

Ephesians 4.11-15

Speaking the truth in love

Christ Church (BDEF)

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Speaking the truth in love

I'd like to share some verses from Ephesians 4:

Christ gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. Instead, **speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ.**

Ephesians 4.11-15 (NIV)

Yesterday I had a conversation with someone in our car park and she said something like this:

‘Ben, I think it’s really clear what God says in the Bible about sexuality and marriage. I know it in my head, but then I meet people who are same-sex attracted and in my heart I don’t want them to feel rejected or to deny them what I have. And I want them to know God loves them as much as he loves me. It’s really hard and I don’t know what to think or what to do.’

I imagine most of us have had similar conversations with people in our churches – to be honest I have that conversation with myself quite frequently! So often I feel as though there is a battle between head and heart, between truth and love – and we feel we have to pick a side. ¶ Are we going to be people of truth, faithful to what Scripture says? ¶ Or are we going to be people of love, welcoming and attractive to all?

Each of us tends towards one or the other – but of course the hard thing is Paul calls us to be *both*: **speaking the truth in love** – love must be our motivation to speak the truth *and* the way we speak it. So depending on our tendency we’ll need to hear this challenge differently: to speak more truth or to be more loving as we speak it. Maturity is not either/or, but *both* truth *and* love, *together*.

John Stott wrote these words about this passage:

Thank God there are those who are determined at all costs to defend and uphold God's revealed truth. But sometimes they are conspicuously lacking in love. When they think they smell heresy, their nose begins to twitch, their muscles ripple, and the light of battle enters the eye. They seem to enjoy nothing more than a fight. Others are determined at all costs to maintain and exhibit brotherly love, but in order to do so are prepared even to sacrifice the central truths of revelation. Both these tendencies are unbalanced and unbiblical.

J Truth becomes hard if it is not softened by love; love becomes soft if it is not strengthened by truth. The apostle calls us to hold the two together, which should not be difficult for Spirit-filled believers, since the Holy Spirit is himself 'the Spirit of truth', and his firstfruit is 'love'.

John Stott, The Message of Ephesians, 172 (emphasis added)

I think he's right, though I confess I find it harder to do than he suggests: **truth becomes hard if it is not softened by love; love becomes soft if it is not strengthened by truth.** We need to hold the two together, for maturity is not either/or but *both* truth *and* love, *together*. And we need help, so we pray: Come, Holy Spirit.