

## SESSION 2: SPEAKING THE TRUTH IN LOVE



Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to him. “Teacher,” they said, “we want you to do for us whatever we ask.” “What do you want me to do for you?” he asked. They replied, “Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory.” “You don’t know what you are asking,” Jesus said. “Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?” “We can,” they answered. Jesus said to them, “You will drink the cup I drink and be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with, but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared.”

– Mark 10:35-40

In this story, James and John asked Jesus to let them sit at his right and his left in his glory. You might think this is pretty bold. On the other hand, you might congratulate them for taking the initiative to get ahead. After all, the world teaches us to aggressively climb the corporate ladder – but it is NOT what God is calling us to do in our work.

Jesus showed us what it looks like to get ahead in God’s eyes. He didn’t look out for his own interests, but instead came to serve. Jesus demonstrated agape, or selfless, sacrificial, unconditional love to all people in everything he did. He wasn’t looking out for his own interests and he didn’t restrict this expression of love to only those who were close to him. He demonstrated it to everyone he met, everyone he interacted with, and everyone who worked with him.

The main point of this interaction is about being a servant (we’ll look at that in session 3). But as Jesus responded to James and John, he modeled another element of love – speaking the truth. Love gives you the power to speak the truth from a place of primary concern for others. When you speak the truth from that place, it comes out differently. It is communicated in such a way that preserves the worth and dignity of the other, hopeful and trusting in their ability to grow.

Jesus addressed issues with the intent to help others grow, not feel condemned. Jesus didn’t reprimand James and John for making such a bold request, but turned this into a teaching moment. He told them a truth that wasn’t easy to hear – that they would also experience persecution (drink the same cup). Even so, only God chooses those who will take the places of honor.



Love rejoices with the truth, always protects, always trusts, always hopes, and always perseveres. When you speak the truth – even the hard truth, when necessary – from a place of love and a desire to build others up, you can provide important feedback that results in real change.

You can point out problems without blaming, and encourage others to contribute to a solution. And when you need to have tough conversations, speaking the truth in love can help you turn that difficult topic into one that makes your relationship stronger and more mutually supportive.

The fact is, the more we avoid speaking the truth to others at work, the more we contribute to growing problems, future mistakes, and opportunities for misunderstandings and resentment to build.

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## CAN YOU RELATE TO ANY OF THESE CHARACTERS?

### THE PEOPLE PLEASER

By not providing constructive feedback to someone who works for you for fear of hurting her feelings, you are not only contributing to the potential for future problems, you could be holding that person back from growing in her career. If she never gets that feedback in a way that encourages her, she may never be able to move up in her career. The feedback you provide today could help her prepare for the position she is striving toward in the future.

### THE SILENT ENABLER

By not communicating about a process issue you notice that could compromise the ability to provide an excellent product or service, you could be contributing to costly product issues, damaged customer relationships, or even possible injuries. All of these will take a toll on jobs and morale.

### THE TOXIC AVOIDER

If you avoid clearing up a misunderstanding with a coworker, you could poison the relationship, which could lead to future misunderstandings, difficulty working together and stress.

You've probably seen many other examples of what withholding the truth can do to relationships at work, team morale and the overall work environment. The fact is, these are very real challenges that are not easy to handle – without love. But when you make love your guiding principle – your motivating force – it can put these situations in a very different light.

Love gives you the courage to speak up and the wisdom to do so in a way that lifts people up, instead of judging or tearing them down. Turning to Jesus' example will give you the strength to follow through and create the most beneficial results for all.

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## REFLECTION & APPLICATION

- 01 What situations have you faced recently in which you have avoided speaking the truth?
- 02 What holds you back from speaking the truth at work? What are your motivations?
- 03 What truths do you need to share? How can you share these truths so that it builds others up and serves them?

### ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURE

VERSE 1  
1 PETER 3:10

VERSE 2  
COL. 3:8-10

VERSE 3  
EPH. 4:25