

## Compassionate Confronting, “Care-fronting

June 14, 2020

Our Monday night Bible study has been studying Galatians recently. Two weeks ago we studied Galatians chapter 5 which has a long list of characteristics that are not good, followed by a list of characteristics that are good which Paul refers to as the “Fruit of the Spirit”. With that background in mind we begin chapter 6.

### Printed Text

**6 Dear brothers and sisters, if another believer is overcome by some sin, you who are godly should gently and humbly help that person back onto the right path. And be careful not to fall into the same temptation yourself. <sup>2</sup> Share each other’s burdens, and in this way obey the law of Christ. <sup>3</sup> If you think you are too important to help someone, you are only fooling yourself. You are not that important.**

**<sup>4</sup> Pay careful attention to your own work, for then you will get the satisfaction of a job well done, and you won’t need to compare yourself to anyone else. <sup>5</sup> For we are each responsible for our own conduct. Galatians 6: 1 – 5**  
**NLT**

Though we are mostly going to be dealing with the first two verses, I find verse 3 very humorous as written in the NLT. It says, “If you think you are too important to help someone, you are only fooling yourself. You are not that important.”

Today I want to talk about gently and humbly bringing our brother or sister back to the right path not being judgmental, but out of a caring attitude or “care-fronting”. I am not sure that this is a real word, but it is a word used by David Augsburger in his book Caring Enough to Confront. When I was in V.S. we were required to read this book, though at that time it’s title was, The Love Fight. At the yearly V.S. retreat, David Augsburger was the guest speaker. He endeavored to help us have more healthy V.S. units; by helping us get to the bottom of issues and work toward reconciliation, rather than fracturing over disagreements. Ignoring issues that came up as twenty year olds shared the same house, was not healthy in the long run, but neither was becoming judgmental. How do you work through

differences or shortcomings in a healthy way. Paul in Galatians would say that we start by gently and humbly addressing our brother or sister's fallenness recognizing how easily it could be us in their shoes. The goal here is compassionately restoring our brother or sister, not judging them.

Sometimes compassion goes beyond the walls of our home or church and may need to address issues of our fallen world, but again it is done best without a judgmental attitude. If we are truly led by Jesus love, we cannot ignore issues that impact our brothers and sisters. This past Memorial Day, May 25th, 2020 George Floyd was killed by Derek Chauvin as three other officers looked on. What was going on in the minds of J. Alexander Kueng, Thomas Lane and Tou Thao. I would guess that they didn't all agree with what was going on, but maybe job security or the chance of ridicule back at the precinct were running through their minds as this horrific event took place. Obviously to have confronted Derek and stopped the events would have saved George's life, but it would have also made their lives better. Instead the only voice of reason heard came from the onlookers while the three co-workers remained silent.

Now in Romans 8: 28 it tells us that God can work things out for the good for those who love God and are called according to His purpose. Through these events that God did not cause, He has used the protests and the clearer vision of the effects of unchecked prejudice to bring about some long overdue changes in the U.S. in the area of racial justice. Last week Sandeep told the story of Cain and Abel in which God says we are our brother's keeper. The three officers with Derek were their brother's keeper and were responsible because they didn't do anything to stop it. What are we doing to reduce the prevalence of racism in our society. Silence, can be deafening to those who suffer because of it.

I remember on Jan. 15, 2005 I was sitting at work in my cubicle and heard by supervisor talking to an engineer calling the day Martin Luther Coon day. I bristled and probably muttered something, but I never said anything to him about it. Now he was generally a good person and I respected him as my supervisor, but the loving thing was not to do nothing, nor would it have been helpful to yell derisive comments at him. The loving thing and Christian thing to do as David Augsburger says in his book would be to let him know that his statements were hurtful and did not represent what is good in society. Now he may have disagreed with me, maybe even been angry with me, but it also may have given him an

opportunity to think about this later and possibly repent. He is a Christian. Now that is more likely to happen if I came to him in the way Galatians 6: 1 says, “gently and humbly” out of compassion wanting to help him see more clearly, not being judgmental.

I wish I could give you examples where I was good at care-fronting but it seems I am better at being quietly judgmental than compassionately confronting. I am giving you examples why in the U.S. racism has been a problem for our entire existence as a country and even in the church. The next example of underlying prejudice happened in our Fellowship Hall over 20 years ago when one of the men used the “N” word like it was just common conversation. I was offended, but again I was also silent. Edmund Burke said “The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing.” Now racism is not out only a sin, it is as Jim Wallis calls it America’s original sin.

In confronting another person you have to check your motives. We are to go to them privately as Matthew 18 says, with the goal of restoration rather than trying to humiliate them publicly. One way that Mennonites use too often, is rather than confronting the other person, we just gossip about them. One thing we need to keep in mind is that gossip is certainly not going to them in private. So care-fronting is done best if it is done in private where the other person has a chance to respond more authentically. You also must give them some time to process what you have shared so that the Holy Spirit has time to shed light on what was just shared.

As we read earlier in Galatians Paul writes, **“Dear brothers and sisters, if another believer is overcome by some sin, you who are godly should gently and humbly help that person back onto the right path. And be careful not to fall into the same temptation yourself. <sup>2</sup>Share each other’s burdens, and in this way obey the law of Christ.”** In another translation it reads, **“Even if a man should be detected in some sin, my brothers, the spiritual ones among you should quietly set him back on the right path, not with any feeling of superiority but being yourselves on guard against temptation.**

**<sup>2</sup>Carry each other’s burdens and so live out the law of Christ. ....”** This care-fronting is a mutual thing we do for each other as we strive to walk as Jesus did.

One of my favorite passages, and good coaching passage for the care-fronter, is Ephesians 1: 15 where it states, **“Instead, we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of His body, the church.”** The way to confront in a Christ like way, is to first of all make sure that we are speaking the truth, but making sure that we are doing it in a loving manner.

David Augsburger talks about the relationship of truth and love when he says,”

Truth with love brings healing

Truth with love enables us to grow

Truth in love produces change

Truth and love are the two necessary ingredients for any relationship with integrity. Love-because all positive relationships begin with friendship, appreciation, respect. And truth because no relationship of trust can long grow from dishonesty, deceit, betrayal; it springs up from the solid stuff of integrity.”

Love without truth brings no change it is silent permissiveness, but truth without love is judgmentalism and brings hurt with little change. If we want to be ambassadors of reconciliation as we are called to be we must speak the truth in love reconciling each other to God and to each other.

As we walk this Christian path of reconciliation we will need help along the way and we will also need to be helpful at times. In **Galatians 5: 19 – 23** it reads, **“<sup>19</sup> When you follow the desires of your sinful nature, the results are very clear: sexual immorality, impurity, lustful pleasures, <sup>20</sup> idolatry, sorcery, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, dissension, division, <sup>21</sup> envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other sins like these. Let me tell you again, as I have before, that anyone living that sort of life will not inherit the Kingdom of God.**

**<sup>22</sup> But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup> gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things!”**

This is a long list of things not to do, followed by a list of things to do. Maybe you have no difficulty with idolatry but sorcery is an issue. On Monday nights recently we have been praying about what is the proper attitude to the Harry Potter books and movies. They may be immensely popular but are they a window

into the world of sorcery? Maybe you have no difficulty with jealousy, but outbursts of anger are a different story. This is a pretty long list of things not to do. Maybe that is why Paul followed up these thoughts with the passage in chapter 6 encouraging us to gently and humbly help each other get back on the right path.

Mike Warnke a Christian comedian back in the 70's and 80's would say that he didn't focus on the don'ts in his Christian walk. He figured if he focused on the do's he wouldn't have time for the don'ts. So maybe if we focus in our own lives and in encouraging others with the Fruits of the Spirit verses 22 and 23 we won't have to worry as much about the fruits of the sinful nature in verses 19 – 21. Paul finishes his list of the fruits of the spirit by saying there is no law against these things. So we can encourage each other in a gentle humble spirit in the areas of joy or patience or faithfulness. Some of you may be more familiar with the King James reading of Galatians 6: 2 which says, **“Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.”** So we are called to gently and humbly bear one another's burdens thus fulfilling the law of Christ. We are not looking for a way to judge our brother or sister, instead we are open to bearing each other's burdens so that we might obey or fulfill the law of Christ.

Mervin sent me this in a text fill from a Bible study he did on the book Caring Enough to Confront.:

*He said, Care-fronting – is. You care enough to confront, yet love enough to try to find a way through without causing further damage.*

Care-fronting is offering our genuine care that bids another grow.

To confront effectively is to offer the maximum of useful information with the minimum of stress and threat.

Care-fronting observes the wrong “fruit” in a brother or sister, and in love confronts with the goal of helping them to grow.

Care-fronting unifies concern for relationship with concerns for goals.

Care-fronting is the way to communicate with truth and love.

So let us resolve to fulfill the law of Christ by bearing each other's burdens.