



Links Players

The Truth Can Hurt

...speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ...
(Ephesians 4:15, ESV)

Way back when, while still in high school, my girlfriend's dad decided he wanted to learn the game of golf. Until then, "TS" only ran track in a city-wide running club for middle-agers. "TS" was short for "Track Star," an affectionate nickname we kids gave him.

So, I introduced him to our local pro, who was quite the character! The three of us headed to the range. It wasn't a bona fide range; instead, it was more like an area off the side of the tenth tee.

We arrived at a patch that had something resembling grass. If asked what sort of grass it was, the honest answer is: "Common Bermuda, Crabgrass, and various other unknown weeds."

TS began to loosen up with stretches that can only be described as "what the heck are those?" After a few moments, Joe, the Pro, says, "take a few practice swings." TS grabs a club that was the latest technology in Harry Vardon's era.

Watching TS make practice swings, to this day, fifty years removed, is an image I dearly wish I could remove from my mind's eye! At that moment, anyone watching knew that TS had truly found his sport: Long Distance Running.

Unfortunately, what happened over the next sixty seconds is deeply lodged in my memory. After taking a violent slash at the ball, Joe the Pro, with a wry grin, says to TS, "I want you to take your club, lay it down in front of you, and never pick up another golf club as long as you live." True story!

In the seconds that followed, I was frozen in a paradox of fear and internal laughter. My mind raced with questions: Would TS be offended? Would he tell his daughter to break up with me? Would Joe the Pro say, "I'm just kidding?" As it turned out, Joe the Pro was half serious.

TS swallowed his pride and responded: "Yep, I knew it! I didn't want to play this game anyway." They laughed as I tried to find a tree, a rock, or anything else I could hide behind.

Though this happened back in '72, I can vividly remember that "moment of truth." With his left hand on one hip and holding a MacGregor iron with the other, Joe the Pro never flinched as he delivered "the truth."

Joe was not mean-spirited. He merely said what was true through his phlegmatic personality. Joe never flinched. I, on the other hand, cringed in sheepish embarrassment.

“Speaking the truth in love” is risky business. If experience has taught me anything, it has taught me that there aren’t enough trees in the forest to harvest enough pulp, create enough paper, and record all the ways “speaking the truth in love” is mishandled.

One way this is mishandled is never to say what needs to be said because “I love them and don’t want to hurt their feelings.” The opposite error is speaking the truth with harshness or inappropriate sarcasm.

Saying what’s on your mind, even if it’s true, isn’t the same as “speaking the truth in love.” Remaining silent when someone you love needs to hear the truth is not love.

Speaking the truth in love is how God brings people to Christ. It is also his means to grow people in Christ. When we forfeit the truth spoken in love, we hinder our effectiveness as ambassadors of the kingdom.

Jesus! Teach us the fine art of speaking the truth in love.

Prayer: Holy Spirit! Show us when and how to “speak the truth in love.”

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Dennis Darville

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The Links Daily Devotional appears Monday-Friday at linksplayers.com.