

Fraternal Correction

Jesus Christ asks us, His disciples, to sometimes do what *seems* impossible. He asks us to pray for those who persecute us. He invites us to love our enemies. And there are those times He reminds us, His followers, to pick up our crosses.

Whenever Jesus asks us to do anything, a good starting point is to remember this: He is trying to help us through life, NOT burden us.

In Chapter 18 of Matthew's Gospel, He asks us to do something that is really difficult to follow. Jesus says, "If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone."

In the spiritual life this is referred to as "fraternal correction."

We know fraternal correction is difficult because it's rarely practiced. It takes courage to tell loved ones that what they're doing is harmful to themselves and others. We risk ending relationships and open ourselves up to criticism.

Yet, fraternal correction is an expression of love.

I believe there are three things to consider prior to confronting another person about harmful behavior.

First, we need to be certain the behavior is harmful. We cannot simply have an opinion rooted in feeling that the one we love is hurting others/self.

Second, fraternal correction must be done out of love. Belittling another in a fit of moral superiority has no place in God's Kingdom.

Finally, the recipient of the criticism must be in the right place (emotionally, spiritually, and the like). Timing is vital.

All too often we criticize a person by telling everyone except the person who needs to hear it. We owe it to those whom we love to follow what Jesus asks.