

Being Confrontational

Joe Slater

Most of us avoid confrontations. In some ways, that's good. Scripture admonishes us not to be spoiling for a fight like someone who *"is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions, useless wranglings . . ."* (1 Timothy 6:4, 5a).

The time comes, however, when faithfulness demands that we confront people with the reality of sin and salvation – even if their reaction is likely to be negative. Peter, for example, spoke to a crowd at the Jerusalem temple about *"Jesus, whom you delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate . . . you denied the Holy one and the Just, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, and killed the Prince of life, whom God raised from the dead"* (Acts 13:13, 14). Within a couple of hours, the Sanhedrin arrested him and John. The worldly-wise might say, "Peter, you were too negative! They were offended, and it's your fault!" Fortunately, Peter didn't listen to worldly wisdom; he was inspired by the Spirit of God.

At their trial the next day, Peter addressed the Sanhedrin this way: *" . . . by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this [formerly lame] man stands here before you whole. This is the 'stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.' Nor is there salvation in any other . . ."* (Acts 4:10-12). Today, Peter might be sent to sensitivity training! The Council let them go with strict orders to speak no more in Jesus' name.

After praying with the church, the apostles kept right on teaching the same message. Arresting them again, the Sanhedrin indignantly asked, *"Did we not*

strictly command you not to teach in this name? And look, you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us!" (Acts 5:28). This very council had condemned Jesus to death, but they didn't want to own up to it. Peter simply affirmed again: *"The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree"* (5:30). That makes three times that he confronted them with their sin of crucifying Jesus, and with the fact of His resurrection (which was especially offensive to the Sadducees on the court).

Jesus said that the Spirit would, among other things, *"convict the world of sin"* (John 16:8). Since the Spirit operates through His word, we must faithfully teach His word so that people will be convicted of sin. We need not be rude or crude, but we must confront!

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Quotable Quotes

"You don't lose by sharing what you know with other people. When one person shares wisdom with another, neither person is diminished. In fact, both are made wiser."

"If you've reached the point in life where you feel you've got all the answers, you had better start asking some different questions."

"The fool is always reaching his intellectual destination. The wise man is always wondering how much further there is to go."

"I've seen a lot of wicked people and a lot of foolish ones, and I believe they both get what they deserve in the end . . . but the foolish ones get it first."

--via *Fortify Your Faith* Newsletter

THIS REALLY HAPPENED

On Sunday, March 25, 1979, a family placed membership at a church of Christ in Arkansas. This is not unusual. We visualize three or four people putting their names on a card and checking the "place membership" box. They may have done that, but they did more: they handed the elders a letter. No, not a letter of recommendation, but their own letter. It read:

"We are asking to commit the welfare of our souls to your care. Although the weakness of the flesh often betrays us, the prime objective of our lives is obtaining salvation for ourselves, our children, and our fellow man. We therefore ask with all sincerity that you help us in every way possible to be successful in this endeavor. Besides spiritual food, encouragement, and fellowship, we fully expect that the help you give might well take the form of numerous requests to serve, instruct, correct, and if necessary, even discipline. With this in mind, we ask that when and if any of us responds in a negative fashion to a request, or fails to measure up in a given task, that you not write us off, but help us to grow and as soon as possible try us again. We view membership in this congregation as an obligation to be subject to its eldership, to be helpful and encouraging to all its members, and to take an active part in its work. We, therefore, state our intentions to give freely of our time, our talents, and our money in order to fulfill that obligation."

This really happened! And it should still be happening throughout our brotherhood today!

--Tim Woodward (via Sayre, OK) adapted