

The Watford Word

www.watfordchurchofchrist.org

What's on

Sunday 23 Aug: Church service.
Malcolm speaking.

Friday 28 August: Funeral service for
Monika, 10 AM.

Sunday 30 Aug: Church service. Malcolm speaking.

Other Events

Friday 11th - 13 September: UK & Ireland Young
Professionals Retreat in Chesham. Registration: <https://iccmisions.churchsuite.com/events/gtrhbmni>

Sunday 27 September: London-wide service. 11 am,
Friends House, Euston Road, London.

Sept 30th - Oct 04th: Spirituality Retreat. <https://shop.thewayministry.global/2026-csr/home>

Friday 30th October to Sunday 01st November:
Autumn Student Retreat for the UK & Ireland.



Speaking the Truth in Love

Why do we find it hard to speak the truth to one another, or to hear the truth from other people? At least, some of us.

Remember Jesus challenging Peter (John 21)? It wasn't about deliberately wounding someone. Rather, it involved bringing painful reality into the light so that there could be repentance, restoration and a renewed relationship. That is the point. Telling the truth in a way that is clothed with grace and kindness is ultimately about giving new life. It is about healing.

As Paul writes in Ephesians 4:15: "Speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ."

Nathan's confrontation of David is powerful. After David's sin with Bathsheba and Uriah, Nathan did not ignore what had happened. Through the story of the rich man who took the poor man's lamb, Nathan brought David to the

point where he could recognise his own wrongdoing. Nathan said plainly, "You are the man!" (2 Samuel 12:7). The truth was painful, but it opened the way to confession and repentance.

I remember my father telling me some truth when I was a student. I had run out of money at the end of my first term, even though that money was supposed to last me for the whole year. As he questioned me, I realised that I had been using my money to buy 'friends'. He revealed a truth about me that I hadn't wanted to face. It was painful, but it made me aware, even at that young age, that I was a people-pleaser, wanting people to like me.

That isn't the Christian way.

Our security isn't found in the approval of people. It is found in God. As Paul reminds us, "If God is for us, who can be against us?" (Rom 8:31). We don't need our egos stroked or our worth affirmed by others. We are already loved and accepted by God in Christ. So how do we speak truth to one another in a healthy and Christ-like way?

First, we pray.

Before we speak truth to somebody, we must pray. We do our best to discern whether the Holy Spirit is prompting us to speak, whether this is the right thing to say, and whether this is the right time to say it. Sometimes the answer may be "yes, speak." At other times it may be "wait." There is wisdom in patience.

Jesus did not always confront people at the moment He noticed something that needed addressing. For example, when the disciples had been arguing about who was the greatest, Jesus waited until they were in the house before asking them what they had been discussing on the road (Mark 9:33-35).

Second, speak truth gently.

When we confront someone else, we expose ourselves to the possibility of hypocrisy because we are all sinners. Remember the image of the

speck and the log in Matthew 7:3-5? When we point a finger at someone else, three fingers point back at ourselves. The truth we speak should therefore come with humility. Galatians 6:1 says:

"If anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted."

Our goal is restoration, not victory.

Third, give the other person freedom to choose how they respond practically.

We can bring truth to someone, but it is up to them to decide how they react. We may have our own idea about the best way for them to respond, but we are not living their life. We are not their Holy Spirit, and we are not their Lord. Our responsibility is to speak faithfully and lovingly, and then allow them to reflect, pray and respond.

James says to be "quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger" (Jms 1:19). Sometimes the helpful thing we can do after speaking truth is to listen.

Fourth, give space for them to reply

Whenever we bring truth to somebody, we are bringing it from our own perspective. We do not have all the information. There are other circumstances in that person's life that have influenced what is happening. We shouldn't avoid speaking truth, *but*, speak with humility.

Perhaps we can say, "This is how I see it. Have I misunderstood something?" Or, "This is what I've noticed. What do you think?" That leaves room for conversation rather than turning the encounter into a judgement.

Jesus modelled this. He asked questions. He listened. He challenged people, but He also allowed them to respond. His conversations with hurting people were often very different from His confrontations with those who were self-righteous. So, if you want to learn how to bring truth to people in a healthier way, why not study the life of Jesus in the Gospels? Look at the occasions when He spoke difficult truths. What do you notice?

How did He speak to hurting people? How did He speak to His disciples? How did He speak to the Pharisees? What was different about those

encounters? And what does that teach us about speaking truth to one another?

In the end, we cannot be the community Jesus founded and desires us to be, to the glory of God, unless we are willing to speak truth to one another. Truth is fundamental to peace and trust. But Christian truth is never truth without love. We are called to "speak the truth in love" (Eph 4:15), to "encourage one another and build one another up" (1 Thess 5:11), and to "love one another deeply from the heart" (1 Peter 1:22). The aim is not to win an argument, expose someone's failure or make ourselves feel morally superior.

The aim is love. The aim is restoration. The aim is healing. The aim is that together we might become more like Christ.

Questions for Reflection

- Is there some truth you could lovingly bring to someone this week that might help them in their walk with God?
- Do you sense this is the right time, and have you prayed and sought the Spirit's guidance?
- What Scripture will you carry with you to help you bring that truth in a Christ-like manner?
- Are you prepared to listen and consider that you may not have the whole picture?

May God give us the courage to speak truth, the humility to receive it, and above all, the love to do both in a way that reflects Jesus.

Your brother, Malcolm

Watford Contribution Details

Church bank account: Three Counties churches of Christ HSBC

Sort Code: 401915

Account Number: 04759613



Watford Media

