



THE WAYS

SPEAK THE TRUTH WITH LOVE. Speak honestly and directly in a way that clearly reflects love and support for one another. Be courageous enough to say what needs to be said, even when it's difficult. Address issues directly with those who are involved or affected; speak to, not about, others.

1. Are Christians more or less likely to talk to people instead of about them?

READ Eph 4:15, 25, and 32

1. What do these three passages have in common?
2. What does “one body” mean? How should it affect how we talk to other Christians?
3. Normally “unwholesome talk” mean swears. What does it mean here? How speaking about instead of to people unwholesome?

Scenario: There is a little old lady at church who is kinda crotchety and can easily be rude. While you are with your friends at church, someone brings her up and begins talking about a moment when she yelled at a group of kids at the Strawberry Festival. It quickly turns into a time for everyone to share their worst stories about her...

1. How is this conversation “unwholesome” for the church body?
2. How can you *Speak the Truth with Love* to your friends?
3. Does it feel more loving to address the issue with the woman or not?
4. How can you interact honestly but lovingly with that woman?

Every time we look to follow after God, it involves turning from habits we may have held our whole lives. If you were raised on “If you don't have anything nice to say...” speaking the truth with love won't come easily to you. Speaking the truth with love isn't always easy. It isn't always nice, but it is the way we, as a community, grow into a church which lives out God's plan.

PRAY TOGETHER.

(Think of a person you have either not been loving to or not been honest with. Pray God would give you an opportunity to make it right with them.)

DAILY Devotional

MONDAY: *READ:* Eph 4:15+16. *THINK:* Faith is founded on truth; and here it is, “Jesus is Lord.” There are so many messages that aim to distract or to detract from that truth. The love that binds together is the love of Christ. It is a love which welcomes you with open arms despite knowing everything you have done, but that also bids you “go and sin no more.” *PRAY:* that God would continuously grow faith in you.

TUESDAY: *READ:* Eph 4:22-25. *THINK:* You are not who you were. You are a new creation in Jesus and that should mean something. New creation doesn't mean “subtly different;” it means utterly new. It's easy to smile and lie in church because we want to be nice, but that nice lie is the old you, the old us. It is truth that hones us and that forms us into a group that reflects Jesus' love and goodness. *PRAY:* the Spirit would reveal to you places where you cling to the old self.

WEDNESDAY: *READ:* Eph 4:29+30 *THINK:* We are one body in Jesus and are indwelt by one Spirit. Truth is not a clever guise for divisiveness. How many hurtful statements have been followed by “I'm just telling the truth.” Search your heart. Is your honesty simply bitterness, frustration, or slander in disguise? We are one Church. Don't let “telling the truth” be your excuse to grieve the Holy Spirit. *PRAY:* Take a moment to ask forgiveness of times when you have spoken the truth with anger.

THURSDAY: *READ:* Matt 18:15-17 *THINK:* Scripture is quite clear: talk TO the person you believe is sinning, talk to the person who hurt you, talk TO the person who you think is leading the church in the wrong direction... When are you allowed to talk ABOUT them? After you have talked TO them, and only to one other person with the goal that you both talk TO them. The Spirit works when we talk together. *PRAY:* for a person who you have talked about but not to.

FRIDAY: *READ:* 1 Cor 13:6+7. *THINK:* In the middle of the most famous passage on love, we read that it rejoices with the truth. How well does it show love when we let a problem fester or when we let a person persist in sin? No one is pretending loving like this is easy. It's hard to speak directly to one another and even harder to do it in love. *PRAY:* that God would help you rejoice with the truth.

SATURDAY: *READ:* Matt 22:8-10. *THINK:* At the end of all things, we are gathered together at the feast of the Lord. We will be brought into his presence and sit at his table. Isn't it strange then when Christians leave conflict unresolved or purposefully hurt each other? What is the plan for the feast? Sit at the other end of the table? We live in anticipation of being gathered together. Practice now speaking the truth with love. *PRAY:* that God would make you hopeful for the feast.