

Ephesians 4:15 (HCSB)

But speaking the truth in love, let us grow in every way into Him who is the head—Christ

Theme: truth in love

Point: we grow in Christ together when we speak truth in love

FCF: we are either too nice or too harsh

App: words are the barometer of our spiritual maturity!

Synopsis

corporate growth is caused by the truth of God and the love of God intersecting

intro: avocados gotta be placed in the right **environment** for prolonged periods of time before they become fully matured. you know it's ripe because 1) the **potency** of flavor, and 2) the **pliability** of its shell

title. explain... verse b: growth,

The Environment for Maturity

Where we want to be (the plan) AP!

experiencing and conforming to the fullness of Christ

Galatians 2:19-20, HCSB

I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

This plan is illustrated in Paul's favorite analogy of "growth" as opposed to a once-and-for-all approach

Where we are now (the scope)

anywhere along the spectrum of newborn to death¹ (asymptote)

How to get there AP!

Holiness is not a condition into which you drift - John Stott²

- It is the duration of a well-lived life³

The next 30 minutes are going to be on these two words: truth & love

TRUTH (potency)

More than *not lying*, but confessing the message of the gospel⁴

¹ αυξήσωμεν εἰς αὐτόν employs imagery that is "organic, referring to the growth of human beings from childhood (cf. νεπιοί, infants; v14) toward maturity." Frank Thielman. *Ephesians*. BECNT. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010). 285.

² quoted by James C. Wilhoit. *Spiritual Formation as if the Church Mattered*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008). 39.

³ This is particularly telling in Paul's use of the phrase, "let us grow". Harold W. Hoehner describes the word Paul uses (αυξήσωμεν) as an aorist subjunctive (ingressive), which means that contrary to the certainty of an indicative, it is "denoting a state or condition and signifying entrance into that state or condition." *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002). 566.

⁴ Ernest Best posits that "the truth is the gospel (see on 1:13; 4:21; 6:14; cf. Gal 2:5,14; 5:7; Rom 1:18 Col 1:5; 2 Tim 2:15)." *International Critical Commentary: Ephesians*. (New York, NY: T&T Clark, 1998). 407. cf. Peter T. O'Brien, "the apostle is not exhorting his readers to truthfulness in general or speaking honestly with one another, however important or appropriate this may be. Rather, he wants all of them to be members of a 'confessing' church." *The Letter to the Ephesians*. PNTC. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999). 311.

Acknowledgment⁵

- memorization (personal)
- meditation (personal)
- discussions (communal)
- classes (communal)
- comm-groups (communal)

Learning is not limited to Sunday morning programs (though these supplement)
It is the confession of faith in every sphere of life

4-6 (corporate confession of the truth) **AP!**

11-12 (gifted people to teach the truth)

13 (unity based on our mutual understanding of the truth)

14 (w/out which we are susceptible to false teachings)

One half of the environment = the dynamic exchange of truth in relationship.

How do we navigate our beliefs without steamrolling each other?⁶

3 tiers will show us what beliefs are worth dividing over or not⁷

1. **kingdom-minded** (fundamental and essential issues)

1. e.g., “the church stands or falls on justification” - Luther
 1. S.B. prayer (we believe Jesus rose!)

2. **tribal-minded** (defines methods & organization)

1. e.g., ecclesiology
 1. we have certain structures that affects how we run our corporate gathering. Worship style, baptism, spiritual gifts, leadership, etc.
 1. but these shouldn't exclude fellowship, though it changes worship

3. **family-minded** (issues that are fun to discuss)

1. going as deeeeeeeep as you wanna go!
 1. e.g., eschatology
 1. these should not divide a local church, though we should experience robust discussion with such things

⁵ I'm getting this word from Clinton E. Arnold, who believes that “‘Confessing the truth’ is a better translation than ‘speaking the truth’ since the latter can be read as simply an exhortation to truthfulness in speech. In this context, however, it conveys the more specific sense of *accepting the truth of the gospel, speaking it out loud in the corporate gatherings of worship, talking about it with fellow believers, and upholding it firmly*. (emphasis added). *Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: Ephesians*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010). 269.

⁶ This navigation is implied by Paul's prepositional phrase “with love.”

⁷ I adapted this from R. Albert Mohler's outline of the same in, *He Is Not Silent: Preaching in a Postmodern World*. (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2008). 109-110.

LOVE (pliability)

This dynamic exchange is in contrast to the hucksters (v14)... (cunning in techniques of deceit)
Not only is Paul condemning the wrong message, but the wrong delivery as well!

Andrew T. Lincoln

AP!

Believers cannot make use of the same means of manipulation and deceit as those who are ready to lead believers astray. Instead, they proclaim the truth by means of love⁸

The content of our message must be in truth--the delivery must be in love

Clinton E. Arnold quoting John Stott,

“Thank God there are those in the contemporary church who are determined at all costs to defend and uphold God’s revealed truth. But sometimes they are conspicuously lacking in love. When they think they smell heresy, their nose begins to twitch, their muscles ripple, and the light of battle enters their eye. They seem to enjoy nothing more than a fight.” The truth of the gospel needs to be proclaimed and upheld within the community of believers. But it needs to be done with a heart that is tender and concerned about the feelings, growth, and well-being of fellow believers.⁹

People say, “The fact that I’m telling the truth is an act of love.” But Paul says, the delivery must be in love.

1 Corinthians 13:1-3 (HCSB)

If I speak human or angelic languages but do not have love, I am a sounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith so that I can move mountains but do not have love, I am nothing. And if I donate all my goods to feed the poor, and if I give my body in order to boast but do not have love, I gain nothing.

Truth without love doesn’t constitute a maturing environment.

WHAT IS LOVE?

1 Corinthians 13:4-7 (HCSB)

Love is patient, love is kind. Love does not envy, is not boastful, is not conceited, does not act improperly, is not selfish, is not provoked, and does not keep a record of wrongs. Love finds no joy in unrighteousness but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends.

When you speak with someone who disagrees with you...are you patient with them?

When you are talking to someone going down a destructive path

When correcting someone, are you improper? (syn. unsuitable, detracting from one’s reputation)

When you are speaking to your kids...do you bear all things?

When you are talking to your spouse...do you keep a record of wrongs?¹⁰

⁸ Andrew T. Lincoln. *Word Biblical Commentary: Ephesians. Vol. 42* (Thomas Nelson, 1990). 260.

⁹ Clinton E. Arnold. *Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: Ephesians.* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010). 269.

¹⁰ what does love require of a person in an abusive relationship? Some would wrongly state that a person must remain in that relationship because love “bears all things.” But love is multi-faceted, and cares about the persons on both sides of the relationship. In addition to bearing all things, it also finds no joy in unrighteousness, but rejoices in the truth. So in order to fulfill the calling to love, the person being abused must also remove themselves from danger.

Love is multi-faceted. **AP!**

- speaking to one another in love (v15)
- accepting one another in love (v2)

Love is expressed with grace and truth¹¹

If we grow, our tendency is to grow in one or the other

1. sin-sniffers

- If we point out faults not thinking of how it makes others feel, we blind them to truth
 - effect: self-righteousness, condescension, patronize, bullying,¹² spiritual abuse, lack of holiness and growth.

2. peace-makers

- If we let things go without truth, we leave people in sin
 - effect: relativism, lack of holiness and growth, bitterness/resentment

But cultivating love (grace & truth) brings these effects [doctrine is for growing]

- exposure of sin (confession of truth)
- repentance (confession of sin)
- restoration (effect of love)
 - Jesus and the woman (John 4)

Growth is happening when truth and love intersect. **AP!**

1 Peter 1:22 (NASB)

Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart

Put different, words are the barometer of your spiritual maturity

- Family
- Work
- Recreation
- Behind closed doors

Good caveat...

¹¹ F.F. Bruce points this relationship out in *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1984). 84.

¹² "Believers console, strengthen, and correct one another through the gospel and so build up their communities...our understanding of the participle avoids any clash between the two virtues of truth and love and any implication here that we must decide when truth needs to be foresworn for the sake of love; this is of course a genuine problem though not present here. If believers are to sustain one another through the gospel then 'love' eliminates certain ways they may do this; the gospel should not be used to manipulate or scold them; they should not be hectored or patronized ('I know the truth, you do not')." Ernest Best. *International Critical Commentary: Ephesians*. (New York, NY: T&T Clark, 1998). 407-408.

Luke 6:45 (NIV)

For out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks.¹³

We hear this, and say “I need to speak better and kinder” in order to grow more mature. I said: words show your heart. You heard: if I speak better, I’ll get better.
NO! By speaking, you reveal that you are NOT as well as you thought.

James 3:6-10 (HCSB)

And the tongue is a fire. The tongue, a world of unrighteousness, is placed among the parts of our bodies. It pollutes the whole body, sets the course of life on fire, and is set on fire by hell. Every sea creature, reptile, bird, or animal is tamed and has been tamed by man, but no man can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. We praise our Lord and Father with it, and we curse men who are made in God’s likeness with it. Praising and cursing come out of the same mouth. My brothers, these things should not be this way

Problem: hearts are NOT perfect

We need a Savior who speaks truth to our need, yet loves us graciously!

App: look upon the WORD spoken to us in “grace and truth”

John 1:14 (HCSB)

The Word became flesh and took up residence among us. We observed His glory, the glory as the One and Only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth

wanna know where your transformation comes from?
not from being nicer or being right. It comes from Jesus’ power.
If you qualify your salvation with something you’ve done...
You may not be saved.

Our words exposes our sinful heart.
God’s Word heals and changes it.

You gotta in the right **environment** for prolonged periods of time before you start to mature.

Good environment to be: live in **the tension** of grace

knowing we are better than we used to be, (by grace)
but we can go deeper than we are now. (by grace)

¹³ for his mouth speaks from that which fills his heart (NASB)