

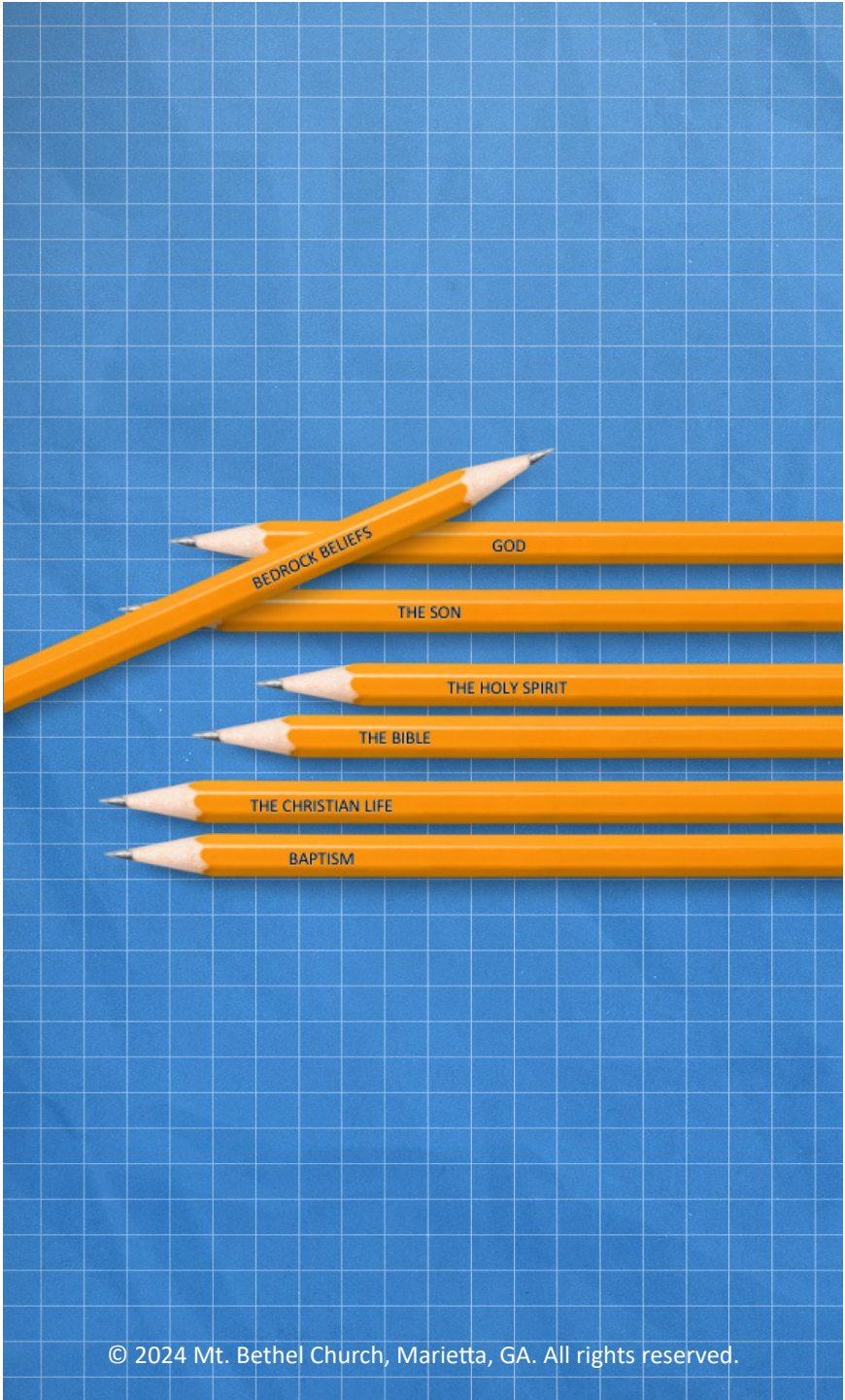
The background is a collage of construction-related items. It features a blue grid paper with faint white lines and circles. Overlaid on this are various pieces of wood, some with blue and white patterned tape, and a wooden ruler. The overall aesthetic is that of a construction site or a workshop.

— A Firm — Foundation

THE MARKS OF DISCIPLESHIP

The logo for Mt Bethel Church, consisting of a stylized white 'MB' monogram above the text 'mt bethel church' in a lowercase, sans-serif font.

mt bethel
church



WEEK 2

Speaking the Truth in Love

By: Dr. John Freeland



"Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ."

(Ephesians 4:15, NIV)

Introduction

In a world cluttered with noise, where opinions clash and discourse often takes a confrontational tone, the call for Christians to speak the truth in love offers hope for family relationships, unity within the Body of Christ, and transformation in the image of Christ. Christian author Timothy Keller said, "The call to speak the truth in love is a divine invitation to participate in the redemptive work of Christ. Our words, seasoned with His love, become instruments of healing and transformation in a broken world." The wonderful news of the Gospel is found in the fact that we are invited to speak the Truth of that Gospel in a lost and dying world. That truth has the power of restoration and redemption.

This week we will explore the relationship between truth and love. It is crucial to acknowledge the relevance of this theme in our contemporary context. In an era marked by digital discourse, polarized opinions, and a myriad of perspectives, speaking the truth in love is not only a timeless biblical command but a timely response to the challenges of our age. Everywhere we go, people are eager and waiting for the truth. Some are

able to hear and receive that truth. Others require more time and that's when love is really needed.

Road trips in the family SUV mark the American way of life. Before the SUV, there was the family station wagon. Many a child sat in the rear facing seat marveling at where they had been with little thought of where they were going. Some Christians attempt to live life this way. Their past lies not in the rearview mirror, but in front of them because they are facing the wrong direction. They are so focused on where they have been and on what they have done they fail to realize what Christ is calling them to be.

The Christian life is not to be lived in isolation looking behind; rather, it's lived within the family of God and is marked by shared experiences, mutual support, and the imperative to grow together in Christ. The urgency of speaking the truth in love is underscored by the Apostle Paul's letter to the Ephesians. The metaphor of the body, intricately interconnected and functioning harmoniously, paints a vivid picture of the transformative potential that lies within truthful and loving proclamation. The Apostle Paul's

words to the Ephesians echo down the corridors of time, urging believers to reflect the very nature of Christ—being truthful, yet tender; honest, yet compassionate.

Timothy Keller also notes, “Truth without love is imperious self-righteousness. Love without truth is cowardly self-indulgence.” Keller articulates the delicate balance that lies at the heart of the Christian life. Engaging the world with the Gospel requires both the firmness of truth and the warmth of love. It’s a delicate balance, a tightrope walk that we must navigate with an emphasis on truth and a practice of Godly love. Jesus met people where they were. Sometimes that meant preaching, sometimes teaching, other times telling parables. Each time Jesus spoke the truth in love. He had every right to judge, instead He died for them. No truth speaks louder or more lovingly than that.

DAY 1 | WEEK 2

The Foundation of Truth in Love

By: Dr. John Freeland

"As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming;¹⁵but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ,¹⁶from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love."

(Ephesians 4:14-16, NIV)

Day 1 | Week 2

The Foundation of Truth in Love

More Than Just Talk

Speaking the truth in love is God's call for every believer. It goes beyond mere communication; it's a call to engage with saints and sinners in a way that reflects the very essence of Christ's teachings. At its core, speaking the truth in love is a commitment to authenticity. It requires believers communicate honestly and transparently, by adhering to the principles of truthfulness found in the Gospel. Yet, the transformative power of this call lies not just in the articulation of truth but in the manner in which it is expressed – with love. This love is not a passive sentiment but an active force, a reflection of the sacrificial and selfless love that Christ exemplified during his earthly ministry.

Engaging with saints and sinners alike demands a conscious effort to emulate Christ's compassion and understanding. It implies a willingness to see beyond the surface, recognizing the inherent worth of each individual, regardless of their spiritual standing. In this way, speaking the truth in love becomes a bridge-building endeavor, fostering connection and understanding rather

than creating divisions. Our call encourages a redemptive approach, acknowledging that every person is in need of truth and love.

In essence, "speaking the truth in love" is a dynamic and continuous process, requiring us to be intentional in our conversations, to embrace humility, and to embody the essence of Christ's teachings in our relationships. By combining truth with love, we can create an atmosphere conducive to growth and transformation, mirroring Christ's grace that invites all to come and be transformed. It serves as a guiding principle for a Christian community that aspires to reflect the transformative love of Christ in a world in need of healing and redemption.

Jesus was highly critical of the Pharisees. He called them hypocrites, and for good reason. Hypocrisy is professing beliefs, feelings, or virtues without personally practicing them. Therefore speaking the truth involves living in accordance with truth. That truth is not arbitrary or dependent on circumstances or ideals. The truth we are called to speak is not just a set of doctrines or principles but embodies the very nature of Christ

Himself. It's a truth that liberates, heals, and transforms lives.

Speaking the truth requires discernment and wisdom. We are called to discern the truth and falsehood, not only in the world but also within ourselves. The truth we speak should be infused with grace and seasoned with wisdom, embodying the very spirit of Christ. The good news is we don't have to guess, reason, or analyze to discover truth. It is plainly found in the Word of God recorded in the Old and New Testaments.

Let Love Be the Framework

In Ephesians 4:15, we are called to speak the truth in love, reminding us that the two are inseparable on the journey toward unity and maturity in Christ. Love is the defining characteristic of the Christian life, and it should permeate every aspect of our interactions including our speech. The Apostle Paul, in 1 Corinthians 13, describes love as patient, kind, and not easily angered. This kind of love seeks the well-being of others and desires their growth in Christ.

The profound connection between love and speaking the truth in love is illuminated by the understanding that love not only dictates the manner in which we speak but serves as the very essence and motivation behind the truth we convey. Speaking the truth in love requires humility and a genuine concern for the spiritual well-being of saints and sinners alike. It's a call to engage in

spiritual conversations with a heart that desires unity, understanding, and growth but refuses to compromise truth. It acts as a guiding force, urging believers to express themselves with empathy, kindness, and a genuine concern for the well-being of others.

Love not only provides the framework or guardrails of how we speak. Love is the driving force behind our commitment to truthfulness. Love compels us to speak the truth not out of a sense of obligation or superiority but as an expression of genuine care and concern. Speaking the truth in love is guided by the life and teachings of Christ, who embodied a love that was unconditional, sacrificial, and transformative. Just as Christ's love prompted him to confront wrongdoing with compassion, believers are called to emulate this love in their communication. In doing so, they contribute to the creation of a community and a world where truth is spoken not as a weapon, but as a catalyst for growth, reconciliation, and the flourishing of individuals and relationships. Love is also the reason we speak the truth. Speaking is the easy part. Many speak like a resounding gong or a clanging symbol, but to speak the truth, and to speak in love, brings unity and growth in the individual Christian, the Church, and the kingdom of God.

The framework of love in communication involves more than just the avoidance of harsh words; it encompasses a deliberate effort to

understand, empathize, and uplift. Love creates an atmosphere of safety and openness, allowing others to receive the truth without feeling attacked or diminished. It encourages a communication style that builds bridges rather than erecting barriers and fosters connections that are rooted in mutual respect and understanding.

It's Time to Grow Up

When we speak the truth seasoned with the love Christ has poured into our hearts, we actively contribute to the unity and growth of the body of Christ, fulfilling our role as members of His transformative and loving community. The measure of our spiritual maturity is not just in what we know but in how we speak the truth in love. Ephesians 4:15 challenges us to grow up in every way into Christ, acknowledging that our words play a crucial role in building a resilient and flourishing community of believers.

Ephesians 4:15 calls us into transformation and spiritual maturity, thus we aspire to grow in every dimension of our lives into the likeness of Christ. Central to this growth is the recognition that our words are not inconsequential, but rather, they wield a profound influence in shaping the character of the community of believers. The verse challenges us to harness the power of our speech as a means to contribute to the discipleship of a resilient and flourishing Christian community.

The call to “grow up in every way into Christ” implies a holistic transformation, transcending mere intellectual understanding and permeating every aspect of our being. This includes the way we communicate. Our words become the building blocks of a mature and thriving community, fostering an environment where grace, love, and truth converge. Acknowledging the weight of our words in this context underscores the responsibility that accompanies our speech.

It prompts believers to engage in intentional communication that reflects the transformative power of the Gospel.

Mature communication is essential for unity within the body of believers. By aligning our words with the character of Christ, we contribute to the cohesion of the community, fostering an atmosphere where people grow in faith together. In essence, Ephesians 4:15 challenges us to view our words not just as expressions of personal opinions but as instruments for building a community that reflects the fullness of Christ's love and wisdom.

Truth and Love are BFFs (best friends forever):

In Ephesians 4:15, the Apostle Paul exhorts believers to go beyond mere words, emphasizing the importance of truthful and loving communication for the unity and growth of the body of Christ. Engaging with both saints and sinners requires a conscious

effort to emulate Christ's compassion and understanding, recognizing that our interactions are opportunities to embody the love of Christ. Paul underscores the transformative power of love-infused truth, fostering genuine connections and facilitating spiritual growth. Moreover, Paul's exhortation implies that this truth-speaking love extends beyond verbal expression; it encompasses our actions, attitudes, and the overall posture of our hearts toward others. In imitating Christ's compassion and understanding, believers are called to manifest a love that goes beyond rhetoric, permeating every aspect of their being.

Love is not only the manner in which we speak but the very essence and motivation behind the truth we convey creating a profound connection between love and truthful communication. Paul underscores the transformative power of love-infused truth, fostering genuine connections and facilitating spiritual growth. We could say, "Truth and love are BFFs." Truth and love are inseparable. They are mutually reinforcing and complementary in the believer's life and interactions with others. In this spiritual union, truth becomes the expression of genuine love, and love finds its authentic manifestation in the truth.

Mature communication is essential for unity and growth within the body of believers. As believers speak the truth in love, they contribute to the building up of the body, ensuring that each member grows into

Christlikeness. Unity in the Spirit is cultivated through honest and caring communication, fostering an environment conducive to spiritual maturity. It is through the intentional practice of truthful and loving communication that the body of Christ becomes a harmonious and thriving community, reflecting the transformative power of Christ's love.

Questions for personal reflection:

1. What changes do you need to make to consciously emulate Christ's compassion and understanding in your interactions with both believers and non-believers?

2. In what ways do you see the connection between love and truthful communication influencing your relationships today?

3. In what ways are you actively seeking opportunities to embody the love of Christ through your words and actions to foster an environment conducive to spiritual growth?

DAY 2 | WEEK 2

Cultivating Virtuous Thoughts

By: Dr. John Freeland

“Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things.”

(Philippians 4:8, NIV)

Day 2 | Week 2

Cultivating Virtuous Thoughts

I Know It. I Believe It. I Will Live It!

In the trenches of daily life, our thoughts matter, so aligning our minds with the truth ensures our lives reflect Christ. Philippians 4:8 provided the believers in Philippi with a powerful prescription for a Christ-centered mindset. This verse offers a way of thinking and living that reflect the transformative power of God's truth and love. This passage serves as a profound guide for those seeking to speak the truth in love, for what dwells in the heart and mind is inevitably expressed through our words and actions. King David knew it (Psalms 5:9; 17:10). King Solomon knew it (Proverbs 15:28; 16:23). King Jesus knew it too (Luke 6:45). What is in your heart will eventually come out your mouth. Before we speak the truth in love, we must fill our hearts with truth.

Elisabeth Elliot said, "In contemplating whatever is true, honorable, and just, we find the divine palette for painting a world infused with the colors of God's truth and love. Let our words be the brushstrokes that bring this masterpiece to life." The call to contemplate whatever is true, honorable, and just is an invitation

to align one's mind and heart with the divine standards set forth in Scripture. It encourages believers to filter their thoughts through the lens of God's eternal truth which produces a mindset that seeks authenticity, integrity, and righteousness. This contemplation becomes the foundation upon which a life of purpose and moral clarity is built.

The essence of this statement lies in the transformative power of intentional thought and mindfulness, urging individuals to shape their perceptions and expressions based on these virtuous principles. We have been given the power to bring to life God's order and beauty, as each conversation and expression becomes an opportunity to contribute to the re-creation of a world adorned with truth and love. In doing so, believers become not just conveyors of divine principles but active participants in the ongoing process of shaping a reality that reflects the very nature of God's character and kingdom.

Whatever is True

Paul begins by urging believers to fix their minds on whatever is true. In a world filled with conflicting ideologies and subjective truths, the call to focus on absolute truth is foundational. It is easy for us to think that Jesus lived in a simpler time when the tablets were made of stone, not microchips and the greatest technological advancements were imported from Rome. They may not have had the distractions of our advanced technology back then, but they battled hundreds of competing voices from paganism to oppressive governance to stoic philosophies. As we navigate the complexities of our time, our words gain potency when anchored in the unwavering truth of God's Word. To speak the truth in love requires a commitment to honesty, transparency, and an unwavering allegiance to the divine truths revealed in Scripture.

Whatever is Honorable

The pursuit of honor is an essential aspect of speaking the truth in love. Our words are to be clothed in dignity and respect, treating others with the esteem that reflects their intrinsic value. Speaking the truth in love is marked by humility and a genuine acknowledgment of God's love for those with whom we engage. Those whom God loves are worthy of some measure of honor if for no other reason than God loves them. They may have done dishonorable things in their past or even their present, but God loves

them. Speaking the truth in love lifts up rather than tears down. The truth may still hurt, but those hearing that truth will also experience love. Where there is love, there is hope, so even a hurtful truth can bring Christ-like transformation when spoken in love.

Whatever is Just

In the absence of truth spoken in love, injustice takes root and flourishes. As ambassadors of Christ, we are entrusted with the responsibility to echo His commitment to justice through our words. Genuine love compels the articulation of truth, dismantling the foundations of injustice. By speaking the truth in love, we become advocates for equity and fairness, mirroring Christ's unwavering dedication to justice. In this way, our words become instruments of transformation, challenging the prevailing injustices and paving the way for a world shaped by the righteousness and compassion exemplified by the teachings of Christ.

Whatever is Pure

Our thoughts and intentions shape our words, and a pure heart is more likely to produce words that are untainted by malice or impure thoughts. The pursuit of purity is a spiritual journey marked by surrender to the refining work of the Holy Spirit. It entails yielding to His transformative influence, allowing the cleansing of our hearts. As the

Holy Spirit purifies our innermost being, our words naturally flow from a wellspring of divine purity. This intentional alignment with the Spirit's sanctifying power ensures that our speech reflects the clarity and goodness found in God's purity, fostering an atmosphere of grace and authenticity in our interactions with others.

Whatever is Lovely and Commendable

Adorning our words with grace, kindness, and a profound recognition of God's inherent goodness reflects the essence of loving speech. Such communication appreciates and celebrates the diversity and uniqueness present in God's handiwork. By embracing a language that echoes the beauty of God's creation, our words become a source of encouragement and edification. Loving speech recognizes the intrinsic worth of individuals, fosters an atmosphere of acceptance and understanding, and mirrors the divine love that appreciates and celebrates the richness and beauty found in the diversity of mankind, promoting unity and harmony.

Change Your Thoughts. Change Your World

Philippians 4:8 serves as a timeless guide for those aspiring to speak the truth in love. It outlines a mindset that transforms the way we think, speak, and live. In a world saturated with noise and craving authenticity, the act of speaking the truth in

love becomes a revolutionary and transformative endeavor. It transcends the mundane and becomes a way for God's Word to infiltrate earthly conversations. This deliberate choice to speak the truth in love is not just a personal virtue but a profound responsibility.

Cultivating a thought life steeped in the beauty of God's truth and love is an intentional process, requiring diligence and mindfulness. It's a commitment to align one's inner dialogue with the eternal principles laid out in Scripture. By doing so, we prepare ourselves to be vessels of truth and love in a world often characterized by falsehood and division.

The aspiration is not merely personal; it extends outward to impact others. Words, when rooted in the authenticity of divine truth and love, become sources of inspiration and encouragement. They possess the power to uplift weary hearts, challenge misconceptions, and foster an environment conducive to growth and unity. Ultimately, the goal is to bring glory to Jesus Christ, the embodiment of truth and love. In speaking the truth in love, believers emulate the very character of their Savior, contributing to a cultural shift where authenticity, compassion, and divine principles prevail in conversations, thereby creating a glimpse of heaven on earth.

Questions for personal reflection:

1. How are you intentionally aligning your thoughts with the divine standards set forth in Philippians 4:8?

2. As the Holy Spirit purifies your innermost being, how are you witnessing a transformation in the way your words flow from a wellspring of divine purity?

3. In what areas of your life do you sense the Holy Spirit working to bring about greater alignment between your thoughts and God's truth?

DAY 3 | WEEK 2

Honesty and Truthfulness

By: Dr. John Freeland

*He who speaks truth tells what is right, but a false witness, deceit.
There is one who speaks rashly like the thrusts of a sword, but the
tongue of the wise brings healing.*

(Proverbs 12:17-18, NIV)

Day 3 | Week 2

Honesty and Truthfulness

In Proverbs 12, we discover the role of honesty and truthfulness in our speech and how deceit impacts relationships. These verses guide us to explore being honest and truthful in our relationships. In the Book of Proverbs, wisdom is presented as a guiding light for the righteous path. Proverbs 12:17 captures the essence of truthfulness and its profound impact on our interactions revealing the transformative power of speaking the truth in love, and the contrast it draws with the destructive nature of deceit.

Proverbs 12:17 declares, “An honest witness tells the truth.” Truthfulness is more than conveying accurate information; it’s a moral commitment to authenticity and integrity. To speak the truth in love is to align our words with reality, presenting an honest testimony that reflects the character of God, who is the ultimate source of truth. Furthermore, honesty not only builds trust within relationships but also serves as a foundation for ethical decision-making. It establishes a moral framework that guides individuals to navigate life with transparency and accountability. When we speak the truth in love, we contribute to the cultivation of a community grounded in trust,

fostering an environment where individuals feel safe to be vulnerable and authentic in their interactions.

Timothy Keller said, “In the tapestry of our words, truth is the warp, and love is the weft. Weaving them together, we create a fabric of communication that not only stands strong in honesty but also drapes gently in the warmth of love.” In a world often marred by half-truths, deceptive narratives, and “fake news” the call to speak the truth is a radical commitment to transparency and sincerity. In a world of social media posts and product influencers, transparency and sincerity seem rare and novel. In the Kingdom of God, where words have power to change lives, our words, when rooted in truth and draped gently in the warmth of love, become a testimony that bears witness to the righteousness and reliability of God.

Everywhere. Everyone. Every Day

The phrase “an honest witness” in Proverbs 12:17 evokes the imagery of a courtroom. Truthful speech acts as a credible witness, providing evidence that stands up to scrutiny. Just as a reliable witness is essential for justice in legal matters, your commitment to speaking the truth in love is vital for the health of your relationship with God, with others, and even with yourself. In the courtroom of life, truthful speech not only upholds the principles of justice but also becomes the cornerstone of a trustworthy character. Just as a reliable witness is indispensable in legal matters, your dedication to speaking the truth in love is instrumental in fostering a foundation of integrity, reinforcing the authenticity of your relationship with God, others, and yourself.

Words carry weight, and when we speak the truth, we contribute to an atmosphere of trust. Honest evidence in our speech builds a foundation for genuine connections and fosters relationships characterized by openness and authenticity. Speaking the truth in love is not just about relationships. It is also about the Gospel. Speaking the truth in love, by its very nature, calls us to proclaim the good news of Jesus not only to our friends, family, and neighbors, but to the stranger. We are not only called to witness in the “courtrooms” of our everyday lives. We are called to witness in the everywhere to the everyone of the everyday life.

Liar, Liar, Pants on Fire!

The second part of Proverbs 12:17 draws a stark contrast with truthfulness, stating, “but a false witness tells lies.” A lie is the antithesis of truth; it involves the intentional distortion of reality for personal gain or to mislead others. A false witness undermines the very fabric of trust, sowing seeds of discord and confusion. Deception, the opposite of truth, not only distorts reality but also erodes the foundations of trust within relationships and communities. A false witness not only misguides others but also undermines the moral integrity essential for fostering genuine connections and cooperation.

A lie not only harms others but also erodes the character of the one telling the lie. It introduces a corrosive element into relationships and leaves a trail of broken trust and fractured connections and complicates the relationship with the potential for unforgiveness. One deception leads to another creating a web of deceit. Soon “fudging the truth” becomes a “bucket of lies” that is impossible to manage. In contrast, speaking the truth in love builds bridges of understanding and fosters an environment where relationships can flourish and the Gospel can prevail.

A Kind Word is Like Honey (Proverbs 16:24)

Speaking the truth in love is not about blunt honesty that disregards the feelings of others; rather, it is a thoughtful and considerate word that seeks the well-being of the hearer. Love tempers our words, ensuring that they are not only accurate but also spoken with kindness, grace, and a genuine concern for the other person. Charles Stanley said, “The power of our words lies not just in their accuracy but in their ability to heal, uplift, and build. Speaking the truth in love is not a skill; it’s a sanctified expression of our commitment to Christlikeness.”

Speaking the truth in love requires a conscientious effort to honestly speak in a way that meets the specific needs and sensitivities of the listener. The Apostle Paul, in Ephesians 4:29, reinforces this idea, urging believers to let no unwholesome talk come out of their mouths but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs. Thus, the sanctified expression of truth in love goes beyond a mere articulation of facts; it encompasses an empathetic awareness of the emotional landscape of those with whom we engage. In this way, love becomes the guiding force that shapes not only the content but also the delivery of our words, fostering an environment where truth is not only heard but received with openness and a spirit of mutual growth.

You’re One Decision Away From a Totally Different Life

The transformative power of speaking the truth in love extends beyond individual interactions. In families, communities, and societies, truthful and loving communication becomes a catalyst for positive change. It creates a culture of honesty, fosters understanding, and builds bridges of reconciliation. Speaking the truth in love has the transformative power to mend broken relationships, bridge divides, and cultivate environments where individuals feel heard and valued.

Our commitment to speaking the truth in love aligns with the transformative work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. As we yield to His guidance, our words become vessels of His grace and instruments of His love in a world hungry for authenticity and connection. The transformative work of the Holy Spirit in our lives extends beyond personal growth to influence our interactions with others. When we yield to His guidance, our words are infused with a divine wisdom that surpasses human understanding. Surrender to the Holy Spirit is vitally important as He empowers us to communicate not merely as individuals but as conduits of God’s love and grace. In speaking the truth in love, we participate in the Spirit’s mission to draw people closer to the heart of God, fostering an environment where authenticity and genuine connection flourish.

Conduits of Grace

In Proverbs 12:17-18, we find a timeless wisdom that speaks to the essence of honest communication and the transformative power of speaking the truth in love. The biblical text underscores the significance of being an honest witness, akin to presenting reliable evidence in a courtroom. This principle extends beyond legal matters, emphasizing the foundational role of truthfulness in our relationships with God and others. When our words align with the truth, they become a testimony to the integrity and authenticity that God desires in His people.

The contrast between honesty and deceit in Proverbs 12:17-18 highlights the destructive nature of falsehood. Deceitful speech not only distorts reality but also undermines the fabric of trust, leading to discord and confusion. The stark difference between truthful and deceitful communication serves as a profound reminder of the moral choices embedded in our words. In a world that often grapples with the consequences of misinformation and dishonesty, God's Word encourages believers to uphold the sanctity of truth, recognizing its power to build, uplift, and heal.

The transformative power of speaking the truth in love emerges as a central theme, reflecting the biblical understanding that our words are not mere expressions but conduits of divine grace. When infused with love, our communication becomes a reflection of the transformative work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. It goes beyond words and considers the emotional and spiritual well-being of the hearer and fosters connections that are rooted in kindness and genuine concern. Ultimately, Proverbs 12:17-18 calls believers to embrace speech that mirrors the commitment to Christlikeness, allowing our words to be vessels of truth and instruments of love in a world yearning for authenticity and connection.

Questions for personal reflection:

1. In what ways does your dedication to speaking the truth in love serve as a witness to your commitment to integrity, not only in legal matters but also in your relationship with God, others, and yourself, as emphasized in Proverbs 12:17-18?

2. What practices do you need to undertake to surrender to the Holy Spirit and allow Him to empower you not just as an individual but as a conduit of God's love and grace?

3. In what areas of your life and relationships do you need to invite the Holy Spirit to work more actively in guiding your words and actions as expressions of God's love?

DAY 4 | WEEK 2

Seasoned with Salt

By: Dr. John Freeland

“Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person.”

(Colossians 4:6, NIV)

Day 4 | Week 2

Seasoned with Salt

Everyday Grace

In Colossians Paul provides practical advice regarding the fellowship of the body of Christ in Colossi by saying our speech to fellow believers in Christ should be gracious, seasoned with salt. What does it mean to maintain grace in our everyday life? Timothy Keller said, “Speaking the truth in love is not just a skill; it’s a sacred dance between grace and honesty.” Colossians 4:6 encourages us to move with the rhythm of the Holy Spirit, creating a symphony of words that resonate with the melody of Christ’s love. It is a call to embody the grace of Christ by speaking the truth in love.

Wrapped in Kindness

The opening words of Colossians 4:6 set the tone for Christlike speech: “Let your speech always be with grace.” The word the NIV translates as “gracious” means “brings joy, pleasure, delight, sweetness, and loveliness.” Gracious speech is captivating. It draws people in. It makes them want more. Basically, gracious speech reflects the heart of Christ, whose words were always marked by love and compassion.

Maybe you know someone who speaks the truth, but they lack grace and love in their speaking. In such a case, the truth can be muffled by the lack of love and grace. Gracious speech doesn’t merely convey information; it wraps the truth in a cloak of kindness, making it more palatable and inviting to those who hear. But, it is not only palatable, it is honest and it hits the mark and with force.

Seasoned with Salt (and occasionally pepper)

In biblical times, salt was not only a preservative but also a symbol of purity and flavor enhancement. There are many qualities and flavors of salt. Fleur de Sel is one of the most flavorful salts in the world. It is also one of the most expensive, because it is harvested from naturally occurring salt pans by carefully skimming the salt from the surface of the water by hand. When our speech is seasoned with salt, it carries the qualities of preservation, purity, and a delightful savor. So imagine if your conversations and preaching were conducted as carefully as hand-skimming salt from the surface of a tidal pool.

To season our speech with salt means infusing it with wisdom, prudence, and a genuine understanding of the needs of our audience. It involves considering the impact of our words and ensuring that they contribute to the preservation of relationships, the purity of truth, and the enhancement of the message. The truth should be told, and speaking the truth in love means speaking that truth in a graceful way in careful and prayerful consideration of the receiver.

Paul concludes the verse with a practical implication of gracious and seasoned speech: “so that you will know how you should respond to each person.” Every person is unique, with distinct tastes, concerns, and questions. The call to know how to answer each person encourages us to be attentive listeners, discerning in our responses, and considerate of the specific needs of those we engage. This also means we are even more attentive to the voice and guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Gracious speech is not a compromise of truth; rather, it is a manifestation of love through communication. As followers of Christ, our words should reflect the truth of God’s Word, but they should also be infused with the love and grace demonstrated by Jesus Himself. How did Jesus speak the truth in love? He taught, He preached, He conversed, He told parables, and in the case of the Scribes and Pharisees, He confronted them with the brutal reality of their sin. He knew His audience. He understood their need

for truth, and He knew how to give it to them in a way they could receive it. He understood the disciples were growing in faith, the crowds were driven by curiosity and need, and the Scribes and Pharisees were greedy and afraid of losing power. Some people need a little salt, like the disciples, some need a lot of salt, like the crown, others, those who are of the kingdom of darkness, need a lot of pepper, like the Scribes and Pharisees.

Cultivating Gracious Speech

Cultivating gracious speech requires a heart transformed by the spirit of God. It involves a deliberate choice to align our words with the redemptive and healing power of the Gospel. Here are a few practical ways to cultivate gracious speech:

Prayerful Consideration: Before speaking, take a moment to pray for wisdom and guidance. Ask the Holy Spirit to govern your words and to help you communicate with grace and love.

Active Listening: First and foremost, listen to the Holy Spirit, then practice active listening to understand the perspectives and concerns of others. This enables you to respond with words that are filled with the power of the Holy Spirit.

Take a breath: Don’t be in a hurry to respond. Give yourself time to think and hear from the Holy Spirit. Several times in John 14, 15, and 16 Jesus referred to the Holy Spirit as

“The Helper.” This reminds us that the Holy Spirit teaches us all things and reminds us of everything Jesus said to us (John 14:26). Being On Mission becomes a joyous and effective time of ministry when we allow the Holy Spirit to speak through us.

Words of Encouragement: Look for opportunities to speak words of encouragement and affirmation. Gracious speech not only refrains from harmful words but seeks to build up and edify. Edification inside and outside the body of Christ is an integral part of gracious speech.

Reflecting Christ’s Character: Keep in mind the example of Jesus Christ, who spoke with authority but also demonstrated unmatched compassion. Let His character shape your speech.

The Truth Can be Hard

Colossians 4:6 invites us to mirror the grace and love of Christ. As we navigate the complexities of relationships and engage with diverse individuals, may our speech always be gracious and seasoned with salt. In doing so, we become ambassadors of Christ’s saving grace, creating a space where truth and love converge in a beautiful harmony.

Colossians 4:6 further enriches the wisdom of truthful and loving communication by urging believers to let their speech be always gracious, seasoned with salt. This metaphorical use of salt implies not only a

preserving quality but also a flavor-enhancing aspect.

In the context of communication, gracious speech preserves the integrity of our message while adding a flavorful touch that makes it palatable to others. Sometimes the truth is hard, as was the case with the Scribes and Pharisees. Speaking the truth in love isn’t always pleasant, but it must always be spoken in love.

Cultivating gracious speech involves listening to and following the Holy Spirit while striving to communicate in a way that reflects the love and grace we have received from God. By seasoning our speech with salt, and on occasion pepper, believers engage in conversations with unbelievers that are not only truthful but also inviting and uplifting. This scriptural guidance serves as a practical blueprint for navigating the complexities of human interaction, encouraging believers to be mindful of the seasoning they bring to their words and ensuring that their communication is a reflection of the Christlike character they seek to embody.

Questions for personal reflection:

1. Reflecting on the idea that speaking the truth in love involves considering the welfare of others and respecting their dignity, how can you actively prioritize the well-being and dignity of the “Scribes and Pharisees” in your life?

2. Considering the guidance of God’s Holy Spirit in speaking the truth in love, how do you currently seek and follow the Holy Spirit’s direction in your communication?

3. How does the understanding that being On Mission can be “a joyous and effective time of ministry when we allow the Holy Spirit to speak through us,” shape your perspective on the role of the Holy Spirit when speaking the truth in love?

DAY 5 | WEEK 2

Truth as the Core

By: Dr. John Freeland

"I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me."

(John 14:6)

Day 5 | Week 2

Truth as the Core

Truth is Urgent

Jesus's statement in John 14:6 was an "in your face" Gospel proclamation of the essence of His mission and the foundational truth of the Christian faith. As we explore this verse in the context of speaking the truth in love, we discover that Jesus not only embodies the truth but also calls us to convey this truth with a spirit of urgency.

In a world where relativism and pluralism attempt to dilute the concept of absolute truth, Jesus boldly asserts that He is the exclusive path to the Father. As believers, our preaching of the truth should reflect the clarity and conviction that Jesus is "the way, and the truth, and the life." Speaking the truth in love does not negate the exclusivity of Jesus as the way to salvation; rather, it invites us to convey this truth with a heartfelt desire for others to experience the same transformative grace we have received.

I Am

When Jesus said, "I Am," it harkened back to the voice of God speaking to Moses from the burning bush (Exo 3). For many who heard Jesus make this statement, it was appalling. No mere mortal should speak in such a way. Jesus is no mere mortal. He is the Son of God. He is Truth. Jesus's declaration of "I Am" not only echoed the divine revelation to Moses but also shattered conventional expectations, affirming His divine nature. The discomfort some felt at His words was rooted in the profound reality that Jesus, as the Son of God, transcends human limitations, embodying the essence of eternal truth and divinity.

The Way

Jesus is 'the way' implies more than a set of directions; it signifies a journey, a relationship, and a life transformed by the guidance of Christ. Jesus remains the singular, unerring route to reconciliation with the Father. This proclamation challenges us not merely to follow a roadmap but to embark on a profound journey of faith, surrendering to Christ's transformative influence. It beckons us into a relationship where our

lives find purpose and meaning in alignment with the teachings of Jesus. Jesus as 'the way' becomes our constant guide, offering not only direction but also a deep relationship with the Father and a transformative path towards abundant life.

When we speak the truth about Jesus being the way, it is an invitation to a life-altering journey, where the lost find direction, the broken discover healing, and the searching discover life. This truth about Jesus as the way beckons all the world into a transformative journey that transcends mere navigation—it is an odyssey of profound spiritual significance. In embracing Jesus as the way, the lost not only find direction but also encounter the Shepherd who tenderly leads them home. The broken, upon recognizing Jesus is the way, experience healing that goes beyond physical restoration, touching the depths of the soul and offering genuine wholeness.

The Truth

In a world shrouded in deceit and subjective realities, Jesus stands as the embodiment of absolute truth. His teachings, His life, and His sacrificial death and resurrection reveal the divine truth that overcome falsehood. Amidst the confusion of misinformation and shifting perspectives, Jesus stands as the unchanging benchmark of absolute truth, offering a firm foundation that transcends the uncertainties of human understanding. His life,

teachings, and redemptive work on the cross reveal the way to a truth that brings clarity, purpose, and eternal significance to our existence.

Speaking the truth in love involves not only proclaiming the truth about Jesus but also embodying His truth in our lives. As ambassadors of Christ, our words should resonate with the authenticity and reliability found in the person of Jesus, while our lives bear witness to the transformative power of the truth we proclaim.

The Life

Jesus offers the essence of true life. His life is not a mere existence but a quality of being that transcends the limitations of earthly circumstances. It is an abundant and eternal life that originates in relationship with the living God through His Son Jesus. This profound truth challenges us to reassess our understanding of life, urging us to move beyond the superficial aspects of mere survival. In embracing Jesus as the source of true life, we recognize that genuine living is intricately tied to our connection with Him. Speaking the truth in love we extend this invitation to true life to all, emphasizing Jesus died for humanity.

Speaking the truth in love invites others into the fullness of life found only in Jesus. It is a compassionate call to lay down the burdens of sin and brokenness and embrace the life-transforming power of the Gospel. As we proclaim the gospel, we participate in God's redemptive

work, providing a pathway for others to experience the liberating and abundant life available in Christ. This call echoes Jesus' own words in John 14:6, affirming that He is not only the way to eternal life but also the conduit through which we find fullness of life in the present. When we speak the truth in love, we extend a gracious hand to those burdened by the challenges of life, pointing them to the salvation found only through faith in Jesus.

No One Comes to the Father Except Through Me

This proclamation is the culmination of Jesus' exclusive claim. It clarifies that access to the Father, the source of all life and truth, is uniquely through Him. Speaking the truth in love, in the light of this statement, involves a solemn responsibility and a compassionate urgency. It beckons us to proclaim the profound awareness of the eternal stakes involved, recognizing that our words have the potential to guide others toward the exclusive path of reconciliation with God. Jesus' claim challenges us to examine the foundation of our beliefs and the sincerity of our love for others. It prompts us to engage in conversations that prioritize truth without compromising the essential element of love, thus reflecting the very character of Christ.

Proclaiming the Gospel is not an arbitrary imposition of beliefs but a declaration of the only means by which humanity can be reconciled with God. It is an expression of love

that desires the salvation and eternal well-being of others. Speaking the truth means our words are infused with the love that compelled Jesus to offer Himself as the way, the truth, and the life. This truth, communicated with love, serves as a lifeline for those seeking purpose and connection with God. Proclaiming the Gospel becomes an act of love and a gracious invitation for others to partake of salvation through faith. As we speak the truth in love, we embody the redemptive message of Jesus, inviting others to experience the profound reality of life in Him.

Salt and Pepper

In the context of John 14:6, speaking the truth in love is an invitation extended with a heart full of compassion. It is a recognition of the profound reality that Jesus is the exclusive path to salvation, and yet, it is conveyed with a deep desire for others to encounter the love, grace, and life found in Him. As we proclaim our faith, may our words be seasoned with the salt (and pepper) of love, preserving the integrity of the truth we convey. May we reflect the compassionate spirit of Christ, who came not to condemn the world but to offer it the way, the truth, and the life.

John 14:6 reminds us that speaking the truth in love is not an intellectual exercise; it is a declaration of the life-altering, soul-saving reality found in Jesus Christ. Speaking the truth in love we point others to the exclusive and inclusive invitation of

Christ: “Come to the Father through me and experience the fullness of life.” In the profound declaration “I Am the Way, the Truth, and the Life; no one comes to the Father except through me,” Jesus captures the essence of both divine exclusivity and inclusivity. It is an unequivocal affirmation of His unique role as the exclusive avenue to the Father, emphasizing the necessity of a personal relationship with Him for eternal life. Simultaneously, this statement embodies inclusivity by extending an open invitation to all who are willing to come through Him, transcending cultural, social, and individual barriers.

The multifaceted nature of Jesus as the Way, the Truth, and the Life underscores the holistic transformation that occurs when one embraces Him. Beyond being a guide or source of knowledge, Jesus is the very path to the Father, the embodiment of divine truth, and the source of abundant life. By speaking the truth in love we point others not merely to a set of beliefs but to a dynamic, life-altering relationship with the living Christ. Love is the core that reflects the very nature of God revealed in Jesus – a love that redeems, restores, and invites all to experience the fullness of life through Him.

Questions for personal reflection:

1. List some things you can do to help you know when to season the truth with salt and when to season it with pepper.
2. How do Jesus’s life, teachings, and redemptive work on the cross reveal the way to a truth that brings clarity, purpose, and eternal significance to your existence?
3. Speaking the truth in love is emphasized in the context of Jesus’s statement that “no one comes to the Father except through me.” In what ways can you approach the responsibility and urgency of proclaiming this truth, recognizing the eternal stakes involved?

Conclusion:

In Ephesians 4:15, the Apostle Paul calls us to engage in the dynamic and continuous process of speaking the truth in love. This call goes beyond mere verbal expression; it encompasses intentional conversations that embrace humility and embody the essence of Christ's teachings in our relationships. The urgency of truth is emphasized, urging us to recognize that the time to speak truthfully and lovingly is always now.

"Salt and Pepper" illustrates the transformative impact of our words in the Christian community and the world alike. Our words season conversations, making them palatable, enriching, and transformative. Just as salt and pepper enhance the flavor of a dish, speaking the truth in love, when seasoned with grace and compassion, enhance the quality of our interactions and relationships.

Aligning our minds and hearts with divine standards set forth in Scripture becomes the foundation for speaking the truth in love. This encourages us to filter our thoughts through the lens of God's eternal truth, cultivating a mindset that seeks authenticity, integrity, and righteousness. This alignment serves as a guide as we navigate conversations, ensuring our words are rooted in God's truth.

Loving speech, as emphasized in Ephesians 4:15, recognizes the intrinsic worth God places on all people, fosters an atmosphere of acceptance and understanding, and mirrors the divine love that appreciates and celebrates the richness found in the diversity of mankind, thus promoting unity and harmony within the community of believers and creating an environment where grace, love, and truth converge.

Speaking the truth in love is not about making pleasant conversation. Speaking the truth in love is our call to proclaim the good news of eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ. When we speak the truth in love we help guide others toward the Way, the Truth, and the Life, the exclusive path of reconciliation with God. By speaking the truth in love we participate in the mission of God led by the Holy Spirit to pull people out of darkness and draw them closer to the heart of God. Nothing could be more loving than that.



OUR MISSION

To lead people to trade the pursuit of more
for a life worth pursuing in Jesus Christ.



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