

Small Group Guide: Speaking Truth in Love

Based on "Summer on the Mount" Sermon Series - Matthew 5:33-37

Opening Prayer & Icebreaker (10 minutes)

Icebreaker Question: Share about a time when someone's honesty (even if difficult to hear) proved to be a blessing in your life, or when someone's deception caused problems.

Key Scripture

Matthew 5:33-37 "Again, you have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not break your oath, but fulfill to the Lord the vows you have made.' But I tell you, do not swear an oath at all: either by heaven, for it is God's throne; or by the earth, for it is his footstool; or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King. And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make even one hair white or black. All you need to say is simply 'Yes' or 'No'; anything beyond this comes from the evil one."

Main Takeaways

1. **Deception is everywhere** - Studies suggest we encounter lies approximately 200 times per day
2. **God calls us to simple truthfulness** - Our "yes" should mean yes, and our "no" should mean no
3. **The truth doesn't need embellishment** - Clear is kind; truth can stand on its own
4. **Our actions must match our words** - We must practice what we preach
5. **Jesus is the only completely trustworthy voice** - He always keeps His promises

Discussion Questions

Understanding the Message (15 minutes)

1. The sermon mentioned that we have a "love-hate relationship" with deception in our culture. What are some examples where lying is seen as acceptable or even entertaining? Where do we draw the line?
2. Why do you think Jesus emphasized such simple, straightforward communication? What was He addressing in the culture of His day?
3. Read Revelation 21:8 together. Why is lying considered such a serious sin that it's mentioned alongside other grave offenses?

Personal Reflection (15 minutes)

4. The pastor shared the principle: "In essentials, unity. In opinions, liberty. In all things, love." How can this guide help us navigate difficult conversations where we need to speak truth?
5. Discuss the advice: "If you don't want someone's honest opinion, don't ask." How does this apply to relationships in marriage, family, and friendship?
6. In what areas of your life do you find it most challenging to speak the truth plainly? (Work, family, church, social media, etc.)

Going Deeper (15 minutes)

7. The sermon mentioned that in Jesus' day, people found "loopholes" in oath-making by avoiding swearing directly in God's name. What are modern equivalents of this - ways we might try to justify dishonesty or half-truths?
8. Read James 1:22 and 1:26-27. How do our actions either confirm or contradict our words? Share an example of when someone's actions spoke louder than their words (positively or negatively).
9. The parable of the two sons (Matthew 21:28-31) shows that saying "no" to God initially doesn't mean we can't change. How does this give us hope when we've failed to keep our word or live with integrity?

Practical Application (15 minutes)

This Week's Challenge:

Choose ONE of the following to focus on this week:

Option 1: The 24-Hour Truth Check

- For 24 hours, pay attention to every statement you make
- Notice when you exaggerate, tell "white lies," or say things you don't mean
- Journal what you discover about your speech patterns

Option 2: Keep Your Word Audit

- Make a list of commitments you've made (big or small)
- Identify any you haven't followed through on
- Take action this week to either complete them or honestly communicate why you cannot

Option 3: Clear Communication Practice

- Practice saying "yes" or "no" without over-explaining or making excuses
- When asked your opinion, give honest, loving feedback
- Remember: "Clear is kind"

Option 4: The Lex Challenge

- Like Lex who trusted his friend's voice, identify one area where you need to trust Jesus' voice more than cultural voices
- What is He calling you to do? What truth is He speaking to you?
- Take one concrete step toward obedience this week

Group Accountability Questions

- Is there someone you need to apologize to for dishonesty?
- Is there a commitment you've made that you need to follow through on?
- What's one specific way you can let your "yes be yes" this week?

Closing Reflection

Key Quote from the Sermon: "In order to be a voice other people can trust, we need to listen to the only voice that any of us can trust. And that's the name of Jesus Christ."

Reflection Question: How can we become people whose word is so trustworthy that others can "run toward our voice" like Lex ran toward his friend's voice?

Prayer Focus (10 minutes)

Pray together for:

- Forgiveness for times we've been dishonest
 - Courage to speak truth in love
 - Wisdom to know when to speak and when to remain silent
 - Integrity to match our actions with our words
 - Hearts that listen to and trust Jesus' voice above all others
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Additional Resources

Related Scriptures for Further Study:

- Exodus 20:16 (The Ninth Commandment)
- Psalm 34:12-13
- Proverbs 12:22
- Ephesians 4:15, 29
- Colossians 3:9-10, 17