

Notes for the Ekklēsia Meeting

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Truthing in Love Toward Growth

by Dan Trygg

"The one gesturing with the eyes with deceit gathers together grief to men, but the one showing-someone-his-error-with- openness makes peace."

Proverbs 10:10 LXX

"...but truthing in love, we might grow unto Him all things..."

Ephesians 4:15

"...from now on we have-come-to-see no one according to the flesh (i.e., as they appear outwardly), ...so that if anyone is in Christ, he or she is a new creation; the old things went-off-to-the-side; behold, new things have-come-to-be." II Corinthians 5:16,17

Last week our study notes were about peacemakers. This is an area we need to explore a bit more. We mentioned how Jesus was alluding to the Septuagint translation of Proverbs 10:10. There a *contrast* is drawn between someone who is being *deceitful*, versus someone who is being *real*. **Hebrew poetry is not based upon rhyme, but upon a parallelism of thoughts.** In other words, to be poetic, the writers would use various techniques to revisit the thought of the first line of a couplet in the second line. **This might be in a direct synonymous parallelism**, where the thought is simply restated. For example in Prov. 9:7 says, "He who corrects a scoffer gets dishonor for himself, and he who reproves a wicked man gets insults for himself." **Another technique, called antithetical parallelism**, restates the second line as a negative parallel of the first. The idea is still basically parallel, but the focus is the *opposite*. For example, Prov. 10:1 says, "A wise son makes a father glad, but a foolish son is a grief to his mother." Both lines are about sons and their parents. Both are about wisdom and its consequences. One is stated *positively*, the other is stated *negatively*. **Most of Proverbs 10 consists of couplets designed in this way.** This is important to note, because it tells us that vs. 10 is intended as a similar contrast. **The first line describes one who is disingenuous, ...someone who pretends that things are ok when they are not, ...someone who mocks, gossips or draws others into relationship problems where they do not belong. This person causes further grief and hurt. The second line describes the opposite, ...one who directly goes to the person who offends them, or who has a problem, and openly, respectfully shows that person his or her error. That individual, in the end, will make peace.**

The Bible repeatedly advocates this kind of open communication, as long as there is a positive purpose in mind, i.e., either the mending of a relationship or the maturation of the person. **It works in either direction. If we realize we have wronged someone, ...or that they have something against us** (real or *imagined* – it has the same impact, a broken relationship), **we are to go to them and openly seek to be reconciled** (Matt. 5:23,24). So far as it depends on *us*, we are to seek to be at peace with all people (Rom. 12:18). **If, on the other hand, someone sins against us**, especially a brother or sister in Christ, **we are to go to that person and openly address the matter** (the same word as is used in Prov. 10:10 is used here also – "showing-someone-his-error-with-openness"). **If they listen to us, the relationship can be mended. This is the goal of this kind of communication, a healing and deepening of relationship.** If the person will not listen, other steps can be taken toward that end. **Wise people love reproof, because they see it as specific feedback to help them toward maturity** (Psa. 141:5; Prov. 6:23; 9:8; 10:17; 15:31; 19:25; 25:12; 27:6,17; Ecc. 7:5).

Aside from ruptures in our relationships with others, we are still to watch out for each other, speaking words of encouragement, correction and admonition when necessary and helpful (Heb. 3:12,13; 10:24,25; 12:15-17; Jas. 5:19,20; I Thess. 5:11,14,15; Rom. 15:14). **We are not to judge, negatively condemn, or speak against one another** (Matt. 7:1-5; Jas. 4:11,12; Rom. 14:4,10-12). **That is not our place.** We *all* stumble in many ways (Jas. 3:2), so we dare not sit in judgment of someone else. If we should find a brother or sister caught up in some sin issue, we who are spiritual are to restore that person in an attitude of humility and meekness, examining ourselves lest we too become tempted to evil in any way (Gal. 6:1). We are not to judge. We are to bear one another's burdens, even bear with (put up with, endure or carry) the failings, weaknesses and immaturities of the weak, and not just please ourselves (Gal. 6:2; Rom. 15:1). The Bible makes it clear that **we are supposed to be in one another's "business", when it comes to watching out for one another's walk with God.** We are to speak up when we see a brother or sister wandering off the path, or stuck in a sin pattern. Of course, there is a measure of sensitivity and timing here. We are not all to descend *en masse* on every unsuspecting soul who stumbles. I believe, however, if we are prayerful, humble and sensitive, we could approach a person individually, and it will be used of the Lord. The Bible says that "a word *in season* (or at the right time and place) is like apples of gold in settings of silver" (Prov. 25:11). Again, "a man has joy in an *apt* answer, and how delightful is a *timely* word" (Prov. 15:23). **Learning how and when to approach people who need correction or support are skills that develop with prayer and experience** (cf. Prov. 15:2; 16:23). It is important whenever you approach someone that you realize that *things are not always how they might appear to you*. Sometimes what we *think* is going on may be seriously misguided, because *our perceptions can be wrong*. Therefore, **when we go to**

someone it is important to *maintain humility* and report what you have seen and heard, giving them the opportunity to clarify if they have a different perspective. Remember, the goal is not to bend the person to your will. Rather it is to promote accountability, understanding, healing, growth and restoration. Sometimes we go to the person “loaded for bear” only to find that they have an entirely different explanation for what happened. Are they *lying* to us, or have we *misunderstood* the situation, or could there be *more than one perspective* of what happened? **Be quick to hear, slow to speak and do not hasten to judgment before you have heard every side of the situation** (Jas. 1:19; Prov. 18:13,17). Finally, “let *all that you do be done in love*” (I Cor. 16:14).

The Body of Christ is like a family, ...a very diverse family. We are a composite of widely different individuals that cover the broadest of backgrounds, life journeys, educational backgrounds, racial, social and economic experiences. If you have ever been married, or deeply involved with another person, you have undoubtedly run into the reality that we grow up with different “code books”. **Certain things can mean one thing to me because of my family background and life history, and mean something totally different to you**, because your experiences and training are not the same as mine. Sometimes this phenomenon is funny, at other times it can be downright frustrating. Well, when you take into account all the divergence of the Body of Christ, is it any wonder that we sometimes misunderstand each other, or frustrate each other? **Our “code book” is the inner guide, the bottom line training we operate by, and the source of our expectations about life.** When these no longer work, ...when we are confronted by people who do not behave as we expect, or even as we were taught was “right” ..., we experience an inner sense of discomfort and maybe even irritation. Depending on our temperament, we may tend to *withdraw*, and may even think we are wrong, ...or we may get assertive and attempt to get that other person to act according to our “code book”. Unfortunately, **others don’t know what your “code book” says. They are following their own, and it says something different.** Some of these “codes” are not right or wrong, in themselves. They are fairly arbitrary, or the underlying need may be addressed in a different fashion in other families. The point is, we need to be aware that this occurs, and sometimes the irritation or discomfort I feel is not about someone purposely attacking me, or ignoring me. It is just that **their expectations may be different than mine.** This is not to excuse anybody from real sin (violation of God’s law), nor to allow anyone off the hook (Nothing wrong with me or my “code book”. You guys just need to change.). No. **Relationships require us to share our minds and hearts with each other, and negotiate a new way of relating to each other that will be sensitive to both.** We all need to make adjustments to get along. It is a fact of life. Paul spoke of this phenomenon in I Cor. 9:19-23, “For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them. To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though not being myself under the law) that I might win those under the law. To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ) that I might win those outside the law. To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some. I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings.”

In addition to all the diversity that can happen simply because families, cultures, etc. do things differently, we have the added variable of the ways we have individually learned to navigate through life. **We all have developed strategies of sin to deal with difficult things in life. We are all crooked in some way.** None of us has come through life *unscathed* or *unbent*. **We have learned to operate in ways that protect us from being hurt. Some of us have learned to be timid and withdrawn**, avoiding conflict by being quiet, keeping to ourselves, etc. **Others have learned to use deception to go through life**, ...saying, doing or becoming whatever we need to at the time to *avoid conflict*. We may not be outwardly withdrawn, but we are *not* very often our *real selves*, ...and we do not let many people know who we are. Somehow, if we pretend to be somebody other than our real selves, it does not hurt so much to be rejected or confronted, because it is not the real “me” that is being rejected. **Others of us have learned to “get big”**, to take control of situations by asserting ourselves *first*, or *very strongly*, so that others have to adjust to *us*. Some like to bully others. Others do this to avoid being taken advantage of. They have learned that a good offense is the best defense, so they will assert themselves strongly early on in the relationship to carve out a niche for themselves. As they feel comfortable and learn to trust the other person, they may negotiate some of this territory away. **The first observation is that, here again, we are all different. Secondly, all of these ways are flawed in part. Thirdly, these human “strategies of coping” or “code books” must be laid at the feet of Jesus.** They are part of the old things that have gone off to the side. We need to be willing to let them go, so that we can embrace the new things that have come as we have been born again. **Fourth, we are called to love one another, code books or not. That is not negotiable.** That is the heart of the King, our Father in heaven. If we love *Him*, we must, we *will*, love His children (I Jn. 5:1). We need to see each other with eyes of faith as “new creations”. We are all in process of becoming like Jesus. **In the end, we will come to value and love each other. For now, we have to push past the discomfort to negotiate our relationships in the Body.** We need to log time together, to talk things out, to understand each other.