

Study for Sermon on January 16, 2022



*Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. **Galatians 6:1***

Getting Started

When others fail to see or acknowledge their contribution to a conflict, we sometimes need to graciously show them their fault. If they refuse to respond appropriately, we may need to involve respected friends, church leaders or others who can encourage repentance and restore peace.

Group Discussion

JUST BETWEEN THE TWO OF YOU

If “owning” our own sins is hard, speaking with someone who has sinned against us is often harder. Most of us have experienced harsh confrontation and rebuke. Even when merited, such incidents can leave us feeling personally assaulted. The point of passages such as Matthew 18:15 is not punishment, but restoration. We are called to win our brother over. To do so, we need to adjust our message to fit the person who receives it, “building others up, according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.” Engaging others in this way is both an art and a skill and requires that we first examine our hearts and confess our sins. This takes on different forms in different cultures, but the goal of confronting others is the same – loving restoration, returning them to full functioning within the Body of Christ.

DISCUSS

- Do people in your community speak directly with each other when wrongs have been committed? If not, how are such personal issues dealt with? With what results?
- Do you find it more difficult to confess your sins, or go to someone who has sinned against you? Why do you think that is? What role do the cultures in which you live (family, church and society) play in how you handle such situations?
- Have you ever “confronted” someone harshly, or been harshly confronted? What impact did it have on you? On your relationship with the other person?
- If someone were to “confront” you, what would you want them to do? What would you find most helpful? Does your answer provide you with a way to go to others to show them their fault when they have sinned against you?

SPEAK TRUTH IN LOVE

Truth spoken without love risks condemnation. But, love spoken without truth risks empty praise. When Paul tells us that we are to speak the truth in love he calls us to speech that is both hard-edged and kind. This tension can be difficult to manage. When sinned against, our natural response is often to bring “the law” against the wrongdoer. With the law, we often bring condemnation and punishment. For Christians, the law must always be seasoned with the gospel and with forgiveness. This is, after all, how Jesus confronts us. Being quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, is a good rule of thumb when working through conflicts of any kind. This helps us remain committed to what is best in the wrongdoer’s life and brings honor to God.

DISCUSS

- Where do you fall on the truth-love spectrum? Do you focus most on speaking the truth, or on loving others? What does this tell you about your priorities?
- Which listening skills do you find hardest to practice – wait, attend, clarify, reflect, or agree? What can you do to improve your ability?

Wait–Waiting patiently while others talk.

Attend–eye contact, positive body language, nodding of head, etc.

Clarify–ensuring you understand what other person said by asking questions

Reflect–summarizing person’s main thoughts in your own words

Agree–find the common ground you agree with before addressing points of disagreements.

- Has someone ever spoken the truth in love to you? What impact did it have on you? On your relationship with the person who spoke to you?
- Is there someone you need to talk with about their wrongdoing? If so, prayerfully ask God to help you plan how to show them their fault by speaking the truth in love.

TAKE ONE OR TWO OTHERS ALONG

When we disagree with others, Scripture requires us to keep the matter as private as possible as long as possible. We are to speak *to* others, rather than *about* others. Sometimes private conversation proves futile. Matthew 18:16-17 sets out further steps we may need to take: involve 2 or 3 others (Mt 18:16); engage the church, especially leadership (Mt 18:17); and, if all else fails, treat the wrongdoer as a “pagan or a tax collector” (Mt 18:17). Even removing someone from worship has as its goal repentance and restoration, rather than punishment. Our response is not to shun someone who has been disciplined, but to evangelize them, to win back their hearts for God.

DISCUSS

- Within your church and community, do people go to others privately when sinned against? Or, do they mostly speak to others about the offense, rather than to the wrongdoer? How can you help them respond in a more godly way?
- Does your church have a process of discipline for members who refuse to repent of serious wrongdoing? If so, does it focus on punishment, or on restoration? What have been the results?
- Have you ever served as a reconciler, helping others resolve their differences? Where in your life are there opportunities to play this role?

Next Steps

- Take some time praying for one another.
- How will you use these skills you have learned today to strengthen your relationships?
- Find ways to get involved in your church community.
- Read and study God’s Word and listen to what it has to say about Peacemaking.



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