

Bridgeway Community Church
Series: Be Encouraged
Dr. David Anderson
March 27, 2022

How to be Real without being Ruthless

Question: How can we be real without being ruthless?

Answer: (1) By choosing love over truth
(2) By choosing grace over judgment

We must choose LOVE over truth

- During World War 2 when Corrie Ten Boom was faced with the choice of hiding Jews in her basement, she chose love over truth. The truth was she was breaking the law by harboring Jews who were systematically being exterminated by Hitler. Yet her faith gave her the strength to resist because she had the love of Christ in her. But in that moment when the truth faced her and she had to tell a Nazi soldier the truth about whether she was hiding a Jew or not, she chose love over truth.

This may bring up conflict in many of your hearts, because civil disobedience may at times conflict with the deeply held truth that keeping the laws of the land is honorable.

Question: But what do you do when the law of the land conflicts with the moral truths of scripture or your own convictions?

Answer: I believe that you must choose love over truth in these moments.

Question: What do you do when you know that telling someone the truth will crush their spirit?

- A radio listener called on Thursday (topic was "The Theology of Salvation") and wanted to know if it was okay for her to pray that her young adult son, who had died in his sins, would still make it into heaven.

This is a perfect example of having to choose love over truth.

“Listen to me here: I am NOT saying that you have to be “truthless.” But what I am saying is that you don’t be “ruthless”...Communicating truth to her in a loving way means that I am choosing to love her over giving her the truth ruthlessly, or without regard to her feelings.”

“The reality is Some of ya’ll can be so harsh. Some of you need to ask God to give you the spiritual fruit of gentleness. Truth is NOT a spiritual fruit.”

“Some of you want to be “filled with the Spirit”, “speak in tongues”, and “raise a hallelujah” with your praise; then you go home and lay people out with that same tongue you've been “raising a hallelujah” with.”

“Maybe what you ought to do is raise a prayer of “help me Jesus with my tongue” that’s on fire!”

James 3:6, 8 NIV84

The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell...but no man can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.

This scripture text isn’t talking about **loud** people, it’s talking about **lethal** people. Poison isn't loud. Poison is lethal.

Just because you’re an introvert and/or quiet, doesn’t mean you can’t be lethal, strategic and poisonous.

We want to teach our kids and grandkids to talk nice to each other and then we go in the other room and curse people out.

James 3:9-10 NIV84

With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God’s likeness. ¹⁰ Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be.

“As believers, we cannot cut people up & spit them out with our tongues like those in the world do.”

Proverbs 15:1 NIV84

A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.

Matthew 12:34 NIV84

[Jesus speaking to the Pharisees] You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? **For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks.**

1 Peter 3:9 NIV84

Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing.

“I know some of you’ll are hating this sermon right now! I don’t mean to step on your toes, but maybe it’s not a bad idea for the Holy Spirit to step on your tongue.”

“When we choose to tell people the truth, knowing that it is going to hurt, and we do not take into account their feelings and their hearts, that’s not only ruthless, **it’s godless!**”

“Choose love over truth. That means that when I tell the truth, I’m going to do it with love. It means that you will take into account the feelings of the other person.”

Ephesians 4:29

Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.

Notice that God is saying that we are to speak only that which helps to build others up “according to their needs” so that it may “benefit” those who listen.

The 2 Criteria for speaking hard truths

Build & Benefit

When you’re speaking the “*Truth in love*” you must take into account two things:

Will it BUILD?

- Will it build up the other person?
- Will it lift them up or tear them down?

Will it **BENEFIT**?

- Will it benefit the other person's development & growth?
- Will it be helpful to them as a person, even if it hurts in the moment?

When I have to speak to another person about a hard truth, any truth, I must ask myself in the moment: "How can what I am about to say BUILD the other person up and/or BENEFIT the other person?" If it is not BUILDING or BENEFICIAL, do I say anything at all? No, or at least, not now.

This underscores the Gracism saying #6 - I will CONSIDER you.

This doesn't mean that there will not be times when I might have to say something that is hurtful.

The question is: "Will it be beneficial?!"

- If I say something to hurt you and it is not beneficial, then what is my motive?
- **It is NOT love!**
- To hurt you and leave you there bleeding is ruthless.

BRUTAL HONESTY?

Question: Where did that term, "Brutal honesty" come from anyway?

Question: Who decided to put that adjective "brutal" in front of such a noble word like "honesty"?

"There are somethings that probably should never go together and "brutal" and "honesty" shouldn't... "Honesty" must quit "Brutality" now if she's ever gonna have a chance for a healthy relationship with others...and herself."

"Brothers and sisters, we must speak the truth in love...or just don't speak at all!"

"Choose love over truth by speaking the truth in love!"

How can we be real without being ruthless?

1. First, we must choose love over truth by choosing to speak the truth in love.
2. Second, we must choose grace over judgment

Grace Over Judgment

“When we don’t agree with someone’s belief system or their way of life, we can share what we believe, we can live what we believe, we can give great advice and give the answers for the hope that is within us. But we must also have a large measure of grace inside of us for those who have differing opinions or they choose their truth over God’s truth...we need a large measure of grace.”

- This grace isn’t because we don’t have strong convictions about the truth of God’s word.
- This grace isn’t because we are soft on our beliefs.
- This grace comes through us because we realize how gracious God was with us in our sinful state.

Romans 5:8 NIV84

But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us

Romans 5:20 NIV84

...But where sin increased, **grace** increased all the more

Ephesians 2:8-9 NIV84

For it is by **grace** you have been saved, through faith, and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God, ⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast.

This grace comes because we realize that it is by grace we are saved and not of ourselves.

God’s grace was patient with us.

God’s grace was extended to us when we were stuck in our sins.

God’s grace was with us when we knew we were rebelling against God

God’s grace is with some of you right now, while you are in the middle of your mess

My sister, Sandra, said to me one time when I was sharing some of my struggles with her back in the day: “David, God is patient with us and he gives us time to get our sins right.”

Question: Is anybody grateful that God gives your time to get your sin right?

Question: Is anybody glad that God waited on them to come to him for salvation before he returned for the day of judgment?

Some of us are so saved that we want God to come back right now and shut the door to the ark so that no one else can get in.

Question: What if the door to the ark of God’s salvation shut right before you made it in?

God’s grace is real in our lives, and we need to pray that it will reach the lives of others before the door of deliverance closes. Many of us have messed up our lives, and our families, marriages, finances, children, and jobs because we were human! We are depraved! We are deceitful. We are deceived. We are ignorant. We are selfish.

Or for some of you, you were just a child when we had to really make hard choices. Some of you were teens and you were making tough choices about relationships, sex, sexuality, drugs, colleges, etc.

Some people don’t have all the faculties, or advantages or mentors or privileges some of you may have had.

“So I plead with you, be more gracious and less judgmental. As you become mature and mighty in Christ, may that make you more gentle, not more of a jerk because that’s not maturity at all, that’s spiritual haughtiness.”

How Can We Be Real Without Being Ruthless?

1. **Choose Love over Truth** by speaking the truth in love
2. **Choose Grace over Judgment** and be patient with others who are still working out their stuff

Proverbs 16:24 NIV84

Gracious words are a honeycomb. Sweet to the soul and healing to the bones.

Grace doesn't mean that we excuse all the "bad" that people do. There are consequences for bad choices and bad behavior. But when people sin against us, it hurts and we want them to pay! But we have to trust Christ with our pain and with our vengeance. Grace, in some way, helps us empathize with their pain too.

Song: "Go Easy on Me" by Adele.

- *"I had good intentions and the highest of hopes, But I know right now that probably doesn't even show."*
- *"Go easy on my baby, I was still a child, Didn't get the chance to feel the world around me. I had no time to choose what I chose to do. So go easy on me."*

God has gone easy on us (this is grace!) Maybe it is time for us to Go Easy on someone else in your life as you seek to understand why they have made (or are making even now) some really bad choices in their lives.

"Easy On Me"

There ain't no gold in this river
That I've been washing my hands in forever
I know there is hope in these waters
But I can't bring myself to swim
When I am drowning in this silence
Baby, let me in

Go easy on me, baby
I was still a child
Didn't get the chance to
Feel the world around me
I had no time to choose what I chose to do
So go easy on me

There ain't no room for things to change
When we are both so deeply stuck in our ways
You can't deny how hard I have tried
I changed who I was to put you both first
But now I give up

Go easy on me, baby
I was still a child
Didn't get the chance to
Feel the world around me
Had no time to choose what I chose to do
So go easy on me

I had good intentions
And the highest hopes
But I know right now
It probably doesn't even show

Go easy on me, baby
I was still a child
I didn't get the chance to
Feel the world around me
I had no time to choose what I chose to do
So go easy on me

Writer(s): Greg Allen Kurstin, Adele Laurie Blue Adkins