

True to the Truth

As leaders, we can learn to **be examples by speaking the truth in love**, as it says in

Ephesians 4:15:

Rather, **speaking the truth in love**, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ,

Speaking the truth in love is a worthy endeavor that should be a lifelong aspiration for us all as believers.

If we're going to make this a practice, we would do well to think about the answer to the question "**What is truth?**" Let's explore some practical as well as spiritual sides to this.

Truth, Practically Speaking

Apart from the Scriptures, how do you think **Jesus Christ learned about truth in his youth?** Surely one way he would have learned to be true practically would have been *in his trade*. Over the centuries, rabbinical leaders reiterated the value of teaching a son a trade to the point where family apprenticeship became a pillar of Hebrew society.

We know that Joseph was a carpenter, and that Jesus was known in Nazareth as the carpenter's son. Knowing what he undoubtedly did about framing windows and doors, Joseph would have instructed his son in the practical application of what *true* means in carpentry.

For those of you who, like me, are *not* builders, I will endeavor to describe in laymen's terms **the meaning of true in the building trades**. (Bear with me.)

Being "true" in construction means ***in complete and perfect alignment***.

When putting in a door, for instance, to *fit* into the frame, the unit must be perfectly aligned:

- With the *foundation*, and
- With the *adjacent parts*.

To achieve that alignment, the frame is measured three ways:

- Horizontally (so it's perfectly level),
- Vertically (so it's perfectly plumb), and
- Perpendicularly (so it's perfectly square).

But doing so on one side is not enough. For the installation to be considered *completely and perfectly true*, these criteria must be achieved for *all dimensions on all sides*. Well, that kind of true sounds like a tall order! Yet experienced carpenters continue to get right results every day. Evidently, that kind of symmetry and balance is attainable. Successful projects prove it.

The lesson here is that an installation is only judged to be *true when it aligns perfectly with both the foundation and all adjacent parts*.

Jesus Christ had experiential knowledge of *truth in building*. Later it would be revealed that he himself is the foundation of the edifice of the Church.

1 Corinthians 3:11:

For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

We are *true* when we're *in alignment with* the foundation: *Jesus Christ*.

Truth, Spiritually Speaking

From the earliest age, Jesus Christ knew who he was and who his Father was. These are *bedrock spiritual truths: who God is, and who His Son is. Jesus lived and died for God, and God raised him from the dead.*

If we are to speak the truth in love, we must [understand who the Son of God is in relation to his Father](#). We must know the answers to these questions:

- [Who is God, and what did He do?;](#) and
- [Who is His Son, and what did he do?](#)

Peter demonstrated this knowledge addressing the people after he and John had ministered healing to the cripple at the Beautiful Gate.

Acts 3:13-15:

The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified his servant [“son” in the Aramaic] Jesus [[truth of God the Father and Jesus the Son](#)], whom you delivered over and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release him.

But you denied the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you,

and you killed the Author of life [[truth of Christ’s crucifixion](#)], whom God raised from the dead [[truth of Christ’s resurrection](#)]. To this we are witnesses.

Peter clearly made known a set of fundamental spiritual truths:

- God is the Father of Jesus His Son
- Christ lived and died for God
- God raised him from the dead.

To truly speak spiritual truth in love, [our words must align with the scriptural truth of who God is and who His Son is](#).

Truth, Personally Speaking

Clearly, the words we speak matter. But is the action of speaking the truth in love confined to just speaking? This is a question that expositors have wrestled with over the centuries due to the unusual nature of the underlying Greek text of Ephesians 4:15.

The words “speaking the truth” are taken from the single Greek word ἀληθεύω *alētheuō*, which is a verb form of the noun for “truth.” But how are we to understand that in English? We have no verb “to truth,” so it makes no sense to talk of “truthing in love”.

Some versions such as the Amplified Classic Bible have endeavored to address the conundrum by expanding on the meaning of the word truth in the verse, and that can be an effective translation approach.

Ephesians 4:15 [AMPC]:

Rather, let our lives lovingly express truth [in all things, speaking truly, dealing truly, living truly]. ...

It’s always wonderful, however, when a translation is able to capture the essence of the message in as few words as possible. Here we should give credit to Bullinger, who defines *alētheuō* concisely as “*to be true*.”

With this understanding, then, the admonition of Ephesians 4:15 can be reduced to its simplest terms as *being true*. Comprehending this aspect of the exhortation gives us a whole new perspective on *what we are to do*. *We are to tell the truth — to make truth known — by being true*.

What is it to be true?

Here are some synonyms:

- To be genuine
- To be honest
- To be sincere
- To be authentic
- To be real
- To be reliable
- To be trustworthy
- To be honorable
- To be loyal

These are all wonderful character traits to which we should all aspire. And what is *the object of all these virtues*? *To showcase truth*. As we live out our lives together in love, we “just say no” to duplicity and hypocrisy. We *reject falsehood and embrace what God says is true*.

Philippians 4:8,9:

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, *think about these things*.

What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—*practice these things*, and the God of peace will be with you.

Paul exhorts the Philippians to *think about these things* and *practice these things*: that which is *true*, honorable, just, pure, lovely and commendable.

Another aspect of showcasing the truth is developing an *awareness of God’s agency — or ability to act — in our lives*.

A common human failing is the tendency to think of God too remotely. We go about our day-to-day affairs as if they were too mundane for Him to care about. But He does care, and we should take care to include Him, not sporadically, but continually.

Each new day when we arise, God is with us. He has things for us to do, places for us to go, and people for us to meet. Some of these things we know about in advance; others we’ll discover as the day unfolds. But we should look for His hand of blessing at every turn.

An important part of this lifestyle involves *moving* — not necessarily physically, but by *making decisions*. If I’m going to lovingly showcase truth in my life, my life will have to *intersect with people*. I can’t just be a wallflower or a couch potato, sitting around waiting for people to come to me. So when figuring out what activities I should take on for the day, I’ll want to consider *getting up* and *getting out* in terms of

contact with others — even if that means just sending a text or making a phone call to someone whose path I might not have otherwise crossed.

To whom can I show the love of Christ today, and how? Will I be ready for that unexpected, but divinely ordained encounter with someone I had no idea I'd be seeing? These can be some of the most profoundly meaningful moments, for they so clearly could have only happened with His involvement. Never underestimate God's ability to "make your day"!

Truth, Collectively Speaking

Critical as it is, though, for us to recognize *our individual responsibility* to speak the truth in love, that *is not all there is to it*. Yet for years I assumed that speaking the truth in love was a command addressed to the individual. But is that all the passage actually says in the context?

Ephesians 4:13-15:

until *we all* attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,

so that *we* may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.

Rather, speaking the truth in love, *we* are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ,

We are *all* to attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God (verse 13) so that *we* may no longer be children (verse 14) and can *all together* grow up in every way into him who is the head (verse 15).

You see, speaking the truth in love is not just something we do alone: it's something we *become together* as we grow up in every way into

the head, Christ. This is our *collective responsibility* as members of the one body.

Colossians speaks of “holding fast to the head”, a reference to Christ as the head of the body.

Colossians 2:19:

and not holding fast to the Head, from whom the whole body, nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments, grows with a growth that is from God.

We are to be knit together as members in the body of Christ. The expression “joints and ligaments” refers generically to *points of contact* and *connections* within the body. The body has many connecting parts, and they are all connected one way or another with the head. *As the head, Christ is the life-giver in the body of Christ.*

In the body of Christ, therefore,

We must *stay connected*:

- *First, to the head;* and
- *Second, to each other.*

This is essentially the same truth we saw in our construction analogy.

We must *stay perfectly aligned*:

- *With the foundation,* and
- *With the adjacent parts.*

Practically speaking, though what does “holding fast to the head” mean? That *Christ in us* — the holy spirit or spirit of Christ in us — *is to predominate in our life as we walk out in the name of Jesus Christ.*

When we hold fast this way to Christ who is the head and are knit together in love with our fellow members, *the outcome is growth that is from God,* as we just read in Colossians 2:19. The various parts are

nourished and knit together in love by interacting with one another, and they grow by staying connected with the head.

Truth, Demonstrated

In the days immediately following Pentecost, the truths of the mystery and the body of Christ had not yet been revealed. However, if you look at the lives of the leaders in the Church at that time, they were palpable, living examples of the impact of speaking the truth in love. Let's take a look at a well-known passage which is illustrative.

Earlier in Acts 3, we saw how Peter and John habitually **recognized God as the Lord God and acted boldly in the name of Jesus Christ among the people**. They consistently **made known his crucifixion and his resurrection before all** men — not just the believers.

Moving on to Acts 4, we see the culmination of a speaking-in-truth saga that germinated and then blossomed following the healing of the cripple at the Beautiful Gate. What started out as two believers in harmony with God and each other extended outward by touching another believing heart (the man who was healed), and then reverberated out to encompass all the receptive bystanders who were moved by the demonstrated power of God. This in turn motivated the wider group of Peter and John's fellow believers to join in unison imploring God for His favor and hand of blessing. Listen to their prayer!

Acts 4:24-31:

And when they heard it, they lifted their voices together to God and said, "Sovereign Lord, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them,

who through the mouth of our father David, your servant, said by the Holy Spirit, "Why did the Gentiles rage, and the peoples plot in vain?

The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers were gathered together, against the Lord and against his Anointed' —

for truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel,

to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place.

And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness,

while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus.”

And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness.

True to the Truth

What exactly transpired among this group of faithful believers?

Together as one, they made a joint decision to be *true to the truth* and supported one another in it. *With one voice they spoke the truth in love, and it rocked the place!* Wouldn't you have loved to be there at that moment in time to experience the electrifying power of the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace? It certainly would have been unforgettable.

Here's *the outcome of their one accord*.

Acts 4:32:

Now the full number of those who believed were *of one heart and soul*, ...

There's no doubt that *each of us will benefit by speaking the truth in love* in our own lives. *Doing so together will multiply that blessing* of partnership with God and our brothers and sisters exponentially.

2 Peter 3:18:

But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity.
Amen.

Together as one, let's resolve to *be true to the truth as members of the one body*, and watch God take us all over the top *as we grow in grace* and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.