

Loving Real People: Lessons from 1 & 2 Corinthians

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Introduction:

Overview: What can we learn from Paul in 1 & 2 Corinthians about how to love people?

1. “Open wide your hearts”
 - How do we do this?
 - What underlying attitudes/beliefs are necessary in order to love people in this way?
2. Bringing up issues
 - Questions to consider
 - Tensions to keep in mind
 - Practical ideas

1. “Open wide your hearts”

¹¹ We have spoken freely to you, Corinthians, and opened wide our hearts to you. ¹² We are not withholding our affection from you, but you are withholding yours from us. ¹³ As a fair exchange—I speak as to my children—open wide your hearts also. (2 Cor. 6:11-13)

How do we do this?

1. Sacrifice (1 Cor. 13:5)

- Examples:

2. Vulnerability

- Examples:

3. Encouragement (1 Cor. 13:4,6)

- Paul's encouragement is based on their identity in Christ, not on their performance
- Example: 1 Cor. 1:4-9

4. Perseverance (1 Cor. 13:6)

- Paul consistently chooses to love the Corinthians and give his heart to them regardless of their response
- Examples:
- Times it is difficult to persevere in loving someone

"One thing that can be hard for a pastor is just the enduring. After you are in the pastorate for a decade or more, you begin to see many weaknesses and sins in yourself, many failures in the ministry, and become increasingly aware of the resistance in God's people to change. As our insights grow, so do our temptations to increase in despair." p. 56, The Heart of a Servant Leader, C. John Miller

What underlying attitudes/beliefs are necessary in order to love people in this way?

1. Understanding God's call

- Examples:

2. Secure knowledge of who I am in Christ

- Examples:

3. Dependence on God

- Examples:

4. Eternal Perspective

- Examples:

Discussion: What kinds of issues might come up in your ministry if this side of things (opening wide your heart) was deficient?

2. Bringing up issues

- Issues Paul brings up in 1 Cor...

Selfishness
Worldly wisdom
Comparisons
Boasting
Ungodly motives
Disunity
Immaturity
Arrogance
Lack of repentance

Misunderstanding
of the resurrection
Sexual immorality
Permissiveness
Public lawsuit
Poor witness in
terms of conflict
resolution
Wrong beliefs about
individual and
corporate identity

Marriage issues
Lack of
urgency/concern for
eternal things &
how near the end is
Not giving up
freedom
Wrong priorities
Temptation/idolatry
Gossiping

Misuse of the Lord's
supper
Gluttony
Drunkenness
Misusing spiritual
gifts
Autonomy
Lack of love
Poor discernment

- There is no perfect formula...
- Questions we ask ourselves:

Questions to Consider

- Have you ever talked with them about this issue before? Are they aware it's an issue?
- Is this an area of resistance or of weakness?
 - See ch. 10-11 of Organic Discipleship by Dennis McCallum (especially p. 164-167)
- What underlying attitudes/beliefs are playing into this?
- What does God think about this – how would he respond to someone struggling with this?
- How serious of an issue is this? Is it seriously hindering their own/others' walks with God

Tensions to keep in mind

1. Harshness vs. softness

- Examples:

2. Overly affected vs. unaffected

Unaffected	Overly affected

- Is Paul overly affected by the Corinthians?

3. Overly positive vs. overly negative

- Realistic about the power of sin
- Confident in the power of God to change people
- Examples:

Overly positive	Overly negative

"...please cultivate a knowledge of Jesus Christ's love for you (2 Cor. 5:14-15; Rom. 5:1-6). Then cultivate your love for Him. He is infinitely worthy of our love, just as we are infinitely unworthy of His love. Do, then, spend much time thinking about His love. It is the only thing that enabled me to break through the crust of my own strength and sufficiency and reach out with patient love as I counseled them. It's often easy enough for me to be disturbed by where people are in their rebellion, but then in unbelief to drop the matter there by simply avoiding them...What I long for is a love big enough to be disturbed by what people are doing, and strong enough and patient enough to carry them to the place where Christ wants them to be!" p. 214, The Heart of a Servant Leader, C. John Miller

Steps towards developing this kind of patient endurance with people

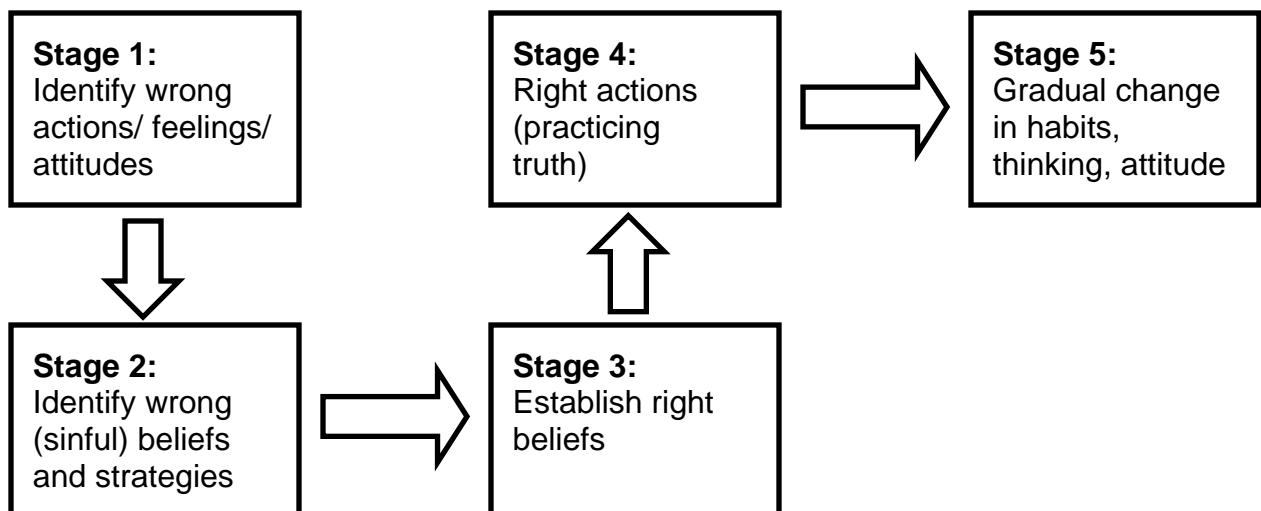
Practical Ideas

1. Lay out a clear positive and negative vision

2. Point out the discrepancy

3. Goal = help people become **convinced** not compliant

- Back up what you're saying with Scripture
 - Examples: 1 Cor. 1:19, 31; 2:9,16; 3:19-20; 5:13; 6:16; 9:9; 10:7,26; 11:24-26; 14:21; 15:27, 32, 54-55 2 Cor. 4:13; 6:2,16 -18; 8:15; 9:9; 10:17; 13:1
- Get at the deeper issues by applying the biblical model for change



- Be clear by using examples, analogies, etc

- Examples:

- Ask questions (so they actually think about it for themselves)

- Examples:

Discussion: What would it look like to be *most* concerned about people becoming actually convinced? What would be different in our approach if this were our goal rather than just trying to get someone to change as quickly as possible?