

# GOSPEL SHEPHERDING

## SPEAK THE TRUTH IN LOVE

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

### HOW DO I SPEAK THE TRUTH IN LOVE AS A GOSPEL SHEPHERD?

- We must be led by the Holy Spirit! Pray and ask him what to say. We should only speak if the Spirit leads us to speak; but if the Spirit leads us to speak, we must speak!
- Ask lots of questions throughout the conversation, and especially in the beginning. We like to say, "Ask 10 questions for every pronouncement."
- Consider our own motivation. Pray through it. Is it our desire to honor God and point the person to him? Are we fearful of the person, or are we resting in our identity as a child of God?
- Proclaim Jesus as much as possible. He is the hero of every person's story, and the real savior we all need in every situation.
- Keep the goal in mind: repentance and faith. Proclamations should help lead a person to Jesus.

### SPEAK THE TRUTH IN LOVE BY...

- Making proclamations concerning identity much more than actions. We always live out of who we believe we are, but we often forget the truth. Remind people of their true identity, not merely what they should do.
- Avoiding simple advice or quoting scripture in a way that is unhelpful. If someone confesses worry, it probably won't help to remind the person that Jesus said, "Do not worry" three times in Matthew 6. Rather, focus on their identity as a beloved child of God, and remind them of the Father's great care for them (which Jesus highlights in Matthew 6!), a truth which can free them from worry and fear.
- Not judging the person's heart. 1 Corinthians 4:5 warns, "do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes ("motives"- NASB) of the heart." If we have preconceived judgments about a person's heart ("I know for sure why they did that!"), they will come through in our communication, and our speech will not be filled with grace. We need the Holy Spirit to purify our motives before we speak.

- Asking permission before making a pronouncement: "Can I tell you what I'm seeing?" This ensures that the person is open and ready to receive a direct word.
- Utilizing very direct communication as the Spirit leads. As long as the Spirit is prompting it, and it is spoken in love, we need to be obedient to say what the Spirit is leading us to say. Sometimes he will lead us to say something very directly, without asking for permission!
- Calling people to repentance. Often, we have to ask, "Is there anything that would prevent you from repenting right now?" or "Would you like to talk to the Father about this right now?" This simple but direct question can help people cross the threshold of repentance and renewed faith in the gospel.