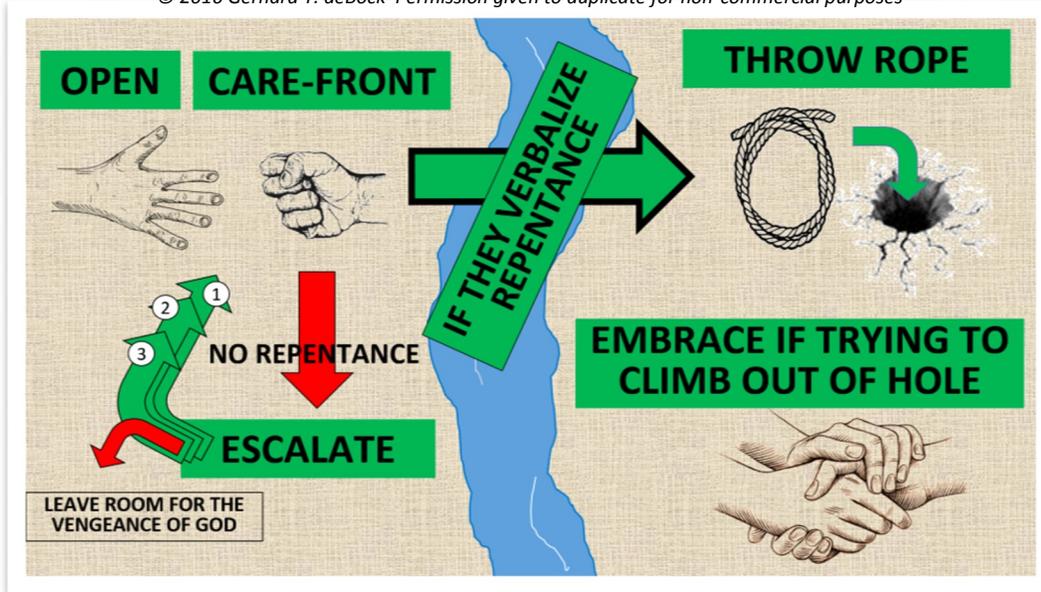


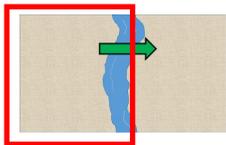
THE MAP OF FORGIVENESS

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BEFORE THERE IS REPENTANCE (Left side of map)

- We are on the left side of the map, not having crossed the river of repentance.
- We must invite someone to repent, getting in the boat and crossing the river with us.
- We cannot force someone to repent. If they do not repent, they remain on the left side of the river. We can live with an “OPEN HAND TO ALL,” but they are not “forgiven” in the sense that their debt is paid. We are NOT “HAND-IN-HAND” with them (on the right side of the river).



DECIDE TO EXTEND AN OPEN HAND

- First, take the log out of our own eye by self-examination.¹
- Then, put in the love by remembering how much we’ve been forgiven.²
- Prayerfully ask the Spirit to help you forgive as you have been forgiven.³



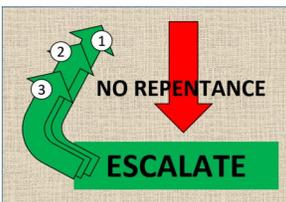
EXTEND AN OPEN HAND BY CARE-FRONTING THE SIN

- It is not enough to “open our hands” in our hearts. We must care enough to confront.
- Take the least threatening posture first (one-on-one).⁴



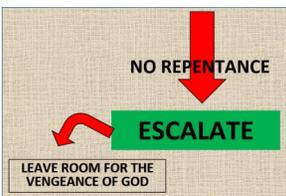
IF NECESSARY, ESCALATE THE CARE-FRONTING

- Be willing to escalate the conflict out of concern for the other’s soul.⁴
- (For professing believers) The final step of escalation is to have the church objectively decide if (1) the other party won’t repent and is acting like an unbeliever, (2) the conflict is not over a sin issue but a judgment call or a miscommunication, or (3) the facts cannot be clearly substantiated and the church is to make a decision on the future course of action for the sake of unity.⁵ Submit to their judgment.
- (For those not professing faith in Christ) Escalate the conflict as possible, moving up to those to whom the erring party is accountable (boss, principal, police, etc.).



DECIDE TO EXTEND AN OPEN HAND

- Turn the other person over to God for judgment.⁶
- Choose to love your enemies⁷ while maintaining wise boundaries that will keep you from unnecessary abuse.



SCRIPTURE REFERENCES:

¹ Matthew 7:1-5

² Luke 7:36-50

³ Ephesians 4:31-5:2

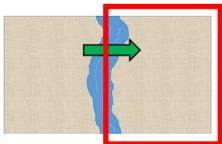
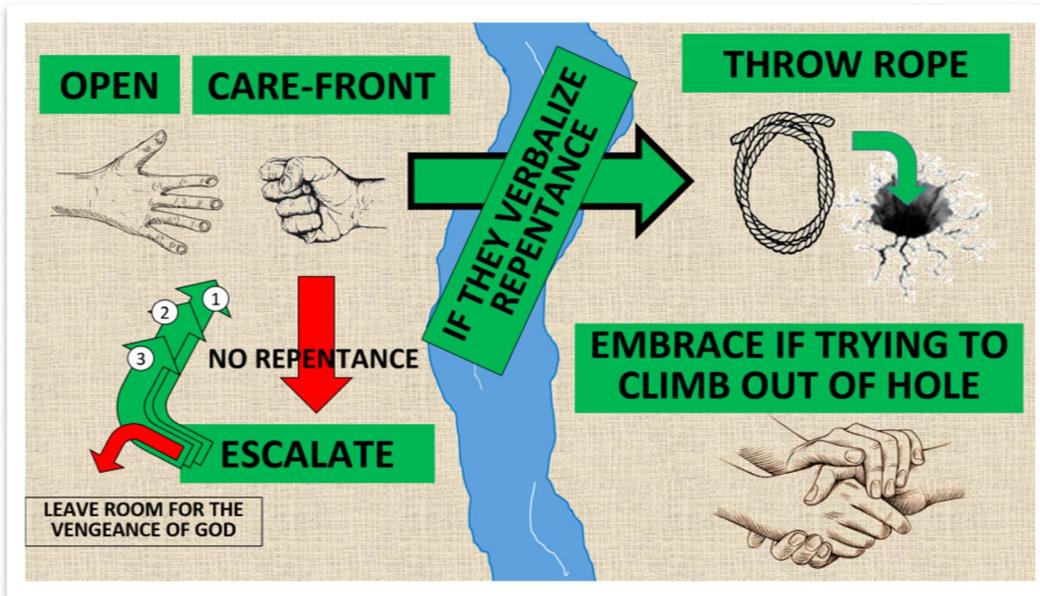
⁴ Matthew 18:15-17

⁵ 1 Corinthians 6:1-8

⁶ Romans 12:14-21

⁷ 1 Peter 2: 22-23

THE MAP OF FORGIVENESS (continued)



AFTER THERE IS VERBALIZED REPENTANCE (*Right side of map*)

- The other party expresses that they are turning from their sin and desire to be forgiven.
- They have accepted our invitation to “get in the boat and cross the river.” We are now moving to the right side of the map.



MAKE THE **DECISION TO FORGIVE**

- As an act of the will, in response to the other party’s verbal commitment to repent (and their act of restitution, if possible).⁸
- This decision includes seeking to restore the judgment of charity*, choosing to now look at the others’ motives with love, and in the best possible light.⁹

WORK THROUGH THE **PROCESS OF FORGIVENESS**

- Throw a rope down the hole, giving the party, who said they repented, a chance to show that they really have. They will either work hard to climb out of the hole or “hang themselves” and show that they really are still on the left side of the river.
- Using the judgment of charity, actively hope for and look for the fruits of repentance (rather than the failures). Affirm the positive.
- Hold the other party responsible for their present actions (failures), without immediately assuming that those actions are evidence that the repentance was not real.
- Keep short accounts of the minor issues. Bear up with the irritants but hold them responsible for the sin issues.¹⁰
- Do not let the sun go down on your anger. Deal with today’s issue while it is still today.¹¹



REJOICE IN COMPLETED FORGIVENESS (**RECONCILIATION**)

- The emotional process is complete when full trust is restored.
- One finds oneself rejoicing in the reconciliation without “actively trying to do so.”
- We rejoice in the other person’s successes.
- We assume the best motives when a circumstance of “suffering” happens between us and the other party.¹²

**The Judgment of Charity is a term for the posture of our hearts towards the motives of another person. This posture entrusts ultimate judgment to God, lowers its self-defenses, and makes a way for reconciliation by choosing to assume the best possible motives. At the same time, it holds individuals responsible for their methods (actions). “Charity” is the old English word for “love.” These decisions of love are reflected in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7.*

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES:

⁸ Luke 17:3-4

⁹ 1 Corinthians 13:4-8

¹⁰ Galatians 6:1-6

¹¹ Ephesians 4:26-27

¹² See how God’s forgiveness

leaves us rejoicing in Romans 5:1-11