



JAMES RAFFERTY
co-director

SOMETIMES I FORGET

SOMETIMES I FORGET the words of Christ in Matthew 25:40. I judge, I disdain, and I criticize my brethren in my heart (and with my actions). When I do this to the least of these my brethren I do it unto Him.

During such times of stark spiritual failure I am especially thankful that God has more faith in

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us than we have in ourselves. God exercises more faith toward us than we could ever exercise in our entire lives. He is the Author and Finisher of our faith (Hebrews 12:1).

In his own spiritual trial, Job struggled to understand why God seemed to be punishing him (Job 9). Yet, God had faith that Job would endure the test. Through it all God purposed to reveal the triumph of love over the power of evil (Job 9). And He did.

When Elijah's faith shrank, he not only ran from duty, he excused

his lack of faithfulness to God, not once, but twice, by pointing to the apostasy of others (1 Kings 18). Yet, God said, before this is all said and done, I'm taking this man to heaven in a fiery chariot (2 Kings 2:11). And He did.

Peter's failure was worse yet. First, he, along with the disciples, forsook Christ. Then Peter denied his Lord, inflicting the greatest pain any human could bring to the heart of the Savior. Yet, Christ said, you may forsake Me, but I will not forsake you. When I am risen again I will go before you to Galilee (Matthew 26:30-32). And He did.

God looks at us today, billions of people selfishly divided and opinionated. He looks at those who were created in His image to be like Him, to be like Christ, to love mercy and do justly and walk humbly (Micah 6:8). Yet God says to the unfallen universe—from these will come the ones that I've been telling you about

for centuries, the ones that My prophecies have predicted. They will be the guileless ones. I will empower them by My Spirit to follow the Lamb wherever He goes (Revelation 14:1-5). And He will.

When we face hard times, when we look into the mirror of God's law of love and recognize how utterly wretched we really are (James 1:23-25), let's not forget that He is faithful still. God's got our back (and our front, sides—head to toes). We're covered, called, loved and paid for. If we believe not, yet He abideth faithful: He cannot deny Himself (2 Timothy 2:13). And He won't. Amen.





DAVID ASSCHERICK
speaker

TRUTH, LOVE, AND LANCE

“WHAT LANCE COULDN’T handle was the truth.” So said Betsy Andreu at the close of Alex Holmes’ difficult-to-watch documentary on the rise and fall of Lance Armstrong, *Stop at Nothing: The Lance Armstrong Story*.

Lance is not alone.

Most of us can’t handle the truth.

Just today, I returned from a two-week trip to Jasper, Oregon to teach for the 2014 ARISE program. Nowadays, many airplanes have movies and television programs available on demand. I surveyed the offerings and found 90% of them entirely uninteresting or just plain ungodly. But *Stop at Nothing* caught my eye. Lance is the ultimate study in deception and perhaps self-deception. Seven-time Tour de France winner, Lance was the most decorated and successful cyclist of all time. More than this, he is a

cancer survivor and founder of The Livestrong Foundation, a cancer research and support organization which has raised more than half a billion dollars since 1997.

Lance was a very big fish indeed, until he admitted in early 2013, after years of deflection and denial, that he had employed PEDs (performance-enhancing drugs) to help him accomplish his seemingly superhuman feats.

He now lives in ignominy and relative obscurity.

As I sat on the plane watching, I found it hard to believe what I was seeing and hearing. I already knew the story, yes, but it’s almost

unbelievable nonetheless. Nearly two decades of deception and lies had finally caught up to Lance. He hadn’t confessed out of contrition or a feeling of moral sensitivity or duty. No, he’d gotten caught, plain and simple. He confessed out of

SELF-DECEPTION

“Fearful is the power of self-deception on the human mind!”

Ellen White
Testimonies for the Church,
vol. 4, p. 88

MASKS LAID ASIDE

“When we approach God it will be as one brotherhood. We are pilgrims and strangers, bound for a better country, even a heavenly. There all pride, all accusation, all self-deception, will forever have an end. Every mask will be laid aside, and we shall ‘see him as he is.’”

Ellen White
In Heavenly Places, p. 288

ERROR IN SELF-APPLICATION

“It is difficult for us to understand ourselves, to have a correct knowledge of our own characters. The Word of God is plain, but often there is an error in applying it to one’s self. There is liability to self-deception and to think its warnings and reproofs do not mean me. ‘The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?’ (Jeremiah 17:9). Self-flattery may be construed into Christian emotion and zeal. Self-love and confidence may give us assurance that we are right when we are far from meeting the requirements of God’s Word.”

Ellen White
Testimonies for the Church,
vol. 5, p. 332

sheer necessity. He was forced to face the music.

His major sponsors—Nike, Oakley, Trek Bicycles, and others—were like rats off the proverbial sinking ship. Lance, a giant figure both in and out of the world of cycling, was suddenly quite alone. In an interview with Oprah, in which he made his confession public, he estimated that he'd lost 75 million dollars in a couple of days from forfeited sponsorship deals and contracts. His seven Tour de France titles were stripped.

The truth had been there all along. There's debate about who in Lance's inner circle knew what. And when they knew it. There's no debate about this, however: Lance knew the truth all along.

Or did he?

Self-deception is very dangerous and very real. And it's not uncommon. In fact, probably the easiest person to fool is yourself. And the toughest person to convince that you're not being fooled is yourself.

Scripture has much to say about self-deception. Here's a sampling.

"Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you thinks that he is wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise" (1 Corinthians 3:18).

"For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself" (Galatians 6:3).

"If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1 John 1:8).

"But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves" (James 1:22).

Plainly, self-deception is real, dangerous, and common. The repeated warnings about it in Scripture should awaken and alert us. They should frighten us.

The only antidote for self-deception is the truth. But the truth can be hard to come by for the person entrenched in self-deception. Layer upon layer of lies effectively insulate the deceived from coming face to face with the truth. When this happens, when an edifice of lies surrounds and insulates us, we are in a very dangerous and precarious position.

Though he may not think so now, and certainly wouldn't have thought so on that fateful day he lost an estimated 75 million dollars, Lance was lucky that, at last, he was caught. It was the best thing that could've happened to him.

As the documentary drew to its climactic close, I found myself thinking about the ARISE students I'd spent the last two weeks with. In class after class, and study after study, it was clear that they were craving truth, whatever the cost and whatever the consequences. Their enthusiasm for Scripture, ministry, and the truth was

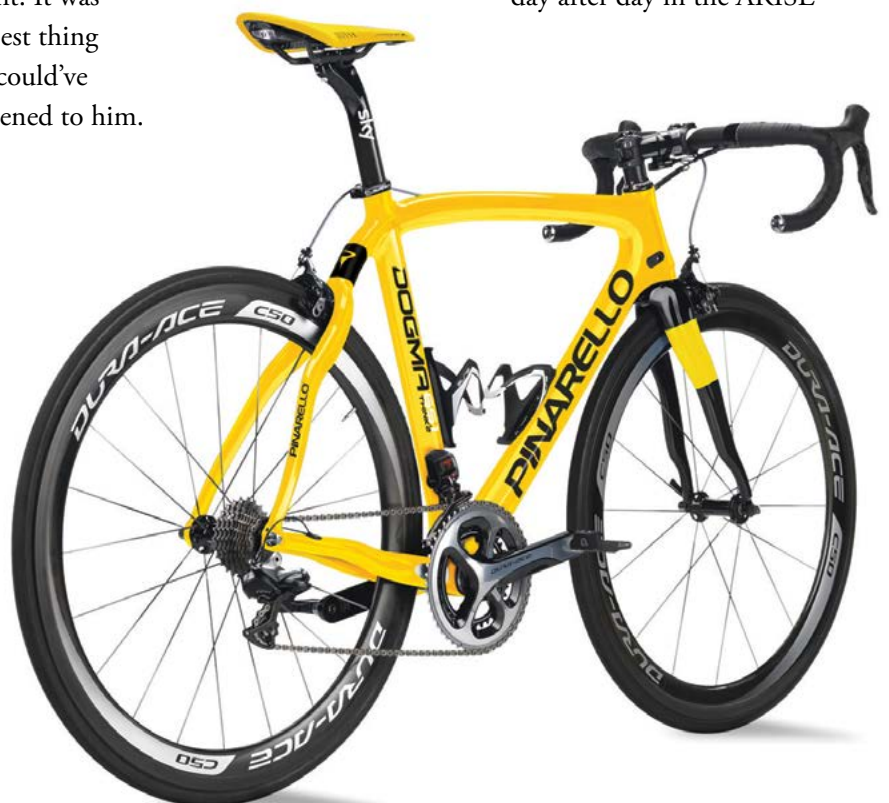
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inspiring. These truths were not always easy to hear or bear, but they longed for them nonetheless.

This craving isn't natural. It's supernatural. It comes from above, from Him who is the Truth—Jesus Christ.

Because the truth is that none of us can handle the truth. Not Lance. Not me. And not you. Naturally, we love to lie and be lied to. Only Jesus and His love can break that spell.

And that's what I was seeing day after day in the ARISE



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... TRUTH, LOVE, AND LANCE (continued from page 3)

classroom: the love of Jesus and a love for Jesus.

Love not only casts out fear (1 John 4:18), it also casts out falsehood, lies, and deception. Truth and love are the closest of friends. We need them both. And

both are abundantly available in Jesus Christ.

The ARISE students are learning this day by day. So am I. I hope Lance does too.

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