

FORGIVENESS: SPEAKING THE TRUTH IN LOVE

Practical Tips for Moving Toward Speaking the Truth in Love

Pray

- Pray for yourself. Ask that you would love well, demonstrate the fruit of Spirit, have wisdom to discern what needs to be said and how to say it clearly and with courage.
- Pray for the other person. Ask God to open the door for a conversation, for their heart to be receptive and for growth.

Plan

Plan for optimal opportunities and use open doors. Use what you know about the person to optimize their receptivity.

- Do they tend to think better at a certain time of day?
- Do they tend to pick up on subtleties or need to hear something straight forward from the start?
- Are they an internal processor who needs a question or information and then time before they talk about it? Or are they someone who discovers and understands more deeply what they think or feel as they share? Do they value bullet-point reasons, examples in story form or something else? Try to honor their process when you are able. If you don't know, ask.
- Are you able to address something just as it happened or quickly after it happened with gentleness and clarity? Sooner tends to be better than a long delay before bringing an issue up.
- Communicate in person when possible. You might respond in the form the information came to you (email, text, phone, in-person), but consider redirecting the connection to a method that minimizes misunderstanding. A phone call or messenger chat may work better than email or a text so you can hear tone of voice.

Statements/Questions

- Acknowledge your concern using "I statements" and starting with facts. If you've left things undiscussed for a long time, prioritize 1-3 facts for the first conversation instead of exhausting your list. Remember, forgive before you address concerns. Avoid using statements like "you always ___", or "you never ___" or interpretations like "you don't care."
- Don't start with your assumptions. Instead, as clarifying questions:
 - Should we talk about what just happened?
 - It seems like we are not on the same page. Can we talk? I want us to love each other well.
 - Can you help me understand why you _____?
 - When you said _____, what did you mean?
 - Would you be willing to walk me through what was going on in you?
- Check for understanding by re-stating what you thought you heard them say to give an opportunity to further clarify, to add extra insights or to correct if you didn't hear them rightly.
 - So, it is fair for me to say you thought _____.
 - So you feel _____ when I _____?
- When possible, affirm things like "I am with you/for you. This matters to me because I want our relationship to be strong."
- Remember there can be different styles for speaking the truth in love. Some people are more direct, some are less. Some people value eye contact. Others engage better on a walk or driving with both of you facing forward. Think of how Nathan first told a story to help David realize the importance of something before he directly pointed out his sin (2 Samuel 12). Paul rebuked Peter in public for something that was done publicly that others might follow (Galatians 2). Private things should be corrected in private.
- Check for understanding by giving the other person an opportunity to reflect back on what you said. If they interpreted something differently than you intended, ask questions about it like: "What gave you that impression?"