

Grace Unraveled  
Grace in Conflict  
2 Corinthians 7:2-12

Encouragement comes in many forms. Sometimes we encourage a particular behavior with a pat on the back and a word of praise. Sometimes we encourage a change in behavior with a kick in the pants and a word of reprimand. German writer and statesman Johann Wolfgang von Goethe once said, "Correction does much, but encouragement does more. Encouragement after censure is as the sun after a shower."

1. Grace requires an \_\_\_\_\_
  - A. Was someone really \_\_\_\_\_?
  - B. Was someone really \_\_\_\_\_?
  - C. Was someone really \_\_\_\_\_?
2. Grace requires \_\_\_\_\_
  - A. We must maintain \_\_\_\_\_ in each other
  - B. We must maintain positive \_\_\_\_\_
  - C. We must maintain \_\_\_\_\_ in conflict
3. Grace requires \_\_\_\_\_
  - A. Challenging words are hard to \_\_\_\_\_
  - B. They are meant to produce godly \_\_\_\_\_
  - C. They are meant to produce \_\_\_\_\_

Our conflict with each other is not unlike our conflict with God. We want our way even if it is wrong. That is why repentance is never a fun process but it is a necessary process. Jesus preached that repentance was necessary in order to enter the kingdom. God does not confront us with the necessity of repentance out of spite or indignation (to say I told you so). He does so out of His goodness (Romans 2:4) a goodness that was fully demonstrated in the finished work of Christ on the cross.

Reflection

In thinking about what we have read so far, how would you describe Paul's relationship with the Corinthians on a personal level? Why had Paul been worried about this relationship? How was Paul reassured about the relationship? What is encouragement and how do you encourage? Would an honest evaluation of your efforts to "encourage" reveal a critical attitude rather than an encouraging one?