

LIFE GROUP LESSON

What Happened to Civility • Week of September 30

When the apostle Paul said yes to God's assignment to carry the Gospel (Good News) to the Mediterranean world, he had his work cut out for him. We modern-day Christ-followers must remember as we read the epistles – personal letters that Paul wrote to the churches he planted – the setting was pre-Constantine Rome. The fact that Paul was drawn primarily to Gentiles, non-Jewish people with little to no grid (memory) of God's law (His Word), made the task even more challenging. The current 21st Century, according to many scholars, resembles this period with the secularization of our culture having now a "Post-Christian or Secular World View".

With great patience Paul teaches these new believers how to live in the light – to be people of compassion, moral ethics, and civility. He describes how coming to faith in the Lord Jesus unites us into one body, with each part filling a vital purpose in Christ's Kingdom. With his pen, Paul instructs his children-in-the-faith to 'speak the truth in love' and 'stop telling lies.' Like patiently planting seeds in tender soil, Paul's words still speak to us today: "put on your new nature, created to be like God—truly righteous and holy" (Ephesians 4:24).

Read Ephesians 4:11-16

The Plain Truth states: "Sharing the truth has to be rooted in love." According to vv 13-14, followers-of-Christ are to be mature, discerning, and ready to defend the faith especially when we see a brother or sister veering off-path, and 'tricked with lies so clever they sound like the truth.' We must be grounded in God's Word (truth) and grounded in God's love.

1. Think of a time you had to speak the truth in love.
 - A) What did you do to prepare for that 'crucial conversation'?
 - B) Was anything resolved?

According to Joseph Grenny, in Crucial Conversations, it is important that we (1) create safety – do all we can to let the person know it is a safe place to share honestly, (2) let them know we genuinely care about their problem, and (3) that we care about them as individuals. While confronting an individual is difficult, it will bear fruit in the long-haul. If Christ is calling you to share the truth with someone, it is vital that you obey His voice.

- C) Learning some tools from Grenny, how could your conversation have gone better? What could you have done differently?

Read Ephesians 4:17-32

2. Paul says "Don't sin by letting anger control you. Don't let the sun go down while you are still angry, for anger gives a foothold to the devil" (Ephesians 4:26-27). Uncontrolled anger and rage can be deadly. What anger/grudge are you nursing? Can you pinpoint the root of this anger? In the space below, write one way you sense the Lord speaking to you regarding this grievance?
3. First Samuel 25 records a time when King David's anger nearly grew out of control over a foolish man, Nabal's treatment of David's men in a time of need. Read about how it was dealt with in 1 Samuel 25: 20-35. Discuss what you learn from Abigail, her reaction to the seriousness of the situation, the wisdom she displayed, and her proactive way of deflecting David's intentions.

As a group discuss point by point how Abigail did the following:

- a) She created a safe space for David. How did she do this?
 - b) She demonstrated that she could identify with David's grievances with Nabal.
 - c) She demonstrated that she cared about King David. How did she do this?
 - d) She spoke the "truth in love" and it literally saved lives. How did she do this?
4. Naaman was the commander of the Aramean army, and he had leprosy. He went to Elisha the prophet in Israel and was told to wash in the muddy Jordan River (see 2 Kings 5:9-15). At first, Naaman's pride got the best of him and he refused to do the simple act of dipping seven times in the Jordan. But then Naaman's officers reasoned with him and said more or less, "what have you got to lose?" Naaman listened to reason, swallowed his pride, and washed in the Jordan seven times as Elisha had instructed. "And his skin became as healthy as the skin of a young child's, and he was healed!" (v14)

Application: Our pride often stands in the way of God's harvest for our lives. In light of Naaman's story, what would it look like if you committed to sowing seeds for a harvest?

- listening to reason, truth spoken in love
- laying down your pride
- being obedient to the Lord's instruction

How is God preparing the soil of your heart to bear more fruit of compassion and civility?



Text: Ephesians 4:11-16, 17-32

PLAIN TRUTH:

Sharing the _____ has to be _____ in _____.

1. If you really _____ then speak the truth in a _____.

a) Create _____.

You create safety when you do the following:

i) You care about their _____.

ii) You care about _____.

b) Caring and creating safe space enables _____.

2. Expect and desire _____.

3. Our _____ gets in the way of God's _____.

One Year Bible Reading

Sept. 30: Isaiah 60:1-62:5, Philippians 1:27-2:18, Psalm 72:1-20, Proverbs 24:11-12

October 1: Isaiah 62:6-65:25, Philippians 2:19-3:3, Psalm 73:1-28, Prov. 24:13-14

October 2: Isaiah 66:1-24, Philippians 3:4-21, Psalm 74:1-23, Proverbs 24:15-16

October 3: Jeremiah 1:1-2:30, Philippians 4:1-23, Psalm 75:1-10, Prov. 24:17-20

October 4: Jeremiah 2:31-4:18, Colossians 1:1-17, Psalm 76:1-12, Prov. 24:21-22

October 5: Jeremiah 4:19-6:15, Colossians 1:18-2:7, Psalm 77:1-20, Prov. 24:23-25

October 6: Jeremiah 6:16-8:7, Colossians 2:8-23, Psalm 78:1-31, Proverbs 24:26