



Marriage Growth-Track

Week 4 - Day 3

Speaking in Love

By Doug and Cheryll Duffie

Instead, we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church."

Ephesians 4:15

Truly effective communication is the key to satisfying, successful, and long-term relationships. It's true among friends, family, and most definitely in a marriage. A couple can do well in other areas of their marriage, but if they fail to communicate effectively, then it is doubtful they will experience much relational depth. Without mutually respectful dialogue, a marriage is destined to be mediocre at best, and divisive and destructive at worst. This is what we see in this verse:

- Speaking in love is imperative if our intent is to grow in Christ;
- Christ is the head of all believers; His body of believers is the church

When we are able to speak in love, almost any situation can be better handled. This doesn't come natural to most of us but we can get better at it with discipline and patience. Thriving couples talk clearly and listen well. They understand the art of meaningful conversation and can talk about facts and feelings without fear of judgment or criticism. As David and Amy Olsen say in *Empowering Couples: Building on Your Strengths*, "Developing a relationship without communication is like trying to make orange juice without oranges: it is impossible."

The words we speak to each other can either build our spouse up or tear them down. Never underestimate the power of your words—especially in the heat of the moment. There is almost always a positive way to frame our comments if we think before speaking. There's a reason why pastors oftentimes compare the words we speak to toothpaste coming from a tube—once they are spoken—out into the universe, so to speak—there is no 'unhearing' them, no going back to the point before they are uttered. It's a hard, hard lesson to learn and has been the death knell to many marriages. Words spoken in haste and without love can do irreparable damage.

Choose your words wisely. Speak with love and understanding as you would want to be spoken to. In doing so, you will elicit a more positive response from your beloved and you will bring honor to Christ—and that's good outcome any day.

Discussion Questions:

1. Is it difficult for you to speak the truth in love? Why?
2. Do you tend to go to extremes focusing on love or truth at the expense of the other?

Action Step:

Reflect on your own desire to grow more like Christ. Determine what factors lead you to grow more or less.

Prayer:

Dear Lord, I know that, on my own, speaking in love is not always doable. It's certainly not easy and not always the way I want to respond. But I take to heart your call to do so and ask for your intervention. I ask that you govern the thoughts of my mind, the feelings of my heart, and the words I speak, and that I bring you honor and glory when speaking with others.

