

The Cost of Speaking the Truth

by Shane Idleman

Speaking the truth in love is a costly endeavor, but it is necessary to share God's gracious gift with others and lead them to salvation through Christ.

Scripture: Jeremiah 20:9, John 16:2, Romans 10:9, 2 Timothy 4:1, 2 Timothy 4:3

Topics: "Speaking Truth", "Christian Integrity"

Description

Shane Idleman shares a powerful message on the cost of speaking the truth, recounting a challenging experience at an American Baptist conference where division arose over ordaining those who embrace the homosexual lifestyle. Despite facing backlash, including hate mail and threats, he emphasizes the importance of boldly proclaiming God's truth, even when it leads to controversy and opposition. Idleman urges believers to prioritize God's approval over the applause of men, warning against the dangers of compromising truth for the sake of tolerance and acceptance in today's lukewarm culture.

Transcript

There is a cost to speaking the truth. This realization came nearly 10-years ago when I was asked to speak at the annual conference for the American Baptist...unaware that they were about to divide over ordaining those who embrace the homosexual lifestyle.

Within minutes of beginning my message, people began to leave the large auditorium. Although it was clear that I had struck a nerve, the clearest message came when a woman approached the platform and attempted to disrupt the service. I told her that I would be happy to talk with her after the service.

Afterwards, a large line of people waited to talk to me. I will never forget the very angry 12-year old girl. My heart sank when she said, "I hate everything you had to say. It was mean and hateful!" Though shocked by her comment, I was moved with compassion for such a young life filled with passion for the wrong things. Others asked if I ever received death threats.

As I boarded the plane, I was perplexed and confused. I prayed, "Lord, what's wrong. I'm simply speaking Your word and genuinely loving these people." The words of Titus Brandsma (martyred at Dachau under Hitler) began to ring true, "Those who want to win the world for Christ must have the courage to come into conflict with it."

I buckled my seat, anxious to head for the familiar comfort of home...but I knew that my life had made a turn. This gospel of love had, ironically, become a message of hate to those who oppose it: "A time is coming when anyone who kills you will think he is offering a service to God" (John 16:2).

Speaking the truth was going to cost me (and it will cost you). I knew that my kids would someday be old enough to ask why the hate mail, mean remarks, indignant looks...while most feedback is very encouraging, those who are upset will often stop at nothing to get their point across.

Do I enjoy this? That goes without answer. Although many applaud boldness, if the truth be told, life would be much easier if I took a secular job and avoided controversy. But I cannot. God radically changed my life by the power of His Spirit through His truth: "It's like a fire in my bones! I am worn out trying to hold it in! I can't do it!" (Jeremiah 20:9).

One of my great concerns is for the pulpits of America: many are exchanging truth for tolerance, boldness for balance, and conviction for cowardness. We don't want to offend lest we lose our audience. But truth is controversial--it convicts and challenges. We are not to seek the applause of men but the applause of God. The pulpit inevitably sets the tone of the religious climate of the nation. The lukewarm, sex-saturated culture simply reflects the lack of conviction in the pulpit as well as the pew. Granted, there are many wonderful pastors and churches--I appreciate their ministry, but, as a whole, the church has drifted off course.

The only difference between believers and unbelievers is that believers are simply forgiven--they have embraced God's gracious gift of forgiveness, wholeness, and restoration through Christ's sacrifice on the cross. Because of the cross, sin has been conquered and atoned for (cf. Romans 6). "If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved" (Romans 10:9).

My goal is to simply share God's gracious gift. If being labeled narrow-minded, legalistic, judgmental, arrogant, and intolerant is the cost of speaking the truth in love, so be it. In 2 Timothy 4:1-2, Paul instructs Timothy, "I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction."

Paul is saying to preach the difficult truths as well as the joyful ones; preach the cross and the new life; preach hell and preach heaven; preach damnation and preach salvation; preach sin and preach grace; preach wrath and preach love; preach judgment and preach mercy; preach obedience and preach forgiveness; preach that God "is love," but don't forget that God is just. It is the love of God that compels us to share all of His truth.

Paul continues, "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths" (2 Tim. 4:3-4). This should sound an alarm in the heart of every preacher, pastor, and teacher to seriously reevaluate their ministry--are we encouraging sin by not warning? If so, we're heading down a dangerous path. A.W. Tozer reminds us that we'll stand to be judged someday: "That makes me both love Him and fear Him! I love Him because He is my Savior, and I fear Him because He is my Judge." We must speak the truth in love despite the cost.

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