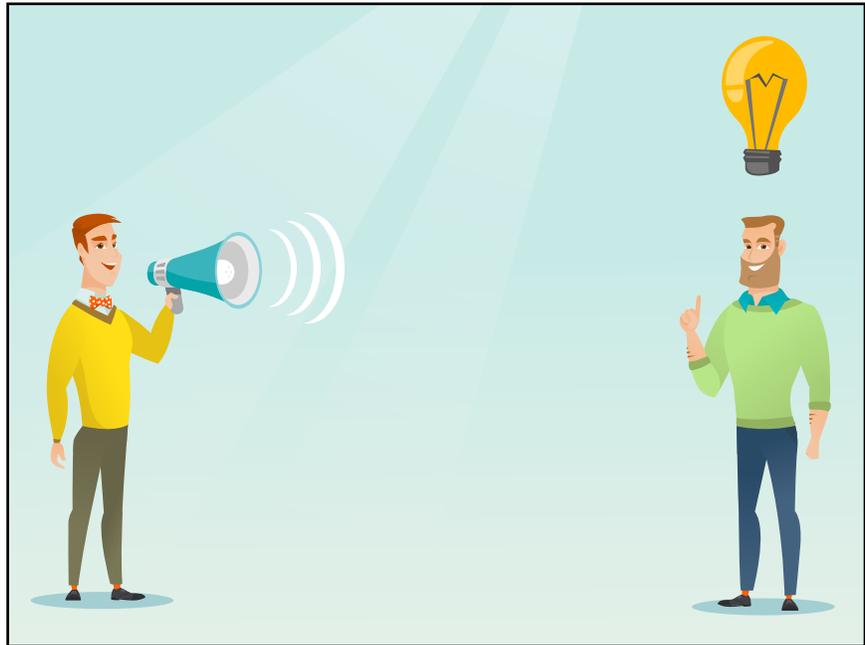


# Speak Up!

Speak up! I can't hear you! Is that what the lost around us are saying to us? They may not be verbalizing or using these same words, but nonetheless, I fear there are many who do not hear God's word from us. Sometimes, they may hear the truth from us, but not in a manner suitable for reaching them. Certainly, it is vital to spread God's word—for their benefit and ours—but we need also need to be concerned with how we present the truth of God's word. Perhaps we would do well to remember



what the Spirit says through the apostle Paul in regard to the growth of the church: “*we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love*” (**Ephesians 4:14-16**). Paul points out that all do not have the same abilities or positions, but all must speak the truth in love. What is that?

***We must begin with our heart.*** Speaking the truth to others should be motivated by love. All that we do should be done through this motivation (**1Corinthians 16:14; 13:1-3**). Teaching others should never be done out of envy, strife, jealousy, or selfishness (**Philippians 1:15; James 3:14**).

***Love does not argue, quarrel, or engender strife*** (**Matthew 12:19**). Even when speaking to non-Christians our speech is to “*always be with grace*” (**Colossians 4:6**). We must exhibit kindness, courtesy, and compassion. Kindness decreases anxiety, relieves stress, and comforts the person (**Proverbs 16:21,24**). Speaking in a pleasant manner, without compromising the truth, is necessary for effective communication of the gospel.

***Speaking in love also means that our speech is giving.*** It gives grace, that is, we speak to benefit the listener spiritually (**Ephesians 4:29**). Jesus is the best example of saying what was needed for each person at the moment (e.g., **Luke 18:22; John 8:10-11; Mark 8:31-33**). We don't always know what people's needs are like Jesus does, however, we must do our best to meet people where they are in order to lead them to where they need to be.

***Love speaks the way you want to be spoken to.*** Be careful not to speak in a brash, overbearing, or an arrogant manner (**Matthew 7:12**). We still should speak confidently or boldly (**Acts 4:13**), but speak in a meek way (**Galatians 6:1**). Remain humble (**Colossians 3:12**). The way we speak ought to shine His light.

***Love speaks the truth with no shame.*** Are you tempted to be ashamed of the gospel in a society that mocks Christians? The intellectual elite (i.e., editors, producers, columnists, anchors, reporters, professors, scientists, etc.) belittle religious conviction. Neighbors, coworkers, classmates, relatives, and maybe even our own family members and friends have been taught to feel this way about Christianity. Consider sharing the truth outside your “comfort zone”—the place where you feel the most comfortable to speak about God. Do you only speak the truth boldly in the presence of other Christians? Brethren often reason that we need to get them to come to the building where we can freely communicate God’s word to them. Shouldn’t we feel just as free to discuss the Scriptures with people wherever appropriate? We will be condemned eternally for having shame of God and His gospel (**Mark 8:38**).

### **Simple Steps to Speaking Up**

***Know your Bible (2Timothy 2:15).*** When you set your heart on the study of God’s word, you will be equipped to teach others (**Ezra 7:10**). Christians should do their best to be prepared to give an answer for their faith (**1Peter 3:15**). The more you study the Bible, the bolder you can be in speaking the truth! You will not be able to answer every single question a listener may have, but you should prepare to answer as best you can.

***Do not overestimate the knowledge of non-Christians.*** Remember that those who mock God are ignorant of the Scripture. Only fools dismiss the possibility of God and you’re no fool! (**Psalms 14:1**). The fool’s so-called “wisdom” is no match for the wisdom of God (**1Corinthians 1:18-25**).

***Remember you have the truth (2Corinthians 4:1-5).*** When you know you teach the truth, there is no reason to feel ashamed. People may doubt you or be suspicious of you. Show who you are—a Christian teaching the truth (**Matthew 7:15-20**).

***Understand rejection can be expected.*** Don’t let negative responses discourage you from spreading God’s word. Remember that Christians are persecuted for their faith (**2Timothy 3:12**). Be joyful when rejected or even persecuted for Christ’s sake (**Matthew 5:10-12; Acts 5:40-42**). You can be bold (**Acts 4:29**)!

***Never forget that you are sharing that which can save a soul!*** You are not sharing the latest fad or some product that adds little value to their lives. You are sharing the priceless, soul-saving gospel (**Romans 1:14-17**). Speak up! They need to hear you!