



Speaking the Truth in Love

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"Explaining spiritual realities with Spirit-taught words."

1 Corinthians 2:13

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Concerning the phrase "speaking the truth in love" which we find in Ephesians 4:15...

To begin with, a more literal and more accurate translation of the Greek word *aletheuo* (Strong's # 226) would be: **"being truthful"**, or **"walking in truth"**, or **"living out the truth"** – "with love". (*Vincent's Word Studies*) In other words, "walking the talk".

However, we **are** also called to **speak** the truth – not only live it. For many years, I've pleaded with the Lord: *"Honestly, I don't know how to do that. I understand loving; and I understand speaking truth; but I have to admit with me it's an 'either-or', I just haven't figured out how to do both at the same time!"*

Some observations I've made over the years: There is the saying, *"The truth hurts."* I would like to suggest that the truth only effectively "hurts" those who are open to receiving it. Those who are closed to the truth, reject the truth, or even suppress the truth, don't take it to heart, and may not even take it in at all. It may "anger" them, but it doesn't "hurt" them.

But how can you tell if someone open or not open to receiving truth? Well firstly, we should look for an urging of the Holy Spirit, indicating, one way or another, as to whether or not a person is open to receive a particular truth at a particular time.

Secondly, if we do feel led to speak, we don't need to "strike the rock twice". Remember the story in Numbers 20:10-13, when Moses "struck the rock twice"? The Lord was angry with him - "Because you did not trust in Me, to treat Me as holy in the sight of the sons of Israel...." Moses was instructed to just speak the word of the Lord, but because of his own lack of faith in God, he felt he himself needed to do more – "strike the rock twice" - in order to get the people to hear and obey. In the Lord's eyes, Moses was attempting to replace God's authority (resident in His word) with his own personal authority through some type of authoritative display. It turned out that was quite a serious mistake in God's eyes – Moses was forbidden to enter into the Promised Land! For us, the moral of the story is: *People can't receive the truth until the Spirit of Truth has prepared and enabled them to.* It really doesn't matter how effectively you communicate it. Simply speak it, and leave it – with the person and the Holy Spirit.



I think it is more often the case that there may not be any need to "hurt" people with the truth: Sometimes Jesus spoke the truth in no uncertain terms, for example to the Scribes and Pharisees. (Matthew 23:13-36; Luke 11:37-54) But often, *He posed questions - soul-searching questions that would point the listener to truth.* In the gospels, we will find 307 questions Jesus asked people. Here is just one example from each of the four gospels:

¹³ "Now when Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He was asking His disciples, '**Who do people say that the Son of Man is?**' ¹⁴ And they said, 'Some *say* John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; and *still* others, Jeremiah, or one of the *other* prophets.' ¹⁵ He said to them, '**But who do you yourselves say that I am?**'" Matthew 16:13-15

In the verses which follow, we see that Jesus asks for, and directs His disciples to seek for themselves, a personal, God-given,

revelation of Himself in order to be a disciple of His kingdom and a member of the Church (Ekklesia) He is building.

¹⁷ “As He was setting out on a journey, a man ran up to Him and knelt before Him, and asked Him, ‘Good Teacher, what shall I do so that I may inherit eternal life?’ ¹⁸ But Jesus said to him, ‘**Why do you call Me good?** No one is good except God alone.’ Mark 10:18

Jesus knew this “Rich Young Ruler” saw Him only as a “good teacher”, and not as “Lord”. He also knew the man thought he could please God through his own righteousness. And Jesus knew the man ultimately needed a revelation of “the righteousness of God by faith”. (Romans 1:17; 3:22; 9:30; 10:3) So, in the verses which follow, we see Jesus challenging the man’s self-righteousness. All this so that the man would *discover for himself* that he could not please God – without Jesus directly saying that to him.

² “And they declared, saying to Him, ‘Tell us by what authority You are doing these things, or who is the one who gave You this authority?’ ³ But He replied to them, ‘I will also ask you a question, and you tell Me: **4 Was the baptism of John from heaven or from men?**’” Luke 20:2-4

From the verses which follow, we see that these men needed to eventually recognize for themselves the authority which comes from God alone.

³³ "Therefore, Pilate entered the Praetorium again, and summoned Jesus and said to Him, 'You are the King of the Jews?' ³⁴ Jesus answered, 'Are you saying this on your own, or did others tell you about Me?'" John 18:33-34

Jesus was challenging Pilate to go beyond people-pleasing politics, by asking if Pilate had a personal revelation of Him.

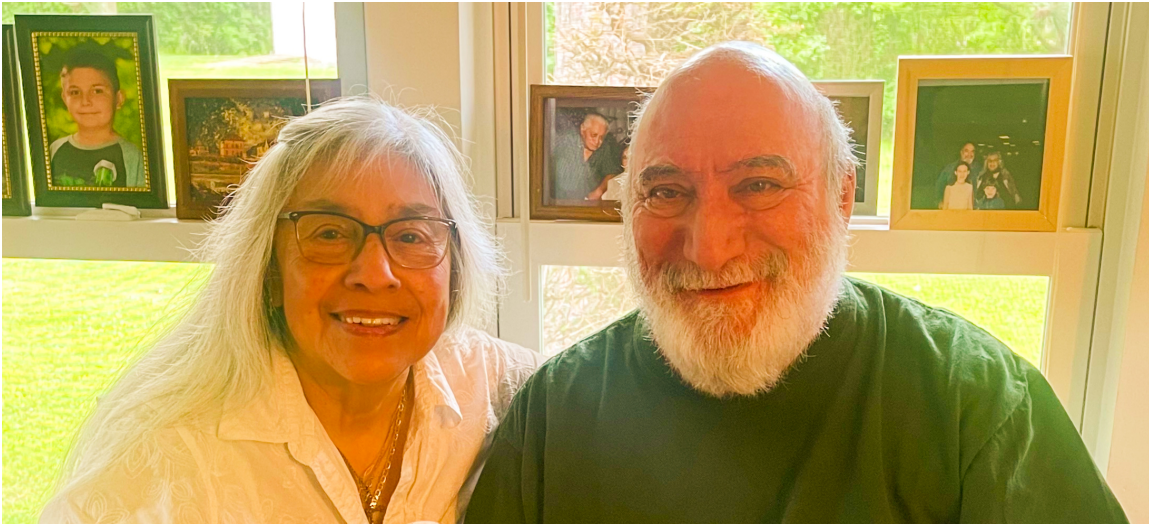
I believe that when those who are open to the truth are asked a soul-searching question, they themselves "hear" the truth speaking to their hearts even without having to hear it from you with their ears. I think more often than not, following Jesus' example of *asking soul-searching questions is a more effective way of pointing to the truth.*

But if we are led to speak words, it is best to make it straight scripture, even if it is paraphrased. God's words work so much more effectively than ours.

And we must remember, we are not *peddling truths* (2 Corinthians 2:17) – we are offering "the costly pearl of great value" (Matthew

13:46) which costs ALL. (Mark 10:21-31; Luke 14:25-34) So, we don't need to "cast our pearls" to people who don't know the difference between pearls and kernels of corn. They will just trample it. (Matthew 7:6) There is only one absolute Truth - God's Truth - and His Spirit is perfectly capable of speaking it into human hearts. It may be that more often than we think, *the perfect vehicle for the work of the Spirit of Truth is a question posed by us.*

Bill & Frances Furioso
~ At Christ's Table ~



Bill Furioso and his wife, Frances, have been married for more than 40 years, and have two children, four grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren.

Bill and Frances served as missionaries in South Africa for thirteen years making disciples, establishing churches, and training church leaders. Over a span of 40 years, they also traveled extensively in an itinerant Bible teaching ministry which took them to hundreds of gatherings on four continents ministering in churches, conferences, spiritual formation seminars, and home gatherings. They have shepherded several churches, discipled many to Christ, and mentored church leaders in the USA and abroad.

Being an avid student by nature, Bill has done both formal and informal study in various fields including Education, Music, Philosophy and Theology. As a writer, he has authored many publications which are distributed worldwide. Because of Bill's disabilities resulting from a spinal cord injury, he can no longer travel, so their ministries of writing, recording, distributing, mentoring, and correspondence are now shared primarily via the Internet... www.AtChristsTable.org

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