A Lesson in Honesty

By Rickey Maxwell

Several years ago my wife and I, with our three young daughters, spent a day at the races watching the horses run. We made several wagers throughout the day and won several small bets. On this day there was standing room only. So that we didn’t get separated in the crowd, my wife and children accompanied me to the window to collect tickets and place wagers on the upcoming race.

On one particular trip to the window the person ahead of me cashed in several winning tickets and left the window, at which time I stepped up to cash in. Upon approaching the counter and beginning my transaction, I noticed he had accidentally left a ticket lying on the counter at the window. I looked around but he was nowhere in sight. Not sure whether it was a winning ticket or not I handed it in with mine and was surprised to find that it was worth close to $100. I excitedly walked away from the counter cash-in-hand and explained this bit of good luck to my children who in turn shared my excitement. But, I also noticed a feeling of guilt and realized that this action was not in line with my value of honesty. Now I had an important choice. I could give my children an example of the “finders, keepers” philosophy or I could set an example for them and at least make an effort to return the prize to its rightful owner.

Because of the peculiar hat this man had worn and my 6’1” height he was easy for me to spot once we had taken a few steps in the direction we thought he had walked. He was very grateful and offered a reward, which I refused. I had received my reward, which was the glowing looks of admiration I saw on my daughters’ faces, and the opportunity to teach by example the importance of honesty to three impressionable young minds.