

Session Three – Love Speaks The Truth

40 Days of Love
The Motley Crew
March 10, 2010

We began with prayer.

CATCHING UP

Pastor Eddie began today's session by reading an excerpt from Martin Luther's Sermon for the Third Sunday in Lent, which discussed Ephesians 5:1-9. In particular, he looked at paragraph 3, which discussed Eph. 5:1, "Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour." In paragraph three of that sermon, Luther wrote:

"Walk in love," counsels the apostle. He would have our external life all love. But not the world's love is to be our pattern, which seeks only its own advantage, and loves only so long as it is the gainer thereby; we must love even as Christ loved, who sought neither pleasure nor gain from us but gave himself for us, not to mention the other blessings he bestows daily – gave himself as a sacrifice and offering to reconcile God unto ourselves, so that he should be our God and we his children. Thus likewise should we give, thus should we lend, or even surrender our goods, no matter whether friends claim them or enemies. Nor are we to stop there; we must be ready to give our lives for both friends and enemies, and must be occupied with no other thought than how we can serve others, and how both our life and property can be made to minister to them in this life, and this because we know that Christ is ours and has given us all things.

Source: Martin Luther, "Third Sunday in Lent," from John Nicholas Lenker, *Luther's Epistle Sermons - Epiphany, Easter and Pentecost*. Vol. II. Three Volumes. (Vol. VIII of *Luther's Complete Works*). (Minneapolis, MN: The Luther Press, 1909), pp. 150-161. "Translated with the help of others by Prof. John Nicholas Lenker."

The complete sermon can be seen at

http://www.hymnsandcarolsofchristmas.com/SPLC/3_Sunday_In_Lent.htm

Did you read chapters 8-14 in *The Relationship Principles of Jesus*? Share something you read that was particularly meaningful to you.

Several members related stories about their responses to the readings.

There was a discussion concerning the quotations from scripture used during these presentations, in particular, that some of the quotations were taken out of context, changing the meaning of the quotation. It was observed that in many cases, a different quote from Scripture could have been used that was a more accurate reflection of the intent of the Scripture.

An example of this is found in today's video lesson where Proverbs 10:10 is represented to say "Someone who holds back the truth causes trouble, but the one who openly [confronts] works for peace" (TEV - *Today's English Version*, 1966, 1992). However, the NIV gives "He who winks maliciously causes grief, and a chattering fool comes to ruin."

Note that the TEV is also known as the *Good News Bible*, the *Good News Translation*, and *Good News for Modern Man*. It is a product of the American Bible Society (ABS), which insists that it is a translation, not a paraphrase. The ABS web site page that briefly discusses the TEV: <http://www.americanbible.org/brcpages/briefAboutBible>

It was noted that some of these quotations are not from translations but from paraphrases of the Bible, for example *The Living Bible*. Take some of these quotations with a grain of salt.

On the topic of patience, Pastor Eddie pointed out that the God of the universe lets me talk, and doesn't finish my sentences for me.

KEY VERSE

**Love . . . rejoices with the truth.
1 Corinthians 13:6 (NIV)**

We then watched the video lesson.

Love Speaks the Truth

Most people misunderstand the phrase "keeping the peace," and think it means avoiding confrontation at all costs. But *repressing* the truth rather than dealing with the truth causes trouble.

Someone who holds back the truth causes trouble, but the one who openly [confronts] works for peace, (Proverbs 10:10 TEV)

Speak . . . the truth in a spirit of love. (Ephesians 4:15 TEV)

In both 1st and 2nd Corinthians, St. Paul is sometimes *brutally* truthful.

How to Speak the Truth in Love

1. Check your **motives**

What is the right motive? To help, not to hurt.

Some other motives include anger, revenge, and superiority, among others.

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

Most relationships are shallow, but some are intimate.

To go from shallow to intimate relationships, you need to go through the "tunnel of truth" where you deal with issues you really don't want to deal with.

This "tunnel of truth" process can generate chaos, conflict and confrontation. It can be scary, painful and loud. Many ... or perhaps most ... of us would rather remain at the shallow and superficial level. But if we go through this process, eventually, the result will be genuine intimacy. But only go through the Tunnel of Truth with people you want to be close to.

2. Plan your presentation

Intelligent people think before they speak; what they say is then more persuasive.
(Proverbs 16:23 TEV)

"For 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 Corinthians 2:4 NIV)

Keys to Presenting the Truth in Love

(1) Plan when you're going to say it.

Don't say it when the person is:

- tired
- under pressure
- in a hurry

Do say it when ...

- it is the best timing for the person
- the person is rested and ready to hear it
- you both are at your best
- you have privacy

(2) Plan what you're going to say.

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

(a) Introduction: How you introduce a touchy subject will determine whether it's going to be received well or rejected.

Don't start with sarcasm or anger.

Do start with *humility* and *gentleness*.

(b) Illustrations: Help the person *picture* what you want to say.

Do choose illustrations the other person understands.

Don't just choose illustrations you like.

(3) Plan how you're going to say it.

Thoughtless words can wound as deeply as any sword but wisely spoken words can heal.
(Proverbs 12:18 TEV)

A soft answer turns away wrath.
(Proverbs 15:1 NKJV)

Don't...

- say it thoughtlessly, or it will hurt the person
- say it offensively, or it will be received defensively

Do ...

- lower your voice
- say it in a gentle and humble way

Truth + Tact + Timing = Transformation

3. Give them affirmation

A word of encouragement does wonders! (Proverbs 12:25LB)

This is speaking the truth in love, and in terms of affirmation of that person, not for other motives.

Affirm that:

- You deeply love and care for the person.
- You will pray for them and help them.
- You believe they can change.
- The relationship can be better and that you can be even closer as a result of this confrontation.

4. Risk their rejection

The apostle Paul risked rejection and it turned out well:

⁸ "I know I distressed you greatly with my letter. Although I felt awful at the time, I don't feel at all bad now that I see how it turned out. The letter upset you, but only for a while.⁹ . . . you were jarred into turning things around. You let the distress bring you to God. . . .¹²And that is what I was hoping for in the first place when I wrote the letter." (2 Corinthians 7:8-9, 12 MSG)

It is scary to speak the truth to someone. Anything could happen, which is why many won't take the risk, and settle for superficial relationships.

Pastor Rick continued with the observation that if feelings are stuffed down, estranged relationships can be extended for days, months or even years. He asked "Who do you need to speak the love to?"

But do not delay. Move to the higher level of loving. Use these steps to approach that person. Pray and then act.

There was a discussion of whether or not there is the time to apply this process to every needed instance. Some situations are either act now or skip it altogether. Pastor Eddie pointed out that familiarity of this process assists even when a fully-prepared presentation is not possible. Understanding this four-part process allows us to build an internal framework to prepare for these moments, especially when it is a "speak now" situation. And, it's always best to first check our motives.

Others observed that in some situations, a good approach is to write out your presentation, and then let it sit for three days. Pray over it (sometimes, God will take care of the matter without the need for further intervention). Then, either act or not act.

One aspect of this approach is the missing fifth step: follow-up. While it is great to do this four-step process, it is also important to check back with that person.

A couple of the "Discovery Questions" from the workbook were addressed in the closing minutes of the video.

4. Are you willing to hear the truth in love? What can you do to prepare your heart to hear it?

What relationships are you turning away from in fear?

1. We wouldn't let a friend step into oncoming traffic. Why, then, do we hesitate to stop a friend who is stepping into trouble or making a harmful choice?

One question asked in love can change lives. Only the very mature person can take these kinds of risks.

Another question that was asked was "What is the real truth?" It was observed that one person's "truth" might be a mistaken interpretation of another's action. For example, what one person perceives as aloofness might just be shyness. Numerous other examples could be cited. We need to do a reality-check before jumping in with both feet.

Also, when approaching one of these situations in a professional setting, one of our members used to spend the first five minutes praising the person before beginning a counseling session.

One of the members pointed out that one of her college professors used to observe, tongue in cheek, that while *he* always had good intentions, the *other person's intentions* were often suspect.

We closed with prayer.