



CONFLICT

LIGHTEN THE LOAD — part 5

OCTOBER 30, 2022

YOU ARE RIGHT

Two men who lived in a small village got into a terrible dispute. So they decided to talk to the wisest man in town. The first man went to the wise man's home and told his side of the story. The wise man said, "You are absolutely right!" The next day the second man came and told his side of the story. The wise man said, "Yes, you are absolutely right!" When the feuding man left, the wise man's wife scolded him. "Those men told two different stories and you told both of them they were 'absolutely right.'" The wise man turned to his wife and said, "You are absolutely right!"

It is inevitable—at some point, we will have dealings with someone who disagrees with us. It could be a co-worker, a family member, a neighbor, or a stranger. The disagreement could be something as simple as a misunderstood text or email or as complicated as a political opinion. The conflict could be a spontaneous disagreement or a pre-meditated act of vengeance.

On a scale of 1 to 10 (10 being a peacemaker), how would you rate your ability to handle conflicts with others?

Do you deal with problems head-on or do you avoid people who tend to push your anger buttons?

If you know there is something that will make someone mad do you refrain from doing (or saying) it, or do you do it just to "stir the pot?"

GOD'S MODEL OF RECONCILIATION

Matthew 5:9— Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

When Jesus blessed peacemakers, He wasn't just talking about being a passively peaceful person. Peacemakers don't avoid confrontation. They make a commitment to walk into the heat of conflict and bring restoration between two warring parties.

God's plan to resolve conflict can be found in these three verses:

Matthew 18:15-17— If your brother sins against you, go tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have won your brother. 16 But if he won't listen, take one or two others with you, so that by the testimony of two or three witnesses every fact may be established. 17 If he doesn't pay attention to them, tell the church. If he doesn't pay attention even to the church, let him be like a Gentile and a tax collector to you. This is perhaps the most well-known scripture on how to deal with an adversary. Let's look at the order God lays out.

Verse 15— _____ communication.

Verse 16— Take _____ with you.

Verse 17— Tell it to _____ leadership.

If this doesn't work, _____ from that relationship.

How does this model go against what many tend to do today?

Why do we involve others too soon?

What does talking to others first do to the conflict?

1. It stirs up more _____.
2. Makes you a _____.
3. Damages the _____ of the other person.
4. _____ into conflict with the person.

Hebrews 12:15

15 Make sure that no one falls short of the grace of God and that no root of bitterness springs up, causing trouble and defiling many.

What does it mean that someone "falls short of the grace of God?"

What is the "root of bitterness?"

Has there ever been a time when you have felt a deep hurt between you and another person? How did it affect you?

The _____ that Jesus gives is not the _____ of trouble but is rather the _____ of His continuing _____.

Two things every Christian needs to know about conflict:

1. How to _____ disagreements with one another.
2. How to _____ others so that peace is a priority.

KEEPING THE PEACE

There is a famous statue of Christ with His arms outstretched in South America—the Christ of the Andes. The statue was erected as a pledge that as long as it stood there will be peace between the countries of Chile and Argentina. No sooner than the statue was finished, Chileans began to protest that Christ’s back was toward them. The feud was finally defused when a man from Chile commented, “The people of Argentina need more watching over than the Chileans.”

In today’s world, it seems that people are always looking for something to be upset about. Read Paul’s thoughts as he wrote to the people in Rome:

Romans 9:3— For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the benefit of my brothers and sisters, my own flesh and blood.

How is Paul’s feelings different from most people’s?

What might a selfish, demanding attitude say to people?

Romans 12:16-19 — Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud; instead, associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own estimation. 17 Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Give careful thought to do what is honorable in everyone’s eyes. 18 If possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. 19 Friends, do not avenge yourselves; instead, leave room for God’s wrath, because it is written, “Vengeance belongs to Me; I will repay, says the Lord.”

Underline phrases that tell us how we are to live.

According to this passage, what is needed to have peace with others?

Romans 14:19— So then, let us pursue what promotes peace and what builds up one another.

What do you believe are the root factors of conflict?

There are those who aggressively stir up disagreements, but another way to push conflict is through passive-aggressive behavior. A person who uses this tactic learns to control the situation in an indirect, almost unrecognizable way.

It can sometimes be easier to recognize passive-aggressiveness traits in others than it is to see these behavior patterns in yourself. Ask yourself these questions to see if you are guilty of dealing with conflict in this way.

- Do you often find yourself sulking when you are unhappy with someone?
- Do you avoid people with whom you are upset?
- Do you ever stop talking to people when you are angry with them?
- Do you put off doing things as a way to punish others?
- Do you use sarcasm to avoid engaging in meaningful conversations?

How do you react to being called out on something you have done wrong?

What if someone calls you out on something that you consider your “right” to do? Which is more important to you—standing for your “right” or nurturing peace in the situation?

What if the person accusing you is much weaker in their faith or a complete non-believer?

Which is of more value—your “rights,” your control, or your testimony?

Romans 14:19-20— So then let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding. 20 ... it is wrong for anyone to make another stumble...

Romans 15:1— Now we who are strong have an obligation to bear the weaknesses of those without strength, and not to please ourselves.

Romans 16:20— The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.

PRAYER TIME

- Give thanks to God for the gift of His peace even when situations with others get difficult. Praise Him for His patience with you, and ask Him to grant you patience with others.
- Ask for more grace to deal with others as you should. Protect your testimony at all costs.
- Think of people you may in conflict with now and those in the past. Pray for those who have hurt you. Ask God how you might make amends in a way that reflects God’s love for them.