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"Conflict Resolution"

Conflict is inevitable - Two realities we have in common: our sinful nature and our ability to make conflict.



Romans 12:18 (NIV) If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.

2 Corinthians 5:17-20 (NIV) Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! 18 All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: 19 that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. 20 We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.

Different types of conflict

- Legal/moral issues in our society - civil disobedience, unethical behavior, abuse etc.
- Moral Issues within the church - financial disputes, sexual purity, marriage etc: (Matthew 18)
- Opinion/preference issues - personal tastes, worship music, politics, some doctrinal interpretations from different camps.

Romans 14:19-22 (NLT) So then, let us aim for harmony in the church and try to build each other up. 20 Don't tear apart the work of God over what you eat. Remember, all foods are acceptable, but it is wrong to eat something if it makes another person stumble. 21 It is better not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything else if it might cause another believer to stumble. 22 You may believe there's nothing wrong with what you are doing, but keep it between yourself and God. Blessed are those who don't feel guilty for doing something they have decided is right.

- Treating preferences as absolutes creates division.
- Don't assume the motives of another. There are two sides to every story. Don't participate in gossip or slander. Resist gossip.

Proverbs 16:28 (NIV) "A perverse person stirs up conflict, and a gossip separates close friends."

- We put out fires for the sake of unity and reconciliation, rather than add fuel to them. (John 17)

Proverbs 20:3 (NIV) Avoiding a fight is a mark of honor; only fools insist on quarreling.

- Lay down your offense, give grace, seek love and peace.
- Personal issues - pride, selfishness, anger, betrayal, gossip
 - Be courageous, speak truthfully in love, forgive as you have been forgiven. (Matthew 18)

Challenges with resolving conflict

- Pouter or sulker - Sulking feels manipulative.
- Ignoring conflict - "It's fine" until it's not.

Matthew 5:23-24 (NIV) "Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, 24 leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift.

- Litigator/debater - argue to prove a point, you 'must win'.

2 Timothy 2:23 (NIV) Don't have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments, because you know they produce quarrels.

- Screamer/anger - you want your way and everyone will hear it.

Proverbs 29:11 (NIV) Fools vent their anger, but the wise quietly hold it back.

Resolving conflict God's way

1. Evaluate your heart first.

- Why did I get so easily offended?
- What role did I play in the conflict?

Matthew 7:3-5 (NIV) "Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? 4 How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? 5 You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.

- Self reflection can give us God's perspective before responding to an offense.

James 3:17-18 (NIV) But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. 18 Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness.

2. Take the initiative to resolve conflict.

Matthew 18:15-17 (NIV) "If your brother or sister sins, go 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.

- Go with a humble heart to understand and reconcile. * Don't try to reason with someone who is not thinking rationally* (Matthew 7:6)
- Take two mature Christians who are objective, not poisoned by your or offense.
- Go to the Elders if need be.

Romans 12:17-18 (NIV) Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. 18 If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.

3. Care about the other person above being right.

Philippians 2:3 (NIV) Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves,

- Communicate with grace, truth and wisdom.

Colossians 4:6 (NIV) Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.

- Listen first, then seek clarity through reasonable questions. (James 1:19-20)
- Own your part in the conflict with humility and forgiveness. (Colossians 3:13)
- Overlook minor offenses. (Proverbs 19:11)
- Good communication doesn't guarantee resolution. If conflict grows, set appropriate boundaries.

1 Peter 4:8 (NIV) Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins.

Small Group Discussion Questions: Story Genesis 13:1-11

1. What was Abram's focus?
2. What is the difference between peacekeepers and peacemakers?
3. Are you allowing conflict to get in the way of relationship? If so, what steps do you need to take?
4. How will you help another person be a reconciler?