BIG TRUTH little books®

What the Bible Says About Confrontation

Cliff McManis

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What the Bible Says About Confrontation is volume 11 in the Big Truth little books® series.

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Dedicated to the memory of Steve Fernandez,
courageous leader,
fiery preacher,
inspiring visionary

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SERIES PREFACE

Our mission with the *BIG TRUTH little books*® series is to provide edifying, accessible literature for Christian readers from all walks of life. We understand that it is often difficult to find time to read good books. But we also understand that reading is a valuable means of spiritual growth. The answer? Get some really big truth into some little books. These books may be small, but each is full of Scripture, theological reflection, and pastoral insight. Our hope is that Christians young and old will benefit from these books as they grow in their knowledge of Christ through His Word.

Cliff McManis, General Editor
Derek Brown, Series Editor

INTRODUCTION: PRESUPPOSITIONS

We are all familiar with the countless books on the spiritual disciplines. The typical disciplines, or Christian virtues, include prayer, confession, Bible reading, Scripture memory, worship, evangelism and fellowship. Often disciplines are included that are never given as commands to Christians in the New Testament like fasting, journaling, silence, solitude, visualization, abstinence, spiritual dancing, stations of the cross, meditating on mantras, praying on beads, utilizing holy water and many more. Sadly, one major Christian discipline that is universally neglected in all these books is the discipline of biblical confrontation. Yes, holy confrontation is a biblical discipline and as common in Scripture as any other spiritual practice required by God. Systematic biblical confrontation is one of the most neglected scriptural virtues in churches today.

Why do so many married couples refuse to talk about their real problems in an honest manner? Why can't so many mothers control their young children?

Why can't Christian dads control their teens and college kids? Why do so many pastors fail to deal with ongoing problems among their members? Why do so many pastors avoid preaching the controversial and politically incorrect passages in the Bible? Why are there so many churches with staff people who can't get along or who have fall-outs and splits? Why do so many young adults let their Christian roommates get away with compromise and worldliness? Why is there so much gossip, bitterness, unforgiveness, division and avoidance in various churches and in the lives of believers? One key reason may be that there is a wholesale lack of courage to implement the biblical discipline of confrontation. Or there may be a wholesale lack of knowledge about what God expects from His people regarding the discipline of confrontation.

The book you are holding in your hands seeks to address these important questions by delineating a systematic understanding of the discipline of biblical confrontation. Or another way to see it is that this book sets forth a theology of biblical confrontation. Before getting into the meat of the topic it is first imperative to lay out some presuppositions on the matter of confrontation.

Presupposition #1: The Bible is Sufficient

The Bible addresses every conceivable issue there is to know about confrontation. This presupposition falls under what is called the doctrine of the "sufficiency of

Scripture." In other words, the Bible is sufficient to address every area of life. Therefore, the Bible is sufficient to give us all the needed guidelines on how to deal with confrontation. This is a clear teaching of Scripture.

Many Bible passages teach this truth, but two will suffice to illustrate the reality of Scripture's sufficiency. The first is 2 Peter 1:3 which says, "His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence." This is an amazing statement. The Apostle Peter is reminding Christians that God has granted to them all the spiritual and practical resources they need to live a full, content, obedient, pleasing life to God…even in a messed up, fallen world. This promise is given only to Christians, and it applies to us the moment we believe the gospel and are saved. God gives total sufficiency to us to live this life by "His divine power"—which means it is a supernatural enablement imparted by God Himself. Unbelievers don't have access to this gift from God unless they believe in Him, for it comes only through "the true knowledge of Him." That means sufficiency flows from a true knowledge of Jesus Christ which results from submitting to the gospel.

Further, Peter says believers have been given everything they *need*, not everything they *want*. Specifically, he says God has given, by virtue of salvation in Christ, all that we need in two domains: (1)

"life" and (2) "godliness." Life and godliness includes all that is needed for living the Christian life, from the point of justification until final glorification. In other words, no Christian can legitimately say, "I can't do it!" in respect to any of God's commands. When God instructs believers to confront sin, therefore, believers are without excuse if they try to wave the white flag, whimpering, "I'm not able." You *are* able, for God has granted to you "everything pertaining to life and godliness," including the courage and wisdom needed to deal with the messy business of confrontation.

The second passage that specifically teaches the doctrine of the sufficiency of Scripture is 2 Timothy 3:16-17: "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work." This passage says point blank that Scripture is to be used for "reproof" and for "correction." Those are synonyms for "confrontation." God doesn't want us relying on any other source for confrontation besides the Bible. And this passage teaches that Scripture is effectual in the confrontation process, for using Scripture the right way achieves the right result, which is that the "man of God may be adequate." The word "adequate" here is the Greek word *artios* which means "complete." The last phrase of 2 Timothy 3:17 says the believer will be "equipped for every good work," which is a superlative and emphatic promise that Scripture enables a believer to be "fully

furnished" or "fully competent." These assertions insure the highest level of practical sufficiency to the Christian who wields Scripture properly. The Bible is completely adequate to deal with every element of conflict and confrontation between Christians who are engaged in conflict.

Presupposition #2: Confrontation Between Believers

Also in this book, I'm specifically talking about confrontation between brothers and sisters in Christ—exposing and resolving conflict between professing Christians. I'm not talking about confronting unbelievers—that's a different topic with a different point of emphasis. The greatest need unbelievers have is salvation, for they stand in opposition to God their Creator by virtue of their rebellion. The main message of confrontation they need to heed is, "Repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ!" (cf. Ezek 18:21; Acts 16:31; 17:30). In this book, therefore, I am addressing conflict between believers, whether it's believers in the church, in the home, in a marriage, between siblings, or any other context.

Presupposition #3: There is Trouble in the Church

You might ask, "Why are you talking about confrontation? That sounds like trouble!" Well, there is trouble in the church. Every church is filled with sinners. Every person that goes to a church is a sinner who struggles with sin in specific areas. When two or more sinners are gathered together, sin and problems

will arise; hence, the need for confrontation. There is disunity that needs to be addressed in every church. We need to be realistic about the issue—Christians are not perfect; only Jesus is!

Years ago when I got saved as a freshman in college, I had two dormmates—one was a believer and the other was not. I had been sharing the gospel with my unsaved friend for about a year, but he just kept making excuses as to why he did not want to believe. One night the three of us went to the gym to play some hoops. We were all very competitive so there would inevitably be some barking going on between the players as we tussled with each other, scrapping and clawing for every rebound or loose ball—contesting calls as we did not always see eye-to-eye.

After we were done, all sweaty, walking back to our dorm, my unsaved friend made a comment about all the bickering that went on during the scrimmage. He went on to say, "See, that's why I don't want to become a Christian. You guys are hypocrites! You can't even get along." I talked to him about that further because I didn't want to legitimize what he had said. I told him, "The fact that I am a Christian doesn't mean I am perfect. I am a sinner, and you cannot use our disagreement about a couple of calls on the basketball court to justify your rejection of Jesus Christ. The only person you need to think about when deciding if you're going to accept Christianity or not is Jesus Christ, who is perfect and never sins." He did not say much in

response. Months later this friend of mine, Jeff, became a believer. The point is, unbelievers frequently want to use disunity going on in the church or squabbling between Christians as justification for rejecting the Bible or God. That is an illegitimate, false excuse.

With the above three presuppositions in place—biblical sufficiency, that I am addressing confrontation between believers, and the reality that Christians are sinners—we continue in the next chapter with an overview of what the Bible says about confrontation with the point of emphasis focusing on the operating principles that cultivate reconciliation all for God's glory.

1

THE NEED FOR CONFRONTATION

Mature, spirit-filled Christians don't have conflict. Hah! You are deceived and living in Wonderland if you believe that. All people have conflict from one degree to another. That is clear in the Bible, in history, and in our present reality. Consider these famous saints from biblical history: Noah's sons had conflict (Gen 9:18-27). Sarah and Abraham argued (Gen 16:5). Jacob got perturbed at his son Joseph (Gen 37:10). Job called his wife "foolish" right to her face (Job 2:10). Aaron and Miriam criticized Moses because of his wife (Num 12:1). David's wife despised him (2 Sam 6:16). Even Jesus' own grown siblings taunted Him publicly (John 7:2-9).

Conflict between believers is real, and even inevitable. Therefore, we need to be honest about it, address it, and deal with it. It isn't just carnal, immature, ignorant Christians who have problems in this area; on the contrary, even mature believers squabble, or at least can be challenged by personal grievances every once in

a while. In this life, you are going to have conflict with people. That being the case, the Bible says we need to deal with conflict. Dealing with conflict between believers often requires some form of confrontation to bring about a solution. Engaging in confrontation is not fun and few people want to do it. But it is necessary in order to manage the ongoing conflict that is a part of daily living.

If you're married, you're going to have conflict with your spouse. If you have children, you're going to have conflict with them. If you have siblings, you're going to have conflict with your brothers and sisters. You will butt heads with other believers in your local church. Church staff members and church leaders will squabble, grapple, lock horns and have conflict. Like death and taxes, conflict will always be with us in this life.

Use a Biblical Standard

The first step in properly dealing with conflict is owning up to it. In other words, don't be in denial about it, or minimize it, or ignore it. A common pitfall is when Christians use false standards by which to gauge reality in their own lives. Many times, that comes in the form of the "greener-grass syndrome." That's when believers look at others from a distance and make an ill-informed and shallow assessment of other peoples' lives, people who have "greener grass" across the street, and conclude, "How come we can't be like that married

couple? They never have conflict! They always get along." Or it may sound like, "Why can't our teenagers be like their teenagers? Their teenagers are so exemplary and mature and selfless and obedient and ideal…and I think I have even seen them walk on water before." Or, "Why is there conflict in our church? Why can't our church be like her church? Her church is perfect. They don't have any sinners in her church—she told me so."

I exaggerate just a tad, but too much wrong-headed analysis goes on among Christians in this area. The Apostle Paul knew this and as a pastor he addressed it pointedly. To the conflict-riddled congregation in Corinth, Pastor Paul exhorted the believers there to stop making false comparisons. He wrote, "we are not bold to class or compare ourselves with some of those who commend themselves; but when they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, they are without understanding" (2 Cor 10:12). Paul is simply saying here, "Quit comparing yourselves with other people. Other lowly, pathetic sinners are not the standard. God's Word is the only proper measuring rod. Whoever uses other people to make comparisons is foolish." When you compare yourself with another person you lower the standard…and you distort reality. Compare yourself to Jesus and God's perfect Word, then you will see the situation for what it actually is. This is true when it comes to assessing conflict in your own life.

Abraham and Sarah

Looking at the only perfect standard of measurement for human behavior and what God expects—the Bible—we will now illustrate that even the godliest of people have conflict with others. For example, the Bible commends Abraham and Sarah for being people of faith and for having a model marriage…despite all their mistakes and sins. Hebrews 11 extols Abraham as a man of faith, and as an example for all, as he was obedient to the call of God (vv. 8-10). He is one of the few people in history who "was called the friend of God" (James 2:23). God's summary assessment of him is as follows: "Abraham obeyed Me and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes and My laws" (Gen 26:5). As such, "the LORD had blessed Abraham in every way" (Gen 24:1). Likewise, Sarah is commended for her faith as she believed in God to do the impossible (Heb 11:11-12). Scripture also concludes that Sarah was a "holy" woman who was modest, feared God and respected her husband. She "pleased" God (1 Pet 3:4-6).

Despite their believing and godly status, Abraham and Sarah had some wing-dingers! The Bible highlights one big marital blow-out between the famous couple that happened when Abraham was eighty-five years old (Gen 16:3). Sarah was discouraged because she was barren at age seventy-five—she was shamed for being childless. So, Abraham had a son with Sarah's maid, Hagar, with Sarah's consent! Then when Hagar's baby was born, Sarah became outraged with jealousy,

yelled at her husband, and treated Hagar "harshly" before chasing her and her newborn out of town (Gen 16:3-16). God graciously intervened and allowed Hagar and her baby to return.

Fast-forward fifteen years and Scripture notes another major conflict between Abraham and his bride Sarah—another "holy head-lock" in their holy wedlock. God enabled Sarah to conceive and give birth to a son when she was ninety—a genuine miracle. At that time, Hagar's son, who was now a teenager, mocked Sarah's new son. Sarah became infuriated once again at Hagar and then took it out on Abraham, ordering him: "Drive out this maid and her son" (Gen 21:10)! As a result, "the matter distressed Abraham greatly" (v. 11). The level of distress in the marriage relationship reached a fever-pitch, probably for decades, as a result of Abraham's adultery years before. There is no greater conflict between humans than between a married couple when infidelity is involved. Vows are shattered. Trust is undermined. Affection is smothered. Indelible wounds are inflicted. Memories persist. Full recovery is rare. But somehow, by the grace of God, Abraham and Sarah's marriage persevered through these challenges and they survived the conflict. Real believers fight and argue.

Peter and Paul

The next example is from the New Testament. No one can think of two greater Christian leaders than the Apostle Peter and the Apostle Paul. Peter's spiritual life

was revolutionized after Jesus ascended and the Holy Spirit was sent to indwell the first disciples of the church at Pentecost. As a Spirit-led Apostle, from Pentecost until his death thirty years later, Peter was a model of unwavering faith (Acts 5:27-32), trusted leadership (Acts 9-10), powerful and gospel-centered preaching (Acts 2:22-39), bold confrontation (Acts 4:8-20) and humble shepherding (1 Pet 5:1-5). Peter was the designated and respected leader of the first church in Jerusalem, entrusted by God to help lay the foundation of the church by his life, preaching, teaching and writing. Paul duly noted that Peter was indeed a "pillar" in the church (Gal 2:9).

And like Peter, Paul was an exemplary leader in the early church. After Jesus confronted him and transformed him from being a designated Christian-killer (Acts 9:4), Paul became "the apostle to the Gentiles" (Rom 11:13). He became a conduit of direct revelation from God, revealing mysteries never heard before (1 Cor 4:1), writing thirteen New Testament epistles (2 Pet 3:15-16). Over three decades he travelled thousands of miles, ceaselessly putting his life on the line for the love of sinners and the glory of God. He planted dozens of churches, discipled countless saints, raised up the next generation of church leaders, and made a permanent mark on history. The significant impact of these two men together is best illustrated by the fact that the whole Book of Acts can be divided in two based on the ministries of Peter and Paul. Chapters

one through twelve showcase Peter's influence and chapters thirteen through twenty-eight highlight Paul's work.

Yet these two inimitable men of God had lives riddled with conflict, even while they served as apostles of the Church. Peter had ongoing, life-threatening, open conflict with the Jewish religious leaders of his day (Acts 4:1-18; 5:17-33). He clashed with two professing believers, Ananias and Saphira, questioning them with an open, public rebuke: "why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit…?" (Acts 5:3). Peter also got ensnared in conflict with Simon the magician, cursing the neophyte soon after he "believed" and "was baptized," shouting, "May your silver perish with you" (Acts 8:20)!

Likewise, Paul found himself bound up in conflict with people everywhere he ministered—and not just with hostile unbelievers. Paul had conflict with fellow believers, including members of his own mission team. The infamous example of conflict with fellow ministers was during his first missionary journey when half way through the arduous trip, his young assistant, John Mark, bailed on the team and left Paul and the others at-risk (Acts 13:13). Paul was so infuriated that later he had a "sharp disagreement" with Barnabas (Acts 15:39), his missionary companion, over the fate of John Mark. Barnabas wanted to give John Mark another chance by taking him on the second missionary journey. Paul said, "No way!" and severed relations with his

former partner and friend, Barnabas. The consequences of this rift were significant, doing great damage to personal relationships and decimating the first missionary team.

Not only did Peter and Paul have conflict with other people—they had a major conflict with each other as leading apostles in the early church…in public for all to see! Paul recorded the incident in the second chapter of Galatians. Paul was serving as a co-pastor in Syrian Antioch (Acts 13:1), a significant city that was about 300 miles north of Jerusalem. Antioch was the hub of the first Gentile church as well as the base of world missions in Paul's day. At some point Peter came to visit the church in Antioch to assess the nature of the ministry as he heard many Gentiles were coming to faith in Christ.

When Peter arrived in Antioch he affirmed the Gentiles as members of Christ's church and even joined them in fellowship and ongoing meals. But when Jewish legalists arrived in Antioch, they poisoned Peter against the Gentile Christians until he succumbed to the prejudiced gossip of the Jews and began to distance himself from the Gentile Christians. He ended up turning his back on them altogether in favor of the party of the circumcision. It was a public disgrace, undermining the unity of the Body of Christ. Paul was there and witnessed it all. Angered with a righteous indignation over Peter's overt hypocrisy, Paul laid into Peter like a whirlwind, exposing his compromise. Paul

recounts the confrontational incident in Galatians:

> But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. For prior to the coming of certain men from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he *began* to withdraw and hold himself aloof, fearing the party of the circumcision. The rest of the Jews joined him in hypocrisy, with the result that even Barnabas was carried away by their hypocrisy. But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in the presence of all, "If you, being a Jew, live like the Gentiles and not like the Jews, how *is it that* you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?" (2:11-14).

Fortunately, Peter came to his senses and realized his sin. He went on public record at the Council of Jerusalem to reaffirm the Gentiles' equal status with believing Jews in the Body of Christ (Acts 15:6-11). Nevertheless, the public conflict he had with Paul was scandalous and created great disunity for a time among the early church.

We have seen from the above scenarios that the Bible is very honest in its portrayal of the saints through the ages who had to deal with conflict. We need to be realistic about conflict. The greatest people of faith had

conflict—Abraham with Sarah; Paul with Peter. None of us will be exempt from conflict. But the Bible goes a step further. It tells us how to resolve conflict in our relationships, and such resolution comes through biblical confrontation, the subject of the next chapter.

2

THE MANDATE TO CONFRONT

From Genesis to Revelation, God expects His people to confront one another. It is one of the key ways God sanctifies us as we live in a fallen world as we rub shoulders with fellow sinners. Before highlighting God's mandate to confront as found in the Bible, it is first necessary to establish a biblical definition of the word "confrontation."

What is "confrontation"? That sounds like a scary word. To some it sounds mean. From a biblical perspective, it is actually a good thing…and a necessary thing. One popular English dictionary gives two basic definitions for "confront":

1) meet (someone) face to face with hostile or argumentative intent;
2) compel (someone) to face or consider something, especially by way of accusation

The second definition is the one we will be addressing

in this book and is consistent with Scriptures' portrait of confrontation. Biblical confrontation is *talking to a fellow believer and compelling them to consider something so they can directly address a problem at hand, with the goal of seeking a God-honoring solution*.

In your English Bible, the word "confront" does not occur much, but there are numerous synonyms for the word all over the Bible. These many words carry various nuances that inform the biblical definition of "confront" and provide for a rich, variegated, deep, wide-ranging meaning for this all-important word. Let's look at some of the most important ones.

Speak up

The first word that defines biblical confrontation is "speak." God told His people, Israel, to "speak the truth to one another; judge with truth and judgment for peace in your gates" (Zech 8:16). The word "speak" here is real simple. It is a neutral word. It is not inherently negative, antagonistic, or adversarial. It means "speak up, open your mouth; communicate; spit it out; open up; say something; deal with it; talk about it; verbalize it." Two ideas here are key to this word. First of all, it is used as a command given by God. Speaking up with each other is not an option but an obligation. Clamming up when you are mad or in a huff or seeking to retaliate against a fellow believer through the silent treatment is not an option but a sin. God's people need to talk to each other…especially when there is a problem.

The second nuance of this word is that it refers to verbal speech, or the spoken word. The implication is that it is to be face-to-face. That's how God wanted the believers in the days of Zechariah around 500 BC to communicate with each other—personally, hashing it out through face-to-face conversation. Many times, that is the most difficult way to communicate, but usually the most effective. There was no computer screen to hide behind, or lap-top, email, Twitter or other impersonal means of escaping from honest, face-to-face talking in Zechariah's day—no room for nasty anonymous letters of retaliation. Get some courage and talk it out.

Five hundred and fifty years after Zechariah wrote that command for believers to speak up to one another, the Apostle Paul wrote the same thing in Ephesians to Christians. He even quoted Zechariah when he gave the similar command. Paul commanded believers to lay "aside falsehood, 'speak truth, each one' of you, 'with his neighbor,' for we are members of one another" (Eph 4:25). Paul's word for "speak" hear is *laleo*, from which we get "la la," the most basic universal noise we make with our tongue. It means "to move the tongue and make some noise," or, "speak up!" Talk to each other. And what do we speak? Paul says, "the truth." That is often hard to do, but we need to confront one another with reality, and this comes through verbal engagement about the truth. And why should we speak to each other? Paul says because we are spiritual family

members, connected to each other, part of the same body. The way we treat another believer affects all of us.

Ten verses earlier Paul said Christians need to be regularly "speaking the truth in love" (4:15). This is similar to Proverbs, which says, "Better is open rebuke than love that is concealed" (27:5). A basic Christian virtue is simply the willingness to talk, and to talk honestly. Clamming up, ignoring or dismissing problems, avoiding deep conversation and withholding information are all detrimental strategies of self-defense and sometimes even acts of deliberate retaliation…of the passive-aggressive type. The cold-shoulder has been around for millennia. That strategy is not Christian, but carnal. But it is an all-too-common practice in the Church and among Christians, and especially in marriages and family life. Refraining from conversation—being unwilling to "speak"—becomes fertile soil for the seeds of bitterness, grudges, unforgiveness, gossip and all manner of evil. Jesus knew this. That's why He commanded believers to "go" talk to any other fellow believer any time you think there might be a problem…and to do it "quickly" (Matt 5:24-25). So speak up! Go talk to that person!

Admonish

Biblical confrontation begins with a simple willingness to speak to each other. The next important word is "admonish." In Romans 15:14 the Apostle Paul commands Christians to "admonish one another."

There are over thirty "one another" commands given to believers in the New Testament. God gave the Church the "one anothers" as a gift to help us manage our interpersonal relationships in a Christ-like way. There are many "one anothers" to be aware of because life is complex and so are people. We are not one-dimensional beings. One command is not sufficient. Yes, we are commanded to "love one another" (John 13:34), but we have to do all the other "one anothers" as well to strike the balance and to promote health in the Body of Christ. And "admonish one another" is one of those many salient commands to heed.

In English, "admonish" seems to have a negative stigma to it, but in the Bible it is not always negative. The Greek word is *noutheteo,* which is two words joined together: *nous* (mind) + *theteo* (to place; put into). So "admonish" literally means "to place into the mind." And what are we placing into someone's mind? The words we speak. We are placing truth into their minds by imparting verbal speech for them to listen to, take in, think through and meditate upon.

In other words, we need to speak up and "give them something to think about"—and we do that by speaking truth to them in love. This word *noutheteo* can be translated at times as "instruct." The emphasis in all of its translations is on deliberate speech directed toward another person to affect their thinking, which in turn will affect their attitudes, beliefs and behavior. The goal of admonishing is to bring about a positive change

through purposeful speech. The content of the speech in an act of admonishing can vary greatly. It can be positive or negative; instructional or exhorting; encouraging or corrective. The emphasis in the word "admonish" is on initiating proactive, deliberate verbal speech. Looking at several examples of how Paul used the word "admonish" in his epistles is instructive and highlights the word's versatility:

Evangelistic/instructional positive uses

"Therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to **admonish (*noutheton*)** each one with tears" (Acts 20:31).

"Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. And concerning you, my brethren, I myself also am convinced that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able also to **admonish *(nouthetein)*** one another" (Rom 15:13-14).

"We proclaim Him, **admonishing (*nouthetountes*)** every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ" (Col 1:28).

"Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and **admonishing (*nouthetountes*)** one another with psalms *and* hymns *and* spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God" (Col 3:16).

"But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and **give you instruction (*nouthe-tountas*)**, and that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Live in peace with one another" (1 Thess 5:12-13).

Corrective/rebuke negative uses

"I do not write these things to shame you, but to **admonish (*noutheton*)** you as my beloved children" (1 Cor 4:14).

"We urge you, brethren, **admonish (*noutheteite*)** the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone" (1 Thess 5:14).

"If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of that person and do not associate with him, so that he will be put to shame. *Yet* do not regard him as an

> enemy, but **admonish (*noutheteite*)** him as a brother" (2 Thess 3:14-15).

We need to add "admonish" to our arsenal in the ministry of confrontation along with the command to "speak."

Rebuke

A third biblical word informing the concept of confrontation is "rebuke." Jesus said, "Be on your guard! If your brother sins, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him" (Luke 17:3; cf. Matt 18:15). The word Jesus uses here for "rebuke" is emphatic. This is a strong verbal rebuke or reprimand. It is synonymous with "reprove, censure" and even "punish." In the context of Luke 17, Jesus is commanding His disciples to go privately, face-to-face and verbally confront a fellow believer when a sin issue arises. This forces the issue to the surface, brings conviction to the wrongdoer, and allows them to own up to what they did wrong so they can repent of it and be forgiven. Neglecting this ministry of verbal confrontation directly undermines Jesus' stated process of how to manage sin among believers.

Just like Jesus, Paul commanded believers to "rebuke" one another. He said about wayward elders, "Those who continue in sin, rebuke in the presence of all, so that the rest also will be fearful of sinning" (1 Tim 5:20). Again, to rebuke someone is to verbally confront them in a personal encounter—speak up, talk about the

problem, let the other person know what's bothering you…even if it's an elder or pastor!

Exhort

In addition to "speak," "admonish" and "rebuke," another common word that is a part of the DNA in biblical confrontation is "exhort." Paul commands Christians in Romans 12 to "exhort" one another. The Greek word for "exhort" is somewhat well known by Bible students because of its etymology, its frequent occurrences, multiplied nuances and its picturesque description. It is a compound word, *para* (alongside of) + *kaleo* (to call). It is a word picture meant to portray one person coming alongside another person, with their arm around the shoulder while speaking into the other person's ear. Like a head coach coming alongside the quarterback, or the team captain of the soccer squad coming alongside the rookie to speak a word of wisdom into his teammate's ear—a timely word, needed in the moment, for that very occasion.

In the Gospel of John, Jesus calls the coming Holy Spirit "the *Paraklete*" (John 14:16), the noun form of our verb here, *parakaleo*. Jesus was promising that the Holy Spirit would "come alongside" believers and speak to them through God's Word, encouraging them with exactly what they needed to hear in any given moment.

Paul uses a form of the verb *parakaleo* in three distinct ways, depending on the context of what needed to be said. It could mean "exhort," "encourage," or

"comfort." Again, the emphasis of the word is on the picture it illustrates—coming alongside someone personally and speaking into their ear. The content of what you tell them can be different depending upon the situation—it can be a word of exhortation, encouragement or comfort. Consider three different New Testament uses:

1) *Parakaleo* used as an exhortation, or a call to repent: "Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were **entreating (*parakalountos*)** through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God" (2 Cor 5:2).

2) *Parakaleo* used positively to encourage and build up: "For I have sent him [Tychicus] to you for this very purpose, that you may know about our circumstances and that he may **encourage (*parakalesei*)** your hearts" (Col 4:8).

3) *Parakaleo* used to comfort someone who is hurting: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ…who **comforts (*parakalon*)** us in all our affliction…" (2 Cor 1:3-4).

The head coach might go up to the quarterback, put his arm around him and whisper three different things

through the hole in his helmet, depending upon the team leader's performance in the big game. The coach might say, "If you throw one more interception then you are benched!" That's an exhortation. Or he might say, "That unpredictable cadence you are using is keeping the defense off kilter—keep it up!" That's encouragement. And finally, the coach could say, "I know you brought us down the field twice and your running backs fumbled—don't get down; that's not your fault. Hang in there!" That's comfort. Exhort, encourage, comfort—that is *parakaleo*. And *parakaleo* is an important aspect of biblical confrontation.

Excuses, Excuses

It's clear from the above that the Bible commands Christians to speak, admonish, rebuke and exhort one another. But that is no guarantee that we will do it. The spirit can be willing, but our flesh is weak (Matt 26:41; cf. Rom 7:15). As a pastor and counselor for decades now, I hear excuses all the time from believers as to why they are not talking with their fellow believers when a problem arises. Here are five of the most common sinful excuses:

1) *"They don't deserve it!"* This one is brutally honest in its bitter and insipid tone, but people actually say this. A common example of this would be when one spouse is angry at the other spouse who is nursing a grudge and the angry spouse knows if they confront

their partner they might actually repent and be forgiven…and they don't want their lousy spouse to be forgiven because "they don't deserve it!" Pretty vicious.

2) *"It won't do any good."* Christians say this when they think God's process outlined in the Bible won't work. They also think some people—including fellow Christians—can't change or won't change. They have predetermined that the perpetrator's sin is worse than any sin they have ever committed and the hardness of their nemesis' heart is stronger than God's convicting Spirit, His dynamic living Word, and His supernatural power of grace in Christ's blood. In this case I tell the doubting Thomas, "You're not in control of whether or not they respond. Your only job is to do the right thing, which is why Jesus commanded us to confront our brother. Leave the results to Him. Trust God's process…go talk to your brother!"

3) *"I don't want to judge them, I just want to love them!"* This sounds pious, but it's actually pathetic. Contrary to what many think, confronting a brother or sister in Christ in a biblical manner is sometimes the most loving thing you can do, if it is warranted. To neglect it is quite unloving.

4) *"I don't like confrontation!"* This sounds honorable and self-deprecating, but it's just camouflaged pride. It's also a result of the fear of man and a lack of courage to do the right thing. It's an illegitimate excuse. Instead of this, we need to fear God and do what He commanded. Confront when it is appropriate to do so.

5) *"It's not my place to judge!"* This one is used frequently as people mis-quote Jesus when He said, "Do not judge so that you will not be judged" (Matt 7:1). But they are taking Jesus' words out of context. Jesus did not say, "Never judge." He was warning His disciples to not judge motives; He allows for judging fruit, actions and words (Matt 7:16). Jesus said in John 7:24, "Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment." Imagine that! Jesus said we should judge.

From the preceding it is clear that God calls His people to manage conflict through biblical confrontation. This entails speaking, admonishing, rebuking and exhorting. It also requires us to muster up some courage and not hide behind convenient self-serving excuses. In the next chapter we will look at practical examples in the Bible of those who were good models, as well as bad, when it comes to living out the ministry of confrontation.

3

MODELS OF CONFRONTATION

Scripture was written for our instruction and also to give us hope (Rom 15:4; 2 Tim 3:16-17). This is true of both the Old and New Testaments. Saints of all the ages serve as models for us to follow and examples of what to avoid. We are no different than the believers recorded in biblical history. Because of this, it is efficacious to observe where they failed and where they triumphed when it comes to the ministry of biblical confrontation. First, we will survey some of the great saints of the ages who failed at biblical confrontation and observe how they reaped the spoiled harvest of it.

Eli's Negligence

Consider Eli the priest and judge of forty years in the days of Samuel the prophet. Eli wrongly confronted Hannah for being drunk when she wasn't (1 Sam 1:12-16), and he failed to confront his sons who were wicked (2:12). Eli had two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, who served as priests (2:34). But they "were worthless men" who "did not know the LORD" (2:12). They abused the

priestly role by hoarding animal meat for themselves, and committing serial fornication by the tent of meeting. They despised God (2:22-36).

This blasphemous behavior went on unchecked for quite some time and became a public spectacle in Israel. God's anger burned greatly as a result and He told Eli that He would kill his two sons on the same day for their wickedness. God also promised to punish Eli. What was Eli's sin? He failed to confront his sons: "I am about to judge his house forever for the iniquity which he knew, because his sons brought a curse on themselves and he did not rebuke them" (3:13). Sure as God's Word, Eli and his two sons died on the same day (4:11, 18).

David's Weakness

Some say David was the greatest saint in the Old Testament. He wrote much Scripture (2 Sam 23:1) and he definitely loved God (Ps 18:1) and God loved him (1 Sam 13:14; 2 Sam 7:8). Nevertheless, he had his shortcomings and fell grossly short as a father to his children. He was notorious for not keeping his children under control. David was a lousy father because he was first a lousy husband. He committed adultery and engaged in polygamy, having at least eight illegitimate wives. The byproduct was at least nineteen sons and some daughters who rivaled each other all their days.

On one occasion, David's oldest son, Amnon raped his half-sister, Tamar, the daughter of David and

his wife Maacah (2 Sam 3:3; 13:1). Soon after, David heard about the rape. Amazingly, he did nothing! No confrontation of Amnon, no accountability. The Law of Moses demanded the death penalty for a rapist and David knew it (Deut 22:25-27). David's other son, Absalom became furious when he heard that his sister was raped (2 Sam 13:22). Two years later Absalom murdered his half-brother Amnon as revenge for his sister. Having lost respect for his father David because his non-action toward Amnon, Absalom ended up betraying, taunting, and publicly mocking King David until the day he died. And during all the years of Absalom's rebellion David failed to confront him as well. David reaped much grief later in life from family infighting that resulted from his unwillingness to be a strong father who confronted his children with the discipline of the Lord.

Job's Friends

Not only are there examples of believers failing to confront, there are also examples of saints confronting the wrong way. We can learn much from these procedural malfunctions as reminders of what *not* to do. Job's three friends come to mind. The Book of Job begins with a sudden flurry of disasters that come upon Job—all ten of his children are instantly killed in a disaster; he loses all his wealth; he loses his physical health as he's overcome with painful boils all over his body; he loses his wife's confidence. He is at rock

bottom in life. And all his three buddies can do at that time…is rebuke and confront him!

They originally came to their suffering friend with good intentions (2:11). But as time went on, their thinking went awry along with their counsel. They basically said, "Job, you probably deserve all this. Maybe God is punishing you." Well, they were wrong. They had wrong thinking, lacked compassion, and confronted Job for all kinds of ill-informed reasons. God eventually came to Job's rescue and exposed the misuse of the ministry of confrontation employed by the three "friends," Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar. God rebuked Eliphaz saying, "My wrath is kindled against you and against your two friends, because you have not spoken of Me what is right as My servant Job has" (42:7). God ended up blessing Job by healing him, replenishing his riches, repairing his marriage and giving him ten new children (42:10-17). The story of Job is a good reminder that we can confront in the wrong manner.

Jesus' Disciples

The New Testament also abounds with examples of believers confronting fellow believers in wrong ways and for misguided reasons. Jesus' disciples were guilty of this. Near the end of His life, while teaching to the masses in Jerusalem, parents were bringing their babies up to Jesus asking for prayer and blessings on their children. The jealous, short-sighted apostles rebuked

the well-meaning parents, confronting them as they sneered, telling the parents to get their babies out of there! Jesus confronted and rebuked His uncompassionate disciples on the spot, telling them, "Let the children alone, and do not hinder them from coming to Me" (Matt 19:14).

Another time, when the Samaritans did not receive the messengers of Jesus near the end of His public ministry, the apostles James and John got angry and wanted to confront the Samaritans with fire from heaven! Their motives were callously vengeful and Jesus confronted James and John for their ill-conceived confrontational spirit (Luke 9:51-55).

A week before Jesus' death, Martha's sister Mary poured precious oil on Jesus' feet and wiped His feet with her hair in an unparalleled act of uninhibited worship. Judas was there, saw it, got angry, and rebuked Mary on the spot in front of everyone, accusing her of wasting valuable oil. Jesus rebuked Judas in turn because he was a liar and a thief and because he confronted Mary for self-serving purposes. Jesus said to him, "Let her alone, in order that she may keep it for the day of My burial" (John 12:7).

Around the same time, Jesus told His apostles that He was headed to Jerusalem where He would be crucified and then rise from the dead. Peter didn't like the crucified part, so he proceeded to literally grab Jesus by the arm, pull Him to the side and give the all-knowing Savior a tongue-lashing, rebuking Him for

talking about dying. Jesus then looked Peter in the face and said, "Get behind Me, Satan!" (Matt 16:23). That was the confrontation of all confrontations in history. Jesus rebuked Peter for worldly thinking that undermined the saving work of God through Jesus' impending atonement by death.

It is interesting to note that in all four examples above where Jesus' disciples confronted someone in the wrong way or for the wrong reason, Jesus did not let them get away with it. He promptly confronted them in like manner for their miscarriage of confrontation. And in all four cases, Jesus' rebuke of them was in public.

Now that we have seen how some Bible heroes short-circuited the ministry of confrontation, we now look at some who were exemplary in employing it. These saints had the right motives and methods for boldly speaking up to a fellow believer. And sometimes about very difficult subjects.

Jethro

God raised Moses up to deliver near two million Israelites from Egypt and to lead them through the wilderness to the Promised Land (Exod 12:37). They had to travel hundreds of miles on foot, with animals, material possessions, women and children, and through dangerous territory. It would be a long journey. And the massive crowd would get antsy, grumble and complain, and commit crimes against one another. To mediate, Moses appointed himself the sole jury, judge, and jailer.

One day, Moses' father-in-law came for a visit to Moses' tent. He had watched Moses work a fourteen-hour day, attempting to adjudicate all of the Jews' conflicts by himself. Jethro had the courage to confront Moses, pointing out the folly of his micro-managing ways. Jethro asked, "What is this thing that you are doing for the people? Why do you alone sit as judge and all the people stand about you from morning until evening?" (Exod 18:14).

What Moses was doing was not good. It was inefficient—a misuse of his time. And it was poor leadership, as he was squandering resources he had at his disposal—other qualified men to help him judge the people. Jethro went on to point that out and he gave Moses a specific plan of delegation that worked efficiently. It took courage for Jethro to speak up and point out Moses' fault, for Moses was a miracle-working prophet who talked face-to-face with the Almighty. Jethro's honest, loving, bold, personal verbal confrontation to Moses worked. Moses responded positively, humbly, and implemented Jethro's plan. The ministry of biblical confrontation worked admirably here.

Nathan

We saw earlier how one of David's weaknesses was his unwillingness to confront his children and hold them accountable. But David had someone in his life who had the ability and boldness to confront in a biblical manner.

That was David's counselor, Nathan the prophet (2 Sam 7:3).

Even though David loved God and was a believer, he was far from perfect. Second Samuel 11 recounts one of the most compromised years in David's life as the King of Israel. One night in Jerusalem at his palace, while walking on his roof, David saw a neighbor woman bathing. His lust overtook him. He seized the woman, committed adultery with her in his palace, and then sent her home—impregnating her in the process. Her name was Bathsheba and she was married to a loyal army soldier named Uriah the Hittite (2 Sam 11:1-6).

When David found out Bathsheba was pregnant, he tried to hide the pregnancy and his immorality. He pulled Uriah out of battle and tried to get him to sleep with his wife Bathsheba, but Uriah refused to go home during battle. Then King David got Uriah drunk in an attempt to force him to go home to his wife. That didn't work either. Finally, David did the unthinkable—he plotted Uriah's death, the innocent husband and faithful soldier. David ordered the commander of the army to "Place Uriah in the front line of the fiercest battle and withdraw from him, so that he may be struck down and die" (11:15). The commander complied and Uriah was killed in battle. David was pleased but Bathsheba mourned. Soon after Uriah's death, David took Bathsheba as his wife. David thought he got away with compounded crimes, but he didn't.

God saw everything he did: "The thing that David had done was evil in the sight of the LORD" (11:27).

God sent Nathan to confront David about his sin. Nathan did so by telling a short parable about a rich man with many sheep who stole from a poor man who had only one lamb. The rich man stole the poor man's one lamb, slaughtered it, and gave it away. David became angry when he heard the story about the injustice of the rich man who stole the poor man's lamb. He exclaimed, "As the LORD lives, surely the man who has done this deserves to die" (12:5). At that moment, Nathan confronted King David to his face saying, "You are the man!" Nathan rebuked David for despising God's Word—for doing evil by committing murder and adultery. Nathan also pronounced great consequences on David from the vengeful hand of God.

David responded immediately by admitting his sin and asking for forgiveness. Nathan told David the Lord forgave him and would even spare his life. God, however, would also discipline him by taking the life of the baby and bringing perpetual strife to David's house. Because of Nathan's courage and willingness to confront David, God could humble David and bring him to a place of repentance, reconciliation and restoration. As a result of this whole experience, David later ended up writing two powerful Psalms (Psalm 32 and 51) about true repentance that would minister grace to the hearts of forgiven sinners for years to come.

The Lord of Confrontation

Jethro and Nathan are to be emulated for their acts of courageous confrontation. There are many other saints who can be profiled in addition to them, but the greatest model of the ministry of confrontation is God Himself. God confronts as a part of His nature, for He is true, righteous, and holy (Isa 6:1-8). From Genesis to Revelation God confronts His people for their good and His glory.

God admonished Adam asking him, "Where are you?" (Gen 3:9). God challenged Sarah about her lying, asking her why she laughed: "No, but you did laugh" (Gen 18:15). God burned with anger, rebuking Aaron and Miriam for their racism, asking, "Why then were you not afraid to speak against My servant Moses?" (Num 12:8). God confronted Moses with this devastating rebuke: "Because you have not believed Me, to treat Me as holy in the sight of the sons of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them" (Num 20:12). The LORD exhorted Joshua for his lapse in leadership, saying, "Rise up! Why is it that you have fallen on your face? Israel has sinned" (Josh 7:10-11). God confronted King Solomon for his immorality and idolatry saying, "Because you have done this, and you have not kept My covenant and My statutes…I will surely tear the kingdom from you" (1 Kings 11:11). God confronted Job for his presumption, asking, "Where were you when I laid the foundation of the world?" (Job 38:4). God

confronted Jonah the prophet for his prejudice and temper tantrum asking, "Are you really so very angry about the little plant?" (Jon 4:9).

Having highlighted both negative and positive models of confrontation, we now venture on in chapter four to establish the biblical purpose of confrontation.

4

THE PURPOSE OF CONFRONTATION

Asking the Right Question

"What is the goal of confrontation from a biblical point of view?" is a question I once asked my elders at the beginning of an elders' meeting. I asked them to not say their answer out loud but to write it down and share it during a time afterwards. I had my own answer in mind. There were five of us, and we all went around the table and shared. Not one of us gave the same answer, but they were all legitimate…and biblical. I was impressed, and I learned a few things from the exercise. I was reminded that there is more than one correct answer for the above question, "What is the goal of confrontation?"

If you were a Pharisee in Jesus' day your answer might be, "The goal of confrontation is to embarrass and humiliate those you don't like or those who threaten you." Sadly, there are people in the church

today just like that. Some might think the goal is to make an example of others by making them look compromised. And plenty of people actually enjoy confronting others because it elevates their status of self-righteousness at the same time. From one degree to another, we are all prone to these subtle and sinister ulterior motives when it comes to confronting others. Jesus knew that. That's why He cautioned believers, "Do not judge lest you be judged" (Matt 7:1). At the same time, Jesus commanded believers to be discerning and to make judgments based on proper standards (Matt 7:16). So, there is a delicate balance when it comes to confronting others—there is a right way to confront and a wrong way to confront. There is a right time to confront and a wrong time to confront. How do we strike that balance? That is a huge challenge.

God's Glory

One way to help navigate that balance is to maintain the proper plumbline by always keeping the biblical goal of confrontation in the forefront of our thinking. According to the Bible, the goal of confrontation is multi-faceted. All the goals can fall under two main categories: (1) seeking God's glory and (2) seeking resolution. The first main category is theocentric and big picture. The second main category is practically-oriented and specific. And when the second one is done properly it fulfills the first—it brings glory to God.

First, let's look at a few thoughts on glorifying

God in the confrontation process. Three issues stand out: being obedient, honoring the process and maintaining the right attitude. It all starts with being obedient. God calls His people to a ministry and spiritual discipline of "confrontation." Many saints are alarmed by this notion. Others are intimidated by the prospect. But it's true nonetheless. The Scriptures are replete with commands for believers to confront other believers, to hold each other accountable, to keep straying sheep in the fold, to chase after deserters, to recover those missing in action, to reign in the unwieldy, to silence the scoffers, to motivate the sluggards, to call out the immoral and to challenge the factious.

God said in Ecclesiastes, "there is a time to throw stones…and a time to speak" (3:5, 7). Proverbs says, "Better is open rebuke than love that is concealed" (27:5). Paul commands Christians to "admonish one another" (Rom 15:14; cf. Col 3:16; 1 Thess 5:14; 2 Thess 3:15). God is committed to holding His people accountable, and the main way He does that is through the ministry of personal confrontation. To neglect needed confrontation is to reject God's command, commit the sin of omission, and rob God of His deserved glory.

The second way we glorify God in confrontation is by honoring the process. God has delineated a very specific process in the Bible of how to confront others. Jesus expects His church to implement and honor this process (Matt 18:15-20; cf. 5:21-26; Lk

17:1-4; 1 Tim 5:19-22). We do not have the liberty to ignore, invent or short-circuit the process. Sadly, this occurs all the time when churches and church leaders—sometimes in ignorance and sometimes wittingly—act out of fear and many times out of pragmatism. I have seen first-hand God's process set aside from a sheer lack of faith—those involved simply failed to believe in the effectiveness of God's process (Rom 14:23b). To compromise God's given formal process as dictated in Scripture is to withhold God's due glory.

The third consideration in giving God glory is maintaining the right attitude. This is difficult to do in the confrontation process because emotions are involved. When there has been a personal offense it is a challenge to stay objective. At times when we finally have the guts to confront someone, it may be that we don't want them to repent or we really don't want to eventually be restored with them—we want to hold on to our bitter grudge. The human heart is a deceptively wicked and twisted thing at times (Jer 17:9). This being true, God reminds us in His Word that we need to stay prayerful, humble, circumspect, sober-minded, and Spirit-filled in the process of confrontation (Gal 5:16-6:4). This is all about maintaining the right attitude. To do so gives God the glory.

Resolution

In addition to giving God glory as an over-arching goal of confrontation is the second big category: seeking

resolution. Confrontation is required when there is a problem. If there is a problem, then there is something off-kilter. If there is something off-kilter, then it requires resolution. The resolution required to solve a problem can be very different depending on the situation. This is especially true in interpersonal relationships, as human dynamics are complicated and diverse. Some of the most common goals of confrontation under the "resolution" umbrella include clarity, protection, repentance and forgiveness, reconciliation, restoration and separation. We will briefly look at each one.

Clarity

Jesus said in Matthew 5, "make friends quickly" with a fellow brother if you know he "has something against you" (vv. 23, 25). In this instance He does not say go to your brother if he "sinned" against you, or you "sinned" against him. But rather, simply go to him if he has "something" against you. The Greek word here for "something" is *ti*, a little, generic, undefined indefinite pronoun. Jesus knew that people can hold grudges against others for non-sin issues! People make wrong conclusions all the time about others, assuming the worst, not giving the benefit of the doubt, connecting the wrong dots, and as a result being angry at a fellow believer for "something" other than a legitimate reason. It happens all the time. Maybe they got that "something" from wrong information that came in the

form of a juicy piece of gossip at the last church social…or even a prayer meeting!

How many times has one spouse said to their partner after enduring hours of silence and the cold shoulder, "Is there 'something' wrong?" opening up a discussion to ultimately find out that there was no sin issue causing the problem, but rather a simple misunderstanding resulting from poor communication or a lack of communication. Poor communication is not a sin. "Something" was impeding the relationship, but it was not premeditated evil or deliberate malice. Proactive confrontation done in the right manner can uncover countless roadblocks to communication that are disguised as trespasses. Get clarity on a matter before pounding the gavel with a guilty verdict. Many times, just clearing the air can bring resolution.

Protection

In addition to bringing clarity, biblical confrontation can help provide protection. One of the main responsibilities of a pastor is to protect the sheep. The Apostle Paul charged the elders in Ephesus to "Be on guard…for all the flock" (Acts 20:28). He commanded the church leaders to protect the church people. He went on to say that the people need to be protected from "savage wolves" (v. 29) who would infiltrate the local church, masquerading as spiritual leaders and teachers. The main way pastors need to deal with false teachers in the church, as well as divisive and immoral

religious leaders, is with strong, open, public confrontation. This open confrontation provides protection for the true believers in the church.

The four-fold church discipline process that Jesus outlined in Matthew 18 is a confrontational process that also provides protection for the saints of a local church. It quarantines and isolates the sin or the sinner until a resolution is reached, while keeping the sin and its effects from spreading like cancer among the body of the church. To shy away from biblical confrontation when it is required is to withhold needed protection among the innocent in the Body of Christ.

Repentance and Forgiveness

Another key goal of biblical confrontation is to bring about repentance. Repentance is to turn from sin and turn to God for forgiveness (Acts 3:19). Jesus said, "If your brother sins, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him" (Luke 17:3). The word for "rebuke" Jesus used here is *epitimao*, an emphatic word for a verbal censure or warning. That's what confrontation means. Jesus makes it clear that the goal of confrontation is repentance—we should want the sinner or offender to change and turn from their error and turn back to God.

Jesus told three parables in Luke 15 illustrating that God in heaven rejoices when sinners repent and turn to God (vv. 7, 10). Jesus also makes it clear that when there is repentance then full forgiveness needs to be granted immediately. That is how God responds to

true repentance and so must we. There is no place to withhold forgiveness among Christians when forgiveness is warranted. When a sinner repents upon being confronted, then true biblical resolution has been realized and God is glorified. It is important to note that repentance is a gift from God, a supernatural work on a person's heart (Rom 2:4; 2 Tim 2:25). So, as we go about the ministry of confrontation, prayer is essential as we ask God to be softening hearts of all parties involved with His Spirit and His truth.

Reconciliation

Another goal of confrontation is reconciliation. Reconciliation is what happens when two former enemies make peace with each other. To be reconciled is to become friends. When sin occurs between two people there is a breech in their relationship. If that happens between two Christians, God commands them to be reconciled with each other (Matt 5:24). The sin barrier needs to be dealt with head-on. That is the purpose of biblical confrontation. Too often, people don't confront the problem head-on and they let it fester with time. That is dangerous. That makes the heart hard and causes bitterness to grow deep in the soul. Bitterness is cancer of the soul (Eph 4:31; Heb 12:15).

We need to be proactive and deliberate in the maintenance of our personal relationships, keeping short accounts, forgiving one another, not letting the

sun go down on our anger, and, when necessary, confronting the sin that separates us from other believers. We need to be vigilant peacemakers with a sense of urgency at securing resolution with others. For Jesus said, when your relationship is broken with a fellow believer we need to "make friends quickly" (Matt 5:25).

Oftentimes we need help from others to hold us accountable to be reconciled with another believer. The Apostle Paul knew this firsthand. He had two Christian women who faithfully helped him in ministry as he served in Philippi named Euodia and Syntyche. At some point, these two Christian ladies clashed, head-butting themselves into an ugly full-blown conflict. Paul eventually called on the whole church of Philippi to help them reconcile: "I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to live in harmony in the Lord…I ask you also to help these women who have shared my struggle in the cause of the gospel" (Phil 4:2-3).

It needs to be noted that reconciliation usually can't happen until there has been true confrontation and repentance. If a sin issue was the impediment in the relationship between two believers, then there can't be reconciliation until all guilty parties repent, owning up to their error while seeking God's forgiveness. Another way to say it is, there can't be reconciliation until the guilty party fesses up. Reconciliation is conditional. Reconciliation between God and the sinner is

conditional—it's conditioned upon the sinner repenting and believing the gospel (Mark 1:15).

In addition, true reconciliation is not always guaranteed when there is repentance. Often people will acknowledge their sin upon confrontation and repent, but they will be hesitant to reconcile with the brother they had a fall-out with. This manifests itself through avoidance, being standoffish or being downright cold. God's ideal is that there would be true reconciliation to whatever degree possible (Rom 12:18).

Restoration

Another key goal of confrontation is restoration. Restoration refers to the process of getting the sinner back into a healthy and productive place in the body of Christ. Sin severs relationships, so even if there is confrontation, repentance and reconciliation, there also needs to be restoration. People, and relationships, need to heal and get built back up. Trust needs to be recovered and restored. In Galatians 6:1 Paul speaks to this issue. He says, "Brethren, even if a man is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one." The word "restore" (*kartizo*) that Paul uses here is the same word used to describe John and James "mending" their fishing nets when Jesus called them (Matt 4:21).

To "restore" something is to mend or heal that which was broken to the point of usefulness or functionality. This is the beauty and uniqueness of having true forgiveness through the work of Jesus

Christ. His supernatural atoning work can restore any true repentant sinner to a place of complete wholeness, restoration and usefulness—sometimes to a place of greater strength than was known before.

The Apostle Paul modeled restoration, as well as all the other previously listed goals of confrontation, beautifully in the church at Corinth. An individual in that congregation sinned against Paul in such a public and scandalous manner that it warranted church discipline at the highest level. This man's sin affected the whole church (2 Cor 2:5). It was public knowledge. The Corinthian congregation confronted the sinner and disciplined him (v. 6). Paul got word that the sinner eventually repented. As a result, Paul exhorted the whole church to "forgive" him and "comfort him" (v. 7). The word "forgive" implies the goal of "repentance" had been achieved. Paul's command to "comfort him" speaks of "reconciliation." But the recovery of the sinner did not stop there. Paul goes on to ensure that "restoration" would take place—he wanted this repentant brother to be fully received, healed and assimilated back into the Body of Christ. To that end, Paul went on to tell the Corinthians to "reaffirm your love for him" (v. 8). The call to "reaffirm" the sinner was Paul's way of saying that full restoration needed to happen with this contrite brother.

Separation

It is a surprise to some, but separation is also a goal of

confrontation. Separation is a complement to "protection," one of the goals discussed earlier. It is interesting to observe that in Jesus' four-fold confrontational discipline process outlined in Matthew 18:15-17, the last step ends on a negative note, not a positive one. Step four in church discipline amounts to kicking the unrepentant sinner out of the church and then treating him like "a Gentile and a tax-gatherer" (v. 17). This is separation. This pruning protects what remains and does not allow what is dangerous and unhealthy to continue to grow.

God wants His church to be holy. Sometimes, this requires the removal of the unrepentant – those who are immoral and unholy. Those people need to be isolated from the rest of the body and "separated." Paul told the Corinthians that the immoral brother in their congregation "should be removed from your midst" (1 Cor 5:2). He goes on to admonish them: "Clean out the old leaven"! (v. 6). And later in the epistle he exhorts: "Do not be deceived: 'Bad company corrupts good morals'" (15:33). Biblical confrontation may at times end with holy separation. Satan will always be planting his seeds and weeds—false believers—among God's wheat (Matt 13:39). Faithful church leaders need to always be diligently modeling and employing the church discipline process to keep the church pure. There are times when we need to welcome "blessed subtraction."

The Apostle John spoke of the need for confrontational separation in the local church when he

spoke of certain people who were removed from the church who once looked, and sounded and smelled like real sheep but weren't: "They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, in order that it might be shown that they are not of us" (1 John 2:19).

Exposure

Closely related to the purpose of separation is exposure. Jesus made it clear that there will always be people in the church who are not regenerate or born again, even though they may say they are born again. These false believers come in all varieties. They might be self-conscious and self-aware liars. They may be infiltrating the church to purposely prey on vulnerable people, to advance their agenda or to earn a buck or a handout, masquerading as true believers. Or they may genuinely think they are saved but are self-deceived. This last category of pseudo-Christians are the most difficult to deal with because they look so much like the genuine article. This type of person typically can articulate the gospel, speak the lingo of Christianity, find their way around the Bible and they spend a lot of time around church, spiritual activities and fellow believers. And most of the time other real believers around them never suspect that such a person is not truly born again.

This is possible because as finite humans we don't know people's hearts. Only God does. We look

on the outward appearance, but God looks at the heart (1 Sam 16:7). And these pseudo-Christians can actually function in the church undetected for years. Jesus told His disciples, "the poor you will always have with you" (John 12:8) and in similar fashion He warned that false believers who are difficult to identify you will always have with you as well (Matt 13:30). Jesus had one such self-deceived pseudo-believer in His inner circle for three years—Judas! Jesus finally exposed Judas the last week of His life (John 13). But that was only after Judas walked and talked and lived with Jesus and the other eleven disciples in close proximity for years. And the whole time Judas professed to be a follower of Jesus, a worshipper of YHWH, a practicing Old Testament Jew, a preacher and evangelist, and the trusted treasurer of their apostolic group (John 12:6).

The startling thing was that the whole time Judas was following Jesus around and claiming to be one of His disciples he was actually pilfering money from the apostles (John 12:6) and living a lie, being an offspring of Satan himself (John 6:70; 13:2, 21). And the other apostles never caught on or suspected that Judas was not a true believer. They never knew until Jesus finally exposed him for who he truly was through confrontation at the Last Supper.

In light of the above it is evident that confrontation can help expose false believers in the church. A special note needs to be made here as a complement. There are times when professing believers

in the church expose themselves without the need of confrontation or the church discipline process. These folks many times have grown up in the church, knew the content of the gospel like the back of their hand but never knew Christ personally. And then they get to a point in their life when they realize they love the world and sin more than they love God and holiness and just walk away from the faith and church. Sometimes out of the blue when no one expected it.

I have had church members come to me in private over the years on rare occasions and confess to me that upon deep reflection they have decided that they are not really born again and so they are leaving the church. At times I had to agree with them in light of the details they revealed. I plead with those kinds of people, asking them to reconsider and repent. If they don't repent, but remain resolute, then I let them go. I don't need to take them through the church discipline process to see if they are not saved. They have already exposed themselves, denied the faith and declared, "I am not a Christian."

Summing it Up

What is the goal of confrontation? The goal is multi-faceted. The goal is God's glory and resolution among His people. God is glorified when His people have the courage to face sin head-on and obey His many imperatives to confront it. God is also glorified when believers use God's process of confrontation laid out in

Scripture and not their own. And believers also need to maintain a godly, humble and dependent attitude, being led by the Spirit during the process of confrontation. That glorifies God as well. Resolution is achieved when believers keep all the practical goals of confrontation in the forefront of their minds: clarity, protection, repentance and forgiveness, reconciliation, restoration, separation, and exposure.

Having briefly introduced the importance of honoring the process of confrontation that God has laid down in His Word we will now flesh that process out in greater detail in the next chapter.

5

THE PROCESS OF CONFRONTATION

What is the mode of confrontation? In other words, how does one actually go about confronting another Christian? What is the correct process? This is a more difficult question, because it is actually case-by-case. Every situation and scenario that requires confrontation is not the same. Sometimes a sin is a personal and private matter, and sometimes a sin can be committed publicly against a group of people. The two scenarios demand two different responses and two different procedures. Actually, there are at least five different scenarios when an "offence" occurs between believers that the Bible addresses. Let's look at each of them.

Option 1: Just Forgive!

The Bible teaches that not every sin between believers needs to be confronted in a head-on confrontation or verbal clash. Thankfully, some sins or offenses can just

be forgiven and not addressed! Proverbs 10:12 says, "love covers all transgressions." Peter says the same thing in the New Testament: "Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins" (1 Per 4:8). Paul speaks similarly as he reminds Christians that "love is patient" (1 Cor 13:4). Paul also says that biblical love "covers all things" (v. 7). The word "covers" here is the Greek word *stego* which means "to protect; to keep secret or hidden." You don't need to jump on people for every small infraction they might make or questionable breath they take. Don't be petty; be forgiving. Let it go! Christians should be in the habit of throwing blankets of forgiving love over the ongoing petty oddities, foibles and idiosyncrasies of other believers that tend to irritate. We all have them.

If this is true, then when should we confront sin and not just put a blanket of forgiving love over it? This is a challenging balancing act. Three suggestions might help. The first is that offenses that can be forgiven without confrontation, or that can be "winked" at, should be sins committed against you personally and you decide in grace to forgive the other person. You have jurisdiction over that sin issue. But sins or offenses that you don't have jurisdiction over, you don't have the prerogative to just ignore them.

For example, if you are a parent and you hear that your teenager stole something from Safeway, you don't just ignore it and forgive it. The sin of stealing was not committed against you; as a responsible parent you

need to confront your teenager and make them fess up and pay restitution. Second, offenses that can go unchecked tend to be smaller offenses, routine irritants that are just a normal part of daily life. Third, if you try to forgive an offense or a sin against you but you remain troubled by it, or even embittered by it as time goes on, then you need to bring it up to the perpetrator and talk about it. Confront it! Get it out, before it turns into a root of bitterness.

So, covering sin is the ability to forgive insults, rudeness, unkindness, or spontaneous inconsiderate words or acts without confrontation. In marriage this could apply to frequent acts and words of omission—things one's spouse doesn't do or forgets to do that probably would have been a good idea to do. The Song of Solomon calls these frequent, ongoing offenses and hiccups in the marriage relationship "little foxes" (2:18). These kinds of shortcomings occur so frequently for us as sinners that, if we confronted every one of them, we would spend all of our time in conflict—being petty and nit-picky, which is the opposite of being merciful peacemakers and the higher road to which Jesus calls His disciples (Matt 5:7, 9).

Option 2: The Church Discipline Process

The church discipline process is a four-fold process Jesus gave in Matthew 18:15-17 to manage sin in the church. This process is meant for sins that cannot go unconfronted. The process is always to be initiated by

the one sinned against. The church will always have sinners, so every church will always have the need to practice church discipline. Church discipline is a formal way of providing accountability for sinners, a forum for the offended to confront perpetrators, and a means to restore wayward sheep, bringing them back into the fold. Church discipline is also a means of protecting the local church from wolves in sheep's clothing, false teachers and unrepentant, factious troublemakers.

In the Gospels, Jesus made only two explicit references to the Church. One is in Matthew 16 when He promised to build the Church. The other is in Matthew 18 where He outlined the steps for the church discipline process. The Church needs to carefully heed Jesus' specific, delineated plan for resolving conflict and dealing with sin and restoration in the Church. It is His Church and He knows best how to protect it and manage problems. He said church discipline serves that purpose.

The key passage on church discipline is in Matthew and reads as follows:

> And if your brother sins, go and reprove him in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother. But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that "by the mouth of two or three witnesses every fact may be confirmed." And if he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he

> refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax-gatherer (18:15-17).

Jesus said these words to His disciples just prior to His departure. He was deliberately laying the foundation for the beginning of the church, and church discipline was central to fulfilling that goal. In His instructions, Jesus based church discipline on some Old Testament principles, one of those being that justice, or truth, was to be established before man on the basis of the testimony of a minimum of two to three witnesses (Deut 19:15). This was a safeguard against frivolous, unjustified accusations being brought against people without accountability. Jesus knew that humans were self-oriented and liars at heart if left to themselves (John 2:25). A classic example of someone bringing a false accusation against an innocent party was when Potiphar's wife accused Joseph of rape (Gen 39:14). Joseph didn't rape her or even touch her, but she made up a lie out of retaliation and a personal vendetta. There were no witnesses of the so-called rape (39:11). It was just Joseph's word against a lying woman's word. Joseph was thrown into prison based on a false witness (Gen 39:20; cf. Exod 20:16). Having one or two witnesses could have ensured justice. Hence the importance of abiding by Jesus' standard in this passage. In just three verses Jesus has outlined an amazingly simple and

effective four-step plan here for dealing with personal conflict and sin in the body of Christ.

It also needs to be kept in mind that the church discipline process is an economy of restoration intended for believers—it is assumed from the beginning that those involved are believers. It is not until the process has been thoroughly exhausted that one of the parties might be considered to be an unbeliever (as a "tax gatherer")—until that point, no such judgment is to be rendered. Rushing to judgment with an assessment saying, "They did this horrible sin—they must not be saved!" before going through the proper steps of church discipline is to undermine the heavenly judicious procedure that Jesus bequeathed to the church. And a rush to judgment about someone's spiritual status before God is dangerous. Real Christians are capable of some horrible sins.

Step One

The first step of confrontation in the church discipline process is at the individual level and is to be carried out in a strictly private manner. The idea is to confront the problem on the personal level in the smallest circle of influence, thus safeguarding the reputation of all parties involved. This involves only the parties that have grievances against one another—usually a one-on-one confrontation between believers.

Private, prayerful, personal, verbal, honest confrontation needs to happen first. If this step is

neglected, and a grievance is shared with an outside party, then that is gossip. That is sin and it dishonors God, and as a result the grievance will compound and spread like gangrene. Also, Satan will capitalize on that breech and seek to create havoc and division in the Body. God's desire is that believers speak openly to one another first about their conflicts, with the goal of seeking confession, forgiveness and restoration. If that is achieved, then the matter is to be forgiven and forgotten. The offending brother has been won over. There is complete resolution to the glory of God.

Step Two

If step one does not resolve the conflict, then the process escalates to step two. The second step seeks a mediator or two, for a maximum total of three people confronting the offender. Step two is to be initiated only if step one failed to bring repentance, restoration and complete resolution. Each step is to be escalated if the response from the offender is that "he does not listen." So, if the offender refused to acknowledge the offense in the one-on-one confrontation of step one, then proceed to step two. In that case the one offended brings one or two other believers to observe the offended brother as they confront the offender, and thereby they become "witnesses" in the process. The circle of knowledge is still small, which prevents gossip and also gives the sinning brother an opportunity to repent in dignity. If the offender owns up to the sin

upon being confronted by the two or three, then total forgiveness is to be granted, and the case is closed, never to be brought up again (see 1 Cor 13:5b). If the offender rejects the admonition of the mediation team, then step three comes into play.

Step Three

The third step is to bring the unresolved conflict to the church. Now the offense becomes a corporate issue and the accountability factor becomes weightier by virtue of becoming public knowledge. The first question to answer is, "Who is the church?" Some say it begins with all the elders or church leadership. Others say it includes the leadership and all the members. Other churches believe it includes the leadership of the local church plus anyone in attendance on any given Sunday, which may include visitors and unbelieving spectators. Still others would include other local churches and the denomination members as well. Despite the differences of opinion, the common denominator is that the sin becomes public with corporate accountability from a minimum of the leaders and its members in the local church.

At this stage the sin is to be publicly proclaimed and the members are encouraged to pray for the unrepentant sinner and call that person to repent as they have opportunity. For the process to work as Jesus intended, everyone has to be on the same page and operate with a united front toward the sinner. One

illegitimate sympathizer who bucks the process can undermine the whole heavenly work. But when the whole church is speaking in unison, this may help bring conviction and repentance. If the offender repents after being confronted by the church, then total forgiveness is to be granted, and the sinner is to be restored (Luke 17:3). If the offender rejects the admonition of the church, then step four is to be implemented.

Before going on to step four, some comments are in order about steps one through three. Regarding step one, all Christians should be regularly involved at this level, for this is simply confronting and resolving conflict in personal relationships at the one-on-one level. We all live day-to-day in this realm. This step helps us keep short accounts with others; it helps to keep the sun from going down on our anger with others (Eph 4:26). It helps clear the air in marriage and prevents the "little foxes" from intruding into family life (SOS 2:18). Doing step one faithfully smothers gossip and stifles Satan's tactics of discord among believers. If you can't remember the last time you implemented step one, then there is a good chance there is unresolved conflict in your life.

Step two will be a way less frequent occurrence for most people. Mainly because step one works. Jesus knew what He was talking about. He knows people and it's His Church. True believers often respond positively to step one when it is implemented properly. And if they know step three might be coming soon that is a healthy

fear that can bring conviction that leads to resolution. Step three should be a rare occurrence. Most Christians fear public accountability. That is a good thing. Usually it is calloused, hardened sinners that don't repent during steps two and three, and so they don't care if they are subjected to step four. With each step, their true character and spiritual heart condition is revealed more and more.

Step Four

If the sinner refuses to repent after being confronted by the whole church, then the matter is escalated to step four. Step four is when the church considers the offender as a "gentile and a tax-gatherer," or as an unbeliever. The person is to be put out of the fellowship, which entails removing him from membership and forbidding him the ordinances and church fellowship (1 Cor 5:13). It is not uncommon for a person in step three or step four to remain a professing Christian. That's why step four is so important. A true Christian would not persist in defying the church by clinging to sin in the face of repeated and escalated formal confrontation. As such Jesus gives the Church the authority to declare the unrepentant sinner a "tax-gatherer" at step four despite their self-profession as a Christian. If they continue to identify themselves as a believer, it is evidence that they are self-deceived—they are more likely weeds than wheat. And since such a person is to be considered as an unbeliever,

the church should evangelize him/her with the gospel and call that person to repentance, but at the same time Christians should remain aloof from them on a personal level considering them spiritually dangerous (1 Cor 5:11).

If you have been subjected to step four in the church discipline process then you are "put out" of the church. Sometimes this is referred to as being "excommunicated," although that is not a biblical word and it carries a lot of negative baggage historically. It is possible for such a person to repent, or come to their senses, and be forgiven and restored to fellowship. There was a man in the Corinthian church who was "put out" of the fellowship but then repented and was received back into fellowship (2 Cor 2:5-8). This illustrates perfectly the amazing grace of God and the reality that where sin abounds, the grace of God in Christ abounds even more (Rom 5:20).

To summarize, the four-fold church discipline process of Matthew can be outlined as follows:

> *Step 1* - "And if your brother sins, go and reprove him in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother" (18:15).
>
> *Step 2* - "But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that 'by the mouth of two or three witnesses every fact may be confirmed'" (18:16).

> *Step 3* - "And if he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church" (18:17a).
>
> *Step 4* - "and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax-gatherer" (18:17b).

Option 3: Reject the Factious

In addition to the four-fold process given by Jesus, the New Testament spells out three other scenarios that are special cases of confrontation or discipline. One of these pertains to dealing with "factious" people in the church. In Titus 3:10-11 Paul says to, "Reject a factious man after a first and second warning, knowing that such a man is perverted and is sinning." This special case of discipline is a little different than the one taught by Jesus in Matthew 18. This situation has only three steps; Jesus gave four steps in Matthew 18. The sin is more specific in Titus for it refers to one guilty of "factious" behavior. The Greek word here for "factious" is "heresy" where we get the English words "factions" and "false teaching." The offense in Matthew 18:15 is more generic and is called "sin," which comes from the Greek verb *hamartano*, "to miss the mark." This is a very broad term for sin and encompasses all manner of moral error.

Another difference is that this factious behavior in Titus 3 is associated with public spoken behavior that is divisive, like false or scandalous teaching or false notions being propagated throughout the church. That kind of behavior needs to be put to a stop immediately.

Hence the circumvented process given to shut it down. Here Paul says that some steps in the church discipline process need to be by-passed to protect the church and keep division and heresy from spreading quickly like a wildfire or fast spreading cancer. In other words, steps one and two are skipped and something similar to step three is immediately in effect. The normal process of church discipline is circumvented based on the nature of the sin, which in this case is "factious" behavior. Such sin needs to be smothered and cut out immediately. Drastic times call for drastic measures.

Option 4: Confronting an Elder

Another special case of church discipline a little different than Matthew 18 is when an elder or pastor in the church needs to be exposed for sin that compromises his ministry and brings reproach on the church. Paul gives the following command in 1 Timothy 5:19-20:

> Do not receive an accusation against an elder except on the basis of two or three witnesses. Those who continue in sin, rebuke in the presence of all, so that the rest also will be fearful *of sinning*.

This command serves as a guideline of how to confront an elder in the church. An elder is the same thing as a pastor, overseer, bishop, presbyter or leader in the church. The terms are used interchangeably in the New

Testament (Acts 20:17, 28; Heb 13:17). In this command God provides protection for elders/pastors while at the same time holds them to a higher standard. They are protected in that no one person can bring a formal charge or grievance against the pastor to shame with vindictive intent. Serious accusations against a pastor must be validated by at least two witnesses. This prevents the pastor from being undermined or attacked by nefarious individuals who simply want to retaliate against the pastor or sabotage his ministry for illegitimate personal reasons. Personal vendettas against elders are to be rejected out of hand.

The first command given in 5:19 is a negative one: "Do not receive an accusation…". The word "receive" means "consider" or "entertain." Unsubstantiated allegations (rogue accusations made by one person with no witnesses) are not even to be investigated. "Do not receive" them! Expose them and condemn them instead. Fellow elders need to be the first in line here to protect the pastor or other elders from being falsely accused via petty accusations leaking from a sole malcontent. This is especially true if the back-handed leak is coming from another elder or church leader. How many churches have been damaged by a coup spearheaded by a fellow, power-hungry, elder or influential powerbroker in the church? Don't give the poisonous gas of sinister gossip against a pastor a match to light the flame. Snuff it out on the spot! Stand up for your elders. Protect your pastors! Satan is working

overtime to destroy pastors; we don't need to support the work of conniving church-goers with the same intent.

At the same time, God scrutinizes Pastors at a higher level of expectation. James 3:1 warns, "Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we will incur a stricter judgment." Pastors hold delegated spiritual authority in trust from God. But pastors are sinners too and at times can misuse that authority. Church leaders are not immune to scrutiny or consequences. As such, they need accountability. Sometimes there are men serving in the office of elder who do not belong there. There are times when a pastor or elder needs to be confronted of sin. Some sins elders commit are disqualifying sins with respect to ongoing formal ministry (1 Cor 9:27). If an elder commits a disqualifying sin, then he needs to be exposed. The process to do this is a two-step procedure. Disqualifying sins, at a minimum, are a betrayal of the elder qualifications Paul listed in 1 Timothy 3.

If a pastor is guilty of a disqualifying sin, then step one is to be invoked: two or more witnesses bring legitimate, validated charges of a sin against the elder as a warning. Step two is invoked if the elder does not repent, whereupon he is to be rebuked or exposed publicly. The word "rebuke" used by Paul here means "confront, expose, convict, reprove." It is to be a public censure. The public rebuke serves as a warning to the whole congregation that God hates sin and takes it

seriously. So, the rebuke amounts to a clarion call to holiness in the church. Because the pastor did not repent with the first warning he has violated the qualifications for being an elder as delineated in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 and therefore needs to step down from his role as elder/pastor.

A critical question here is, "What sins are considered disqualifying sins for a pastor or elder?" There is much debate about the answer. At a minimum the answer is that if the elder or pastor clearly violates the qualifications that got him qualified, then he becomes disqualified. Those qualifications are specifically listed in 1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9 and 1 Peter 5:1-3.

After twenty-plus years in ministry, having served in many churches, on many leadership boards in churches and Christian schools, the qualification that I have seen violated most among spiritual leaders, by far…hands down…is men who become or act "self-willed." That is a qualification listed in Titus 1:7. If you are self-willed then you have no business being in church ministry. God wants shepherds serving God, Christ, the Church and the sheep…not themselves. Being self-willed is similar to Peter's warning to elders in 1 Peter 5 when he exhorts them not to "lord it over" the people. Lording it over the sheep is when a church leader abuses his delegated authority he has by virtue of the position. Lording it over is a uniquely dangerous sin because pastors and elders can use their authority to

build a fire-wall of protection against any accountability, as they hide behind their title and mis-use Bible verses like, "Touch not mine anointed" (1 Chron 16:22 KJV), in effect telling the people that the pastor is beyond confronting. And too many church leaders through the years have abused their authority by acting like little dictators, wielding a heavy-hand, acting like drill-sergeants instead of like lowly foot-washers that Jesus called pastors to be (John 13).

There is no place for pastors to be micro-managing people lives, controlling their behavior through fear, threats, legalism or coercion. The people are God's sheep, not our sheep. The saints are God's children, not the pastor's children. Jesus is the only legitimate Senior Pastor in the church (1 Pet 5). Elders are mere under-shepherds, servants, galley-slaves and stewards. Pastors are supposed to love the people, serve the people, feed and protect the people. Elders are called to be gentle and compassionate with God's people as Jesus was. As a Shepherd, Jesus fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah and became the ideal model of what a pastor was to be: "a battered reed He will not break off, and a smoldering wick He will not put out" (Matt 12:20; cf. Isa 42:3).

A note of clarification is needed to complement what Paul lays out in 1 Timothy 5:19-20. In addition to the formal rebuke of pastors mentioned above, as individuals, pastors are sinners like all other Christians. Not every sin a pastor or elder commits is a ministry-

disqualifying sin. Therefore, there will be times when an individual may have to talk to a pastor individually, privately, about a personal grievance. Show the pastor, a fellow brother in Christ, his fault; if he repents, he is to be forgiven (Luke 17:3). Case closed. This might be the pastor's wife, or child, or a fellow elder. We all need to do ongoing maintenance in our relationships to safeguard against the "little foxes" that creep in day to day.

Option 5: "Fire!"

The last unique case of confrontation is the one-step approach of church discipline. This is the rare occasion of exposing a public church scandal by confronting the intolerable sin while at the same time issuing an expulsion from the church in the same step. This is like yelling, "Fire!" and then taking immediate action to save lives while removing the imminent threat at the same time. The context for imposing this one-step approach is almost always dealing with a public sin that threatens the whole church. In these special instances, public sin warrants public rebuke.

There are a couple of examples in the Book of Acts that illustrate it in action. In Acts 5 Peter confronts two church members, Ananias and Saphira, a married couple, at a public church meeting for their sin of lying to the Holy Spirit. Both of them dropped dead on the spot upon Peter's public rebuke. They were then summarily dragged out of the church. There was no

four-fold church discipline process imposed on them allowing them time to reconsider their ways so they might reform, be rehabilitated and assimilated back into the community. They were not allowed two verbal warnings to get it together like the factious man in Titus 3. They were not even given two steps to make it right like the sinning elder in 1 Timothy 5. It was one strike and you are out!

This was also the case with Simon the sorcerer of Samaria in Acts chapter 8. Simon was a practitioner of the occult by way of profession. But on one occasion he heard Philip preach the gospel and Simon believed and was baptized (8:13). And he even began to follow Philip as a disciple. But it turns out that Simon's faith was shallow and polluted, for he really loved money more than he loved God. As a professing Christian he tried to buy the apostolic power of the Holy Spirit with filthy lucre. Peter rebuked him to his face saying, "May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money" (8:20). Simon's sin was a public act, so he got an immediate public rebuke.

Paul also used the one-step approach of confronting Christians who were in sin. The Corinthian church had a public scandal with one of their members committing incest with his mother-in-law (1 Cor 5:1). The ghastly deed was public knowledge in the church. Paul commanded the church to immediately purge the man from their church and to deliver him

over to Satan (vv. 5-7). There was no time for a two-step, three-step, or four step-process. The damage had been done. One step and he was out. Paul also used the one-step approach of confrontation against the Apostle Peter in the scenario already highlighted in chapter one. In Galatians 2 Paul recounts how Peter was being a public hypocrite, giving favoritism to the Judaizers over the Gentile Christians. The credibility of the gospel was at stake so Paul said he "opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned…in the presence of all" (2:11, 14). Fortunately, Peter responded to the rebuke, repented, got back on track and remained a faithful apostle of the church until his death.

This idea of an urgent one-step approach of public confrontation was not invented in the New Testament, nor was it wielded for the first time by Peter and Paul. Its practice and necessity goes all the way back to the Old Testament prophets, who routinely confronted professing saints among the Israelite community calling them to account. One of the most memorable examples is when Nehemiah, governor of Jerusalem, rebuked several Jewish leaders for their compromised ways—they were marrying unbelievers and defiling the sacrificial system God laid down. When Nehemiah found out about it he went ballistic with an inimitable holy rage. In his own words he explains what he did:

In those days I also saw that the Jews ha

> married women from Ashdod, Ammon *and* Moab. As for their children, half spoke in the language of Ashdod, and none of them was able to speak the language of Judah, but the language of his own people. So I contended with them and cursed them and struck some of them and pulled out their hair, and made them swear by God, "You shall not give your daughters to their sons, nor take of their daughters for your sons or for yourselves. Did not Solomon king of Israel sin regarding these things? Yet among the many nations there was no king like him, and he was loved by his God, and God made him king over all Israel; nevertheless the foreign women caused even him to sin. Do we then hear about you that you have committed all this great evil by acting unfaithfully against our God by marrying foreign women?" (Neh 13:23-27).

Nehemiah, the man of God, rebuked them publicly, cursed them (possibly by rehearsing the curses in Deuteronomy 28), struck them and pulled out their hair! Ouch. And then reminded them of what Scripture said on the matter. That is courageous confrontation.

To sum up, the Bible describes five options for dealing with an offense among believers. The first was to cover the offence with love taking no action. Second

was following the four-fold church discipline process laid out by Jesus in Matthew 18:15-17. Then we looked at three unique examples: confronting the factious man in three steps; confronting a sinning elder in two steps; and dealing with a public scandal in one step.

6

JESUS: THE MASTER OF CONFRONTATION

The Prince of Peace

Some Christians think the essence of true spirituality is being conflict-free…or being "nice." All anger, all arguing, all conflict, all confrontation is bad. Many would have us imagine that Jesus was happy all the time, was at peace with everyone, lived as a political pacifist like Gandhi, never got upset or raised His voice and was committed to keeping unity at any cost. Hippies of the 60's and 70's believed the same thing. John Lennon gave the world the song "Imagine" in which he sang, "Imagine…no hell below us…no religion too, Imagine all the people living life in peace." Utopian, idealistic New Age drivel. Buddhism strives for this unrealistic ideal as well. The pacifist doctrine is alive and well in today's world.

Contrast all this thinking with the way Jesus actually lived His life 2,000 years ago. He is the "Prince

of Peace" and the only sinless, perfect person who ever lived, and yet His life, especially His three years of public ministry, were anything but conflict free. An objective look at the four Gospels in the New Testament paints a very different picture of the nature of Jesus' public ministry. He was familiar with conflict, debate, verbal scuffles, exposing error, and rebuking sin on a regular basis, much more than many people realize. As a result, He had an ongoing ministry of confrontation. Consider several examples from the Gospel of John.

Christians often tell inquiring unbelievers and new believers to start their Bible reading with the Gospel of John. This is the case for several reasons. John's Gospel is easy to read, written in a simple Greek style with familiar vocabulary. It is also evangelistic in purpose, so unbelievers clearly see the purpose of Jesus' life and death. And it also has several amazing miracles and unique dialogue that makes the deity of Jesus explicit in a way not expressed in the other three Gospels. But one feature about John's Gospel that is not mentioned much is the amount of conflict that occurs throughout between Jesus and others. Of its twenty-one chapters, Jesus is in a dispute with someone in almost every chapter. It is breathtaking.

John 2

John starts out with Jesus and some of His disciples at a wedding in Cana of Galilee (2:1-2). This is the

beginning of Jesus' public ministry—He was thirty years old. His mother Mary was at the wedding as well, assisting with the food. When they ran out of wine, Mary went to Jesus and said, "They have no wine." Jesus' response to her is startling. He didn't say, "Oh, OK Mother Mary, what do you want Me to do? I'll do whatever you tell Me." Instead, Jesus told her bluntly, "Woman, what do I have to do with you? My hour has not yet come" (2:4). This is how Jesus began His public ministry—putting His mom in her place…or at least it kind of comes off that way. It seems a bit confrontational. The fact is, Jesus was speaking respectfully to her, but He was clearly letting her know there were new parameters of His relationship with her now that He officially began His public ministry as the Messiah. He was no longer just her oldest son. His priority moving forward was the will of His Father in heaven (John 4:34; 5:30; 6:38).

Immediately after this wedding Jesus went to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover. The city was bustling with pilgrims everywhere who came to worship at the Temple. In the Temple area Jewish moneychangers were selling animals for sacrifice primarily to make a buck. Jesus knew this and became disgusted…and outraged by the crass defilement of the holy Temple. So He confronted the moneychangers publicly, on the spot, and with a loud fury. "He made a scourge of chords" (2:15). That means He made a whip! And He started using the whip, whipping the

moneychangers, chasing them out of the Temple along with their animals. But that is not all. "He poured out the coins of the moneychangers, and overturned their tables." He was breaking and throwing stuff around; in public; in broad daylight; in the busiest time of the year of the Jews; with hundreds of spectators watching …probably most of them in shock, never having seen anything like this in their lives. Then He shouted at them saying, "Take these things away; stop making My Father's house a house of merchandise" (2:16). What an incredible scene.

What would happen to you if you went up to someone's lemonade stand on the corner or on the sidewalk and started whipping the person who owned the stand, then you turned their table over and threw their money all over the ground and then yelled at them really loud telling them to leave? People would be afraid of you, call you crazy, and maybe even call the police. This would be a public spectacle of the first order. Well, it was a public spectacle of the first order when Jesus did it. And this is how He began His public ministry as the Messiah! The Jewish leaders witnessed this act and they hated Jesus from day one because He did this. And they would spend the next three and half years figuring out how to kill Him for it.

It is interesting, and significant, that three years later, in the last week of His life, Jesus did it again! After His triumphal entry into Jerusalem during Passover week, the first thing Jesus did upon His arrival was to

go into the Temple and cleanse it again. He went to the moneychangers, overturned their tables and their money boxes, threw their chairs and chased them out of the Temple grounds…and yelled at them, saying, "you are making My house of prayer a robbers' den" (Matt 21:12-14). This time the Jewish leadership would be successful in killing Him for His confrontational preaching and iconoclastic ways. Jesus the peacemaker began and ended His ministry with a scandalous act of confrontation—a loud, open-aired cleansing of the Temple were the bookends of His public ministry.

John 3

In John chapter three Jesus had a nighttime conversation with the preeminent religious teacher in Israel and a ruler of the Jews, a man named Nicodemus (3:1-21). Nicodemus began the conversation by complimenting Jesus for being a good teacher. Jesus' response caught Nicodemus off guard. Jesus did not say, "Oh, thanks for the kind words; I appreciate it; glad you like my teaching." Instead, Jesus told this religious Jew that he needed to get saved! Jesus told him his religion would not cut it, but rather he needed to be born again, born from above, born by the work of the Holy Spirit. Nicodemus questioned Jesus' commands, so Jesus responded with some confrontation. Jesus asked Nicodemus why he was so ignorant about true religion (v. 10). Then Jesus rebuked him for not believing His words (vv. 11-12). And then Jesus closed

with a basic Bible lesson from the Law of Moses, pointing out the ignorance of the great Jewish teacher (vv. 13-15). So although he was at first fascinated with Jesus, it was clear that Nicodemus did not believe in Jesus in accordance with the truth.

This had to be humiliating for Nicodemus. He was not used to someone talking to him this way. But Jesus' confrontation about the truth paid off in time, for after a few years the truth Jesus spoke about the gospel began to sink in with Nicodemus. In John 7 Nicodemus seemed to be sympathetic to the ministry of Jesus while all the other Pharisees rejected Christ's ministry (7:50-52). And when Jesus died, it was Nicodemus who helped Joseph of Arimathea bury Jesus (John 19:38-42). More than likely, three years after first being confronted by Jesus for unbelief, Nicodemus was eventually born again and joined the family of God.

John 4

Next, in John chapter four Jesus confronts an immoral Samaritan woman (4:1-42). The two meet alone at a well in Sychar. It's midday, hot and Jesus is thirsty. Jesus starts the conversation with this outcast stranger by asking her for a drink. The woman is surprised that He, being a Jewish man, would talk with her, a non-Jewish woman. Jesus proceeds to offer her living water, or eternal life. She is at first clueless and thinks He was talking about literal water. The conversation reaches a climax when Jesus finally exposes her sin by saying,

"Go, call your husband" (v. 16). She said she didn't have a husband. Then Jesus confronted the skeleton in the closet of her personal life by saying to her, a complete stranger He just met: "You have well said, 'I have no husband'; for you have had five husbands; and the one whom you now have is not your husband."

Here, Jesus basically called her a prostitute! She was a Samaritan woman. Samaritans supposedly believed in the Law of Moses. Moses condemned adultery with the death penalty (Ex 20). This woman should have been stoned to death four times over. She knew she had been exposed. She felt the guilt and as a result thought maybe Jesus was a prophet with the gift of extra-sensory perception. Jesus continued with His confrontation telling her that she was ignorant about true worship (v. 22). Then He revealed to her that He was the Old Testament Messiah, the great I AM (v. 26). At that comment the woman split the scene and ran to her home town telling everyone that Jesus was the Messiah. As a result, many of the Samaritans in that city believed in Jesus because of the woman's testimony. Jesus courageously spoke truth to her, confronted her sin, and called on her to believe in Him. Instead of being offended when being called out for her sexual escapades upon confrontation, she responded in humility and embraced the truth and as a result received eternal life—the living water that Jesus promised. This scene is a classic example of Jesus' "loving confrontation." It was one of many times when He loved the sinner so much

He had to tell her the truth about her sin that would damn her, and the truth that could set her free.

John 5

In John chapter five Jesus got into a huge skirmish with the Jewish religious leaders because He healed a lame man on the sabbath day (5:1-47). They began to persecute Him for doing miracles on the Sabbath. Jesus did not blow it off, ignore it, run from it or try to compromise with them over their persecution and criticism. He boldly confronted them to their faces saying, "My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working" (v. 17). That infuriated them all the more and so they then tried to kill Him! Jesus countered with a long public rebuke telling them they were not believers (v. 38), that they did not know anything about Scripture (v. 39), that they did not have eternal life (v. 40), that they did not love God (v. 42), that they follow false teachers (v. 43), that they were man-pleasers (v. 44) and that they were spiritually condemned (v. 45). This is the ministry of confrontation in action. Jesus was the Master at it.

John 6

In chapter six things do not calm down. Jesus is in Galilee by the sea and He feeds a multitude with fish and bread (6:1-71). Most in the crowd follow Jesus for free food, not because He was the Savior. So Jesus confronts them for their crass self-centeredness and then declares to the whole massive crowd, "you seek

me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate of the loaves, and were filled" (v. 26). Then He told them that He was "the bread of life" who came down from heaven and so they need to believe in Him. That made them angry. As a result, "The Jews therefore were grumbling about him" (v. 41). Right there on the spot, right after He gave them a free meal, they turned on Him and began to mock Him. Jesus did not back down. He confronted them even more. He quoted from Isaiah and Jeremiah proving that He was the promised Messiah. That just made them "argue" (v. 52) and "grumble" all the more (v. 61). Jesus poured it on even more saying, "no one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him from the Father" (v. 65). As a result of this long public verbal altercation, "many" of Jesus' disciples withdrew and followed Him no more (v. 66).

John 7

In John chapter seven the confrontations continue. At the time of the feast Jesus is laying low in Galilee. His brothers, who were his younger half-siblings, were taunting Him about His claim to be the Messiah. He gave them a terse rebuke: "My time is not yet at hand; but your time is always opportune" (v. 6). This sharp word did not go unnoticed.

A couple years later after Jesus died and rose again, His brothers, James and Jude, would come to believe in Jesus and they were privileged to even write a New Testament epistle each. Jesus' confrontation was

always efficacious, whether it culminated in salvation for those who would believe, or in guilt and greater accountability for those who would reject Him. Jesus ends up going to the feast in Jerusalem and gets into a confrontation at the Temple with the Jews again. They say He is demon possessed! (v. 20). Jesus retorts with, "You shall seek Me, and shall not find Me" (v. 34). The Jews sought all the more to arrest him.

John 8

Confrontation and conflict reach a fever pitch in John chapter eight. Jesus went to the Temple in Jerusalem to teach. He began His teaching by declaring, "I am the light of the world!" (v. 12). That infuriated the Jewish leaders. They rebuked Jesus publicly on the spot, in front of the massive crowds. They shouted, "Your witness is not true." That did not silence Jesus. He went on to give them a tongue-lashing telling them they were ignorant (v. 14), that they were false witnesses (v. 15), that they would die in their sin (v. 21), that they were worldly (v. 23), that they would murder the Messiah (v. 28), that He was the only one who pleased God the Father (v. 29), and that they were slaves of sin (v. 34). They responded in kind by saying He was a bastard child! (v. 41). Jesus countered by telling them they were from Satan himself! The devil was their father (v. 44). So they accused Him again of being demon possessed (v. 48). Jesus answered that by giving the gospel and then He called them liars (v. 55). Then He revealed to

the whole crowed that He was the great I AM—the eternal One (v. 58). With that comment, they picked up stones to stone Him for blasphemy!

John 9-21

We are only at chapter nine now out of twenty-one chapters and there is lots more conflict to highlight, but space does not allow. So a brief summary will suffice to make the point. In John nine Jesus confronts the Pharisees telling them they are spiritually blind and lost in sin (v. 41). In John ten the Jews accuse Jesus for the third time of being demon possessed (v. 20) while He accuses them of unbelief and being without eternal life. They try to stone Him again. In chapter eleven Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead but the Jews respond by trying to arrest Jesus. In chapter twelve Jesus confronts Judas over his love of money.

In chapter thirteen Jesus confronts Peter about his wrong thinking (v. 8) and He confronts Judas the betrayer. In chapter fifteen Jesus warns His apostles that the world hates them (v. 18). In chapter eighteen Jesus confronts the mob who comes to arrest Him, Peter for wielding a sword, the High Priest who arrested Him and Pilate who tried Him. In chapter nineteen Jesus confronts Pilate again and then He is crucified. The Gospel closes in chapter twenty-one with the risen Savior lovingly confronting Peter three times about his commitment to Jesus. Peter gets the lesson and Jesus reinstates him into service to be the head Apostle who

would lead the church which would be born on Pentecost.

Thus concludes our overview of the Gospel of John, highlighting the often-overlooked frequency with which Jesus was involved in holy confrontation with sinners. Jesus came into the world as the Savior, to seek and to save those who were lost because of sin. To save people from their sin, Jesus first had to expose their sin. The way He exposed sin was through confrontation. Sometimes His confrontation was subtle and sometimes it was overt. But it was always done in keeping with truth motivated by love for the sinner and the glory of the Father (John 6:38).

Matthew 23: Fools and Serpents

Space does not permit us to illustrate the many more examples of Christ's ministry of confrontation replete in the other three Gospels, like the classic excoriation He gives the Pharisees in Matthew 23 where He calls them "hypocrites" seven times, as well as blind guides, fools, white-washed tombs, lawless, serpents and sons of hell! (vv. 13-33). And there are countless mild confrontations He makes in a gentle, patient and loving manner towards His Apostles as He trains them for leadership over the course of three years (cf. Luke 11:40; 22:25 ff., 24:45). And finally, some of Jesus' most scathing rebukes are reserved for Christians in the churches of Asia Minor described in Revelation 2 and 3. There, He even threatens to kill people in the church

if they don't repent (Rev 2:16, 22; 3:16). Jesus even says that He manifests His love for His children through "rebuke and discipline" (3:19). Biblical confrontation is loving! The point is simple. Jesus is the model of true, pure, biblical ministry. He had a perfect balance in love for truth and love for sinners. As such, His life serves as the perfect balance of how to navigate the tension between mercy and justice, grace and truth, forgiveness and accountability, confrontation with compassion.

When we go to confront someone, we need to be guided by truth and biblical principles. The model of truth is Jesus Christ, and we can look at how He confronted people in Scripture. Those are the boundaries, and we need to be sure not to go outside these boundaries of confrontation. If you confront someone for the purpose of belittling them, shaming them, embarrassing them, retaliation, revenge, insulting them, or exonerating yourself, you are going outside the margins of biblical truth.

Jesus maintained a perfect balance in confronting sinners; He pursued truth in the context of love. Jesus healed a man who was lame for thirty-eight years (John 5:9). That was sheer love. Jesus also told him after the healing, "do not sin anymore" (5:14). That was undiluted truth. That is difficult for us to do, because we are usually on one end of the spectrum—pursuing only truth, thus coming across as harsh, or interested only in love, thus letting the issue slide with no justice. Jesus struck the perfect balance, right in the middle of

these two extremes—confrontation when necessary, with truth, love, forgiveness, and patience.

CONCLUSION

When was the last time you confronted another Christian? If so, did you do it biblically? Have you gossiped about a fellow Christian lately? Do you find it difficult to confront extended family members because you don't want to upset the apple cart, lose credibility or create a scene? Do you find yourself being overly-critical of your spouse, routinely, with ease? When was the last time you were part of a step two scenario of confronting another believer? Have you ever been part of a step two scenario? Does your view of God and Jesus include the fact that confrontation is a part of God's regular interactions with His people? Do you think confronting someone is unloving or unkind, or "not nice"? Do you find yourself making excuses of why you don't confront a fellow believer when you have an issue with them? Do you talk to your friends about another Christian's faults without talking to that Christian about their faults that irk you so much? Can you think of another believer right now that you have a grudge against or unforgiveness for or a vendetta against…because you have not talked to them personally?

All the above questions come from real Christian living in the day-to-day world. They flow from common scenarios I deal with all the time as a pastor. As a shepherd and elder I spend much time in counseling and damage-control with believers just reminding them to fulfill their obligation of simply doing step one in the Matthew 18 church discipline process—"Just go talk to your brother or sister in Christ, will you?" It's amazing how neglected this discipline is. This book was written to address all these questions on a practical level and to enlighten and encourage all Christians to be about the business of the forgotten, but all-important, spiritual discipline of biblical confrontation. As we do it we will preserve unity in the Body, strengthen our relationships, be a model for others to follow, obey Scripture and glorify God. Continue to ask God and His Spirit for His enabling power to stay faithful in this area (Jude 24-25).

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