

Speaking the Truth in Love Growing up into Christ

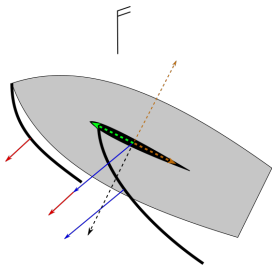
14 Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. **15** Instead, speaking (as we speak) the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the head, that is, Christ.

Vs 14: Paul says that as we are growing in Christ together that we will stop acting immaturely.

Here is the picture I get when I read verse 14. It's the picture of a raft or any boat without a keel.

Question: What is the purpose of a keel?

Answer: The rudimentary purpose of the keel is to convert the sideways motion of the wind when it is abeam into forward motion – to keep us going straight.



Without a keel the boat is just pushed and blown whatever way the wind blows.

A person without truth as a guide is like a boat without a keel and are easily blow off course, anything that sounds good or feeds a need within them can easily sway or redirect them.

When we are young in the faith and knowledge of God we are infants – immature, ignorant of truth, Tossed about, blown here and there by teaching or cunning and craftiness in scheming – easily swayed by people and led down false paths and into darkness again.

Vs 15: Yet as we mature in Christ we learn to 'Speak the Truth' in love. And this speaking of truth matures us more. This truth becomes our keel that keeps us going in the right direction.

What does this really mean to 'Speak the Truth' in Love?

The Greek word we translate 'speak' means more than speak, it means embody – speak truth, do truth, live truth. So live, speak, embody God's reality, truth in his divine, unselfish, sacrificial love

The Greek word Truth means speaking reality into a person's life, making a record of what *God* deems is truth, not what I deem as truth or what I feel. (From HELPS Word Studies)

Often we think of this passage as speaking of saying hard things to one another. Having conversations about how we feel. That's not really what this verse is saying – it's not about telling people how they make you feel it's about speaking reality and truth.

I'm not saying discounting your feelings when I say this just pointing out that feelings aren't necessarily facts. It is important to let someone know when they hurt your feelings and to work on your relationship together. But just know that the reason your feelings were hurt could be as much or more about you as the person who offended you.

We must make every effort in humility and gentleness to keep the bond of peace. So it's important to share if something they did hurt you feelings and if you're that someone to listen with gentles and humility.

These truths can come from knowledge and knowing of a person, from personal interaction with them, or a word of knowledge or wisdom from God.

Note: It gives credence to what you say when you live out what you speak. I speak this reality because I am, want to, trying to live it out myself. Doesn't mean that all you speak you've mastered but your are trying – no hypocrisy here.

Ephesians 4:15 (Amplified Bible) **15**Rather, let our lives lovingly [**a**]express truth [in all things, speaking truly, dealing truly, living truly]. Enfolded in love, let us grow up in every way and in all things into Him Who is the Head, [even] Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed One).

This passage, speaking truth in love, is really about speaking reality, the truth of Jesus into someone.

- What is it about a person that is causing the kinds of actions that hurt them or others?
 - o Maybe a lack of humility or gentleness that needs to be pointed out.
- What is it about a person that blesses you and shows you the reality of Jesus in them?
 - o Maybe they have the gift of exhortation or a gentle and humble spirit, point it out, speak this truth to them.
 - o Truth is not just hard things it can be exhortations as well
 - o I believe we need to do more of this – exhort one another to love and good deeds.
 - o If we make this a focus it will make having the hard conversations easier – people will trust us more
- Or even who is God and what does He have for them?
 - o What is he saying to them. This could be a prophetic word you get for a person.

- It could just be a verse the Lord gives you.
- It could be speaking the truth and opposing lovingly some false doctrine that they believe.

This truth is the truth of who Jesus is and what the Word teaches us. It is the truth that the Spirit reveals to us. It is in essence Jesus himself that we speak over and into one another. So that we grow in knowing him and in faith in Him and what he has done, will do in and through us.

And it's to be spoken in Love

Love = agape – unconditional, without expectation of return for us. Divine love.

I have to go back to vs. 2 and 3 and say that Paul addresses what this looks like when he says...

2 Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.

So we speak reality (his Word, his Spirit led utterances) to one another in divine love in order to build up and grow the body into the image of Christ

- Note the word build up is the same word used to build a building.

What does Speaking the Truth in Love look like? Examples

Example 1

In response to this talk and my previous talk, a few people in church have encouraged me. They've said, in truth and love, that I have a good teaching gift that has really blessed them. I'm not receiving this as flattery, because they're not saying this to get something from me, but rather as a means of conveying truth.

When we see something in someone in the body and we thank them or call something out, we're speaking the truth in love.

Example 2

I talked with a fellow InterVarsity staff this week with whom I have a very good relationship. He mentioned to me that he saw a student whom we both know, a Christian, standing in line for a Palm reading at a school fair. I asked him if he exhorted her to not see the Palm reader. He said no, he was on his way somewhere and she seemed busy. My response back to him was that it's his responsibility to warn her away from such things, as someone God has placed in her life to shepherd her. I told him gently but firmly that he needed to go back to her and talk and

possibly pray with her about what had happened. He also needs to ask her and the Lord for forgiveness.

When I spoke with this staff I was speaking the truth in love. When he goes and speaks with his student, he will be speaking the truth and my hope is that it will be done in love.

If you see a brother or sister sinning or making choices that will harm them you need to speak the truth in love.

Matthew 18:15 "If a brother or sister sins (or sins against you), go and point out the fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over."

Example 3

While serving at a church in the inner-city of Chicago I found myself growing more and more frustrated and hurt by the pastor. He was a difficult man to work with and at times abusive. But I never talked with him about his behavior and how much it hurt me and many others. Instead I kept it inside and let it build up.

During a meeting with the pastor and our supervisor (we were actually working as inner-city missionaries and not employees of the church) the pastor started complaining about how my wife Laurie was undermining his authority. Actually what she would do is frequently ask hard questions about his plans and dreams, pointing out that many of them were unrealistic.

As he was talking he turned to me and tried to get me to back up what he was saying. I was speechless. After all the difficult things this man had done, now he was trying to turn me against my wife. I couldn't say anything I was so angry, I just stood mute in stunned silence. But in my mind I was strangling him with both my hands and wanting him to die. '

I went to see another pastor for counsel. He asked me a simple question. What does the Bible say we are to do to our enemies? I replied "love them and pray for them, but this man is not my enemy he's my pastor." To which he replied back, "oh really?"

I spent some time praying for the pastor who had hurt me and realized that I had sinned against him and the body. I'd spoken to others about him and the things he'd done but never to him. And I never really forgave him or loved him or prayed for him. After several weeks I went to him and confessed and asked for his forgiveness.

When the other pastor spoke the truth of what the situation was, he spoke the truth in love. He didn't condemn me for my anger and hatred of our pastor, simply he pointed me to the truth of the situation and the truth of God's word.

Group Time What about you? Can you think of an example this week where you had to speak truth in love? How did you do? Take some time to share with your neighbor.

Question: How does this help build us up, mature us? What happens when we live our lives together this way?

Answer: This provides for us a new level of freedom and foundational trust, a way of walking in maturity where we can be in agreement and trust one another.

Trust is the foundational level of any relationship. Without trust you cannot have intimacy or deep friendship.

Word for the church

Church – at times we are like a ship without a keel – you are in danger. We need to learn how to have better communication. We need to learn how to speak or embody truth in love.

- We are in a place of great growth but could easily be divided
- We are easily swayed by intentional and unintentional comments or schemes
- We need to grow in speaking truth over one another in love and stop lying
- We need to be humble and look to the Lord
- We need to work on our communication and relationship with each other
- We need to make sure that we're not gossiping and slandering each other
- Some of us need to be reconciled
- We need to bear with one another in love and give each other the benefit of the doubt
- We need to have faith in our leaders and pray for them
- We need to make sure that when we speak to each other it's for the purpose of building each other up in love

Principles for Speaking the Truth in Love

Here are some principles for Speaking the Truth in Love that come out of this passage.

2 Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. 3 Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.

1. Separate Truth from Feeling
 - a. What we want to share is reality
 - b. Sometime truth can be confused by hurt or other strong feelings
 - c. You need to separate your feelings from the truth of what happened
 - i. A mentor or wise friend can help you do this.
 - d. Doesn't negate feelings, but may find that you're partially responsible for how responded and that you may not be giving person benefit of the doubt.
2. Give each other the benefit of the doubt.
 - a. Assume the that they have the best in mind for you
 - b. Assume that they love you and are doing it in love
 - c. Assume that they are not hurting you or if they are sinning that they're doing it intentionally
3. Listen or speak with humility and gentleness

- a. Being angry may be a reality but it make conversations much harder – be careful not to sin in your anger
 - b. Forgiving them before you have a conversation would be good
 - c. Don't be defensive if you're on the receiving end. Even if you disagree with what they are saying, give it some time and process with God and others before responding. There many be some truth in what they are saying, receive it this way
4. Don't wait too long to tell someone
- a. Don't let the sun go down on your anger
 - b. Longer you wait the harder it will be
 - c. If it's been a long time may need to apologize ask them to forgive you
5. Check you motivation
- a. Make sure that your doing this for the other person as much as for yourself
 - b. Make sure that your action will bless the body of Christ
 - c. Make sure that God is directing you to do this