

Study Guide

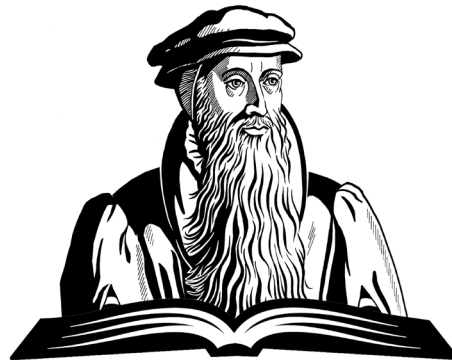
for

CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN THE CHURCH

by Rev. A. T. Vergunst

Lecture 4

Surrounded with Prayer and Love



The John Knox Institute
of Higher Education

Entrusting our Reformed Inheritance to the Church Worldwide

John Knox Institute of Higher Education

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Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from the Authorized King James Version.

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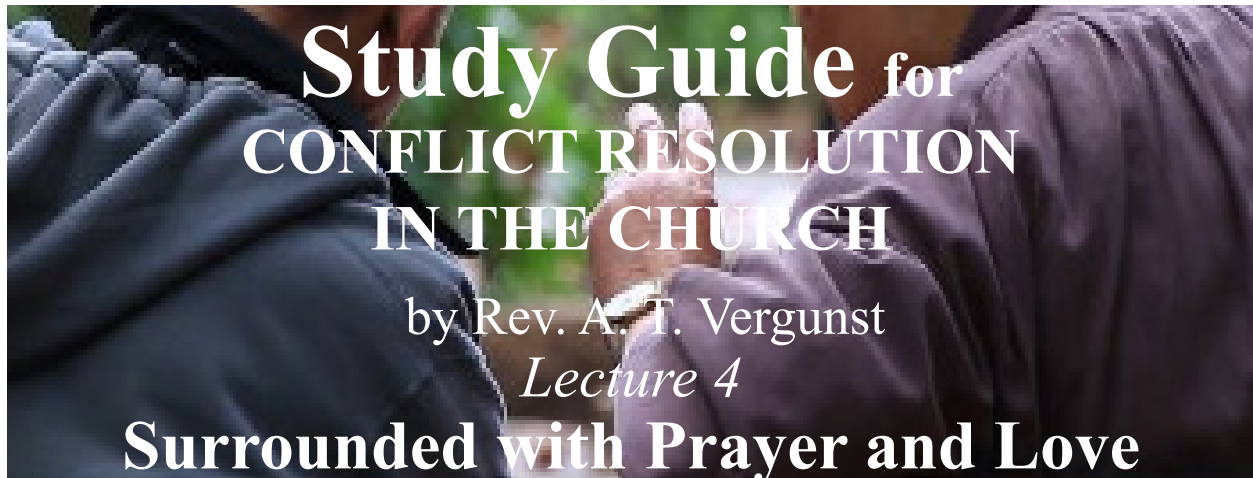
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Video Lecture Series

by Rev. A. T. Vergunst

1. Introduction
2. Jesus' Instructions on Confrontation
3. Repentance, Confession, & Forgiveness
4. Surrounded with Prayer and Love
5. Excommunication and Restoration



Scripture Texts

“Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.”

—Matthew 18, verses 15 to 17

Key Points

1. Review of the four levels of confrontation for reconciliation.
 - a. Self-examination; private confrontation; bring a witness; involve the church.
 - b. If private confrontation fails, show patience and give it time.
2. If there is no repentance, move to the third level: confrontation at an extended or combined level—bring one or two others to assist.
 - a. Person of spiritual maturity and experience.
 - b. Independent of the matter. They must be uninvolved and remain objective.
 - c. Integrity, meekness, impartiality, credibility.
3. If there is no repentance, move to the fourth level, congregational level—tell it to the church.
 - a. Church discipline is not punishment but spiritual medicine. The main purpose is to bring healing and restoration.
 - b. “Tell it to the church” is a command. It must be made public to the congregation.
 - 1) Some churches have adopted a rule of review by neighboring churches.

- c. Public announcement: a call to pray and fast for the unrepentant brother or sister.
- d. If there is still no repentance, the unrepentant sinner is excommunicated from the church.
 - 1) Delivered to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that they might yet repent.

Review Questions

1. Rev. Vergunst tells us that it is God-like to show patience with a sinning brother. How is that being like God? Does God show patience with us when we sin?

2. In the third level of confrontation, we are to take one or two witnesses and confront the offender again. What is the rule of the witnesses, and how can their presence help?

3. Who should be chosen to be the one or two witnesses to help us? What should their character be? Is it important for them to be objective?

4. Rev. Vergunst advises that each member in the household of God should develop themselves for such a witness role in the church. Why is this important?

5. If there is no repentance, and the matter must be brought to the congregational level, what things should we bear in mind in this process?

6. The congregational level is, “tell it to the church.” Is that an option, or is it a divine command? Please explain some of the different methods which might be adopted in local congregations.

7. If the sinner doesn't repent, what is the purpose of sharing the matter with this enlarged audience of the local congregation? How should the members of the congregation respond?

8. Some churches practice “silent censure.” What does that mean? and how is the matter shared with the church? What is the congregation asked to do?

9. If a “silent censure” is practiced, and repentance still doesn't occur, what is the next step in the process of telling it to the church? Why must we surround the sinner in prayer and patient love?

10. What exactly is excommunication, and why is it the last step in the reconciliation process of a Christian who refuses to repent? Is there still hope? Why is it necessary?

Personal Applications

1. What are some of the qualifications to look for in a potential witness to assist you in confronting sin in a fellow Christian? How can you become equipped with these qualifications?

2. The members of a church have a great responsibility in response to the announcement of a church censure. What Christian duties are they called to when the congregation's leaders announce such a disciplinary measure? Would you be prepared to perform those duties?
