

NATIONAL COMMUNITY CHURCH

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The Blindspot Quadrant

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A few months ago I started getting a little tooth ache and I could tell that something was not quite right. I noticed some sensitivity to hot and cold and as I brushed my teeth occasionally, a little shooting pain and so you know what I did. I immediately called the dentist, made an appointment. No, I didn't, I ignored it until I could ignore it no longer because of the pain and that's how many of us approach our relationships. We ignore the problems that cause pain until we can ignore them no longer. I think there's a better approach and we're in a series called 'Better Together' and that's what it's all about. If you have a Bible, you can turn to the Gospel of John and we will get there in a New York minute.

Last weekend, Pastor Joel and Nina talked about the subject matter of marriage, kind enough to gift a copy of their book to every engaged and married couple. I don't know for sure, but I think some people got engaged during the message to get the book because we ran out, we ran out. Good news, we've got some more copies at all of our campuses, and so if you're an engaged or married couple, swing by your connection table and get a copy of praying circles around your marriage.

Let me go back to that dentist chair because that's where I was this week. He filled the cavity with a resin base composite, then he used something called a dental curing light. It's an intense light in the blue lights spectrum and it polymerized that filling and your Pastor is good to go. Hold that thought. The Gospel of John was written by one of Jesus' disciples, one of his closest friends. In fact, it's kind of cool. I think one of the coolest nicknames in the Bible, Jesus called John and his brother James, the Sons of Thunder. That's what I'm talking about, right, and that John writes this about Jesus. In John chapter one, verse 14; *"the word became flesh and made his dwelling among us."* In other words, God most high becomes God most nigh.

This week we brought in a creative consultant to help us do a little bit of brainstorming about the city block that we are turning into a prototype campus and marketplace. One of the exercises that we went through was something called in empathy map. Now, if you're a designer or a marketer, you're probably familiar with that. It's a way of gaining greater insight into your clients or customers in a sense, by putting yourself in their shoes. What do they think? What do they feel? What do they see? What do they hear? What are their pain points and their gain points? Well, I think the incarnation of Christ goes beyond an empathy map. In fact, this is the God who identifies with our pain. Why? Because he didn't just walk in our shoes, he carried our cross. The writer of Hebrews says that *we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who was tempted in every way just as we are yet was without sin.* John continues; *we have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only who came from the Father, and here it is; full of grace and truth.*

What I want to do this weekend is talk about tough love and let me give you a couple of definitions and a little formula upfront, and if you're taking notes, you can jot these down.

- Grace means I will love you no matter what.
- Truth means I will be honest with you, no matter what.

It's the combination of those two things that make tough love and it's not half grace/half truth. You remember what Pastor Joel and Nina said last week that marriage is not a 50/50 proposition, that it's each person bringing a hundred percent to the table. I think this is like that; grace without truth is not Jesus and truth without grace is not Jesus. He was full of grace and truth. He will love you no matter what. And he'll be honest with you no matter what.

Alright, here's the formula; Grace giving plus truth telling equals tough love. I want to share two stories and then I want you to tell me which one is more loving.

First story, not long after Lora and I got married, I was speaking at a church in Skokie, Illinois. I hadn't preached very many times, not a lot of experience. And so I got up, I started to preach and it was amazing the way that my wife was taking notes. I was like, I can't wait to hear what I'm saying that so amazing that she's writing down and so the sermon ended. Afterwards I asked her and she told me what she loved about the message, but she wasn't just taking notes, she was tallying the number of verbal fillers, the number of times I said, um, and ah, and it was 37 if I remember right. And I love Lora for this because my wife is incredibly gracious, but she loved me enough to believe that I could become a better speaker than I was, that I could become a better version. I guess what I'm saying is like, I still say, um, and ah, here and there but you have Lora to thank that I don't do it more.

Second story, when I was five years old, I was at my grandparents' house; one simple rule do not play with your grandfather's fossil collection. He taught history at the University of Minnesota. this was his prize possession. You can guess what I did five years old. I remember the fossil slipping through my fingers hitting the ground cracking and when it did, it was like a flash flood of guilt and fear because I did not know what his reaction would be. He walked into the room, didn't say a word, kind of assess the situation, pick me up and just held me tight. And that's the day that I discovered grace.

Question; which one of those is more loving? I think there's a tendency, especially if you're a grace giver, to think that maybe my grandfather showing me grace was more loving, but I'm not convinced that it is because very few people love us enough to say what needs to be said to take the relational risk to help us become a better version of ourselves. And really, it's a trick question, isn't it? Because I've already put my cards face down. Tough love is a two sided coin; it is grace giving and truth telling.

A few years ago, I remember doing a photo shoot I think for a book and the photographer was all up in my business. I mean he was playing with my collar and primping my hair like and then telling me what to do with my hands. And I was like getting super self conscious. And then this photographer turned prophet; He said, you'll thank me in five years. Ha!

I want to ask you two questions and maybe jot these down because you'll forget if you don't.

- First question, who are you talking about that you need to talk to? Who are you talking about that you need to stop talking about and talk to?
- And then second question is, what do you need to say to someone who will thank you in five years for saying it?

Let me go back to Jesus, the same John who said that Jesus was full of grace and truth writes about an incident that has awkward all over it. A woman is caught in the act of adultery and the Pharisees make the mistake of asking Jesus a trick question. In the law, Moses commanded us to stone such women; now, what do you say? Now, I did not learn this in seminary but here's my interpretation. It's almost like Jesus goes into a crane kick position like Daniel's son in the Karate Kid. My balance is a little off tonight. And he says, "*Let him who is without sin cast the first stone*". (Pastor Mark does a kick) I've never done that before. [Laughter] I love this. What an incredible comeback. Jesus does a little bit of jiu jitsu here. He comes to this woman's defense, it's almost like he says, you can stone her over my dead body. It's this moment of tremendous grace giving.

We have a core value; love people when they least expect it and least deserve it. That core value comes from this story, from this moment, but the story doesn't end there and I think this is where sometimes grace givers get it wrong. Jesus doesn't condemn this woman, but he doesn't ignore what she did either he gives grace, but then he speaks truth and he says; "*go and sin no more*". He calls a spade a spade, but he does it in a way that gives this woman a new lease on life.

Let me tell you what love is not. Love is not putting a stamp of approval on sinful behavior. True love, tough love doesn't ignore what's wrong. Imagine a doctor withholding a diagnosis because he doesn't really want you to feel bad about what's wrong. Now, that would be malpractice and it's not just true medically, it's true relationally. Now, sometimes we speak truth when we need to give grace and sometimes we give grace when we need to speak truth and it takes tremendous emotional intelligence and spiritual maturity to know what to do when and we're going to talk about some of that, but I just want to make sure because I think it's a mistake that some people make; truth is not giving grace and grace is not not telling the truth. We've got to get both of these things right.

I'm going to talk about some habits of highly effective grace givers and truth tellers, but let me frame this real fast. When I was in graduate school I was introduced to a fascinating matrix on human personality called the johari window, sounds real fancy, but it was actually two guys, Joe and Harry who came up with it, true story. Johari window, I'm going to put it on the screen so that you can visualize this. I've shared this before, consists of four quadrants in a sense four angles on identity or for windows into who you are.

- The first window is the arena quadrant. This consists of the things that you know about you and others know about you. It's your public persona, it's a title on your business card, it's your Facebook feed, it's what everybody knows, everybody sees.
- The second window is the facade quadrant. It consists of those things that you know about you, but others don't know about you. This is your alter ego, if you will. This is who you are, when no one is looking, this is the curtain that hides the wizard of Oz.

And I want to say this at this juncture, everybody is fighting a battle that you know nothing about. And I think it's important that we understand that sometimes when someone is lashing out of you, they're projecting some of the pain that they're..., it's not an excuse, doesn't make it right, but let's not fake it till we make it. It's okay to not be okay. And I think this is where we've got to come to terms with that.

- A third window is the blind spot quadrant. Consists of those things others know about you, but you don't know about you. And this is where you need someone who sees your potential and calls it out of you, but also someone who is willing to call you on the carpet. This is where you need someone who cares enough to confront, we'll come back to this.
- And finally the fourth window is the unknown quadrant. It consists of those things you don't know about you and others don't know about you. Listen to me; this is where you need a relationship with God because God knows you better than you know you. In fact, if you're going to reach your potential, you need to be in relationship with the God who gave you that potential in the first place. This is where the Holy Spirit does such great work in our lives where we discover our true identity in Christ. In fact, did you know that your name isn't really your name? Now I know it's the name your parents gave to you, but do you know that God has a name for you? Wouldn't it be awesome if it was a Son of Thunder, like I would dig that, but it's something and it's awesome and it's who you really are and when we crossed that space time continuum, enter dimension the Bible calls heaven that's one of the first things we'll discover, he will call us by our true name.

Now, let me go back to that third quadrant and I'm just going to say this real quick, since we kick off small groups this week, this is such a huge part of who we are as a church, so critical in our spiritual journey to be in relationship with other people. And I kinda liked this; do you know why CS Lewis went to church? It was not because he liked the music and he actually, he called it fifth rate poem set to sixth rate music now, that's not NCC worship, right? Because songs we're writing I think they're first rate poems, first rate music. It's not because he liked the sermons and I just kind of find this funny, he said it's not because he liked the people, he didn't. He said he went to church because if he did not, he would fall into something the he called solitary conceit. This third quadrant, we need people who are grace givers and truth tellers to speak into this part of our lives and I don't think that necessarily means finding a small group where everybody has the same political viewpoint and the exact same personality type. Why? Because iron sharpens iron and the key to that is something called friction like we need to be with people who can challenge us and help us grow.

So what I want to do in the next couple of minutes, spend some time in this third quadrant and we'll talk about habits of highly effective grace givers and truth tellers. And let me say this, I'm going to talk about it both from the standpoint of giving grace, telling truth, but then we find ourselves in places, right, where people are then telling truth to us and I think that takes some maturity to know how to process that and so I'm gonna talk about both of those things.

- Number one, if you're taking notes, know your tendencies I mean I guess I could say know thyself. Socrates fourth century philosopher, delphic maxim and spot on, right, know thyself. As it relates to grace and truth I think most of us have an orientation. If I'm going to divide the house at all of our campuses, I'm gonna divide the house and based on

what you've heard, what you know and you know, two sided coin, both of these are our dimensions of tough love. How many of you would be grace givers, grace givers. It's easier to give grace than it is to speak truth. Let me see your hands, hold them high loud and proud, let me see them, okay. And then how many of you would be truth tellers? Little easier to speak the truth and to give grace. Okay, I think we're right about kinda like the Senate and the House right now, and in the middle there. Okay? Now let me say this, if you don't know which way you lean your friends do. And if you're a parent, your kids do too. If a child needs a little extension on the curfew, a little extra allowance, who do they go to? Well, tell you who. They know who the grace giver is, and then as your kids get a little bit older, what Lora and I have found with our children as they grow up. You know what? Sometimes they need some unfiltered advice, the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. Who, are they going to go to? You know what? I think they go to the truth teller. And so I, both of these are so incredibly important, but what I'm getting at is I'm more of a grace giver and you know what that means? It means I have to really push myself to speak truth into people's lives where I can help them and, I'm probably a little bit better at spotting potential and calling that out than caring enough to confront. Can I just say this? Sometimes I'm too lazy. Sometimes I just take the easy way out and I sort of hope that maybe more grace and then more grace and more grace will do the trick. But you know what? There are moments as a grace giver where I've got to be a truth teller and there are moments. And so knowing your tendency I think then helps you as you engage in that relationship.

- Number two, don't use your personality as a crutch and this is kind of related to the first one. Here's what I found happens so often and Lora and I, we've taken like every personality assessment in the book and we love it because it helps us in our marriage and it's pretty funny, like we're exact opposites. Opposites attract and we are very attracted to each other. But here's the danger, sometimes we use those personality assessments, listen to me, to box ourselves in. And then sometimes we use those personality assessments to box someone out. And I don't think that's how they're intended to be used. Now I cannot prove this and it's reading between the lines. But I have a hunch that Timothy on the Myers Briggs was perhaps an introvert. I think Paul sees potential and he calls it out, but he does it in such a unique way. He says, *God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but love and power and self discipline.* Now, if I'm reading this the right way I think Paul is maybe even rebuking something in Timothy that he's calling a leadership gift. He's calling a holy confidence out of Timothy that maybe is a third quadrant capacity that Timothy doesn't even know that he has. Can I tell ya how Timothy died? Fast forward, he's 80 years old and according to church tradition, he tries to stop a pagan parade. That doesn't strike me as timid. They dragged Timothy through the streets and stoned him to death. Now, I don't know, but it seems to me like Timothy became a different person. Why? Because there was a prophet in this case, Paul, who was speaking into his life. And how great is this? We get to read that letter, in fact, two of them First and Second Timothy and those words that were inspired by the Holy Spirit that called something out of Timothy. It called something out of me. It calls something out to you to become the better version through Christ that he has called us to be.

I remember sharing this very short story in 'Chase the Lion' about a missionary named Sarah Carein's. When Sarah was in high school, she wanted to be a missionary, but she had a huge

problem with shyness. And then there was this moment of revelation, I love what she said. She said, I realized that shyness was not my personality, my shyness was actually fear. Now listen, she said once I called it what it was, the bondage of shyness was broken in my life and she now serves as a missionary in South Africa. Is there a piece of your personality that you've used as an excuse, as a crutch that I don't believe it is who you are in Christ.

- Number three, consider the source, and this is where we flip the script a little bit. If you're on the receiving end of some blunt truth, I think you have to process this carefully. Here are a few lessons I've learned; it's not what said as much as who is saying it. I think that truth telling carries different weight based on the source. My wife of 26 years, when she says something, I listen to it and I'll tell you why because I love her and I know she loves me and I have learned to trust her instincts beyond some of mine and so when she says something, it carries a certain weight. I have a spiritual father, Dick Foth, and he's kind of a grandfather to this congregation. When Dick says something, I listen. Now what's interesting is, I like this and this might be something you want to employ because I think we have to be so careful at the weight that our words carry when we speak them into another person's life. Can I tell you what Foth has done since day one? He frames up something, he says, Mark, I have something to tell you, but on a scale of one to 10, if one is Foth and 10 is God, this is a three or a seven. And I've always appreciated it, I think there's wisdom in that and so he kind of sets it up, but his words carry a certain weight. I think all of us have maybe been on the receiving end of truth that's spoken into our life that we probably should have looked in the mirror, received that rebuke and done something about it, but we ignored it. And then I think there are also criticisms that perhaps are not warranted. Now, I love with Erwin McManus says, he says, "don't let an arrow of criticism pierce your heart unless it first passes through the filter of scripture".

And so, I want to share just a couple of things that have helped me, here's one of them. I think that a compliment from a fool is often an insult and an insult from a fool is often a compliment. I think you have to consider the source and that's true on the listening end and the speaking end. Well, what did Jesus say? He said; don't cast your pearls before pigs. If you have something really important to say that is confidential, you may not want to say it to someone who has a track record of loose lips. You've got to think about who you're entrusting that information too. And I'll say one more thing. If you live by compliments, you will die by criticism. Abraham Lincoln said, you can please all the people some of the time, some of the people all the time, but you cannot please all the people all the time. You know what I think; I think we ought to live for the applause of nail scarred hands. At the end of the day, that's whose opinion really matters.

- Four - you gotta know when to hold 'em, know when to fold them, know when to walk away, know when to run. That is not in the Bible. Let me juxtapose two back to back verses, Proverbs 26:4 & 5 - used to totally confused me because they seem totally contradictory. Here's verse four, "*do not answer the foolish arguments of fools or you will become as foolish as they are*". Next verse, "*be sure to answer the foolish arguments of fools or they will become wise in their own eyes.*" To answer or not to answer that is the question. So which is it? Listen, Solomon, wise guy, right? I think he knew what he was doing here. If you are dealing with a fool, you cannot win one way or the other and that's a little discouraging but it is what it is. You control what you control. You cannot control

a person with their pants on the ground, pants on the ground, looking like a fool with their pants on the ground. If it's funny to me, I'm going to say it.

I think this is critical, I want you to dial in just a couple more minutes. If there is someone that person that you've been talking about that you need to talk to that you need to say something that five years from now they will thank you for. Here's the tricky part. You need to discern the maturity and the integrity of the person you're talking to, but you also need to discern their readiness to hear what you have to say. There's a moment, and I kinda go to this all the time to keep myself in check. John. 16:12 Jesus says, "*I have so much more to say to you more than you can now bear.*" In other words, man, I would love to say this, but you just are not ready to hear it. I think we've got to check our motives, listen to me, I think some of us say it anyways to get it off of our chest, but then it's not for the other person. I think we've got to make sure that it's all about that person becoming a better version of themselves and I would say this, you might have to love them a little longer. You might have to pray for them a little bit more until they're ready to receive what you have to say and that brings us to number five and you are doing great. We're almost done.

- Five, pray it before you say it. I think we are so quick to just fire back at our critics. In fact, let me just talk about social media for a moment. I'm not saying there isn't a place for it. I'm not even saying that if you don't manage it the right way, that it can't accomplish something. I enjoy it, I like following some people. I'm not sure that it doesn't cause more harm than good because I think in many instances it's so easy to hide behind a twitter handle and kind of lob a hand grenade at someone we don't know and we use our words in a way that I don't really know that it accomplishes much besides just kind of turning up the megaphone. I want to be careful there because some of you manage that really well, do it great, but I've never had anybody come to me and say, that tweet changed my life, not even that tweet changed in my mind. I think in a day and age of Facebook we probably need a little bit more face to face dialogue with one another.
- That brings us to number six, level the playing field with vulnerability. What I mean by that is this, when I'm going to have a difficult conversation with someone, I usually try to go first. I usually try to put some cards on the table and explain how I've fallen short in this area or in other areas because if you don't, man, it just comes across as holier than thou and it's got to be genuine, but I would say don't criticize in others which you haven't confessed yourself and you're going to set the bar, and so if you are vulnerable in a relationship, it gives that other person the ability to hear what you have to say.
- And finally, number seven, catch people doing things right. If you criticize someone before complimenting them, they may not hear you. We need 2.9 compliments for every criticism, right, the Lazada ratio. I would say catch people doing things right, brag about them behind their back and then compliment them to their face.

Okay? I'm going to try to wrap this up. A few years ago, I hike the Inca trail to Machu Picchu. When we got to dead woman's pass about 13,000 foot elevation I got a headache and that headache was because of oxygen deprivation, at that elevation 43 percent less oxygen in the atmosphere. And so fortunately, we had guides who brought pure oxygen in canisters and yes, I inhaled and my headache went away and I think we live in a culture that has so many headaches and heartaches because there's a lack of life giving words that just love you no matter what, I'm

going to be honest with you, no matter what, come on, where is the tough love? I hope and pray that this is a church where we're like Jesus in the way that we love people. Proverbs 25:11, *"like apples of gold in settings of silver is a word skillfully chosen."* Right words at the right time can be game changer and may God help us speak those words. All right, I think I'm done.

So grateful for our youth group, want to say love youth pastors, youth leaders, youth group. I think they do this so well. In fact, I think they're on the front lines. One of the things that Pastor Steffen and Pastor Brooke pray all the time for our youth is, God bring dark things into the light. But, then it's that dental curing light, right? That brings healing to the pain we're experiencing. And then they did the series last year 'The Bible is Weird' and I kind of liked that because they just gave permission to talk about some of the tough topics that are in the Bible. They're there, if you have read the Bible cover to cover. And these eight words they said, kind of defined them last year; ask anything, listen well, freely disagree, love regardless. And so the retreat next weekend and if your NCC youth haven't signed up yet, I think we can get you in the door, I think it would be awesome. The theme is greatest of these. And you know what the greatest of these is, right? Love, love is the greatest of these.

And so let me close with this thought. Tough love, I'll tell you what it is. It's someone carrying a 300 pound cross, 650 yards down the Via Delarosa for someone else's sin and then praying for the soldiers that nailed him there saying, father, forgive them for they know not what they do. There is a God who doesn't just love you, tough loves you, he's full of grace, he's full of truth, and he will help you become the person he destines you to be. May you step into that relationship if you don't have it, and may you take the next step if you're in that relationship.

Let me pray. I want to invite actually all of our campuses to stand, would you stand all of our campuses and I'm going to invite our prayer teams at all of our campuses to be available to pray with folks. If you're here and you need someone to pray with you, we want to do that and let me pray for you right now. Lord, I pray that you would give us the wisdom to discern when and how to give grace and when and how to tell the truth. God, help us love people when they least expect it and least deserve it. Lord, I pray that you would give us humble hearts that are willing to receive a rebuke when we need it. Give us ears to hear, and Lord, I pray that like Jesus full of grace, full of truth that you would help us to, well, maybe crane kick a few Pharisees along the way and to be the people that don't give up on those who are in a tough spot, to put on our rally caps and believe because grace never gives up on us. So, God we give you thanks and praise in Jesus' name. Amen.