



1

(Theme Slide)

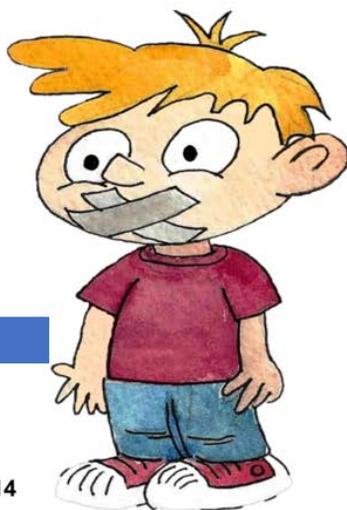
¹¹Come, my children, listen to me;
I will teach you
the [] of the Lord.

¹²Whoever of you [] []
and desires to see
[] good days,

¹³Keep your tongue from []
and your lips from [] []

¹⁴Turn from [] and do good;
seek peace and [] it.

Psalm 34:11-14



**Our second memory verse challenges us to listen and to learn.
-- Can you fill in the blanks?**

TR: What a powerful implied question . . .

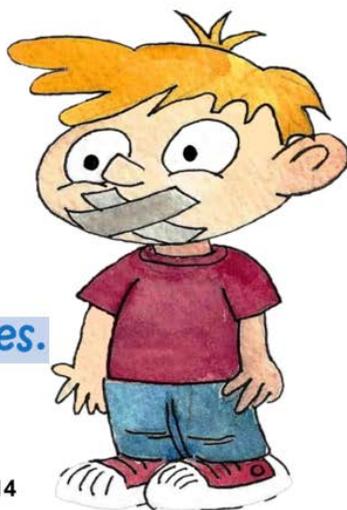
¹¹Come, my children, listen to me;
I will teach you
the fear of the Lord.

¹²Whoever of you loves life
and desires to see
many good days,

¹³Keep your tongue from evil
and your lips from speaking lies.

¹⁴Turn from evil and do good;
seek peace and pursue it.

Psalm 34:11-14



Do we love life and desire to see many good days?

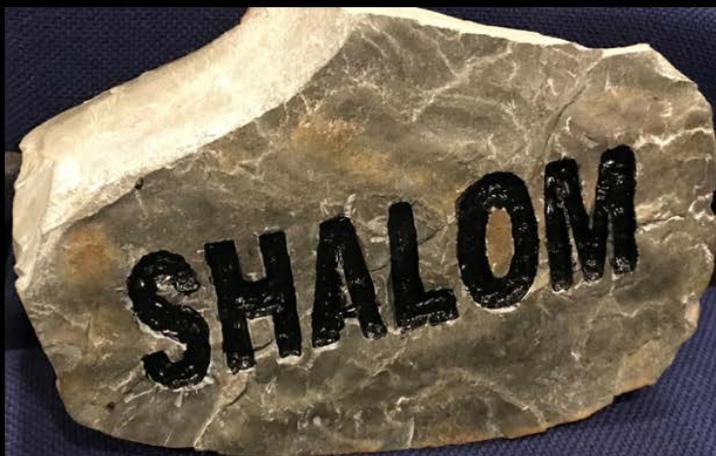
-- Then . . . READ SLIDE

-- Notice the last verse . . . dealing with the truth about what is evil and turning from it in repentance . . .

-- . . . AND seeking and pursue peace . . .

-- . . . are NOT opposed to each other.

TR: The Peace Initiative is a time for us to seek God and His . . .



. . . SHALOM.

-- A man from our congregation ground this beautiful word into stone and then gave it as a gift to our worship pastor after hearing about his son's battle with brain cancer.

-- Isn't Shalom what we want . . . as we learned last week . . .

-- peace with God, peace with each other, and peace within.

TR: But there are great and dangerous trends in many churches and in the lives of many who profess to be Christ-followers. They are the filthy habits of . . .

“STOP PRETENDING – STOP EXCUSING”



. . . pretending and excusing.

-- We pretend there is peace, Shalom, but we are only wearing masks.

-- We excuse ourselves from having to deal with the relational breaches, cleverly letting ourselves off the hook of biblical obedience.

TR: Our hope is to have fellowship with God, to be in true relationship with Him. John the Apostle addresses this in his first letter . . .

1 John 1:5-6

This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. ⁶If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.

ESV

6

READ SLIDE

-- When we pretend to have fellowship with God while excusing our walking in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.

TR: The next verse gets to the heart of the matter even more . . .

But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, **we have fellowship with one another**, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.

ESV

READ SLIDE

- We are only pretending to have fellowship with God if we are not in fellowship with one another.
- We may think we have good excuses to not be in fellowship, but when we remember that the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin and even sin's power . . .
- . . . our excuses seem pretty pale, don't they?

TR: Instead of pretending and excuses, we need to . . .

Ephesians 4:15-16

Rather, **speaking the truth in love**, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, ¹⁶from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, **makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.**

ESV

8

... READ SLIDE

TR: My hope today is to encourage us to turn in our pretending and excusing for NOT speaking the . . .



TRUTH *in*
LOVE

READ SLIDE

TR: I want to go with you through 4 stories from the New Testament that model for us this truth in love principle and practice.



Jesus & Peter

Peter & Paul

Paul & Corinthians

Paul & John Mark

Stop Pretending; Stop Excusing

10

We'll briefly look at . . . READ SLIDE

TR: From the encounter between Jesus and Peter at the end of John's Gospel we see modeled that we should . . .



Jesus & Peter

Stop Pretending:
Just ignoring the problem
is OK.

11

READ SLIDE

TR: Peter messed up . . . and royally so.

John 18:25b-27

"You also are not one of his disciples, are you?" He denied it and said, "**I am not.**" ²⁶One of the servants of the high priest, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, asked, "Did I not see you in the garden with him?" ²⁷**Peter again denied it, and at once a rooster crowed.**

ESV

12

In John 18 we read of what was happening after Jesus had been arrested . . . those in the courtyard asked Peter . . . **READ SLIDE**
-- Peter had denied Jesus multiple times, even though he had vowed to die with Him.
-- The rooster had crowed, just as Jesus prophesied.

-- It is only a few chapters later and Jesus has been raised from the dead . . . wouldn't it be easier to just ignore what Peter had done? Wouldn't it be easier just to act like it never happened, even though we all know it did?

TR: But John records that Jesus did not do that. That's not the

**model He left for us. In the last chapter of the Gospel we¹2
read . . .**

John 21:15-16

When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Feed my lambs."
¹⁶He said to him a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Tend my sheep."

ESV

13

READ SLIDE

TR: Verse 17

John 21:17

He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, "Do you love me?" and he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep.

ESV

14

READ SLIDE

- Three denials. Not ignored but graciously care-fronted, speaking the truth in love.
- If Peter was to fulfill the calling of a key leader in the early church, it was going to take more than just ignoring the problem to aim for restoration.

TR: Verse 18 goes on . . .

John 21:18-19

Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you used to dress yourself and walk wherever you wanted, but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will dress you and carry you where you do not want to go." ¹⁹(This he said to show by what kind of death he was to glorify God.) And after saying this he said to him, **"Follow me."**

ESV

15

READ SLIDE

- This time Jesus prophesies that Peter will be faithful even unto death.
- The commission is reinstated . . . "Follow me."

TR: As Jesus brings up the failure, though very gently, it would have been easy for Peter to make excuses.



Jesus & Peter

16

Stop Pretending:
Just ignoring the problem
is OK.

Stop Excusing:
“I had no choice.”

He could have said, “I had no choice.”

- After all, Jesus had prophesied and therefore it would certainly happen.
- Or perhaps, Peter would say he had no choice because everyone else had done the same.
- Or maybe, the “Rock” could have made his excuses with “The Fool’s Choice.”
- That is, “I had no choice if I wanted to somehow save you, I had to save myself.”
- EX: A Fool’s Choice is like when we think our choice to not betray secrets is now the cause of their death at the hand of our

captors.

-- Cf. many action-adventure movies . . . doing what is wrong to save our family.

TR: We often slip into thinking that love is our excuse . . .



. . . with a backdrop of psychedelic fantasy, we excuse our ignoring the problem because . . . READ SLIDE

-- EX: When confronted with the vengeful gossip they had spread around, one person sat stone-faced. Because they were family a relationship of sorts continued. But because she thought ignoring it would make it go away without any pain, the relationship was always “guarded” and “tentative.” How could it be otherwise? There was no repentance.

TR: We don't need pretending and excusing, we need . . .

(<https://www.google.com/url?sa=i&source=images&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=2ahUKEwiukKi3opHgAhUJ5IMKHaJGA98Qjhx6BAgBEAM&url=https%3A%2F%2Fweheartit.com%2Fentry%2F67885535&psig=AOvVaw2n5GC19Jtw27jlcPXRLWD2&ust=1548792106968803>)

TRUTH *in*
LOVE

READ SLIDE

TR: Our second story is . . .



Peter & Paul

19

Stop Pretending:
Double standards
are OK.

about . . . READ SLIDE

TR: We see modeled that we must stop pretending that double standards are OK.

Galatians 2:11-12

But when Cephas (*Peter*) came to Antioch, I (*Paul*) opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned.¹²For before certain men came from James, he was eating with the Gentiles; but when they came he drew back and separated himself, fearing the circumcision party.

ESV

20

In one of the earliest of the New Testament letters we read . . .

READ SLIDE

-- Peter had the vision of the sheet lowered with all the foods that the Mosaic Law condemned as unclean . . . and God made it clear that it was not about expanding his menu choices but about welcoming the Gentiles as part of the people of God.

-- Peter ate with the Gentiles until strict Jews came for a visit.

TR: His double standard had a huge impact, as verse 13 continues

. . .

Galatians 2:13-14

And the rest of the Jews acted hypocritically along with him, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy. ¹⁴But when I saw that their conduct was not in step with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas before them all, "If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you force the Gentiles to live like Jews?"

ESV

21

READ SLIDE

- Peter was ready to have a double standard.
- In a sense, he thought the pre-civil rights movement standard of "separate but equal" was OK.
- Let's not assume that this was with malicious intent.

TR: He may well have had excuses in his mind that justified this.



Peter & Paul

22

Stop Pretending:
Double standards
are OK.

Stop Excusing:
“It’s too much to expect of them.
This is the pragmatic option.”

He may have thought . . . READ SLIDE

- How could Jews who had always kept themselves separate from Gentiles change?
- “You can’t teach an old dog new tricks, can you?”
- Peter probably could imagine how ugly it was going to get, so the pragmatic, practical solution was just to keep these two groups separate.
- Like seating people at different ends of the room at wedding reception, because it will save a lot of headaches.
- Sure, they were both saved by the blood of Jesus, but that didn’t mean they had to be able to sit down together for a meal,

does it?

22

TR: Many times our psychedelic definitions of love and peace really mess us up . . .



Love DOES NOT . . . READ SLIDE

- Happy, for most people, is comfortable.
- For the strict Jews who had decided to follow Jesus, trusting Him for salvation, that meant separation and honoring their heritage as God's special people.
- For Peter, it meant being a false peacemaker . . . even being hypocritical.
- This is a fool's choice . . . acting like it is up to us to make everyone happy. "If I don't compromise a bit, they'll leave."

TR: What the early church needed, what Peter needed, is what

Paul delivered . . .

23

TRUTH *in*
LOVE

READ SLIDE

TR: Our third story is about . . .



Paul & Corinthians

25

Stop Pretending:

Ongoing sin is
not a big deal.

. . . this same apostle Paul, but this time in relationship with the church he founded in Corinth.

-- This alive and vibrant fellowship was seeking to keep the peace, at least in some matters, by pretending . . . READ SLIDE

TR: We see this in two different ways. First . . .

1 Corinthians 1:10-11

I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, **that all of you agree, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment.** ¹¹For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there is quarreling among you, my brothers.

ESV

26

. . . they seem to like to form into cliques . . . little groups who expressed loyalty to one leader or another, instead of to Jesus.

-- Paul writes . . . READ SLIDE

-- The Apostle doesn't pretend that there are no divisions. He doesn't pretend they are of the same mind and same judgment. He doesn't sweep the quarreling under the rug.

-- Ongoing sin is a big deal, including the sin of divisiveness.

TR: The Church at Corinth was divided, but I think they wanted to be united . . . so they just pretended that ongoing sin wasn't a big deal. A few chapters later . . .

1 Corinthians 5:1-2

It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that is not tolerated even among pagans, for a man has his father's wife.
²And you are arrogant! Ought you not rather to mourn? Let him who has done this be removed from among you.

ESV

27

READ SLIDE

- A man is having an affair with what is likely to be his step mother.
- And, instead of mourning, this church is arrogant and proud of how loving and accepting they are.

TR: I wonder whether they had, what they considered to be, legitimate excuses for this tolerance of sin.



Paul & Corinthians

28

Stop Pretending:

Ongoing sin is
not a big deal.

Stop Excusing:

“I can’t burn that bridge!
They’re family.”

**I’ve seen many a family tolerate sin, being unwilling to carefront,
based on the logic of . . . READ SLIDE**

TR: Our psychedelic twisted notions leads to a fool’s choice . . .



- . . . of putting love and truth in competition with each other.**
- Biblical love does not mean that relationships trump the truth of holiness and righteousness.**
 - “If you love me, you’ll let me” is not a godly sentiment.**
 - “I know what they are doing is wrong, but I’m their spouse, what can I do?”**
 - “I know that what they did was illegal and they’ve confessed and should go to jail. But, they’re my kid, I have to do everything I can to get them out of this jam.”**

TR: What the Corinthians needed was a godly definition of love,

like Paul shared in 1 Cor. 13 (that we looked at last week) 29
What they needed was a solid dose of . . .

TRUTH *in*
LOVE

READ SLIDE

TR: Our fourth story is about . . .



Paul & John Mark

31

Stop Pretending:

. . . the Apostle Paul, his dear friend Barnabas, and Barnabas' young cousin, John Mark (as Colossians 4:10 tells us).

TR: What is modeled for us is that we must stop pretending . . .



Paul & John Mark

32

Stop Pretending:
Performance does not matter;
division is God's plan to multiply.

... READ SLIDE

TR: The bulk of the story's beginning is found in Acts 12-15.

Acts 12:12

When (Peter) realized this, he went to the house of Mary, **the mother of John whose other name was Mark**, where many were gathered together and were praying.

ESV

33

**Peter has been released from prison by an angel of the Lord. After he figures out that it is not just a dream or vision he . . .
READ SLIDE**

TR: A bit later, in the same chapter, we read . . .

And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem when they had completed their service, **bringing with them John, whose other name was Mark.**

ESV

**. . . that Barnabas, the son of encouragement who helped the believers in Jerusalem welcome and accept Paul as a brother in Christ, instead of the vicious persecutor he had been . . .
-- well Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem, after their famine relief journey . . . now back to Antioch . . . bringing with them John Mark.**

TR: This young man seemed to show a lot of promise . . .

Acts 13:4-5

So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus. ⁵When they arrived at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews. **And they had John to assist them.**

ESV

35

**. . . in chapter 13 we read . . . READ SLIDE
-- This was the first missionary journey.**

TR: It all sounds good until they leave the island of Cyprus.

Acts 13:13

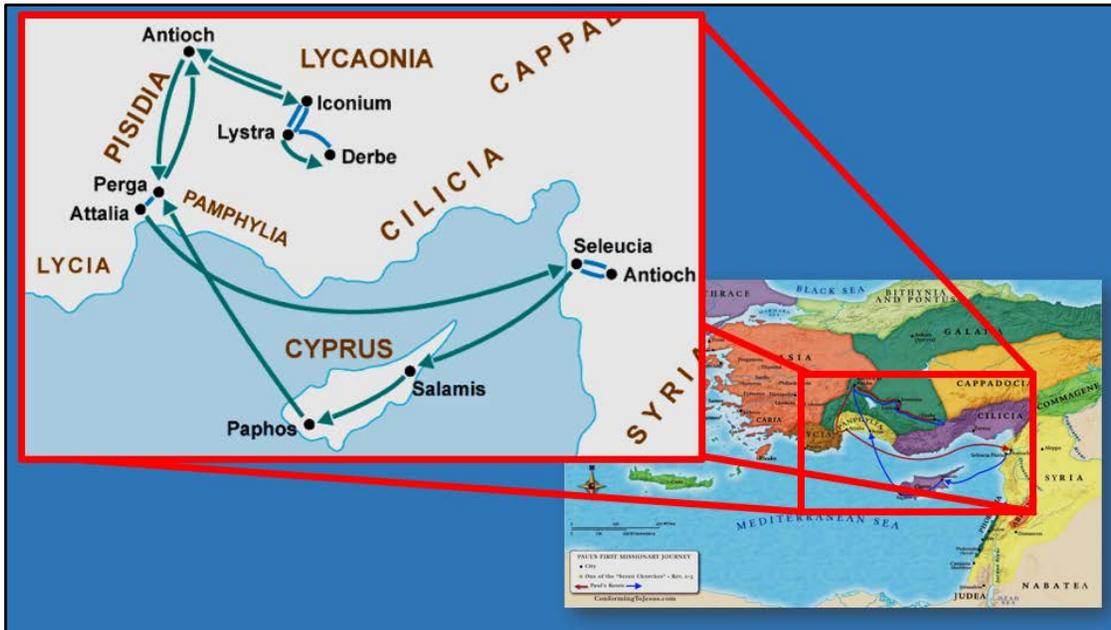
Now Paul and his companions set sail from Paphos and came to Perga in Pamphylia. **And John left them and returned to Jerusalem . . .**

ESV

36

READ SLIDE

TR: Here's a map to give us some geographical perspective.



John Mark is with the team from the Antioch that is in Syria to the island of Cyprus.

-- But, after they hit the mainland again, in what is today southern Turkey, John Mark leaves.

-- We don't know exactly why.

TR: But a few chapters later we see that the Apostle Paul didn't think much of his decision.

Acts 15:36-37

And after some days Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us return and visit the brothers in every city where we proclaimed the word of the Lord, and see how they are." ³⁷**Now Barnabas wanted to take with them John called Mark.**

ESV

38

READ SLIDE

TR: Verse 38

Acts 15:38-39

But Paul thought best not to take with them **one who had withdrawn** from them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the work. ³⁹And there arose **a sharp disagreement**, so that they separated from each other. Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus . . .

ESV

39

READ SLIDE

- I've had respectable Christian leaders hold this up as an example, a model, of Christians disagreeing and then drawing hard boundaries of separation.
- While I agree that this does model **NOT PRETENDING** that performance doesn't matter . . .
- . . . it does **NOT** model that God's plan to multiply Jesus' Church is through division.

TR: Why would Barnabas seemingly pretend that John Mark's withdrawing from the team wasn't a major concern?

Colossians 4:10-11a

Aristarchus my fellow prisoner greets you, **and Mark the cousin of Barnabas (concerning whom you have received instructions—if he comes to you, welcome him),** ¹¹and Jesus who is called Justus.

ESV

40

Perhaps, because Mark was his cousin.

- But this text in Colossians also helps us see things changed.
- The church in Colossae was probably planted on Paul's second missionary journey. This letter seems to date from around AD 62.
- The separation between Paul and Barnabas and John Mark took place probably in about AD 48 or 49.
- That means some 13 or 14 years have passed.
- Paul now tells the church he planted to welcome John Mark.

TR: Yes, there was a division, a separation, between Paul and these two cousins. We don't know too much about the outcome

with Barnabas, but with John Mark we do.

40

Philemon 1:23-24

Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, sends greetings to you, ²⁴and so do **Mark**, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke, **my fellow workers**.

ESV

41

In Paul's brief letter to Philemon, he calls Mark among his fellow workers.

**TR: And in his final letter that we have, of 2 Timothy, we read this
...**

2 Timothy 4:9-11

Do your best to come to me soon.
¹⁰For Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica. Crescens has gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia. ¹¹Luke alone is with me. **Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is very useful to me for ministry.**

ESV

42

READ SLIDE

- It is sad that Demas, who had been called a fellow worker in the letter to Philemon, is now a deserter, in love with this present world.
- But it is a thrill to read that Paul consider Mark VERY USEFUL and that he specifically wants Timothy to bring him along.
- We know from the end of 1 Peter, that Mark was considered as a son to Peter. Many scholars agree that this is the same Mark who writes the Gospel of Mark, under the authority of Peter.

TR: What a model for us!

42



Paul & John Mark

43

Stop Pretending:

Performance does not matter;
division is God's plan to multiply.

Stop Excusing:

"He'll just do it again."

We see portrayed people of God who don't pretend . . . READ SLIDE

-- But we also see that we must stop excusing people's performance failures . . .

-- . . . AND we must not excuse our unwillingness to aim for restoration because we pretend to be God and say, "He'll just do it again!"

TR: Psychedelic love says . . .



. . . accountability doesn't matter.

TR: But, when we do expect accountability for change, we must also give someone the opportunity to be forgiven and then restored. To go from a quitter to someone VERY USEFUL.



TRUTH *in*
LOVE

To do that, we need to interact in our relationships with . . . READ SLIDE

-- We must parent with . . . READ SLIDE

-- We must supervise our employees with . . . READ SLIDE

-- We must build our marriage with . . . READ SLIDE

TR: Last week we talked about the danger of being swindled by accepting knock-offs of love and peace. We do that by pretending we have peace AND excusing our unwillingness to speak the truth in love.

Jesus & Peter **Don't ignore the issue
even if it is painful**

Peter & Paul **Don't have double standards
to "keep the peace"**

Paul & Corinthians **Don't tolerate sin,
even from "family"**

Paul & John Mark **Don't settle for less
than restoration**

Stop Pretending; Stop Excusing

46

Our four stories have taught us . . . READ SLIDE

TR: There are many other excuses we give to not speak the truth in love, to not care-front a broken relationship.

Other Common Excuses:

“It won’t make any difference anyway.”

47

We’ve all heard people, including ourselves, say . . . READ SLIDE -- This excuse says that as long as we think it won’t work, we don’t have the biblical obligation to do what God wants us to do.

TR: Another excuse that sounds OK until we explore it a bit is . . .

Other Common Excuses:

“It won’t make any difference anyway.”

“I don’t really know what to do.”

48

READ SLIDE

- It is fine to say this at the outset of a relational breakdown . . .
- . . . BUT, we have too many resources to continue to use this excuse.

TR: A really challenging excuse is when people say . . .

Other Common Excuses:

“It won’t make any difference anyway.”

“I don’t really know what to do.”

“I just can’t right now . . . I’m too _____.”

49

READ SLIDE

-- I left the end of the quote blank since we can put a lot of different words in there.

-- I’m too . . . busy, tired, overwhelmed, emotionally fragile, hurt, damaged, etc.

-- EX: “I can’t right now.” “When could I call you to see if you are ready?” I call . . . “I still can’t.” . . . I call . . . “I won’t.”

TR: When we pretend and when we excuse ourselves from obedience, we fill the church with disguises . . . people wearing

masks.

49



And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. So it is no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. Their end will correspond to their deeds.

2 Corinthians 11:14-15 ESV

**The scary thing is that is what Satan's servants do.
-- READ SLIDE**

TR: In the end it all becomes clear . . . the pretenders and excusers will be exposed by Jesus' . . .



TRUTH *in*
LOVE

READ SLIDE

- We all have things to learn about speaking the truth in love.
- Pretending that we have a psychedelic love isn't the answer.
- Excusing our lack of obedience to God's revealed truth isn't the way to go.

TR: For me personally, I've been working on applying 2 Timothy 2 to my life . . .

2 Timothy 2:25-26

. . . **correcting his opponents with gentleness.** God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, ²⁶and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will.

ESV

52

READ SLIDE

- Knowing that people are out of their senses,
- knowing that folks may be ensnared and captured by the devil,
- . . . helps me correct them with gentleness.
- These realities could be excuses to not speak the truth, to just pretend that everything is OK . . .
- . . . BUT, God has called us to something high . . . the high road of TRUTH IN LOVE.

TR: At a retreat for pastors a month ago, a brother in Christ prayed for me as I asked for help in becoming a better

peacemaker. He prayed, without pretense or excuse . . .52

**“ . . . help him be as gentle
as possible, but as severe
as necessary.”**

Tom Penner in prayer for Gary deBock

READ SLIDE

- Let's not pretend with are all lovey-dovey.**
- Let's not excuse our unwillingness to speak the truth.**
- Let us take the truly high road . . . the road of truth in love.**