

TE enables people to speak the truth in love

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Reflections on Ephesians 4:14-16

In various contexts evaluation is regarded as something that may punish people. The holistic evaluator needs to help people see the difference between using negative information to punish and using it to confront reality in a way that helps people move toward their desirable future. This may involve professional development in staff, training events in a community, fostering better relationships among groups, revising plans to be more realistic, etc.

The evaluator must hold the tension between truth and love in balance. As people speak the truth in love to one another, they mature in all things until they are more like Christ. Love that is undergirded by truth is not soft or sentimental, while truth that is spoken in love does not demean. To the extent that we are not willing to face harsh reality, to that extent something dies within us and we end up being demeaned. Our ability to face reality depends largely on how close we are to Jesus. God wills that we grow by heeding truth spoken in love.

One application of this in evaluation work is that the evaluation should present the whole picture of that which is evaluated. When only the bad things are presented, or only the good things are presented, people are deprived of an opportunity to grow in their understanding of what it means to love God and neighbor. A manager who is afraid of what might happen if problems are described in the evaluation report is demonstrating a lack of trust in God's love for his situation. The evaluator who complies with the manager's request destroys an opportunity for spiritual growth in the manager and possibly others.