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# **[Week 9] War of Words – Citizens in Need of Help Manuscript**

**Introduction.**

* [**Ask the congregation this question**] How do you feel about confrontation? Anyone?
  + Scares me.
  + Feels unnecessary.
* When thinking about confrontation, most of us picture
  + A tense conversation
  + Glaring eyes
  + Pointed fingers
  + Raised voices
  + Red faces
  + Inflammatory words
* And this is not a picture that warms us with anticipation.
* If I asked to come over to your house tomorrow and rebuke you, would you be excited? Would you say to your spouse or friend, “I just got great news. Nash is coming over tomorrow to rebuke me! I can’t wait – I haven’t been rebuked for so long! It’s about time!”
* No, we treat confrontation and rebuke with the anticipation we reserve for root canal.
* Yet, scripture tells us that this ministry is an essential part of God’s plan for our words.
* The class today will help us re-examine the intervention God calls us to make in each other’s lives. We will see what the nature of our need is, and what kind of help God calls us to give to each other.
* But before that, we need to grapple with the reality of how scary confrontation is.

**Confrontation So Scary?**

* And we will begin by asking a question.
* Why is confrontation so scary? Well, one of the reasons is cause as sinners, we spend much of our time hiding because of our sins.
* We excuse or blame others for our sin.
* Now, because we’re sinners we do not like it when we’re under inspection.
* We’re very good at inspecting others and seeing the speck in their eye than in seeing the log in ours.
* And so, we dread confrontation because we do not like to look at our sins.
* But there’s another reason we dread confrontation. We dread it because of the **troublesome and sometime unbiblical way** we’ve seen it handled.
* Here are some ways in which confrontation has been handled in troublesome ways.

1. *Confrontation at times has confused personal irritation and anger with biblical perspectives and purposes.*

* the purpose of confrontation is not to arrange for our opinions to dominate someone else’s. Nor is it to let another person “*have it*” when we’ve had enough.
* Confrontation usually happens when someone has sinned or offended another.
* And at times, biblical priorities in such situations get crowded out by our frustration and anger with people.

1. Another unhelpful way that confrontation has been handled is through poor data gathering. *Poor data gathering has in many ways led to incorrect assumptions about the facts, which derail confrontation.*
   * In confrontation, we need to ensure we see issues accurately. We need to be sure that the person being confronted is guilty.
   * Otherwise, a distorted perspective will cloud confrontation.
2. *Confrontation can also be marred by a judgement of motives rendering how it’s handled unhelpful.*
   * Most of us are good at assuming and projecting certain kinds of motives to others.
   * Unfortunately, this usually leads to the other person being misunderstood or wrongly accused.
   * And in such a case, the person being confronted will likely miss the accurate part of the message.
3. Another unhelpful way is using *Inflammatory language, condemning words, and emotional tones.* This have in many occasions stained confrontation.
   * In confrontation the air is often thick with tension.
   * And things can be said more as angry judgements than the gentle but unwavering words of rebuke that scripture encourages.
   * In such cases, the person being confronted will likely forget the message and remember the angry words.
4. Another way in which confrontation has been handled troublesomely is when *said* *confrontations have been adversarial rather than moments of loving concern for the person who needs your rebuke.*
   * We can forget who we are and fail to remember that we would be exactly where the other person is if not for God’s grace.
   * We can easily confuse the enemy as the person being confronted.
   * The purpose of confrontation is not to stand against the other person but to stand alongside him – pointing out things that God wants the other person to see, confess, and forsake.
5. Another troublesome way of *confrontation, is when use scripture as a club. At times we use scripture more as a club than a mirror of self-awareness and a guide to change*
   * Scripture should enable people to see themselves as they really are.
   * Scripture should expose not just the person’s behaviour but the person’s heart as well.
   * You want to lead the person you’re confronting to confession and not hinder that.
6. The seventh unhelpful way we can handle confrontation is *when we confuse human expectations with God’s will*

* The goal of confrontation is not to get someone to do what you want. Or to get them to live in a way that pleases you. Or even to get them to agree with you or submit to out interpretation.
* The goal should always be to call a person to submit to the will of God alone.

1. *Confrontation often takes place in the context of a broken relationship*

* *Often the parties involved before a confrontation are nursing wounds and already feeling little negative toward the other.*
* *This can set confrontation in the wrong direction.*
* *Confrontation is most effective in the context of a relationship where love and trust are mutually understood.*

1. Another way in which confrontation has been handled in a troublesome way is when *Confrontation has demanded that change be an immediate thing rather than a process.*

* Many times, we fail to give the spirit room to work.
* Yet, the Bible depicts change as a process rather than an event.
* We shouldn’t apply undue pressure as if we can do the work of the Spirit.

**The Fruit of Confrontation Gone Wrong**

* And so, because of all the reasons we’ve talked about, we tend to be afraid whenever confrontation is mentioned.
* Not only do we dread being on the receiving end of a confrontation, we also dread being the confronter.
* We worry about whether we will have the right things to say.
* We worry about how our words will be received. And at times we worry of what will be left of the relationship when confrontation is over.
* Because of this fear, we tend to avoid confrontation whenever and however possible.

**A Very Different Way**

* But today we will see a different way of confrontation.
* Now, sin is hard to admit and talk about, and our approach (right, the troublesome ways of handling confrontation) has made it even more difficult.
* And this has caused a big problem. Much of what needed to be brought into light has not seen light of day. Instead, in many cases, it grows so serious until it cannot be ignored.
* Issues that were once small and simple have become huge and complicated and the process of confrontation made much more difficult.
* Confrontation is necessary but has been made difficult through the troublesome and unhelpful ways it has been handled – just as we’ve seen.
* Now we will read an example of confrontation in the Bible from 2 Samuel 12:1-9, where we will see Nathan confronting David about his sin – [**Someone please read 2 Samuel 12:1-9**].
* Now, we can learn a few things from the story of Nathan confronting David.
  + First, we ought to be impressed that David needed to be confronted at all!!!
    - David is the anointed king and even he needs to be confronted.
    - Surely, David knew the law of God, yet he wasn’t eaten up with conviction of sin.
    - And so, David needed someone to stand before him and point out what should have been blatantly obvious.
  + This story gives us a real window into the heart of man.
  + It also gives us a window into God’s covenant commitment to intervene in our blindness and rebellion with his redemptive grace.
  + David needed the confrontation of Nathan to see the heinousness of his sins, which had deceived him.
* And we too need intervention. We are capable of sinning and going on as if nothing happened – just like David.
* We need God to raise up people who will do the hard job of helping us see ourselves as God does.
* Even though we have been brought from the kingdom of darkness and into the kingdom of light, as believers we are still *citizens in need of help.*
* We are still under the ongoing work of sanctification.
* And you know what, our communication is part of what God is sanctifying.
* Our speaking must have the principal work of God’s kingdom in view. And that work is partly our sanctification.
* Our battle is not yet over even though sin’s dominion has been broken.
* The darkness within us must be exposed and rooted out wherever it exists, and our talk has been ordained by God to be a vital part of that work.
* And so, our talk should always have ongoing redemption in view.
* But maybe you’re wondering…*are we never supposed to deal with the real issues – you know, the nasty comment, the unpaid bill, the broken promise, the family squabble, the inactive husband, the nagging wife, the loud music etc?*
* Well, the issue is not ***whether*** we deal with these things – because we must deal with them. The issue is ***how*** do we deal with them.
* Because of indwelling sin and God’s ongoing work of sanctification, we are called to communication that has a higher goal than solving the problem at the moment.
* We must see our words as his tools.
* So we seek to solve the problem of the moment in a way that propels the work God is doing through it.

**Our Talk and Sin’s Deceitfulness**

* I think it would be good, at this point, to talk about our communication and what that has to do with sin’s deceitfulness.
* Our talk and sin's deceitfulness.
* We will read a couple of verses that will help us see the reality of sin and its deceitful nature. We will read from Hebrews 3:12-15 [**Ask someone to read**].
* The verses that we’ve just read – show us what it means practically to speak as an ambassador for the Lord.
* It acknowledges the harsh realities of life in the kingdom of God.
* The battle is not over, the work is not done, we are citizens who need help and are called to give it.
* We have been rescued yes but we’re still prone to wander.
* We wander when we express anger toward our spouses or children.
* We wander away when we covet the blessing of a friend…when we doubt God and His goodness…
* We wander when the cares of this world squeeze out a diligent pursuit of God…
* We wander in all and in many other definitive ways.
* But friends, it is also the case that many are our wanderings that are subtle and unnoticed.
* In our passage, four words are used to describe the subtle wandering.
* These words are
  + *Sinful*
  + *Unbelieveing*
  + *Turning away*
  + *Hardened heart*
* The author is warning against turning from the living God.
* The turning the author alludes to is one of a subtle nature.
* It is a turn of the heart from God, which will influence the way we see God and ourselves. And this change in perspective will result in a radical difference in the way we live our lives.
* There’s also a progression here.
  + The *sinful or evil* heart wants to hide and therefore becomes weak and *unbelieving*.
  + Then the *unbelieving* heart having lost its confidence in God has no reason to continue persevering and thus *turns away*.
  + And the heart that has turned away is no longer sensitive to God’s truth, becoming increasingly *hardened* to the things of God.
* This progression in a believer’s life is explained by that little phrase – “***the deceitfulness of sin.***”
* Our sin and our hearts are deceitful. They blind us from seeing ourselves as we need to.
* Though we can see the sin in others, in fact their sins are usually obvious but our sin less so.
* And many times, when confronted, we are usually tempted to conclude that we haven’t sinned.
* We all suffer from spiritual blindness in some way, shape or form.
* And it is because of this reality that the author says we need one another daily.
* We all need to exhort one another everyday.
* We all need each other’s daily encouragement so that indwelling sin does not blind us and harden us.
* None of us on this side of eternity can say that they don’t need help.
* Even citizens of the kingdom of light need the daily intervention of other fellow citizens.
* This daily ministry is not so much because of a specific act of sin but rather because of the ***condition*** of spiritual blindness.
* And we should always remember that when dealing with sin in us and in others, intervention is not meant to be critical and judgmental. It is intended to point us to Christ and the glories of his grace.
* And pointing each other to Christ will encourage us to follow Him more humbly, carefully and faithfully.

**Each One a Helper, Each Needing Help.**

* Now in this same passage of Hebrews, notice that there are no haves and have-nots. All of us are needy, dear saints.
* Each of us are a helper to another and also in need of the other person’s help.
* Each believer is called to recognize their daily need, and each is called to be one of God’s helpers.
* We are each called to serve and to be willing to *be served*.
* And this ministry of helping cannot be left to the pastors and elders.
* This call encompasses every member of the body of Christ.
* We all need each other to encourage each other to hold on and persevere.
* There’s one other thing to say about this important passage in Hebrew. The passage not only gives a warning. It is also a call. It is a command to communicate to others with a certain
  + *Frequency*
  + *Spirit and*
  + *Message*
* We will look at each of this very briefly. To start us off is the frequency of this ministry.

1. **Frequency of the Ministry in Hebrew.**

* Perhaps when you think of ministry – i.e., how it is done and who is supposed to do it – perhaps you think of “professional” trained pastors, counsellors or evangelists. Or perhaps you think of the more mature saints or the usual known saints in our congregation.
* But the writer of Hebrews sees ministry more comprehensively.
* His view is nothing short of *everyone ministering every day!*
* The call for us is a daily call to the ministry of each other.
* As long as sin remains in us, there will be some degree of deceitfulness in our hearts leading to spiritual blindness.
* This means that in every situation, to every person, this daily ministry is needed.
* We should make use of every opportunity to be used as God’s tool – with our talks – for the sanctification of others, but also to receive help because we are also needy.
* We should be ready to be ministered to.

1. **Spirit of the Ministry in Hebrew.**

* The spirit that underlies God’s plan for our talk is the spirit of *humility.*
* The gospel reveals our sin but also the grandeur of God’s grace. These realities that the gospel reveals leave no room for boasting.
* The posture of our hearts toward the everyday ministry of intervention should not be one of pride or of a subtle belief that others are somehow different from us.
* We are to admit that there’s nothing that we can give that we do not need.
* Even those who have been in the faith longer, need God’s grace as much as the first time they believed.
* And so, we walk in humility. And humility is acknowledging that we offer the only thing that will help and that is Christ.
* There is a kindness and gentleness and compassion that flows from realizing that we are all in the struggle and that God’s grace is our only hope.

1. **The Message of the Ministry in Hebrew.**

* The message we’re called to bring to the everyday ministry opportunity is one of encouragement.
  + *We encourage one another not to give up! That there is reason to continue! We encourage one another to believe in God’s promises! To be tender in heart and keep following the Lord!*
* We are called to do more than point out one another’s sin.
* We are called to encourage faithfulness in the battle until the victory is won.
* Everyone of God’s war-weary soldiers needs this ministry of encouragement cause at times we lose sight of the goal. Or we go through times that seem too big and too hard. At times we even feel like quitting the Christian journey and so we need encouragement.
* But won’t this minimize our sins? Someone may ask. No, I would respond. Please know that the grace of God *never* *minimizes* our sin, but it *does* give us reason to face it, confess it, and forsake it.
* Grace is the only reason we have hope to continue our fight against sin. It is what we are called to offer others who are blindly beginning to turn away.
* Every time we are intervening on one another’s lives, let us remember that they and us are not so different – in that – we all need God’s grace.
* And so, the everyday ministry of encouragement needs to guide our talk with one another.
* As we meet believers discouraged in the battle and blinded by sin, we need to ask ourselves do we give them reason to hold on? Do we encourage them to stay confident and to continue the fight?

**A Model of Biblical Confrontation.**

* Now we’ve seen the necessity of the ministry of intervention or confronting one another.
* We’ve seen that that’s necessary because of our proneness to spiritual blindness.
* But how then could we better confront one another?
* How can we avoid the pitfalls of confrontation that we explained at the beginning of the class?
* To answer these questions let me present a model for us from the word ***ENCOURAGE*** as an acrostic.
  + ***E****xamine your heart* – confrontation starts with us and because we all have indwelling sin, we must begin with ourselves. We must be sure that we have dealt with our rage and bitterness, our impatience, and self-righteousness.
  + ***N****ote your calling* – remember that confrontation is not based on your opinion of the person. You are there as an ambassador and your job is to faithfully represent the message of the king. You’re there to help people see and accept God’s view of themselves.
  + ***C****heck your attitude* – when you speak are your words spoken in kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, forgiveness, forbearance, compassion and love? Failure to do this will hinder God-honouring, change-producing confrontation. We need to examine both our message and our attitude as we speak.
  + ***O****wn your own mistakes* – remember to enter confrontation with a humble recognition of who you really are. And as you admit your own need for the Lord’s forgiveness, you are able to be patient and forgiving with one to whom God has called you to minister to.
  + ***U****se your words wisely* – prepare particularly on the words you’ll use. We need to ask God to help us use words that carry his message, not get in the way of God’s work.
  + ***R****eflect on scripture* – the Bible should guide us on the content of our confrontation. The Bible guides what we say and how we say it. We should enter confrontation with specific understanding of what scripture says. We should seek to understand how the principles, how the perspectives, and how the commands of scripture shape the way we think about the issues before us.
  + ***A****lways be prepared to listen* – we need to give the other person the opportunity to speak since we cannot read their heart or mind. We need to welcome their questions and look for signs that they’re seeing the things they need to see of themselves.
  + ***G****rant time for response* – we must give the Holy Spirit time to work. There’s nothing in scripture that promises if we do our confrontation well, that the other person will confess and repent in one sitting. The Bible teaches us that change is usually a process. And so, we need to model the same patience that God has granted us.
  + ***E****ncourage the person with the gospel* – It is the awesome grace of God, his boundless love, and his ever-present help that gives us a reason to turn from our sin. Romans 2:4 – says that it is God’s kindness that leads people to repentance. Thus, the truths of the gospel ought to colour our confrontation.

**Conclusion**

* As we wind up, please remember that we all, in our own way, struggle with weariness, discouragement, doubt.
* We struggle with deception, self-righteousness and confusion.
* We all need someone to point us not just to our sins but also to Christ – calling us back to a heart of faith.
* We need our blinders removed. Not just the blinders that keep us from seeing our sin but also from seeing the grace and love of Christ.
* Only in light of his grace can we find reason to confess and forsake sin.
* And this is the encouragement we need every day.
* *We need to encourage one another not to give up! We need to remind each other that there is reason to continue!*
* We need to continue checking up on one another, reminding each other to open our eyes to God’s truth and to continue opening our hearts to his conviction and our lives to his grace.
* Let us continue reminding each other to keep following Christ by faith even when the struggles thicken. There’s help and hope in Him.

*(Psalm 46:1-3)*

**Q&A**

* Any questions?

**REFLECTIVE SESSION**

We will now take some time for personal reflections. Please take a couple of minutes to read the questions on the 3rd page of your handout. As you read the questions, please…

* Take a moment to note down a response to any of the 5 questions.
* Afterward, please take some time to seek forgiveness from God in ways you have sinned and also plead with Him for strength and for help.
* After that I will come in and make a concluding prayer.

**PRAYER**

* Thank God for his work of sanctification.
* Thank God that he has given us each other that we may minster to one another
* Ask God to forgive us for the times our confrontation has been a hindrance for the change of others. How we have allowed our demands and our sin to get in the way of God’s work in others.
* Acknowledge that God has called us to speak for him as ambassadors. And to use our talk as a tool for the His sanctifying work on others.
* Ask God for help and strength to wisely and in a godly way confront and intervene in each others’ lives.