

Dealing with Sin in the Church

Confronting Sin

Problematic Ways of Handling Unrepented Sins

1. Resentment
2. Gossip
3. Triangulation
4. Lobbying
5. Calling out

Overlooking an Offense?

1. An important Biblical category (Proverbs 19:11)
2. Considerations:
 - a. Severity
 - b. Scope
 - c. Impact

Overlooking offenses is appropriate under two conditions. First, the offense should not have created a wall between you and the other person or caused you to feel differently toward him or her for more than a short period of time. Second, the offense should not be causing serious harm to God's reputation, to others, or to the offender.

❖ Ken Sande, *The Peacemaker*

Importance of Confronting Sin

1. Love for God (*Proverbs 3:11-12*)
2. Love for the church (cf. *1 Corinthians 5* below)
3. Love for the sinner (*Galatians 6:1; James 5:19-20; Proverbs 25:12*)

The Starting Place: Our Own Hearts (*Matthew 7:1-5*)

1. Importance of self-reflection
2. Faithful wounding (*Psalms 141:5; Proverbs 9:7-8; 19:25; 27:5-6; 28:23; Ecclesiastes 7:5*)
3. Giving over revenge to God (*Leviticus 19:17*)
****Confronting another person well is never easy!*

The General Practice (*Luke 17:3; Matthew 18:15-20*)

1. History of interpretation
2. Considering the treatment of commands
 - a. Laws have exceptions (even the Ten Commandments), examples:
 - 1) Jesus on the Sabbath (*Matthew 12:1-21*)
 - 2) Jesus on honoring your father and mother (*Matthew 10:34-39*)
 - b. The underlying logic of the law is important to understand!
****Warning: We need to find the logic clearly in Scripture, not invent the logic ourselves!*
3. Process
 - a. Context:
 - 1) Children as examples for faith
 - 2) Protecting "little ones" from stumbling – *the key to figuring out exceptions!*
 - b. Confrontation
 - 1) Private confrontation
 - 2) Witness to the confrontation
 - 3) Giving it to elders (cf. *Matthew 16:17-19*)

The question is not whether such conflict can be eliminated, but how his followers are to deal with conflict. He assumes that conflict is not to be ignored or denied, but rather conflict, which may involve sins, is to be forced into the open. Christian discipleship requires confrontation because the peace that Jesus has established is not simply the absence of violence. The peace of Christ is nonviolent precisely because it is based on truth and truth-telling. Just as love without truth cannot help but be accursed, so peace between the brothers and sisters of Jesus must be without illusion.

❖ Stanley Hauerwas, *Matthew*

Some Exceptional Situations

1. Remembering the scoffer & the wicked (*Proverbs 9:7-8*)
2. What puts someone in a vulnerable position?
 - a. Private or public offense?
 - b. Positions of authority
 - c. Potentially dangerous situations
 - d. Severe emotional/psychological distress
 - e. Habitual nature of the offense
3. Clear situations:
 - a. Domestic abuse
 - b. Sexual assault
 - c. Violent crimes
4. Wise counsel might be needed in other situations!

Church Discipline (1 Corinthians 5)

1. Why does it matter?
 - a. Glory of God
 - b. Purity of the church
 - c. Repentance of the sinner
2. How it works (at least in the PCA)?
 - a. Church power is “only ministerial and declarative”
 - b. Reports to the session (or the presbytery in the case of ministers)
 - c. Investigation and possible trial
 - d. Censures available:
 - 1) Admonition
 - 2) Suspension from the sacraments
 - 3) Excommunication
 - 4) For church officers: suspension from office or deposition from office
3. Resourcing from the church
 - a. Prayer
 - b. Practical care (e.g., meals, child care)
 - c. Deacons fund
4. When to include governmental authorities?
 - a. Church officers/staff reporting requirements by law:
 - 1) Abuse or sexual assault on premises or during a church event
 - 2) Evidence of abuse or sexual assault of a minor or physically limited persons
 - 3) Immediate intention to harm
 - b. Church support for reporting
 - 1) Committed to supporting reporting of felonies
 - 2) Particular concern about domestic abuse and sexual assault
 - 3) Specific plans may need to be made for safety prior to reporting