

Growing Relationships Through Confrontation



by Mike & Sue Dowgiewicz

Restoration Ministries International



For an audio version of Growing Relationships Through Confrontation

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2019

Growing Relationships Through Confrontation was first published as a hard-copy book in 1998.

Our goal was to help readers become aware of the vast differences between the relational intimacy and spiritual power of the earliest followers of Jesus, and the self-obsessed, lukewarm compromise with the world which represents so much of Christendom today.

Since that time we've expanded the contents of this book through deeper insights and materials to equip people to restore the way of life our forefathers in the faith experienced in their love-grounded, obedient trust.

Please use the links to these various materials alongside this book so that the Holy Spirit may enable you to live a life that pleases your heavenly Father and lifts up the name of Jesus to a desperately needy world.

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Restoration Ministries International

- Restoring the Hebraic** Foundations of the Earliest Followers of Jesus
- Preparing Today's Followers of Jesus to Do Their Part in His Kingdom

****Following Jesus as LORD of your life with the trust-based determination of the first Hebrew, Abraham.**

Acknowledgement

We are indebted to C. James Maselko, President of Designed Learning, for his insights into the issues facing interpersonal confrontation. We thank our Lord God Who is the Author and Finisher of our faith, Who has joined us together with all other believers in His Body to work in unity for His glory.

About Mike & Sue Dowgiewicz



Mike and Sue Dowgiewicz became followers of our Lord Jesus in 1977 while Mike was a career officer in the navy, having served three deployments during the Vietnam Conflict as a helicopter pilot.

After being born again he realized that following Jesus was a response of overwhelming love toward his Lord, and he wanted to learn how he could more adequately present the life-changing work of His Savior to others.

Resigning from the navy in 1978, he attended Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary to study the roots of the many various denominations and sects throughout Christendom. There he was made painfully aware of both the division and the competition among the segmented religious establishment.

Through his own ministry track, however, he learned how important interpersonal connection with one another is in discipling others to walk in Jesus' steps through the indwelling Holy Spirit.

Sue attended seminary as well, focusing on studies in New Testament Greek and on effective ways to reach others from different cultures. In a way that only our Father could work out, both of these pursuits would feature heavily in their various ministries over the course of their lives together.

After seminary Mike and Sue administrated and taught at a Christian retreat center where they interacted with over 5,000 people. They were able to come alongside those who were hurting relationally within their families and experiencing frustration in their own faith walk.

While at the center, Mike was a counselor to religious leaders throughout southern New England. He was able to use the skills he'd acquired from his graduate studies in interpersonal relationships to encourage these leaders to develop a unified concern among their congregations for the lost in their communities to encounter Jesus.

Sue found her heart's desire to work among people of other cultures by teaching conversational English to international students at a nearby university for six years. Through their time together these students became dear friends, and a number of them heard about Jesus for the first time.

Mike and Sue's combined ministry was recognized by the Associated Press in an article that was published nationally. Mike also was featured in an article in New England Church Life, "Who Pastors the Pastor?"

Following their retreat ministry they lived in Israel, where our Father revealed the Hebraic foundations to them.

Restoration Ministries International has its basis in research and revelation they did while living in Israel, and Mike and Sue are sharing our Father's re-establishment of the Hebraic foundations that both communally strengthened the early followers of our Lord Jesus and spiritually empowered them.

Their present ministry through the internet is reaching people from 105 countries with a call to a life of loving and obedient trust in Jesus as their Lord.

Mike holds a B.A. in Economics from the University of Connecticut, an MBA from California Lutheran College, and a Master of Religious Education from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. Sue holds a B.S. in Education from the University of Connecticut as well as having taken several graduate courses at GCTS.

Father's Purpose For Restoration Ministries International

Restoration Ministries has its basis in revelation and research they did while living in Israel.

For the past 24 years through Restoration Ministries International Mike and Sue have been sharing our Father's re-establishment of the relational priorities that strengthened the early followers of Christ to boldly reach and disciple others.

The core of the Hebraic Foundations is based upon prioritizing relationships, beginning from the center of the diagram below outward. Restoration Ministries International was given by our Heavenly Father the responsibility to focus on the center three priorities.



- [For further information on our Father and Jesus.](#)
- [For further information on Your Home.](#)

•[For further information on Fellowship In Homes.](#)

Each of the materials produced by Restoration Ministries International is interconnected with a family of information related to what our Father told us to call "The Hebraic Restoration".

Each item is designed to stand alone to equip you to apply these foundational truths and principles to your life. Yet the real strength of each is found in its interrelationship to the other facets of the Hebraic Restoration.

Through these truths our Father is revealing the trust-based, obedient lifestyle of our father Abraham:

*“The promise comes by trust, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham’s offspring—not only to those who are of the law but also to those who are of the **faith of Abraham**. He is the **father of us all**. If you belong to Christ, then you are **Abraham’s seed**, and heirs according to the promise” (Romans 4:16,17; see also Galatians 3:29).*

Followers of our Lord Jesus are children of Abraham, the first Hebrew (Galatians 3:7). Abraham trusted God in love-grounded obedience, willing even to sacrifice his son at God’s command.

Therefore, God called him into covenant union with Himself, and caused Abraham to be the father/role model for all who follow Jesus our Lord.

THAT MEANS YOU!

CHAPTER 1

Followers Of Jesus Must Confront Divisive Issues

Would you desert your family just because they didn't agree with you on an issue? Would you cut off your hand just because a sprained finger kept you from playing golf?

These questions may sound foolish to you, but how quickly individuals in the body of Christ cut off communication or take offense when others don't see things the way they do!

No matter how frustrated you may get from wanting others to understand your point of view, remember: **Relationships must take precedence over any issues on which you disagree.** We experienced this concept firsthand in Israel, where we lived with close friends for several months. One afternoon Mike noticed two men in our neighborhood involved in an animated, heated discussion.

Our host Bert, a Jewish believer, asked Mike if he thought the relationship of those men would be jeopardized by such a strong disagreement. Recalling personal past experiences, Mike answered, "Of course!"

Bert replied, "That's the way it is with Gentiles. Your disagreements tend to alienate you. You become estranged from each other. This isn't so with Jewish people. Our relationships are more important to us than the issues we disagree about."

Mike was deeply convicted by Bert's observation, an insight that compelled us to take a closer look at the Bible's view of relationship.

This booklet develops a biblical basis for *supporting those we care about* while at the same time *confronting the issues* that are detrimental to the relationship.

Those who have read our book **Demolishing Strongholds** understand that the main assignment of demonic activity is to cause division—separation between you and God and between you and others in your life.

These spirits attack every level of relationship: husbands and wives, children and parents, children with each other, neighbors, co-workers, fellow worshipers.

Demonic servants of Satan locate and exploit footholds of rejection, bitterness, fear, and insecurity in churches, families, or individuals. No wonder we are warned by Peter:

"Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers [family in Jesus!] throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings" (1 Peter 5:8,9).

One of the devil's schemes that Paul warned believers about in Ephesians 6:11 is what we call the **"sweaty-body scenario."**



For thirty years Mike played a lot of pickup basketball. He normally perspires a lot during activity.

During the past few years he noticed an interesting trend regarding attitudes toward the normal bodily function of perspiration: Many young men hate to get sweat on themselves. They avoid body contact as much as possible.

Realizing this, Mike would purposely come up and slide against them. Sure enough, they would back off and fail to guard him.

He was free to make any shots he wanted!

In the relational realm, Satan uses the “sweaty body scenario” by creating an aversion in one person toward another. Normally he incites some behavioral or personality habit in a brother or sister that keeps you from drawing near that individual.

That one irritating flaw then colors all other thoughts or actions you have toward that person, creating an avoidance pattern in you. Satan does this to keep God’s children from obeying the “[one-anothering](#)” commands that permeate the Newer Testament.



During our ten years of teaching ministry at a retreat center from 1983 to 1993, we observed an ever-increasing rise of intolerance over interpersonal differences. This unwillingness to bend affects marriages, families, and friendships.

A Greek philosophical influence has threaded through much of Christian thinking today. This competitive, “*I’ll prove to you I’m right*” attitude causes people to become polarized in their positions and opinions.

They become personally offended when anyone differs with them. All too often their affections for each other diminish and even turn to animosity.

Think of how many times the apostle Paul calls members of the body “brother” and “sister.” Even Jesus defined mother, brother, and sister as those who did the will of His Father in heaven (see Matthew 12:50).

The Hebraic understanding of *family* ([mishpachah](#) in Hebrew) encompassed far more than the immediate blood relatives. Included were the entire extended family of Jewish people the world wide.

In the same way, as followers of Jesus our concept of family must stretch beyond the comfort zone of those with whom we choose to intermingle. If we are truly co-heirs with Christ in His Kingdom, then we are “relatives” in that family by His blood!

Let’s bring the analogy even closer to home: your own human body. Paul addresses a great number of verses to the Body of believers in Corinth to convince them of the necessity for *connection*—for that unity of well-being that comes when every part is functioning as it ought to.

We may not be pleased with all the individuals that make up our particular faith communities, be it a home fellowship or congregation, but from God’s viewpoint:

HE “has combined the members of the body and has given greater honor to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other” (1 Corinthians 12:24,25, emphasis added).

We are never all going to agree on everything all the time, even by the grace of God. We therefore need to learn how to biblically resolve those areas of personal differences that must find resolution, and to wait on God to solve those that we can’t.

But never should we cling to anger or bitterness. Those divide our unity in Jesus and sever our relationships so that we cannot function in a Body that is truly seeking to love and obey God.

Remember, Satan has declared war on the saints (see Revelation 12:17). To yield to his devices of deception, lies, and hatred is to corrode the love that is able to bind us together.

If he can stir up tension and apprehension over the differences we encounter, he has succeeded in establishing footholds that will ultimately bring estrangement into our relationships in Christ.

Differences exist because *we are different*. Even our gender differences were created by God to teach us to see our need for the other side's perspective.

Personality differences indicated by any number of tests confirm that we are not all clones of each other.

And distinctions in spiritual gifting cause us to see things differently. Just put four individuals gifted respectively with prophecy, exhortation, mercy, and administration in the same room to witness the same event, then ask them what they observed.

You probably won't get the same response! Yet each will offer input that contributes to the picture as a whole.

As you go through this workbook, remind yourself that immediate agreement on issues of difference may *not* be God's plan. Paul, writing from the perspective of a Jewish follower of Christ, concurs.

God's ultimate sovereignty is a great comfort for those who trustingly wait on His intervention:

"All of us who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you" (Philippians 3:15, emphasis added).

God's sovereign purposes will be accomplished. Let's trust Him to reveal the truth and hold onto our brotherhood in Jesus.

God expects that we will differ in our opinions in marriage and in other close relationships. Some of these differences may involve emotional convictions that are held very tightly.

Whatever people value dearly they cling to with strong emotional attachment. When it comes to matters of faith and obedience to God, this passion can be even greater.

For example, for some people, keeping their home free from potential visual and audio temptation is a key value. That may motivate them to toss their TV and carefully monitor all CD's, tapes, and magazines that come in.

For others, perfecting their personal skill in a sport or activity takes high priority. Perhaps their self-esteem is derived from that. For still others, changing their society through intense political activism is paramount.

Each person's values are different, yet none is intrinsically wrong. Just be sure that you are able to define for others *what is important to you*, and that you are *willing to listen* when others reveal their values to you.

Reflections

1. List 4 things that you value the most (peaceful home, health, security, intimate companionship, whatever). Using a scale of 0 to 100, indicate how important each value is to you.
2. Which of your values do you find is most often overlooked, stepped on, or criticized by others?
3. Which items, if any, on your list would you be willing to die for? Who or what influenced you to feel so strongly about these values?
4. How do you most often react to those whose values or beliefs conflict with yours? Describe a situation in which this conflict of values occurred.

CHAPTER 2

Christ-Like Confronting

Differences bring discomfort and sometimes emotional pain. We want to escape from our distress and blanket over the differences just so we don't have to risk confrontation.

But through our Father's grace and the teachings in His Word, God expects His people to work through the areas in which we differ with others. Learning to deal in love with our differences epitomizes a virtue of Jesus that we must practice repeatedly if it is to become part of our transformed nature.

Regrettably, many of the Sunday school and Bible study curricula used in congregations are designed specifically to convey content but minimize the chance that differences may surface and confrontation ensue over these differences.



Overemphasis on *content conveyance* reduces opportunity for personal confrontation and actually breeds the growing intolerance seen throughout the church in the U.S. God's children need to face their differences and grow *through* them, not avoid them.

Any viable relationship that continues to grow in ever-increasing Christ-likeness will require biblical confrontation and/or admonishment for it to flourish.

- **Confrontation** involves *coming to grips with differences*, none of which may be inherently wrong.
- **Admonishment**, however, involves confronting another person with *words designed to alter* attitude, behavior, or direction.

Consider the synonyms for “admonish” that occur repeatedly in scripture: reprove, exhort, correct, counsel, rebuke, warn, advise.

You may have been abused in the past by someone who misapplied admonishment or mistreated you unlovingly in the name of “biblical rebuke.” A close examination of **Colossians 3:12-17**, however, reveals the biblical prerequisites for administering biblical admonishment.

“Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience” (v. 12).

Because you have been chosen by God and filled with confidence in His love, you are completely able by His grace to put on the virtuous “garments” listed above. Yet none of these character traits grows in a vacuum.

For instance, in order to experience compassion, someone else needs to be hurting. To demonstrate humility, you need to be in a position where self-exaltation is also a tempting option. And certainly patience grows only with the fertilization of potential irritation or frustration brought on by someone else!

“Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you” (v. 13).

It is the potentially divisive issue or situation that brings you to the point of choosing to bear with another person’s differences. After all, an unChristlike response would be to flee the whole mess, severing the relationship and refusing to face it with forgiveness.

The forgiveness with which the Lord has forgiven you goes far beyond agreement that wrong has been committed. His intercession continues, and He never again reminds you of past sins that He has remitted.



No grievance can be too large for you to excuse and hold onto your bitterness or unforgiveness toward another individual, especially if you want to be available to be used according to God’s purposes.

“And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace” (vv. 14, 15).

Unity in the Body is the goal of our Father (see John 17:21,22). This takes a huge amount of love in “one-anothering”—personal, trusting obedience to the biblical, interactive commands for the Body.

Correct behaviors alone will produce prideful, isolated churchgoers. Only those who are yielded to the supernatural inner working of the Holy Spirit will have a loving heart ruled by peace that can righteously admonish, exhort, instruct, encourage, and correct others in the household of faith.

“And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God” (vv. 15,16).

Note that thankfulness is a *state of being*, an overflow of continual awareness of God’s mercy and kindness to you. With that attitude in place, you are then in a position to apply His Word to your own inner being.

From that well of wisdom you can instruct and admonish others with the goal of raising them up in Christlikeness. Admonishment that is done from the flesh, from wanting your own way to prevail, is far different from the God-directed and -empowered correction that promotes spiritual growth and fruit.

The apostle Paul was able to exhort and admonish and warn the Corinthian believers because he had practiced the virtues listed above.

He recognized himself as their spiritual father (see 1Corinthians 4:15). As such, he felt deeply the **relational responsibility** to direct them away from ungodliness and toward that which pleases God. Thus he could urge them to imitate his *way of life*, which encompassed far more than his actions.

Paul exhibited the inner working of the Holy Spirit so that these new believers also could experience the Spirit-led life as they obeyed His prompting.

Paul's admonishment redirected them toward a *loving obedience* to the Father that would bring glory to His Name.

Reflections

1. Name three people in your family or faith community who are willing to correct, rebuke, or admonish you when necessary.
2. When was the last time any of them did so? What was the issue he or she addressed? How did you feel when that person approached you about that issue?
3. Do you think it was difficult for that person to work up courage to come and speak to you? Ask how he or she felt. Do the responses agree?
4. When was the last time you confronted someone? What was the issue?
5. If you were to exhort or correct another person again, what heart preparations (according to Colossians 3:12-17) would you need to adjust before carrying out your assignment?

CHAPTER 3

Supporting Relational Harmony



“I don’t want to get involved!”
“I have enough problems of my own!”

Sound familiar? These are really just excuses for avoiding relational intimacy.

Your *noninvolvement* produces a void just your size in the church Body. A non-functioning foot will not carry you anywhere. A weak, barely operative heart will immobilize you completely.

Spiritual edification on an individual or corporate level comes only as each one does his part in harmony with the others.

What does *harmony* look like? In the context of Romans 12, harmony emerges from the *interconnected belonging* of each part with the other. Paul calls for “sober self-appraisal” that produces a certain degree of humility as you see how incomplete you are in isolation from the rest of the Body.

The gifting apportioned to you by the Holy Spirit is uniquely designed by Him to fit into a Body for specific purposes that will bring spiritual growth

and depth to each member.

For instance, perhaps there is a great need in your congregation for home visits to shut-ins, but your gift of mercy is being quenched by your frivolous misuse of time. Not only are you feeling that gnawing uneasiness from the Spirit, but the Body at large is missing out on the blessing you could be to those in need.

That's the time to draw near to God in repentant submission and yield to His intents and purposes for your time. Your inner peace will grow and there will be harmony in the Body as far as it depends on you.

See [God's Instruments for War: Discovering and Coordinating Spiritual Gifts as Weapons of Warfare](#), for more on the interconnection of spiritual gifts.

Both Paul and Peter twice refer to "brotherly love." This relational intimacy is *load-bearing*, that is, you love enough to shoulder the burdens and share the pain as a part of the family of Jesus.

Just as brothers and sisters in a biological family cause pain as well as bear it, so, too, families in Christ must be willing to risk painful intrusion or angry responses as they help their brother or sister get back on spiritual track with a godly word of rebuke or instruction.

Part of that relational responsibility entails coming alongside to offer accountability and to help guide one another onto the right path.

You wouldn't spank your child and not follow-up with a word of love and direction as to the right course she should follow. So, too, a wayward family member in the Lord needs more than a rebuke.

He or she also needs assurance that you care enough to help find the right course of action or attitude and then bring encouragement as steps are taken in that direction.

Apply the truth of Proverbs 27:6 to your own life: "*The kisses of an enemy may be profuse, but faithful are the wounds of a friend.*" Those who love you and have a vested interest in your spiritual growth are willing to sacrifice their time and efforts to help you restore intimacy in your walk with God and fellowship with others.

People with whom your relationship is only superficial will smile and ignore the pain in your eyes. They are not willing to “shoulder the load” with you.

We are called to be faithful as He is faithful. Are you willing to allow the Lord to intrude into your life with one of His needy children?

Relational responsibility offers you a whole realm of opportunity to put others before yourself in a righteous manner. If you are not finding joy or peace as you extend yourself to others, ask yourself if your motive is misguided.

- Are you trying to “prove” that you’re following Christ?
- Are you deriving some sort of perverse “martyr” satisfaction over being there for everybody and then grumbling about it?

True load-bearing that is empowered by the Holy Spirit brings discernment of when to say no, as well as the means to obey that to which He is calling you.

It’s easy enough to experience personal peace when you’re all alone and no one is making demands on you. But so much of the biblical text calls for you to merge your life with the lives of others both in the faith and outside it. That is where your willingness to live in harmony gets tested.

Paul admonished the Roman believers to live at peace *as much as it depends on them* (Romans 12:18). Even when by His grace you extend peace to others, there is no guarantee that they will return it. But your faithful obedience releases God to work in the heart of the ones to whom you’ve reached out.

Reflections

1. What percentage of your free or discretionary time is spent blessing others, be it by telephone, prayer, or other interaction? If Jesus were in your shoes, would that amount be the same? How would it differ?

2. Describe your response when you encounter a brother or sister in need. What form of involvement do you generally contribute?

3. Name three people in your faith community whom you really see as intimate spiritual brothers or sisters. In what ways does your relationship with them differ from that with others in your faith community?

Describe an instance when you experienced the “faithful wounds of a friend.” How did you feel at the time? Could you sense the love behind the words or did you feel like he or she was dropping a bomb on you? How was your friend able to help you along a new direction?

5. Since you are commanded to live in harmony with others, what changes is the Holy Spirit prompting you to make that will add to your own spiritual peace as well as the peace of your family in Jesus?

CHAPTER 4

Confrontation Is Not Conflict

**The key to biblical confrontation:
*Focus on the issue, don't attack the person.***

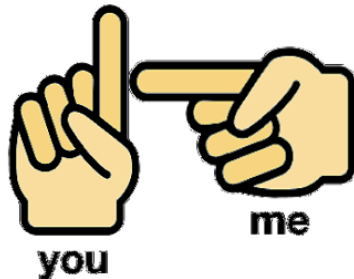
Followers of Jesus will not always agree on everything. Some issues will be major, others relatively minor. Few true disciples are willing to split over a difference in the carpet color of the sanctuary.

Most differences or issues can be resolved if the conflict is viewed as a point of difference between the parties, i.e., "**We** have a problem" rather than "**You** have a problem."

The biblically Hebraic viewpoint of dealing with differences is like putting your two index fingers together and recognizing that **we together** have a situation that needs resolution.

Conflict

"**YOU** have a problem"



Confrontation

"**WE** have a problem"



MOVIE 4.1

Conflict Is Not Confrontation



•Conflict is relationally destructive. •Confrontation is redemptive.

The Gentile approach we inherited from the Greek philosophers tends to find fault or blame from an *adversarial approach*. That process looks like one index finger pointing at the other and saying that the problem comes from *your* faulty way of thinking.

But *we in Christ* are members of the same Body; as parts of the whole, each one is part of the communal “**we**.” Thus *we* are obligated to either find resolution or to wait on God to make it plain.

Because of the Hebraic self-awareness of the early Church, this was a very natural concept to grasp. The earliest believers were Jewish. They fully understood a *communal belonging* to all other Jews worldwide. Their sense of “**we**” in both the Messianic and non-Messianic communities was intensely strong.

Our current church culture has become more pluralistic and divided in its thinking, finding it difficult to see ourselves as one Christian family. We need intentional, interpersonal training in order to apply the true, biblical confrontation that brings unity of spirit.

One of the most loving interpersonal skills you can develop is the ability to support someone even while you confront or admonish him.

Confrontation can take many forms. Sometimes it is just trying to clarify where you and I disagree on a matter. Sometimes it is more intense, compelling you to come to me to discuss a matter of sin that I am clinging to.

What do you normally do when you hear something that differs with your view or opinion? Your reaction may be something like this:

“If I listen to you and try to understand what you’re telling me, you may misinterpret my listening as agreeing with you.”

So to defend yourself, you might interrupt with words like “No” or “You’re wrong” or “I disagree.” Worse, you may stop listening and begin to prepare your own position or rebuttal, and *never fully hear* what the other person is really saying.

Think of how often the phrase “*He who has an ear, let him hear*” appears in the Bible. True hearing entails more than the passage of sounds through your ears. Your brain interprets those sounds into words, and then instills emotional response into their meaning so that action then follows.

At any point you can choose to “shut off” communication by not processing those words or by refusing to allow them to penetrate your understanding.

You owe it to others to allow the impact of what they’re presenting to you to evoke a response that shows he or she is worthy of consideration.

If time is crucially short, you can gently but firmly present alternatives, such as, “Can we discuss this more tomorrow afternoon when we won’t be rushed?” But shutting them off even while standing in their presence violates the command,

“*In humility consider others better than yourselves*” (Philippians 2:3).

You can support the person you are confronting without having to agree with him or her. Support accepts the validity of whatever he or she says, thinks, or feels, irrespective of

your agreement with it.

Your support allows him to be heard and understood even if you differ with his position or ideas. You are giving him the right to his feelings and perceptions as *personal realities*.

When you consciously listen, that support enhances his dignity. After all, that individual is made in God's image and loved by Him. Just because your views and beliefs don't match in no way subtracts from his innate value.

It is crucial that you *clarify the areas in which you do agree* if your relationship is to take on deeper dimensions. If you have a relationship that revolves exclusively around tennis, little meeting of the hearts will occur.

However, if you belong to a home fellowship family, the accountability in your walk together with the Lord will be multi-faceted. There will be multiple areas of agreement, and even some areas of disagreement.

If your relationships are accountable you will encounter situations in which a timely rebuke or admonishment is needed. *How* you handle your differences in these close relationships will be key to deepening true fellowship.

The differences you face provide opportunities for you both to exercise submission to one another and to demonstrate patience and forbearance.

The value that you and others bring to a relationship is your wonderful uniqueness in being made *in God's image*. The skill of biblical support is the ability to demonstrate acceptance of one another no matter what he or she thinks, says, or feels. This is *their* reality as much as your thoughts and values are reality for *you*.

Skillful support recognizes where you differ with each other, and realizes that you have a right to your differences. To react in any other way is to literally sit in judgment of the person...a position reserved only for God Himself:

"Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye?" (Matthew 7:3).

The deeper a relationship, such as marriage, parenting, or load-bearing, the more critical it is that *supportive confrontation and admonition* occur. Workable solutions must be identified and carried through in order for the relationship to continue with health and vitality and trust.

A warning is in order here:

If you silently go along with everything someone else says even if you don't agree, you will face the danger of emotionally detaching yourself from that person. Your relationship will become strained, and you will avoid contact because you will feel that your beliefs or ideas have no value.

A loving relationship in Christ necessitates confronting or admonishing the other person when differences arise.

Confrontation allows you the freedom to present your side, and an opportunity to come before God together in prayer to search the Scriptures to discern resolution of the

situation.



Supportive listening and interaction show that you recognize the other person's position to be legitimate for him or her. It meets one of the deepest human needs — the *need to be heard*.

We all need to be loved, understood, and accepted. These needs can be met when someone takes the time to listen and accept us even if they don't agree with our ideas or beliefs.

Reflections

1. One key element of supporting another person is *to listen*. Ask five people with whom you have a close relationship to evaluate you as a listener. Be sure to ask them to evaluate your facial expressions and body language for attentiveness. Record the essence of their comments.
2. Recall a situation in which you seriously disagreed with your spouse, child, or close friend on an issue that was important to you. Replay the conversation as you remember it. Would you have described yourself as supportive of the other person? If so, how did you indicate that? What changes, if any, in your approach do you think God would have you make in any future confrontations?
3. Think about this verse as it applies to you: "*As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another*" (Proverbs 27:17). When you sharpen iron, flakes of rust and dullness are scraped away. If you are the "dull, rusting iron," this can be a painful process. Recall an incident in which you knew that God was using you to sharpen someone else in admonition, or when He was using another person to remove "corrosion" from you. What benefits came out of that situation?

CHAPTER 5

Be Supportive While You Confront

Differences that interfere with the quality or purpose of your relationship need to be addressed in order for fruit to be produced. We've already discussed the need for admonishment in the Body of Christ as part of relational responsibility.

But sometimes we differ in areas that *don't* involve sinful attitudes or behaviors.

**We can agree to disagree.
or
We can confront the difference
in a biblical manner
while growing our relationship.**

“**Confrontation**” seems to contain a flavor of something distasteful. Yet in the biblical sense, it means to stand fast or to *stand firm* for a cause.

Most of us feel that the whole notion of confrontation is something we'd rather avoid than deal with. But while avoidance may provide immediate comfort, it will eventually disrupt harmony and vitality in the Body.

Again, confrontation is not synonymous with conflict. Biblical confrontation enables a detrimental situation to be changed for the better. It contains a gamut of approaches from discussion to correction or admonition.

The goal and process involved in confrontation is *redemptive*. In other words, you confront another person so that harmony between you can once again be restored.



Conflict is related to discord and hostility. Conflict entails a “win-lose” element in which one person must be the victor while the other goes down in defeat.

Although confrontation and conflict may create similar emotions, the goals of each have nothing in common.

Remember:

**Biblical confrontation is *not* conflict —
proving one person right
and the other one wrong.**

In Acts 15:36-41, Paul and Barnabas disagreed over whether to take Mark with them on their next missionary trip. Mark had deserted them in Pamphylia and Paul perhaps distrusted the staying power of the young man. We

are told,

“They had such a sharp disagreement that they parted company. Barnabas took Mark and sailed for Cyprus.”

Even though a *“sharp disagreement”* occurred between them and they no longer ministered together (as far as we can tell from Scripture), we can infer that the loving respect Paul and Barnabas had for each other was not severed.

After all, it had been Barnabas who went to receive Paul after his conversion when everyone else was still fearful of him:

“When [Paul] came to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples, but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he really was a disciple.

But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. He told them how Saul on his journey had seen the Lord and that the Lord had spoken to him, and how in Damascus he had preached fearlessly in the name of Jesus” (Acts 9:26,27).

They had been through a lot together for the sake of the gospel. The church at Antioch was aware of the long-standing relationship of these two powerhouses for Jesus.

Paul and Barnabas had ministered together in Antioch for an extended period of time before the disagreement erupted.

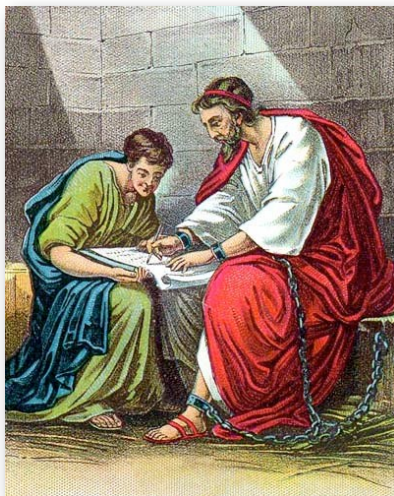
Rather than make a judgment call that would deem one right and the other wrong, the brothers put the matter into the hands of the Lord.

Barnabas and Mark sailed off in one direction, where presumably the younger man continued his training under his godly mentor. *“But Paul chose Silas and left, commended by the brothers to the grace of the Lord” (15:40).*

Because they *refused to be estranged* because of their differences, we see Barnabas’s protégé Mark joining Paul later in his life:

“My fellow prisoner Aristarchus sends you his greetings, as does Mark, the cousin of Barnabas. (You have received instructions about him; if he comes to you, welcome him.)” (Colossians 4:10).

“Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, because he is helpful to me in my ministry” (2 Timothy 4:11).



Paul includes Mark in his greetings to Philemon, *“And so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas and Luke, my fellow workers” (Philemon 1:24).* Doubtless, if Barnabas had held onto a grudge against Paul, his young cousin would not have risked his life to help the old apostle later on.

Paul again faced confrontation with a fellow apostle, this time Peter. *“When Peter came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he was in the wrong” (Galatians 2:11).* This was not easy for Paul, for he wrote, *“I came to you in weakness and fear, and with much trembling” (1 Corinthians 2:3).*

Throughout the scriptures the ability to both *support and confront* is seen as the pattern of God's people with each other: "If your brother sins go and show him his fault" (Matthew 18:15).

Herein lies a major weakness in church relationships today. By not supporting one another even in confrontation, we knock the blossom off relationships that were meant to bear fruit to glorify the Father.

Stable fellowship and relational responsibility that represents "family" loyalty and love requires *belonging to and becoming part of* each other—warts and all.

Confrontation is analogous to house cleaning: It removes the dirt and clutter and improves the living conditions for all who abide there.

Remember that your support involves you giving the one you are confronting the *right to his own stance*.

Think of the emphasis our Lord placed on treating others as you want to be treated:

"So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets" (Matthew 7:12).

Support brings encouragement to the other person, while *confrontation allows you* to express a stance or position *that differs*.

Interpersonal tensions are normally founded on one or more of four areas of difference:

goals

- The purpose of the relationship; answers the question of "*where*" the relationship is going.

methods

- The manner and practice by which aspects of the relationship are carried out; answers the question of "*how*" the relationship should function.

values

- The significant elements esteemed by the partners in the relationship; answers the question of "*why*" you think and/or act as you do.

facts

- Circumstances of certainty which can be proven by investigation; answers the question of "*what*" is facing the relationship.

In any interpersonal difference, you should always take the time to *confirm the area(s)* of your disagreement or misunderstanding. If you can identify the differences you have and the basis for them, a resolution is then at least possible.

Identifying the area(s) of difference is like getting all the cards dealt before you begin the game.

Too often people attempt resolutions but skip the step of identifying differences. They then fail to grasp what they are trying to resolve, which results in the same difference(s) arising again later.

For instance, your two children are squabbling over which TV show to watch. If you walk over and turn off the TV and leave it at that, you have done nothing to prevent the situation from happening again.

But if you allow each child to present his view without accusations toward his sibling, you can then mediate a system of TV viewing that will be agreeable to both.

Perhaps they might come up with the idea of a chart to sign up for certain shows, or a check mark sheet of who had the last turn. You'll be providing them an opportunity to learn to negotiate as well!

Often as you work on identifying differences, *other information surfaces* that can help you reach resolution.

Be sure to clearly identify the differences in the position(s) that each of you is taking so that you will focus on the issue and not on each other's perceived character deficiencies.

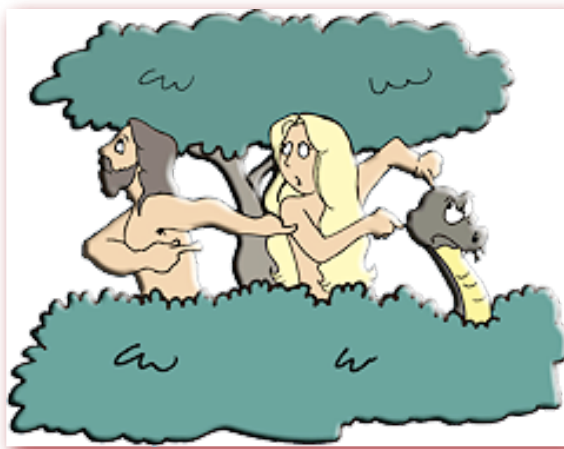
Avoid words like "You always..." or "You never..." Your goal is to *resolve the issue*, not raise accusations that lead to a wounded relationship.

Take responsibility for your own feelings.

If the issue you are confronting involves a lot of emotional fervor, be alert to one another's feelings.

You are responsible for the feelings that are aroused in you. No one else causes them. You can be angry at other people for their behavior, but it's unrealistic to blame them for what's going on inside you.

You are the one who creates hostile, angry feelings inside yourself; the other person merely supplies the behavior that triggers that response in you.



The response of *blaming others* is an attempt to evade personal responsibility. Adam blamed Eve, Eve blamed the serpent, and they were still thrown out of the garden of Eden.

The current social trend assumes a *victimization* posture: If you delve far enough into the past, you can discover who is at fault for your present misery.

Looking for someone to blame can keep you imprisoned in self-pity and confusion. Like Paul, however, followers of Christ would do well to forget what is behind and press on to win the glorious eternal prize (see Philippians 3:13,14).

Take full responsibility for yourself, including your feelings. You can then hear more clearly and open-mindedly what the other person is sharing.

Don't feel threatened by convictions that are expressed with intensity.

The stoic approach our society has inherited from the Greek philosophers frowns on any display of strong emotion. Emotional expression is biblical as long as it is not aimed at anyone.

Many men, in particular, are caught in this stoic trap. They hold in their emotions for so long that when they finally do release them, destructive verbal or physical abuse results.

We must firmly grasp our biblically Hebraic roots: *Relationships are more important than issues*. True faith trusts that in all differences, “*God will make it plain.*”

Confrontation is risky because being different is risky.



Your feelings may get hurt when you confront someone. As both of you work to solve the problem, you might receive some new information or insight and discover that you have to change your position.

If you do not confront a brother or sister about a difference, you are denying both that person and yourself the value that you bring into the relationship. A solution that is presented may be in error because your particular insight was not included.

Perhaps you hold a key perception that could alter the course of someone’s spiritual journey.

But if you listen to the demonic lies that you have little worth and that the differing belief or idea that you can offer has little value, then you become an impotent Body part.

That which the Spirit was nudging you to share will be squelched, and the Body will suffer because of it.



There is also a risk if you *don't* confront someone with whom you differ or see headed down a sinful path.

That person may recognize your reluctance or timidity and hold you in low regard or even disdain. Your value in relationship to that person as a true brother or sister will be lessened.

Procrastination only increases your inner tension, and perhaps heightens any barriers of resistance in the person you need to confront.

There are certain risks in confrontation, but even greater risks in non-confrontation. The real issue is not “whether or not to confront my brother or sister,” but “*how and when to confront with loving effectiveness.*”

Reflections

1. List several verses that deal with confrontation and/or admonishment. How would you distinguish between rebuke, correction, warning, admonishing, confronting, reproof, exhortation, and counsel?
2. Have you ever been in a situation in which, like Paul and Barnabas, a third party disrupted your relationship for a while? How did reconciliation between you come about?
3. Think of three people with whom you are not in agreement about everything. •Do you differ over goals, facts, values, or methods? Which of these four areas seem most serious to you? Why?
4. What issue really arouses emotion in you? How have you responded in the past to someone who not only disagrees with you but whose position seems unbiblical to you as well? What did you do?
5. On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you gauge your level of emotion when you are confronting differences over issues? Did you grow up in a home where feelings were expressed and considered? Are there any areas of your emotions that you think God wants to change in you?

CHAPTER 6

Dire Consequences If You Don't Confront



In close interpersonal relationships you may try to avoid confrontation because you just don't want to face any accompanying emotional tensions. What may result, however, is a ["co-dependent relationship."](#)

In a co-dependent relationship, one person dominates everyone else while one or more others, because they want security or at least peace, refuse to voice their differences.

Jerry Harvey, a business management specialist, illustrates the consequences of non-confrontation in his book *The Abilene Paradox and Other Meditations on Management*:



One particularly sweltering afternoon in West Texas, Harvey, his wife, and her parents were sitting on the shady veranda playing dominoes. Suddenly his father-in-law piped up, "Let's get in the car and go to Abilene and have dinner at the cafeteria." Abilene was fifty miles away, and their old car had no air-conditioning.

As Harvey inwardly groaned, his wife enthusiastically agreed. He asked his mother-in-law, who also agreed. So off to Abilene they went. The food was lousy and the drive brutal. When they finally returned, his mother-in-law complained, "I wouldn't have gone if you all hadn't pressured me into it."

Aghast, Harvey exclaimed that he'd been content to stay on the porch. His wife admitted she had gone only because she wanted to please her father. The father-in-law confessed that he had suggested the trip only because he thought they might be bored.

Four people ended up doing something none of them really wanted to do because *no one wanted to speak up*.

You can't always categorize by personality type the dominant individual you are fearful to confront. Sometimes the fears are irrational perceptions that have no basis in reality. This was probably the case in the Abilene paradox.

In other instances, it is the person whom others have to tiptoe around to avoid withdrawal or tears who is really the “one in charge.” Those behaviors are actually controlling the response of others, but no one wants to confront the manipulation.

People who have an underlying apprehension or fear when they know they have to interact with a dominant person are the co-dependents. They don’t want anything said or done that may set off the dominant individual.

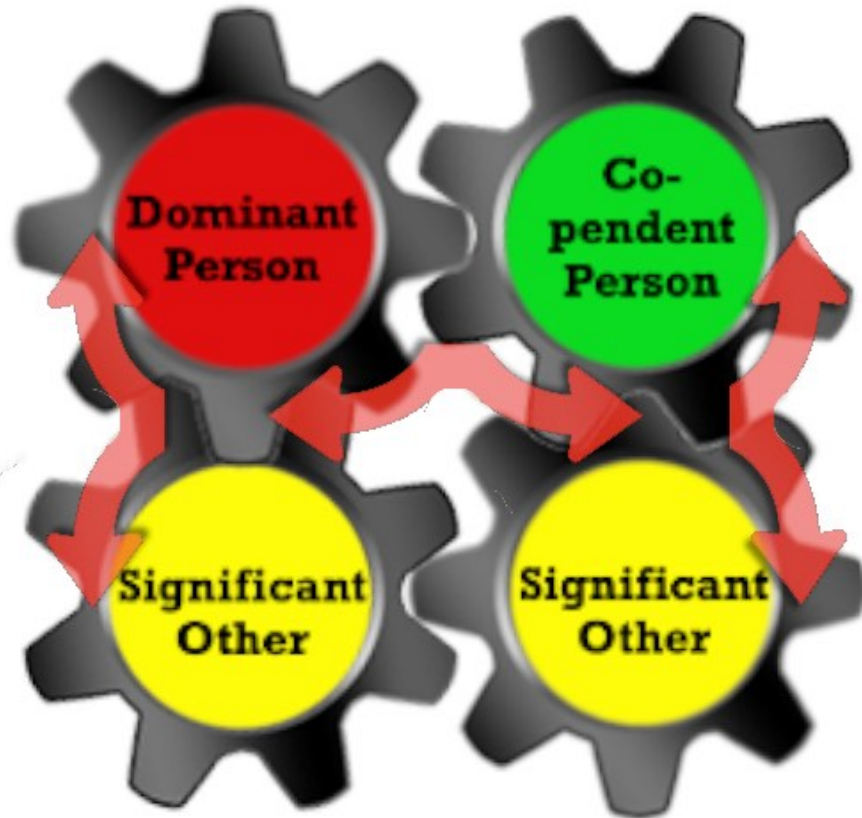
They convince the others involved to stifle their input too. These “significant others” who could help the Body function in a productive, godly way thus fail to step in and speak up.

The co-dependent person is so desperate to avoid confrontation with the dominant individual that he or she actively discourages admonishment. The longer that discomfort and avoidance are practiced, the more deeply entrenched fear and non-confrontation become.

In families and close faith community relationships, two possible responses are likely:

- Others will be entrapped in the co-dependent relationship, or
- They will be forced to flee the relationship in order to maintain their own identity, respect, and values.

**The destructive force
of codependent relationships
look like gears spinning.**



MOVIE 6.1 **The Destructive Force Of Codependency**



The love of Jesus doesn't flourish where there is apprehension.

The motion of the gears is driven by the **dominant** person's *unconfronted behavior, ideas, or opinions*.

If you are the **co-dependent** person, you *fear the emotional tension* brought about by confrontation. You may then *offer excuses and even defend* the dominant person's behavior.

Affected by your fear and denial are the **significant others**, children or spiritual family who are in close relationship with you.

They may want to confront or admonish the one who is controlling everyone else, but they are also *fearful of the emotions* the confrontation may generate.

And if they care deeply about you, they may *excuse your defensive actions* as a co-dependent person.

We faced such a situation at one of our *Restoring the Early Church* workshops. The participants were seated at tables in "family groupings" of those with whom they already had a relationship or shared something in common.

One older group didn't seem to be making much progress on their group discussion assignment. As Mike talked with them, they revealed that one of their group who had just left for the afternoon had held them all in bondage for years.

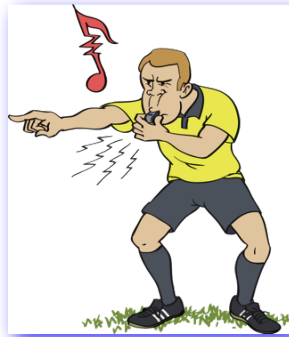
His overbearing attitude and arrogance had prevented them from addressing the discomfort they felt when he abused them. They had all murmured about the situation but had never gone to the man with the bold love that confrontation requires.



When Mike finally was able to break through their co-dependency with the truth of their *disobedience to God* and their own *unloving cowardice*, they repented.

After they prayed, two of them purposed before God to hold one another accountable to go to this individual with confession of their own sin and with admonishment and exhortation for him.

Sometimes An Outside Intervener (a peacemaker) Is Needed



“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God”
(Matthew 5:9).

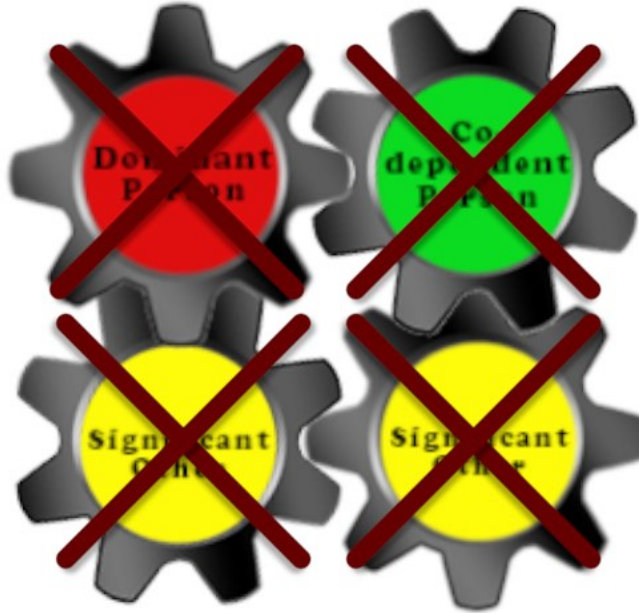
Peacemakers are people of justice who have the love of Jesus. They can listen without allowing themselves to become prejudiced or take sides. They know that as long as apprehension exists the love of Jesus is blocked out.

Also, you can't confront only the dominant person and expect that everyone else will breathe a sigh of relief and things will be wonderful.

You must also help the co-dependent person and the significant others because their attitudes and behavior have been altered by their response to the dominant person. They, too, need to repent for their failure to lovingly admonish those who have crippled the purpose of the Body.



In order to stop the gears from turning and eliminate the entire co-dependency, everyone involved must confront the reality of the situation, confess their part in it, repent before God, and look for God's ways to relate righteously to each other.



Reflections

1. Describe any situations you have encountered in which another person controlled everyone else by his or her attitude or behavior. Did anyone lovingly confront this person? Did you? If not, why not?
2. How would you handle a situation in which a close friend was pursuing a decision that you sensed from the Lord would hurt his Christian walk? What if someone warned you in advance that this brother might not respond well to your intervention?
3. What scriptures would you use to encourage others in your faith community who are reluctant to confront a dominant individual? Describe a situation in which you have observed someone skillfully exhort others using scripture effectively.
4. How could brothers and sisters in the faith encourage one another to “maintain clean slates” in their relationships? How can you avoid becoming nit-picking watchdogs around one another, and distinguish the issues or situations that really need to be addressed?

CHAPTER 7

Confrontation Really Works

- 👍 **1. When I support the person whom I am confronting or admonishing, I am recognizing his or her reality.**
- 👉 **2. Confrontation legitimizes my position or ideas.**
- 👥 **3. Together WE make explicit our differences and the resolutions that God intends.**

Marriages and close relationships in faith communities involve relational responsibilities that lead to *accomplishing mutual goals*. Because we will not always agree nor will each one always be walking in loving obedience to God, the skills of supportive confrontation are critical.

It is not enough for us to confront differences that hinder our relationship and just leave it at that. We need to resolve these in some way or we will give Satan an opportunity to destroy the love that we share.

If we are unable to reach resolution among ourselves, we need to submit to an outside, mature individual for mediation. Paul tells us,

“Therefore, if you have disputes about such matters, appoint as judges even men of little account in the church!” (1 Corinthians 6:4).

The apostle is certainly hoping that such a need is unnecessary. However, unresolved conflict that is truly hindering brotherhood must be confronted.

Godly outside intervention should not be perceived as failure in the relationship, but as the biblical extension of the Body helping in time of need — **load-bearing**.

See *Restoring The Early Church*, [Chapter 12 “Neighborhood Home Fellowship: Load-bearing Relationships”](#), for more on how vital load-bearing is to true fellowship.

Remember, the purpose of developing communication skills is to *nurture relationships* in which each one feels loved, understood, and accepted.

Without loving, biblical admonishment given by those who are walking intimately with the Father, depth of maturity and sincere “one-anothering” that attracts unbelievers will never advance.

With *supportive confrontation*, relationships will be nurtured, differences will be explored, conflicts will be resolved. Then growth can occur.



SUPPORT

Support encourages the *other person*.

What to support

- The other person’s anxiety, fear, doubt.
- The right for him or her to feel or think differently.
- The reality of his or her perceptions.

How to support

- Pray together for wisdom and truth.
- Let the other person speak his or her case.
- Listen! Listen! Listen!
- Restate back what he or she is saying.
- Verbalize his or her feelings.
- Ask for his or her preferred solution.

Don’ts:

- Don’t rush in too quickly with solutions.
 - Don’t tell him how he shouldn’t feel.
 - Don’t cut him or her off too soon.
 - Don’t judge — describe instead.
- Don’t give unsolicited advice that is irrelevant to the present issue.



CONFRONT

**Confronting encourages *you*
(and that’s good!).**

What to confront:

- Problems that are not being solved.

- Differences that hamper the relationship.
- Sins, attitudes, behaviors that are detrimental.

How to confront:

- Treat issue as a situation you both need to solve.
- Acknowledge the other person's position.
- State your differences clearly and succinctly.
- Check to see if you are being understood.
- Be responsible for your own feelings.
- Fully explore the differences.

Don'ts:

- Don't attack his or her character or imply motives.
- Don't railroad your own solution, even if you are in a position to do that.
- Don't problem-solve until you have both discussed the issues to one another's satisfaction.

A Simple Concept...

**DIFFICULT TO DO CONSISTENTLY
WITHOUT LOVING AWARENESS,
PATIENT PRACTICE,
AND FERVENT PRAYER**

[One-anothering](#)

One-anothering is demonstrated as family members and extended spiritual family put into action the supportive love that is manifested in the 54 “one another” passages found in the Newer Testament.

[Load-bearing](#)

Supportive love in action is called “load-bearing”, and is demonstrated by the 54 “one-another” passages found in the Newer Testament. Relational fruit is produced when extended spiritual family members uphold righteousness in their daily lives in love-grounded, obedient trust in Jesus as Lord of their lives. Your relationships deepen through Spirit-prompted service to each other as you seek to fulfill your Father’s purposes.

[Mishpachah](#)

The first followers of our Lord Jesus recognized one another as mishpachah [mish-puh-KAH], extended spiritual family who share relational responsibility for each other as brothers and sisters in authentic fellowship as family in Jesus.

[Co-dependent relationship](#)

Codependency is a behavioral condition in a relationship in which one person enables another person's addiction, poor mental health, immaturity, irresponsibility, or under-achievement. Among the core characteristics of codependency is an excessive reliance on other people for approval and a sense of identity.

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