



STUDY FIVE  
"TOUGH LOVE"  
OCTOBER 7, 2007

MEMORY VERSE

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

INTRODUCTION

Do you struggle with how to appropriately show "Crazy Love" to your fellow believers? Do you have a difficult time knowing how to translate the love Christ has planted in your heart into your interactions with others? How do you love when you are in conflict or have been hurt by someone?

These are some of the questions we will attempt to address through this week's study and discussion. Most people avoid speaking the truth in love because it is often hard, uncomfortable, requires some kind of confrontation or they fear any mistake might hurt their witness for the Lord. Many have learned how to pretend to love others. They may speak kindly to them, avoid hurting feelings or appear to take an interest in them and their needs, but in reality they are presenting a false front and not truly loving the other person. When conflict occurs between people, many avoid addressing the real issues because it is often too hard or painful. Often the result of not addressing the issues is built up resentment, bitterness and additional conflict. God calls us to be real and sincere in our love. This means our words and actions should reflect the love and integrity of Christ. Speaking the truth in love is not always easy, convenient, or pleasant, but it is necessary if the Church is going to do Christ's work in the world.

LEARNING FROM GOD'S WORD

1. According to Ephesians 4:15-16, why do we need to speak the truth to one another in love? What is the result of doing so? How might this build up the body of Christ?
2. Read John 16:13-15 and Romans 5:5. What do these verses reveal to you concerning the role of the Holy Spirit and God's love for us? How can these truths help you in situations where you are called to show tough love?

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(For the following questions, read Romans 12:9-21)

3. In Romans 12:10 it says to, “Outdo one another in showing honor.” What do you think this means? How could this practically be displayed in your life?
4. How would “rejoicing in hope, being patient in tribulation and constant in prayer” affect your relationships with others? (Romans 12:12)
5. According to Romans 12:14-21, how would Paul’s advice help you live at peace with your enemies and those you are having conflict with?
6. How would being “devoted to one another in brotherly love” support all that we are called to be in Christ Jesus? (Romans 12:10)

### OUR WALK WITH GOD

1. Why are we so often tempted to “swallow the truth” and “keep the peace” rather than tell the truth? Why is consistent truth-telling one of the greatest indications of a truly loving relationship? Can you think of a situation where you need to speak the truth in love to someone? What are you going to do about it?
  2. Based on the truths reflected in this study, what are some key ways to help resolve conflicts in our relationships?
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3. Read Proverbs 17:17. What is the hardest thing about loving people through times of adversity or personal struggles? Sometimes we don't love people through these difficult times, but rather drop in every so often to check up on them. How effective is this kind of attention? What would happen if we truly loved them through their time of adversity and struggle? What might this look like in true practice?
  
4. Proverbs 27:17 presents a great picture of how fellow believers can encourage one another spiritually. What is necessary for such a scenario to occur? Why is such mutual sharpening so vital for the health and growth of Christ's body, the Church? Do you have a person who sharpens you like this? If not, what steps will you take this week to start this kind of a relationship?

### GOING DEEPER

Read Matthew 18:15-20. What does this passage reveal to you concerning the proper way to discipline someone in the Church? How does this process reflect the kind of "tough love" we have been discussing in this study?

### SERVING AND BEING SERVED

1. While speaking the truth in love is often not easy, convenient, or pleasant, it truly is an expression of love toward another. Is there someone you are in conflict with or need to confront? Go before the Lord and ask Him for the opportunity to talk with this person and to prepare your heart for this time of speaking the truth. Ask your small group to pray for you and commit to follow-through with this act of love.
  
2. Do you have someone in your life who sharpens and holds you accountable. If you do, renew your commitment to this person and continue to build on your relationship. If not, begin to pray for someone you might develop this kind of a relationship with. Determine to take the necessary steps to find one who will sharpen you and support you through the struggles of this life.

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**SUGGESTED SMALL GROUP STUDY FORMAT**  
**CRAZY LOVE SERIES – “TOUGH LOVE”**  
**STUDY FIVE – OCTOBER 7, 2007**

CONNECT ..... 25 MINUTES

Time of Fellowship

Opening Prayer

Icebreaker Questions:

1. What is one of the best practical jokes anyone has pulled on you?  
How did you try to repay them in kind?
2. What was one of the most meaningful acts of love in your life that you  
will never forget?

MEMORY VERSE (Memorize and say aloud in your group) ..... 5 MINUTES

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

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS ..... 35 MINUTES

SERVING AND BEING SERVED ..... 5 MINUTES

Hold each member of your small group accountable concerning resolving conflict and  
committing to someone who will sharpen and hold them accountable.

PRAYER AND PERSONAL SHARING ..... 30 MINUTES

1. As a group, ask the Lord to grant you His love so that others around you will  
see Christ reflected in you better.
  2. Pray for those in your group who need to deal with conflict in their lives.  
Pray they would have the courage and desire to follow-through and resolve  
this area of struggle.
  3. Pray for the personal needs of one another in your small group.
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