

Speaking to the soul



Kiss of friendship

An honest answer is like a kiss of friendship. Proverbs 24:26

Like most of us, I am sure, I was brought up with the saying that honesty is the best policy. But what I wasn't taught was that it's often the most difficult policy. It's often easier to keep the truth to yourself and not to share it because it might not be well received. Indeed, the hearer might be deeply offended by the truth. And so we can easily end up playing a kindly and courteous game of deceit. We say what other people want to hear and never dare to go anywhere near the sharp edges of truth.

Whenever someone asks us how we are, we have to decide what level of truth to share. The customary answer "Fine" often reveals nothing at all and is simply used as a polite way of avoiding conversation. However, at the same time, it would be inappropriate to share everything about your life and feelings. What is vital is that there is a time and a place where we can be entirely honest. Life is full of thrills and spills, joys and sorrows, amazing successes and painful failures and everyone needs space to talk through these things in a completely open way. Without such reflection it is likely that these varied experiences will get out of proportion and the painful times will be buried and give rise to later difficulties.

There is every reason why the Church should be a community characterised by honesty. However, it is easily possible for a church to be as superficial and deceitful as any other group of people. Out of a desire to keep people happy it is very easy for churches to skate over the truth and avoid its challenge. I believe that the apostle Paul was addressing this issue when he urged the Ephesian church to "speak the truth in love" (Ephesians 4:15). When the honest truth is spoken rudely and aggressively it can be horribly destructive. Only if our words are full of love will the truth

bring healing and blessing. To use the words of Proverbs, our honesty will be like nothing less than a kiss of friendship.

QUESTION

Do you have someone with whom you can be completely honest?

PRAYER

Lord God, help me to become better at being lovingly honest with those around me. Amen

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