



Class 8. Speak the Truth in Love

- Just between the two of you - Matthew 18
- Knowing when to say something is the hardest part
- Is it Dishonoring God?
- When someone is behaving in such a way that others think less of God or His Word
- Is it Damaging your Relationship?
- If your feelings, thoughts, words or actions towards the other person have been negative for a short period of time - then the offense is too serious to overlook
- Is it Hurting Others?
- A disagreement is too serious to overlook when it results in significant harm to you or others
- Is it Hurting the Offender?
- Sin needs to be addressed when it is seriously harming the offender
- Either by direct damage - Substance Abuse
- Or indirectly, by impairing their relationship with God
- Don't be fooled by the world's view that everyone should be allowed to *"do their own thing as long as they don't hurt anyone"*
- This week we'll talk about some suggestions to keep in mind when you do go talk to someone
- What you say can either help to heal the Conflict, or drive people further apart

- Your natural tendency when someone has offended you, is to come at them with “the law”

- Show them clearly from the Scriptures what they have done wrong, and what they need to do to make things right

- Generally, this will put people on the defensive, and make the conflict worse

- Instead of bringing them the Law, try bringing them the Gospel

- Instead of focusing on what people have failed to do, try focusing on what God has done for them

- Focus on the redemption we have through Christ, and the forgiveness, mercy and grace we all receive

- Begin your discussion by reminding them that God is eager to help us change our ways

- Then... Be quick to listen

- Try to actually understand what they are trying to say

- **James 1:19**

- Even if you can't agree with everything that they say, your willingness to listen demonstrates that you are trying to understand

- 5 Keys to good listening:

- 1) **Wait**

- Waiting while others talk is key!

- Without this you will often fail to understand the root cause of the conflict

- **Proverbs 18:13**

- Don't jump to conclusions about what they are saying

- People all think differently, so don't try to finish their thoughts for them, because you are different than them

- Learn to be comfortable with silence, because they might need time to think before they speak

- Don't offer immediate solutions to the problem, lots of time they already know what they should do, they just need someone to talk it through with

2) Pat Attention

- You can think about four times faster than someone can talk
- So, you are tempted to start rehearsing your response
- If you do this, you may miss something important that they are trying to say to you
- Also, they can tell when you are distracted, and it discourages them from trying to communicate

3) Clarify

- Make sure you understand what they are saying
- Ask questions to confirm you understand correctly

4) Reflect

- Summarize their issues in your own words
- You don't have to agree, just say, "Do I understand you correctly?"
- This also helps to slow things down, which is helpful when emotions get high

5) Agree

- To build towards reconciliation, it is important to Agree with what you can agree with
- You don't have to abandon your beliefs, but it is good if you can find something that they've said that you can agree with
- This is especially important when you have been in the wrong
- You may not agree with WHY they felt that you were wrong, but it's good to agree that you were wrong
- Ask yourself, "Is there ANY truth in what they are saying?" - If the answer is YES, then acknowledge what is true and identify your common ground

- Proverbs 15:31

- Agree with SPECIFIC terms - You don't have accept responsibility for the entire problem

- Proverbs 12:18

- Now that you've listened carefully... Speak carefully!

- 12 Tips to speaking carefully

1) Speak Gracefully

- Galatians 5:22-23

- The more we "take in" the grace of God, the easier it is for us to "give it out"

2) Judge Lovingly

- Don't jump to conclusions

- Try to believe the best about them

- Philippians 2:3-4

- If people think that you have already made up your mind, then they won't bother talking to you

- Give them the benefit of the doubt

3) Speak the Truth in Love

- Ephesians 4:15

- Take a gentle approach first and get firmer with the person only if necessary

4) Counsel from Beside, not Above

- Don't talk down to people

- Don't appear sinless

- Admit ways that you have wrestled with other sins

5) Help Others Examine their own Desires

- The root cause of most conflict is the Desires in our Hearts that have become so strong they control us

- It's hard enough to talk to someone about their sinful words and actions, it's even more difficult to talk about what is going on in their hearts

- So, how can you help them see their Desires?

- Start by describing the things you have found in yours

- Encourage them to ask themselves probing questions

6) Choose the Right Time and Place

- Timing is essential

- Seek for the RIGHT time, not the CONVENIENT time

- Don't discuss difficult issues when they are tired

- Don't discuss difficult issues in front of others

- Don't discuss difficult issues unless you have enough time

7) Talk in Person

- Letters don't allow you to see how the other person is taking what you say, or to clarify things that need it

- You really can't just drop by unannounced, so you have to call or email first

- They are going to want to know what's up, but avoid getting into it before you arrive

8) Engage Rather than Lecture

- If you launch into a detailed description of their faults, even if accurate, they are likely to stop listening, or even launch a counter-attack

- Try broaching the subject in an indirect way that engages their heart without putting them instantly on guard

- One of the best ways to do this is a story or analogy

- Use popular books or movie allusions to get it started

9) Be Clear

- Conflicts are aggravated by misunderstandings

- Don't just strive to communicate so clearly that you can be understood... Strive to communicate so clearly that you cannot be misunderstood
- Think carefully about your words and look to remove any thing that might be vague or imprecise

10) Plan your Words

- Think in advance about what you are going to say
- It might be helpful to write out the following things:
 - Define the problem as narrowly as you can
 - List the things to avoid that might be offensive
 - Analogies or stories that they might value
 - Words that describe your feelings
 - A description of how this problem is affecting you
 - Your suggestions for a solution to the problem

11) Use "I" Statements

- You only know what YOU are thinking, not them
- So, use statements that give information about yourself rather than the other person
- Typically, "I" Statements follow a formula:
 - I feel _____ when you _____
 - As a result _____
- Instead of telling a Brother that he is Irresponsible, and therefore you want to take him off the Speaking List...
 - I feel frustrated when you fail to keep your commitments to the Ecclesia
 - As a result, I'm finding it difficult to depend on you when it comes to Exhorting the Ecclesia
- First, they show how their conduct is affecting you
- Second, it clearly identifies what they have done
- Third, it explains why the issue is important to you

12) Be Objective

- Try to keep objective
- While expressing your feelings may help them understand the problem, if you emphasize subjective opinions too much, you will convey condemnation
- Make an effort not to exaggerate - Be specific instead
- “You have not been properly prepared for your past three exhortations” - Not, “You are never prepared!”

- Ephesians 4:29

- Don't use the Bible to tear people down, only to build them up
- If you can show someone a reasonable way out of a predicament, then they may be willing to listen
- Don't pretend you have all the answers... Make it a suggestion, and ask for their suggestions