

TRUTH IN A SPIRIT OF LOVE
“SHOWING LOVE TO EACH OTHER”
1 Cor. 13 Part 8

“Love rejoices with the truth.” 1 Cor. 13:6 (NIV)

“Speak the truth in a spirit of love.” Eph. 4:15 (GN)

HOW TO CONFRONT SOMEONE YOU LOVE

1. CHECK YOUR MOTIVES

“Why worry about a speck in your friend's eye when you have a log in your own? ... First get rid of the log from your own eye, then perhaps you will see well enough to deal with the speck in your friend's eye.” Matt. 7:3-5 (NLT)

The right motive:

“... We tell you this as Christ's servants ... Everything we do, dear friends, is for your benefit.” 2 Cor. 12:19 (NLT)

“Wounds made by a friend are intended to help.” Pr. 27:6 (GW)

2. PLAN YOUR PRESENTATION

You think through what you're going to say before you say it.

“Intelligent people think before they speak; what they say then is more persuasive.”
Pr. 16:23 (GN)

If you want to be persuasive in a presentation, you must think through what you're going to say in advance.

Paul did this when he had some painful truths to present to people, his friends in Corinth. He says

“I wrote you out of great distress and anguish of heart and with many tears, not to grieve you but to let you know the depth of my love for you.” 2 Cor 2:4 (NIV)

Paul says, I had some tough things I had to write to you about. But this wasn't impulsive. I didn't just sit down and blast off an e-mail. Have you discovered how dangerous an e-mail can be? You can vent real quickly, hit the button and it's gone. And then you wish you could pull it back.

Paul says, “No, I sat down and thought about this. I agonized. I wept. That's how much I care about you. When I had to say some tough things that you didn't want to hear, but you really need to hear because your life is messed up, I really thought about it. I planned, I grieved, I agonized.”

When you plan to have a loving confrontation with your husband, your wife, a son, a daughter, a parent, a friend, a co-worker, a relative who's kind of dysfunctional what you need to do is plan three things.

- **Plan when you'll say it.**

"A wise friend's timely reprimand is like a gold ring slipped on your finger."

Pr. 25:12 (Mes)

When you have a tough issue to deal with in a relationship, have you discovered that timing is everything? Bringing up a tough thing: You don't want to bring it up when they're tired. You don't want to bring it up when they're under pressure. You don't want to bring it up when they're in a hurry. You may be ready to deal with the issue. You may be ready to unload. But they're not ready to hear it.

Columbia University did a study and discovered that more arguments occur right before dinner than any other time of day. That makes sense. We're tired, we're cranky, we have low blood sugar, we're hungry. That's not a good time to bring up a major issue – right before dinner. The point is this: You don't ever drop a bomb.

- **Plan what you'll say.**

"The right word at the right time is like precious gold set in silver." Pr. 25:11 (CEV)

Plan two things: introduction and illustrations. You want to plan your introduction and you want to plan your illustrations.

Introduction is very important. How you introduce a touchy subject will determine whether it's going to be received well or whether it's going to be rejected. In other words, if you want to talk about how the house needs to be cleaner, you wouldn't start by saying, "The roaches are begging for Raid!" Or "This place is a pigsty." Or some other sarcastic remark. Sarcasm never, ever, ever works. You choose the right introduction. How am I going to broach this subject?

Then you need to have some good examples ready. For instance... Have your illustrations ready. But you need to choose illustrations that that person understands, not just ones that you particularly like. If you've never read anything about this, a good book is The Language of Love. It talks about seven different kinds of love languages. We all hear things differently. You need to choose the illustrations that are appropriate for the person you're trying to deal with. Plan what you're going to say in advance.

- **Plan how you'll say it.**

"Thoughtless words can wound as deeply as any sword, but wisely spoken words can heal."

Pr. 12:18 (GN)

1. **Say it tactfully**

"A wise mature person is known for his understanding. The more pleasant his words the more persuasive he is." (Pr. 16:21 GN)

Do you want to be persuasive? Here's the point: I'm never persuasive when I'm abrasive. If you want to get the message across, you don't say it offensively. That will be received defensively. You don't say it rudely, arrogantly, angrily, in frustration, in irritation, in annoyance. You don't say it like that. You say it pleasantly. The more pleasant your words, the more persuasive you'll be. You say it with tact.

2. Say it lovingly — “*I’m speaking as plainly as I can with great affection.*” (2 Cor. 6:13 (Mes))

He spoke it in a loving way. You never use truth as a club. You never beat people up with the truth. You never hit them over the head with it. You say it in a loving way. And how do you know if you're saying it in a loving way? It's for their benefit, not yours. If you feel good in saying it, you're probably saying it for your own benefit.

By the way, you never confront anonymously. That's unloving.

3. Say it so it's received gently — “*A soft answer turns away wrath.*” You might even lower your voice when you talk about it. Say it gently.

“*If someone is trapped in sin, you should gently lead that person back to the right path.*”
Galatians 6:1

Part of that means just being humble. Maybe even qualifying your approach: “I may be totally wrong about this, but...” or “I may be totally off base, I may not have all the facts, I'm certainly not perfect. I've got a lot of problems in my life...” You set it up being humble yourself. You're not coming in as the schoolteacher, the authority, the disciplinarian. You're saying, “We all need help. I need help in some areas of my life.” Say it in a gentle and humble way, so that it can be received in a humble way.

There is an equation that goes like this: Truth plus Tact plus Timing equals Transformation. If you want your marriage transformed, if you want your friendship transformed, if you want a relationship with anybody transformed, if you want to help somebody change, if you want to see that life transformed, it takes more than truth.

It takes truth plus tactfulness plus the right timing to create the transformation in that person's life or in your relationship. And you have to say it in a gentle way.

“*I am writing these things not to shame you, but to warn you as my beloved children.*”
1 Cor. 4:14 (NIV)

Hear the compassion in his voice? He says, “I know I'm having to beat you up a little bit right now. I know I'm having to point out things you don't want to hear. It's probably ticking you off. It's probably making you angry. But I'm not doing this to shame you. I'm doing this because I genuinely care about you. I'm speaking the truth in love.”

GOOD PLACE FOR A STORY OR ILLUSTRATION WHEN SOMEONE SHARED THE TRUTH WITH YOU AND IT'S IMPACT

3. GIVE THEM AFFIRMATION

That's very important in speaking the truth in love. Give them affirmation.

You need to understand that a healthy, strong relationship is always built on two legs.

Two legs help the relationship stand. **Confronting in truth, affirming in love.** If you want to have a healthy friendship, if you want to have a healthy marriage – or anything else – you must have both of these in the relationship. Confronting in truth and affirming in love. If you only have one, you've got a **one-legged relationship and it isn't going to stand. It will fall over at anything.**

The Bible says that the truth will set you free. When you go through that tunnel of truth, it does free you to the deeper level relationship. The truth will set you free, but first it will make you miserable. If I were to come to you today and say, "Let's go have some coffee. I want to point out the areas that need changing," you would not be thanking me for it. You'd be going, "Who do you think you are?" You'd be resentful, rebellious, resistant, determined, stubborn. You wouldn't be going, "This is great! Tell me the areas I need to work on! Tell me the areas that are messed up in my life." No. You would be miserable. Because when you share the truth, it first hurts. Sometimes a surgeon has to cut out a cancer, has to hurt, in order to heal.

Because the truth often does hurt, we must speak it in love, and you couch it in affirmations. You put affirmations on either side of it.

"A word of encouragement does wonders!" Pr. 12:25 (LB)

Paul Began: *"I always thank God for you..."* 1 Cor 1:4 (NIV)

Ended: *"My love to all of you in Christ Jesus"* 1 Cor. 16:24 (NIV)

1. **You want to affirm that you deeply love and care for them.**
2. **You want to affirm that you will pray for them and help them.**
3. **You want to affirm that you believe they can change.**

A tip: Never use the word "but" in a confrontation. The moment you use the word "but," whatever you say before or after will be totally ignored and invalidated. "I think you're a great person, but..." "You've got a lot going for you, but..." "We've got a great marriage, but..." "We've been friends a long time, but..." You can say all kinds of compliments before that one word. When you use that word "but," people tune out.

Instead use the word "and." "You're a great person, and I believe you can be even better." "We've got a great marriage/relationship, and I believe there's some things we need to work on." "God is using you in a great way, and there's some areas you might want to think about." Not "but." Use the word "and." And make affirmation.

"I have great confidence in you and have a lot of reasons to be proud of you..."

2 Cor. 7:4 (GW)

He says this right in the middle of some very tough truths, where he's saying, "This is some stuff you need to work on." He's leveling with them. He's not pulling any punches. But in the

middle of it, he says in affirmation, “I have great confidence in you, and I have a lot of reasons to be proud of you.”

If you want to move from grade-school loving to graduate-level loving, if you want to be a master at the art of love, you have to learn in a relationship to be both realistic and optimistic at the same time. Realistic and optimistic. Point out what’s really good and what isn’t so good that needs to be better. You say, “I believe with God’s help you can change... I believe with God’s help we can have a stronger relationship... I believe with God’s help there can be a different closeness and level of intimacy together...”

EXPLAIN WHAT AN INTERVENTION LOOKS LIKE

Sometimes people just aren’t going to listen. No matter what you do, they’re just not going to listen to you. So you have to maybe bring in some other people. This is called an intervention. An intervention is when you get other people, not just strangers off the street, but four or five really close people, people who love that person the most, they deeply love and they’re committed to that person’s growth and success and you get them in a room together and together you speak the truth in love. It’s kind of last-ditch attempt for desperate situations.

CR MAY BE ABLE TO HELP “CR PITCH”

4. RISK THEIR REJECTION

“I know I distressed you greatly with my letter. Although I felt awful at the time, I don't feel bad now that I see how it turned out. The letter upset you, but only for a while ... and you were jarred into turning things around. You let the distress bring you to God ... And that's what I was hoping for in the first place when I wrote the letter.” 2 Cor. 7:8-11 (Mes)

It’s scary to speak the truth in love. The reason why we stuff our emotions and stuff our feelings and we don’t speak the truth and hide the issues in our relationship that we’re bugged about but we don’t want to bring them up is because we fear the possible consequences. Cowardice keeps us from speaking the truth in love. We let fear become greater than our love. The truth is, it’s scary to do a speaking-the-truth-in-love to somebody. We don’t know how they’re going to react. They may get mad. They may walk out. They may misjudge your motivation. They may attack you. You don’t know what’s going to happen. So it’s scary, and you’re taking a great risk.

And because we don’t want to take that risk, we settle for superficial, shallow relationships.

Some of you have not felt loving toward a loved one for weeks or months or maybe even years. You have a parent, a husband or wife, a partner, a brother or sister or some relative, but you don’t love them and you don’t feel any love toward them. Because you’re stuffing your feelings. You’re stuffing the truth. You’re pushing it down. You’re not speaking the truth in love, you’re not dealing with it and you are killing the relationship.

Margaret Becker wrote a song called *Honesty*. Part of it goes like this, “Tonight by the glow of the firelight you found the courage to speak your mind and tear down the walls you’ve been

hiding behind. So many of us spend so much of our time smoothing things over and pretending they're fine."

"An honest answer is a sign of true friendship." Pr. 24:26 (GN)

Who do you need to have an honest conversation with? Who do you need to speak the truth in love to? Somebody in your neighborhood? Somebody in your small group? Do you see a teenager heading down the wrong direction, getting involved in things they have no business getting involved in and you know that their parents aren't going to do anything about it. Will you? Will you care enough to speak the truth in love? As a friend. What are you pretending isn't a problem in your relationships? What are you pretending not to know? What is the pink elephant in the center of your living room?

Let me ask this: What excuses have you been giving to procrastinate bringing up the issue that everybody needs to deal with? "I don't want to make it worse!" Being quiet will make it worse. "I don't want to be judgmental." We talked about this. It isn't about being judgmental. It's about being loving. "I don't know what to say. I don't know the answer." You don't have to know the answer. You only have to point out the problem. God will take care of step two.

"An honest answer is a sign of true friendship." Pr. 24:26 (GN)

Graduate-level loving. You care enough to not be quiet. You speak up.

You say, "It's not my place. It's none of my business. Who am I to point that out?" The phrase "It's none of my business" is one of the most selfish statements ever created. Basically, the person who says, "It's none of my business," is saying, "The rest of the world can go to hell in a handbag. I don't care." It's an incredibly selfish statement. Love demands that sometimes you confront. Love demands that sometimes you say, "This isn't working out. Stop this. Let me help you." Will you care enough to confront?

I realize that what I'm talking about is for mature audiences only. You can't handle this unless you've got a level of maturity. This is so counter culture. Our culture basically says, "Let everybody do what they want to do and don't worry about it. It's no skin off my nose. If they want to mess up their lives, if they want to destroy their marriage, their life, fine." The real issue is, are you willing to be used by God?

Real friends speak the truth. They tell their friends what they need to hear not what they'd like to hear. Sometimes love must be tough. Sometimes love hurts. It hurt Jesus to die. That's the kind of love Jesus had to die for you. But the end results were worth it.

"In the end people appreciate frankness more than flattery." Pr. 28:23 (LB)

underline "in the end" – because they never appreciate it in the beginning. They don't.

CLOSE WITH A CR testimony 5MIM MAX and you wrap up with summary and prayer!!!