

Speak the Truth in Love

by Shane Idleman

We must speak the truth in love, even if it's difficult, to spare others tremendous pain and to guide them towards the light of absolute truth.

Scripture: Jeremiah 17:9, Jeremiah 20:9, John 4:23, Acts 20:31, 1 John 5:13

Topics: "Absolute Truth", "Speaking Love"

Description

Shane Idleman emphasizes the importance of standing firm in absolute truth, likening it to a lighthouse that guides and protects amidst the darkness and challenges of relativism and postmodernism. He highlights the danger of departing from absolute truth, leading to a mechanical approach to Christianity and a loss of spiritual guidance. Idleman stresses the need to speak the truth in love, even when it may be perceived as narrow-minded or intolerant, drawing from personal experiences and biblical examples like the apostle Paul and Jesus.

Transcript

Darkness and dense fog forced the captain to maneuver anxiously through uncertain waters. The eerie silence was shattered as he faced his greatest fear. Through the thick fog, a faint light signaled disaster. He was on a collision course; another light was fast approaching.

In a desperate attempt to avert calamity, the captain signaled: "COLLISION INEVITABLE. TURN TWENTY DEGREES STARBOARD!" To the captain's amazement, the light signaled back: "COLLISION CONFIRMED...CHANGE COURSE IMMEDIATELY!"

Now near panic, the captain signaled: "HIGHEST RANKING OFFICER IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY--ALTER COURSE IMMEDIATELY!" The oncoming light did not move, but signaled: "ALTER COURSE IMMEDIATELY!"

Infuriated that this small vessel would challenge his authority and endanger both ship and crew, the captain gave a last alert: "FINAL WARNING: ALTER COURSE. WILL OPEN FIRE. I AM A BATTLESHIP!"

The final signal was chilling: "CAPTAIN, WITH ALL DUE RESPECT, ALTER YOUR COURSE. I AM A LIGHTHOUSE!"

I've heard this story numerous times, yet I'm always reminded that absolute truth, like a lighthouse, stands solid, immovable, and unyielding as a guiding light.

A weapon of destruction has set its sites on our nation, our homes, and our families. Relativism and postmodernism continue to challenge truth, but to their own destruction. Attacking absolute truth is like challenging a lighthouse. It cannot be negotiated or bargained with. Truth cannot move.

We live in a culture that often describes conservative Christians as "ignorant" and "narrow-minded" simply because we claim that we can know the truth. Postmoderns, on the other hand, often interpret only by experience and feeling. Truth is relative to the situation rather than absolute. Feelings shouldn't lead but follow: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17:9). Although feelings can be good and God-ordained, when it comes to making decisions, we shouldn't interpret the Scriptures in the light of our feelings, but rather, interpret our feelings through the light of Scripture.

When people, groups, denominations, or movements depart from absolute truth, and thus quench and grieve the Spirit of God, they become mechanical in their approach to Christianity and lose the ability to guide. The Word of God is not in their hearts "like a burning fire" (Jeremiah 20:9), but relative, powerless, and debatable. This is what we see today; many are not truly worshipping God, as Jesus said, "in spirit and truth" (John 4:23). Unfortunately, those Christians who are sounding the alarm are often categorized as irrational, judgmental, bigoted, and intolerant. But how can we warn if we won't confront, correct if we won't challenge, and contend if we won't question? We must speak the truth in love.

When my daughter was 18 months old, my wife and I took her to a local feline zoo. As we walked through the facility, we were entertained by a variety of small leopards, tigers, and other exotic felines. My daughter enjoyed seeing all the "kitty cats."

Before leaving, we took a ride on a miniature train. As we rounded the first turn, I was amazed and shocked to see a large lion leaning against the chain-link fence with his massive paws slamming against it.

As the train moved slowly through the lion exhibit, I looked down, and to my horror, my daughter was unbuckling her seat belt. She shouted, "Daddy, hug the lion; play with the lion," as she desperately tried to get out of the train. I replied with an emphatic, "No," as I pulled her tightly to me and refastened her seat belt. Needless to say, she wasn't happy. She began crying, hoping that it would change my mind. To her, and others looking on from a distance, I may have appeared narrow-minded, judgmental, and intolerant, but had I let my daughter play with the lion, she might have been mauled to death. That's the truth in love: loving enough to tell the truth, even if it hurts--to spare others tremendous pain.

In Acts 20:31, the apostle Paul spoke the truth in love as reflected in his statement, "Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears." Was he wrong, out of step with the culture, and arrogant? Or was he speaking the truth in love? Even a brief review of the New Testament confirms this. Jesus perfectly balanced grace and mercy with confrontation and correction. He wanted people to know the truth even if it offended. Oswald Chambers said, "The words of the Lord hurt and offend until there is nothing left to hurt and offend." The Bible was written so that people would know the truth-- the truth about God, creation, sin, and redemption. In reality, truth invites scrutiny; whereas, error runs from it (cf. 1 John 5:13). We are not called to make truth tolerable but to make it clear.

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