

Sermon Notes

Series: How to Be A Peacemaker

Date: December 13th, 2009

Title: “Step 4: Decide if You Need to Go to Your Brother”

Text: Misc. Texts

You should go to your brother when...

1) *YOU HAVE DIRECTLY OFFENDED HIM.*

a) James 5:16 says it this way... “Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed.”

- i) And the context for this verse seems to be one of sickness or suffering.
 - (1) And we know that James understands their illness to be the result of sin.
 - (2) But the problem is that James never identifies what exact sins led to their illness.
- ii) But whatever it was, part of the remedy for their illness was to confess their sins.
 - (1) And the same goes for us...
 - (2) There are times when we need to confess our sins to those we've sinned against.
- iii) But when exactly should we do that?
 - (1) And what sins do we need to confess not just to God, but to others?
 - (a) Well, we need to look beyond James 5 to answer these questions.

b) Three examples in Scripture when we see people going to the others they've wronged and confessing their sin. (Cf. prodigal son in Luke 15, Zacchaeus in Luke 19, and believers in Acts 19)

- i) SO if we look at these three examples side by side we have sins of selfishness, disrespect, fraud, dishonesty, and deception all leading to confession of sin to others.
 - (1) And I don't think that list is exhaustive.
 - (2) But it is a helpful list, because each of those sins are visible, concrete, and objective.
- ii) Another way to think about this is whether the sin you committed against your brother is a heart sin or a social sin.
 - (1) A heart sin would be something like lust or coveting takes place in your thoughts and heart.
 - (a) And typically those sins don't directly affect anyone.
 - (b) Those sins only need to be confessed to God.
 - (2) But a social sin, a sin involving word or actions, that actually affects other people should be confessed not only to God, but to those who've been affected by it.

2) *YOU KNOW HE HAS SOMETHING AGAINST YOU.*

a) The most helpful verses on this matter are found in Matthew 5:21-25.

- i) From these verses it's apparent that Jesus wants us to take anger seriously.

- (1) In fact he wants us to take it so seriously that even if we aren't the one who is angry, we need to do what it takes to put an end to that anger.
- (2) And that's why he tells the brother offering his gift at the altar to leave it if his brother has something against him and to go to him and be reconciled.

b) You should go to your brother when you know he has something against you.

- i) And that word "know" is important.
 - (1) Jesus doesn't want us going to our brother because we wonder if they have something against us.
 - (2) Jesus doesn't want us to get into the pattern of trying to read people's mind or facial expressions.
 - (3) He doesn't want us to sit around and go paranoid thinking... "Are they upset at me?" or "Did I offend them?"
- ii) Jesus said leave your gift at the altar if you remember that your brother has something against you...
 - (1) The reason you remember that your brother has something against you is because he actually has something against you... it's apparent. It's undeniable.
 - (2) That's also why Jesus says come to terms quickly with your accuser – again... you know for certain when you've been accused of something.
- iii) So if there is clear evidence that someone has something against you... if there is undeniable anger or distance or hurt, you should go.
 - (1) You should go to your brother if you **know** he has something against you.

3) HIS OFFENSE IS SOMETHING YOU CAN'T OVERLOOK.

a) And before we can grasp this point, we have to understand what Scripture says about overlooking sins. (cf. Pro 19:11, Eph 4:32, 1 Peter 4:8)

- i) When we overlook someone's sins we're making a conscious decision to not talk about that sin or dwell on it.
 - (1) We're making a decision not to file that offense away for retaliation at a later time.
 - (2) We're making a decision not to become bitter toward the person who offended us.
- ii) And of course, when we overlook and cover sin it's because we are imitating God's mercy and grace. (cf. Psalm 103:8-10)

b) But what about when we're having difficulty overlooking someone's sin? What about when we've tried to forgive them apart from addressing their sin but we just can't seem to do it?

- i) Well, in those instances, better to go to your brother so that you can talk to him and share your pain and forgive him than just sitting at home getting more and more upset.
 - (1) IF it takes going to that person to help you forgive them, then do it.
 - (2) Because you can't remain with unforgiveness in your heart. (cf. Matt 6:14-15)
- ii) Before we move on to the next point, let me give you 4 signs that you are having trouble overlooking someone's sin and struggling with unforgiveness...
 - (1) First, you continue to be angry with the person who offended you.

- (2) Second, you tend to avoid the person who offended you.
- (3) Third, you're continually critical and judgmental of the person who offended you.
- (4) And fourth, you have a superficial relationship with the person who offended you.
- iii) If any of those fit your situation.. if you are battling with unforgiveness, please -go to your brother.

4) *HIS OFFENSE CREATES A WALL BETWEEN THE TWO OF YOU.*

- a) **Even though Scripture does command us to overlook sins, it doesn't command us to immediately overlook every sin.**
 - i) And one of the sins we're not to immediately overlook are those offenses that create a wall or barrier in our relationships.
 - (1) We know this because throughout Scripture we see the priority of reconciliation not only with God but with each other. (cf. John 17, Ephesians 2)
 - ii) Not only that, but we have specific Scriptures that tell us to go to our brother when they have offended us. (cf. Leviticus 19:17, Matthew 18:15, Luke 17:3)
 - iii) So you should go to your brother when his offense creates a wall between the two of you.

5) *HIS OFFENSE CAUSES HIM HARM.*

- a) **Another way to say this is that we should look out for the welfare of each other.**
 - i) Far too often, we take on the world's mindset that we should just let people do their own thing.
 - (1) We think, "we'll their bringing this on themselves, and it's between them and God."
 - (2) Or we think, "I can overlook their sin.. and besides, it's not really creating a wall between the two of us."
 - ii) But if our brother is doing something that either directly harms him or indirectly damages His relationship with God and others, we should intervene – we should go to our brother. (cf. Proverbs 24:11; James 5:19-20; Galatians 6:1)
 - iii) And so if in the midst of a problem or conflict in one of our relationships we spot a sin in our brother or sister that is causing them harm, we should go to them.
 - (1) When we realize our brother or sister is pursuing unbiblical relationships or buying into false doctrine or engaging in addictive behaviors, we should go to them.

b) Conclusion