

-Story of JC confronting me—uncomfortable, but helped us all in the end.

-We talk a lot about the centrality of Christlike love, but does that mean we just be nice and avoid speaking truth? No, love has teeth. It's willing to enter into tense situations to bring healing.

Proverbs 28:23 (NIV)—Whoever rebukes a person will in the end gain favor rather than one who has a flattering tongue.

-In other words, speaking a hard word of truth to someone, rather than being nice and saying what they want to hear, will ultimately end up benefitting the other person in the long run.

-People are afraid that too much Jesusy-love talk means that we are too committed to being nice and avoiding the truth. But I think this assumes a wrong understanding of love. I want to differentiate between Tolerant Love and Christlike Love:

-Tolerant Love (Rampant in our culture today)

- Committed to being nice and preventing uncomfortable situations
- Avoids conflict at all costs, even allowing relationships to dissolve
- Shallow and self-serving—I want to be comfortable
- Willing to avoid the truth if telling the truth would create tension
- Ignores the spinach in the other person's teeth

-Christlike Love

- Committed to the hard work of helping relationships flourish
- Willing to enter into conflict if it will bring healing to a situation.
- Deep, other-oriented
- Committed to the truth because the truth exposes the lies and sets us free
- Addresses the spinach in the other person's teeth

-So, to those who fear that love compromises truth, know that true, Christlike love is not the same as Tolerant Love. Christlike love is committed to pursuing truth.

-But, I'd also offer a warning to anyone who emphasizes truth over love. Truth without Christlike love can be used like a weapon to cut others down and shame them, making the "truth" teller feel morally superior to the one they are belittling—there's no healing, just a puffing up of one's own ego, and a silencing of the other. In fact, I'd say **if truth isn't grounded in Christlike love, then it isn't truth, because it's self-centered rather than others-centered.**

-Christians are to be people who are honest and tell the truth, but this truth must be motivated by Christlike love that is committed to healing broken relationships.

Ephesians 4:15-16—Instead, we will speak the truth IN LOVE, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church. He makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love.

-Camp story—Cherry-picking of this passage emphasizing the truth part and dropping the love part (possibly because truth seems tough and effective love seems too soft). Ended up being a good conversation, and we both benefitted from it (and the camp too).

“Truth and love go hand-in-glove.”

-Oven mitt example. Truth without love is like taking something out of the oven without the mitt—burn yourself and drop the food. Tolerant love without truth wants to stay away from the heat, and the food ends up burning. But when the hand and the mitt work together to carefully remove the food, we have a good meal to enjoy.

Along with this, the way we confront another person with truth is extremely important if we want to do it well.

Bazooka approach—Have a forceful, abrasive conversation. Might make me feel better because “someone had to say it,” but you blew the other person up, and didn’t bring healing.

Syringe approach—Might have to convince them that it’s ok, and that they can trust you. Might sting, and they might be mad at you, but eventually it can work on them and bring healing.

Matthew 18:15-17—If another believer sins against you, go privately and point out the offense. If the other person listens and confesses it, you have won that person back. But if you are unsuccessful, take one or two others with you and go back again, so that everything you say may be confirmed by two or three witnesses. If the person still refuses to listen, take your case to the church. Then if he or she won’t accept the church’s decision, treat that person as a pagan or a corrupt tax collector.

- Take time to discern what to say and how to say it. Prayer.
- Process the situation with someone who is wise—no gossip!
- Determine who needs to be part of the conversation. Avoid scapegoating.
- Go into the conversation with a commitment to working toward unity and understanding. Don’t go with the goal of arm-twisting the other person to conform to your way. And be honest with yourself about whether or not you’re using subtle, passive-aggressive remarks/gestures that provoke the other person to anger.
- Season your conversation with love, gentleness, kindness, and patience.
- Be clear about what the issue is, and what resolving it might look like.
- Be honest with yourself and the other about the role you have played in the conflict. Own your stuff and don’t make excuses for it or try to justify it—set the tone.
- Give them space to respond, and try to see things from their perspective. It’s possible I have an idea in my head about what’s really going on, but it’s not true!
- Thank them for having the conversation. We cool?
- Expect some residual awkwardness. Don’t try to force the relationship, but show them in different ways that you’re not holding a grudge against them.
- You might not resolve the issue. Take more time for discernment now that you have more sides to the story.
- If the other person refuses to be a team player, you may have to cut ties with that person, but always with the openness to restore them to the team should they have a change of heart.

Communion