

# the gospelived

We need to take responsibility for each other's godliness – not only at the level of behavior but of attitudes and underlying idolotries. Paul encourages the Christians in Ephesus to “speak the truth in love” to one another (Ephesians 4:15.). This means recognizing that apparently insignificant moments are actually full of significance.

—**Steve Timmis**, *Total Church* (122)

So we grow towards maturity by “speaking the truth in love” (Ephesians 4:15). We build one another up through the words we say. . . . We need to be communities in which we encourage, challenge, console, rebuke, counsel, exhort and comfort one another with the truth. We need to be communities in which everyone is speaking truth to everyone. In verses 17-24 Paul reminds us why “speaking the truth in love” is central to change. He reminds us firstly in verses 17-19 that the underlying causes of sinful behavior and negative emotions are futile thinking, darkened understanding, ignorant minds, hardened hearts, indulged desires and continual lust. In other words, we think or believe lies instead of trusting God's word (chapter 5) and we desire or worship idols instead of worshiping God (chapter 6).

—**Tim Chester**, *You Can Change* (170)

## Proclaiming the Gospel to Christians

1. If you were to ask the average person, “What is ‘the church’?” what are some of the answers you'd expect to hear? Would it make much of difference if the person was a Christian?
2. Read Ephesians 4:11-16. What metaphor does Paul use to define “the church”? How is this definition different from most people's definition of “the church”?
3. In v. 14, how does Paul describe an immature person?

In light of this description, what are some practical signs of immaturity you can look for both in yourself as well as in other people?

People often reveal their idols (sometimes unknowingly) within their everyday conversations. This is what Jesus meant when he said, “Out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks” (Matt. 12:34). The trouble is, we often don’t listen with discernment (in fact, we often don’t listen at all). What should you listen for when people tell you their stories (whether they’re talking about what’s happened in the past or simply what’s going on right now)?

What are some examples of things they might say?

4. Read v. 15 again. What is the primary way Paul says, we “grow up” as Christians?

What does this tell us about the role that other people play in our growth as believers?

5. In the book *You Can Change*, Tim Chester describes the necessity of both truth and love in the way we go about helping other Christians mature: “Love without truth is like doing heart surgery with a wet fish. But truth without love is like doing heart surgery with a hammer. We will speak the truth effectively only in the context of loving relationships.” How would you describe “love without truth” and “truth without love”?

How have you experienced either of these ineffective communication strategies in your own life?

What keeps people from “speaking the truth in love”? In other words, what holds us back?

6. Have you ever had someone actually “speak the truth in love” to you? What did it look like for them to communicate with that kind of balance? What effect did it have on you?

Can you distill any strategies or principles from that experience?

A non-threatening starting point is to ask discerning questions that help people uncover for themselves what's really motivating them. What sort of questions could you ask to expose the motivations of another person's heart?

7. How can we as a group start to practice these principles?

