

The Needfulness of Truth and Love

“Speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint ... when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love” ([Eph. 4:15-16](#)).

- [Ephesians 4:15-16](#)

Growth into mature unity is the main theme of [Ephesians 4:1–16](#), and as we conclude our study of this passage today, we will see that while truth is essential to this growth, we need more than just facts to move beyond spiritual infancy. The manner in which this truth is presented is also key, for we “grow up in every way into him who is the head” only as we are “speaking the truth in love” ([Eph. 4:15–16](#)).

Today, we are usually put on alert that a criticism is coming when an individual says to us, “I have something to tell you in love.” In fact, it might even be wise to run the other way when a comment is prefaced with those words. Yet presenting criticisms in a gentle, loving way is not exactly what Paul has in mind in verse 15, although Scripture does commend the practice of giving needful exhortations in a spirit of grace and compassion ([Prov. 15:26](#); [Jude 22–23](#)). Instead, Paul contrasts “speaking the truth in love” with the speech motivated “by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes” mentioned in [Ephesians 4:14](#). False teachers plot to deceive people with their words, shaping their erroneous messages so as to receive the largest following and telling half-truths instead of outright lies so that their schemes may go unnoticed. Truth, on the other hand, must be presented honestly. We must not skip over difficult teachings, for example, in order to make the “pleasant parts” of Scripture more enticing to our hearers. This is the error of the church-growth movement, which often neglects passages on judgment and hell in order to proclaim the Bible’s teaching about “our best life now.” However wellintentioned, ignoring parts of God’s Word to attract listeners is not speaking the truth in love, and it gives many people false assurance of their place in heaven.

Yet as teachers speak the truth in love, we grow up into the head, which is Christ, the source of the body's life ([Eph. 4:15–16](#)). Paul uses metaphors based on the human body to indicate the interconnectedness of believers and the key role of us all in the functioning of the church. Just as ligaments tie the whole body together, we are so interdependent that we must receive nourishment from Jesus through other believers and then pass on this sound instruction to others.

Application for God

Are you conscious of the intimate way in which you are connected to all other believers? Your sins and holiness impact other Christians, for you share an inseparable link to them ([Eph. 4:15–16](#)). One of the key motivations in our sanctification (growth in holiness) is the realization that our deeds affect others in the body of Christ. If we love them like we should, we will strive to mortify sin and glorify Jesus.

Passages for Further Study

[Ezekiel 14:1–11](#)

[Mark 9:42](#)

1 Corinthians 3

[Colossians 2:16–19](#)