

To Love Kindness (Micah 6:8) – 2016 Social Media Series



I wrote this back in August 2016 – it's a many part series when God challenged me about the requirement of loving kindness. It was a lesson that I had to learn because of a very grueling ordeal at the hands of people

whom I had mistakenly thought were friends, who I had ministered to, and even spent money helping. It was a deeply personal and humiliating violation of my dignity, but God did use it in my life – although, all told, it took Him 9 whole months to get through to me. I am still in recovery from my November and December strokes and not really able to do new teachings but it has been a good opportunity to transfer some old social media teachings to the blog.

August 16, 2016

Sabbath/Feast Culture Experiment Week #32

A Love of Kindness

I am not there yet, not by a long shot.

Near the end of the Shemoneh Esrei, the “eight plus ten” prayers that were composed by the men of the Great Assembly, headed by Ezra at the time of the building of the Second Temple, there is a section entitled “Peace” where the Spirit has apprehended me for two days in a row by drawing my attention to the following statement:

“...Bless us, our Father, all of us as one, with the light of your countenance, for with the light of your countenance you gave us, HaShem our God, the Torah of life and a love of

kindness..." – The Complete Artscroll Siddur

The "love of kindness" stopped me dead in my tracks two days in a row, so here on the third day I want to address it.

Michah 6:8 He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

Pro 31:26 She opens her mouth with wisdom, and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue.

Zech 7:8-10 And the word of the Lord came to Zechariah, saying, "Thus says the Lord of hosts, Render true judgments, show kindness and mercy to one another, do not oppress the widow, the fatherless, the sojourner, or the poor, and let none of you devise evil against another in your heart."

Ro 2:4 Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?

Col 3:12-13 Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.

I find it a fascinating phenomenon that when we, as Gentiles, came to Torah, we by and large did not do so with the proper attitude of believing that kindness is a virtue – in fact, we seemed to hate all displays of kindness and labelled it instead as enabling, a hatred for the truth, weakness, etc. Yet, the Shemoneh Esrei specifically draws our attention to Micah 6:8 where we are not only to act kind, that isn't enough and it isn't always genuine, but to love kindness – to love it. This love we are called to have for kindness is "ahavah" love – the kind of love we first see mentioned as referring to Jacob's love for Rachel, the kind of love that was willing to

labor for 14 years. It is a love tied to faithfulness, meekness, humility and patience, an enduring and delivering love.

What would happen if we dropped everything, all of our impatient posturing, and pursued kindness the way Jacob labored for Rachel?

I am going to leave it there.

Moving forward from yesterday's Sabbath/Feast Culture post on what it means to love kindness.

Can you imagine having such a love and reverence for kindness that it created a barrier against cruelty? What if I loved kindness so dearly that it would actually cause me to loathe "snapping" or overreacting when I am frustrated? What if the fruit of self-control is actually tied to each of the other fruit? What if I need kindness in order to control the innate human desire to lash out at times? What if each measure of fruit actually manifests in its own unique area of restraint? Maybe that is why self-control is listed last and love is listed first. A desire to love others is the prerequisite for all, and total self-control would be the ultimate fruit of maturity in each and every one of these virtues.

To Love Kindness Micah 6:8 Pt 3

In learning to love kindness, we have to be careful about our hatred for unkindness because it can manifest itself as – well... more unkindness!

There is a big difference between hating unkindness and simply being hurt by someone else's unkindness. We all hate it and get outraged when someone is unkind, because unkindness does damage – sometimes it does really deep damage that takes a

long time to heal. How we respond to that damage tells us whether we truly hate unkindness or whether we just hate being hurt. We often hate the unkindness of others and make excuses for our own unkindness – especially retaliation-related unkindness.

I was recently wounded very deeply, twice on the same day from two unexpected sources and I struggled for about a week. At first, of course, I was just in shock – trying to get my bearings. I didn't want to harm anyone at that point – I was just struggling to understand what had happened and why. As the shock wore off, about a day later, I slipped into a numbness and then into a real struggle – I wasn't hating unkindness, I was like a wounded animal, longing to hurt someone but not having the heart to do it (having a conscience, however, is still not the same thing as hating unkindness!). A part of me wanted someone to hurt the way I was hurting, because I was howling with pain inside – really, it took every ounce of strength not to lash out. I am grateful that I spent so much time in shock – actually I am really grateful this didn't happen a few years ago because it would have been incredibly ugly.

I recognize now that I was being tested – sifted like the flour for the grain offering. I marginally passed not because I hated unkindness so much that it was unthinkable for me to lash out, but simply because the Spirit was communicating to me that this lashing out would be wrong.

I call this phenomenon “Tyler, shut up and trust me because you just don't get it yet. Trust me, I am protecting you from yourself here.”

It didn't matter that I was provoked, it didn't matter the unkindness I was faced with – it didn't matter. A response to something wrong can still be fatally wrong. We don't get to exercise our flesh when wronged, and that chaps my hide something fierce, but we just don't get to do it. If we are

innocent of a charge, we have to remain innocent, but how many of us become guilty because of the way that we defend ourselves?

The fruit, the kindness and self-control, that we are called to is radical fruit. It looks wrong and feels wrong to our flesh – my flesh knows that what happened was wrong, and my flesh says, “That gives us carte blanche to go lopping off some heads!”

That’s a problem – people already came through and did damage. Do they also get to influence my behavior? Because that’s what we would have been talking about here – had I responded how I wanted to after the shock wore off, humans would have had more influence over me than the Spirit. When the Spirit curbs my behavior, my most common response is, “But that’s unfair!” Yeah, it’s unfair – everything that happened to my Master was grotesquely unfair, not just slightly unfair. Do I want to be like Him or not?

I tell you that not retaliating hurts more, and not less, than retaliating because not only does the original unkindness hurt like crazy, but the flesh screaming for vengeance night and day can hurt even worse. Flesh demands satisfaction, and being wedged between pain and the desire for vengeance – well, that’s the place where we either decide that we do or do not love kindness.

August 22, 2016

To Love Kindness (Micah 6:8) Part 4

I drank caffeine yesterday afternoon, which gave me a whole lot of time to think about things in the middle of the night. I started thinking – what does it mean to be kind to God?

There is the easy answer of simply submitting out wills to His individual plan for our lives, but what about making His job easier?

I started frowning, thinking of the different times when I created a stumbling block for this or that person – especially when I was new to the faith and then new to Torah. The guilt trips laid on me as a new believer, “If your loved ones died tonight, would they go to hell?” and the embarrassment I felt over being understandably ignorant, both in the beginning of my faith walk and again when I had my eyes opened to His Torah – they really twisted my perceptions of “my obligations” and I hit the ground running – well actually chasing people away. Not only wasn’t it kind to encourage and manipulate me into thinking I had to be an evangelist before I even knew what I myself believed, but I myself wasn’t being kind. I was in the “in crowd” now – going to Heaven as part of the remnant while Jews and non-believers were going to hell. (don’t get me started about the world to come... I know, I know)

Looking back, I made His job a lot harder for Him wherever I intervened.

The former Gentiles in Rome did the same thing for both God and Paul. They weren’t keeping to the same standards of kosher as the Jews of Rome with whom they were worshiping – it was, well, scandalizing the congregation, and destroying the witness of Yeshua and making the job Paul wanted to do there much more difficult. It’s a complex story (I wrote about it in King, Kingdom, Citizen) but in the end it came down to the former Gentiles needlessly creating a stumbling block for their brothers and sisters in their synagogues who did not yet know Messiah and sadly, might not ever want to because of the unkind behavior of the newcomers.

In Galatia, we had the flip side of the coin. Despite the Holy Spirit over-ruling the 18 edicts of Shammai at the house of Cornelius the Centurion by falling upon the entire family when they had not formally converted to Judaism, the Jews who did believe that Yeshua is Messiah refused to share table fellowship with them – simply because they had not formally converted through adult circumcision (I wrote about this in

KKC as well, at length). Another stumbling block of unkindness.

I am certain that in both situations, the unkind meant well – heck, I meant well when I was young and ignorant, too. But meaning well is not the same as kindness – sometimes meaning well is just wanting to do good but refusing to take the time to find out what “good” actually means. Actually doing good means showing kindness to God and others, doing good in our own eyes usually means we are pursuing our agenda at all costs – agendas being whatever it is that we convince ourselves is good.

But if we pursue a love of kindness, maybe those agendas will fall away one by one – after all, even if our agenda is good, such things are only good for certain people in season, and out of season they are inappropriate and can even be detrimental. Until we can see that people are in different seasons of maturity and in need of different treatment accordingly, we don't stand a ghost of a chance to know how to be kind and helpful towards God – we'll just keep doing what we think is best, and when we do that, the words will come back void, because they are only His words when they are in season. The Word of God can't be reduced to some kind of magic spell – where we speak the phrases in English (or even in Hebrew), however we want wherever and whenever we want, expecting them to do our will. We have to be kind, and true kindness requires patient discernment – something I rarely ever actually see.

August 23, 2016

To Love Kindness (Micah 6:8) Part 5

Been an insane week, well, insane two weeks really. Ever wake up in the middle of the night knowing something has changed but you have no idea what it is? Like something just snapped, and a season has changed? Felt it last night. Has me a bit

worried because I am being forced to learn about kindness lol and worried about how I will be required to use it.

Saw a meme once, and at one point I would have agreed with it but it is one of those memes that means entirely different things to different people, it's what I call a "behavior justification meme."

It said something like, "Love means telling the truth, even when that truth hurts."

Such memes are simply a carte blanche to be unkind, sort of a "get out of the guilt-jail free card." As long as one believes they are telling the truth, they can just say they were "speaking the truth in love" when their conscience comes knocking at the door.

Of course, that meme was nonsense because we always think we know the truth, right? But how much "truth" boils down to plain old ignorant guesses and assumptions and even projection? How much truth is actually just opinions itching to be spoken?... or flesh screaming to be unleashed on the world?

It is often the height of self-deception and definitely the fruit of pride to convince oneself that personal opinion is not only truth, but also one's obligation and loving duty to inflict on others.

Sitting here this moment thinking back and cringing, how many false "truths" do we remember feeling an uncontrollable urge to force on others as though they couldn't live without them? How many of those do we regret now, with all our being? Are we somehow immune to our judgment being wrong now? How many people have we led astray with what we genuinely thought was true, and how many people have we wounded with opinions that served no purpose but to blow off steam?

It is incredibly unkind to tell the "truth" if all it does is

make us feel better somehow – if it serves as a steam vent for frustration, ego, misplaced guilt, or sometimes genuinely well-deserved guilt. Why are we telling this “truth” and what purpose does it serve? Is this the right place, and the right time and am I the right person to tell it? Why do I want to tell this “truth” right now? Does this person even have the ability to receive what I am saying at this moment or am I going to create a stumbling block so that they will never receive it?

Telling people what we truly *think* is not the same thing as telling the truth, but it takes a sizable measure of humility to even consider that as true.

Kindness really does matter, and we owe it to others to learn how to be kind – in fact, it is better to err on the side of too much good fruit than not enough. I don't think that we should simply write off having hurt people under the excuse of having told the truth – truth is, if we were truly mature in the fruit of kindness and the level of self-control that goes along with it, I bet we could, most of the time, tell the truth with a minimum of pain. Right now, it seems like we don't think about the amount of pain we are causing, or questioning if we are causing enough pain in telling the “truth” that our truth-telling in fact has become sin.

August 24, 2016

Part 6 – “What happens, in truth, when we return unkindness for unkindness? I mean really, what is the result? There is only one result – the person who was initially unkind to us hears our unkindness and feels justified, making it harder for them to repent.

In addition, their buddies standing by do not question their unkindness, figuring you are just a jerk who had it coming. Returning kindness for cruelty is the only hope that unkind people have of questioning their own actions because, as Robert Heinlein once wrote: “Your enemy is never a villain in his own eyes.””

August 25, 2016

Part 7 – Showing kindness to our Spouse and kids

There are three types of people in this world when it comes to showing kindness:

The people who are only kind to their own loved ones, the people who are kind to everyone except their family, and the people who are somewhere in between.

I have no use for people in the first two groups – I am definitely one of the people who struggles in between. I struggle in between because I am rather too easily irritated and irritation tends to flow out of me as unkindness. Fear, also, shows itself through unkindness. Frustration. Anger – beneath my unkindness lurks quite a few emotions. I am at the point where I have mostly managed to contain it with outsiders over the past few years, and have been reigning it in with my family as well – but they still endure too much of it.

Strange, isn't it? The people who need our love and kindness the most, because it means more to them than to anyone else in the world, are so often the recipients of unkindness.

We have to come to the point where we love kindness so much that our own unkindness brings us to tears, our unkindness needs to hurt us more than it hurts the people we unleash it on.

August 27, 2016

To Love Kindness (Micah 6:8) Part 8

Guarding the Peace of Others, and especially on the Sabbath

The Sabbath is a day to weigh every word and every action. It occurs to me that Friday should naturally be not only be a day of preparation but a day of repentance. Have we wronged anyone, have we crushed their dignity, have we done anything that might cause them to carry a lack of shalom into the Sabbath and into their own homes?

It seems to me as though we are too quick to damage others and far too slow to try and restore them. We steal peace but do not think to give it back. We feel a bit guilty maybe, but not enough to think about easing the burden we placed on another.

Our words are never spoken in a vacuum, despite the fact that we would love to believe that they are. We will be judged by every hasty word, every careless accusation, every insult, and every unjust judgment.

It is common in this culture to rashly speak our mind, and even more common to give no thought to it afterwards, thinking that our words produce no lasting effects – like ripples on a pond that go far but quickly dissipate, leaving no discernible difference in the pond.

But people are not ponds – they have lives, and struggles, fears and heartaches that they do not share with the world. No matter how well we may think we know someone, we never know how close to suicide someone might be, how little dignity they have remaining, how close they are to being literally humiliated to death. We just don't know.

And so if we are going to engage with people whom we do not intimately know, we must always make allowances for the fact that we might have in front of us someone who just can't take it anymore, someone who needs their dignity guarded and not degraded. No matter how it looks on the outside, many people who look like they have it together on the outside are dying from grief.

Yeshua knew every person's heart – we don't. He could speak what was on His mind to speak and have it always be appropriate – we can't. Too many people blaspheme the Spirit by crediting the Spirit with inspiring their every word – and then come up with noble sounding names for their cruelty. I have heard more than one club-wielding person call themselves a “scalpel in the Lord's hand.” Blasphemy – we dare not credit the Spirit as responsible for the actions of the flesh. We dare not accuse the Spirit of our callous words in order to endorse our own behavior.

Until we learn to guard the dignity of others, and not simply

of those we are fond of – preferentially protecting those we love while running roughshod over those whom we don't love, or love less – we are not the types of people who can be trustworthy ambassadors of the Name of our King. The more I read biographies of the great men and women of the faith, the more I see people who were not careless with their words, or quick to attribute their prejudices and harsh moments to the leading of the Spirit. Even a plot to murder Hitler was agonized over by Dietrich Bonhoeffer before he agreed to be a part of it – he was that cautious even with a monster.

How many of us would even think twice, so assured are we of the rightness of our impulses? How many of us think twice about hurting those around us who are not monsters at all or even dangerous – but simply irritating?

I guess what I mean to say is that people are drowning, and we have a choice to throw them a life-preserver, or a weigh them down with something heavy enough to drown them. We ought to think carefully about every word – and not just about the words we speak to those whom we admire, love, or feel protective of.

Extend dignity – love kindness. No more excuses.

August 28, 2016

To Love Kindness (Micah 6:8) Part 9

Kindly equipping others in season vs Unkindly vomiting information

There is a certain behavior that is common in social media religious circles that I absolutely detest – and that is when people who are not teachers will drop into a thread and make a comment that is either controversial, or way above the heads of many people – and then they just walk away, having no decency to stay and clean up the mess they just made in the lives of others.

(You might ask, “Why are you saying the people who do this aren’t teachers?” and I would respond, “Just because someone is spouting information doesn’t make them a teacher, but yes, some people who “teach” are not mature and some do this sort of thing – although most genuine teachers walking in maturity would see this type of behavior as not only futile, but as completely undermining the learning process)

Being a teacher requires kindness, a whole lot of it. I teach kids and beginners – which means that I don’t teach at my own level of knowledge. I don’t drop big complicated bombs on people and leave them desperately searching for a handhold. I don’t put things in front of people without first laying a foundation or without being there to answer questions if someone missed a step.

Teaching has to be about love, or it’s just a way of showing off. Giving someone something they don’t have, when they are ready for it and in a way that they can easily grasp, that’s kindness. Forcing on them something they are not ready for, in a way that makes them feel stupid – isn’t teaching.

There are people out there who are extraordinarily puffed up with this or that understanding – and they seem to believe that merely mentioning something is tantamount to planting a seed. Nothing could be further from the truth – it is incredibly unkind to drop a knowledge bomb in the midst of a conversation. It isn’t teaching, and it isn’t preaching – it’s generally just an extension of ego.

“(Insert controversy here). You don’t understand now, but you will – just pray about it.”

PLEASE! ^^That right there is not how we should treat people. There is no point to it other than to elevate oneself or lord one’s own level of esoteric knowledge over others or your supposed superiority in relationship with God that you have “deeper understandings.” It’s a pet peeve of mine. It’s also

incredibly transparent – and sadly, almost irresistible to those who play the knowledge game. For me, knowledge isn't a game, it is a tool that helps me not to misinterpret Scripture. Knowledge hems in my imagination and keeps it from masquerading as the Holy Spirit! But knowledge is nothing if there is no mature character beneath it as a foundation – when I go to prayer, it is not knowledge that I am lamenting not having enough of (because that can be remedied through study) but because I am still incredibly flawed.

Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted. (Mt 23:12) – ESV

Self-exaltation is, by nature, never kind to others. We have to diminish others in order to do it, we have to be showing off.

The proper way of introducing information to people is through sustained relationship. If one is truly a teacher, they understand it intrinsically – we know how vital it is to know where our students are at, and to give them what they need, and not what we know. Imagine how little respect we would have for a person to barge into a Kindergarten classroom and start spouting multiplication tables, and then just walk away, leaving a classroom full of confused youngsters whose education has now been undermined by being given food out of season by someone who obviously had no love or respect for them, and their level of understanding.

We don't give them what we know, we have an obligation to give them what they need and what they are actually ready for – otherwise, we aren't teachers at all, we're just people who unkindly vomit information to show how "awesome" we supposedly are.

August 30, 2016

To Love Kindness (Micah 6:8) Part 10

We are often... whatever we go to the trouble of saying we aren't.

Kind people rarely brand their own actions as loving, but unkind people seem to announce it in front of themselves like a trumpet. It's a sort of a disclaimer before or after doing something horrifically cruel. "You aren't about to see what you think you see!"

"I am not usually a critical person, but in love I really must tell you that..." (oh great, they just told me they aren't critical, which means – oh yes they are)

"You are a son of the devil, and it took me a lot of love to say that to your face" (– well, I mean, on facebook where I don't actually have to look in your face or anything...)

"I hope that you aren't going to overreact but..." (invariably followed by something offensive that they don't want to have to deal with the consequences of saying, so not only were they jerks, but they put you on a pre-emptive guilt trip for any response that falls short of kissing their feet in gratitude).

We definitely, subconsciously at least, know when we are doing evil through an unkindness, IF we preface it with a disclaimer. Years ago, I asked God to judge me during this life while I still had time to change and the time He slammed me to the mat the hardest was when He showed me all the times I lied – not to others but to myself:

"I was just speaking the truth in love..."

"Of course they are offended, the truth always offends the rebellious and sinful..."

"I am not racist, I have a darned good reason to hate..."

After that day it became:

"I was fooling only myself, I couldn't bear to hear the Spirit

poking at my conscience as I was saying that... so I told myself I was speaking the truth in love so I wouldn't have to hear the truth about my unkindness."

"Of course they are offended, I acted like a jerk and worse – I did it in the Name of God. It made it a whole lot easier when I blamed their reaction on them instead of on my behavior."

"I am a racist, and I have no reason to hate."

We can learn a lot about ourselves by learning to listen to our disclaimers....

Sept 1, 2016

A Love of Kindness (Micah 6:8) Part 11

Rebuke without Relationship Part 1 (or conversely, a relationship based solely upon rebuke)

We are called to love one another. We are called to peace, patience, kindness, gentleness and self-control – but those tend to go out the window when we see something that we disapprove of.

There are times, of course, when someone will get publicly in our face and start something up – it happens. It happened to Yeshua (Jesus) quite a lot; He didn't pick fights with the chief priests, scribes, Pharisees, Herodians and Sadducees (some of which were the chief priests) – they came gunning for him. Not all of them did, but some did. When they attacked – well, He didn't start the fight but He sure finished it. He rebuked because they came at Him first, repeatedly throughout the Scriptures, as part of the honor/shame culture of the day. I teach honor/shame culture but Yeshua was very clear in His sermon on the mount that the system of gaining honor at the expense of others in this manner was not acceptable as part of the Jewish lifestyle. We are to give and preserve honor

preferentially as opposed to publicly taking honor and degrading others.

Sadly, there are many people out there who wield unkindness as a substitute for righteousness – really as self-righteousness.

I once met a couple who were just frankly bonkers. He was a wannabe cult leader with no charisma (I thank God for that) but his wife was completely in his thrall. She once told me that his spiritual gift was “bringing correctness to the body.” He did this through correcting everyone, on everything, in a very controlling manner. Had facebook existed, he would have been the type of person to never engage unless he was scrolling through his newsfeed and saw some behavior to disapprove of and correct.

Apart from being dreadfully boorish, this doesn't work except on people who have been weakened and beaten down by abuse and know no other kind of relationship. The majority of people are repulsed by such behavior, and actually come to associate the correction with the bad behavior.

“You shouldn't be dressing like that unless you want to look like a whore!” becomes, “This self-righteous jerk has a problem with the way I dress, therefore he only disapproves because he is a self-righteous jerk, therefore I am justified in dressing this way because it is HIS (or her) problem!”

A comment like that is usually given outside of a relationship, I would hope, but when a comment like that is given inside a relationship, there are big problems in the relationship! (You think?)

That was just an example of the sort of thing that goes on on social media everyday among believers, and sometimes perpetrated by believers against non-believers (which we are NEVER supposed to do). That's an “in your face” type rebuke, but there are more subtle and manipulative sorts of unkindnesses as well – guilt trips, control through promises

of approval IF.., only showing up in conversations when you can take the moral high ground, etc.

It comes down to this, and parents, this goes for us doubly – if the only time we open our mouths in a relationship is to correct, rebuke, embarrass, discipline, manipulate, scold, lecture, etc., then we need to keep our mouths shut. And hey, I know it is hard – but relationships are built on the same elements that we see listed as the fruit of the Spirit. If a person does not have a portion of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control from us and with us – then we are not in the position relationally to come along and offer correction.

I think we need to ask ourselves a hard question – “why am I seeking to rebuke here, now and in this way?” How about, “Do I feel an uncontrollable compulsion to do this?” ← a lot of times the answer to that is yes and we were taught that uncontrollable compulsions come from the Spirit.

But there’s a problem because self-control is a fruit of the Spirit. We have free-will, and not only that but we start out with very strong-will, an uncontrollable will. That uncontrollable impulse is our flesh, not the Spirit. We like to say it is the Spirit, especially when we have left a trail of wounded in our wake. Our flesh desires enmity, strife, resentment, fear, impatience, cruelty, sin, frivolousness and most of all, a free reign to do as it wills and something else to blame it all on.

Relationship, real relationship, teaches us restraint with a small group of beloved people. Hopefully it is a healthy relationship and hopefully there is indeed a measure of restraint and kindness. That should lead to us seeing others as extensions of that. If you would scream if someone treated your spouse the way you are treating someone, then you are a hypocrite to treat anyone in that manner. The same goes for your child, your relatives and your friends. We have to be

equitable – kindness cannot simply be reserved for the people we like the most or divvied up according to our hierarchy of fondness.

Sept 3, 2016

A Love of Kindness (Micah 6:8) Part 12

Speaking the Truth in Love?

I think this is the last entry in the series – it occurred to me last night that any modern conversation about kindness, and by extension unkindness, has to end with this oft heard expression. It comes from Scripture, Ephesians 4:15-16 – but the context is almost always ignored. In fact, the verse has been used as a justification for ignoring the context of this verse.

“Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love”

So what is the context? What does speaking the truth in love require?

Eph 4:1b-3 “...walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace...”

The prerequisites for speaking the truth in love are:

(1) humility – I can assure you that if your first action upon being rebuffed was to insult the person or go on social media decrying their not accepting the truth you spoke, your words did not qualify as humble.

(2) gentleness – gentleness requires speaking the words in

such a way that they CAN be accepted in the first place, which requires knowing a person and approaching them with wisdom. Everyone has different ways of needing to be approached – and that takes relationship. Paul was talking to a congregation who had relationship with one another, they were intimates in a hostile world.

(3) patience – the truth is not enough. Does it matter what I think you need to know if you are not able to understand it or receive it yet? And the converse is also true – does it matter what you think I need to hear if the timing is bad right now? More stumbling blocks are placed through impatient vomiting of opinions than possibly through anything else.

(4) bearing with one another in love – as I explain in my new book, love isn't what we feel on the inside for a person, love in the ancient world was expressed in terms of loyalty – something we moderns know very little about. Do we seek to guard the dignity of each other, or are we interested in saying whatever is on our mind whenever it occurs to us, and wherever we want to say it? Notice that the people who respected and loved Yeshua always confronted him in private, and those who hated him confronted Him in front of an audience.

(5) eager to maintain the unity – our individualistic society sees no virtue in unity at the expense of having everything our own way, having everything “right” according to our current standards and level of knowledge. In fact, we are quick to disparage unity as compromise and weakness. During the days of Yeshua, the High Priesthood was corrupt – and yet, unlike the Qumran sectarians, Yeshua was still in Jerusalem at every Feast. Circumstances were not optimal, far from it, and yet He who knew perfection better than anyone, was in the synagogues every Sabbath, at the Temple every Feast in unity with everyone else.

(6) the bond of peace – we have to cherish peace, like

kindness, we have to love it and hate that which is contrary to it. Robert E Lee said, "It is well that war is so terrible, otherwise we should grow too fond of it." It is true, but sadly, the internet social media and our egos have removed the terrible nature of war – as well as our conscience over fighting. It is thrilling to battle an enemy whose face we are not required to look into, while the bodies of our friends are not decimated to our left and right. In truth we enjoy social media war because it is a war of cowards, with none of the immediate horrors because we cannot see the true effect of the carnage we deliver into the lives of others – after all, they are no more real to us than video game characters. Social media warfare is much like drone warfare – we kill and destroy people we do not know and can not see, and over what? Doctrines that we may not even still believe tomorrow?

In truth, the "truths" I all too often see spoken "in love" do not qualify as either truth, or love, and they certainly are not serving the purpose of equipping one another and helping one another to grow up. On the contrary...

... instead of building up the Body of Messiah we are often, instead, tearing it down one soul at a time... while using Scripture to excuse our lack of mature fruit.