

Living Up to Our Name Speaking the Truth in Love

Introduction

Tell you that I bit off more than I can chew for this
I'm uncertain of how this is going to work out

Steve Jobs – Your Calling is Greater

So did anybody hear about Steve Jobs death this week? What did you think of his life?

- He is being called a genius and compared by some to Henry Ford and Alexander Graham Bell.
- He is responsible in many ways for the personal computer revolution.
- Mary Beth loves her IPAD
- All the staff here except Zach use Macs
- I have a Mac and really like it
- His products changed the world and have blessed many of us
- He was to many a great man, a genius that will be missed by many

But did you know that Steve Jobs was Adopted and that his birth parents were graduate students here at the UW Madison ?

Question

- What could have happened if Jobs was Adopted by our Father in Heaven
- What could have happened if Jobs great gifts were used for the glory of the Lord for which they were created?
- What kind of eternal impact could he have had?

Possible Answers

- He might not have been well known
- He might have been nicer to get along with
- He might have used his great creativity to grow the kingdom
- He might still have built Apple but he could have given glory to God and his creative genius rather than to himself
- He might have reconciled with his earthly father

Your calling is greater than Steve Jobs' – you can make an impact that will last forever. Steve Jobs impact will fade away over time

- I believe that Mark and Ron Lindy's impact was far greater for the Kingdom of God than that of Steve Jobs' and they didn't have the same kind of fame in this life. In heaven it will be different.

Slide: This is a picture of worship at IRIS Ministries in Africa

What has one gifted husband and wife (Heidi and Roland Baker) done for the Kingdom of God

- They changed a country
- They changed the world
- They've seen thousands come in to the Kingdom of God
- Who knows what else the Lord has done through them

- They have glorified God with their lives

What about us? When do we give glory to God and make an eternal impact on creation...

- When we serve God with our gifts and possessions,
- When we help another person begin a relationship,
- When we clothe the poor,
- When we feed the hungry,
- When we shelter the homeless
- When we help one another grow in their relationship with God
- When we make every effort to keep the bond of unity
- When we love one another
- When we worship the creator with our lives

We have a calling that far exceeds the calling Steve Jobs had. Steve is famous on the earth and will be for a long time, we may never be known by the masses. But our calling is not for us it's for Him and it's Him to one whose fame is eternal and calling is above every name on heaven and earth.

When we are his children we give glory to God and make an eternal everlasting impact on creation.

Overview of my message

Today I'm continuing my series called Living up to our Name
The topic this morning is "Speaking the truth in love" and comes from Paul's letter to the Ephesians. Specifically Ephesians 4:15.

Right after my last message I felt strongly that this is what I was supposed to speak on. When I would ask the Lord what to say I just kept hearing the phrase, more like a command, 'speak the truth in love.'

BTW I'm not talking about speaking the truth in love like

- When my wife says to me "Honey, you seem to be putting a little weight lately" (she never says this to me it's a joke)
- Or my fear that as I continue to lose hair on the top of my head my children say, 'Hey dad you're starting to look like grandpa!'

It's probably closer to the times I have to confront one of my children about some bad behavior of theirs and they say 'But Dad you do that too.'

- And I say yes but I'm quick to realize it and apologize and I never justify it.
- And I also say, 'Okay, do what I say not what I do.'

My main point is this, we as a church need to improve our communication if we are ever going to grow up to the next level and fulfill the calling that the Lord has for us as a body here in Madison. Grow up by speaking the truth in love.

Putting this message together I felt that I needed to cover not only the key verse, but those leading up to it as well. So today we'll be looking at Ephesians 4:1-5, 11-16.

Live a life worthy of the Name you've received

We have a great calling, greater than the life that Steve Jobs lived. And Paul agrees with this and encourages us to live that live in a worthy manner and shows us how this is done.

Ephesians **4:1b** Live a life worthy of the calling you have received. **2** Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. **3** Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. **4** There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; **5** one Lord, one faith, one baptism; **6** one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

Let's look at Verse 1b: **Live a life worthy of the calling you have received.**

Paul in his letter to the Ephesians wants to encourage them to be and become who they were created to be. When I say this I'm talking about becoming in both in an individual sense and as a community, the body of Christ.

The word 'calling' is also means 'named'. Another way of saying this might be 'live a life worthy of the Name you have received.'

What is this name we have? Jesus

This calling we have is the calling to be sons and daughters of God, we have been given his name as all children receive their fathers' name. We are called to live our life in worship glorifying our Lord with our lives. Together being a place where God dwells, the place of his presence and the means by which Christ is made know to the world.

This is important because everywhere we go, the world's image of Jesus is largely based on how we live not just alone but more importantly together. How we love and reach out to one another is key. We are his hands, his feet, his body to the world. We are Jesus to them and they decide what Jesus is like based on how we live and love each other and the world around us.

The Calling Paul is talking about is the calling we have to be a dwelling, a temple, a building, a people, a body in which Christ dwells and through which Christ and his love are made known to the world. We are called to be Jesus to the world around us. This is the name we have all been given written on our hearts. When we are gathered together in Jesus name the Holy Spirit is with us and Jesus is in our midst. For he dwells in us and we in Him, known wherever we go.

Story of Student at the UW

I remember my first trip here to Madison in Fall of 1998. We were doing a focus group on students' thoughts and feelings about Christianity and Jesus. The most outspoken and angry young woman was from Wheaton Ill where I had just

graduated from grad school. As we were talking, I remember clearly seeing in the Spirit the word 'suicide' written on her forehead. I felt such compassion for her and sadness. This girl who had grown up around so many who knew Jesus and called themselves Christians, yet she was filled with so much anger and disgust about them. Also she hated herself, or so it seemed from the word written on her head. Where had the body of Christ in Wheaton gone wrong? What had happened that turned her against them and against Christians.

There is a book out called "They Like Jesus but not the Church" speaking about how the current generation of students like the Jesus they see in the Bible but can't stand organized religion.

Question: Why is it that students today like Jesus but not the church?

Answers: Maybe they see our hypocrisy, how so often Christians don't seem really different than the world around us but often claim to be better. Maybe they see how we don't get along very well with one another. Maybe they're too idealistic. What do you think?

Live United

The next two verses really set the foundation for our relationships with one another in the body. These verses are key for 'Speaking the Truth in Love'.

2 Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. 3 Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.

Paul goes on and in the same statement encourages us to make every effort in humility and gentleness to protect the unity we have. This is a unity that we are born into when we receive Jesus and become God's children. This is a unity that comes by the Spirit of God living in us (this is singular and collective us) one body, one Spirit, one God, one Lord...

To fulfill the calling to be Jesus' body, or his temple as another verse puts it, we need to make every effort to work together. Why?

We all know how hard it is to get along with each other. To stay together to work together it's not always easy. Is it? We are easily scattered and I believe that is because the enemy knows the power we have to change the world when we love one another and make Jesus known.

Question: How many of you have been apart of a church that has split or seen many people leave because they were hurt or angry by something someone in leadership did or didn't do?

It seems that no matter what gifts God gives us we still have the ability to throw it away or wreck it. There is a whole other message here about putting off the old self and putting on the new. Paul actually talks about that in this passage but that's not what we're focusing on today.

So in vs. 2 & 3 Paul implores, encourages, exhorts us to do everything we can to keep the unity that already exists. We don't need to make the unity, we need to keep it, to grow it in love. We need to fight and work hard to make this happen.

So how can we do this? How can we live our life worthy of the calling we have received in our unity in Christ. To fulfill our calling we must be unified.

We have been talking for years about going up to the next level. I really believe that part of this is growing up into Christ so we can reach the next level of intimacy with him together and fulfill our greater calling to be him to this community.

Growing up into Christ

So how do we grow up in Christ together?

Let's skip ahead to vs. 11.

11 So Christ himself gave some.... **12** to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up **13** until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

First we must allow those whom Christ has given to equip us for service and then do our part

We must be built up in faith and the knowledge (heart and head) of Jesus. We must together know him intimately. And God has gifted some to equip us for works of service and to help us grow in the knowledge of God and faith in him.

Picture: A man building a wall. The word 'built up' is the same word for building a building. Imagine that this man is one of those called and chosen to equip the body. With Christ's help and leadership he is helping the people of God find their place within the temple.

Supporting Passage: Earlier in Ephesians Paul talks about the church as a temple, a place where God dwells. And we are all being built together as stones to create a dwelling place for God.

Ephesians 2:19-22 **19** Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household, **20** built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. **21** In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. **22** And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

One of the things we need to do is to support, encourage and follow the leadership of those God places in these roles. They are not trying to control the body, although this can sometimes happen. They are trying to build up the body into maturity in Christ so that we can truly together live our life worthy of the calling we have received.

Second, we must learn to act maturely and 'Speak the Truth in Love' to each other

14 Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. **15** Instead, speaking (as we speak) the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the head, that is, Christ.

Vs 14: Paul says that as we are growing in Christ together that we will stop acting immaturely.

Here is the picture I get when I read verse 14. It's the picture of a raft or any boat without a keel.

Question: What is the purpose of a keel?

Answer: The rudimentary purpose of the keel is to convert the sideways motion of the wind when it is abeam into forward motion – to keep us going straight.

Without a keel the boat is just pushed and blown whatever way the wind blows.

A person without truth as a guide is like a boat without a keel and are easily blow off course, anything that sounds good or feeds a need within them can easily sway or redirect them.

When we are young in the faith and knowledge of God we are infants – immature, ignorant of truth, Tossed about, blown here and there by teaching or cunning and craftiness in scheming – easily swayed by people and led down false paths and into darkness again.

Vs 15: Yet as we mature in Christ we learn to 'Speak the Truth' in love. And this speaking of truth matures us more. This truth becomes our keel that keeps us going in the right direction.

What does this really mean to 'Speak the Truth' in Love?

The Greek word we translate 'speak' means more than speak, it means embody – speak truth, do truth, live truth. So live, speak, embody God's reality, truth in his divine, unselfish, sacrificial love

The Greek word Truth means speaking reality into a person's life, making a record of what *God* deems is truth, not what I deem as truth or what I feel. (From HELPS Word Studies)

Often we think of this passage as speaking of saying hard things to one another. Having conversations about how we feel. That's not really what this verse is saying – it's not about telling people how they make you feel it's about speaking reality and truth.

I'm not saying discount your feelings when I say this, I'm just pointing out that feelings aren't necessarily facts. It is important to let someone know when they hurt your feelings and to work on your relationship together. But just know that the reason your feelings were hurt could be as much or more about you as the person who offended you.

We must make every effort in humility and gentleness to keep the bond of peace. So it's important to share if something they did hurt you feelings and if you're that someone to listen with gentleness and humility.

These truths can come from knowledge and knowing of a person, from personal interaction with them, or a word of knowledge or wisdom from God.

Note: It gives credence to what you say when you live out what you speak. I speak this reality because I am, want to, trying to live it out myself. Doesn't mean that all you speak you've mastered but you are trying – no hypocrisy here.

Ephesians 4:15 (Amplified Bible) **15** Rather, let our lives lovingly [a] express truth [in all things, speaking truly, dealing truly, living truly]. Enfolded in love, let us grow up in every way and in all things into Him Who is the Head, [even] Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed One).

This passage, speaking truth in love, is really about speaking reality, the truth of Jesus into someone.

- What is it about a person that is causing the kinds of actions that hurt them or others?
 - o Maybe a lack of humility or gentleness that needs to be pointed out.
- What is it about a person that blesses you and shows you the reality of Jesus in them?
 - o Maybe they have the gift of exhortation or a gentle and humble spirit, point it out, speak this truth to them.
 - o Truth is not just hard things, it can be exhortations as well
 - o I believe we need to do more of this – exhort one another to love and good deeds.
 - o If we make this a focus it will make having the hard conversations easier – people will trust us more
- Or even who is God and what does He have for them?
 - o What is he saying to them. This could be a prophetic word you get for a person.
 - o It could just be a verse the Lord gives you.
- It could be speaking the truth and opposing lovingly some false doctrine that they believe.

This truth is the truth of who Jesus is and what the Word teaches us. It is the truth that the Spirit reveals to us. It is in essence Jesus himself that we speak over and

into one another. So that we grow in knowing him and in faith in Him and what he has done, will do in and through us.

And it's to be spoken in Love

Love = agape – unconditional, without expectation of return for us. Divine love.

I have to go back to vs. 2 and 3 and say that Paul addresses what this looks like when he says...

2 Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.

So we speak reality (his Word, his Spirit led utterances) to one another in divine love in order to build up and grow the body into the image of Christ

- Note the word build up is the same word used to build a building.

What does Speaking the Truth in Love look like? Examples

Example 1

In response to this talk and my previous talk, a few people in church have encouraged me. They've said, in truth and love, that I have a good teaching gift that has really blessed them. I'm not receiving this as flattery, because they're not saying this to get something from me, but rather as a means of conveying truth.

When we see something in someone in the body and we thank them or call something out, we're speaking the truth in love.

Example 2

I talked with a fellow InterVarsity staff this week with who I have a very good relationship. He mentioned to me that he saw a student whom we both know, a Christian, standing in line for a Palm reading at a school fair. I asked him if he exhorted her to not see the Palm reader. He said no, he was on his way somewhere and she seemed busy. My response back to him was that it's his responsibility to warn her away from such things, as someone God has placed in her life to shepherd her. I told him gently but firmly that he needed to go back to her and talk and possibly pray with her about what had happened. He also needs to ask her and the Lord for forgiveness.

When I spoke with this staff I was speaking the truth in love. When he goes and speaks with his student, he will be speaking the truth and my hope is that it will be done in love.

If you see a brother or sister sinning or making choices that will harm them you need to speak the truth in love.

Matthew 18:15 "If a brother or sister sins (or sins against you), go and point out the fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over.

Example 3

While serving at a church in the inner-city of Chicago

Example 4 Speaking truth to self in love

Group Time What about you? Can you think of an example this week where you had to speak truth in love? How did you do? Take some time to share with your neighbor.

Question: How does this help build us up, mature us? What happens when we live our lives together this way?

Answer: This provides for us a new level of freedom and foundational trust, a way of walking in maturity where we can be in agreement and trust one another.

Trust is the foundational level of any relationship. Without trust you cannot have intimacy or deep friendship.

Word for the church

Church – at times we are like a ship without a keel – you are in danger. We need to learn how to have better communication. We need to learn how to speak or embody truth in love.

- We are in a place of great growth but could easily be divided
- We are easily swayed by intentional and unintentional comments or schemes
- We need to grow in speaking truth over one another in love and stop lying
- We need to be humble and look to the Lord
- We need to work on our communication and relationship with each other
- We need to make sure that we're not gossiping and slandering each other
- Some of us need to be reconciled
- We need to bear with one another in love and give each other the benefit of the doubt
- We need to have faith in our leaders and pray for them
- We need to make sure that when we speak to each other it's for the purpose of building each other up in love

Principles for Speaking the Truth in Love

Here are some principles for Speaking the Truth in Love that come out of this passage.

2 Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. **3** Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.

1. Separate Truth from Feeling
 - a. What we want to share is reality
 - b. Sometime truth can be confused by hurt or other strong feelings
 - c. You need to separate your feelings from the truth of what happened
 - i. A mentor or wise friend can help you do this.
 - d. Doesn't negate feelings, but may find that you're partially responsible for how responded and that you may not be giving person benefit of the doubt.
2. Give each other the benefit of the doubt.
 - a. Assume the that they have the best in mind for you
 - b. Assume that they love you and are doing it in love
 - c. Assume that they are not hurting you or if they are sinning that they're doing it intentionally
3. Listen or speak with humility and gentleness
 - a. Being angry may be a reality but it make conversations much harder – be careful not to sin in your anger
 - b. Forgiving them before you have a conversation would be good
 - c. Don't be defensive if you're on the receiving end. Even if you disagree with what they are saying, give it some time and process with God and others before responding. There many be some truth in what they are saying, receive it this way
4. Don't wait too long to tell someone
 - a. Don't let the sun go down on your anger
 - b. Longer you wait the harder it will be
 - c. If it's been a long time may need to apologize ask them to forgive you
5. Check you motivation
 - a. Make sure that your doing this for the other person as much as for yourself
 - b. Make sure that your action will bless the body of Christ
 - c. Make sure that God is directing you to do this