

## Caring Enough to Confront

### Video - "The Interrogation"

**Introduction - "Church Discipline"**! Those two words conjure up all kinds of **unpleasant images**, don't they? The word "confrontation" is probably one of the most **unpleasant words** of the English language! No one likes confrontation--well, at least **normal people**, anyway! This morning, we're going to look at several passages of Scripture that give us some very **clear instructions** about confrontation. As we study these passages, we're going to ask ourselves the **5 W's and an H**--Who, What, Where, When, Why and How? The title of my message is "**Caring Enough to Confront.**"

First, let me say that the passages we're going to look at deal specifically with conflict that comes as a result of **sin**. Last week, Nathan did an excellent job dealing with our **desires** that often cause conflict. I guess one could **argue** that all conflict is a result of sin--the **original sin** of Adam and Eve, but today we're going to focus on conflict that is the result of a **specific sinful action** by another believer.

Secondly, we're going to spend the majority of our time this morning dealing with **Step One** of the so-called "Church Discipline" which is really a poor name for it. "**Restoration Process**" would probably be a better title because restoration must always be the **goal** of confrontation.

According to Peacemaker Ministries, **90% of all conflict is resolved with a one-on-one confrontation**. That's Step One. **9% of all conflict is resolved at Step Two** where you essentially repeat Step One but with one or two other people with you. That means **only 1% of all conflict ever goes beyond Step Three** to be dealt with in a public forum--and even still, according to how I read my Bible, it should be **nothing like the horror stories** I've heard about with someone being "**churched**." You see, I believe we use this process more often to **kick difficult people out** of the church instead of actually trying to **restore relationships**. Too often, we "write people off." We "wash our hands of them," so to speak. You might say, "Yeah, but the Bible says that we are to **treat them as a pagan or a tax collector**." But let me ask you, **how did Jesus treat pagans and tax collectors?** See Luke 15:1-2. Instead of alienating them and turning our noses up at them, we are to **pursue them** with the love of Christ as we should any unbeliever.

Conflict is a topic that hits pretty **close to home** at Immanuel, isn't it? I wasn't here during those dark days of our church, but I can safely say that **sin** in the life of believers was the **cause** of the conflict our church experienced in the **past**. In fact, if you're experiencing conflict **with someone** right now, it is likely because of **sin**. And conflict among Christians is quite **costly**! Did you know that...

- Born again Christians in the U.S. file **4 to 8 million lawsuits** every year, often against other Christians, costing 20 to 40 billion dollars.
- There are approximately **19,000 major, scarring church conflicts** in the U.S. each year. That's an average of 50 per day! *No wonder we have an exploding population of "**de-churched**" people in our country!*

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- 32% of born again Christians who are currently married have gone through a **divorce**, virtually the same percentage as our general population.
- 1,500 **pastors leave** their assignments every month in the U.S. because of conflict, burnout, or moral failure, costing the church at least \$684 million each year.

*Ken Sande, President of Peacemaker Ministries in "The High Cost of Conflict Among Christians"*

And this says nothing of the cost to the **advancement of the Kingdom of God** or the carnage of **interpersonal relationships** that conflict leaves behind!

If you have your Bible, turn with me to **Matthew 18:15-22**. My Bible has a heading above verse 15 that reads "**Dealing With Sin in the Church**" which is interesting to me, because, at this point, the **church had yet to be formed**. In fact, Jesus had **just unveiled** this brand new concept called "The Church" **2 chapters earlier** in chapter 16, verse 18, when He declares that He will build His Church and the gates of Hell will not prevail against it. Let's begin reading at verse 15...

15 "If your brother sins against you,[a] go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. 16 But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.'[b] 17 If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector.

18 "I tell you the truth, whatever you bind on earth will be[c] bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be[d] loosed in heaven.

19 "Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. 20 For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them."

21 Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?"

22 Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.

### Pray

*Anytime we study a passage of Scripture, it is helpful to **answer the questions**: Who, What, Where, When, Why and How? So, first, according to this passage,*

I. **Who** should be confronted and who should do the confronting? v. 15

A. "**brother**" - means fellow Christian --someone who claims to be a Christ-follower

*It's clear in this passage that we are to **confront fellow Christians** with their sinful behavior. Did you know that Christians are not commanded to confront **non-Christians** about their sinful behavior? We are to confront them with their sinful nature which separates them from God. There is a **difference**! If we confront only the behavior, we are guilty of **legalism** which teaches that it is the behavior that is **offensive** to God and if the offensive behavior is dealt with, then*

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*we are made right with God. That is not the Gospel! Non-Christians are not separated from God because of their sinful behavior. **Romans 6:6-7** tells us that the “old self” or sinful nature causes us to be slaves to sin--sinful behavior. It is only when the “old self” or sinful nature is crucified with Christ that we are set free from sin--sinful behavior.*

*That’s why **I don’t expect Christian behavior from non-Christians**. For instance, I don’t confront non-Christian people about their **language** and I don’t boycott secular **business** because they support things I don’t agree with--but that’s just me! Is a non-Christian who stops using foul language in my presence any more righteous than someone who does? Is a company that doesn’t support the homosexual agenda somehow more righteous than ones that do? Of course not!*

*Colossians 4:5-6 tells us to “be **wise** in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always **full of grace**, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.”*

*Too many times, we get “**offended**” by the **sinful behavior of non-Christians** while we turn a **blind eye to the sinful behavior of Christians**! Guess what--non-Christians don’t have a choice--they are **slaves to sin**! Believers have a **choice**!*

*Let’s move on before I start preaching!*

### B. “you” - means YOU!

*Note who is NOT mentioned at this stage--It doesn’t say “**pastors**” or “**deacons**” should do the confronting. It says **YOU**. This type of confrontation is the **responsibility of every believer**!*

### C. There are some **qualifications** here. Galatians 6:1 which we’ll look at further in a minute, says:

1 Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, **you who are spiritual** should restore him gently...

### D. In other words, the person who confronts must have his/her life **under the control of the Holy Spirit**. We’ll talk more about this when we answer the question “How should we confront?”

## II. Well, **what** should be confronted? v. 15

### A. “sins” - Greek word transliterated “hamartia” that means “to **miss the mark**”

*It is the same word used in **1 John 1:9** - “if we confess our **sins** He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”*

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*Why is it that the predominate sin that we hear being confronted within the church is **sexual** in nature? Obviously, it's a **serious problem** in the church today, but **so is** greed, envy, strife, deceit, gossip, arrogance and disobedience to parents (Romans 1:29-30)? Or hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissension, factions and envy (Galatians 5:19-21)? I'm just sayin'!*

- B. **"against you"** - Greek word "eis" (ace) that means **"to, towards, or among."**

*This word encompasses **more** than just sins done **"against you."** It includes sins done **"among you"** as well.*

- C. In verse 15, "go and show him his **fault**," the word **"fault"** in the Greek is the same word used in **John 16:8** where Jesus is speaking of the role of the Holy Spirit. Jesus said...

8 When he comes, he will **convict** the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment:

*Quite literally, we as **Spirit-controlled believers must lovingly confront sin** in the life of fellow believers much like the **prophet Nathan** confronted David about his sin. In doing so, the **Holy Spirit uses us to convict someone of their sin.***

- D. You might ask, "What if it's **not really a sin**--just something that this person did that really **bothers** me?" This passage specifically deals with **sin issues** and should **not necessarily be applied** to instances where there were irritations, hurt feelings, misunderstandings or unmet expectations that did not involve a specific sin. That is **not to say** that confrontation is **never justified** in those situations, but, it is **beyond the scope** of this passage--specifically, the intentional **process** that is laid out for us to follow.

### III. **Where** should confrontation take place? v. 15

- A. "just between the two of you" - **in private**
- B. The Greek word **"monos"** means **"alone."**
- C. That means you do it someplace that will **not bring anyone else** into the matter.
- D. 1 Peter 4:8:

8 Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of **sins**.

*"**sins**" in this verse is the same word that is used in both Matthew 18:15 and Galatians 6:1. But, "**covers**" does not mean "to turn a blind eye to," "to sweep under the rug," or "glaze over"; but **"to hide, veil or hinder the knowledge of."** Therefore, if we love this person, we must demonstrate it*

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by “**covering**” the person’s sin. In other words, **we don’t tell** anyone else about it! Once it is dealt with, we keep it hidden.

### IV. When should we confront?

- A. This passage does not give us a **time frame** for confrontation--immediately, or after you’ve had a good night’s sleep, etc. But there is an **urgency** about it.
- B. However, it is important to **keep in mind** a few things when timing the confrontation:

- 1. What is my **attitude**? Am I **reacting** out of **hurt, anger, frustration**?

*Confronting at the wrong time can **escalate** the situation. We can return a sinful behavior with a **sinful reaction or overreaction**.*

**Proverbs 15:1** A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.

- 2. Is my **heart** prepared? Do I have the right **motives**?
- 3. Am I confronting this person for **my benefit** (bone to pick, axe to grind) or for **their benefit** (restoration, spiritual healing)?

### V. **Why** should we confront? v 15. Galatians 6:1

- A. We are **commanded** to do so. “**go!**”

*When we observe obvious sin in the life of a fellow believer, we are **obligated** to lovingly confront them.*

- B. Unresolved conflict **always escalates**.

*Peacemaker Ministries has a diagram they call “**The Slippery Slope**” to illustrate what happens when conflict is unresolved.*

*Ken Sande in “The Peacemaker” @2009 Peacemaker Ministries.*

#### 1. **Escape Responses**

- a. **Denial** - One way to escape from a conflict is to pretend that no problem exists. Another way is to refuse to do what should be done to resolve a conflict properly. These responses bring only temporary relief and usually make matters worse.
- b. **Flight** - Another way to escape from a conflict is to run away. This may take the form of ending a friendship, quitting a job, filing for divorce, or leaving a church. Flight may be legitimate in extreme situations (abuse,

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domestic violence, etc.), but in most cases it only postpones a proper solution to the problem.

- c. **Suicide** - When people lose all hope of resolving a conflict, they may seek to escape the situation by attempting to take their own lives. Suicide is never a right way to deal with conflict.

### 2. **Attack** Responses

- a. **Assault** - Some people try to overcome an opponent by using various forms of force or intimidation, such as verbal attacks (including gossip and slander), physical violence, or efforts to damage a person financially or professionally. Such conduct usually escalates conflict.
- b. **Litigation** - Although some conflicts may legitimately be taken before a civil judge, lawsuits usually damage relationships, diminish our Christian witness, and often fail to achieve complete justice. This is why Christians are commanded to make every effort to settle their differences within the church rather than the civil courts (see Matt. 5:25-26; 1 Cor. 6:1-8).
- c. **Murder** - In extreme cases, people may be so desperate to win a dispute that they will try to kill those who oppose them (see Acts 7:54-58). While most people would not actually kill someone, we should never forget that we stand guilty of murder in God's eyes when we harbor anger or contempt in our hearts toward others (see 1 John 3:15; Matt. 5:21-22).

### C. Unresolved conflict **hurts the Body of Christ** - Ephesians 4:1-6

1 As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. 2 Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. 3 Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. 4 There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to one hope when you were called— 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

### D. Resolving conflict **glorifies God**. **How?**

#### 1. We show that we **trust** Him - Proverbs 3:5-6

5 Trust in the LORD with all your heart  
and lean not on your own understanding;  
6 in all your ways acknowledge him,  
and he will make your paths straight.

*Resolving conflict is not easy and should never be undertaken without **God's help**. If we trust Him with our conflict, He promises to help us!*

#### 2. We show that we **love** Him - John 14:15

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15 “If you **love** me, you will **obey** what I command.

*Our obedience to the command to lovingly confront a fellow believer’s sin shows that we love God.*

VI. **How** should we confront? v 15.

*Peacemaker Ministries offers “The Four G’s” when dealing with conflict.*

A. **G**lorify God

*Ask yourself this focusing question: "How can I please and honor the Lord in this situation?"*

B. **G**et the **log** out of your own eye - Matthew 7:1-5; James 4:1-3

*Make sure you are not guilty of the **same sin or worse!** Also, check to be sure the conflict is not a result of a **desire** that has become an **idol** in your own life.*

C. **G**ently restore, Galatians 6:1

1. **Pray** for humility and wisdom
2. **Plan** your words carefully (think of how you would want to be confronted)
3. **Anticipate** likely reactions and plan appropriate responses
4. Choose the **right time and place** (talk in person whenever possible)
5. **Assume the best** about the other person until you have the facts to prove otherwise - Proverbs 18:17

17 The first to present his case seems right,  
till another comes forward and questions him.

6. **Listen** carefully - Proverbs 18:13

13 He who answers before listening—  
that is his folly and his shame.

7. Speak only to **build others up** - Ephesians 4:29

29 Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.

8. Ask for **feedback** from the other person

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### 9. Recognize your limits - **only God can change people**

#### D. **G**o and be reconciled

*Don't **settle** for a superficial truce! Instead, **actively pursue** genuine peace and reconciliation, forgiving the other person just as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you - Ephesians 4:32*

32 Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

*That is the **Gospel** at work in resolving conflict! Making peace with another believer is **living out the Gospel of Jesus Christ** to those who have offended us! We **forgive** because we have been **forgiven**.*

*Make 4 specific commitments:*

- I will not **think about** (dwell on or brood over) this incident
- I will not **bring up** this incident and **use it against** you
- I will not **talk** to others about this incident
- I will not allow this incident to **stand between** us or **hinder** our personal **relationship**

**Application** - Some of you this morning are in **conflict with a fellow believer** over a sin issue either in **their life or your own**, and it is **eating you alive**. Since I began speaking this morning, this situation has been at the **forefront of your mind**. I want to invite you to live out the **ways of Jesus**. His ways are **counter-intuitive**! How could doing such an **uncomfortable thing** like confronting someone **bring peace and healing** to a relationship!?

Two years ago, Suzanne and I had the privilege of planting a church with some friends of ours in the Atlanta area. Our **core group** of 30 or so people began meeting in early **January of 2009**. Then, we held our very first public worship service on **Sunday, March 8th, 2009**. The **very next day**, we had to confront sin in the life of one of the members of our core group--we didn't have formalized church membership in place at that time. Unfortunately, this was not the first time he had been confronted about this particular sin. **Step One had already been done**. Now, we found ourselves as pastors of a new church confronting sin at Step Two. You see, as a brand new church, we had made a **commitment** to live out the counter-intuitive **ways of Jesus**. I wish I could say that the one confrontation was all that was needed to bring about life change. The truth is that **authentic community** with other believers is oftentimes **messy**! It's rarely "**one and done**" when it comes to confrontation. It requires a **commitment to walk with the person** through good times and bad until the person is **fully restored** with God and with you.

**Do you believe** that Jesus can **heal** the conflict you're experiencing? Is He **more than enough** for you? **Nothing is impossible** with Him!



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Some of you are living in **denial**. You're **pretending** that there's no conflict or you're **running** away from it. You're **avoiding** the places you know this person might be. Maybe you come to church praying that they won't be here today. Or maybe you're here at Immanuel and this person attends **another church**. Perhaps it is conflict that has **lingered for years**! Some of you are **attacking** the person--maybe not physically, but you've **talked to other people** about the situation. **Attacking** and **escaping** are always the **wrong responses** to conflict. There is only one right way to deal with conflict--**God's way**.

**Do you care enough to confront?** Maybe you want to **come to the front and pray** for God to give you the **strength** to follow **His ways**. Pray for **wisdom** to lovingly confront the person in such a way that it will bring **healing the relationship** and **peace to your soul**.

Only in a **right relationship** with God can we resolve conflict. Maybe you're here this morning and you don't have a relationship with God. The Bible says that because of our **sin**, we are in **conflict with Him**. You can **be reconciled** to Him **today**. You see, the **basis** for all **reconciliation** is **Christ**. If God can **forgive us**, then **we can forgive others**. But if we haven't been forgiven by God, we don't have the **capacity** to forgive others. We'd love to **show you how** you can resolve the conflict between you and God through accepting the **work of Jesus Christ** on the cross. Don't wait any longer!