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Presentation Transcript
Inner Truth
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We're starting a new series today. It's called *Getting Real*. The first presentation in that series is called *Inner Truth*.

Good afternoon everybody!

I was talking to a single mother recently. She worked – had a job. She was raising her daughter by herself. Her life was very stressful – very busy. She'd lived in town for seven or eight years and had no friends – isolated, pretty much – completely on her own – no family around. And then, if that wasn't hard enough, she got in a terrible automobile accident and had PTSD and chronic neck pain – after all the doctors were done with what they could do. She was referred for treatment of her post-traumatic stress disorder. I love to see people come to my office, who have been in car wrecks, because the results are usually so dramatic. Three, four or five sessions and they're usually good to go. And they think it's a miracle. I like that. And I was really looking forward to treating her, so I did all the same things I usually do and nothing happened. Her anxiety didn't go down at all. Her depression didn't go away. When that happens, what usually is happening is the depression and the anxiety, that we think is from the accident, really is from somewhere else and it's just being triggered again by the automobile accident.

So we had to go back. And I had to start where I always try to start in those cases – with her childhood. She wasn't abused. Her parents didn't get a divorce. During the session, where we were trying to figure what might have been causing the upset, she mentioned that her mother seemed like she was always angry with her and was always trying to get her to go outside and play, because she didn't want her around. And I said, "So how did you deal with that?" And she said, "Well, I remember feeling very uncared for. My father would play with me, but my mother wouldn't. But when I got older, I just used to make fun of her, just to see her get more angry." I thought, "Well, that's something to remember. You don't hear that one too often." And then she said, "But I don't like to talk about that, because so many people have it so bad that I think it sounds like I'm whining when there is nothing to whine about. I had it pretty good." After she said that, a tear rolled down her cheek. Then she said, "I hate to cry. I feel so weak." And I said, "Well, that tear is probably the most genuine thing I've seen from you yet."

So why is it that we don't let others know who we really are? Why do we build walls to keep our feelings in and people out? Why do we delude ourselves about how we're feeling? She was talking some more, a bit later, about her mother, and I said, "You look angry." She said, "I'm not angry. I feel sad for her. I'm not angry." We therapists...our jobs are to make what's unconscious conscious. And so we ask questions and say things that we would never say to people in normal life. But I said, "So that's why you're hands are in fists and white from squeezing them so tightly while you talk about your mother that you're not angry with." She had been so used to putting the wall up that she wasn't even aware that that's what she was doing anymore. She was not really being real about her real feelings. She had a terrible time getting down to that. It was a real street fight for her. She had a hard time with it.

So that would be an example of one of the things I'm talking about today – the human propensity to deceive one's self. Did you know that we have three divisions of government in our country? We do, don't we? You probably knew that. We have an executive branch – right? – the President and his group, and then we have the judiciary – starting with the Supreme Court – and then we have the Congress, which is made up of two parts. Do you know why we have that? Well, the founding fathers didn't want any one person or branch of government to get control. Do you know why they were worried about that? Because they read the Bible and they read Jeremiah 17:9 that says, "The human heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick. Who can understand it?" Our politicians tells us they're not control freaks. They just want to have more control so they help the country. Right? And some of them probably believe that. And some of them use it as a manipulation, because they *know* they want to control things. But get real! Human nature *is* deceitful. And there are people who would try to manipulate and take control of the government, if they thought they could pull it off. In fact, probably a long line of people have been trying to do that ever since the beginning. I think about Franklin Roosevelt's third term. And there are lots of other things, too, on both sides of the aisle.

Another example. A couple came to my office awhile back and they wanted to get their teenage son into treatment. Actually, the mother was the bio-mother and the father was the stepfather. So the mother told me that her son, who was fourteen and had gotten into so many fights at school, that she had to take him out, because the school was threatening to turn him over to the police. And they told her that they would probably – if he kept doing this – put him in juvey. So she took him out of school and started homeschooling him. The way she did it was, she bought an online course and left him home all day by himself to study, because she was working. So you can guess how much school got done. And they'd also moved from the side of town, where he knew lots of people and had friends, to a completely different neighborhood, where he didn't know anybody. And since he wasn't going to school, he had no prospects of meeting anyone. I asked them if they knew why he was so angry. And the very next words spoken came from the stepfather, who had, pretty much, been quiet up to that point. And he began to talk almost as though he were talking to himself about how hard it is to find a good therapist. So, do we know where the problem is? Well, the problem is between the boy and his stepfather, which I later corroborated as I talked to the boy. He was much more open about his feelings. I think that the stepfather felt like it might be, at least partly, his fault – that there was a problem between him and his stepson. And I think that what he was doing was deflecting the guilt that he was feeling

about by thinking out loud how I might side in with the boy. That's a big problem for parents. They think their kid is going to go trash them to the therapist, which *is* what they do. And then they go home and trash the therapist to their parent. Parents probably figure out what's going on in session based on what they're hearing. But he was just projecting the problem onto me.

I was thinking about the whole situation and thinking about how nice it would have been for both of them to get them in a room and help them just communicate to each other in a way that would not cause either one of them to get defensive – like he was when I asked a simple question, “Why do you think he's so angry?”

But in doing what he was doing, he was completely unaware that he was pushing it off onto me – “I've got to look good here and blame somebody else.” This was all an unconscious thing with him. But by taking that path, he was unable to even approach the problem. He couldn't approach the problem. He was ready to even admit that he was a part of it. So, most of the time, when we have problems to resolve with people, it requires that we get real – get honest about what's going on inside of us.

So, today, we're going to look into the Bible to see what God says about the deceitful human mind and how it functions, and the effects of it, and what it's trying to achieve – why we're that way. And then, in following presentations in this series, we're going to look at how to get real and think about the benefits of doing that.

Why do we do what we do? Well, I'm going to tell you a little bit about human anatomy for a minute. In your brain – right at the top of your spinal column above the brain stem – it's actually on top of the brain stem – there's a little part of your brain about the size of a walnut – there's actually two on them – one on each side – one for the right, one for the left – for some reason they don't usually refer to them in tandem or plural, but they just say, “The amygdala,” which is that part. It's job is to take all the incoming information from the senses – the around – and evaluate it. That's what it does. And then it creates appropriate responses, based on the information that's coming in. I mean, if an ice cream cone is headed your way, it creates one set of responses – you know, mouth starts watering; might start lusting – but, if somebody pulls a gun on you, it would create a whole different set of responses. So one of the jobs that it does is, it scans all incoming information for threat. Is it dangerous? And, after it does the scanning, or evaluating, it then sends it to another part of the brain that's right attached to it, called the hippocampus. And that stores all of this incoming information in memory.

So, can you think about how important this little piece of our brain is? You know, you step off a curb, look up and see a bus coming fast, the data comes up through the amygdala, the amygdala says, “Uh oh,” and it creates intense fear and it sends signals to the body to prepare to run, jump, dodge, etc. That's a pretty easy example to understand, but that's not the only kind of threat that it detects.

This thing – the amygdala – is like a little brain in your brain. It does *so* much! It has to be one of God's surpassing feats. It's just amazing! Let's see it in action. Let's go to Genesis 3. (You know, every time I read this small part of the Bible I'm just blown away by how

much is there. When I think I've milked the last bit of meaning out of it, I read it again and a whole other world opens up.) This part is all about how it all started for us – how it went wrong, how we responded, what causes our problems, and there are even implications there about what to do about it. So let's start in verse 8. This is after the devil talked to Eve, and she talked to Adam, and they ate of the fruit of the tree that God told them not to eat. You know, they could have any fruit of any tree, except that one, so where does he go? He goes right there. And they do, too.

Genesis 3:8 – *They heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the Garden in the cool of the day. And the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the Garden.* Another way to say that is, that they tried to deceive God about their location. Right? Why did they do that? Why? *The LORD God called the man, and said to him, "Where are you?" And he said, "I heard the sound of You in the Garden and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself."* "I was afraid" – how did they become afraid? Amygdala scanned incoming data from the ears, heard God, and for some reason, it now sees Him as a threat – a different meaning has been assigned to God now – somebody who might hurt them. Why? Was the amygdala malfunctioning? No, there's something else that is going on, right? Their perception of God changed. God is now a threat. What is He a threat to? Is He a threat to their physical health? No. I guess He could be, but I don't think they were thinking that. So, to understand that part we need to go somewhere else for a bit.

Let's think about before the devil talked to Adam and Eve – you know, back in Genesis 1 and 2. What were things like for them? Yeah, baby in the crib, right? And the parent is taking care of all their needs, right? So they feel what? Safe and secure, integrated and they trust God, right? God is supplying all their needs. How did that make them feel? Safe. It made them feel loved by God. Right? Taken care of. Is that self-esteem? It's a sense of yourself as loved by God, right? What did that allow them to do? Well, it gave them the confidence to extend out and do the work that God gave them to do. Adam had the job of naming all the animals, right? That's a pretty hard job. And they tended the Garden, pruned the trees. I had to hire an expert to prune my tree, because I'm always afraid I'm going to cut off the wrong limb. So there is a certain amount of learning that has to take place about trimming trees. And what if you mess up? What if God doesn't approve of the way I'm taking care of the Garden? It probably never entered Adam's mind. He knew he was safe. Why? Well, because He was in God's care. He'd learned to trust God because of the way God treated him. It probably never entered their minds to do anything else.

So when the mind functions this way – when we're safe and secure with those who love us and those that we love – everything is good. We feel good. There is peace within. Life works. That is the optimal state for human beings. It's about *good relationships* – connection. That's what we want – and specifically, with God. And, if you have problems in your relationships, then life isn't good. So our optimal state is to be in good relationships – and especially, with God and with each other – kids, parents, husbands, wives, fathers, mothers, families.

Now I want you to think about one other thing. This state that they were in, in the Garden, with God is very similar to what we're promised in the Kingdom, isn't it? There is not

going to be any danger, because we're not physical. Right? Can't be killed. We know that God's going to love us eternally, so life's going to be good. Right? We know that we're going to have a job, because, in the New Testament, it talks about the temple and how all the apostles and everybody fit into that, and we know that we're going to be in there, too. Okay.

So, when Adam and Eve were hiding in the Garden – let's come back to that now – what were they afraid of? Well, they did something contrary, that God told them not to do. So they were afraid they were going to lose the connection that they had with Him. He's going to be unhappy with them – angry. So they hid. They withdrew from God. And the solution that they chose to deal with the problem created the problem. He wasn't hiding. He was looking for them. He was trying to connect with them. See, we don't do well with sin. We're not created for that. We were created for good works. Right? We're created and designed to struggle against sin and the adversary that brings it, but we do not flourish with it in our lives. It separates us from each other and from God. The effects of sin in our life is *destructive*. It turns God into a threat. It make us want to avoid Him.

Elaine and I were watching the movie *Flywheel* the other day. You know, that's the group in Georgia, I think it is – the church group – that makes the movies – *Facing the Giants*, *Fireproof*, *Courageous* – those movies. The first one they ever made – *Flywheel* – was about this guy who was a used car dealer. He prides himself in being able to rip people off and sell the cars for way more than they're worth. One day he hears his son talking to his friend about his father – about how his dad lies a lot, and charges people too much for cars, and doesn't pay any attention to me. And then his wife starts getting on him about ripping people off. And they go to church and he pretends like he's putting money in the envelope, but nothing in it goes in the plate. And he starts becoming aware that he isn't doing what he knows he should do – that he's sinning. And his response to that is “get off my back, leave me alone, I don't want to talk about it.” That's his response to his wife as he withdraws. It separates them. That's deception, and hiding, and avoiding, and not wanting to admit, not looking at, and pulling away.

Let's look in Hebrews 3:13. I often wondered about this scripture and I think I understand it much better now. He said:

Hebrews 3:13 – *But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called today, that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.* We don't want other people to know about our sins and we don't want to think about them ourselves. We hide them from ourselves. Sin makes us want to hide and cover up. Why? Well, let's got to Acts 5, and verse 1.

Acts 5:1 – *There was a man named Ananias with his wife, Sapphira, and they sold a piece of property. With his wife's knowledge, he kept back, for himself, some of the proceeds and brought only a part of it and laid it at the apostles' feet. But Peter said, “Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back for yourself part of the proceeds of the land? While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not at your disposal? Why is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart?”* Good question. Why was he doing that? What were they afraid of? What were

they trying to accomplish by that? Well, I think two things. One, they were trying to avoid a loss of connection with the church. “If we give this, then they’ll think that we’re just like they are – committed Christians.” And I think, maybe, they were also trying to avoid a loss of financial security – you know, “If we give all of it, we might not have enough.” I’m sure it felt to them like they were caught between those two things – the desire to be a good Christian and the desire to have enough – a dilemma. So they figured out a way to do both, which included presenting themselves in a way that they weren’t really. And Peter doesn’t make any bones about it. He lied to the Holy Spirit. Apparently, they presented it as though they were giving the whole thing – not being quite honest about it. So they were worried about a loss of financial security and about a loss of connection. Our deceitfulness usually is about the struggle for safety and security, which is something God says He’ll take care of for us, but somehow don’t believe that.

The stepfather that I mentioned earlier... what was he afraid of? What do you think he was afraid of? Well, he was afraid that he was going to get blamed for the problem. And I, after talking to the boy, am pretty sure that it wasn’t all his fault. He had some of it. Anytime somebody comes into the family it upsets the equilibrium, right? But he was afraid he was going to get blamed for it. That might hurt his relationship with his wife, right? Maybe she’s going to side in with the boy, too. And maybe I might think he was a bad person after listening to the kid. So he’s telling me that he hopes I’m a good therapist and that I can perceive that I’m only getting one side of the story, maybe. So he’s afraid of losing connection, isn’t he, and looking bad.

We’ve talked about this already – the connection feature – but I want to really brand that as so primal. God created us to be in relationship with Him for all eternity, so He made us relational beings. Our minds reach out into the minds of others. We change their mind as we interact with them and they change ours. And we get ideas from each other and absorb part of somebody else into ourselves and extend part of us out. We’re all about connection. And we all *want* connection. And then we all do things that weaken our connections. We sin. And then we hide. We deceive. Sometimes we deceive ourselves and sometimes we try to deceive other people. Notice what God says about this in Psalms 51:6.

Psalms 51:6 – *Behold* – David says of God – *You desire truth in the inward being and You teach me wisdom in the secret heart.* All right. So He teaches about truth in the inward being. So let’s say we finally come out of hiding. We admit the problem. How are we going to feel when we do that? Well, first we feel vulnerable, don’t we?

Let’s go back to the mother that I told you about. The tear rolls down her cheek and she says that she hates crying. The tear rolled down her cheek – she just couldn’t hold it back – and then she has to tell me that she hates crying, because she just feels like such a weakling in my presence. Even, as a little girl, when her mother was endlessly angry with her, she just put on the stiff upper lip and made fun of her mother rather than let her mother see that tear run down her cheek. So she’s feeling weak, isn’t she – exposed, vulnerable – as she sat in my office. And she felt vulnerable back then. So she wouldn’t let her mother see the tear either. What does she do now? How does she live her life? Well, she puts on a fake smile every morning and goes out to meet the world – stuffs her feelings and her troubles, so that people won’t think she’s weak – because that’s what she’s afraid of – and she wants to

cover up the weakness and project strength – a deception. So she comes off kind of hard, and kind of insensitive, and kind of lifeless, because she is so depressed she can hardly get out of her own way. And she's afraid that, if people knew how much she was hurting, that would turn them away from her, because she's weak. She has to maintain that façade – that deception.

I want to talk about two words right now, for a minute, and then we'll come back to this again. The words are *shame* and *guilt*. Guilt is the feeling we get when we've done something wrong and we know it. Guilt feels bad, but research shows that just what the Bible tells us. It's good for us to feel guilty when we've done something wrong. That's good for us, right? It helps us, because it's like a compass. It points to where we ought to be going, or that we've got some problems we need to work on. So it helps us course-correct. It's like when you cut yourself, if you didn't feel pain, you could bleed out because you might not even notice that you've cut yourself. But you have nerves and they let you know. Guilt is sort of a mental pain that we feel. And it helps us realize we've done something wrong. When God told Cain that he would be accepted if he would do good, He wanted him to feel guilty and change his attitude.

Now shame is the feeling we get when we believe that we *are* wrong – not that we've *done* wrong, but that we *are* wrong – that we're defective, that we're not enough. When our sins are exposed, that's bad enough, but when our defectiveness is exposed, we feel especially vulnerable. That's shame. Shame causes us to become highly deceptive to keep the defectiveness out of sight. All the things that we feel about ourselves – our weight, our smoking, our whatever – that we do that makes us not acceptable to other people, those are usually things that we *are* – not just that we've done. You can't change what you are and you can't change what you've done. So the stepfather didn't know what he'd done to cause his stepson to be so angry with him. And I suspect that he was thinking there was something about himself that caused the problem. But he wasn't willing to look at it. It was just too scary. It's all about these bad therapists. It's easier to think about that.

So vulnerability is the internal solution to deception. What if Ananias had said to the church, "I know that a lot of you have donated your life savings and I know there's a great need for money, but I just don't feel like I can give that much. I feel like I can give half of what my property sold for, but I just feel so afraid to give it all, because we'd have nothing left for our old age." Don't you think everybody in the place would know, from experience, exactly how he felt? Vulnerability increases connection instead of decreasing it. The things that we're afraid of – that we *think* are going to cause us problems with people – cause people not to like us, not to love us. If we fess up on those things, it causes people to love us *more*. The stepfather...you know, if he said, "You know, I married this woman. I love her, but I'm just so confused about her son and why he hates me so much. Sometimes I want to help him because he's just a kid and other times I'd just like to wring his neck!" Who hasn't been there with kids? You know, we're right there with him, right? Just think about how that works. Or the isolated single mom... "You know, I just feel so angry. My husband left me. My neck hurts all the time. I get these migraines. I'm afraid my daughter's picking up on my depression and anxiety. I don't have any friends – nobody to help me. Some days, all I can do is cry, but I don't let anybody dare see it." How does

that make you want to react to her? It just makes you want to gather around and lift the burden, doesn't it?

Deception reduces connection. Truth enhances it. We're created for connection. Let's go to John 8:31 to close this out.

John 8:31 – *So Jesus said to the Jews who believed Him, “If you abide in My word, you are truly My disciples. And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”* I don't think He's talking about doctrinal truth here. Do you? I think He's just talking about a fundamental principle of the universe. It's true about everything. Truth is *always* a good thing.

Well, that's somewhat about getting real. Next time we're going to delve even deeper. If we're self-deceptive – and we all are – how can we penetrate the deception? If you're deceiving yourself, how would you know where the work needs to be done? Well, we'll talk about that and we'll talk about strategies in our next presentation on the series *Getting Real*.