

# **Northwest Community Evangelical Free Church**

(June 22, 2014)

Dave Smith

Sermon manuscript

## **Sermon series: THE TIES THAT BIND**

### **Encouraging One Another -**

#### **Part 2: The Hard Side**

(2 Samuel 11-12; Galatians 2; Philippians 4; James 5)

Study #8

**Introduction:** Putting it all back together again...

*Humpty-Dumpty sat on a wall  
 Humpty-Dumpty had a great fall  
 All the King's horses and all the King's men  
 Couldn't put Humpty together again*

Everybody knows this nursery rhyme - and it's been around for a long time.

Back in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, people in England applied it to King Richard III, as his popularity plummeted. They said that his reign could not be restored to legitimacy.

But the poem didn't originate in 15<sup>th</sup> century England. It can be found in various forms in the poetry of France, Germany, Denmark, and Sweden, as well as England.

Originally, the rhyme was a riddle. And the answer to the riddle is: an egg. The message of the riddle is that some things (an egg is one example), once broken, can never be restored.

Eggs are like that - once broken, irreparable. So are cars totaled on Loop 1604 and homes destroyed by Nebraska tornadoes. After suffering damage, some things might as well be trashed. They can't be rebuilt.

But what about a life? What about the life that is "broken"?

Lots of people have suffered devastating blows - some of you here have. And all of us know people who have gone through personal earthquakes. Sometimes the damage is done by the apparent fickleness of life, sometimes by the cruelty of others, and sometimes by our own destructive choices.

Can a broken life ever be put back together again? Or will the efforts of all the King's horses and all the King's men be as unable to rebuild a life as they were unable to rebuild Humpty-Dumpty?

The Bible says, "Yes" - even a broken life can be restored. And God will often use a friend's encouragement to rebuild it.

You and I can give encouragement to the person who has suffered. The soft side of encouragement is especially helpful when someone's life is wrecked by disease or disaster or by someone else. Then, encouragement comes in the form of comfort and affirmation and gentleness.

There is, though, another side to encouragement. There is a hard side. And the hard side of encouragement is tailor made for those times when a friend is the one who has done the damage, to himself or to others.

The idea of encouragement<sup>1</sup> is that we "come alongside someone to help." And sometimes, in the Bible, friends come alongside of friends to help in ways that are not gentle or comfortable.

Sometimes, words like "reproof" and "rebuke" and "confront" are used to describe what is, essentially, the ministry of encouragement.

This morning, we'll track three biblical scenarios where we see the hard side of encouragement.

---

<sup>1</sup> Greek, paraklesis.

Here, encouragement doesn't just mean pleasant interactions. It means speaking the truth when truth hurts and caring enough about your friend to wound them with what they need.

You'll want to pay close attention, because it is very likely that very soon you will be called upon to come alongside one of your friends in precisely the ways we'll see today.

Sometimes, your friend will need you when he has committed some great and terrible sin. He's been disobedient. She's rebelled. In that case it may be necessary for you to be wise, shrewd, even crafty in your approach.

### **Crafty Rebuke for High-Handed Sin (2 Samuel 11-12)**

#### **David's Exaltation**

We meet David, the youngest son among Jesse's eight sons, in the first book of Samuel as he is anointed by Samuel to be king of Israel. He was anointed while King Saul was still on the throne.

After David was anointed and after he killed Goliath, David became very popular - which didn't at all set well with King Saul. So, for ten long years, Saul tried to kill David.

He failed, of course, and after those ten years of running from Saul, Saul himself died and David became king. King David led the nation of Israel very well for a number of years, walking closely with his God.

At a certain point, after uniting the nation and fighting enemies, the stresses on David's life began to ease. The world seemed less dangerous. He slowed down. His Kingdom was strong. His battle-tested military was without peer. The kingdom was secure.

From this position of comfort, we watch David fall HARD one spring evening.

#### **David's Dark Fall into Adultery and Murder**

##### *King David stays in Jerusalem*

David's life fell apart in the year that he decided to not go out to battle with his army. Instead of going with them, as he usually did in the spring time, he sent them out under the able leadership of Joab, his commander, to fight the pesky Ammonites.

##### *King David commits adultery!*

Today, we won't look at all of the details of David's fall into sin. We'll just look long enough to remember - or learn, if you've never heard this ugly story - what David, the king, David the man after God's heart, did.

Early on an evening, David went up to his palace rooftop and was walking around, looking around.

As he looked around, like an addict's eyes rove around a computer screen, just looking, David's rooftop gaze settled on one scene.<sup>2</sup>

*[2] Now when evening came David arose from his bed and walked around on the roof of the king's house, and from the roof he saw a woman bathing; and the woman was very beautiful in appearance.*

Right then David should have looked away. He should have run away. Instead David allowed his gaze to linger.

Now the woman happened to be obeying the Mosaic Law's requirement for ceremonial washings.<sup>3</sup> David knew that but it didn't stop him from looking.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> When our children were young, we read them the Dr. Seuss book, *Yertle the Turtle*. David might have been thinking Yertle's most famous line: "I'm Yertle the Turtle, O marvelous me, for I am the ruler of all that I see."

<sup>3</sup> See Lev. 12:2-5; 15:18-28; 18:19. These verses describe the purification process for women after childbirth or after menstruation. While bathing is not specifically mentioned in the texts, washing was an understood part of the cleansing process.

<sup>4</sup> The NIV translation reflects this understanding by placing the phrase about her cleansing in parenthesis, while the King James version gives an excellent rendering with, "*he lay with her; for she was purified from her uncleanness: and she*

He looked and then he went further. He launched an investigation to find out who this woman might be. He discovered that she was Bathsheba, the wife of one of his most trusted warriors, Uriah the Hittite, who was out fighting the king's battles.

David's next actions are shameful.

**[4] David sent messengers and took her, and when she came to him, he lay with her...**

David saw a woman, lusted for her, and violated her while she was in the very act of obeying the Law he was sworn to uphold.

*King David commits murder!*

Not long after, after Bathsheba told him that she was with child, David tried to cover up his sin by enticing her husband, Uriah, to come home to sleep with his wife so that no one would think that the baby was his.

But Uriah had such integrity that he refused to go home to be with his wife while his fellow soldiers were out on the battlefield, fighting.

So, what did David do? He turned to murder to cover up his crime, and sent Uriah into battle with orders to his commanding officer to withdraw support from Uriah so that he would die.

Then, David took Bathsheba as his wife, who bore his son.

And, no, they did NOT all live happily ever after, because **[2 Samuel 11:27b]...the thing that David had done was evil in the sight of the Lord.**

---

**returned unto her house.**" See also **The Message**, which captures the idea. So does the English Standard Version.

## Nathan's Parable

*A year of misery*

A year passed between the time of David's sins of adultery and murder and his repentance. It was a year of misery. During that year David had begun to wake up to the horror of what he had done.

During that year, his fellow Jews continued to look to David for leadership. Life went on. Matters of state still had to be dealt with. And his subjects still knew him as "*David, the man after God's own heart.*

The awful secret of what he had done stayed bottled up inside for an entire year.<sup>5</sup> That kind of secret-keeping does real damage to a soul. Hiding, pretending, faking it can result in the withering of a soul. All self-respect dies when we pretend.

So, enter Nathan. Nathan was a prophet and a good friend of David. Nathan proved to be the best friend David could have ever hoped for as he served up a shrewdly crafted word of encouragement.

*The loving correction of a good friend*

One day, Nathan pulled David aside, telling him that he needed counsel about a "situation." David was glad to offer his sage wisdom.

Nathan's story<sup>6</sup> is a tale of injustice, a classic story of a "have" taking advantage of a "have-not."<sup>7</sup>

There was a wealthy man who had many flocks and herds (not just many sheep, but many groups of sheep) and he had ripped off the one pet lamb of a poor man.

---

<sup>5</sup> See the following Psalms we suspect David wrote during this year. They are usually referred to as Penitential Psalms - 32, 39, 102, 130.

<sup>6</sup> 2 Samuel 12:1-4.

<sup>7</sup> Interestingly, Nathan's story appears as poetry, not prose. We wonder if this was standard fare for communicating with the King, or if Nathan speaks poetically to capture David's attention.

The poor man had “**bought**” the lamb, indicating significant sacrifice. He had nourished it as the lamb grew up with his children.

But, the cold-hearted rich man was unwilling to use his own flocks to satisfy the hunger of a guest, so he stole and then slaughtered the poor man’s little lamb instead, and fed it to his guest.

After that story, Nathan didn’t even need to ask the question, “*My King, what should be done in this case? What does justice require here?*”

David was already all over it.

*[5] Then David’s anger burned greatly against the man, and he said to Nathan, “As the Lord lives, surely the man who has done this deserves to die. [6] He must make restitution for the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing and had no compassion.”<sup>8</sup>*

That’s when Nathan stopped the make-believe story and moved from fiction to non-fiction, from novella to the History Channel.

Nathan pulled on David’s custom-made noose, pointed a long, bony finger in David’s face and told him, *[7] “You are the man!”*

Note Nathan’s skill here.

He used the rich man/poor man story to soften David up. He never mentioned God. He never quoted a verse from the Bible. There was no altar call at the end. It was just a compelling story.

And it served to confront, rebuke, and drive King David to repentance.

### **Rebuking shrewdly:**

There will likely come a day when a friend of yours takes a tragic step into sin. Maybe he is about to or is already playing with fire. YOU will be called upon to be your friend’s Nathan.

---

<sup>8</sup> Does David’s immediate judgment suggest that he was extra sensitized to injustice, due to his own failure? David passed judgment - and played right into Nathan’s hands.

And you will bring your most creative, inventive thinking to the task of speaking to your friend’s callused or grieving soul. You will work hard to bring your friend to see the ugliness of what he has done. You will be God’s instrument to “encourage” him to repent before God.

And at the end of the day you may hear him say, as Nathan heard David say, *[13a] “I have sinned against the Lord”* - which was the beginning of his restoration.<sup>9</sup> On that day, God will have used you to begin to put your friend back together.

Let’s turn to the New Testament now, where we’ll see another example of the hard side of encouragement.

### **Public Confrontation for Hypocrisy (Galatians 2)**

#### **Community in Antioch**

The city of Jerusalem was where the Christian faith began. Jesus was crucified and resurrected in Jerusalem. The Holy Spirit descended on the disciples in Jerusalem.

But it didn’t take long for the church to spread to regions beyond Jerusalem, beyond Judea, beyond Samaria, to some very remote places. (think Acts 1:8...) Among those remote places was Syrian Antioch, a city nearly two hundred and fifty miles north of Israel.

Within a few short years of Jesus’ resurrection, a vibrant church had been established in Antioch.

Now Antioch was a mostly Gentile city and the church there was mostly made up of Gentiles, non-Jews.

One day, Simon Peter decided to leave Jerusalem, go traveling, and see the world outside of Palestine. He went at least as far as Antioch, and, at least for a short while, he had a great time with the church that was there!

---

<sup>9</sup> Much of the remainder of chapter 12 details the death of Bathsheba’s child, and the grief that this death brought to David. The death of the innocent child is of a piece with the other injustices associated with David’s sin. The innocent people standing on the sidelines suffer because of the sin of the guilty. That is part of the hideousness of sin.

The Apostle Peter knew that Jesus had broken down the wall dividing Jews and Gentiles. He knew that because God had given him a vision (see Acts 10), declaring all people clean - Jews and Gentiles! - and even declaring all food clean. In Christ, Jews no longer had to keep kosher dietary restrictions!

So, when Peter came to Antioch, he thoroughly enjoyed fellowship with the Gentile Christians there AND he thoroughly enjoyed eating everything that was served at their pot-luck suppers.

All kinds of seafood. Bacon. Hot dogs. Sausage. You name it. Whatever was set before him, he ate it!

He had perfect freedom to eat if all up, and he knew it.

Peter's bacon-fest came to a screeching halt, though, and we are told why in Galatians 2.

## Fracture in Antioch

*Before some visitors from Jerusalem*

**[2:12a] For PRIOR TO THE COMING OF CERTAIN MEN FROM JAMES** (emphasis added), **he used to eat with the Gentiles...**

Everything had been going great in Antioch *until* heavyweight leaders of the JEWISH mother church in Jerusalem came to Antioch. Then, as if somebody had thrown a switch, Peter went back to his kosher-observing ways.

*After the visitors from Jerusalem*

**[2:12b]... but when they** (the men from James) **came, he began to withdraw<sup>10</sup> and hold himself aloof, fearing the party of the circumcision.<sup>11</sup>**

<sup>10</sup> Word used to describe the pulling back of troops in battle.

<sup>11</sup> So what happened? Had Peter somehow become convinced that enjoying pork sausage with Gentiles was wrong, or that sitting down at table with Gentiles was wrong? NO! He knew that the restrictions of the Law had been abolished because of that vision God gave him. He simply feared the bigwigs from Jerusalem. There

The message from the Jerusalem delegation, whether it was delivered verbally or non-verbally (with arms crossed and frowning faces) was clear:

*"Peter, news has reached Jerusalem that you are getting chummy with Gentiles. You know that Moses gave orders about diet and fellowship. Your behavior is causing grave concern to the brethren down south..."*

So, Peter stopped eating what the Gentiles ate. He also stopped eating with the Gentiles. From that point forward, he would either only eat with the Jews or by himself.

And Paul says that Peter stood condemned. Why? What had he done that was so wrong?

He was acting hypocritically. He knew that it was a perfectly fine thing to hang with the Gentiles and to eat with the Gentiles. He stopped, though, and his actions had the potential of doing enormous damage to the church in Antioch and beyond.

Just imagine if you were a Gentile in the church. You've been enjoying eating with Simon Peter, the leader of the apostles.

You've been listening as Peter regales you with Jesus stories, stories you've never heard. After all, Peter was there for three years with Jesus and he had seen the healings and miracles, had actually heard the Lord's teachings.

You're all having a great time as a family of Christ-followers. There is no division between you just on account of that Jewish/Gentile thing.

Then it stopped.

You can imagine their thoughts - *"Was it something we said? Did we do something wrong? Do we no longer measure up to Peter's standards? Is there something wrong with us?"*

may have been other dynamics at work besides fear prompting Peter to do what he did. But fear was primary. He caved to peer pressure.

There is no way they could have avoided feeling snubbed, dissed, and ostracized. Budding new friendships were fractured because of Peter's move away from the Gentiles.

Peter sinned against love. And Peter also sinned against truth.

Peter was actually re-building the dividing wall Jesus' death and resurrection had knocked down. He was putting up a barrier between Jews and Gentiles. Jesus died to create one Jew/Gentile BODY - and Peter's actions were, in effect, creating Jewish church and a Gentile church.

As well, as is so often the case, Peter's actions had a ripple effect.

#### *The contagion of hypocrisy*

**[2:13] *The rest of the Jews joined him in hypocrisy, with the result that EVEN BARNABAS (emphasis added) was carried away by their hypocrisy.***<sup>12</sup>

Even Barnabas - big-hearted Mr. Encouragement himself - withdrew from fellowship with the Gentiles.<sup>13</sup> All of the other Jews in the Antioch church began to take their meals separately.

And Paul was there in Antioch when it went down. He saw it all happen. Not surprisingly, Paul took immediate and bold action.

#### **Rebuke in Antioch**

**[2:11] *But when Cephas came to Antioch, I OPPOSED HIM TO HIS FACE, because he stood condemned.***

Paul was a quick study. He immediately took in the situation and frontally addressed Simon Peter, the chief of the apostles.

You can read for yourself the exact form Paul's opposition to Peter took. (Galatians 2:14-21) You will see that it was strong. It was a rebuke.

---

<sup>12</sup> Hypocrisy is concealing one's real character, feelings, under the guise of implying something different. It is creating a false impression purposefully.

<sup>13</sup> "*The rest of the Jews*" refers to those residing in Antioch. Peter's hypocrisy had effectively created a schism between peoples.

The Apostle Paul accused the Apostle Peter of not being straightforward about the Gospel itself.

Some people have found fault with Paul's public words to Peter. They have been hard on Paul for how hard he was on Peter. But Paul did exactly what was called for. Rebuke is a sometimes necessary part of the hard side of encouragement.

Paul was more concerned for the unity of the church at Antioch and for the Gentile Christians who been treated like second-class citizens of the Kingdom of God than he was concerned to protect Peter's feelings.

#### **Confronting publicly:**

There may come a day when someone you know sins against love and truth. They have hurt someone by their actions or words. They knew better - and they did it anyway.

When that day comes it may be that your only recourse will be to call them on the carpet for their hypocrisy, for the sake of the person they hurt, for the sake of truth and love, and for Christ's sake.

It's a tough assignment, but it's part of applying the hard side of encouragement. Your willingness to boldly confront may be what God will use to rebuild something precious that has been broken.

For one more image of the hard side of encouragement, we'll travel to the city of Philippi. One of Paul's letters has just been received by the church there.

There was something going on in the church that was unhealthy. Paul addressed it.

#### **Pleading for Reconciliation (Philippians 4)**

#### **Two Quality Sisters in Christ Can't Get Along**

In the church at Philippi were two women - Euodia and Syntyche. Paul describes them as "*fellow workers*" who had shared Paul's struggle in the cause of the Gospel.

They are great women and they are sisters in Christ. They may have been involved in the establishing of the church there in Philippi. And for some reason they just can't seem to get along.<sup>14</sup>

Paul has heard through the grapevine that there has been a fracture in the relationship between Euodia and Syntyche.

Given that situation, we wonder what Paul will say, or what he is going to recommend? We are certainly struck by what he DOESN'T say,

*"Well, that's really too bad. What a shame."* or

*"Oh well, let's press on, now, to more important matters."* Or

*"I advise that one of them start attending Northwest Philippi Community Church and the other can continue on at First Church."*

No! He urges immediate RECONCILING action. He urges<sup>15</sup> harmony. And he urges it in the letter that he writes to the church.

### **Paul Urges Harmony - and Brings Witnesses**

***[2] I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to live in harmony in the Lord.***

Now, it might be helpful to explain how apostolic letters were handled in the early church.

Since the letter was addressed to the entire church, it would have been read out loud, in its entirety, to the church during a time that they had all gathered. (That would have been necessary, both because there was only one copy, and because not many people would have been literate.)

Can you imagine the effect on Euodia and Syntyche when they heard Paul urging harmony and reconciliation between Euodia and Syntyche as that part of the letter was read to the church?

---

<sup>14</sup> Notice the high regard Paul had for women and their importance in the Gospel ministry. Throughout his writings he makes reference to female fellow-servants and to women who worked alongside of him in furthering the Good News.

<sup>15</sup> Paraklesis

How would you feel if your name was read aloud to the congregation this morning, as needing to reconcile with someone here?

That alone might have prompted them to move toward reconciliation.

But that's not all that's going on here. Paul enlists others to help in the reconciliation process. He asks a "***true comrade***" - evidently someone highly esteemed in the church; maybe a church leader to whom the letter had been sent - to help these two women work out their differences.

AND he also asks Clement<sup>16</sup> to help. AND he expects "***the rest of his fellow workers***" to help these two women mend things.<sup>17</sup>

What does this effort tell us about the importance of harmonious relationships between us in the church? What does it say about how zealous we should be to maintain harmony with each other in the church?

Clearly, we won't fulfill our purpose of turning the world's attention to Jesus if there is discord and strife and contention between us.

### **Urging reconciliation:**

The fact that Paul called for harmony between these two women tells us that you or I may be called upon to help mend broken relationships in the body of Christ.

That is another facet of the hard side of encouragement. We don't just let broken relationships remain broken.

When you observe strained relating, your next move may be to urge harmony. As much as it is possible, we seek to help put the broken person and the broken friendship back together.

---

<sup>16</sup> Clement was a common first name, and we don't know precisely who this Clement was.

<sup>17</sup> I agree with Dr. Robert Lightner who thinks that the words "***along with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers***" means that Paul was enlisting Clement and others to help "***the true comrade***" unite the women.

## Conclusion:

As we wrap up, we'll turn to the little book of James and listen as James, the half-brother of Jesus, calls you and me to meaningful, sacrificial, risky effort to restore a fellow Christian when he wanders from the way.

*[19] My brethren, if any among you strays from the truth, and one turns him back, [20] let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.*

How does God put a broken life back together? Often, He will use a Christian friend who is willing to bring the *hard* or *soft* side of ENCOURAGEMENT to bear on their friend's brokenness.

Today, Jesus is calling us to be willing to use comfort or rebuke, affirmation or confrontation to help put our friend's lives back on track for Him.

Significantly, James doesn't tell us to call the elders. And while not taking these verses out of the context of what he has just said, he doesn't tell us to pray. Here, he commands ACTION.

When you see someone "erring" or "wandering" - love requires purposeful action. Prayerful action, of course, but action.

Do something. intercept him on his way to the adult theater. Interrupt him as he gossips. Rebuke him for his harshness with his kids or his wife.

Maybe you'll show him his error in a crafty way, as Nathan did with King David, so that his guilt, his need, or his error is driven home with a ringing sense of conviction, "***I have sinned against the Lord.***"

Maybe you'll be more of a Paul who calls a Simon Peter on the carpet for destructive hypocrisy when love and truth are on the line.

Or maybe you'll urge reconciliation between friends in Jesus when they can't work things out alone, inviting others to help.

But when you turn your friend from a destructive path you save his soul from death<sup>18</sup> and you cover a multitude of sins.<sup>19</sup> You put him back into service. You restore him. You recycle him.

Every Friday I haul my blue City of San Antonio recycling trash can out to the street. It's filled with paper and cardboard and plastics and tin cans for outfits like River City Steel and Re-Cycling to pick up and haul off for use in another life.

Re-cycling aluminum and paper is a really good thing! But, what James has in mind is the most valuable kind of recycling imaginable. He challenges you and me to the ministry of reclamation for wayward brothers and sisters in Christ.

We do it by hard and soft encouragement. We do it by prayer and forgiveness, service and love, by not judging and not bragging and not being jealous.

When we practice the "one anothers" of the New Testament, we become the people and the church of Jesus' dreams.

---

<sup>18</sup> Sinful waywardness is a life and death issue. The wages of sin is death. For the person who has never placed trust in Jesus for salvation, that death is eternal separation from God. But for the believer, the Christian, sin pays no higher wages. Sin has a deadening effect on our relationship with God. The believer who "wanders" is less sensitized to the Spirit. He dies relationally toward those around him.

<sup>19</sup> Using, "cover" in the Old Testament sense, James means that by turning an errant believer back toward the Lord we open the way for that Christian to experience a fresh awareness of forgiveness, and to receive cleansing for a vibrant walk with God. (see Psalms 32:1; 85:2)