

## Sermon Discussion Information

Sermon Series: Why We Gather, Grace-Filled Accountability

Sermon Title: "Honest Love"

Sermon Text: Proverbs 12:15-18 & Ephesians 4:14-16

Listeners Journey: I want my listener to be wise in the way they communicate their truth to others and receptive to learning from the truth that others offer such that more of our conversations lead to transformation and Christ-like love.

Unique Quotes from Sermon:

The whole experience got me thinking about the manner and ethics with which we communicate "Truth and our truth" to others. I say "Truth and our truth" because all good and earnest human beings reach to understand and live in sync with that which is True and that which is real. Minnesotans have wisely discerned the fact that operating a touch screen hand held computer simultaneously to operating a moving vehicle that weighs several thousand pounds is highly dangerous for everyone concerned, and thus wisely made it illegal. Capital T truth turned into a simple law.

Many things in life are not so obvious and clear, or agreed upon, as well. And, this is where the construct of "our truth" comes into play. Now, "our truth" isn't necessarily *not* ultimate truth. I want to be clear on that point. It might be. It can be. And, it might not be because of the limitations of individual experience and the reality that there is a larger arc of human consciousness development that, like what we read in the arc of biblical history, is always taking two steps forward and one step back. Humans are always (and will always be, because we are not God) in a constant state of having and living ultimate Truth and reaching and not always having Truth all figured out. Whether or not we have been told this in our life, there is a difference between ultimate Truth and our truth. And, "our truth" is our personal, or communal, or institutional reaching for that which is ultimately True and the real.

I mention a few framing thoughts on the construct of "truth" because of the chaotic time we live in, and because truth and truthfulness has fallen on hard times. This sermon is not about the theological and philosophical implications of truth, though... This sermon is about the *way* we speak our truth. We live in a time where there seems to be an unprecedented amount relational carnage because of *the way* everyone is speaking their truth to one another. Even long term relationships amongst families and affinity networks that have withstood decades of strong differing opinions are now crumbling because few know how to navigate the rapid pace of change and the volatile socio-political climate.

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The first half of this proverb assumes honesty as a basic and core human ethic. And, yet that is not the end of the story. The second half of the couplet tells us that we must be wise in the way we bring our honesty forward to others. Being truthful and honest isn't enough. If we are reckless with our honesty, it is possible to not only hurt someone, it may even lead to that person not even considering what we have to say. Humans are complicated and highly defended creatures. In regards to the more difficult and polarized topics of our time, many are like scared animals trapped in a corner. Some, and this is what we are seeking to become as a people here, are willing to be uncomfortable and less defended. But, many are ready to defend and fight to the death, particularly with the more intensely personal truth topics. In such instances, people will likely need to be encouraged out of their corner.

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The wise bring healing...the wounds of a friend can be trusted...these statements remind us of something critically important: *We*, are the medium of our message and how we embody our truth will improve or erode our chances of others being wooed out of a defensive posture. What are some things to

consider about the way we embody our truth? Wise people seeking to be truth telling friends are those who consider the quality of relationship that they have with the other person, the timing of the exchange, and the best way to frame the matter such that, again, the other person might let down their defenses and be open to a new way of thinking. It was African American novelist Octavia Butler who once said: "Sometimes being a friend means mastering the art of timing. There is a time for silence. A time to let go and allow people to hurl themselves into their own destiny. And a time to prepare to pick up the pieces when it's all over."<sup>1</sup>

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The key here is that "speaking the truth in love" is attached to growing in Christ-like-ness. The larger understanding of this text does not assumed that every Christian, or any individual segment of Christian religion, has Truth all figured out and then are to demand that everyone else conform to their specific version. No, this assumes that it is *while* we are speaking to one another in love and reaching for Truth, it is Christ who is the center point of our faith, and whom we are to imitate above all else, as God's Truth to the human experience

Three Discussion Questions:

1. How do you process the meaning of the word "Truth?" (Personal sharing)
2. What are some connections between the Proverbs text and the Ephesians text? (Exploring the text)
3. What can you do to work on sharing your truth, and sharing your truth in love? (Direct application)

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/o/octaviabut170210.html?src=t\\_timing](https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/o/octaviabut170210.html?src=t_timing) (accessed 9-2-17)