

# UNTO THE LORD FAST

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DAY FIVE

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**What does it mean to speak the truth in love? The Bible states in Ephesians 4:15 (NIV), "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."**

**Christians often talk about the need to "speak the truth in love," the command found in Ephesians 4:15. Many times what they mean is the need to share difficult truths in a gentle, kind, and inoffensive manner. From a practical standpoint, we know that difficult things are best heard when our defenses are not up. In a loving, non-threatening environment, hard truths are more readily received. It is Biblical to share hard truths with others in a loving way and in the manner that the phrase "in love" is meant to be used. Looking at the context of Ephesians 4:15, however, gives us deeper insight into what it means to speak the truth in love.**

**In the verses prior to verse 15, Paul writes about unity in the body of Christ. He urges the Ephesians, and all Christians by extension, to "live a life worthy of the calling you have received" (Ephesians 4:1 NIV). He describes this life as one in which we are humble, gentle, patient, bearing with one another in love, and making efforts toward unity. Paul reminds his readers that we all serve the same Lord and are all part of the same body. He talks about Christ giving the gift of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers "to equip His people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God, and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ" (vv.12-13 NIV).**

**Having reached maturity, we will not be spiritual infants, easily deceived and tossed to and fro "by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming" (Ephesians 4:14 NIV).**

**In this context of church unity and spiritual maturity Paul writes, "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). Rather than be spiritually immature and easily deceived, we are to speak the truth to one another, with love, so that we all can grow in maturity. We are to train one another in these truths: the foundational gospel truths, truths about who God is and what He has called us to do, hard truths of correction, etc. – and our motivation to do so is love.**

**The "love" referred to in verse 15 is agape love, which is a self-sacrificial love that works for the benefit of the loved one. We speak the truth in order to build up. Several verses later Paul writes, "Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen" (Ephesians 4:29 NIV).**

**Our words should be beneficial to the hearers of the words. We should speak truth in love.**

**Paul also counsels in Ephesians 4:22–25 "to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitudes of your minds, and to put on the new self, created to be like God, in true righteousness and holiness. Therefore, each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body" (NIV).**

**As members of the same body, we should not deceive one another. We cannot defraud each other through lies, nor should we attempt to hide things about ourselves out of shame or to manage our images. Rather, as those who are part of the same body, intended for the same purpose, and united by the same love, we should be characterized by honesty. Those who love must speak the truth – love rejoices with the truth (1 Corinthians 13:6). Dishonesty is unloving and abusive.**

**Speaking the truth in love is not as much about having a gentle demeanor as it is about the way truth and love go hand-in-hand. Because we love one another, we must speak the truth. Because we know the truth, we must be people characterized by love (John 13:34–35;15:1–17). Jesus came from the Father, full of grace and truth. As His followers who are being conformed to His image (Romans 8:29), we should also be characterized by grace and truth.**

**Importantly, we are also called to love those who do not know Christ. The best way we can show love is to share with them the truth of the gospel. Apart from Christ, people are dead in their sins and are destined for an eternity in hell (John 3:16–18; Romans 6:23). But, in Christ they can receive new life and eternal salvation (Romans 10:9–15; 2 Corinthians 5:17). This is a message we must share.**

**In 1 Peter 3:15 (NIV), Peter wrote "In your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect." We share the gospel because we love the people for whom Christ died. We speak God's truth because of His love, and we speak in a way that clearly and unapologetically communicates both truth and love (1 John 4:10–12 NIV).**

**There are times to be silent and listen and learn, and there are times to speak the truth with wisdom and love with the Holy Spirit's guidance. It's a hard balance to speak with both truth and love because we tend toward one extreme or the other. We want to share God's truth with others but sometimes we do so without speaking in love, which only pushes people away from us and from God. Sometimes, we want to be perceived as nice, so we offer words of grace and encouragement, and avoid speaking words of truth that might cause division.**

**Scripture offers hundreds of verses and passages that show the power of our words. I have chosen seven of them to use as a springboard to pray for wisdom and courage to speak God's truth to others.**

1. **Exodus 4:10–12 (NIV)** “Moses said to the Lord, ‘Pardon your servant, I have never been eloquent, neither in the past or since You have spoken to Your servant. I am slow of speech and tongue.’ The Lord said to him, ‘Who gave human beings their mouths? Who makes them deaf or mute? Who gives them sight or makes them blind? Is it not I, the Lord? Now go, I will help you to speak and I will teach you what to say.’”

**Thank God, He gave us our mouths. No matter what insecurities we may have about speaking to others, He will equip us.**

2. **1 Corinthians 1:5 (NIV)** "For in Him you have been enriched in every way – with all kinds of speech and with all knowledge."

**Thank God that He has and will equip you with all you need to share His words.**

3. **John 1:14 (NIV)** "The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us. We have seen His glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth."

4. **Psalm 107:2 (NLT)** "Has the Lord redeemed you? Then speak out! Tell others He has redeemed you from your enemies."

**Pray that you would be able to speak out about God's love and the work He has done in your life.**

5. **Revelation 12:11a (NIV)** "They triumphed over him [Satan] by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony."

**Pray that you would have opportunities to boldly share your stories of how God has worked in your life.**

6. **Ephesians 6:19 (NIV) "Pray also for me, that whenever I speak, words would be given me so that I would fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel."**

**Pray that God would give you the words to speak and the courage to say what He wants you to say.**

7. **Colossians 4:6 (NIV) "Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone."**

**Pray that you would be able to share God's truth with others, with love and grace.**

**Many people today believe that Christianity is just a vague spirit of love and niceness, but this contradicts scripture and history. The apostles and Jesus never hesitated to criticize false teachers and refute their teachings. To always speak the truth in love, as Ephesians 4:15 states, is an often misunderstood and misapplied statement. Many use this verse to argue against criticizing the views of others on the basis that it is unloving. They say that to criticize other Christians is to disrupt the unity of the church and God's people. This grossly misses the point of what it means to speak in love and what it means to live in unity with other Christians.**

**As mentioned earlier, the apostles refuted false teachings. In fact, many of the epistles were written for just this reason to correct false teachings that had infiltrated the church. Not only this, but the whole history of the church has seen many creeds and confessions drafted to lay out clear doctrine, to protect the unity of the church.**

**Because God has revealed the truth about Him and His Son Jesus in the Bible, the church must proclaim the truth and refute all that contradicts God's Word. In order to hold onto something, you must know what it is. The truth here is something that can be defined. Ephesians 4:14 warns against being tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine and verse 15 contrasts by telling us to hold onto the truth.**

**There are certain truths we must hold onto: the authority of scripture, the deity of Christ, the atonement, and justification by faith alone. Creeds and confessions have been written to define and defend these essential truths. They were written to save the church from error.**

**We must hold onto the truth, but we must do so in love. This means:**

- 1. Watching our spirit, especially toward other believers.**
- 2. Not being rigid, legalistic, intolerant, or argumentative.**
- 3. Having a desire to persuade and win others; not just to prove them wrong.**
- 4. Approaching others with humility; recognizing our own fallibility.**
- 5. Starting out by explaining the truth; not by attacking others.**
- 6. Having sympathy and compassion for those in error.**
- 7. Not compromising the truth but holding it in love. Love means desiring the best for others.**
- 8. Paul's letter to the Galatians shows this approach in practice. He rebuked them strongly for their error but did so out of love for them.**

**In conclusion, we must strive to always walk in love toward one another, while holding to the truth of the Word of God. Second Timothy 2:24-26 says, "The Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful.**

**Opponents must be gently instructed, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will." (NIV)**

**We must let love lead the way. The love that only comes from God can calm any storm, bring peace to any situation, foster forgiveness, and promote reconciliation. Love is the key!!!**