WHEN MR. CONFRONTER EMAILS MR. BLOGGER

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It's no fun when Christians confront you about your sin even if they do so in a sensitive, grace-filled way. It can be worse if they do so insensitively and ungraciously. And it can be even worse if they insensitively and ungraciously confront you about sin that you're not guilty of.

But this short post is not about how to receive criticism. It's about how to confront others.

To make this less abstract, let's use this example: One Christian confronts another Christian via email about pride because of something he wrote on his blog. We'll call the former Christian "Mr. Confronter" and the latter "Mr. Blogger."

If Mr. Blogger really is guilty of pride, then he should be grateful to God that Mr. Confronter loves him enough to care for his soul that way even though the confrontation itself isn't pleasant.

But Mr. Confronter may be confronting Mr. Blogger about a sin that—as best Mr. Blogger can discern with a clear conscience before God—Mr. Blogger is not guilty of, at least not to the degree accused. That kind of confrontation is awkward and potentially harmful. So we must be cautious in confronting others.

Mr. Confronter, in the example above, makes at least two unwarranted assumptions:

- 1. What Mr. Blogger did was sinful because it would be sinful for Mr. Confronter if he were Mr. Blogger.
- 2. Mr. Confronter understands Mr. Blogger and the situation sufficiently to confront him accurately.

This is not to say bloggers are always right and confronters are always wrong. Far from it. But it is a call for caution. Here's one simple suggestion on how to confront other people in a way that serves them: preface your confrontation by acknowledging your limitations and then end with a question.

Thus, Mr. Confronter's conversation may look something like this:

May I share an observation with you? I may be completely wrong here because I don't know your heart and because I may not understand the situation sufficiently. But I know my own heart better than anyone else's, and I'm definitely the worst sinner I know! And if I did what you did in this case, I think that I'd be guilty of pride because Is my observation here anywhere close to the mark?

If Mr. Blogger doesn't think that he is guilty in this particular instance, Mr. Confronter could come back with a fellow church member, friend, or elder. But it may not be wise for Mr.

Confronter to turn the screws tighter and increase the intensity. Mr. Blogger may be guilty, and God may use the confrontation to convince him of his sin in due course. But Mr. Blogger may not be guilty! So if Mr. Confronter insensitively and ungraciously persists, he may create false guilt and become guilty of the very pride he is condemning.

You can't control how all other Christians confront you, but you are responsible for how you confront others. So when you confront others, do it in a way that serves them. "I love my fellow-Christians not simply because of the gospel, but I love them best when I am loving them with the gospel! [1 Thes 2:8]" (Milton Vincent, *A Gospel Primer for Christians*, 22).

Related: See Ken Sande, "Judging Others: The Danger of Playing God," Parts 1, 2, and 3.