



GOSPEL FORGIVENESS – *RECONCILED TO EACH OTHER*

This week's text – 2 Corinthians 2:5-11

Sermon ideas

1. Satan gains ground when sin isn't properly addressed in the church

A man in the church in Corinth had been committing a particular sin in the church, which Paul pressed the church to deal with. Eventually, they listened and confronted the man, and instead of running away, he repented. This is what we all want when we think about grievous sin happening in the church. But, just like the Corinthians, we seldom want to embrace the sinner fully or restore him/her into fellowship in the way they had been before.

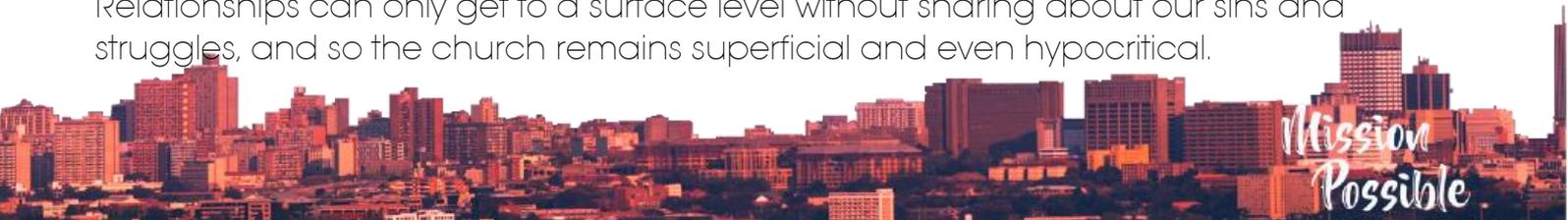
Paul told the Corinthians not only to forgive the man, but to comfort him in his shame, and to affirm their love for him, because this is what the gospel compels us to do. When we do not act in gospel love and kindness, we give Satan some hooks into our lives. When we respond sinfully, we open the door for Satan to wreak havoc through unforgiveness, resentment, bitterness, gossip, slander and all other forms of divisiveness. This stops the church from being able to experience the love, joy and peace that the gospel brings when we reconcile to one another.

Some of the Corinthians probably felt unaffected by the sin and felt no urgency to address it, while others felt a pressing need to deal with it. This caused friction among the members of the church, distracting them from the gospel and God's mission.

Likewise, we tend to veer away from having uncomfortable conversations with people who are living in sin. We care even less so if we do not know them personally or see how the sin is affecting the body and giving Satan ground. Others of us have just become completely tolerant of sin, and because we indulge in our own sin, we prefer to "not get involved".

We are also reluctant to speak to others about our own sin struggles. Most of us are ashamed of the sins we are still battling, because we think we should have dealt with them years ago. Others have lost faith and trust in sharing our struggles because we have been gossiped about, and so all trust has been lost in the church. All of the reasons force us all to hide in our sin and shame, and keep pretending we are fine.

As a result of our unwillingness to deal with our own sin and the sin of others in the church, we have created a culture that portrays that we are all doing "just fine". Relationships can only get to a surface level without sharing about our sins and struggles, and so the church remains superficial and even hypocritical.



Igniting our missional impulse

A study in the book of 2 Corinthians



2. Keep gospel love and joy at the heart, and confront sin

It would have been easier for Paul just to have ignored the sin in the church, because confronting it was difficult and painful. But he knew that leaving it would allow Satan to gain ground, and he would not stand for that. Instead, he kept gospel love and joy at the centre of his actions and reactions.

When we keep gospel love and joy at the centre, we will confront sin with a:

- Clear motive – our motive for confronting sin must always be with the intention to fully restore the sinner to fellowship, and in so doing, we must be an instrument of God's grace in the process.
- Certain process – Matthew 18:15-17 tells us how we are to confront sin in the church. We always start with a one-on-one private conversation, which seeks to confront sin gently without exposure or shame, while drawing the sinner into repentance. Only if the sinner is unrepentant, does one then take one or two others back to them again, and plead them once again. Only if the sinner remains unwilling to change, then and only then would the issue be taken to the wider church body. The sinner in Corinth had been put through this process and not repented, which is why Paul had been called to assist. It was only at this stage of unrepentance that the wider body of the church was called to intervene, because the man had not responded to any other forms of correction. And yet at this level he turned back to God in repentance and faith. We should care about the process because we want every sinner to turn back to God and be restored into full fellowship.
- Concrete outcome – the outcome of addressing sin should always be a stronger and more unified church.

3. Being trustworthy when someone confesses their sin to you

Confronting sin is the loving thing to do in the community of faith. It allows for repentance and restoration and keeps Satan from breaking the church down. We need to be willing to confront our own sin, as well as lovingly confront others. But we also need to be agents of grace to those who are convicted to confess their sin, and who need help in the fight against it. Here are some ways in which we can be Godly, supportive and wise agents of change to those who seek our help:

- Let them know, up front, whether you are willing and able to journey alongside them in the process of overcoming sin. Being true to your word is key to their journey.
- Reassure the person of your acceptance and love despite what they are struggling with.
- Speak the truth in love.
- Guard confidentiality, and do not allow their business to be repeated from your lips.
- Follow up and offer to hold them accountable.
- Pray for them and with them.



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Discussion Questions

1. What are some of the key reasons why we do not confront sin in each other's lives?
2. What is the biggest reason why you do not confront sin in the lives of close family members or friends?
3. How do you think you would react if someone in this GC was to pull you aside and confront you on your sin? Why do you think you would react this way?
4. Why does Satan take ground in the church when we do not deal with sin appropriately?
5. Why is dealing with sin in the church the loving thing to do, even though it will require some difficult conversations?
6. Why is our motive essential when confronting someone about their sin?
7. Have you ever witnessed sin being dealt with using the pattern in Matthew 18? What was the outcome of the process?
8. Why is confidentiality critical when someone shares their sin struggles with you?
9. Who is the one person you are willing to trust in sharing your sin struggles? Why do you trust them, and what can you learn from this, so that you can extend the same to someone else?
10. What is the one big take away that God is asking you to deal with in light of this message?

