

Open your Bibles to Proverbs 27:5-6.

- That's where we'll be starting this morning.
- And the theme we'll be considering today is Godly Confrontation.

Now, when most of us hear the word “confrontation,” some images come to mind.

- We think of red-faced yelling and angry faces.
- We think of passive-aggressive speeches. Of one person simply trying to make another feel bad.
- We often associate “confrontation” with fighting, hostility, and animosity.
- And that's how a lot of confrontation goes.
- And those kinds of attitudes, words, and actions are evil. So we tend to think that confrontation is to be avoided by Christians.

But what if I told you that there was a godly way to confront people?

- That there was a way to address wrongdoing and wrong thinking, in such a way that honors the Lord?
- And what if I told you that confronting others when they persist in sin is something that God actually commands of you?

Now, I'd bet that many of us already know that godly confrontation is commanded in Scripture.

- We usually call it “accountability.”
- But even with that knowledge, we don't always obey the Lord in this area.
- Some of us wouldn't confront a sinner in their sin for anything in the world.

- We don't want to upset people. We like to sweep things under the rug and act like they didn't happen.
- And that's because it's awkward to confront someone. And we don't want to hurt anyone's feelings.
- And we know that sometimes confrontation can end in a destroyed friendship; even when done properly. And we don't want that.

On the other hand, some of us like confrontation a little too much.

- We're quick to criticize. We're quick to put on the robes of a Pharisee and speak harshly, condemn, and look down on others.
- What's worse is that sometimes we're incredibly quick to question someone's profession of faith, as if falling into a particular sin is simply impossible for a real Christian.
- So we're harsh, contentious, always looking for a fight, relishing in the wrongs of others, and showing no gentleness or grace to fellow sinners.

But the Word of God calls us to a third way that neither avoids confrontation, nor takes joy in it.

- It's a way that's neither timid, nor harsh. Neither limp-wristed, nor mean-spirited. Neither spineless, nor graceless.
- In His Word, God calls us to love-induced, gracious, uncompromising, repentance-calling, sinner-restoring, humble, Christ-glorifying confrontation.

So this sermon is meant to be a kind of generic counsel for all of us.

- I won't get into specific kinds of sin or situations.
- Instead, I'll go broad and explain how God directs us to deal with one another when ANY OFFENSE has occurred and the one in the wrong hasn't repented.
- What I plan to say has application to how you should behave if someone has sinned in general, sinned against you, or has strayed into error in doctrine.

But let me add one thing:

- Though this sermon will speak broadly about confrontation, there is a specific element to it.
- I'm going to address how we're to confront our FELLOW CHRISTIANS when they're in sin or error.

And I want to deal with this subject because confrontation has to happen in any church.

- People are going to sin. That's what sinners do.
- And sin must be addressed. If it's not, lives will be destroyed because SIN RUINS EVERYTHING.
- And since confrontation must happen, it's best that we know how God wants us to do it.

My prayer this past week has been that God would use this sermon to show us how to confront one another with real brotherly love.

- Because if that happens, we'll all grow. And our church will remain healthy and get even healthier.
- And, most importantly, our Lord Jesus Christ will be glorified among us.
- So may God bless the preaching of His Word today.

If you would, and are able, please stand with me

now for the reading of the inspired, inerrant, and infallible Word of God.

Proverbs 27:5-6

[5] Better is open rebuke than hidden love.

[6] Faithful are the wounds of a friend; profuse are the kisses of an enemy.

(PRAY)

Our Most Gracious and Merciful God,

•Thank you for another opportunity to sit under the ministry of your Word.

•O, God, would you work in our hearts today as the Word is preached?

•Mold us into the image of your beloved Son, Jesus Christ. Make us more like Him.

•Teach us to speak, think, and love like Him.

•Teach us to love one another, as we've been loved.

•Glorify yourself in the preaching of the Word today.

•And change us that we might honor you in the world.

•We ask these things in Jesus' Name and for His sake.

•Amen.

1.) The first thing I want to show you this morning is that CONFRONTATION IS BIBLICAL.

•To “confront” is to speak to someone in order to address something wrong they've done.

•When we confront a brother, we're addressing sin in his life, showing it to be sin, issuing a rebuke, and calling him to repent and return to the Lord.

- A lot of us have at least halfway believed the lie that this is “sticking your nose in someone else’s business.”
- That people who rebuke you don’t really care about you and are only trying to hurt your feelings.

But let’s consider what the Scripture says.

- “Better is open rebuke than hidden love.”
- “Open rebuke” is speaking plainly about sin.
- Not mincing your words. Speaking openly to the brother in the wrong. Telling him the truth and not skirting around the issue.
- THAT is true love. That’s what a real friend does.

Such a frank rebuke is better than “hidden love.”

- “Hidden love” is the kind of love that never reveals itself in telling someone they’re wrong.
- Love that remains silent when your brother is in sin, is HIDDEN love. It can’t be seen. You may really care about the brother. But you’re not showing it.

So this Proverb teaches that love that shows itself is love that confronts when someone is in the wrong.

- Catch this: It’s better to be loved with a rebuke than by someone silently letting you continue unchecked in sin.
- Why? Because sin ruins everything. Sin destroys.
- Some love in such a way that they won’t risk offending others for fear that they’ll lose a friendship.
- BUT OPEN REBUKE IS BETTER LOVE.

Consider the words of the other Proverb:

- “Faithful are the wounds of a friend; profuse are the

kisses of an enemy.”

- The wounds of a friend are faithful. They're intended for your good.

- A real friend is one who will wound you, if that's what you need. Like a surgeon who wounds in order to heal.

- The real friend is one who will tell you hard things. But they do so because they love you and intend to help you.

- I think we'd all agree that IT HURTS to have your sin pointed out.

- Rebuke can cut like a knife. But a godly friend is one who is willing to talk to you about your life.

On the other hand, an enemy will do nothing but kiss you. Make you feel good about yourself.

- A person who never points out your sin is not your friend. If someone just lets you go your own way, to your own harm, they're not your friend.

- If it's all kisses and no wounds, that person doesn't care about you.

- How do I know that? Because YOU AREN'T PERFECT. Sinners NEED correcting. Even the godliest saint needs correction.

Please, hear me: If you don't have anyone in your life who will confront you, then you don't have any friends.

- Not godly friends, anyway.

So the principle is clear: Confrontation is good.

- It's healthy. It's loving. It's a mark of true brotherly love.

- Being rebuked, corrected, and called to repentance is

good for all of us.

- But let me add a caveat: It's good for us...WHEN IT'S DONE IN A GODLY WAY.

2.) So the question is this: How do you confront in a godly way?

- I have seven things I'd like to set before you today.

The first element of godly confrontation is the MOTIVATION for it.

- You must first ask yourself, "WHY am I going to confront?" And the answer must be LOVE.

1 Corinthians 16:14 says, "Let all that you do be done in love."

- That's a universal statement. So it includes rebuke.

- Or Matthew 18:15: "If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother."

- The purpose of confrontation is to regain your brother. And you want to regain him because you love him.

- Or John 13:34: "...just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another."

- One of the ways our Lord Jesus loves us is through rebuke and correction. So our motivation must also be love, if we're to obey His commandment.

In true religion, it's not enough to just DO the right thing. You've got to do the right thing for the right reason.

- And love is the proper motive.

- You confront because you want your brother to

repent.

- You want this relationship to be restored.
- You want this sister to think rightly about God, and the world, and her life.
- You want this brother to live in the way that is most conducive to his joy in Christ and the good of his soul.

LOVE, wanting wants best for another, is why we confront.

• It's not for revenge. It's not because we're self-righteous and proud. It's not done out of a love for "busting people." It's not done to make yourself look better by comparison.

• LOVE FOR THE ONE IN THE WRONG is why we confront. It must be because YOU CARE!

• Think about this: Why else should you be willing to get involved in someone else's life?

- Why should you risk them being angry with you?
- Why should you risk a destroyed friendship?
- It's because you love them that you're willing to risk these things!

Leviticus 19:17 is really powerful to this point:

• "You shall not hate your brother in your heart, but you shall reason frankly with your neighbor, lest you incur sin because of him."

• To not confront ("reason frankly") is actually hating your brother in your heart.

• Why? Because the one in sin will hurt himself by his sin!

• So instead of silently hating, and thereby incurring sin yourself, you are to openly love him by speaking to him

about his sin.

So, brothers and sisters, let me say this: Without love, DON'T CONFRONT.

- Because without love, you're just fault-finding and being an accuser of the brethren, like Satan.

- If you have no love for the one in sin, then you should keep your mouth shut.

- Because without love, you're not trying to actually help. You're speaking out of some sinful motivation. (Usually it's anger or self-righteousness.)

- You should only open your mouth when you can sincerely say, "I just want to help."

- There have been too many Christians deeply wounded by loveless confrontations.

Now, some of you might hear that and think, with regard to certain people in your life, "Well, I guess I just won't say anything, then."

- NO. That's not really an option, either. Because you're commanded to love your brother.

- Your hatred doesn't excuse you from obedience.

- Instead, you must first repent of your hard-heartedness. And then you must love your brother and go to him.

Brothers and sisters, remember that it must be LOVE that drives you to open your mouth.

- Nothing less will do. Nothing less will actually help.

- It must be love that compels you to try to help your brother out of sin.

- So before you go to him, hang back, pray earnestly for

God's help, and LOVE.

3.) The second element of godly confrontation is your POSTURE.

- This is what you're consciously remembering before and during the conversation.

1. This has to be in your head: "I'm dealing with a Christian."

- This is your brother. He has made a credible profession of faith, received baptism, and is a member of the church.

- As far as any man can tell, you're dealing with a Christian.

And I say this because sometimes we think that a REAL Christian won't commit certain sins.

- So if we find out that a brother or sister has committed some kind of sexual sin, has been a hypocrite in some way, has lied, stolen, or some other grievous sin, we sometimes might immediately question their entire profession of faith.

- And that IS NOT BIBLICAL.

- True believers can commit truly terrible sins. And they're still true believers. They will eventually repent.

- Adultery: King David

- Drunkenness: Noah

- Lying and stealing: Jacob

- Temporary Apostasy: Peter

- Hypocrisy: Peter

I'm not excusing sin. I'm just pointing out that true

believers sometimes commit terrible sins.

•So whatever the sin is that needs addressed, you can't automatically assume that the sinner is a false professor.

I'm a firm believer that we must keep a category of "Corinthian" in our minds.

- Think on the Apostle Paul's letters to the Corinthians.
- They had a man in the church who was sleeping with the wife of his deceased father. (His step-mother.)
- They were getting drunk at the Lord's Supper.
- They were dividing over preferred ministers.
- They were participating in idol worship at temples.
- Some were rejecting the Apostle's authority.
- Their worship services were full of chaos and disorder.
- They had a lot of sin that needed dealt with.

But listen to how the Apostle dealt with them:

•"To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours:

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus...so that you are not lacking in any gift, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. I appeal to you, brothers..."

(1 Corinthians 1:2-4, 7-9, 10a)

Paul dealt with them as CHRISTIANS!

- He dealt with them according to their profession.
- They hadn't been disciplined out of the church. So they were to be counted as brothers.

Brothers and sisters, you don't go to the one in sin thinking, "They're probably not even saved."

- Such an attitude runs RAMPANT in some Reformed circles. But it ought not be so among us.

And you don't approach assuming the worst. That the conversation will go badly and the brother won't listen.

- You should give your brother the benefit of the doubt that he'll listen and repent.
- Why? Because HE IS A CHRISTIAN!
- You should charitably believe that he has the Spirit of God dwelling in him and will listen to the Word of God.

And you don't come thinking, "Well, if she doesn't listen, then she must be a hypocrite."

- Friend, how often do you immediately listen to the Lord?
- Aren't you often slow to listen and obey?
- Don't be so fast to kick someone out of the Kingdom.
- Remember to be patient. And come hoping and praying for the best in them, as God works through you.

2. And you must also remember that you're a sinner yourself.

- Think on your own past sins that once grabbed you by the throat and wouldn't let go.
- Remember how you've fallen far at times and sinned horribly.
- Consider the sins you're currently wrestling with.
- Humble yourself before you go. Consciously remind yourself that you're just like them in many ways.
- That you're in need of God's grace and correction just as much as they are right now.
- Knock yourself down a peg or two before you speak.
- A humble attitude is necessary to godly confrontation.
- You're just a weak and needy sinner telling another sinner where to find help and forgiveness.

4.) The third element of godly confrontation is APPROACH: How you make contact with the one in sin.

- Where do you start? How should you speak?
1. First, go privately if you can, and if it's appropriate.
 - Some things must be confronted publicly before the whole church. But that's often not the case.
 - Remember in Matthew 18:15, our Lord tells us to "go and tell him his fault, between you and him ALONE."
 - The purpose of confrontation IS NOT to embarrass or ruin reputations.
 - The purpose is to see the sinner repent and live for the glory of God and the good of his own soul.
 - So our instinct should be to rebuke privately.

Think about this: Embarrassed people rarely listen.

- If someone thinks you're trying to humiliate or hurt

them, they're not going to listen to you.

- So you should approach in such a way that it's apparent that you're doing this in love.

2. Second, don't go straight for the rebuke. Instead, start with praise, so long as it's honest.

- Tell the brother what good you see in his life.

Encourage him, that he really is a Christian.

- Tell of the growth you've witnessed. The love for Christ and His People that you see in him.

- Start there. And then move to correct.

This is the example of Christ and His Apostles.

- Think of the Apostles' letters. How do they usually go?

- “Hey. It's Paul. Grace and peace to you. I pray for you. I thank God that you've come to know Him through Christ. I see your love for God and one another. NOW, there are some problems that need addressed.”

- Or think of Christ's letters to the Seven Churches in Revelation 2-3.

- Three of those letters go like this: “This letter is from the Lord Jesus. I see this good in you. **‘But this I have against you.’**”

That's not manipulation or flattery.

- That's just fair. It's recognizing the work of God and attempting to encourage the brother before you say something you know is going to hurt.

- And it's practical, as well as biblical: People are more likely to give you a hearing if you approach this way.

- Why? Because you're making it clear from the start that **YOU ARE NOT AN ENEMY!**

- You're showing yourself to be a brother who loves them.

Approaching this way lets the brother know that you don't view him as the sum total of his sin.

- You're telling him, "I view you as a WHOLE PERSON, even though this needs addressed and you need to repent."

- And that's the way it ought to be. We can't view brothers only in light of their sin. Because Christ doesn't!

3. Third, be gentle and gracious.

- Galatians 6:1 says, "Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of GENTLENESS..."

- Don't be harsh. Don't go for the throat.

- You can be firm about the truth while still being gracious and gentle.

- Inflammatory and intentionally shaming language is NOT NECESSARY for confrontation.

- Now, people are going to be ashamed of their sin. That's actually good. But let the Holy Spirit produce godly shame and sorrow that leads to repentance.

- There's a world of difference between feeling stupid and sorrowing for sin. And only God can cause the latter.

- So have a gentle disposition with the sinner.

Now, this doesn't mean that you'll never have to get sharp in your speech.

- It's not intrinsically sinful to be quite pointed in your language.

- But don't start there. Start, assuming the brother only needs a gentle nudge to be brought to repentance.
- And then go from there.
- To the hard-hearted and stiff-necked, we become more pointed in our rebukes.
- But to the broken, we speak as to little children.
- Remember how our Lord Jesus spoke differently to the Pharisees than the weeping prostitute.

5.) The fourth element of godly confrontation is the SCRIPTURES.

- Friends, BRING THE BOOK.
- 2 Timothy 3:16 says, "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness..."
- The Bible is profitable for reproof and correction. So you must bring it with you when confronting others.

Hear me: Your opinion doesn't really matter when we're talking about sin and righteousness.

- Only God's opinion matters on these things.
- You don't have the authority to determine what is and isn't sin. So you have no authority here.

And this gets forgotten by a lot of Christians.

- We'll approach one another without Scripture and, even if what we're saying is biblical, we speak as if we should be listened to in our own right. As if we have anything helpful to say or any legitimate authority to command!
- That's just silly. We're fallible, sinful men. Who should listen to us about such weighty matters?

- Friends, not even the Elders of a church have intrinsic authority.

- All authority within the Church is derived from the Word of God because Jesus Christ is Head of the Church.

So bring the Book!

- Bring specific texts that are relevant to the sin that needs addressed.

- The meat of godly confrontation should be, “Sister, let’s see what God says about this.”

- Without an open Bible, your brother or sister has every right to ignore you. Because it seems that you’re just bringing your own fallible opinion.

- So bring the Book!

6.) The fifth element of godly confrontation is STRAIGHTFORWARDNESS.

- We must be bold and not mince our words. We mustn’t be vague or squishy.

- We must speak honestly and not be cowards.

As Leviticus 19:17 says, you are to “reason frankly with your neighbor.”

- Or as Jesus said in Matthew 18:15, “...tell him his fault.”

- That’s quite simple and clear. Be straightforward about the sin.

- Speak what you know to be true. Tell what you saw or heard. Don’t beat around the bush.

- And call sin what it is: SIN.

- Don’t baby talk this stuff. Don’t try to soften the blow.

Speak clearly. Reason frankly with your brother.

- Don't make him guess. Don't bring vague accusations of vague sins. Be specific. Tell him his fault.

And bring examples, too. Bring evidence.

- The Bible views evidence as important in matters of wrongdoing.

- Every charge of sin needs evidence.

- Without specificity or examples, you have no grounds to confront someone about sin.

- Without them, the one you're confronting has every right to ignore you because your accusation is groundless.

Friends, if the goal of confrontation is repentance, restoration, and godliness, then sin must be named and proven.

- The sinner must be convinced that he's sinned.

- How can someone repent if they don't know what sin they're repenting of?

- How can you strive for reformation in your life if you don't know what needs reformed?

- And how can you be brought to repentance if you don't know whether or not you sinned?

- So be straightforward. Name the sin. Bring evidence. Pray for boldness. And don't be a coward.

- Love for the one caught in sin will make you bold.

7.) The sixth element of godly confrontation is a CLEAR CALL TO REPENTANCE.

- There's a six-letter word that many Christians have never said to someone: Repent.

- We confront others, but then think the job is done once the sin has been exposed. But it's not.

- That's just groundwork for what we're after. We're after godly repentance. Turning from the sin and back to the Lord. That's the whole point!

Consider how simple and clear our Lord is in Revelation 3:19:

- “Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and REPENT.”

- That's how we should be after we've proven sin in the life of our brother: Simple, plain, and clear. A direct call to repent.

- “Brother, you must repent of this. You must forsake this sin in your heart immediately. You must turn back to Christ and seek His forgiveness. And after, you must take some kind of steps to try to keep from this sin in the future.”

I beg you, don't just point out the sin and then leave.

- We're after a return to Christ! We're after a renewed obedience! We're after forgiveness for our brother!

- So we're to call for immediate action.

- We have to “put legs” on our confrontation and issue the command to repent.

And, might I add, if there is some kind of change that needs to happen, offer help.

- If accountability is necessary, offer it.

- If a hard conversation with a third party is necessary, offer to coach them through it and pray with them.

- Whatever is necessary, be like Christ, who doesn't just call us to repent but also says, "And I'll walk with you and help you because I love you."

- Remember, this is all motivated by love. So love them to the end of the problem.

8.) The final element of godly confrontation is so crucial if we're going to do this properly: REMIND THEM OF THE GOSPEL.

- Christian, I beg you, don't leave a brother hopeless. Don't leave a sister in the dirt.

- Having sin pointed out in all its filthiness is a hard thing to receive.

- So much shame, guilt, feelings of dirtiness.

- It's those times that Satan would capitalize on and beat your wounded brother into the ground.

- So bind up his wounds with the Gospel!

- Remind him of the mercy of God in Christ!

Hear the Word of God this morning:

- "Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy." (Proverbs 28:13)

- "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:8-19)

- "My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world." (1 John 2:1-2)

As you must faithfully wound your friend, be just as faithful to mend those wounds with the Gospel.

- Tell of how Christ died for ALL THE SINS of His People.
- How God promises to forgive those who repent.
- That, in Christ, he is God's child.
- That God will not cast him out of the family room and back into the courtroom.
- That Christ is the Rock of Ages in whom we can hide.
- That God's grace is greater than all our sin.
- That it's Christ's righteousness that justifies us, and not our own.
- That God has no more wrath for the believer. Because Christ has suffered it in our place.
- That there is no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus.
- That perfection isn't the mark of the Christian. But repentance and faith are!
- That Christ lived, died, and was raised that he might be free from this sin.
- That God has saved us from our past ways of life.
- That the redeemed of God are not who we once were.
- That God will never abandon His People. But will finish what He has begun!

My dear friends, encourage your brother with these things!

- Encourage your brother with the Gospel!
- Declare that blessed message again and again, from every angle you can, until the wound is healed and the sinner restored to the joy of salvation!

9.) Brothers and sisters, there is much more that I'd like to say, but I don't have time this morning.

•So let me end with this: Love one another.

Love your brother enough to confront him.

•Love your brother enough to listen when he confronts you.

•Love your brother enough to not confront him to death, allowing room for preferences, liberty, and the fact that even the best of us can act out of character at times.

•And love your brother so fiercely that apathy and the fear of man melt away.

May God help us to help each other, that He might be glorified in us all.

•Amen.