

How to Rebuke someone for Sin

How to bring a personal rebuke.

Mt. 18:15ff

1. Keep it between you and the one who has done the sinning, initially.
 - a. "Such private reproof is hard to do, but it is the way of Christ."
-A.T. Robertson, vol. 1 p. 148.
 - b. Do not tell it abroad.
 - c. If you just ***have to tell someone else***, only tell someone who you know will be willing to pray for you as you endeavor to approach the one who transgressed against you. Do not use any names; just ask for prayer for yourself as you approach your brother/sister, that both you and the one who has sinned against you will have the heart of God in the matter. Remember that according to the context of this passage we as children of God, as opposed to children of this world system, are to be more mercy/forgiveness oriented with our Christian family than judgment/justice oriented.
 - d. To 'tell him his fault' is not simply to '*name*' the offense, but to *explain* it to your brother/sister with a goal of making him understand and converting him to your way of seeing it. This will be a process. Because confronted people are normally defensive, care needs to be taken not to attack, but to explain.
 - i. Try not to use language that is accusatory, but rather that which reveals the product of his actions.
 - ii. Not: "You hurt me!" Rather: "When you say things like that it hurts me because...."
 - e. Be prepared to have the LORD uncover weaknesses in ***you***, and not only in your brother/sister.
 - f. Adding Mt. 5:23-24 to this passage, whoever recognizes that there is a breach in fellowship must be the one to point it out and be the initiator in healing the wound.
2. Second level: Taking along mutual friends whose biggest "dog in the fight" is your mutual edification. (This is not the time to marshal people who will automatically take your side in the issue.)
 - a. Deut. 19:15 principle. This does four things.
 - i. Friends can be a sort of referee between two people at odds with one another. They can call foul and point out when one is taking unfair advantage of another in a discussion.
 - ii. The truth of the matter can be established in front of others so that an offending person will not be able to hide his/her sin from a larger group of associates/friends/family members.

- iii. Motives can be judged and weighed by folks who are loving and impartial, and whose goal is for the betterment of the two and the church body as a whole.
 - iv. “For the sinner, moreover, the withdrawal from his sin is far easier if he fears the shame of incurring censure from many acting together—to him, indeed, might be applied the words: ‘To him who is such a one, this rebuke is sufficient which is given by many’—and for the righteous man, there is a great and full satisfaction in the esteem of the group and in their approval of his conduct.” -the Long Rules 7, Basil.
 - 1. This applies to the third level, but eventuality of such a progression to a next step can not be lost on a person who has been thusly approached by his friends over his sin.
3. Third level: Revealing the whole problem to the covenant community and asking for help.
- a. The point of the process is to bring restoration to the relationships that have been damaged by either a brother’s sin or by misunderstanding or by wounded pride of the person who has received the offense. If by the first two steps these possibilities cannot be revealed for what they are, then you have a problem.
 - b. The added pressure of the whole community finding out about the rift ought to be enough to make two people work things out. But, sometimes the problems are so deeply seated that it takes the ‘nuclear option.’
 - c. “[1 Cor. 6:5] I speak to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? No, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren?”
 - d. Taking an issue to the church does not require both to be present. Indeed, if it has progressed to this level, one is probably not going to come.
 - e. The church is not brought into this process in order to become the henchman of the offended party, but rather to seek to restore people to good relationships. But if one or the other refuses to pursue peace and godliness in the relationship, the church must take note of it and proceed to the next level, as the one’s contumacious attitude and actions and irreconcilable heart have revealed him to have no spiritual heart after the LORD. Thus, one is hard-pressed to see such a one as being born of God. (Thus, to be treated as a ‘heathen man and a publican.’)
 - f. There are other possibilities of which to be aware:
 - i. One has been falsely accused by another.

- ii. There is a deep hurt in the life of the accused causing a lack of ability to trust.
 - iii. There has been inadequate and/or miss communication throughout the process.
 - iv. Justice has been elevated above mercy. “[1 Cor. 6:7] Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded?”
- 4. Ultimately, if relationships need to be severed, they ought to be severed on the basis of keeping peace in the larger body instead of handing out ‘punishment’ to the one who is ‘guilty’ of the offense.
 - a. How can there be peace in the body when people are diametrically opposed to one another and cannot reconcile?
 - b. Would it not be better for one to separate from the larger body than to remain, stirring up strife and agitation?
 - c. Why would anybody want to remain in a place where there is such tension? It only makes sense for that one to either remove himself or be removed, or reconcile.
 - d. Somewhere in this whole process perchance there will be a revealing of true heart motive in one or the other party, at which revelation there will be an obvious course to follow.
- 5. Purity of the Covenant Community is paramount, along with restoration of the sinner, not punishment of the sinner.
 - a. The local body is the representation of the bride of Christ.
 - b. Punishment for wrongs is necessary, but it is not the main thing or the goal.
 - c. “1 Cor. 5:1 It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife. :2 And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you. :3 For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed, :4 In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, :5 To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. :6 Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? :7 Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: :8 Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. :9 I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators: :10 Yet

not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world. :11 But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat. :12 For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within? :13 But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person.”

- d. The above is an example of Mt. 18:18-20 in action. These verses have been taken and applied out of context by well-meaning folks for years and years. Rarely have they been used to establish the contextual truths of this passage. I dare say that I doubt any of us have ever heard of them being used in their native context.
 - e. To reiterate the primacy of the peace and purity of the body of Christ over and above any punitive action against a person for the sake of personal satisfaction for a wrong committed, please see 2Cor. 2:5-11.
 - i. There was punishment, but it was for the purity of the body, and to affect the repentance and forgiveness of the one who erred so grievously.
6. Seeking to evangelize or restore the erring one to fellowship with God and the church.

“Paul asks the Corinthians not only to lift the censure of the fornicator but also to restore him to his former status (Basil, Theodoret of Cyr), for to punish a man without healing him means nothing (Chrysostom). He wanted to see that they were as obedient in restoring the sinner as they had been in disciplining him (Chrysostom, Ambrosiaster, Pelagius). Satan can destroy not only by leading into fornication but also by the immoderate sorrow that can follow on repentance for it (Chrysostom, Didymus the Blind, Ambrosiaster). The pain caused to Paul was shared by all the saints at Corinth (Ambrosiaster).”

-Ancient Christian Commentary of Scripture, vol. VII, p. 205.

“Reaffirm your love for him... In other words, reveal your friendship as certain, unshakable, fervent, ardent and fiery; present your love with the same strength as the previous hatred.” Chrysostom.