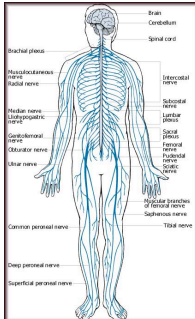


Your Body is an amazing organism.....

It the most advanced **information** and **communication network** you will ever encounter....



You are designed by God with a brain than is in constant communication with every part of your body..... Communication travels through your central nervous system out into two peripheral systems and then back again....

All of your **organs**.... (function properly)..... as they receive these electrical impulses from your brain....

All of your members make precise movements as directed by your brain....

Could say...figuratively....Your body talks to itself 24 hrs. day / 7 days a week and always does what the brain thinks is in its best interest....

- ONLY when your body has been **drugged**.... or if something is **malfunctioning**.... are any messages sent within the body that are not true....

These messages from the brain.... **give life** to otherwise idle body parts.....

They give not only instruction.... but they are also responses to the communication the brain is receiving from the members...

Likewise.... since **we** are the body of Jesus Christ..... with Him as our Head.... our **brain**...(if you will).....

God has designed **us** to both function and grow through **TRUE communication**....

or... as Eph. 4:15 puts it.... through **Speaking the Truth in Love**

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,"

The **context** of our passage is very important. In v. 14 (recall from last week) Paul emphasized that we are not to be **weather vanes**..... turning in the direction of every new **faddish** doctrine that comes along in our generation....

We are not to be **duped** by FALSE teachers.... out to draw away God's sheep from the fold....

That is what CHILDREN are susceptible to..... being snatched away by predatory, misguided adults...

So Rather than..... being content to coast along with the world in perpetual childhood.....drinking in whatever **kool aid** is served up in the name of religion....

God has called us (as the church) to be in the process of growing up Together into our Head....

RATHER than being tossed about... and afflicted by falsehood.... we are to grow up in **the TRUTH** of the gospel.....

We do that by **living out** and **speaking** the Truth to one another. That's what I am calling this morning....

TRUE COMMUNICATION

1. Is Built on the True Confession

The **means** which Paul lays out for our growth (Speaking the Truth in Love) actually carries with it a broader range of meaning than is apparent in the English translation. The phrase we translate "speaking the truth" is actually one word in Greek – a participle – that most literally translated would be "**truthing**"....

In contrast to being tossed about by every wind and wave of doctrine.... Paul wants these Ephesians (who had known and confessed the truth of the gospel already) to **keep on holding** to **the truth** of the faith once for all handed down to the saints.... to keep on confessing that they believe the doctrines Paul laid out in Ch. 1 – 3....

Confessing the Truth means you ADMIT...this gospel is yours.... you are **owning** it

If you are here this morning and are not yet a follower of Christ..... believing the truth of the gospel is HOW God can save you from what you deserve.....

Romans 10:9-10

"because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved."

We simply can't rehearse and admit this truth too often.... not merely between us and the Lord but with one another....

A great example of this is the age old tradition of Christians greeting one another on Easter Sunday by saying **He is Risen!** and the other person responds..... He is Risen Indeed!

That's confession.... EVERY part of the body is held together by that kind of true communication...

Clinging to this gospel..... we build one another up in the most holy faith.... by confessing and building our lives upon EVERYTHING God's Word says about Jesus... and about us....

The pastor to the Hebrews says essentially the same thing....

Hebrews 10:23

"Let us **hold fast** the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful."

The essence of our communication with one another is to be the truth of the gospel!

We have FELLOWSHIP – we share in the life of Christ together through the gospel

That is why we **SING** and **confess** the truths of the gospel together.....

When we do... we are not only communicating with our HEAD.... but the Holy Spirit in each believer.... is communing with one another.....

Nothing I would rather do that ENJOY the truths of the gospel with other HAPPILY redeemed people!!

That union... that **communication of Truth** one to another is essential for our growth....

But it is insufficient for that to be all there is.....

It is insufficient for you to come in here every Sunday and sing with God's people... to AGREE with the truth of what is prayed.... and preached.... and testified about....

True Communication (also involves)

2. Constructive Conversation

Most people love to talk. Honestly, most people love to **talk about themselves**. They puff up themselves by bragging (either indirectly or directly)...

Or they speak **poorly** of others in order that they and their hearers can feel better about themselves....

But True Communication involves **constructive** speech..... speech that builds the people of the church..... we often call it **CONVERSATIONAL MINISTRY**...

We want it to become the central nervous system of communication within this Body. We want to create **a culture of truth** that swirls about in a **wellspring of God's love**.

That can only happen through HORIZONTAL relationships.....

...Where you intentionally, prayerfully and **carefully** speak God's truth into other's lives for their good.... for their upbuilding... for their CONSTRUCTION.

Let's **Pan out** for a moment... review our study of this section... (Eph. 4:11-16) follow along in your Bible..... so you can see clearly **YOUR ROLE** in this process....

Recall that v. 11.... God has assembled a **Church Construction Team**..... (we are built on the foundation of the Apostles and the Prophets.... we still benefit from their teaching... their instruction....)

He has given us gifted Evangelists to lead the way in getting the gospel to the lost.... and bringing them into the fold..... they show us how... by their example and equip us through training....

He has given us Pastors / Teachers... to SPEAK the Word of Godto us..... for **one purpose**.....

To help us begin to function in a role according to our gifting (to make us FIT) and to TRAIN us to **do** the work of the ministry....

We saw that while the work of the ministry does involve some practical tasks..... that it is essentially **PEOPLE WORK**.....

Every member is called to take part in helping to **MAKE DISCIPLES** of one another....

We are to take **mutual responsibility** for one another's growth.....

Today... we see the MEANS of that People Work.... we see that Disciples are made through **CONSTRUCTIVE CONVERSATIONS**

Through **intentional conversations** that you welcome and **initiate** so that we can MATURE together through the mutual ministry of the Word of God spoken into one another's lives.....

Do you ever take a hard look at your conversations with others?

- Ask yourself (at the heart level) What were you seeking to accomplish in the conversations you have had so far today?

For many of you.... you were just trying to **avoid rejection**... or making sure someone thought well of you.....

Perhaps you listed off a recent accomplishment..... or tried to find kinship in some mutual pursuit....

Let me ask it another way..... how have your conversations this morning been any different from ones you would have with co-workers.... or neighbors ?

Look around..... God says....we are mutually responsible for one another's growth!.....

If **this Word** is true... we will each stand accountable on the final Day for whether how we DID the work of the ministry.... the building up of the People of God....

The **means** God has given us to accomplish that is by intentionally seeking to **speak the truth in love**..... into one another's lives.....

By that.... I don't mean.... that every word out of your mouth needs to have a Chapter and verse at the end of it..... that might be speaking the truth..... but it is very likely **not** done with a motive of LOVING the one you are talking to...

I have greatly benefited this week from reading this book by David Powlison....
Speaking the Truth in Love....

Not surprisingly he says that **Jesus is our model** for Speaking the Truth in love. If you look at conversations he had.....

Sometimes Jesus cited Scriptural references as he quoted texts from the OT... other times he simply **wove the truths into normal sentences**. But his conversations were always Biblical in their essence.

- Granted.... you and I are not Jesus..... All of our efforts in this direction might be clumsy at first.....but Jesus **is** our model is He not?! We are His followers.... we are trying to GROW up into HIM!

Jesus also **asked questions** of those he conversed with.....

When you ASK questions about someone..... it is a means of demonstrating love for them... **taking an interest** in the details of their life.....

For many people you might be the **ONLY one**.... who genuinely cares enough to do that...

So...

If they share a praise.... you can REJOICE with them..... (genuinely)

If you hear a **burden**... or a concern..... you can offer to pray for them ... perhaps even right there on the spot.....

Or if God brings a truth to your mind..... that you believe would help them..... you might ask if you could share it.....

That 's **Constructive Conversation**..... That is you using your mind, and your heart and your mouth to build up what Jesus died to save....

It is an ETERNAL work.....

unlike 90% of conversations about your recreation...or even a project at your office.....which are like chaff that the wind blows away...

If you desire to grow in your ability to build up others in your conversations.....

Here's a Goal:

Connect one bit of Scripture -> to one bit of life.

A **fundamental disconnect** exists between people struggling with sin and the wonderful power and tender mercy of God in the Scriptures...

Our speaking the truth in love is an attempt to **RECONNECT** the two.... it is a ministry of reconciliation.

Ask the HS for wisdom and grace to speak specific words into specific situations, one bit at a time...

That is what **APPLYING** the Word means.....

Powlison says that Christian people are very used to "church talk.."

Abstract theological concepts will cause them to nod their head and walk away **unchanged**.... General truths about God don't change anybody...

Often it takes a loving FRIEND to help them CONNECT how that one truth..... really addresses an area where they can find grace to change....

Specific words applied to life bring about change...growth...**community**.

It **creates** (what Powlison calls) a community of **WISE LOVE**.

That's what we're aiming at! A community of WISE LOVE.

We want CONVERSATIONAL MINISTRY to be the central nervous system of this Body....where the truth of God's Word flows in and out in and out.... encouraging... building... strengthening.... and (when necessary) **correcting**.....

In building up the church.....we are never starting with a blank slate. (that is what makes it so hard)...

Some elements of our lives NEED to be **deconstructed**...chiseled away... in order to be replaced by what is true and lasting and freeing.

God uses **loving friendships** to accomplish that

See the Bible says....

Proverbs 27:6a

"**Faithful** are the wounds of a friend;

In other words... a **TRUE friend**... will tell you things that you might not want to hear...

Because they **love you**.....

In the same way that parents would no sooner let their child continue in a certain trend...without **adjusting** them.....because they have their long term interest at heart.....

We as brothers and sisters in Christ.... must be **faithful friends**... to gently and lovingly bring **correction** whenever someone we love is blind to or unwilling to admit a sin pattern in their life.....

See.... the verse goes on to say....

Proverbs 27:6b

"...profuse are the kisses of an enemy."

It is your **ENEMIES**....who tell you what you want to hear.

Remember the Stevie Nicks song.... tell me lies, tell me sweet little lies.....

Enemies do that..... (She was a witch by the way)....

Friends speak the truth in love for your good.

As you seek to apply Scriptural truth to an area of your friend's life.....

In that moment.... much of the time they will not immediately believe God can help them through His Word.... (it sounds too simple)...

but (listen) you can have faith **for** them..... **your faith** can be imparted to them.....as you lovingly speak God's truth into their situation.

That's how YOU help build the church!

For some of you..... you think.... "oh I could never try to minister God's Word to someone else...." you are **right!** But **God can** through you! The **same Jesus** who you see doing it in the Bible has come to reside IN you by His Holy Spirit....

He promises to do GREATER works through us.... as we trust Him.

Others of you (especially those of you who have acquired some Bible knowledge) have the **opposite problem**.... you tend to try to throw the whole weight of Scripture at your friend in one sitting.....

As my pastor in TX used to say.... "no cow can eat a whole bale of hay...."

We want to lovingly and prayerfully seek to Connect **ONE BIT** of God's truth – to one specific area of our brother or sisters life....

Example of what that looks like:

Let's say that someone you care about (in your App. group) or that you have built a relationship with in the church shares with you a **FEAR** they have of the future.... a big **uncertainty** looms on the horizon of their life.....

You might say.... I can understand why you are afraid.... I would probably be scared too....

But could I ask you (if you are honest with yourself) what are you looking to for **HELP** right now? How are you seeking to find relief from your situation?... are you escaping to TV.... the internet..... are you hoping in people?

God says something through David when he was afraid.....that can be your anchor right now (it has for me in the past):

Psalm 121:1-2

" I lift up my eyes to the hills. **From where does my help come?** My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth."

_____ right now lift up your eyes off of your circumstances and look the LORD... the one who made heaven and earth. Go out and look at the sky, the trees... and realize that the one who upholds all of reality is the same One who has promised to come alongside you in this trouble... and be **your HELPER**.

He is not like some general guy at the help desk in an airport.... He wants you to own Him as YOUR HELP.....

When you get home.... email them the verse..... tell them you are praying it for them....

If they seem helped.... you could send them this the next day:

Hebrews 13:5b-6

“I will never leave you nor forsake you.” So we can confidently say, “The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?””

You don't have to be more Spiritually mature than your friend to minister God's word to them..... that eliminates what Jesus did at the cross.... making us all brothers....

HE is our head.... we are all His members..... no one is superior.....

Probably the best thing about you trying to do this (first in your own life) and then in helping your friends..... is that..

God's Word has an **amazing ability** (when applied to one small area) to spread like leaven to **other areas** of our life!

Not sure how many of you are BAKERS..... bake your own bread.... etc...

But (I'm told)....in order for bread to RISE...to be fluffy and delicious ...the dough has to be **KNEADED**...

In other words.... water has to be worked into the flour... like this....



When that is done... the protein in the dough warms and expands so that it can hold the little gas pockets produced by the yeast or leaven.....

If it is not kneaded.... the bread will collapse leaving a dense, heavy loaf no one wants to eat.....

So get this picture.... you can have all the ingredients for making great fluffy bread.... on the counter... or even in the bowl.... but someone has to knead it or it will never become edible.....

Powlison says:

“Often people we disciple already know significant truth, but they don’t know it in a way that changes their lives. Discipleship does the hard work of **kneading what is true** into how **we actually live**.”

Church....you all know more Bible than the average Christian has ever even heard.....

But I am afraid that many of **those truths** are just sitting on the counter of your lives.... because you don’t want to let anyone get close enough to knead them into to **how you live**....

That’s the work of the ministry....that’s what we are talking about... that is the goal of CONSTRUCTIVE conversation....

In Ephesians 4 Paul gives us both the GOAL and the BOUNDARIES of this type of ministry....

The goal we have looked at today.... Speak the Truth in Love...so that the Body grows up into Christ...

The boundary marker...for CONSTRUCTIVE CONVERSATION ..is what **NOT** to say:

Ephesians 4:29

"Let no **corrupting talk** come out of your mouths, but **only** such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may **give grace** to those who hear."

If you will let these two verses frame **the parameters** for your conversations.....

Eph. 4:15 “Speak the Truth in love”

Eph. 4:29 “**Stop** things from coming out which CORRUPT God’s people.... which spawn disease and decay.... ONLY speak words that impart grace...

You will be well on your way to CONSTRUCTIVE conversation....

That combined with our tenacious clinging to... and confessing the truths of the gospel...

form the TRUE COMMUNICATION that our Lord Jesus wants flowing through His Body....

Which He gave His life to REDEEM..

- What I want to ask you to do today... is be willing.... in word and deed... to give **yourself** up for the same people?