

Reflection Questions: ***Ephesians 4:15-25; 1 Corinthians 13:6***

For the message, "Loving the Truth; Truth-ing in Love" given by Pastor Mike Ivancic
at New City Church of Calgary on June 11, 2017

These discussion questions are designed primarily to help you apply the message from the Scriptures by helping you think through application to your personal life, your church life, and your city's life.

You can use these by yourself for reflection, or with your family or small group for discussion.

To review the sermon, go to NewCityChurch.ca/sermons

INTRODUCTION

Pray. Take a moment to pray asking God to guide you in reflecting upon the Scripture text.

Read the Scripture text: Ephesians 4:15-25; 1 Corinthians 13:6

A summary of the sermon: This past week we looked at the concept of truth, especially speaking of truth. Many in our culture have a deep aversion and resistance to claims to truth. It's often believed that making truth claims leads to division, a proud exclusiveness and self-righteousness (e.g. *who are you to tell me. . . what gives you the authority to say. . .*). However, as both modern atheistic philosophers (Michel Foucault, Friedrich Nietzsche) and the Apostle Paul point out the problem with truth is not with believing it or make claims about it (we all do that) which is inevitable. The problem lies with our relationship with the truth.

The natural tendency of the human heart is to misuse, abuse or deny the truth. The Bible tells us that natural inclination of the heart is to suppress, disobey, swerve from, oppose, turn away from and refuse to love the truth. Further, there is a way of speaking truth that is manipulative, controlling and keeps other dependent on you. It is often motivated by selfish desires to have control over people, to exercise power of them (Foucault). Paul will tell us that before we were Christians that we were "futile in our thinking"; our "minds were darkened" and we were "ignorant due to hardness of heart" (i.e. we are ignorant because we are hard-hearted – hard and resistance to the truth).

In contrast, Paul tells us there is a way of speaking truth that make the bearers of truth into servants and bearers into lovers (i.e. serve and love others with the truth rather than control them). He calls this way "speaking the truth in love". This unique perspective unifies truth and love. Love protects and guards truth. Truth pays the back favor and does likewise. Truth and love needs each other and if robbed of each other's companionship they are less themselves (e.g. truth without love is not very truthful, and love with truth isn't very loving).

Paul will tell us that the only way you can understand and do truth is if you see how truth and love was given to you. This truth is learned to us not by principles and propositions but a person – Jesus Christ (v. 20). Did Jesus die because God is truth and God is holy and God is just and wrath on sin must be satisfied? Yes! Or did he die because he loved us and he didn't want to punish us and because he wanted us to be saved and his heart was filled with mercy? Yes! There is the ultimate example of truth and love at once.

When you receive the love and truth of Jesus you can never be condescending, proud and self-righteous to others. So how do you practice truth? First, you are person who is not afraid of the truth about yourself. You can handle criticism because of the truth of God's grace to you. Second, you are teachable and open to be corrected. You are patient and persist with people who disagree you without writing them off since God does this with you. Finally, you are not cowardly and afraid to tell people the truth but you do so with kindness, gentleness, respect and winsomeness. A church that speaks the truth in love is a mature church that "is building itself in love".

QUESTIONS

1. How does this text speak to your life?

- How are you challenged, convicted, encouraged, or surprised by this text?
- What are is your default approach: love without truth (people pleasing); or truth without love?

- Do you have anyone in your life that you have proactively invited and given permission to honestly and candidly speak truth in love to you?

2. How does this text speak to us as a church community?

- What would it look like for us a church community if we are to live out this text in our city?
- Do you think the church stresses truth in its life together or love? Why do you think this is? Does this hold true for New City Church as well? How do we hold and promote both these aspects together so we can grow and mature?
- What other ways are there where we can practice the truth?

3. How does this text speak to our city?

- Does our city need to hear more about truth or love? What do you base that on?

CONCLUSION QUESTION

What is the one thing you want to take away from this study to remember or to make a change in your life.

PRAYER

What are some ways you can turn what you are learning into prayer? List them as bullet points....

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____