

EVERYDAY LIFE

Monday, October 27, 2008

"Speaking the truth in love." Ephesians 4:15 NIV

"If you don't have something good to say, wouldn't it be better to not say anything!"

My thoughts today are, **"to tell the truth."**

Some years ago when I testified before the FCC in Washington DC, in preparing me for testimony our attorneys cautioned me to avoid prefacing my comments with words like, **"to tell the truth,"** or **"to be honest,"** lest that suggest at other times I was being less than truthful. The integrity of your word is easily lost and not so easily regained.

In much of everyday life, it is difficult sometimes to know who is telling the truth. That is because there are **times that the truth could be inconvenient.** Anything less than the truth should not be true of a Christ-follower. It was said of Jesus, *"Who committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth."* 1 Peter 2:22 NKJV. In the example of our Lord, you and I should be committed to truth-telling. See 1 Peter 3:8-10 NKJV.

But there is more than one criterion for your speech. If it is true, is it okay to tell? **Not only must it be the truth you speak; you must also "speak in love."** I think it would be wise to consider the added qualification of love as not so much that you know that what you speak is true and well intended, but that you have a proven relationship in which the other person fully knows of your love at all times. Relationship earns you the trust to speak truth to one another. See Ephesians 4:22-32.

There must certainly be elements of truthfulness and loving kindness in the words you speak, and also **elements of the right time and place.** *"A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver."* Proverbs 25:11 NKJV. Jesus said to His disciples, *"I have much more to tell you, but now it would be too much for you to bear."* John 16:12 TEV. Consideration of **another's readiness to hear** is important.

The truth is meant to help and to heal, not to needlessly hurt. The truth must never be used as a weapon, nor as an instrument of your self-satisfaction. I have seen friendships and families broken because someone was more intent on their right to say something simply because it was true, without regard to the effect. See Psalm 141:3. There are **things that are true, but definitely not edifying and best handled with care if handled at all.** A good rule to follow is this, *"Let all things be done for edification"* (1 Corinthians 14:26 NKJV) - to build up, not to tear down.

I have observed that those who use truth in such hurtful ways are often more brutally honest about others than truthful about themselves. When you are too eager to tell the unvarnished truth without regard for its effect on others - *"because somebody needs to hear it"* - be very careful. Your motive might not be about the truth as much as about using the truth to harm rather than help.

Maybe my grandmother was right when she advised, *"If you don't have something good to say, it would be better to not say anything!"* Solomon wisely wrote, *"Do not let kindness and truth leave you."* Proverbs 3:3 NAS. Isn't that interesting? God's Word connects kindness and truth together, as it connects truth and love. Let Jesus be your example, *"The Law came through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ."* John 1:17. The One whose very nature is truth always expressed that with grace. Shouldn't you? I would recommend you pray David's prayer, *"Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O Lord."* Psalm 19:14.

My prayer for you today is that you be truthful, and loving in your doing so.

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