

Handling Offense Pt. 3

Pastor James Foley – Sunday, March 20, 2022

COMMUNION

Communion is the Christ-ordained means whereby His people are to remember His sacrifice until He Returns...

- 1) The Wafer Symbolizes the BODY of Christ** – Broken for Us
- 2) The Juice Symbolizes the BLOOD of Christ** – Shed for Us All

1 Corinthians 11:23–26 (NIV)

23 For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, 24 and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, “This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.” 25 In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.” 26 For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.

KEY – Children and workers are dismissed at this time...

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INTRODUCTION

Thank you for joining us today! Whether you are here in person or joining via the livestream, you are most welcome. Please have a Bible at the ready and be prepared to take notes. We have much to cover in a short space of time.

SETTING THE STAGE

NOTE 1 – We are in the midst of an extended series on the topic of offense. We have all felt slighted, wounded or put-off by the words and actions of our peers, so it is vital that we all learn to respond in a biblically-sound manner. Please review previous installments of this series online at www.NewLifeBarre.org.

NOTE 2 – Last week we noted that since most offense is non-intentional by nature, the best course of action is to simply overlook the offense (i.e., using it as a springboard unto spiritual growth). This principle is communicated clearly in Scripture. Please take note of the following and apply it in kind...

Proverbs 19:11 (NIV)

11 A person's wisdom yields patience;
it is to one's glory to overlook an offense.

NOTE 3 – However, there are times when even unintentional behaviors need to be addressed and challenged...

Q1. How do we know when to confront versus overlook an offense?

Q2. If we must confront, in what manner are we to address the issue?

NOTE 4 – These are questions deserving of consideration—questions we shall respond to with our time today. Though there are no cookie-cutter answers or formulas, allow me to offer a series of scriptural principles that have aided me through twenty-plus-years of faith and ministry...

DELVING IN PT. 1

Q. How do we know WHEN to confront v. overlook an offense? TWO A's...

A1. It may be necessary to confront offensive behaviors if they are threatening healthy relationship.

If the behavior of another has wounded you to the point where you cannot seem to move past it (i.e., despite time, effort and prayer), you may need to take necessary steps to establish relational peace. Consider the following illustration...

ILL – In recent weeks I have noted the congregant who wanted to connect with the Pastor after service, but the Pastor requested a meeting at a later time. This offended congregant was put-off and felt uncared for. Despite weeks of trying to overlook the offense, feelings of angst continue (i.e., to the point the individual no longer wants to attend church, etc.). This may be a time to address the matter!

FYI – Of course, we often find it easier to pull away from people when offended v. act like peace-makers (cf. Matt. 5:9). This is true especially in the church world, as Christians are among the worst people at confronting one another in love. How often we...

a) Act Contrary to the Greatest Commandment

Matthew 22:37–40

“‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ 38 This is the first and greatest commandment. 39 And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ 40 All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

b) Fail to Fulfill Christ’s High-Priestly Prayer

John 17:20–21

20 “My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, 21 that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.”

c) Show the World that which is Contrary to Christ’s Desire

John 13:34–35

34 “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. 35 By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

d) Neglect Apostolic Commandment

Colossians 3:13

13 Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.

A2. It may be necessary to confront offensive behaviors if personal reputations are being diminished.

NOTE 1 – We should be concerned with matters of personal reputation, for reputation speaks to both character and credibility. I value my reputation as a minister of the Gospel, for it either opens or closes doors to sharing Christ. You should value your reputation as witnesses, for sullied names make for ineffectual ministry!

NOTE 2 – Thus, if an offensive behavior is discrediting the good name of a person, the church or the Lord, steps should be taken to address the matter in love. Please consider the following imagined, yet real-world, scenario...

ILL – Jack is a follower of Jesus Christ. However, he annoys his peers by making himself the center of attention in conversation. He has the tendency to insert himself into any discussion he comes upon, and within moments bends it to thoughts, insights and experiences. As a friend this has irritated me at times, though I tend to overlook the offense. However, I have noted his habit is putting off Christians and non-Christians alike. I have heard peers say he talks too much (i.e., especially about himself). I have even heard people say, “If this is how Christians are, I don’t want to be one!” This may be a good time to speak to my friend in love, lest his reputation and ministry be tarnished!

DELVING IN PT. 2

The decision to address offensive behavior must happen at times, though it should not be rushed into quickly. The following principles should be considered that speak to the MANNER in which we deal with off-putting words and activities...

1) Confront Only After Prayerful Reflection

NOTE 1 – Let us remember that the prayer of the righteous man or woman is both powerful and effective (James 5:16b). Per the words of Alfred Lord Tennyson, “More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of.” Sadly, Christ went “more willingly to the Cross than we do to the Throne of Grace” (Thomas Watson cf. Heb. 4:16).

NOTE 2 – Prayer has the power to change the heart of the offender. “Men may spurn our appeals, reject our message, oppose our arguments, despise our persons—but they are helpless against our prayers” (J. Sidlow Baxter). Moreover, it is through prayer that we discern the will of God and receive His guidance. You may be tempted to rebuke and the Lord says “NO” in prayer. You may be tempted to stay quiet and God says “GO”!

Proverbs 14:12

12 There is a way that appears to be right,
but in the end it leads to death.

NOTE 3 – God is more than willing to grant us necessary wisdom in the moment...

James 1:5–7

5 If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you. 6 But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind.

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 submit to him,
and he will make your paths straight.

KEY – I never think of addressing the behavior of a fellow believer apart from the place of prayer. Such is folly!

2) Confront Only After Personal Introspection

Sometimes the behavior we hate in others is the very behavior we are most guilty of ourselves—behaviors we may even be utterly blind to. This idea of self-introspection is clearly taught by Christ Himself in the Sermon on the Mount...

Matthew 7:3–5

3 “Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? 4 How can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? 5 You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.

ILL – A young couple moved into a new neighborhood. The next morning while they were eating breakfast, the young woman saw her neighbor hanging the wash outside. “That laundry is not very clean,” she remarked. “She doesn’t know how to wash correctly. Perhaps she needs better laundry soap.” Her husband looked on, but remained silent. Every time her neighbor would hang her wash to dry, the young woman would make the same comments. About a month later, the woman was surprised to see a nice clean wash on the line and said to her husband: “Look, she has learned how to wash correctly. I wonder who taught her this.” The husband replied, “I got up early this morning and cleaned our windows.”

3) Confront Only After You Have Ensured Proper Personal Motivation(s)

Why do you feel it necessary to correct another? If your motive for confrontation is anything but a selfless sense of concern for the offending party, you may wish to think again. I cannot over-stress the significance of personal intention...

Q1. Are you confronting because you want an apology? PARDON

Q2. Are you confronting in order to win an argument or diminish? SELF/PRIDE

Q3. Are you confronting because you want them to hurt like you are hurt? MALICIOUSNESS

KEY 1 – Let us confront in order to ensure the health and well-being of the offender. Consider...

Matthew 16:21–23

21 From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.

22 Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. “Never, Lord!” he said. “This shall never happen to you!”

23 Jesus turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns.”

Q. Why did Jesus confront Peter herein (i.e., particularly in a public forum)?

A. To ensure both Peter’s spiritual health AND the health of the apostolic band.

KEY 2 – Let us confront in order to restore and/or repair fractured relationships. Consider...

Philippians 4:2–3

2 I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. 3 Yes, and I ask you, my true companion, help these women since they have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are in the book of life.

KEY 3 – Let us confront in order to preserve the Good Name of Christ and His Church. Consider...

1 Corinthians 6:1–6 (Paul Confronts the Lawsuits Within the Corinthian Church)

If any of you has a dispute with another, do you dare to take it before the ungodly for judgment instead of before the Lord's people? 2 Or do you not know that the Lord's people will judge the world? And if you are to judge the world, are you not competent to judge trivial cases? 3 Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more the things of this life! 4 Therefore, if you have disputes about such matters, do you ask for a ruling from those whose way of life is scorned in the church? 5 I say this to shame you. Is it possible that there is nobody among you wise enough to judge a dispute between believers? 6 But instead, one brother takes another to court—and this in front of unbelievers! 7 The very fact that you have lawsuits among you means you have been completely defeated already. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be cheated? 8 Instead, you yourselves cheat and do wrong, and you do this to your brothers and sisters.

ULTIMATELY...

- 1) We Confront Only After We Have Spent Time in Prayerful Reflection**
- 2) We Confront Only After We Have Practiced Genuine Introspection**
- 3) We Confront Only After We Have Ensured Godly Motivation(s)**

DELVING IN PT. 3

As I wind to a close, the following elements are worthy of consideration...

1) Consider the Relationship Factor

I would begin by asking, "How well do you know the person you are seeking to correct? What is your relationship to them?" The type and scope of your relationship with the individual will determine much of HOW you proceed...

a) If you are complete STRANGERS, I would recommend that you tread lightly in matters of addressing offensive behavior. It is best to earn the right to speak into their lives, for people do not care what you know until they know that you care.

b) If you are ACQUAINTANCES or FRIENDS, you have likely earned said right to speak. Make sure to heed my previous advice re: confrontation only after prayer, personal introspection and the necessity of godly and/or pure motivation(s).

c) If you are in a MENTORING relationship, correction is a built-in aspect of this connection. It is assumed that mentor figures will offer necessary guidance, rebuke, and beyond within the context of this voluntarily relationship.

d) Similarly, certain posts within the BODY come with the responsibility of dealing with improper behavior(s)....

1 Thessalonians 5:12–13

12 Now we ask you, brothers and sisters, to acknowledge those who work hard among you, who care for you in the Lord and who admonish you. 13 Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work. Live in peace with each other.

2) Watch Your Words

Proverbs 18:21

21 The tongue has the power of life and death,
and those who love it will eat its fruit.

NOTE 1 – Sometimes we can be harsh with the words we use in offering correction, bringing about more harm than good. There is something to be said about having words that are characterized by a scriptural “gentleness”...

Galatians 6:1 (Emphasis Mine)

1 Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person **gently**.

NOTE 2 – Earlier I shared the following scenario with you all...

ILL – Jack is a follower of Jesus Christ. However, he annoys his peers by making himself the center of attention in conversation. He has the tendency to insert himself into any discussion he comes upon, and within moments bends it to thoughts, insights and experiences. As a friend this has irritated me at times, though I tend to overlook the offense. However, I have noted his habit is putting off Christians and non-Christians alike. I have heard peers say he talks too much (i.e., especially about himself). I have even heard people say, “If this is how Christians are, I don’t want to be one!” This may be a good time to speak to my friend in love, lest his reputation and ministry be tarnished!

Q. What might be the best way to approach this in terms of your words?

NOT – “Jack, why do you have to be such a blowhard?”

NOT – “Jack, why can’t you just shut up and let me talk for a change?”

NOT – “Jack, I think our relationship would be a lot better if you stopped talking!”

BETTER – “Jack, have you ever thought of how people feel when you cut them off?”

BETTER – “Jack, you might have better luck sharing re: Jesus if you listened more to people.”

BETTER – “Jack, you are a good man and a good friend, but I worry about this one area in your life...”

FYI – Time will not permit, but also consider the means and location of your discussion. Something of this nature should be face-to-face via text and/or email. Also, most people are not going to handle open rebuke well! Thus, bring the matter privately to your peer (i.e., per the words of Christ)...

Matthew 18 (Private to Public Escalation)

15 “If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. 16 But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that ‘every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.’ 17 If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector.

3) Be Ready to Listen

James 1:19

19 My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry,

ILL – Earlier I noted the congregant who was offended at the Pastor for not meeting immediately after service (i.e., seeking another time). Again, this triggered offense and the nagging sentiment that the congregant was not cared for by the church. Despite weeks of festering feeling(s), the Pastor is ultimately approached by the wounded party. What if, in response, the Pastor shares why he requested another meeting time? Perhaps he already had another scheduled meeting? Perhaps he had a personal emergency to tend to?

KEY – The offended party must be willing to listen; otherwise there will be no resolution whatsoever.

SUMMATIONS

This morning I have provided you with an array of principles to consider in response to the following Q's...

Q1. How do we know when to confront versus overlook an offense?

Q2. If we must confront, in what manner are we to address the issue?

It is my prayer that you can find application for these principles, fulfilling the command of Scripture...

James 1:22 (Emphasis Mine)

22 Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. **Do** what it says.

CONCLUSION

NOTE 1 – Those who wish to give online may do so at www.NewLifeBarre.org. Those who wish to give in person can utilize the offering boxes located throughout the church facility. Thank you for your faithfulness in supporting this local work of Christ.

NOTE 2 – Ministry schedule...

Prayer – Sunday at 8:45am

Sunday School – Sunday at 9:15am

CYC – Tuesday from 3–4pm and 4–5pm

Weekly Study – Thursday at 6:30–7:30pm

Women's Ministry – 2nd Tuesday at 6:30pm

Men's Breakfast – 2nd Saturday at 9am

Potluck – Final Sunday of the Month