

Carefronting II Ephesians Part 38

*“Instead, speaking the truth in love,
we will in all things grow up into Him who is the head, that is, Christ.”*

Ephesians 4:15

Last week we looked at this creative word by David Augsburger and five ways we can graciously help other people by speaking the truth in love. In Matthew 18:15 Jesus says, “If your brother sins against you (or offends you), go and show him his fault, just between the two of you.”

Over the years, I have been aware of an ever-increasing way most folks handle offenses. It does not seem to matter whether they are Christians or not. If someone gets offended they tell their friends. Or even vent on the internet forums. I can hear James saying, “This should not be!” Many of us lack the courage it takes to go to the person who has offended us. One of the reasons is that when we do bring our issue up with the one who hurt us, they don’t respond in a godly manner and things get worse. Jesus knew this and that is why he said, “If he does not listen, take one or two others along with you...If he refuses to listen to them, take it to the church, and if he refuses to listen to even the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector” (these are people that the early believers had little association with).

Please catch the flavor of what Jesus is saying. His heart is to reconcile. People who have issues cause disunity in the body of Christ. I know it is messy and hard to work out our offenses but Jesus was not making a suggestion. He saw that where unforgiveness dwelt, there was room for the kingdom of darkness to work. The heart of Matthew 18 is about coming to agreement so that the presence of Christ may abide and our prayers may be answered (see verses 19 & 20).

One of the things I have to do when I approach someone about either something I heard was said about me by way of gossip or something that was said that was disrespectful is, check my own spirit and attitude. I get hurt too. But I cannot go with my hurt hanging on my shirtsleeve. I need to deal with my offended spirit. So I need to forgive the person even before I go to them. If I don’t, I am just going to get mad and make things worse.

Forgiveness is key when dealing with personal offenses. I wrestle with it as much as anyone else. I’m a man and sometimes I like a good fight. I like to win. Sometimes this can be very ungodly. One day while on staff at my former church, the Senior Pastor actually lied and then gossiped about something I did. My first recourse was to play the get-back game. I was going to fight fire with fire. Then the Holy Spirit nailed me, “If your brother offends you, go to him...” Guys, let me tell you, I did not want to go to my Pastor and speak to him with grace about this issue! So I went up the steps and into our church prayer room and wrestled with God. And unlike Jacob, I lost. The Lord’s word came to me powerfully. He said, “Gene, you can choose the path of anger and get back at him. You can choose the path of despondency and pull back from the relationship. Or, you can choose the path of love.” After a few tears, I chose the path of love and went to my Pastor and we got the situation resolved.

Forgiveness ~ the key to reconciliation. Who do you need to forgive today? After dealing with your own spirit, are you willing to choose the path of love and go to your brother or sister and reconcile so that Christ’s presence can abide in your life and your prayers are answered?