Hard Love
Confrontation
Brian Wood

Key Scripture:

2 Samuel 12:1–7 (NLT)
So the LORD sent Nathan the prophet to tell David this story: “There were two men in a certain town. One was rich, and one was poor. 2 The rich man owned a great many sheep and cattle. 3 The poor man owned nothing but one little lamb he had bought. He raised that little lamb, and it grew up with his children. It ate from the man’s own plate and drank from his cup. He cuddled it in his arms like a baby daughter. 4 One day a guest arrived at the home of the rich man. But instead of killing an animal from his own flock or herd, he took the poor man’s lamb and killed it and prepared it for his guest.”
5 David was furious. “As surely as the LORD lives,” he vowed, “any man who would do such a thing deserves to die! 6 He must repay four lambs to the poor man for the one he stole and for having no pity.”
7 Then Nathan said to David, “You are that man!

Galatians 2:11–16 (NLT)
11 But when Peter came to Antioch, I had to oppose him to his face, for what he did was very wrong. 12 When he first arrived, he ate with the Gentile believers, who were not circumcised. But afterward, when some friends of James came, Peter wouldn’t eat with the Gentiles anymore. He was afraid of criticism from these people who insisted on the necessity of circumcision. 13 As a result, other Jewish believers followed Peter’s hypocrisy, and even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy.
14 When I saw that they were not following the truth of the gospel message, I said to Peter in front of all the others, “Since you, a Jew by birth, have discarded the Jewish laws and are living like a Gentile, why are you now trying to make these Gentiles follow the Jewish traditions? 15 “You and I are Jews by birth, not ‘sinners’ like the Gentiles. 16 Yet we know that a person is made right with God by faith in Jesus Christ, not by obeying the law. And we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we might be made right with God because of our faith in Christ, not because we have obeyed the law. For no one will ever be made right with God by obeying the law.”

TALK IT OVER

Start talking. Find a conversation starter for your group.

- What is the most difficult conversation you’ve ever had to initiate, and what did you learn from that experience?

Start sharing. These questions are to help get your group thinking and to create openness.

- How does the tragic silence of the NASA engineers illustrate the danger of avoiding necessary conflict? In what specific relationships do you tend to stay quiet simply to protect your own comfort?

- **Read 2 Samuel 12:1-7**. What drove Nathan to confront King David's behaviors? What can we take away from Nathan’s approach here, and the outcome?

- **Read Galatians 2:11-14**. What compelled Paul to publicly confront Peter about his hypocrisy in Antioch? Is a face-to-face confrontation a better approach and harder to do in our modern digital age?

- Why do we typically play out catastrophic, worst-case scenarios in our heads before confronting someone? What would change if you approached your next difficult conversation expecting a best-case scenario of spiritual growth?

- How does making restoration a primary goal change your approach to confrontation? How can you focus more on restoration than simply winning the argument?

- What stood out to you most about Pastor Brian's story of his friend boldly confronting his lifestyle at a party? Who in your life currently loves you enough to tell you hard truths, and how do you normally respond to them?

Start doing. Commit to a step and live it out this week.

- Identify one lingering issue you have been avoiding to "keep the peace". Commit to applying Pastor Brian's four principles this week by scheduling a direct, face-to-face conversation to address it.

Start praying. Be bold and pray with power.

- Father, thank You for loving us enough to confront our sin and offer us grace. Give us the courage to step out of our comfort zones and practice hard love. Help us to confront sinful actions, avoid attacking character, and lovingly aim for full restoration. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Devotional

The Biblical Blueprint for Confrontation

In his message this weekend, Pastor Brian highlighted that real love requires saying the right thing the right way, even when it's difficult. While he drew principles from the stories of Nathan and Paul, Jesus also gave us explicit instructions on how to handle conflict within the church in Matthew 18.

When we combine these biblical examples, a clear blueprint emerges for God-honoring confrontation.

1. Examine Yourself First

Before we confront anyone, Jesus commands us to examine our own hearts. In Matthew 7:3-5, He warns us to remove the "plank" from our own eye before trying to remove the "speck" from our brother's eye. We must check our motives, confess our own sins, and ensure we are not acting out of pride, hypocrisy, or a selfish desire to simply "win" an argument.

2. Go Directly and Privately Jesus instructed in Matthew 18:15, *"If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you."* Pastor Brian echoed this by urging us to go directly to the person rather than venting online or avoiding the issue entirely. Skipping the gossip and going straight to the source honors the person, prevents rumors, and contains the relational damage.

3. Aim for Gentle Restoration The Apostle Paul wrote in Galatians 6:1, *"Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently."* The ultimate goal of biblical confrontation is never punishment, vengeance, or proving a point. As Pastor Brian taught, the goal must always be restoration. When we confront someone gently, targeting their actions rather than attacking their character, we leave the door wide open for repentance, healing, and restored unity.

Reflection:

How does this message and its Biblical examples challenge the way you naturally handle conflict? What steps can you take to ensure your next hard conversation is driven by love more than frustration?

Adapted directly from GotQuestions.org: What does the Bible say about confrontation?