A Story about Honesty (from *Living Values Activities for Children Age 8 - 14*, p297)

**The Miner and the Prince** by Lamia El-Dajani, retold and modified by Joan Jensen

Thomas was a miner who used to live with his family in a small house near the forest. One day, Thomas had an accident in the mine. His injuries prevented him from working in the mine. Life then became hard for him and his family. After his injuries began to heal, he started going to the forest to find a way to feed himself and his family.

One day Thomas was in the forest sitting beneath a tree, when suddenly he heard the sound of horses running very fast. He saw the Prince riding a horse and behind him a group of soldiers on their horses. They were chasing after a deer. As they disappeared and the forest became quiet again, he saw something on the path that the horses had galloped across. He picked up the object and found it was a very fine leather wallet. The Prince's name was embossed in gold on the front of the wallet. He slowly opened the wallet and saw a large amount of money. Thomas remained where he was in the forest, waiting for the Prince and his soldiers to return so he could give back the wallet. Slowly it became dark. As the night grew later and there was no sign of the Prince, Thomas decided to return home.

On the long walk home, Thomas continued thinking about the money. He thought, "This money belongs to the Prince, and should be returned to him." As he continued walking, he thought, "But neither the Prince nor his soldiers returned for the money. Perhaps they don't realize it is lost." And after a few more steps, "Maybe because the Prince is so rich, looking for it would be a waste of his time, and he won't even bother, he won't even miss it. And my family is so much in need. We are hungry, my children need clothes, the roof needs to be repaired. I found it, I could keep it for my family, and no one would even know. " As he walked further, thinking about all the things he could buy for his family with this money, he thought, "And no one would know. No one would know. No one would know." Then he stopped suddenly, realizing, "I would know. And my wife would know. And God would know!" But how was he to return it to the Prince? The capital city was a very long walk away. He would need food for the journey, and his family had very little food to spare. His clothes were shabby. Perhaps he would not be allowed into the royal castle. It would be hard to be honest. It would be so easy just to keep the money. And so his thoughts kept turning round and round on the long walk home.

When he arrived home later than usual, his wife Elizabeth hurried to meet him, asking about his day. He excitedly told her what had happened and showed her the wallet. "What should I do?" he asked her. Elizabeth also saw the dilemma, and said, "Our children are hungry. The money is enough to feed our family for several months. No one would know." And they looked at each other in love and concern. "We must pray for guidance," his wife declared. And immediately they sat down together, opened one of their books, and read the following words.

"They who dwell within the tabernacle of God, and are established upon the seats of

everlasting glory, will refuse, though they be dying of hunger, to stretch their hands and

seize unlawfully the property of their neighbor, however vile and worthless he may be.

"The purpose of the one true God in manifesting Himself is so summon all mankind to

truthfulness and sincerity, to piety and trustworthiness, to resignation and submissiveness

to the Will of God, to forbearance and kindliness, to uprightness and wisdom. His object

is to array every man with the mantle of a saintly character, and to adorn him with the

ornament of holy and goodly deeds."

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| Husband and wife looked at each other, and with a sigh his wife said, "It is now clear what we must do. The only thing yet to decide is how we will do this."  Thomas and Elizabeth made preparations far into the night. Thomas packed food to take on the journey. Elizabeth washed and patched his one suit of clothes, so he would be more presentable when meeting the Prince. And in the morning, Thomas set off on his journey.  When he reached the palace, the guards stopped him at the gate and prevented him from entering to meet the Prince. He had no appointment, and from his shabby clothes they knew he was not a rich or important man. They asked him why he wanted to meet the Prince, but he refused to tell them the reason. Thomas had heard that people in the capital city were not always honest, and he was worried if he handed the wallet to the guards, they would keep the money for themselves. So he just insisted, "I must meet with the Prince. I will not leave without seeing him!"  The guards began to shout at him to leave, and push him away from the gate. Suddenly Thomas saw the Prince himself, mounted on his fine horse, approach the gate to leave for the day. Thomas threw himself in front of the horse and called to the Prince, "A word with you, my beloved Prince!" The Prince paused, and Thomas drew the wallet from his coat and handed it to the Prince.  The Prince looked very surprised, and asked Thomas where he had found it. Thomas told him the story of the previous day in the forest. The Prince then opened the wallet. Everyone could see that he was astonished to find all the money there, untouched. The Prince asked Thomas, "Why didn't you take the money?" and Thomas replied, "I cannot take something that does not belong to me."  A gleam of respect appeared on the Prince's face, and he was quiet for a moment, thinking. Then he turned to Thomas and said, "Would you come and serve in my court, and work for me? I can use an honest man, someone I can trust, to do the work of the kingdom." |
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