

My Brother's Keeper, Part 2

Luke 17:3-4

August 28, 2022

Well, we're in Luke 17, and we're continuing a series called My Brother's Keeper, and we are looking at Luke 17:1-10, Luke 17:1-10. Today, we're just going to get through the first four verses. Last week we learned that we need to be our brother's keeper, and this week we're going to learn how to be our brother's keeper. So this is, this is really some practical, practical teaching from our Lord today.

And so today is going to be less, maybe less like a sermon and more like some in-house instruction for the saints. This is like the equipping of the saints for the work of the ministry, like it says in Ephesians 4:11-12. That's my job, and that's what I hope every Sunday we're doing here, trying to be faithful to that instruction.

GRACE CHURCH

Greeley

This is definitely, though, like a word of instruction from our Lord. So if last week was the what and the why of being my brother's keeper, this week is more about the how to. This is about how we do this together. I gave you a two-point outline last week, and I'm just going to briefly mention the first point, summarize, and then get right into the second point.

So the first point we started with last week is, number one, sin is serious, so pay careful attention. Sin is serious, so pay careful attention. That was point one in our two-point outline. That's all we really had time to cover last week. But look at verses 1 and 2.

We see that this falls immediately on the, on the heels of the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, and Jesus said to his disciples, Luke 17:1-2, "Temptations to sin are sure to come, but woe to the one through whom they come." What's the woe? The woe has just been described in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus.

GRACE CHURCH

Greeley

It was a graphic, vivid portrayal of the woe he's describing. "Woe to the one through whom temptations to sin come." Verse 2, "It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck and he were cast into the sea than that he should cause one of these little ones to sin." And then this in verse 3, "Pay attention to yourselves."

After delivering a parable, graphically, vividly, terrifyingly portraying the reality of a rich man who unexpectedly finds himself suffering in torment. It's a religious man. In this culture, he would have been a religious man. He would have been a church-going man. He would have been your neighbor. He would have been friendly, respected, commended in the community and yet he finds himself unexpectedly suffering in torment after he dies.

And so Jesus, his warning here to us as a church, to his disciples, this warning makes perfect sense. "Pay attention to yourselves." Watch out for yourselves. It's not an individualistic command, just pay attention to yourself individually, though this has individual implications.

This is a corporate command. Pay attention to yourself as a community. Pay attention to yourself as a fellowship of believers. You disciples, pay attention to yourselves. You are your brother's keeper. We have to watch out for ourselves. We have to guard the fellowship. It's our duty, our job, to protect the little ones in our midst.

Just as society tries to protect the little ones from predators preying upon their little lives and their naivete and their vulnerability and their weakness, so we as a church do the same thing with the little ones among us.

"Temptations to sin," *ta skandala*. That's, *skandalon* is the, is the noun, stumbling block. And in the context, these temptations to sin, Jesus is refer, Jesus is referring here to the scribes and the Pharisees, those who oppose the godly, those who rejected the little ones who despised the poor and the crippled and the, the lame and the blind, those who criticized Jesus for receiving tax collectors and sinners and eating with them.

They're the older brother in the parable of the prodigal son. They're the ones who not only hate their younger brother and hate the grace and the forgiveness that's coming upon him, but they hate the father for it, too. That's who these stumbling blocks are in context.

And Jesus' summary of the parable for his disciples forms an introduction, then, into the instruction that we're about to hear today. So we want to make sure we stay far, far away from that woe that Jesus has pronounced upon those through whom temptations to sin will inevitably come. They will arise.

We don't want to be the people who are the stumbling blocks. We don't want to introduce the stumbling blocks. We don't want anyone in our fellowship to cause others to stumble. We don't want any of these little ones in our midst to stumble, either. Consequences are so serious and final and deadly and permanent.

GRACE CHURCH

Greeley

And so we are, by this instruction from our Lord and by this warning from our Lord, we are well motivated, aren't we, to pay attention to ourselves, to be our brother's keeper, to listen carefully to Jesus' instruction. We're convinced that we need to take up the responsibility, take up this blessed duty, this call of our Lord to care for our brothers and sisters, to make sure that we know what to do, know how to respond when the inevitable stumbling block enters into our fellowship.

And so the second point, this is what we'll get into today, number two, sin is insidious, so practice biblical confrontation. Sin is insidious, so practice biblical confrontation. Since stumbling blocks are inevitable, since it's impossible that there will not be stumbling blocks entering into our fellowship, and since they enter into our fellowship not with signs on them, but through loving people like they, flesh and blood people like you and me, then it's inevitable that people will enter into our fellowship who, though they don't appear that way at the first sight, they will become a cause of stumbling for others.

GRACE CHURCH

Greeley

We need to count on it, because our Lord told us to. They will become a cause of stumbling for others. They will inevitably introduce temptations to sin, temptations to compromise. They'll introduce aberrant or false doctrine. They will influence others through ungodly behavior, whether in their speech, their influence, their lifestyle.

The sin, the temptation to sin, it's insidious. It's deceptive. It's pernicious. It's crafty because it comes in the form of people that we as a people, we as a believing community, we are inclined to love them. We're inclined to think the best. We're inclined to receive and welcome and rejoice in people coming into our fellowship. And so there's a vulnerability in us.

Jude identifies the same issue. Jude in Jude verses 3 and 4, that short little one-chapter epistle, Jude says, "Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary instead to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints." Jude, what changed your mind about the purpose in

writing? Why couldn't you just write about our common salvation, rejoice in that? Why did you have to get all serious on us and talk about contention?

Verse 4, "For certain people have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality, that is, living by their senses. And they deny our only master and Lord Jesus Christ." Watch out. Canon of New Testament revelation had not even closed. The ink's not even dry, and already what Jesus is warning us about in Luke 17, it's happening in the little letter that Jude wrote.

So Luke 17:1-2, it's a perennial problem. It's inevitable that stumbling blocks will come. There's not a day that goes by that we must always be watchful, always be on our guard, always be checking, always be careful and concerned. Doesn't mean live in fear. Means live in joy, but discernment and wisdom.

And look at verses 3 and 4. Jesus says, "Pay attention to yourselves." And here's how you put this into practice. Here's

GRACE CHURCH

Greeley

how you pay attention. "If your brother sins, rebuke him. And if he repents, forgive him. And if he sins against you seven times in the day and turns to you seven times saying, 'I repent,' you must forgive him."

Short instruction, just two verses. But man, is that packed with content. It requires great wisdom in putting it into practice. There's more to be said about this passage than I can say in an hour, but this is about practicing biblical confrontation, and that can be tricky if you've ever entered into this.

People are tricky, aren't they? And sometimes when you confront or you bring something up to somebody that's difficult and complicated, sometimes you see not the best in yourself coming out. Confrontation can be tricky, and you don't want to go into the, one of these confrontation situations wielding a battle axe or a broadsword, just whaling away at everything, swinging around, lopping off sins left and right. That's not biblical confrontation, that's idiocy. Makes a big, big mess.

Doesn't actually hit the problem. Hits a bunch of other things and causes all kinds of other problems.

Confront, confrontation, biblical confrontation, if it's done biblically, requires a gentle hand, requires a soft touch and a steady hand of precision. So instead of Conan the Barbarian with a broadsword, think surgeon with a scalpel, eye surgeon, brain surgeon, delicate, so there's like blood vessels. Think about someone with precision and skill. Biblical confrontation requires this. It requires patience, a gentle demeanor, and, as Jesus says here, a gracious and forgiving spirit.

So if you think, "Well, that's not me, so therefore I'm excused from this whole, there's a, there's an asterisk down here and it says, Hey, if you're a knucklehead, more like a Conan the Barbarian, doesn't apply to you, don't get involved. That's not what it says. "Pay attention to yourselves." All of you, "Pay attention to yourselves." And if you're not there, get there. And you get there by practice.

So let's get into this. Jesus addresses two situations here: in verse 3, one in which you witness a brother sinning, verse 3; and another situation where he kind of turns up the heat a bit in verse 4, in which you're not just witnessing someone sinning; you are the victim of that sin. That sin is now against you; you're the victim of your brother's sin. The first isn't personal, necessarily, but the second definitely is.

So verse 3, "If your brother sins," if you witness a fellow Christian sinning, whether it's a sin against others or against God alone or whatever it is, rebuke him. In verse 4, Jesus makes it personal. "If your brother sins," notice it, there, "against you." Against you.

First situation, your brother's sinning, not necessarily against you, and if that's the case, what do you do? Once again, for your purposes in note taking, we'll use letters A, B, and so on to identify these points, and hopefully this will make it clear.

GRACE CHURCH



Grace

If we practice biblical confrontation, when we start out, here's letter A, when we start out, we make, letter A, a reasonable assumption. We make a reasonable assumption. That's letter A for your notes. When we witness the sin, our starting assumption is that we are dealing, as Jesus says here, with a brother. And that masculine form is meant to bring to mind the sister as well. So, brother, sister.

This is, in other words, this is a fellow disciple. This is a professing Christian, and this is so important. Jesus is not telling his disciples to confront just anyone. We're not to run around confronting all of our unbelieving neighbors and unbelieving coworkers. There are instances in which we must address sin in the world and confront unbelievers, but here Jesus is calling his people to confront sin in the church, confront sin in the household of faith, among believers.

You can turn there if you're quick enough, but in 1 Corinthians chapter 5, verse 9 and following, Paul is dealing with the situation in the Corinthian Church in chapter 5 of 1 Corinthians, verses 1-8, in which it's a horrible sin. A man has

his father's wife, and not only is that sin going on, but the church is actually rejoicing in their liberty and saying, Look at this example of grace and liberty and freedom. And even the unbelieving world around them, and that's the Corinthian world around them, is condemning it and saying, this is abhorrent, repugnant.

What is this fellowship of people doing? Paul corrects that, confronts it, says, expel that man out of your midst. He says this in chapter 5, verse 9, 1 Corinthians. He says, "I wrote you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people, not at all meaning the sexually immoral of this world," that is, your coworkers, your neighbors, unbelievers. Not the people, "the sexually immoral of this world or the greedy and swindlers or idolaters since then you would need to go out of the world.

"But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother. Don't associate with somebody who's a professing Christian if he's guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler.

GRACE CHURCH

Greeley

Don't even eat with so, such a one." Don't even sit down and have breakfast or lunch. Don't get into each other's houses. "For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge? God judges those who are outside. You purge the evil person from among you."

That's 1 Corinthians 5:9-13. So if we're confronting sin, we're confronting it in the church, and we start by assuming that this person is a Christian. We assume they are a regenerate church member, and when we do that, we need to realize that we are dealing with a fellow believer, a believer who has all the marks of being a believer that you do.

This means we assume, and this is especially the case in a church like ours, where we have learned from other faithful churches, we have learned that we need to practice formal church membership. We need to know, then, the front end before anybody comes into the church, that they're truly a Christian. We need to have a, here, a credible profession of faith. We need to make sure, as much as it depends on us, as much as we can tell, that

GRACE CHURCH

Grace

this is a regenerate person, that there's evidence of regeneration in their lives.

So we examine professions of faith, we examine their testimony. We insist upon believer's baptism, credo-baptism. We assume when they come in and they enter into our church and they join our church, now, everybody who's a member of this church, we assume some basic truths about every single church member.

We assume, for instance, that every member is born again by the Spirit of God. Born again. Regenerate. Every member has a new nature given to him or her by God. That's a heart of stone replaced with a heart of flesh, and that heart of flesh, it responds. It's living. It responds to the Word.

And so we assume that that new nature accepts all the basic truths of Christianity. There's no questions about the Trinity, the deity of Christ, the things we confess, the nature, the authoritative nature of Scripture. There's no questions about what the true Gospel is, that salvation by grace alone, through faith alone in Christ alone. There's no question about Christ

being the head of the church, and his authority comes by his Word mediated in and through the church.

Those are all accepted basic foundational things among Christians. Every member, every individual member has been baptized into Christ by the Spirit, immersed in the Spirit, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and therefore partakes of the Spirit's ministries of illumination, so that truth comes to life, and they kind of have an understanding of it, takes part of the Spirit's instruction, conviction, motivation for righteousness. All those things we assume to be true when we see a brother sinning. We put, brother, in all caps in our minds, sinning, small font. Brother, this is a brother.

We assume that every believer in our church shares a love of the truth, desires to mortify sin, repent of sin, respond well to the truth, has a longing to walk in holiness and righteousness of the truth. And so when we come to a brother or sister to talk to them about sin, we have every reason to expect that this person will react, what, positively, eager to be obedient to truth.

In fact, it's one mark of a healthy Christian, it's one mark of a healthy church, that we react to biblical confrontation well. Christians are a robust people. They're not thin-skinned about confrontation. They've actually got a thick skin. They're a strong and confident people because they are eager to open themselves up to confrontation, eager to open up their lives to the scrutiny of one another. Why? Because they want to grow in the truth. They love the truth. They love to worship the God of truth.

This is why Jesus is careful to isolate the practice of biblical confrontation to a brother. Luke 17:3, "If your brother sins," one from among yourselves to whom you are supposed to pay attention, if that one sins. We're talking about members of the church, and it's for the good of the church. It's for their good, and it's for the good of the whole church. This is why we come.

So we make letter A, a reasonable assumption. Next little sub-point here, letter B, we witness, letter B, we witness a

verifiable violation. Verifiable violation. It's a violation of what? God's Word, God's truth, and it's verifiable. That is, we can see what they've done, we can point to chapter and verse.

So we're talking about an actual sin, according to God's Word. It's not some petty violation of tradition. It's not someone walking across your preference issue. It's not your cultural standard. It's not your cultural church standard. It's actually chapter and verse.

So when Jesus says, "If your brother sins," the verb for sin is *harmartano*. *Harmartano* is to miss the mark. So picture, like, an archer shooting an arrow, and he fails to hit the bullseye. He fails to hit the bullseye, that's missing the mark, and that, what is the target? The target is perfect obedience to God's Word.

So he misses the target, he misses the bullseye. So your brother or sister here in this scenario is off target. He or she, missing the mark in word or deed, straying away from obedience to God's Word in word or deed, in lifestyle and

GRACE CHURCH

Greeley

behavior and speech. There's no, close enough is good enough, with God's law. This isn't horseshoes or hand grenades. This is God, who's perfect. Jesus said, Matthew 5:48, "Therefore be ye perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect."

So this is a God who requires absolute perfection, absolute precision, pinpoint accuracy in doing his will in obe, in obedience to his commandments. This requires obeying God wholeheartedly in thought and word and deed, in doing whatever he commanded and excluding nothing and leaving nothing out. Obedience to him.

Who among us fits that description? Not one, right? Not one. Only the Lord Jesus Christ fits that perfection of righteousness' description, and that's why we start out understanding that the act of obedience of Christ and being united to him by the Spirit, joined to him in union with him, when God looks at us as Christians, you know what he sees? He sees Christ. He sees Christ's perfections. He sees his absolute perfection and righteousness, and so we are covered in him.

GRACE CHURCH

Greeley

And yet, we see in our practical experience, don't we, yeah, positionally righteous in Christ. Practically, practically, that's the problem, isn't it? And so if none of us can raise our hands, say, yep, perfect, wholehearted obedience, loving the Lord God with all my heart, soul, mind and strength, never failing in that for a second, and loving my neighbor as myself, never failing that for a second, nobody here can raise their hand and say, that's me.

So what should we expect? Every once in a while, we need to be confronted. Every once in a while, we might be putting a foot wrong, right? And we might expect, I've offended somebody. I've, my sin has come out and been seen in public.

And you say, well, wait a minute. Even what I do, rightly, that people don't perceive, sometimes there's bad motives in my heart, sometimes there's a mix of motives. So are we supposed to be heart-sin police? Are we supposed to get into everybody's kitchen and start questioning and put him in the interrogation room. Single light bulb swinging back and forth. Turn up the heat.

GRACE CHURCH

Greeley

Who among us has the spiritual perception to test the heart for that kind of precision, accuracy, and obedience? Not one of us, not one. God and God alone can see the heart, right? There's no way that you or I as human beings with our inherent human limitations, there is no way that we can see the heart. There's no way we can know the mind, discern the motives.

That's God's territory, not ours, right? God told Samuel, 1 Samuel 16:7, "The Lord sees not as man sees. Man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart." That's not condemning us, that's just calling it like it is. It's simply stating the obvious. It acknowledges we live and we are creatures living in a visible world, flesh-and-blood world.

All we can, all the information that's going to come to us, requires a stimuli, an external stimuli that's going to hit our sensory receptors, our audibly, visually, touch, taste, smell that's interpreted by the brain, and we make a decision. Hidden matters of the heart, it's invisible to us. We cannot perceive it. That's God's territory and God's alone.

So when it comes to Jesus' command here in Luke 17:3, "If your brother sins," if he misses the mark, if he strays off course, we're dealing with those sins that are externally observable. We don't address what we suspect may be going on in the heart. We deal only with what we can see or hear, sins that are obvious to us because we can see them with our eyes, we can hear them with our ears.

We like to say when confronting sin, make sure you're dealing with something obvious, something you can take a picture of, something you record on video, or something you could, don't record each other on video. That's not what I'm saying. But something, you could do that or recorded, you know, audio.

Perhaps something dramatic, blatantly obvious, like the sexual sin I mentioned Paul confronted in 1 Corinthians 5:1. There's no question mark about that. That's going on. People knew about it. It's externally visible.

GRACE CHURCH

Grace

Could be a doctrinal error, something you hear somebody saying that's not doctrinally right or righteous. Paul instructs Timothy to deal with that kind of doctrinal error in 1 Timothy 1:3, Titus in Titus 1:11.

Could be a behavioral issue or a doctrinal issue, and when it comes to threaten the, you know, the unity of the church and create division in the church, Paul tells Titus to deal with it swiftly and decisively in Titus 3:10. The divisive man after the first and second warning, if he doesn't heed it, kick him out. I mean, speeding through the steps of church discipline. You don't, you don't give this guy a pass because the unity of the church is so precious. These little ones are so precious.

In some cases of sin, it's not so dramatic as maybe a fist fight, adultery, cheating on taxes. In some cases of sin, especially relational sins, or sins of speech and attitude, sometimes it takes dis, time to discern a pattern of a speech or a pattern of behavior that could be a habit that needs to come to an end. It's been destructive. It's been disruptive.

GRACE CHURCH

Greeley

So obviously in a church environment, especially gossip and slander, sins of the tongue can be the most obvious. Talking about others in a sinful way, complaining about how we've been offended by so-and-so or mistreated by so-and-so, and oh, could you pray for me because of look at all those bad things that they've done, so we couch it in spiritual language and cover over our gossip and slander.

Could be a subtle insinuation of doubt, maybe injecting a hint of suspicion about someone's motives. Subtle or not so subtle character assassination. Well, yeah, that guy, he likes to get up and talk a lot. I mean, you know, he's really, look what he's after, you know? He wants everybody to look at him, you know.

Could be a pattern of, in a person, of self-promotion. This me-centeredness, a conversation that always somehow makes its way back to this, this guy. You know, he's always, he's the, you know, the Brian Regan Me Monster. Always, always, me, me, me, me, me, talking about his accomplishments, his past, his present, his future, everything he's going to be doing.

Could be a pattern of complaining, grumbling, irritation, ingratitude. Sometimes these things aren't obvious in just a moment. Sometimes you hear something and you're like, eh, that didn't sound quite right. But you know what? You don't run and attack it like a bulldog or something. You just, you let that go. You wait and see. Is this a pattern, or is that just a bad day, it's just a off moment.

Gracious with people, but it's still, if we see patterns and habits of sin, for the good of that person, do we want to leave it? For the good of the church, do we just want to let it go? What did Jesus say? "Pay careful attention to yourselves." Are we going to be obedient to that or not?

There are some things you can't pick up in a single conversation, so let's not be hasty. Takes time to recognize a brother or sister might be enslaved to a certain habit of speech, habit of thinking, habit of reacting. Takes time to pray for them. Takes time to grow in loving concern for this person as you maybe search the Scripture on their behalf so you can

help them out. So be patient. Don't be negligent, but be patient as you prepare yourself to practice biblical confrontation.

When Jesus says here, "If your brother sins," we've started with a reasonable assumption. We've witnessed a verifiable violation of God's Word. So what to do about it? What action is required? Here's letter C, letter C for your notes as we engage, letter C, in biblical confrontation. Letter C, engage in biblical confrontation.

What does this look like? Jesus is so simple. He's so simple in how he says this. He says, "If your brother sins, rebuke him." Rebuke him. That's practicing biblical confrontation. Rebuke him. The right thing to do in obedience to the Lord. The loving thing to do in helping a sinning brother. Rebuke him.

The verb here is pretty strong. It's *epitimao*. It's to, you could say, to speak urgently to someone and demand immediate compliance. So you're urgent in speaking with them. Your tone and your tenor of your address is, is urgent. The appeal is

GRACE CHURCH

Greeley

serious. And you want immediate compliance. If it's a sin, right? Rebuke it, correct it.

Synonyms for rebuke here, you can use the word, reprove strictly, warn severely, admonish strongly. Those are the, those are the ideas here. There's no, there's no sense of hinting here. There's no, no beating around the bush, no pampering, no mollycoddling. There's a, there is a straightforward dealing with the truth, dealing with the sin.

There's no time for subtlety here, using the third person, making some oblique references, talking about a friend of a friend of a friend who had this bad habit, and isn't that bad? You see the point? You see the point? You're kind of like that.

That's not how we do it. You get right to the point. Jesus commands us to be direct, candid, forthright, straightforward. Why? Because this is for their good. Do you want your doctor, when he spots cancer in your body, you say, Hey, so what's the diagnosis, Doc? He's like, Well, you know, I know this one guy in another country. He's got a cousin. And man, you know, just

GRACE CHURCH

Greeley

some cancer riddling his body. Well, have a nice day. You walk out of the office, and you're like, What was that? Do I have cancer?

You want your doctor to be straightforward. You want your brother coming to you about a sin issue in your life to be straightforward. Gentle, sure, but straightforward. If you're concerned about coming across as harsh, listen, that's not a bad thing. That's a good thing. It's good to be concerned about kindness. But you can be frank and forthright, and at the same time be gentle.

In fact, you must be gentle. As a fruit of the Spirit, you must be gentle with people, and kind and patient. I've found you can be gentle as, but many today coming out of the culture we live in are so thin-skinned. Can't take really much of anything. Tissue paper for skin and break so easily. Just being confronted, just being told you might have put a foot wrong, that's enough for them to be like, whoa, what happened? I just got cancelled. It's enough for them to accuse you of being harsh

and unloving and all the rest. Don't be harsh and unloving, be gentle.

But listen, you've got to realize that these days we're going to have to muscle up a little bit. We come out of a very weak, thin-skinned culture. It's going to take some time. On the other side of this, I think there are some who see themselves as really good at confrontation, but they really are bad at it. They lack perspective. They're unable to see themselves clearly, unable to read other people well, and after making a big, foul mess, they walk away saying, What? What? Wow, was she ever sensitive! No, you were just a jerk. You lack gentleness. You act, lack patience. You lack tact. You lack wisdom.

In fact, there's a whole community online that's seemingly reacting against the feminism and the weakening of this culture, and so they've muscled up, trying to be overly manly, taking all the things that maybe feminists have complained about, and toxic masculinity, and they made that their badge. And they say, If you can't handle how direct and straightforward and

confrontational I am, it's because you're not manly. It's because you've been affected by the feminism of the culture.

So, man, there are ditches to fall on either side in this whole issue of confrontation. Listen, you want a clear picture of true manliness, of true confrontation, doing it gently but straightforwardly? Look at Jesus Christ. He wasn't a caricature of all the chest-beating, scotch-drinking, cigar-smoking versions of manliness that are false in our culture.

But neither was he a sissy. He was as straightforward and direct as they come, and yet kind with his enemies, loving in his confrontation. He's who we need to be like. And when we practice this, and when we practice it by the fruit of the Spirit, with the fruit of the Spirit we grow. And it's the life of Christ that works in and through us, and he does the confronting through us. That's the goal.

Listen, it's those who know confrontation is hard, it's those who know that it's fraught with difficulty, who are wary of giving unneeded offense. It's those who feel maybe somewhat

intimidated by the prospect of having to confront, but who, in obedience to the Lord and out of love for a sinning brother or sister, they willingly embrace the loving duty to confront. Those are the ones we, we see grow and learn in confrontation. They become models of it. They become exemplary. They learn to do it well.

So beloved, don't feel intimidated. Wherever you are on the spectrum, don't feel intimidated by this call to confront. It's a learned skill, which is why we call this the practice of biblical confrontation. It's a skill that highlights the presence or the absence in our life of the fruit of the Spirit.

Biblical confrontation is going to expose, it's going to reveal our level of Christian maturity, which is a good thing for us, isn't it? Whatever level we're at, biblical confrontation is going to help us grow in Christian maturity. It's going to bring all that stuff to the surface. It's going to show us what we need to deal with, and we're so thankful to deal with it.

GRACE CHURCH

When we learn to conduct ourselves according to the fruit of the spirit, Galatians 5:22, "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control," that's the life of Christ flowing through us. That's how he practiced biblical confrontation in step with the Spirit. That's what he wants for us, too.

When you see what Christ says in this text, no matter how you feel about it, no matter what you have estimated your skill or maturity in being able to conduct yourself righteously in biblical confrontation, listen, he doesn't leave us any way to opt out of this. If you are among his disciples, this applies to you. You must rebuke your brother or your sister.

Why? Because Jesus loves this person, because Jesus died to save this person, and because Jesus is calling you to be his, his vessel to sanctify this person. Straightforward rebuke is how he wants you to do it. Leaves no room for confusion. It puts the issue out there in, identifies the offense, calls for confession of sin. He wants, Jesus wants this person to get to the point. He wants the sinner to get the message so that he can

GRACE CHURCH

Greeley

repent, and so we can remove the offending obstacle of sin from our midst and get back on track with the joy of obedience.

So it's a professing Christian, one who's missed the mark regarding God's commandments, and when that happens, you rebuke him. Now rebuke can go in one of two directions, right? It can either go well or poorly. Jesus mentions one outcome here in our text. It says, "If he repents," so it's gone well. If he repents, if that happens, which is the best outcome, if he sees and admits his error, he sees how he's missed the mark, he turns from sin to righteousness, praise God, we're back on track. Full speed ahead.

So if he repents, what do you do? Forgive him immediately. No longer count that sin against him. No longer keep it on the list. No longer consider the offenses on his account. No longer hold it over his head. You don't bring it up, you don't remind him of it. You forgive the wrong, you pardon the sin, you set him loose, and you do it right away, you do it eagerly. That's what we hope for.

GRACE CHURCH

Grace

If the sin you're rebuking him for involves another person, you might have to, you know, maybe it's against another person, or he offended someone else, well, you might have to help that penitent brother confess his sin to that other person, seek forgiveness from the one he offended, receive forgiveness from the one he offended. Maybe you, your help is needed in that, maybe not.

But you're tenderhearted toward the penitent brother or sister. You're eager to forgive, eager to forgive. You long to see this person restored and strengthened and back on track and heading in the right direction, marching lockstep with you toward Christ in the Spirit. We're to be one another's biggest cheerleaders in dealing with sin and repenting of sin.

There's another direction this confrontation can go, though, right? What if he doesn't repent? What if he ignores you? What if he defends himself? What if he says, Oh, you, you think you're righteous? There's this counter-accusation coming your way. Blame shifts. Well, you know, I wouldn't have sinned if it weren't for you and that leadership of the church. I mean,

I mean, you create an environment where people can't help but sin. What if she calls you critical-spirited, legalistic, Pharisaical? What if the person says, Listen, this is none of your business?

What do you do if something like that happens? Well, sometimes practicing biblical confrontation means we're in for a longer ride. And if we're in for a longer ride, you know what? The Lord is in that as well. The Lord will be with us along the way. And he actually prescribed and instructed for exactly that scenario.

Turn back to Matthew chapter 18. Matthew 18. Last week when we got into Luke 17, remember for Scripture reading we actually read the whole chapter of Matthew 18, Jesus' concern for the little ones, for the younger Christians, for those who are less mature.

And there's a section in Matthew 18, verses 15 and following, where, where Jesus shows the other side of this, when

a professing brother does not repent of his sin, when he hardens his heart. So what's the plan in that case?

I just want to give you a footnote here at this point. Whether, whether the outcome is good or bad, we're not concerned about outcomes. We leave that to the Lord. We rejoice in a good outcome, and we kind of buckle up for a bad outcome, but we leave the outcome to the Lord. We just need to be faithful. We just need to do what we're told.

So no matter the outcome, listen, if you've been obedient to Christ in rebuking a sinning brother or sinning sister, listen, you can rejoice that you have been a really good friend of this person no matter how it turns out. If you do what Jesus says with an erring Christian, no matter how she responds, you've been a tool of sanctification. You've been there to help her grow in her holiness.

She may not recognize that in the moment, but you have been a gift of Christ to this person. You have been an offering of Christ of edification, to point the way out of sin, out of

weakness, and into a place of strength and holiness. This is just a footnote. No matter how, what the outcome is, rejoice if you've been obedient. Rejoice.

So in Matthew 18:15, as we read from ESV, it says, "If your brother sins," you notice, where it says, "against you, go and tell him his fault." The King James Version and the CSB put it the same way. They add this preposition "against you." But that's actually not how the Greek text reads. The words there, against you, have been erroneously added to the later manuscripts, but the earliest manuscripts, the best manuscripts, don't include those words, against you. Several translations, the NAS, the NIV, the LSB, the Legacy Standard, Standard Bible, they leave them out, and that's accurate.

So Matthew 18:15, it actually says, "If your brother sins," period. "If your brother sins, go and tell him his fault." That's exactly parallel to Luke 17:3. "If your brother sins, rebuke him." So Jesus says, "If your brother sins, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he listens to you," that's the same thing in Luke 17:3, "if he repents." Listening

GRACE CHURCH

Greeley

to you, repenting, same thing. "If he listens to you," in that case, good news. It's hugs, smiles, pats on the back. Why is that? Because "you've gained your brother," it says. You've won him over to righteousness. Back on track. So far, so good.

In formal church discipline, this is called Step 1. Step 1 is a private conversation, a one-on-one conversation between the offender and the one who's confronting. Now, this isn't justifying obviously some judgmental, you know, like we said, a judgmental kind of a jerk who goes off half-cocked, and he confronts every little thing in a person's life.

This is something that caused, calls for restraint among us and caution, careful prayer, prayerful attention to detail, and prayerful reflection. It's like a, a, the immune system in the body, making it healthy. In a healthy church this Step 1, conversations between people, should be happening quite, quite often, regularly, sin being resolved in private, with no one but God and the two brothers or the two sisters knowing about it.

But what if he doesn't repent? What now? Jesus says in verse 16, if he doesn't listen, if he doesn't repent, what do you do? "Take one or two others along with you so that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses." If repentance is not forthcoming, Step 2 is necessary to establish the charge.

The circle widens out a little bit, still stays private, but two or three other Christians, they enter into the situation so they can examine the case and establish this matter together. Maybe they decide together that they confront, the confronting person has been too zealous. Maybe he's made a mistake in judgment. So if he's been inaccurate or incorrect in making this charge, then the two or three other Christians will provide some objective clarity. They'll overturn the charge, they'll correct the overzealous brother or sister, and that's a win, too, as well, right?

However, if the two or three others establish the charge, if the charge of sin has been correct, and the rebuke is warranted, then the added weight of their consensus, that's an

encouragement of several other Christians who agree, and it'll help this sinning brother to see his error. We simply want him to see his error correctly, see his sin come right, see him come to repentance. That's what we're after.

Again, if he repents here, praise God, you've won your brother. That's what we're after, and that's where it ends, right there. But if there's still no repentance, then it's time to get a higher authority involved. And Jesus brings that in in verse 17. "If he refuses to listen" to this small group, "tell it to the church."

This is called Step 3. Jesus wants his church to convene, to gather together so his will can be made known through the church in this matter. Obviously, here at this stage, Step 3, the church's elders have had to come, get involved because no matter is going to come before the gathered church without elder oversight, without elder approval. And the elders have to hear the situation, review the facts of the case, adjudicate the matter biblically, maybe have some follow-up conversations and see what's, what's been going on, and then either give their

GRACE CHURCH

Greeley

approval or disapproval, but approval to bring this matter before the church.

If they decide that, look, I think the two or three of you have gathered together, and I think you've kind of, here's where we think you could be corrected in this, and let's give this, this brother or this sister more time or be patient with this. They instruct, they oversee, they're to be the mature people in the church.

But if they give their approval, if they've adjudicated in the same way as the two or three, they bring it before the church and the corporate involvement of the church, the agreement of the local church, the weight of the church's collective witness. The hope is that this sinning brother or sister will relent, that he'll humble himself, that he'll repent of his sins, that he'll feel the weight, that he'll be restored in humility and fellowship, and he'll stay in step with his church. It's what we long to see.

GRACE CHURCH

Grace

However, not everything goes that way. Jesus says in Matthew 18:17, "If he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector." That's the final step, Step 4, having to excommunicate the unrepentant sinner from the church based on his sinful behavior, based on his refusal to repent.

By the way, that contradicts his insistence that he is a genuine believer. Remember, we started with the assumption that this is a true believer, but when he is stubbornly acting contrary to that, the church gathers, declares its judgment that this man appears to be an unbeliever. The church makes a declaration. This professing Christian who repute, refuses to repent is no Christian at all.

The church has loved this man all the way. The church has loved this man from start to finish. The church loved him by warmly embracing him and encouraging and teaching him all through his life in the church. The church loved him by rebuking him for his sin, its members, first one, then two or three

others, and then the elders getting involved, and then the church collective.

Now the church continues in its love for the man by refusing to accept a false profession of faith. That's love. If he goes on in a false profession of faith, what happens when he stands before the Lord at the end? End of Matthew, chapter 7, "Many will come to me on that day and say, 'Lord, Lord, did we not do good works in your name and cast out demons and do many miracles? You are our Lord,' and Jesus will say, what, 'depart from me. I never knew you, you worker of iniquity.'"

It is a loving thing for us to make this kind of a judgment when we have to, and excommunicate somebody, refusing to accept their profession of faith, refusing to accept their identity as a believer by saying amongst ourselves, no, we as a church say that this person is not a believer.

You say, that doesn't sound very nice. Listen, it's kindness itself to do the hard thing. The man is self-deceived. This person is in grave danger of the woe that Jesus mentions in

GRACE CHURCH

Greeley

Luke 17:1, that he described in Luke 16:19-31. This is kindness itself to treat this, this man or this woman like a Gentile and a tax collector. It's love that motivates us to reach out and then evangelize him. We don't write them off and let them go. We want to evangelize him and see him come to faith.

What just happened corresponds to what we read earlier in 1 Corinthians 5:12-13. Je, Paul says, there, "I'm writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he's guilty of unrepentant sin, not even to eat with such a one." But those inside the church are the ones we're to judge. Why? So that the Spirit, through our judgment, purges that evil one from our midst. The evil person is the so-called brother who refuses to repent when he's rebuked. He refuses to repent on the testimony of two or three witnesses. He refuses to repent in the face of the collective authority of the church.

Now let's take this back to Luke 17, Luke 17. You can turn back there now. The evil person, the unrepentant sinner, has entered the church, and he starts off-loading stumbling blocks, and he set them before one of Jesus' little ones. And once

GRACE CHURCH

Greeley

somebody noticed this going on, rebuked the sin. The church's immune system did its job. It perfected the, the body from this infection. The false brother has been identified and exposed. The cause of stumbling eventually has been removed from the church.

Man, think about the good that's been done when this, when the church obeys the Lord's prescription, here. The unrepentant sinner has been loved so well through this loving rebuke. The little ones have been kept safe through the, remove, removal of the cause of stumbling. The church has been kept pure through the process of discipline, strengthened to fear the Lord by dealing decisively with sin.

The Lord has been honored, feared, obeyed, worshipped in obedience to Luke 17:3 and corresponding instruction there in Matthew 18. This church pleased its Lord and its Savior by loving God, being obedient, and loving men in doing what's right.

GRACE CHURCH

Greeley

Listen, beloved, that's what happens every time we practice church discipline together in a formal way, when we have to announce a name before you at a communion service. We're simply following our Lord's instructions. And on one level, this is nothing remarkable at all. This is just normal Christianity. We're doing our duty. We're doing exactly what the Lord has prescribed.

On another level, though, this is quite remarkable because through our simple obedience on our part, Christ is accomplishing amazing things. He's doing a deep spiritual work. He's keeping the body pure, keeping the body holy. He's protecting the little ones. He's protecting the fellowship. He's exposing the man's sin, graciously bringing sin to mind, the judgment of a church against him so that he can examine himself, recognize he's not in the faith. Through all this, Christ is strengthening and protecting his flock. Remarkable, remarkable, amazing things going on that we're not privy to because it's something God sees and we don't.

GRACE CHURCH

Grace

Now verse 3 was about confronting a sinning brother, and in verse 4 we said this gets personal. "If he sins," what, "against you." Okay, now this is personal. Now this stings. You've been victimized by the sin. Not only that, but seven times in a day. And he, he's not getting the point. What now? Well, we started by making a reasonable assumption that this person's a brother or sister, and when we witnessed a verifiable violation of the truth, we engaged in biblical confrontation. That's A, B, and C.

Now, when we have to do this repeatedly, and even if the sin is against us personally, letter D for your notes, we offer them, letter D, a charitable absolution. We offer, letter D, a charitable absolution. That's just another way of saying in love we forgive them, but "in love we forgive them" didn't rhyme with the rest of my points, so "charitable absolution" it is.

In verse 4, Jesus paints a more difficult picture for us. The offense is not against someone else now. It's not generalized now. It's particularized, it's personal, and it's repeated. And yet Jesus is emphatic about our forgiving one

another even when, and especially when, we're offended personally or we're offended repeatedly.

The way Jesus says this in the original, seven times of offense is what gets the emphasis. Literally, he says, "If seven times in the day he should sin against you." The emphasis there is on the repetition and then on the personal nature. So no matter how hurtful, no matter how often, no matter how tedious this is getting, our duty is to forgive the repenting brother.

How could we do this? Are we up to this task? I mean, think of some of the personal, inter-relational conflicts you have just in your home. Husband and wife, parents and kids, kids and kids. Think about how easy it is to set us off, how just one comment can be like, Man, who does she think she is? Man, did he wake up on the wrong side of the bed! You know, it's just like, starts just with a little thing.

Jesus says seven times in a day. When we think about the parable of the unforgiving servant, end of Matthew 18, we realize how much we have been forgiven. Our sins against a holy

GRACE CHURCH

Greeley

God have been wiped away, all of our sins punished in Christ. If we'll keep mindful of that, man, we're ready and eager to offer forgiveness to anybody who offends us. What a minor thing to offend me. What am I? Who am I?

Jesus is emphatic about our need to forgive, particularly in the form of the verb. He uses the word, forgive, *aphiemi*. In verse 3, he uses the imperative tense when he first commands for forgiveness. It's an imperative. It's a command: Forgive. And then in verse 4, he uses the future tense of the same verb. He makes that command emphatic. So Jesus goes from forgive to, you will forgive.

Kids understand this instinctively. Mom can say, Clean your room, but when she says, You will clean your room, oh, man, kids are like, Okay, she means it. Get to work. Mom's not playing around. When she invokes the authority of the father, Wait 'til your father gets home, now you've really gone over the edge. It's too late. Better get that room clean.

GRACE CHURCH

Grace

Our Lord wants us to think this way about forgiveness. This attitude of forgiveness, this tenderness, this graciousness, it needs to pervade our believing community. Our entire church needs to be of this mindset, that there is a tone among the members of the local church, of forgiveness and graciousness and tenderness toward one another. Forgiving attitude like this, keeping no record of wrongs, not quick to be offended, eager to forgive, this should characterize our fellowship, shouldn't it?

Listen, when a readiness to forgive sets the tone, it encourages the practice of biblical confrontation in the church. Can you see that? The more gracious we are with each other, the more ready we are to give correction, the more open we are to receive correction, man, this just opens, this just facilitates the health of the body and a healthy immune system keeping us healthy, well, protected.

We need to know, don't we, that we can fail with one another, that's not going to ruin the friendship, that we'll keep the relationship. We need to sense with each other, don't

we, this sincere longing for holiness, for reconciliation, for restoration.

That's what Jesus is trying to promote here among his disciples, when he commands, when he insists upon, and he is even somewhat stern in saying to his disciples, forgive, and, by the way, You will forgive. It's not an option. He is emphatic.

Lest we misconstrue this, though, lest we distort what Jesus is actually saying, we need to see that there are conditions, aren't there, here, for the transaction of forgiveness to take place. Notice how long with the seven-time repetition of sin, "seven times," by the way, is a figure of speech. You're not to be counting like Peter, you know, seventy times seven. It's just a, it's just a figure of speech. It notes this indefinite number of offenses that just seems to keep on going.

Seven times of sinning corresponds, there in verse 4, to a seven-time acknowledgement of sin on the part of the sinner, a seven-time confession of sin, and a seven-time commitment

to repentance in verse 4. After sinning against you seven times, times he returns to you, and seven times saying, that is confessing his sins, and seven times affirming, I repent. So in that case, as he comes to you confessing his sin, acknowledging and saying, I'm repenting, look, your heart has to be soft. You have to forgive him. And why wouldn't you?

Jesus emphasizes repentance in this exchange. He uses two different verbs for repentance. In verse 4, it says in verse 4, "He turns to you." That's the verb *epistrepho*, literally returns to the physical motion of turning around. So imagine somebody standing in one direction. They turn 180 degrees and go in the other direction. *Epistrepho*. It's returning. So here *epistrepho*, figuratively used to picture repentance. He's returning to you in his heart. It's a turning. It's a changing of mind, it's a reversing course of action. And that is true repentance.

The second verb for repentance in verse 4, Jesus puts it into the mouth of the repentant sinner. "He returns to you seven times, saying," and there it is, *metanoeo*, I repent, I repent. The verb *metanoeo*, it has the, the word *nous* in it, mind, at its

root. So literally *metanoeo* is a change of mind, and results in a change of direction, a change in attitude, a change in speech, a change in behavior, change in lifestyle.

So here's what this looks like. Struggling br, brother. He sinned, sinned against you. What do you do when he sins? You rebuke him. If he repents, great. You've won your brother. You forgive him. Forgive him. You let it go. But here, this struggling brother, he's struggling, and he sins against you again. He's got this habit of sinning. He's got decades in the world of practicing this way, and so he sins against you again and again and again.

You've already rebuked him, so you don't need to go and badger him over it. But he returns to you on his own. He returns to you again and again, and he comes in humility. He comes confessing his sin. He comes saying to you, Listen, I repent. And Jesus uses the present tense verb there, so it can be accurately translated, I am repenting, which gives this idea of a continuousness, this habitual commitment to repentance.

GRACE CHURCH



Grace

This is talking about his commitment to the ongoing work of repentance in his life. He's affirming his commitment to repent. When this happens, and it's happened to me, I've gone to others and I've seen their attitude toward me, this provokes feelings of compassion with each other, doesn't it? We need to see how much of a hold that this sin has on this brother or this sister.

It's like what the Puritans used to call a besetting sin. It's one that's kind of deeply entrenched. It's going to take some time. How do we know it's going to take some time? Because he keeps doing it. He keeps, seven times a day, and he keeps having to come to you and saying, Man, I blew it again. But he keeps also in humility coming back, acknowledging his fault, and admitting to you, I'm repenting.

So we're not talking about here someone who shirks his responsibility, someone who ignores or minimizes the seriousness of his sin. This isn't someone who is indifferent to the offense of his sin against God. He's not calloused about the effect of his sin against you or against others.

GRACE CHURCH

Greeley

This is a true brother, this is a true sister, a friend in Christ who's simply struggling with sin. Someone who's, he's in the fight, he's just been knocked down. You just need to help him up, patch up the wounds, stop the bleeding, set the legs, set the limb, put the gun back in his hand and let him get back in the fight, to get back online with you. It's a brother. It's a sister. He wants freedom from his sin. Just finds it hard to overcome, finds it hard to find full victory and repentance.

And our hearts go out to a person like that, don't they? Invokes our sympathy. How many of us have struggled in the same way with a sin, found some particular sin really difficult to overcome? Isn't this the kind of treatment we want when we continue to blow with somebody else? Don't we want somebody to just have a, have a sympathetic ear to understand and say, Look, I get it. Summons our compassion with one another.

It stirs us to action so we can help this friend. We don't want him to become discouraged. We don't want him to become weary in well-doing because if he continues to pursue obedience

to Christ, the Spirit is going to help him to the end, to the finish line, and he will overcome.

Maybe this brother or sister, by coming over and over, maybe they're showing that they need our help. Maybe they don't understand how to work out repentance. That's a fair thing. Then take them into Scripture. Help them to understand the nature of sin, help them to understand what repentance looks like, how to renew the mind so that it works out from the inside out to hate and put off the sin and to love and pursue the righteousness.

Maybe they need our help with that. Maybe they need our help to workout a strategy, clarify some tactics in putting off sin, and mind renewal, and putting on righteousness. Perhaps we should call for someone who's older, wiser, more mature in the faith and get their counsel to help this brother or sister in repentance. Whatever the case, Jesus is calling for this pervasive, foundational, forgiving attitude.

If you're thinking to yourself, man, this sounds hard. I'm not even close to being the kind of person who's mature enough

to practice biblical confrontation. That's somebody else's gift in the body. I've got the gift of, just, encouragement. I just say nice and positive things to everybody. Wrong. Jesus brings you into it. You're all practicing biblical confrontation, and if you're not, I think I said this very starkly last week, you're wrong. You are your brother's keeper.

But let me encourage you with just a few closing thoughts here to make this your habit to practice this. First of all, notice in verse 5 that Jesus' Apostles, the Twelve, they felt exactly the same way as you're feeling right now. They heard Jesus' instructions, here, and look at verse 5. The Apostles said to the Lord, whoa, time out, increase our faith, turn up the, turn up the nozzle and pour a bunch of faith into us. Because man, this is beyond us. Our faith is too small to handle this.

This "brother's keepers," keeper mentality does require us to take a very tough stand against sin, to confront and purge any cause for stumbling out of our fellowship. But while we take a tough stand against sin, at the same time when we confront

GRACE CHURCH

Greeley

sin, we also have to have this uber meek, gentle demeanor. How do you get ahold of the two things together in the same life? We stand tough, but we do it with the tender heart. We're strong and straightforward and direct, and yet at the same time, gentle, gracious, eager, ready to forgive.

The Apostles here are correct in saying, Whoa, time out. Me? Increase our faith. Jesus is giving us the broadest responsibility to be watchful in the fellowship, and at the same time, we have to have this magnanimous heart of tenderness toward people that we frankly don't have all the time, even toward the most offensive, immature, repeated offender who keeps on hurting us with their sin.

It's hard stuff. The duty is way beyond our natural ability, isn't it? That's why they say this, Increase our faith. So if you have that sense, listen, you're in good company. It's exactly what the Apostles felt. It's exactly what they sensed. And we'll come back to that challenge when we tackle verse 5 and following next week.

GRACE CHURCH

Greeley

Second way to encourage you, here. It's just with this, it really doesn't matter how we feel about this, about ourselves, about how deficient we think we are, about how we're not up to the task. Jesus is giving us commands to obey, not suggestions to consider. If they were suggestions to consider, listen, we'd have to wrestle quite a bit with this, but when it's a clear-cut command, pretty simple, isn't it? March forward. Our job is just to obey what he says. We leave the results to God. So that makes it very simple. Let me encourage you with this: it's simple.

Third thing to encourage you with is if we'll simply obey him, consider what good comes out of this. When we practice biblical confrontation, you know what happens? We become better at it. We're tested in the crucible of confronting sin, and we, we grow more mature. We're able to see where we do and don't display the fruit of the Spirit in our lives. We're able to grow in manifesting this fruit of the Spirit. And not only that, but when we just practice this among one, one another, our entire church blesses and benefits when we simply obey him. Consider the good and just get into the practice.

GRACE CHURCH

Greeley

Consider a medical doctor. I'm not saying this by any personal experience at all, but I've just seen what they've had to study. It takes four years or so to earn an undergraduate degree and, you know, usually in pretty tough subjects, chemistry, science, all those kind of things. And another four years of medical school or so followed by three to seven years of a medical residency. I'm not great at math, but I think that's like 11 to 15 years of preparation.

After all that, that's when a doctor starts to what? Practice medicine. He practices medicine, then, for the rest of his life. And what does the doctor do? He doesn't have it all when he walks into the office. He practices on you and on me. But after making a few mistakes on us, he kind of starts to get it right. So you want to find that doctor in his, like, late fifties to sixties, somewhere in there. But he's maturing in wisdom, isn't he? He's increasing his competency. He's keeping up on the latest journals. He's refreshing his skills. He's deepening and broadening his ability.

GRACE CHURCH

Grace

Same thing with us, beloved. Consider yourselves medical doctors in the field of practicing biblical confrontation. Practice it. As our brother's keeper, when we practice biblical confrontation, we're going to grow in our skill in, over the course of our Christian lives.

And when we do loving obedience to Christ, out of loving concern for one another, God will bless our fellowship. He'll grow us into a mature body. We have got a healthy immune system that protects against stumbling blocks and purges out the impurities, but also promotes health, growth, maturity, and strength. And beloved, I've seen this in our midst, in our church. I've seen you practicing this, and I just got to say excel still more, and let's see what the Lord does among us. Let me commit all this to prayer because that's really what we need, is to go to the Lord and have him work through us.

Our Father, we thank you for the Lord Jesus Christ, that you sent him to teach us, to help us, to help us to understand, help us to understand what a church is, what our role is as a member of a body. We're so thankful that we belong to you by

GRACE CHURCH

Greeley

grace. Lord Jesus, we thank you for this particular block of instruction, how you have not left us alone without instruction, but you teach us. You are our abiding truth teacher. You don't leave us alone like orphans, but you have sent the abiding, indwelling Holy Spirit to guide and direct us and teach us, lead us into all truth.

So thank you so much. We see the triune God oriented toward our benefit, and we are the recipients of your grace. We just pray that you would help us to have the temerity, the strength, the courage, the faith to trust you to do what is, what you're calling us to do here, that we wouldn't err on one side or the other, but that you'd keep us straight down the middle. By your grace, we know that's what you'll do.

And even when we are overzealous on the one hand or we're timid on the other, we know that you will help us in our errors, our mistakes, our sins. You'll pick us up, dust us off, and set us on the right path again, and you use one another to do it. We look forward to practicing that together. Just ask that you give us great encouragement in doing so. Bless our fellowship and

GRACE CHURCH

Greeley

bless this, bless this beloved church. Let us be faithful to you
in Jesus' name. Amen.