

Confront, Forgive, and Forget

If thy brother trespass against thee,
rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him.

- Luke 17:3

It is difficult for most people to confront someone else regarding an offense, but sometimes confrontation is necessary. Ignoring confrontation is often what causes bad feelings to turn inward and fester into something much worse. Those ugly feelings can sit in the pit of a person's stomach, churning away until he becomes so upset that he can hardly see straight.

Usually it's better to kindly say what you feel and get over it than to let those raw emotions turn into an ugly monster, just waiting to crawl out at an opportune moment and attack its victim. That is frequently what happens when you allow ugly emotions to go unchecked. Confrontation may be uncomfortable, but it's a lot less painful than having to apologize later for erupting in a fit of flesh like a volcano that spews destructive lava all over its surroundings.

This is exactly why Jesus said, "...If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him" (Luke 17:3). The word "trespass" is the Greek word hamartano, which means to violate a rule; to cross a line; to commit a grievance; or to miss the mark. By using this word, the Bible teaches you what to do when someone has violated you, crossed a line he shouldn't have crossed, committed what you perceive to be a grievance against you, or seriously missed the mark of what you expected of that person: You are to "rebuke" that person for what he did.

The word "rebuke" is the Greek word epitimao, which in this case means to speak frankly, honestly, and politely as you tell a person how you feel that he has wronged you. This doesn't mean you have to speak to him like he's a devil; it just means you need to directly and honestly confront him. This issue of honesty is a big one in the Body of Christ. Many believers are dishonest about what they really think and feel. Inside they seethe with anger toward someone about a perceived offense. Yet on the outside, they

smile and pretend as if everything is all right. This dishonesty divides believers and keeps God's power from freely flowing between members of the Body of Christ.

Believers put themselves on dangerous territory when they harbor hidden disagreements or secret petty grievances against other people, yet go around smiling and acting as if everything is all right. They're not just being dishonest - they're engaging in outright lying and deception!

When you refuse to confront an offense, you are just as wrong as the one who violated your rights and stepped over the line. Jesus said, "If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him."

(Luke 17:3). That means if you are going to be mature in your relationships, you must learn how to confront others when you feel they have wronged you. It may be difficult to do that, but it's a lot less painful and leaves less scars than does a soul that is filled with bitterness and resentment.

When you have to confront someone regarding an offense that you perceive he has committed against you, I recommend that you take the following three steps:

STEP #1:

Don't confront anyone until you've first made it a matter of prayer.

Prayer resolves a lot of problems by itself. There have been times in my own life when I've been upset with someone, only to discover after getting into the Presence of God and praying about the matter that my own attitude was uglier than the actions of the one who wronged me. Once I recognized my own sinful condition, I couldn't hold a thing against the other person anymore; I just wanted to get my own heart right before God.

Prayer will put you in a position where God can speak to your own heart. After praying, if you still sense that you are supposed to confront the other person, make sure you pray for that person first. The Spirit of God may give you a strategy regarding what to say, as well as when and how to say it.

Believe me, taking directions from the Holy Spirit about how to confront someone will only help you. Confrontation without prayer is like barging into the middle of the fray with no preparation.

Therefore, let prayer be a time of spiritual fine-tuning as you prepare to do what you need to do.

As you pray, spend a few minutes thanking God for your offender. This will help bring you to

a new level so you can deal with the issue at hand in the right spirit.

Remember the good things that person has done. Take time to reflect on all the enjoyable moments you've had with him and all the benefits you've gained in life as a result of that relationship. It's difficult to remain angry at someone when you are thanking God for him at the same time!

STEP #2:

Don't confront anyone with a judgmental attitude.

We've all made mistakes - and that includes you! So assume that your offender would not deliberately hurt or offend you. Take a positive position about the other person.

When you do finally sit down to talk with the person who offended you, start the conversation

by assuring him that you know he didn't intend to do what he did. Tell him that somehow the

devil got into the middle of your relationship with him through his actions - and now you want to get the devil back out of the relationship as you get your heart right with him. This immediately removes any sense of an accusatory spirit and puts the spotlight on the devil instead of on that person. The issues will still be dealt with, but from a different perspective.

Starting from this approach is much more beneficial than taking a defensive approach that treats

the other person as if he were your adversary. Remember, that person is not your enemy; he isn't on the other side of the line, fighting a battle against you. Your relationship may be going through some rough times right now, but you still need to view the two of you as being on the same side. The purpose of this time of confrontation is not to prove how wrong the other person is; it is to learn how to work together better and how to keep the channel of communication open and in the light.

STEP #3:

Remember that you, too, have been offensive in the past.

Never forget that you've probably offended people in the past. You didn't intend to do it. You didn't even know you did it until the person later told you. You were probably embarrassed or sad when you heard how the devil had used some statement you innocently made to leave a wrong impression.

When you were in this type of situation, didn't you want the person you had offended to tell you the truth rather than to walk around harboring bad feelings about you? Weren't you glad when that lie of the devil was exposed and your relationship was made right again? Weren't you thankful for the opportunity to make things right with that other person?

So when someone offends you, remember that you've stood in his shoes in the past. Were you forgiven at that time? Were you shown mercy? Now it's time for you to show the same forgiveness and mercy to someone else that has previously been shown to you.

If you still feel the need to confront the person who offended you after following these three steps, you should now be able to do it with the right attitude.

You have prayed about the matter; you have been in the Presence of the Lord. Now your heart is free, liberated from negative feelings and attitudes toward that person. You are finally in a position to go to him or her in a spirit of love and reconciliation instead of in a spirit of accusation. As Jesus said, "...if he repent, forgive him" (Luke 17:3).

The word "forgive" is the Greek word *aphiemi*. It means to set free; to let go; to release; to discharge; or to liberate completely. It was used in a secular sense in New Testament times in reference to canceling a debt or releasing someone from the obligation of a contract, a commitment, or promise. Thus, it means to forfeit any right to hold a person captive to a previous commitment or wrong he has committed. In essence, the word "forgive" - the Greek word *aphiemi* - is the picture of totally freeing and releasing someone. A modern paraphrase of this Greek word would simply be to let it go!

This means you and I don't have the privilege of holding people hostage to their past actions if they repent and ask us to forgive them. If they sincerely seek forgiveness for offending us, we are obligated to "let it go." If your offender repents and sincerely asks for forgiveness, Jesus said you are to put away the offense and no longer hold on to it. You must release those ugly feelings you've held against that person. You have to let it go!

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- So are you able to let go of the offense that someone has committed against you?
- Are you able to put away that offense once and for all instead of dragging it up again and again?

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Just as God has removed your sin as far as the east is from the west (Psalm 103:12), you must now decide that this person is freed in regard to that past offense. Once you forgive him, you cannot drag up the offense again and again. You have released and liberated him completely from that sin. Therefore, you never have the right or privilege to pull out that offense later and use it against him. It is gone!

My Prayer for Today

Lord, please help me have the courage to lovingly speak to those who have sinned against me. Help me know how to tell them what they did wrong and kindly ask them not to do it again. If they repent and say they are sorry, please help me forgive them for what they did and then release them completely from that grievance, never to bring it up again. Help me put that offense out of my mind forever, just as You have done so many times for me!

I pray this in Jesus' name!

My Confession for Today

*I confess that I am courageous, bold, and loving in the way I confront people who have sinned against me. I do not hold bitterness inside my heart; instead, I politely speak to those who have wronged me so my heart can stay free and they can learn from the experience. God's Spirit is changing me and helping me to speak to my offenders from a gracious, helpful spirit, rather than from a spirit that is bitter and critical. Therefore, the end result of each difficult situation is reconciliation and peace instead of division and discord!
I declare this by faith in Jesus' name!*

Questions for You to Consider

1. Can you think of a time when someone truly forgave you for something wrong you did to him or her? When that person forgave you, what effect did this genuine forgiveness have on your life?
2. Are you able to forgive others as you have been forgiven, or do you find that you

keep reaching into the past to try to drag up those past issues again and again?

3. Who is it that you need to confront and forgive right now?

Why not spend some

time in prayer and get the heart of God for this situation so

you can go to that person

in the spirit of Jesus and make things right in your

relationship with him or her?

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