

“Speaking the truth...in love.”

EPHESIANS 4:15

We all aspire to be truthful and loving, right? We all, as children, learned to never tell a lie and to love each other. But the two are joined together. Why? I think it's because we often do one or the other: we speak the truth, but in an unloving way and hurt someone in the process. Or, we sugar-coat a situation in an attempt to be loving and we don't really tell the truth. It's hard to keep the two together and to keep to keep them in tension. This kind of teaching is common in the Bible and used frequently by Jesus. Here, the Apostle Paul is teaching the young church at Ephesus about the importance of unity in the body of Christ. Just as each part of a human body is important to overall health, each member is valuable to the health of the church. All those body parts are connected by ligaments and tendons which hold the body together. Without them the body would fall apart. Speaking the truth in love is like those tendons and ligaments which hold the church together. Truth without love is inflexible and brittle. Love without truth has no backbone or structure. We live in that creative tension. We are frequently faced with situations where we would be wise to pause, reflect, pray for guidance, and then “speak the truth in love.”

Reflection Questions:

- When was the last time you reacted to a situation with outright uncensored honesty?
- What happened the last time you spoke with love, but not truth, only for the truth to come out later?
- What does living in the tension of love and truth mean to you?

Family Activity:

Stand in a circle with your toes all touching, then take a step back. While holding hands, continue taking steps back until you are stretched to the limit. Now lean back, making the connection of the hands be the support of the circle's weight. When one person isn't balanced in their care for the group, it affects everyone and how they respond to the shift in weight and pull. Tension is good, but uneven tension causes us to fall and to break apart.

Teenage Activity:

Think of the last time you spoke without reflecting. Did it harm someone? How could you have dealt with the situation differently? Practice pausing and attempting to see all angles of the situation you are facing which requires telling the truth in a loving manner.

Adult Activity:

Words matter. Think of a situation where you need to speak truth in love. Write out a script for what you need to say. Practice, pray, and try it.

Prayer:

Dear God, I trust you and give you thanks and praise to you for the words of care and life you give to me. Help me to speak the truth in love to...