

Biblical Correction¹

Series: The Power of Words and the Grace of God (part 7)

Christopher Patton

March 1, 2009

Sermon Outline

Introduction

- For some, the mention of the subject brings to mind painful memories. For others the whole idea of correction just sounds kind of intrusive.
- Most of us, to some degree, view correction like we do a root canal (Paul Tripp).
- Giving and receiving words of correction is almost never easy or painless. However, because we live in a fallen world where people sin, we do see in Scripture that it is sometimes necessary for correction to be brought and equally necessary for it to be heard. In Prov. 27:6 we read, “Faithful are the wounds of a friend (Prov 27:6)”.
- Illustration: Nathan and David.
- How much worse things might have been had Nathan not been faithful to correct David? If David had continued on the path he was on? Perhaps he would have ended up like Saul and many of the other kings in Israel’s history who became utterly unfaithful to the Lord.
- We could never conclude from the Bible that correction is unimportant or unnecessary. In fact, biblically speaking, giving correction is sometimes absolutely necessary. The one who does not heed correction is considered a fool.
- Unfortunately, the church in general suffers from a terrible lack of sound teaching on this crucial subject. And as a result, when believers do correct, their correction is often “off key” and the sad result is that the sweet, redemptive and yes even pleasant notes of true and authentic biblical correction, which bears sweet fruit, can scarcely be heard.

¹ I am thankful to Paul Tripp and Ken Sande for their wisdom and insight which I benefited from greatly in crafting this message.

- Pastoral burden behind message: To equip you to speak sweet, redemptive notes of biblical correction, when necessary, in the lives of your family members and fellow-believers.
- We will explore four keys to correcting biblically.

Key #1: Know when not to speak words of correction

- You will NOT be a person who speaks sweet notes of biblical correction, if you correct sin when you should be overlooking sin.

Proverbs 19:11 “Good sense makes one slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook an offense.”

Proverbs 17:14 “Starting a quarrel is like breaching a dam; so drop the matter before a dispute breaks out.”

1 Peter 4:8 “Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins.”

Colossians 3:12-13, “Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another.”

- What does it actually mean to overlook sin? We aren't hyper-sensitive to the sin of others and that we don't nitpick at one another.
- To overlook an offense means that “we make every effort to overlook inconsequential wrongdoing.” – Ken Sande
- Wisdom from Ken Sande (summarized): Ask yourself the question “is this sin bringing serious harm to God's reputation, to others, or to the offender?” If so, you do need to correct that person. But if not, you can choose to overlook that sin. Secondly, ask yourself this question: “has this person's sin created a wall between me and them or caused me to feel differently toward him or her for more than a short period of time?” And if the answers to both of those questions are “no”, well then it is to your glory and to your credit to overlook that offense.

Key #2: Speak as an ambassador of the Lord

- Nowhere in Scripture do we find God's mission for our talk more clearly stated than in 2 Cor.5:17-21 where Paul writes:

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us

*to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are **ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us**. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”*

- This passage reminds us that as Christians, all that we do and all that we say, is to represent the Lord! It tells us that as those who are now new creations in Christ, we have been made ambassadors for Christ and given the ministry of reconciliation.
- It is evident from the context (which we don't have time to get into right now) that this ministry of reconciliation includes not only the ministry of evangelism, but also the ministry of helping believers to draw near to God. God has purposed to make his appeal to us through others! In other words, just as Nathan was God's ambassador to David, so God has called us as well, as his ambassadors, to at times, speak words of correction that God will use to help others.
- You never have the right to liberate your tongue from your divine calling to be an ambassador for Christ. We must only correct with God's agenda in view. And God's agenda when we sin is always to draw us into deeper fellowship with Himself through repentance.
- What does this mean practically? Get your heart before you go to correct. Ask yourself, "why am I going?" "Am I mainly going because I am angry or disappointed? Or am I going because I see my friend or my loved one sinning against God and in some way, and I want to help." Ask yourself these kinds of questions and then go with a clear conscience and go in love.

Key#3: Be humble

- We've talked about cultivating humility in several of the other sermons in this series. Just to insure that what we've learned about humility in those messages informs how we approach correction, here are a few pastoral thoughts.
- First, when you correct, don't forget what we learned several weeks back about making charitable judgments. Let's remember to not, in effect, stand in the place of God by making sinful judgments. In other words, let's not arrogantly assume that we fully understand and know the motives of the hearts of those that we correct. Sometimes we may think someone needs correction, when the reality is, we've misunderstood the situation entirely.

- What I think this means practically is that, when we correct, we don't speak accusing words, but instead we ask good questions.

Key #4: Focus on the Gospel

- When you speak words of correction you must not forget to speak the Gospel to the person you are correcting. If you get this one wrong, it has the potential to seriously undermine the opportunity for change that your correction offers.
- Just consider for a moment, the passage that we looked at several weeks ago in 1 Corinthians. Paul was about to correct the Corinthians, but even before he started his correction, do you remember what he said? He said, "I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus...." Here, Paul thanks God for the grace that was given to the Corinthians through Jesus Christ – or you could also say, through the Gospel – because Jesus is the Good News of The Gospel!
- Perhaps the greatest pitfall of teaching on this subject of correction is that we can become motivated to serve one another through correction, but still leave the Gospel at the back door.
- Correcting someone for the bad news of their sin without reminding them with your words of the Good News of the Gospel is incomplete correction! You can correct lovingly and with humility, but if you forget to remind your spouse, your child or your friend in the church of the Gospel, you've forgotten to sound the most beautiful, the most majestic and the most glorious note of all when it comes to the music of biblical correction.

CONCLUSION

Combined these are the beautiful notes of biblical correction: Overlooking when you can. Representing Christ. Being humble. And focusing on the Gospel.

And as we conclude this morning, let us together pray and ask God that he would help us as couples, as families and as a local church to sound these notes well in order that our correction might be like a sweet symphony not only to our own ears, but in the ears of God Himself.

Questions for Reflection/Discussion

- 1) What are the dangers of failing to correct biblically? What are the benefits of correcting biblically?
- 2) What is the purpose of biblical correction?
- 3) Explain what it means to overlook sin. When should you overlook? When should you not overlook?
- 4) Read 2 Cor. 5:17-21 again. Generally speaking, what does it mean to be an ambassador of Jesus Christ? How should this idea inform how you correct?
- 5) What does it mean to sinfully judge someone else? Why is this dangerous to do?
- 6) Only God knows the heart-motivations behind why people do what they do. How should knowing this inform the way that we correct?
- 7) Why is it crucial to speak the gospel to the other person whenever you correct?
- 8) How have you been convicted or inspired to grow through this message?