

1 Timothy 5:1-2

Introduction

1. In many ways, the church at Ephesus was dysfunctional
 - a. There were elders and leaders engaging in speculation and fruitless discussions which resulted in false teaching involving strange doctrines, myths, and legalism
 - b. There was wrath and dissention among some of the men
 - c. Some of the women were dressing and behaving immodestly
 - d. There was a problem with leadership and authority in the church:
 - 1) Women were teaching and exercising authority over men
 - 2) Individuals were apparently serving as elders and deacons when they weren't qualified (this may explain why Paul provides qualifications for elders and deacons)
 - 3) Some of these were apparently also using their positions and teaching for financial gain, attempting to get rich
2. Paul left Timothy at Ephesus to address...and correct...these issues
 - a. This would involve a certain amount of confrontation on Timothy's part
 - b. As we can imagine, some of these confrontations might have gone well, but others certainly would have been more challenging and may not have gone so well
 - c. Paul himself faced pushback with a couple of false teachers who refused to repent; he named these men—Hymenaeus and Alexander—and even said he had to hand them over to Satan so they would learn not to blaspheme God (1 Timothy 1:20)
3. According to the Bible, there is a right way and a wrong way to confront other believers over sin and that is the topic of our passage today:
 - a. Let me start with an example of the WRONG way:

Rick and Nancy confronting me over music at celebration service

- b. In 1 Timothy 5:1-2, Paul instructs Timothy on the RIGHT way to confront others over sin
 - c. What Paul shares is a very simple principle, and it's one that's laid out throughout the Scriptures so we are going to spend some time looking at other passages as well
 - d. Paul's instructions to Timothy on how to confront others follows on the heels of his discussion from last week on the disciplines and duties of a good shepherd, and one of these was to be an example to the flock
 - e. This includes being an example on how to confront others over sin in a Christ-like fashion
4. Before we look at this simple principle I think it's important to lay down a foundation so our outline for today is as follows:
 - a. First, we're going to look at the NEED for confrontation
 - b. Next, we're going to look at the GOALS of confrontation
 - c. Finally, we're going to look at the PRACTICE of confrontation

A. The NEED for Confrontation

1. The need for confrontation is based on one very simple fact: saints still sin and we don't always deal with sin on our own
 - a. One of the roles of the Holy Spirit is to convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment, and I would argue this applies to believers as well (READ John 16:7-11)
 - b. This ministry of the Holy Spirit in our lives is often all it takes to convict us and cause us to address our sin
 - c. However, it seems we don't always listen to or submit to the Holy Spirit and this is where confrontation by our brothers and sisters in Christ comes in

2. The Bible actually commands us to confront one another when sin is involved:
 - a. In Luke 17:3 Jesus said, **"Be on your guard! If your brother sins, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him."**
 - b. In Matthew 18:15, Jesus said, **"If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother."**
 - c. In 1 Thessalonians 5:14 Paul wrote, **"We urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone."**
 - d. In Galatians 6:1, Paul wrote, **"Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness..."**

3. So, we are obligated to confront one another when it is necessary, but there are two extremes we need to avoid:
 - a. The first extreme is those who refuse to confront:
 - 1) Sometimes it's because they don't like conflict

Father of young man at my first church who broke out all the windows in the house
 - 2) At other times it's because they don't feel it's their place; they may say, "Who am I to judge?" or "I'm not perfect" or even "I'm not the Holy Spirit"
 - 3) Sometimes they're afraid of the reaction or response they'll receive (especially if the temperament of the one being confronted isn't all that pleasant or Christ-like)
 - 4) Sometimes it's simply because they don't care
 - b. The other extreme is those who seem to love confrontation and confront over non-sin issues:
 - 1) The Bible doesn't tell us to confront each other over things we don't like, things we disagree with, differences of opinion, etc.
 - 2) Unfortunately, we probably all know people who seem to relish in confronting others at every opportunity and love to point out the "sins" of others (I know a few)
 - 3) Before we confront someone and accuse them of sin, we ought to be able to identify the sin Biblically (at least in principle, but better yet with chapter and verse)
 - 4) This doesn't mean we shouldn't approach others with non-sin issues or things that bother us because that's simply part of building and maintain good relationships
 - 5) However, this is different than confronting someone and accusing them of sin

B. The GOALS of Confrontation

1. I refer to the goals—plural—here because there isn't just one goal when it comes to confrontation
2. In many of the passages we've already covered we see a number of goals:
 - a. One goal is repentance (Luke 17:3): **"Be on your guard! If your brother sins, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him."**
 - b. A second goal is to restore a broken relationship with another believer (Matthew 18:15): **"If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother."**
 - c. A third goal is to address unruly or divisive behavior within the church:
 - 1) 1 Thessalonians 5:14: **"We urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone."**
 - 2) Titus 3:10: **"Reject a factious man after a first and second warning, knowing that such a man is perverted and is sinning, being self-condemned."**
 - d. Believe it or not, in some situations, a fourth goal of confrontation might be to save another believer from death (READ James 5:19):
 - 1) James refers to **"any among you"** straying from the truth which suggests Christians (or at least professing Christians)
 - 2) He says that turning this one who sins from the error of his way saves his soul (life?) from death and covers a multitude of sins
 - 3) Paul may have been referring to this in 1 Corinthians 5:5 when he handed an unrepentant man over to Satan for the destruction of his flesh in order to save his soul in the day of the Lord, and when he said that some at Corinth had died as a result of abusing the Lord's supper (1 Corinthians 11:30)
3. The one thread that runs through all of these passages is the concept of RESTORATION and that is ultimately THE goal of confrontation: when someone is confronted over sin and repents, it leads to restoration with God, restoration with other believers, and restoration of order within the Church
4. We're going to see this now as we go back to 1 Timothy 5:1-2 and a few other passages to see what the Bible says about the PRACTICE of confrontation

C. The PRACTICE of Confrontation (1 Timothy 5:1-2)
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I'm going to lay out four principles that exemplify the practice of Biblical confrontation beginning with 1 Timothy 5:1-2, but then looking at a few more verses

1. The first principle of confrontation is that we are to appeal rather than sharply rebuke (READ 5:1-2):
 - a. Paul's instructions to Timothy began with a warning against rebuking others **"sharply"**:
 - 1) As we can tell from the structure of these two verses, the two verbs "rebuke" and "appeal" apply to all four groups: older men, younger men, older women, and younger women
 - 2) In English, to rebuke someone means to express strong disapproval or criticism for their improper or acceptable behavior
 - 3) There are a variety of Greek words with a range of nuanced meanings that are all translated as rebuke in the NT:

- a) Some refer to simply pointing out improper or unacceptable behavior—and the Bible instructs us to do this
 - b) Others are a little stronger and refer to admonishment or chastisement—the Bible also instructs us to do this
 - c) And then there are the words like the one Paul uses here and :
 - In a literal or strict sense, it refers to striking or beating someone;
 - It's used only one time, here, in the NT and Paul is using it metaphorically to express strong disapproval as a type of punishment
 - It's similar to the word used in Mark 14:5 when the disciples were “**scolding**” the woman who poured expensive perfume over Jesus’ head
 - We can rightly describe these later two types of rebuke as giving someone verbal beat-down or brow-beating, and Paul warns Timothy to avoid rebuking others in this way
- b. Rather than sharply rebuking others, Paul called on Timothy to “**appeal**” to them:
- 1) This word for appeal means to ask for, request, or plead earnestly for something, and it's often translated as appeal, implore, exhort, and encourage in the Bible
 - 2) Paul gives us a glimpse into what this looks like:
 - a) Timothy was to appeal to older men and women as “**fathers**” and “**mothers**” bringing to mind the Bible's commands to honor one's parents
 - b) He was to appeal to younger men and women as “**brothers**” and “**sisters**” once again alluding to family relationships
2. The second principle of confrontation is that we are to correct with gentleness (READ 2 Timothy 2:24-26):
- a. Paul uses two words here that are critically important
 - b. The first is “**correct**” which means to provide instruction—Biblical confrontation isn't just telling someone what they are doing wrong; it involves teaching them what's right (this is something we did when we disciplined out children)
 - c. The second word is “**gentleness**” and for emphasis Paul places this before the verb (lit. “**in gentleness correcting those who are in opposition...**”

***The next two principles come from probably the most important passage on confrontation (turn to Galatians 6):

3. The third principle of confrontation is that our goal should be restoration not punishment (READ Galatians 6:1a):
- a. We see this same principle in Matthew 18 when Jesus said, “**if he [the one who sinned] listens to you, you have won your brother.**”
 - b. We also see it in the 2 Timothy 2 passage we just covered when Paul wrote, “**perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth,**”
4. The forth principle of confrontation is that we should do it with humility (READ Galatians 6:1b-4)

***For the final principle we are going to turn back to one of the last things Paul wrote to Timothy

5. The fifth principle of confrontation is that it should be grounded in the Word of God (READ 2 Timothy 3:16-4:2):

- a. Paul writes that the Word of God is “**profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness**”—e.g. what’s right, what’s wrong, how to get right, and how to stay right
- b. Therefore, he encouraged Timothy to not only “**preach the Word**” but to “**reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with great patience and instruction**”
- c. This is critical, folks: it is the Word of God that not only gives us the authority to confront one another over sin, but it defines what kind of behavior ought to be confronted and even what kind of behavior to replace it with!
- d. I’d like to close with this: as a practical matter, when I feel the need to confront someone I ask myself what Bible passages can I turn to that not only identify the behavior as sin but offer help and hope in dealing with it
- e. This does two things:
 - 1) It holds me accountable by ensuring that I’m confronting sin and not just something I dislike, and forces me to examine whether I am guilty of the same thing
 - 2) It reminds me that it’s the Holy Spirit through the Word of God that is responsible for convicting the one caught in sin; not me or my words