# Introduction …

Well here we are at session 6 or REC, and this, I think, has been the session everyone I have been talking to has been waiting for. In one sense that is a good thing because we want to be better informed and educated about how to do what this session is about. On the other hand, the fact that many of us want to learn this third G, reflect also the importance of the first two!!!

You see our third G is “Gently Engage Others” or “gently restore others”, and its all about how we speak to the other person in our conflict. How we seek to engage them in the process of restoring our relationship. Even to share with them the actions or words that hurt us and that they should not continue! To restore them to a better more godly behaviour. As we have said a number of times, this is our natural first move in a conflict, to point out the problem the other party has in causing my distress and our conflict!! But we have learnt its not the first thing to do, it must be the second, or even third, or perhaps even fourth thing I do!! I must first be real about myself and look at the log in my own eye, then I must apologize to the other party, admitting specifically, acknowledging hurt, accepting the consequences and altering my behaviour, and then, thirdly, I must ask them to forgive me!! Remember our 7 A’s of apology!!

Now, if we avoid doing all that and jump straight to engage the other party, no matter how gently, it really won’t work!! It won’t work for me, and it won’t work for your, and it won’t work for us!! The conflict will not be resolved if we ignore the Lord Jesus words and jump to the speck in the other person’s eye before we deal with the log in mine!

Indeed the good news is, if you rightly do the first two G’s, we may not even reach the third one!! As I apologise, the other party warms to our relationship and we are apologizing to one another admitting our short comings and engaging on being resotred.

Remember that as we proceed today and learn more about how we do point out the speck in the other person’s eye, because the Lord Jesus does recognize that is an important part of resolving everyday conflict – gently restoring others.

# Introducing the third G: Gently Engage others …

We hear much around the world, and even the church, about *“Do not judge, or you too will be judged.”* These are the words of the Lord Jesus in Mathew 7:1, however perhaps sometimes they become a gag on something else the Scriptures call us to do. In Galatians 6:1 we read, *Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently.”* The Scriptures do call us to gently restore one another when we see each other are in sinful or godless behaviour. Judging, an attitude that condemns people, and a hypocritical one that ignore my own sin and coming judgment, is very different to restoring a friend who is living in a sinful way in any way: impatient, angry, lustful, proud, selfish, you name the list. We are not prohibited from pointing out hurtful actions or attitude in others. As we have seen the Lord Jesus a few verse after saying don’t judge, says look at the speck in your brothers eye, but only after you’ve dealt with the log in your own!! We *must* go to the other person gently in order to restore them in their relationship with God, and with others. In judging the attitude and purpose is to bring down, to condemn. In restoring gently under Galatians 6, the attitude and purpose is to lift up and restore. Deitrich Bonhoffer in his famous book, *Life Together* put it like this, as you can see at the top of page 28,

*“Nothing is so cruel as the tenderness that consigns another to his sin. Nothing can be more compassionate than the severe rebuke that calls a brother back from the path of sin.”*

Correcting and guiding one another is an act of love and part of loving one another. Its why we need each other – pulling someone away from the edge of the cliff – if it’s done in the right way!! You see one of the risks in a message like this, is that we all go home, and start practicing this truth like the Sin police!!

The third G of gently engaging others, is not about being the sin police!! Its about helping one another. We see it in the table on page 28

The third G is not *just confronting someone (if you want to confront someone, it might be a bad idea!!).* The third G is *going with a heart of love for the person, wanting their best and a restoring of the relationship between you.* The third G is not *going in a spirit of anger and vengeance, that is don’t correct sin in sin, or sinfully*. The third G is going to lead them away from the cliff of sin. And the third G is not  *going to “ding” them in a self-righteous spirit.* The third G is *going to them gently.*

There must be love. If you can’t go in love, then don’t go at all. Ephesians 4:14-15 says,

*14 Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. 15 Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ.”*

There are two things here, the obvious one is the way we approach them, lovingly, gently, kindly. We all know that, and we will talk about how in the rest of the message. But I want to bring another point out of Ephesians 4:14-15. The Greek is actually *“truthing in love”,* having no sense of “telling”. So the heart of the passage, to bring us up into our head, that is the Lord Jesus, is about a relationship of love as much as the words of love. Ephesians 4:14-15 calls us to restore and guide one another “in love”, in a relationship of love. Apply this this way, if I have a relationship with someone such that if I bring a hard word of rebuke or guidance, with a heart to restore them and lift them up, and they hear that hard word as a restorative word, then I have the relationship in which I can go and speak with them to restore them. However, if I do not have a relationship of love with them such that they will hear my words in that restorative way. Then I should no approach them and raise the matter, even if I have the heart to restore. Why? Because it is doubtful they will hear it that way, and it will only add to the conflict.

This is an important matter to consider when restoring others gently. Have a I got a relationship to restore this person? Even with challenging words? Or do we need someon else to help? We will return to this point later.

# How do I go?…

So, I have a relationship of love with this person, and I want to put Galatians 6 into practice and restore them even in my conflict with them. How do I go and do that? Jesus’ words in Matthew 18:15-17 help us,

*15 “If your brother or sister singo and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over.* *16 But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that ‘every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.’* *17 If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector.*

## Step one: go talk with them (15) …

There are three easy steps in this passage. First go and speak with them. And please note SPEAK with them. Not email, letter or text. A written note may help to express your apology and contrition, but restoring someone gently is not best expressed in written form. Sometimes our desire to write or email is an expression of our fear to speak face to face.: fear it won’t be well received or, fear my sin will be pointed out. In the event that we have followed the first two G’s, these fears will not be present.

And when you go, be quick to listen!! You don’t know the other person’s heart. You may have seen *what* they did, but you don’t know *why!* So, listen up as you sit together!!! Practically this means ask more questions and make fewer statements!!

And when you speak with someone, give them hope. They may have fallen short and done the wrong thing, but the wonder of the gospel and God’s heart and love for them means they have not been rejected by him, and so neither will you. The gospel brings hope for forgiveness and change. Fundamental for such a message.

## Step two: get help (16) …

Of course there can be times when it’s a little too confronting for me to approach someone with whom I am in conflict. You might feel its unsafe, or there is a power imbalance in the relationship, or the conflict might be so long and deep that you can’t do it just the two of you. Well Jesus says in verse 16, get help!!

This doesn’t mean ‘ganging up on the person’ though!!! It may be useful to suggest someone whom you both respect and trust. Someone you both mutually trusted person. This can sometimes be the first matter to discuss with the person, “Hey is there someone that can help us through this?” and then approach them together. In any event, keep it private as long as possible, and keep it confidential, conflicts can include matters that are personal, hurtful, and misunderstood by those outside of the situation. Why bother doing this? well, the Lord Jesus says so, and that’s a good start, but page 30 gives us four reasons why its worthwhile getting someone else to help.

* Emotions can run high!! A third person can help everyone be more loving and careful in their communication
* The third person, while not there to judge, can bring questions and clarifications to help understanding and seeing things the same together. Stop listening in conflict
* The third person can help each party see their own logs in their eyes , keeping restoration on the agenda
* A godly third person can take you to God’s Word and what it says to both of you about the situation

## Step three: the place of the church (17) …

Step three, is when the conflict remains even with one person to help, there can come the place of a further place of assistance. Now this passage has been the basis for church discipline, and there is a significant place for that as Paul picks up in 1 and 2 Corinthians, however, it also relevant when resolving conflict. If you can’t see resolution in a relationship with another person, approach the elders of the church. Elders are set apart to lead in prayer, overseeing the teaching of church, and also in this area of relationships. Our ERT has recommended Elders that we believe God has prepared for this role, as we have set out in our Elders position description. Make use of them, if you need them, to meet with you and work it through.

One of the great things about REC is that is getting us, and not just us as elders, but as a church, to be ready to help those I the commmuinty in their conflicts. The gospel brings reconciliation and restoration as we have seen. Well what if we CrossLife developed a peacemaking team to help the families, singles and couples around us in their relationship struggles? What a great service to the families of our child care centres! But it doesn’t just have to be elders, anyone with a heart for resolving conflict. So today we have a sing up sheet for you to express interest for training in this – a day on Saturday 30th November in personal conflict coaching. A peacemaking team that would us develop a culture of peace in the church and in our community.

This biblical approach is a great process for anything that requires sensitivity between people. We have adopted it for our Eldership process. The ERT announced their recommended Elders last week. And this month we pray and consider it before affirming them, or not, at our AGM on Sunday 3rd November. What if you have a question about one of them? Do you wait for the AGM? Not at all!! Follow Matthew 18 – approach and discuss with them, and if that does not resolve it, bring in an ERT member.

# Having the difficult conversation …

How do we have this conversation though? On the back of your card from last week, and on pages 31-32 we find the PAUSE tool that helps with that conversation. You use this when you are wanting to point out sin in a friend’s life, and when you are dealing with the material issue in a conflict.

## PAUSE: Prepare …

Frist Prepare – prayerful, thinking through the issues, seek godly counsel and what the Scriptures say, plan your remarks and consider what the other party might say. Get ready for some possible outcomes, preparing your heart to embrace a number of them.

## PAUSE: Affirm relationship …

Then as you speak, affirm the relationship you have with the person. Every conflict is about an issue, and is between people. We should maintain that separation to find resolution. As page 31 says, focus on the problem and don’t make the people things worse. Make sure they know they are values as a person by you.

## PAUSE: Understand interests …

The heart of engaging gently, is listening. What do you listen for? Phil 2:3-4 tells us,

*“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but the interests of others!”*

Pretty plain what we listen for – their interests. We need to understand their interests. Interests are motivations behind people’s positions. It may be a need, a concern, a desire or a limitation, or something they fear or value. The underlying thing thaey are trying to accomplish. If we identify them, then we can identify what they are looking for and move to the next step

## PAUSE: Search for creative solutions …

As we understand interests and what we are searching out, we can find creative ways to solve the issue between us. This is where your preparation comes through. Don’t get caught on just two solutions. Proverbs 14:8 says,

*The wisdom of the prudent is to give thought to their ways, but the folly of fools is deception.*

## PAUSE: evaluate options objectively and reasonably …

Finally, evaluate options objectively and reasonably. How is it going? This is not just at the conversation, but how can we keep each other accountable to see this approach continue into the future.

# Conclusion …

When I left McPhee Kelshaw solicitors for College, my boss gave me this letter.