



Biblical Reconciliation

Glorifying God in Conflict

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Growing Disciples
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Hope in Conflict

Definitions

Peace

- A state of well-being, harmony, and love, driven by unity in desires, goals, and purposes.

- Paul contrasts peace with _____ and _____.

1 CORINTHIANS 14:33 – “GOD IS NOT A GOD OF **CONFUSION**, BUT OF PEACE.”

- David contrasts peace with _____.

PSALM 4:8 – “IN PEACE I WILL BOTH LIE DOWN AND SLEEP, FOR YOU ALONE, O LORD, MAKE ME TO **DWELL IN SAFETY**.”

- Jesus contrasts peace with _____.

JOHN 14:27 – “PEACE I LEAVE WITH YOU; MY PEACE I GIVE TO YOU; NOT AS THE WORLD GIVES DO I GIVE TO YOU. DO NOT LET YOUR HEART BE **TROUBLED**, NOR LET IT BE **FEARFUL**.”

- Paul contrasts peace with _____.

2 CORINTHIANS 13:11 – “FINALLY, BROTHERS, REJOICE, BE MADE COMPLETE, BE COMFORTED, **BE LIKE-MINDED**, LIVE IN PEACE; AND THE GOD OF LOVE AND PEACE WILL BE WITH YOU.”

- Simeon contrasts peace with _____.

LUKE 2:29 – “NOW LORD, YOU ARE RELEASING YOUR BOND-SERVANT TO **DEPART IN PEACE**, ACCORDING TO YOUR WORD.”

- Jesus contrasts peace with being _____.

MARK 5:34 – “AND HE SAID TO HER, ‘DAUGHTER, YOUR FAITH HAS MADE YOU WELL; GO IN PEACE AND **BE HEALED OF YOUR AFFLICTION**.’”

Conflict

- “A difference of opinion or purpose that frustrates someone’s goals or desires.” Ken Sande

- A state of impaired thinking and relationships driven by competing desires, goals, and purposes.
 - Euodia and Syntyche had a broken relationship due to some kind of _____ of mind. The solution was to “live in harmony,” which literally translates to “be of the same mind.”

PHILIPPIANS 4:1-3, “. . . I URGE EUODIA AND I URGE SYNTYCHE TO LIVE IN **HARMONY** IN THE LORD. . .”

- Paul and Barnabas had different _____ on Mark’s trustworthiness, which caused them to separate and minister apart from each other.

ACTS 15:36-40, “. . . **BARNABAS WANTED** TO TAKE JOHN, CALLED MARK, ALONG WITH THEM ALSO. **BUT PAUL KEPT INSISTING** THAT THEY SHOULD NOT TAKE HIM ALONG WHO HAD DESERTED THEM IN PAMPHYLIA AND HAD NOT GONE WITH THEM TO THE WORK. . . .”

- Paul confronted Peter about his hypocrisy. There was a difference in _____—Peter wanted to please certain Jews and Paul wanted to give a right testimony to Gentiles. The solution was to align their desires.

GALATIANS 2:11-14, “**BUT WHEN CEPHAS** CAME TO ANTIOCH, I OPPOSED HIM TO HIS FACE, BECAUSE HE STOOD CONDEMNED. FOR PRIOR TO THE COMING OF CERTAIN MEN FROM JAMES, HE USED TO EAT WITH THE GENTILES; BUT WHEN THEY CAME, HE BEGAN TO WITHDRAW AND HOLD HIMSELF ALOOF, **FEARING THE PARTY OF THE CIRCUMCISION. . . .**”

The Process of Reconciliation

- “A work of the Triune God in union with us, the sons of God, who through that union labor to bring about that great day of peace by rectifying wrongs and setting relationships right, all under the lordship of God.” Alfred Poirier, *The Peacemaking Pastor*, 75.

- God has reconciled Himself and _____.

2 CORINTHIANS 5:18-19, “. . . [GOD] **RECONCILED US TO HIMSELF** THROUGH CHRIST AND GAVE US THE MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION. . . .”

- God has reconciled Himself and His people _____—uniting Jews and Gentiles into the people of God.

EPHESIANS 2:11-15, “. . . FOR HE HIMSELF IS OUR PEACE, WHO **MADE BOTH GROUPS INTO ONE** AND BROKE DOWN THE BARRIER OF THE DIVIDING WALL. . . .”

- In light of the reconciliation God has accomplished, we must work to preserve that reconciliation _____.

EPHESIANS 4:1-6, “. . . I IMPLORE YOU TO WALK IN A MANNER WORTHY OF THE CALLING WITH WHICH YOU HAVE BEEN CALLED . . . BEING DILIGENT TO **PRESERVE THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT** IN THE BOND OF PEACE. . . .”

A History of the World Through the Lens of War and Peace

The World at Peace

- Genesis 1:31 tells us that God looked upon everything He had made, and it was very good. What does that include? Among other things, we find hints that life in this created world was defined by _____.
 - There was peace between animals (1:30; 2:19).
 - There was peace between mankind and creation (3:17-19).
 - There was peace between Adam and animals (1:29; 2:19-20).
 - There was peace between Adam and Eve (2:18, 23-25).
 - There was peace between mankind and God (3:8).

The World at War

- As soon as sin entered the world, creation was defined by _____.
 - There is conflict between animals (3:14; 6:12).
 - There is conflict between mankind and creation (3:14-19).
 - There is conflict between mankind and animals (3:21; 4:4; 9:2).
 - There is conflict between Adam and Eve, and among mankind (3:7, 12, 16; 4:8, 23).
 - There is conflict between mankind and God (3:8-10, 22-24; 4:4-10; 6:3, 6-7).

The New World of Peace

- The millennium and the eternal state will be defined by _____.
 - There will be peace between animals (Isaiah 11:6-7; 65:25).
 - There will be peace between mankind and creation (Revelation 22:1-3).
 - There will be peace between mankind and animals (Isaiah 11:8-9).
 - There will be peace between mankind (Isaiah 2:4; Micah 4:3).
 - There will be peace between mankind and God (Revelation 21:3-4, 24-26; 22:3-4).

Peace: Now or Later?

- Even though our sin-cursed world is defined by conflict, the gospel is the good news that not only has God made peace possible in the future, but He is making peace in the world today and calling those reconciled to Him to be peacemakers.

Peace is Possible Because of Who God Is

- While this world will be defined by conflict until the Jesus sits on His throne, there is hope that we can experience peace because our God, Creator, Savior, and Redeemer is a _____ God.

ISAIAH 9:6 – “FOR A CHILD WILL BE BORN TO US, A SON WILL BE GIVEN TO US; AND THE GOVERNMENT WILL REST ON HIS SHOULDERS; AND HIS NAME WILL BE CALLED WONDERFUL COUNSELOR, MIGHTY GOD, ETERNAL FATHER, **PRINCE OF PEACE.**”

ROMANS 15:33 – “NOW THE **GOD OF PEACE** BE WITH YOU ALL.”

PHILIPPIANS 4:9 – “THE THINGS YOU HAVE LEARNED AND RECEIVED AND HEARD AND SEEN IN ME, PRACTICE THESE THINGS, AND THE **GOD OF PEACE** WILL BE WITH YOU.”

1 THESSALONIANS 5:23 – “NOW MAY THE **GOD OF PEACE** HIMSELF SANCTIFY YOU ENTIRELY; AND MAY YOUR SPIRIT AND SOUL AND BODY BE PRESERVED COMPLETE, WITHOUT BLAME AT THE COMING OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.”

2 CORINTHIANS 13:11 – “FINALLY, BRETHREN, REJOICE, BE MADE COMPLETE, BE COMFORTED, BE LIKE-MINDED, LIVE IN PEACE; AND THE **GOD OF LOVE AND PEACE** WILL BE WITH YOU.”

HEBREWS 13:20-21 – “NOW THE **GOD OF PEACE**, WHO BROUGHT UP FROM THE DEAD THE GREAT SHEPHERD OF THE SHEEP THROUGH THE BLOOD OF THE ETERNAL COVENANT, EVEN JESUS OUR LORD, EQUIP YOU IN EVERY GOOD THING TO DO HIS WILL, WORKING IN US THAT WHICH IS PLEASING IN HIS SIGHT, THROUGH JESUS CHRIST, TO WHOM BE THE GLORY FOREVER AND EVER. AMEN.”

Peace That Can Be Yours Today

1. _____ Peace with God

- While this is a _____ peace that only God can produce, we are called to pursue it by faith and repentance, as well as to _____ others to be at peace with God.

ROMANS 5:1-2 – “THEREFORE, HAVING BEEN JUSTIFIED BY FAITH, WE HAVE **PEACE WITH GOD** THROUGH OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, THROUGH WHOM ALSO WE HAVE OBTAINED OUR INTRODUCTION BY FAITH INTO THIS GRACE IN WHICH WE STAND; AND WE EXULT IN HOPE OF THE GLORY OF GOD.”

COLOSSIANS 1:19-22 – “FOR IT WAS THE FATHER’S GOOD PLEASURE FOR ALL THE FULLNESS TO DWELL IN HIM, AND THROUGH HIM TO RECONCILE ALL THINGS TO HIMSELF, **HAVING MADE PEACE** THROUGH THE BLOOD OF HIS CROSS; THROUGH HIM, I SAY, WHETHER THINGS ON EARTH OR THINGS IN HEAVEN. AND ALTHOUGH YOU WERE FORMERLY ALIENATED AND HOSTILE IN MIND, ENGAGED IN EVIL DEEDS, YET **HE HAS NOW RECONCILED YOU** IN HIS FLESHLY BODY THROUGH DEATH, IN ORDER TO PRESENT YOU BEFORE HIM HOLY AND BLAMELESS AND BEYOND REPROACH.”

2 CORINTHIANS 5:18-20 – “NOW ALL THESE THINGS ARE FROM GOD, **WHO RECONCILED US TO HIMSELF** THROUGH CHRIST AND GAVE US THE MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION. . . . THEREFORE, WE ARE AMBASSADORS FOR CHRIST, AS THOUGH GOD WERE MAKING AN APPEAL THROUGH US; WE BEG YOU ON BEHALF OF CHRIST, **BE RECONCILED TO GOD.**”

2. _____ Peace Enjoyed with the God of Peace

- When we enjoy peace with God, the most significant conflict in our life is _____. This frees us to experience _____ peace. But it usually doesn’t happen by accident. We are _____ to pursue it.

PHILIPPIANS 4:6-9 – “**BE ANXIOUS FOR NOTHING**, BUT IN EVERYTHING BY PRAYER AND SUPPLICATION WITH THANKSGIVING LET YOUR REQUESTS BE MADE KNOWN TO GOD. AND **THE PEACE OF GOD, WHICH SURPASSES ALL COMPREHENSION, WILL GUARD YOUR HEARTS AND YOUR MINDS** IN CHRIST JESUS. FINALLY, BRETHREN, WHATEVER IS TRUE, WHATEVER IS HONORABLE, WHATEVER IS RIGHT, WHATEVER IS PURE, WHATEVER IS LOVELY, WHATEVER IS OF GOOD REPUTE, IF THERE IS ANY EXCELLENCE AND IF ANYTHING WORTHY OF PRAISE, DWELL ON THESE THINGS. THE THINGS YOU HAVE LEARNED AND RECEIVED AND HEARD AND SEEN IN ME, **PRACTICE THESE THINGS, AND THE GOD OF PEACE WILL BE WITH YOU.**”

ISAIAH 26:3 – “THE STEADFAST OF MIND **YOU WILL KEEP IN PERFECT PEACE**, BECAUSE HE TRUSTS IN YOU.”

JOHN 14:27 – “**PEACE I LEAVE WITH YOU; MY PEACE I GIVE TO YOU**; NOT AS THE WORLD GIVES DO I GIVE TO YOU. **DO NOT LET YOUR HEART BE TROUBLED, NOR LET IT BE FEARFUL.**”

JOHN 16:33 – “THESE THINGS I HAVE SPOKEN TO YOU, SO THAT **IN ME YOU MAY HAVE PEACE**. IN THE WORLD YOU HAVE TRIBULATION, **BUT TAKE COURAGE**; I HAVE OVERCOME THE WORLD.”

3. _____ Peace with Others

- Once the vertical peace with God is established, and we experience inner peace, we are called to pursue horizontal peace with others.
- We are called pursue peace with _____.

ROMANS 12:18 – “IF POSSIBLE, SO FAR AS IT DEPENDS ON YOU, **BE AT PEACE WITH ALL MEN.**”

HEBREWS 12:14 – “**PURSUE PEACE WITH ALL MEN**, AND THE SANCTIFICATION WITHOUT WHICH NO ONE WILL SEE THE LORD.”

TITUS 3:2 – “TO MALIGN NO ONE, TO **BE PEACEABLE**, GENTLE, **SHOWING EVERY CONSIDERATION FOR ALL MEN.**”

1 CORINTHIANS 7:15 – “YET IF THE UNBELIEVING ONE LEAVES, LET HIM LEAVE; THE BROTHER OR THE SISTER IS NOT UNDER BONDAGE IN SUCH CASES, BUT **GOD HAS CALLED US TO PEACE.**”

- We are called to pursue peace with _____.

ROMANS 14:19 – “SO THEN WE **PURSUE THE THINGS WHICH MAKE FOR PEACE** AND THE BUILDING UP OF ONE ANOTHER.”

EPHESIANS 4:1-3 – “THEREFORE I, THE PRISONER OF THE LORD, IMPLORE YOU TO WALK IN A MANNER WORTHY OF THE CALLING WITH WHICH YOU HAVE BEEN CALLED, WITH ALL HUMILITY AND GENTLENESS, WITH PATIENCE, SHOWING TOLERANCE FOR ONE ANOTHER IN LOVE, **BEING DILIGENT TO PRESERVE THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT IN THE BOND OF PEACE.**”

COLOSSIANS 3:15 – “LET THE **PEACE OF CHRIST RULE IN YOUR HEARTS**, TO WHICH INDEED YOU WERE CALLED IN ONE BODY; AND BE THANKFUL.”

2 TIMOTHY 2:22-23 – “NOW FLEE FROM YOUTHFUL LUSTS AND **PURSUE RIGHTEOUSNESS, FAITH, LOVE AND PEACE, WITH THOSE WHO CALL ON THE LORD** FROM A PURE HEART. BUT REFUSE FOOLISH AND IGNORANT SPECULATIONS, KNOWING THAT THEY PRODUCE QUARRELS.”

1 THESSALONIANS 5:13B – “**LIVE IN PEACE WITH ONE ANOTHER.**”

Conclusion

Peace is not just a possibility in this life, it is a calling—a _____. God commands us to have peace _____ others. But He does that having granted us peace _____ Him and offering us peace _____ ourselves.

Therefore, we are to have an _____ of peace, and take _____ in peacemaking.

Attitude of Peace

COLOSSIANS 3:15 – “LET THE **PEACE OF CHRIST RULE IN YOUR HEARTS . . .**”

- To “rule” means to act as a judge or arbiter. Like an umpire who decides what happens next, peace should be the _____ by which you act and respond toward others.

Action of Peacemaking

MATTHEW 5:9 – “BLESSED ARE THE **PEACEMAKERS**, FOR THEY SHALL BE CALLED SONS OF GOD.”

- As those who’ve been reconciled to God and adopted into His family, we are to work in the family business of peacemaking.
- Put another way, when we pursue peace, we demonstrate that we are sons of our heavenly Father, not our former father—the devil (John 8:44).

Rethinking Conflict

What are common reasons for conflict?

- _____ Differences

ACTS 15:1-31 – “SOME MEN CAME DOWN FROM JUDEA AND **BEGAN TEACHING THE BRETHREN**, “UNLESS YOU ARE CIRCUMCISED ACCORDING TO THE CUSTOM OF MOSES, YOU CANNOT BE SAVED.” AND WHEN **PAUL AND BARNABAS HAD GREAT DISSENSION AND DEBATE WITH THEM**, THE BRETHREN DETERMINED THAT PAUL AND BARNABAS AND SOME OTHERS OF THEM SHOULD GO UP TO JERUSALEM TO THE APOSTLES AND ELDERS CONCERNING THIS ISSUE. . . .”

TITUS 3:9 – “BUT AVOID **FOOLISH CONTROVERSIES AND GENEALOGIES AND STRIFE AND DISPUTES ABOUT THE LAW**, FOR THEY ARE UNPROFITABLE AND WORTHLESS.”

2 TIMOTHY 2:23 – “BUT REFUSE **FOOLISH AND IGNORANT SPECULATIONS**, KNOWING THAT THEY PRODUCE QUARRELS.”

- _____ over limited resources

GENESIS 13:1-12 – “NOW LOT, WHO WENT WITH ABRAM, ALSO HAD FLOCKS AND HERDS AND TENTS. **AND THE LAND COULD NOT SUSTAIN THEM WHILE DWELLING TOGETHER**, FOR THEIR POSSESSIONS WERE SO GREAT THAT THEY WERE NOT ABLE TO REMAIN TOGETHER. **AND THERE WAS STRIFE BETWEEN THE HERDSMEN OF ABRAM’S LIVESTOCK AND THE HERDSMEN OF LOT’S LIVESTOCK**. NOW THE CANAANITE AND THE PERIZZITE WERE DWELLING THEN IN THE LAND.”

ACTS 6:1 – “NOW AT THIS TIME WHILE THE DISCIPLES WERE INCREASING IN NUMBER, A COMPLAINT AROSE ON THE PART OF THE HELLENISTIC JEWS AGAINST THE NATIVE HEBREWS, **BECAUSE THEIR WIDOWS WERE BEING OVERLOOKED IN THE DAILY SERVING OF FOOD.**”

GENESIS 26:19-20 – “BUT WHEN ISAAC’S SERVANTS DUG IN THE VALLEY AND FOUND THERE A WELL OF FLOWING WATER, **THE HERDSMEN OF GERAR QUARRELED WITH THE HERDSMEN OF ISAAC, SAYING, “THE WATER IS OURS!”** SO HE NAMED THE WELL ESEK, BECAUSE THEY CONTENDED WITH HIM.”

- _____ in values, goals, gifts, priorities, expectations, interests, or opinions.

1 CORINTHIANS 12:12-31 – “AND THE EYE CANNOT SAY TO THE HAND, “**I HAVE NO NEED OF YOU**”; OR AGAIN THE HEAD TO THE FEET, “**I HAVE NO NEED OF YOU.**” ON THE CONTRARY, IT IS MUCH TRUER THAT THE MEMBERS OF THE BODY WHICH SEEM TO BE WEAKER ARE NECESSARY; AND THOSE MEMBERS OF THE BODY WHICH WE DEEM LESS HONORABLE, ON THESE WE BESTOW MORE ABUNDANT HONOR, AND OUR LESS PRESENTABLE MEMBERS BECOME MUCH MORE PRESENTABLE, WHEREAS OUR MORE

PRESENTABLE MEMBERS HAVE NO NEED OF IT. BUT GOD HAS SO COMPOSED THE BODY, GIVING MORE ABUNDANT HONOR TO THAT MEMBER WHICH LACKED, SO THAT THERE MAY BE NO DIVISION IN THE BODY, BUT THAT THE MEMBERS MAY HAVE THE SAME CARE FOR ONE ANOTHER.”

1 CORINTHIANS 1:12-13 – “NOW I MEAN THIS, THAT EACH ONE OF YOU IS SAYING, **“I AM OF PAUL,” AND “I OF APOLLOS,” AND “I OF CEPHAS,” AND “I OF CHRIST.”** HAS CHRIST BEEN DIVIDED? PAUL WAS NOT CRUCIFIED FOR YOU, WAS HE? OR WERE YOU BAPTIZED IN THE NAME OF PAUL?”

- Sinful _____ and _____ that lead to sinful words and actions.

JAMES 4:1-2 – “WHAT IS THE SOURCE OF QUARRELS AND CONFLICTS AMONG YOU? IS NOT THE SOURCE YOUR **PLEASURES THAT WAGE WAR IN YOUR MEMBERS?** YOU LUST AND DO NOT HAVE; SO YOU COMMIT MURDER. YOU ARE ENVIOUS AND CANNOT OBTAIN; SO YOU FIGHT AND QUARREL. YOU DO NOT HAVE BECAUSE YOU DO NOT ASK.”

1 CORINTHIANS 6:1-11 – “DOES ANY ONE OF YOU, **WHEN HE HAS A CASE AGAINST HIS NEIGHBOR, DARE TO GO TO LAW BEFORE THE UNRIGHTEOUS AND NOT BEFORE THE SAINTS?** . . . WHY NOT RATHER BE WRONGED? WHY NOT RATHER BE DEFRAUDED? ON THE CONTRARY, YOU YOURSELVES WRONG AND DEFRAUD. YOU DO THIS EVEN TO YOUR BRETHREN. . . .”

How Should I Think About Conflict?

1. Realize that Conflicts are _____; Therefore Expect Them

- When you think about the many varieties of conflicts, and the innumerable circumstances in which conflicts arise, there is no way to avoid conflict.
- We should never be surprised by conflicts.
- Expecting conflicts doesn't mean we should assume the worst in others. Love assumes the best (1 Corinthians 13:7). But because of the curse of sin, even when two people have legitimate motives, opinions, and expectations, conflicts will take place because of competing desires as well as miscommunication.
- The mere existence of a conflict should not anger or frustrate us. It should motivate us to take action.

2. Realize that Conflicts are _____; Therefore Resolve Them

- Not all disagreements are conflicts, and thus not necessarily sinful.

- Conflicts are defined by impaired thinking and relationships, which means that God is not being honored in our thoughts and our relationships.
- While we may not have overtly sinned in a conflict, there are likely ways we could have handled the situation differently.
- Sin is any lack of conformity to Jesus. Jesus was in constant conflicts, but He always handled them perfectly. Since we are not yet like Christ, we must acknowledge where we could or should have acted or responded differently.
- Sometimes our role in a conflict is passivity. Like Adam, sometimes we find ourselves in a conflict because of what we *didn't* do. Whether we played an active or passive role in a conflict, the presence of a conflict means that sin is present in one or both parties—and it's usually both.
- Wherever sin is recognized—in thought, word, action, or inaction—it must be repented of.

3. Realize that Conflicts are _____; Therefore Seize Them

- Conflicts are opportunities to know, trust, and _____ God.

PSALMS 9:9-10 – “THE LORD ALSO WILL BE A STRONGHOLD FOR THE OPPRESSED, A STRONGHOLD IN TIMES OF TROUBLE; **AND THOSE WHO KNOW YOUR NAME WILL PUT THEIR TRUST IN YOU**, FOR YOU, O LORD, HAVE NOT FORSAKEN THOSE WHO SEEK YOU.”

PSALM 55:23 – “**IN GOD I HAVE PUT MY TRUST**, I SHALL NOT BE AFRAID. WHAT CAN MAN DO TO ME?”

PSALM 140:12 – “**I KNOW THAT THE LORD WILL MAINTAIN THE CAUSE OF THE AFFLICTED AND JUSTICE FOR THE POOR.**”

JOHN 14:15 – “IF YOU LOVE ME, YOU WILL KEEP MY COMMANDMENTS.”

- Conflicts are opportunities to become like _____.

EPHESIANS 5:1-3 – “**THEREFORE BE IMITATORS OF GOD**, AS BELOVED CHILDREN; AND WALK IN LOVE, JUST AS CHRIST ALSO LOVED YOU AND GAVE HIMSELF UP FOR US, AN OFFERING AND A SACRIFICE TO GOD AS A FRAGRANT AROMA. **BUT IMMORALITY OR ANY IMPURITY OR GREED MUST NOT EVEN BE NAMED AMONG YOU, AS IS PROPER AMONG SAINTS.**”

PHILIPPIANS 2:1-11 – “. . . DO NOTHING FROM SELFISHNESS OR EMPTY CONCEIT, BUT WITH HUMILITY OF MIND REGARD ONE ANOTHER AS MORE IMPORTANT THAN YOURSELVES; DO NOT MERELY LOOK OUT FOR YOUR OWN PERSONAL INTERESTS, BUT ALSO FOR THE INTERESTS OF OTHERS. **HAVE THIS ATTITUDE IN YOURSELVES WHICH WAS ALSO IN CHRIST JESUS . . .**”

1 PETER 2:21-23 – “FOR YOU HAVE BEEN CALLED FOR THIS PURPOSE, SINCE CHRIST ALSO SUFFERED FOR YOU, **LEAVING YOU AN EXAMPLE FOR YOU TO FOLLOW IN HIS STEPS . . .** WHILE BEING REVILED, HE DID NOT REVILE IN RETURN; WHILE SUFFERING, HE UTTERED NO THREATS, BUT KEPT ENTRUSTING HIMSELF TO HIM WHO JUDGES RIGHTEOUSLY.”

- Conflict reminds of our _____ for Christ.

2 CORINTHIANS 12:7, 10 – “BECAUSE OF THE SURPASSING GREATNESS OF THE REVELATIONS, FOR THIS REASON, TO KEEP ME FROM EXALTING MYSELF, THERE WAS GIVEN ME A THORN IN THE FLESH, A MESSENGER OF SATAN TO TORMENT ME—TO KEEP ME FROM EXALTING MYSELF! **THEREFORE I AM WELL CONTENT WITH WEAKNESSES, WITH INSULTS, WITH DISTRESSES, WITH PERSECUTIONS, WITH DIFFICULTIES, FOR CHRIST’S SAKE;** FOR WHEN I AM WEAK, THEN I AM STRONG.”

- Conflicts help us see blind spots in our _____ and _____

PSALM 119:67, 71 – “**BEFORE I WAS AFFLICTED I WENT ASTRAY,** BUT NOW I KEEP YOUR WORD. IT IS GOOD FOR ME THAT I WAS AFFLICTED, THAT I MAY LEARN YOUR STATUTES.”

- Conflicts help us practice _____.

1 TIMOTHY 4:7 – “BUT HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH WORLDLY FABLES FIT ONLY FOR OLD WOMEN. ON THE OTHER HAND, **DISCIPLINE YOURSELF FOR THE PURPOSE OF GODLINESS.**”

- Conflicts are opportunities to _____ to others—those in conflict with us, and those observing.

GALATIANS 6:1 – “BRETHREN, EVEN IF ANYONE IS CAUGHT IN ANY TRESPASS, YOU WHO ARE **SPIRITUAL, RESTORE SUCH A ONE** IN A SPIRIT OF GENTLENESS; EACH ONE LOOKING TO YOURSELF, SO THAT YOU TOO WILL NOT BE TEMPTED. BEAR ONE ANOTHER’S BURDENS, AND THEREBY FULFILL THE LAW OF CHRIST.”

MATTHEW 7:1-5 – “DO NOT JUDGE SO THAT YOU WILL NOT BE JUDGED. FOR IN THE WAY YOU JUDGE, YOU WILL BE JUDGED; AND BY YOUR STANDARD OF MEASURE, IT WILL BE MEASURED TO YOU. WHY DO YOU LOOK AT THE SPECK THAT IS IN YOUR BROTHER’S EYE, BUT DO NOT NOTICE THE LOG THAT IS IN YOUR OWN EYE? OR HOW CAN YOU SAY TO YOUR BROTHER, ‘LET ME TAKE THE SPECK OUT OF YOUR EYE,’ AND BEHOLD, THE LOG IS IN YOUR OWN EYE? YOU HYPOCRITE, FIRST

TAKE THE LOG OUT OF YOUR OWN EYE, **AND THEN YOU WILL SEE CLEARLY TO TAKE THE SPECK OUT OF YOUR BROTHER'S EYE.**"

1 PETER 3:14-16 – "BUT EVEN IF YOU SHOULD SUFFER FOR THE SAKE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, YOU ARE BLESSED. . . . BUT SANCTIFY CHRIST AS LORD IN YOUR HEARTS, **ALWAYS BEING READY TO MAKE A DEFENSE TO EVERYONE WHO ASKS YOU TO GIVE AN ACCOUNT FOR THE HOPE THAT IS IN YOU,** YET WITH GENTLENESS AND REVERENCE; AND KEEP A GOOD CONSCIENCE SO THAT IN THE THING IN WHICH YOU ARE SLANDERED, THOSE WHO REVILE YOUR GOOD BEHAVIOR IN CHRIST WILL BE PUT TO SHAME."

1 TIMOTHY 4:12 – "LET NO ONE LOOK DOWN ON YOUR YOUTHFULNESS, BUT RATHER IN SPEECH, CONDUCT, LOVE, FAITH AND PURITY, **SHOW YOURSELF AN EXAMPLE OF THOSE WHO BELIEVE.**"

- With such significant opportunities comes responsibility. And with responsibility comes _____.
- Stewards view conflicts not as _____, but as an opportunity to _____.

ROMANS 12:1-21 – "THEREFORE I URGE YOU, BRETHREN, BY THE MERCIES OF GOD, TO PRESENT YOUR BODIES A LIVING AND HOLY SACRIFICE, ACCEPTABLE TO GOD, WHICH IS **YOUR SPIRITUAL SERVICE OF WORSHIP.** . . . NEVER PAY BACK EVIL FOR EVIL TO ANYONE. RESPECT WHAT IS RIGHT IN THE SIGHT OF ALL MEN. IF POSSIBLE, SO FAR AS IT DEPENDS ON YOU, BE AT PEACE WITH ALL MEN. . . . DO NOT BE OVERCOME BY EVIL, BUT OVERCOME EVIL WITH GOOD."

- Stewards view conflicts not in terms of personal _____, but in terms of divine _____.

PSALM 69:9 – "FOR ZEAL FOR YOUR HOUSE HAS CONSUMED ME, AND **THE REPROACHES OF THOSE WHO REPROACH YOU HAVE FALLEN ON ME.**"

- Stewards trust in God's _____ purposes.

ROMANS 8:28 – "AND **WE KNOW THAT GOD CAUSES ALL THINGS TO WORK TOGETHER FOR GOOD** TO THOSE WHO LOVE GOD, TO THOSE WHO ARE CALLED ACCORDING TO HIS PURPOSE."

- Stewards know that God is _____ them.

ROMANS 8:31 – "WHAT THEN SHALL WE SAY TO THESE THINGS? **IF GOD IS FOR US, WHO IS AGAINST US?**"

- Stewards don't focus on _____, they focus on _____.

MATTHEW 25:21 – “HIS MASTER SAID TO HIM, ‘**WELL DONE, GOOD AND FAITHFUL SLAVE. YOU WERE FAITHFUL WITH A FEW THINGS, I WILL PUT YOU IN CHARGE OF MANY THINGS; ENTER INTO THE JOY OF YOUR MASTER.**’”

4. Remember the ABC of conflict. _____

JAMES 1:3-4 – “CONSIDER IT ALL JOY, MY BRETHREN, WHEN YOU ENCOUNTER VARIOUS TRIALS, KNOWING THAT THE TESTING OF YOUR FAITH PRODUCES ENDURANCE. AND LET ENDURANCE HAVE ITS PERFECT RESULT, SO THAT YOU MAY BE PERFECT AND COMPLETE, LACKING IN NOTHING.”

Questions We Must Ask During a Conflict

How have I _____ to this conflict by wrong thinking, speaking, acting, or not acting?

How can I _____ and _____ the Lord in this conflict?

How can I be a _____ of what Christ has done for me?

Keeping God at the Center

Last week we saw that one of the opportunities that conflict provides is to trust, obey, and glorify God. Today we want to narrowly focus on how to maintain the goal of glorifying God in resolving conflicts.

What Does it Mean to Have God at the Center?

1 CORINTHIANS 10:31 – “WHETHER, THEN, YOU EAT OR DRINK OR WHATEVER YOU DO, DO ALL TO THE GLORY OF GOD.”

2 CORINTHIANS 5:9 – “THEREFORE WE ALSO HAVE AS OUR AMBITION, WHETHER AT HOME OR ABSENT, TO BE PLEASING TO HIM.”

What does it look like to glorify God? We glorify God _____ and _____.

- Vertically, glorifying God means to live in such a way that our lives reflect back to Him that He is worthy to be worshipped and served and obeyed.
- Horizontally, we glorify God by reflecting who God is to others with our words *and* our actions.

Glorifying God is easy when our desires align with His and that of others. It’s when our desires are in conflict that we have the opportunity to demonstrate who is really on the throne of our lives.

Principles for Pleasing God

- a. We must make pleasing God our single, _____ life goal.

MARK 12:30 – “YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.”

- b. We must seek to please God, not ourselves or _____.

GALATIANS 1:10 – “FOR AM I NOW SEEKING THE FAVOR OF MEN, OR OF GOD? OR AM I STRIVING TO PLEASE MEN? **IF I WERE STILL TRYING TO PLEASE MEN, I WOULD NOT BE A BOND-SERVANT OF CHRIST.**”

- c. We must seek to please God according to God’s _____.

PSALM 119:9, 11 – “HOW CAN A YOUNG MAN KEEP HIS WAY PURE? BY KEEPING IT ACCORDING TO YOUR WORD. . . YOUR WORD I HAVE TREASURED IN MY HEART, THAT I MAY NOT SIN AGAINST YOU.”

- d. We must seek to please God by depending on God’s _____.

EPHESIANS 6:10-11 – “FINALLY, **BE STRONG IN THE LORD AND IN THE STRENGTH OF HIS MIGHT. PUT ON THE FULL ARMOR OF GOD, SO THAT YOU WILL BE ABLE TO STAND FIRM AGAINST THE SCHEMES OF THE DEVIL.**”

- e. Jesus alone has fulfilled this pleasing-God goal _____.

MATTHEW 3:17 – “AND BEHOLD, A VOICE OUT OF THE HEAVENS SAID, ‘THIS IS MY BELOVED SON, **IN WHOM I AM WELL-PLEASSED.**’”

MATTHEW 17:5 – “WHILE HE WAS STILL SPEAKING, A BRIGHT CLOUD OVERSHADOWED THEM, AND BEHOLD, A VOICE OUT OF THE CLOUD SAID, ‘THIS IS MY BELOVED SON, **WITH WHOM I AM WELL-PLEASED; LISTEN TO HIM!**’”

Implications of Pleasing God for Resolving Conflicts

- Failure to please God—our failure or the other person’s, or both—is the _____ cause of all relational conflict. It is a failure to love God and love others.

GENESIS 6:5, 11 – “THEN THE LORD SAW THAT THE WICKEDNESS OF MAN WAS GREAT ON THE EARTH, AND THAT **EVERY INTENT OF THE THOUGHTS OF HIS HEART WAS ONLY EVIL CONTINUALLY. . . . NOW THE EARTH WAS CORRUPT IN THE SIGHT OF GOD, AND THE EARTH WAS FILLED WITH VIOLENCE.**” (SEE ALSO 8:21)

2 CORINTHIANS 5:14-15 – “FOR THE LOVE OF CHRIST CONTROLS US, HAVING CONCLUDED THIS, THAT ONE DIED FOR ALL, THEREFORE ALL DIED; AND HE DIED FOR ALL, SO THAT THEY WHO LIVE MIGHT **NO LONGER LIVE FOR THEMSELVES, BUT FOR HIM WHO DIED AND ROSE AGAIN ON THEIR BEHALF.**”

TITUS 3:3 – “FOR WE ALSO ONCE WERE FOOLISH OURSELVES, DISOBEDIENT, DECEIVED, ENSLAVED TO VARIOUS LUSTS AND PLEASURES, SPENDING OUR LIFE IN MALICE AND ENVY, **HATEFUL, HATING ONE ANOTHER.**”

JAMES 4:1-4 – “WHAT IS THE SOURCE OF QUARRELS AND CONFLICTS AMONG YOU? IS NOT THE SOURCE YOUR PLEASURES THAT WAGE WAR IN YOUR MEMBERS? . . . YOU ADULTERESSES, DO YOU NOT KNOW THAT FRIENDSHIP WITH THE WORLD IS HOSTILITY TOWARD GOD? THEREFORE WHOEVER WISHES TO BE A FRIEND OF THE WORLD **MAKES HIMSELF AN ENEMY OF GOD.**”

- The goal of pleasing God keeps our _____ on God, not on the conflict issues or on the other person.

COLOSSIANS 3:1-8 – “THEREFORE IF YOU HAVE BEEN RAISED UP WITH CHRIST, **KEEP SEEKING THE THINGS ABOVE, WHERE CHRIST IS**, SEATED AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD. . . . THEREFORE CONSIDER THE MEMBERS OF YOUR EARTHLY BODY AS DEAD TO IMMORALITY, IMPURITY, PASSION, EVIL DESIRE, AND GREED, WHICH AMOUNTS TO IDOLATRY. . . . ANGER, WRATH, MALICE, SLANDER, AND ABUSIVE SPEECH FROM YOUR MOUTH.”

2 TIMOTHY 2:3-4 – “SUFFER HARDSHIP WITH ME, AS A GOOD SOLDIER OF CHRIST JESUS. NO SOLDIER IN ACTIVE SERVICE **ENTANGLES HIMSELF IN THE AFFAIRS OF EVERYDAY LIFE**, SO THAT HE MAY PLEASE THE ONE WHO ENLISTED HIM AS A SOLDIER.”

- In Christ, this goal is always doable, regardless of how the other person _____.

1 CORINTHIANS 10:13 – “NO TEMPTATION HAS OVERTAKEN YOU BUT SUCH AS IS COMMON TO MAN; AND GOD IS FAITHFUL, **WHO WILL NOT ALLOW YOU TO BE TEMPTED BEYOND WHAT YOU ARE ABLE**, BUT WITH THE TEMPTATION WILL PROVIDE THE WAY OF ESCAPE ALSO, SO THAT YOU WILL BE ABLE TO ENDURE IT.”

1 PETER 4:12-16 – “BELOVED, DO NOT BE SURPRISED AT THE FIERY ORDEAL AMONG YOU, WHICH COMES UPON YOU FOR YOUR TESTING, AS THOUGH SOME STRANGE THING WERE HAPPENING TO YOU; BUT TO THE DEGREE THAT YOU SHARE THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST, KEEP ON REJOICING, SO THAT ALSO AT THE REVELATION OF HIS GLORY YOU MAY REJOICE WITH EXULTATION. **IF YOU ARE REVILED FOR THE NAME OF CHRIST**, YOU ARE BLESSED, BECAUSE THE SPIRIT OF GLORY AND OF GOD RESTS ON YOU. . . . IF ANYONE SUFFERS AS A CHRISTIAN, HE IS NOT TO BE ASHAMED, BUT **IS TO GLORIFY GOD IN THIS NAME.**”

- This goal will help us _____ our efforts (our timing, energy, risk, etc.).

MATTHEW 5:23-24 – “THEREFORE IF YOU ARE PRESENTING YOUR OFFERING AT THE ALTAR, AND THERE REMEMBER THAT YOUR BROTHER HAS SOMETHING AGAINST YOU, LEAVE YOUR OFFERING THERE BEFORE THE ALTAR AND GO; **FIRST** BE RECONCILED TO YOUR BROTHER, AND **THEN** COME AND PRESENT YOUR OFFERING.”

- God might bless our efforts by bringing about _____.

PROVERBS 16:7 – “WHEN A MAN’S WAYS ARE PLEASING TO THE LORD, HE MAKES EVEN HIS ENEMIES TO BE AT PEACE WITH HIM.”

- If both parties seek to please God, full reconciliation is _____.

2 TIMOTHY 4:11 – “ONLY LUKE IS WITH ME. PICK UP MARK AND BRING HIM WITH YOU, **FOR HE IS USEFUL TO ME FOR SERVICE.**” (SEE ACTS 15:38)

- Even if the other party does not please God, we can experience God's blessing and _____.

ISAIAH 26:3-4 – **“THE STEADFAST OF MIND YOU WILL KEEP IN PERFECT PEACE, BECAUSE HE TRUSTS IN YOU. TRUST IN THE LORD FOREVER, FOR IN GOD THE LORD, WE HAVE AN EVERLASTING ROCK.”**

MATTHEW 7:24-26 – **“THEREFORE EVERYONE WHO HEARS THESE WORDS OF MINE AND ACTS ON THEM, MAY BE COMPARED TO A WISE MAN WHO BUILT HIS HOUSE ON THE ROCK. AND THE RAIN FELL, AND THE FLOODS CAME, AND THE WINDS BLEW AND SLAMMED AGAINST THAT HOUSE; AND YET IT DID NOT FALL, FOR IT HAD BEEN FOUNDED ON THE ROCK.”**

- We must _____ our efforts to please God even if the other party doesn't, and even if the relationship gets worse.

1 CORINTHIANS 11:18-19 – **“FOR, IN THE FIRST PLACE, WHEN YOU COME TOGETHER AS A CHURCH, I HEAR THAT DIVISIONS EXIST AMONG YOU; AND IN PART I BELIEVE IT. FOR THERE MUST ALSO BE FACTIONS AMONG YOU, SO THAT THOSE WHO ARE APPROVED MAY BECOME EVIDENT AMONG YOU.”**

- When the goal of pleasing God _____ us, the other person's sins and failures become opportunities, not obstacles, to please God more and more and to grow as a Christian.

1 PETER 1:5-7 – **“WHO ARE PROTECTED BY THE POWER OF GOD THROUGH FAITH FOR A SALVATION READY TO BE REVEALED IN THE LAST TIME. IN THIS YOU GREATLY REJOICE, EVEN THOUGH NOW FOR A LITTLE WHILE, IF NECESSARY, YOU HAVE BEEN DISTRESSED BY VARIOUS TRIALS, SO THAT THE PROOF OF YOUR FAITH, BEING MORE PRECIOUS THAN GOLD WHICH IS PERISHABLE, EVEN THOUGH TESTED BY FIRE, MAY BE FOUND TO RESULT IN PRAISE AND GLORY AND HONOR AT THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST.”**

1 PETER 2:21-23 – **“FOR YOU HAVE BEEN CALLED FOR THIS PURPOSE, SINCE CHRIST ALSO SUFFERED FOR YOU, LEAVING YOU AN EXAMPLE FOR YOU TO FOLLOW IN HIS STEPS, WHO COMMITTED NO SIN, NOR WAS ANY DECEIT FOUND IN HIS MOUTH; AND WHILE BEING REVILED, HE DID NOT REVILE IN RETURN; WHILE SUFFERING, HE UTTERED NO THREATS, BUT KEPT ENTRUSTING HIMSELF TO HIM WHO JUDGES RIGHTEOUSLY;**

1 PETER 3:17-18 – **“FOR IT IS BETTER, IF GOD SHOULD WILL IT SO, THAT YOU SUFFER FOR DOING WHAT IS RIGHT RATHER THAN FOR DOING WHAT IS WRONG. FOR CHRIST ALSO DIED FOR SINS ONCE FOR ALL, THE JUST FOR THE UNJUST, SO THAT HE MIGHT BRING US TO GOD, HAVING BEEN PUT TO DEATH IN THE FLESH, BUT MADE ALIVE IN THE SPIRIT.”**

1 PETER 4:1-2 – **“THEREFORE, SINCE CHRIST HAS SUFFERED IN THE FLESH, ARM YOURSELVES ALSO WITH THE SAME PURPOSE, BECAUSE HE WHO HAS SUFFERED IN THE FLESH HAS CEASED FROM SIN, SO AS TO LIVE THE REST OF THE TIME IN THE FLESH NO LONGER FOR THE LUSTS OF MEN, BUT FOR THE WILL OF GOD.”**

JAMES 1:2-5 – “CONSIDER IT ALL JOY, MY BRETHREN, WHEN YOU ENCOUNTER VARIOUS TRIALS, KNOWING THAT THE TESTING OF YOUR FAITH PRODUCES ENDURANCE. **AND LET ENDURANCE HAVE ITS PERFECT RESULT,** SO THAT YOU MAY BE PERFECT AND COMPLETE, LACKING IN NOTHING. BUT IF ANY OF YOU LACKS WISDOM, LET HIM ASK OF GOD, WHO GIVES TO ALL GENEROUSLY AND WITHOUT REPROACH, AND IT WILL BE GIVEN TO HIM.”

JAMES 5:7-11 – “**THEREFORE BE PATIENT,** BRETHREN, UNTIL THE COMING OF THE LORD. THE FARMER WAITS FOR THE PRECIOUS PRODUCE OF THE SOIL, BEING PATIENT ABOUT IT, UNTIL IT GETS THE EARLY AND LATE RAINS. YOU TOO BE PATIENT; **STRENGTHEN YOUR HEARTS,** FOR THE COMING OF THE LORD IS NEAR. **DO NOT COMPLAIN, BRETHREN, AGAINST ONE ANOTHER,** SO THAT YOU YOURSELVES MAY NOT BE JUDGED; BEHOLD, THE JUDGE IS STANDING RIGHT AT THE DOOR. AS AN EXAMPLE, BRETHREN, OF SUFFERING AND PATIENCE, TAKE THE PROPHETS WHO SPOKE IN THE NAME OF THE LORD. **WE COUNT THOSE BLESSED WHO ENDURED.** YOU HAVE HEARD OF THE ENDURANCE OF JOB AND HAVE SEEN THE OUTCOME OF THE LORD’S DEALINGS, THAT THE LORD IS FULL OF COMPASSION AND IS MERCIFUL.”

Conclusion

If your goal is to please and glorify God, and your efforts are primarily motivated by that goal, then you will experience peace, joy, and comfort regardless of the outcome of the situation. And most importantly, you will be pleasing God.

The Heart of Conflict

Up until now we've been setting the groundwork for how to think about conflict as a Christian. Everything we've talked about so far is fundamentally different than how unbelievers would approach a conflict because our focus is on the Lord. And as we move forward, that will only continue to be the case because our understanding of conflict rises out of a biblical anthropology, not secular evolutionary humanism.

When we think about the nature, source, and remedies for conflict, we fundamentally think differently than the secular world. We have profoundly different views of humanity and relationships and justice and fairness and thus our understanding of where conflicts come from and how to go about resolving them will be equally incompatible with the world.

So let's start with the critical question:

What is the source of conflicts?

JAMES 4:1-3 – “**WHAT IS THE SOURCE OF QUARRELS AND CONFLICTS AMONG YOU?** IS NOT THE SOURCE **YOUR PLEASURES** THAT WAGE WAR IN YOUR MEMBERS? YOU **LUST** AND DO NOT HAVE; SO YOU COMMIT MURDER. YOU ARE ENVIOUS AND CANNOT OBTAIN; SO YOU FIGHT AND QUARREL. YOU DO NOT HAVE BECAUSE YOU DO NOT ASK. YOU ASK AND DO NOT RECEIVE, BECAUSE YOU ASK WITH WRONG MOTIVES, SO THAT YOU MAY SPEND IT ON YOUR PLEASURES.”

- “Pleasures” translates the word *hēdonē* from which we get the word “hedon” and “hedonism.” Related synonyms would be _____ and _____. In the New Testament, this word always has a bad connotation.

LUKE 8:14 – “THE SEED WHICH FELL AMONG THE THORNS, THESE ARE THE ONES WHO HAVE HEARD, AND AS THEY GO ON THEIR WAY THEY ARE CHOKED WITH WORRIES AND RICHES AND **PLEASURES** OF THIS LIFE, AND BRING NO FRUIT TO MATURITY.”

TITUS 3:3 – “FOR WE ALSO ONCE WERE FOOLISH OURSELVES, DISOBEDIENT, DECEIVED, ENSLAVED TO VARIOUS LUSTS AND **PLEASURES**, SPENDING OUR LIFE IN MALICE AND ENVY, HATEFUL, HATING ONE ANOTHER.”

2 PETER 2:13 – “. . . [THE UNRIGHTEOUS] COUNT IT A **PLEASURE** TO REVEL IN THE DAYTIME. THEY ARE STAINS AND BLEMISHES, REVELING IN THEIR DECEPTIONS, AS THEY CAROUSE WITH YOU.”

- “Lust” translates the word *epithumia* which means a strong _____. The context always determines whether the desire itself is good or bad, but it is always a strong, _____ desire.

1 TIMOTHY 3:1 – “IT IS A TRUSTWORTHY STATEMENT: IF ANY MAN ASPIRES TO THE OFFICE OF OVERSEER, IT IS A FINE WORK HE **DESIRES** TO DO.”

LUKE 22:15 – “AND HE SAID TO THEM, ‘I HAVE **EARNESTLY DESIRED** TO EAT THIS PASSOVER WITH YOU BEFORE I SUFFER.’”

1 CORINTHIANS 10:6 – “NOW THESE THINGS HAPPENED AS EXAMPLES FOR US, SO THAT WE WOULD NOT **CRAVE** EVIL THINGS AS THEY ALSO **CRAVED**.”

MATTHEW 5:28 – “BUT I SAY TO YOU THAT EVERYONE WHO LOOKS AT A WOMAN WITH **LUST** FOR HER HAS ALREADY COMMITTED ADULTERY WITH HER IN HIS HEART.”

Why do I do what I do? Because I _____ what I _____.

Why do I want what I want?

While knowing our wants is critical to understanding our motives in any given situation, we must go deeper to get what is behind our situational desires. In other words, *why* do we want the things we want? Or better yet, *where* do our wants come from?

- The Bible teaches that humans are dichotomous beings. We are made of _____ and _____. We have a _____ part of us and an _____ part of us.

GENESIS 2:7 – “THEN THE LORD GOD FORMED MAN OF DUST FROM THE GROUND, AND BREATHED INTO HIS NOSTRILS THE BREATH OF LIFE; AND MAN BECAME A **LIVING BEING**.”

MATTHEW 10:28 – “DO NOT FEAR THOSE WHO KILL THE **BODY** BUT ARE UNABLE TO KILL THE **SOUL**; BUT RATHER FEAR HIM WHO IS ABLE TO DESTROY BOTH **SOUL** AND **BODY** IN HELL.”

JAMES 2:26 – “FOR JUST AS THE **BODY** WITHOUT THE **SPIRIT** IS DEAD, SO ALSO FAITH WITHOUT WORKS IS DEAD.”

PROVERBS 14:30 – “A TRANQUIL **HEART** IS LIFE TO THE **BODY**, BUT **PASSION** IS ROTTENNESS TO THE **BONES**.”

ECCLESIASTES 11:10 – “SO, REMOVE GRIEF AND ANGER FROM YOUR **HEART** AND PUT AWAY PAIN FROM YOUR **BODY**, BECAUSE CHILDHOOD AND THE PRIME OF LIFE ARE FLEETING.”

ROMANS 7:23 – “BUT I SEE A DIFFERENT LAW IN THE MEMBERS OF MY **BODY**, WAGING WAR AGAINST THE LAW OF MY **MIND** AND MAKING ME A PRISONER OF THE LAW OF SIN WHICH IS IN MY MEMBERS.”

- As we see in these passages, the immaterial part of us is referred to interchangeably throughout Scripture as _____, _____, _____, and _____.
- There is no clear way to distinguish these terms, and when they are used together they are often meant to refer to our entire being, not our individual parts.

DEUTERONOMY 6:5 – “YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR **HEART** AND WITH ALL YOUR **SOUL** AND WITH ALL YOUR **MIGHT**.”

MARK 12:30 – “AND YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR **HEART**, AND WITH ALL YOUR **SOUL**, AND WITH ALL YOUR **MIND**, AND WITH ALL YOUR **STRENGTH**.”

- Sometimes, the terms are used together as synonyms.

HEBREWS 4:12 – “FOR THE WORD OF GOD IS LIVING AND ACTIVE AND SHARPER THAN ANY TWO-EDGED SWORD, AND PIERCING AS FAR AS THE DIVISION OF **SOUL** AND **SPIRIT**, OF BOTH JOINTS AND MARROW, AND ABLE TO JUDGE THE THOUGHTS AND INTENTIONS OF THE HEART.”

ISAIAH 26:9 – “AT NIGHT MY **SOUL** LONGS FOR YOU, INDEED, MY **SPIRIT** WITHIN ME SEEKS YOU DILIGENTLY . . .”

JOB 7:11 – “THEREFORE I WILL NOT RESTRAIN MY MOUTH; I WILL SPEAK IN THE ANGUISH OF MY **SPIRIT**, I WILL COMPLAIN IN THE BITTERNESS OF MY **SOUL**.”

- By orders of magnitude, the most common word to refer to our immaterial part is _____.

A Biblical View of the Heart

- The heart is the _____ center of life. It is what drives us.

PROVERBS 4:23 – “WATCH OVER YOUR HEART WITH ALL DILIGENCE, **FOR FROM IT FLOW THE SPRINGS OF LIFE**. PUT AWAY FROM YOU A DECEITFUL MOUTH AND PUT **DEVIIOUS SPEECH** FAR FROM YOU. LET **YOUR EYES** LOOK DIRECTLY AHEAD AND LET YOUR GAZE BE FIXED STRAIGHT IN FRONT OF YOU. WATCH THE PATH OF **YOUR FEET** AND ALL YOUR WAYS WILL BE ESTABLISHED. DO NOT TURN TO THE RIGHT NOR TO THE LEFT; **TURN YOUR FOOT FROM EVIL**.”

- The heart _____.

MATTHEW 12:34 – “YOU BROOD OF VIPERS, HOW CAN YOU, BEING EVIL, SPEAK WHAT IS GOOD? **FOR THE MOUTH SPEAKS OUT OF THAT WHICH FILLS THE HEART**.”

MATTHEW 15:18 – “**BUT THE THINGS THAT PROCEED OUT OF THE MOUTH COME FROM THE HEART, AND THOSE DEFILE THE MAN.**”

LUKE 6:45 – “**THE GOOD MAN OUT OF THE GOOD TREASURE OF HIS HEART BRINGS FORTH WHAT IS GOOD; AND THE EVIL MAN OUT OF THE EVIL TREASURE BRINGS FORTH WHAT IS EVIL; FOR HIS MOUTH SPEAKS FROM THAT WHICH FILLS HIS HEART.**”

- The heart _____.

PSALM 33:11 – “**THE COUNSEL OF THE LORD STANDS FOREVER, THE PLANS OF HIS HEART FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION.**”

PROVERBS 6:18 – “**A HEART THAT DEVISES WICKED PLANS, FEET THAT RUN RAPIDLY TO EVIL . . .**”

PROVERBS 16:1 – “**THE PLANS OF THE HEART BELONG TO MAN, BUT THE ANSWER OF THE TONGUE IS FROM THE LORD.**”

- The heart _____.

DEUTERONOMY 14:26 – “**YOU MAY SPEND THE MONEY FOR WHATEVER YOUR HEART DESIRES: FOR OXEN, OR SHEEP, OR WINE, OR STRONG DRINK, OR WHATEVER YOUR HEART DESIRES . . .**”

PSALM 37:4 – “**DELIGHT YOURSELF IN THE LORD; AND HE WILL GIVE YOU THE DESIRES OF YOUR HEART.**”

- The heart _____.

DEUTERONOMY 15:9 – “**BEWARE THAT THERE IS NO BASE THOUGHT IN YOUR HEART . . .**”

PROVERBS 23:7 – “**FOR AS HE THINKS WITHIN HIMSELF, SO HE IS. HE SAYS TO YOU, ‘EAT AND DRINK!’ BUT HIS HEART IS NOT WITH YOU.**”

JAMES 1:26 – “**IF ANYONE THINKS HIMSELF TO BE RELIGIOUS, AND YET DOES NOT BRIDLE HIS TONGUE BUT DECEIVES HIS OWN HEART, THIS MAN’S RELIGION IS WORTHLESS.**”

- The heart _____.

JUDGES 16:15 – “**THEN SHE SAID TO HIM, ‘HOW CAN YOU SAY, ‘I LOVE YOU,’ WHEN YOUR HEART IS NOT WITH ME? YOU HAVE DECEIVED ME THESE THREE TIMES AND HAVE NOT TOLD ME WHERE YOUR GREAT STRENGTH IS.**”

LEVITICUS 19:17 – “**YOU SHALL NOT HATE YOUR FELLOW COUNTRYMAN IN YOUR HEART; YOU MAY SURELY REPROVE YOUR NEIGHBOR, BUT SHALL NOT INCUR SIN BECAUSE OF HIM.**”

ECCLESIASTES 7:3 – “SORROW IS BETTER THAN LAUGHTER, FOR WHEN A FACE IS SAD **A HEART MAY BE HAPPY.**”

JOHN 16:6 – “BUT BECAUSE I HAVE SAID THESE THINGS TO YOU, **SORROW HAS FILLED YOUR HEART.**”

PSALM 119:111 – “I HAVE INHERITED YOUR TESTIMONIES FOREVER, FOR THEY ARE **THE JOY OF MY HEART.**”

- The heart _____.

DEUTERONOMY 30:2 – “. . . RETURN TO THE LORD YOUR GOD AND **OBEY HIM WITH ALL YOUR HEART** AND SOUL ACCORDING TO ALL THAT I COMMAND YOU TODAY . . .”

PROVERBS 3:1 – “MY SON, DO NOT FORGET MY TEACHING, BUT **LET YOUR HEART KEEP MY COMMANDMENTS.**”

PROVERBS 7:25 – “**DO NOT LET YOUR HEART TURN ASIDE TO HER WAYS,** DO NOT STRAY INTO HER PATHS.”

PSALM 141:4 – “DO NOT **INCLINE MY HEART TO ANY EVIL THING, TO PRACTICE DEEDS OF WICKEDNESS** WITH MEN WHO DO INIQUITY; AND DO NOT LET ME EAT OF THEIR DELICACIES.”

MARK 7:20-23 – “. . . THAT WHICH PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MAN, THAT IS WHAT DEFILES THE MAN. **FOR FROM WITHIN, OUT OF THE HEART OF MEN, PROCEED** THE EVIL THOUGHTS, FORNICATIONS, THEFTS, MURDERS, ADULTERIES, DEEDS OF COVETING AND WICKEDNESS, AS WELL AS DECEIT, SENSUALITY, ENVY, SLANDER, PRIDE AND FOOLISHNESS. **ALL THESE EVIL THINGS PROCEED FROM WITHIN AND DEFILE THE MAN.**”

- The heart _____.

PSALM 119:10 – “**WITH ALL MY HEART I HAVE SOUGHT YOU;** DO NOT LET ME WANDER FROM YOUR COMMANDMENTS.”

DEUTERONOMY 11:16 – “BEWARE THAT YOUR **HEARTS ARE NOT DECEIVED,** AND THAT YOU DO NOT TURN AWAY AND SERVE OTHER GODS AND **WORSHIP THEM.**”

JEREMIAH 13:10 – “THIS WICKED PEOPLE, WHO REFUSE TO LISTEN TO MY WORDS, WHO WALK IN THE STUBBORNNESS OF **THEIR HEARTS AND HAVE GONE AFTER OTHER GODS** TO SERVE THEM AND TO BOW DOWN TO THEM, LET THEM BE JUST LIKE THIS WAISTBAND WHICH IS TOTALLY WORTHLESS.”

ISAIAH 29:13 – “THEN THE LORD SAID, ‘BECAUSE THIS PEOPLE DRAW NEAR WITH THEIR WORDS AND HONOR ME WITH THEIR LIP SERVICE, BUT THEY REMOVE THEIR HEARTS FAR FROM ME, AND THEIR REVERENCE FOR ME CONSISTS OF TRADITION LEARNED BY ROTE.’”

- Who you are is who you are in your heart. You can deceive yourself, and you can deceive others, but you cannot deceive _____ because God knows our heart.

1 SAMUEL 16:7 – “BUT THE LORD SAID TO SAMUEL, ‘DO NOT LOOK AT HIS APPEARANCE OR AT THE HEIGHT OF HIS STATURE, BECAUSE I HAVE REJECTED HIM; FOR GOD SEES NOT AS MAN SEES, FOR MAN LOOKS AT THE OUTWARD APPEARANCE, BUT THE LORD LOOKS AT THE HEART.’”

PSALM 44:21 – “WOULD NOT GOD FIND THIS OUT? FOR HE KNOWS THE SECRETS OF THE HEART.”

ACTS 15:8 – “AND GOD, WHO KNOWS THE HEART, TESTIFIED TO THEM GIVING THEM THE HOLY SPIRIT, JUST AS HE ALSO DID TO US.”

ROMANS 8:27 – “AND HE WHO SEARCHES THE HEARTS KNOWS WHAT THE MIND OF THE SPIRIT IS, BECAUSE HE INTERCEDES FOR THE SAINTS ACCORDING TO THE WILL OF GOD.”

- Because the heart is the core of our being and the wellspring of life, we will never truly address a problem until we address the heart. And God has given us the sufficient and necessary truth in His Word to do just that.

PROVERBS 20:5 – “A PLAN IN THE HEART OF A MAN IS LIKE DEEP WATER, BUT A MAN OF UNDERSTANDING DRAWS IT OUT.”

1 CORINTHIANS 2:11-13 – “FOR WHO AMONG MEN KNOWS THE THOUGHTS OF A MAN EXCEPT THE SPIRIT OF THE MAN WHICH IS IN HIM? EVEN SO THE THOUGHTS OF GOD NO ONE KNOWS EXCEPT THE SPIRIT OF GOD. NOW WE HAVE RECEIVED, NOT THE SPIRIT OF THE WORLD, BUT THE SPIRIT WHO IS FROM GOD, SO THAT WE MAY KNOW THE THINGS FREELY GIVEN TO US BY GOD, WHICH THINGS WE ALSO SPEAK, NOT IN WORDS TAUGHT BY HUMAN WISDOM, BUT IN THOSE TAUGHT BY THE SPIRIT, COMBINING SPIRITUAL THOUGHTS WITH SPIRITUAL WORDS.”

The Heart of Worship

- We’ve already noted the variety of functions of the heart. While most of the functions cannot be put in an order of importance, we can identify one function as being the primary function which all the others fall under. The heart is primarily made to _____.

ROMANS 11:36 – “FOR FROM HIM AND THROUGH HIM AND TO HIM ARE ALL THINGS. TO HIM BE THE GLORY FOREVER. AMEN.”

COLOSSIANS 1:16 – “FOR BY HIM ALL THINGS WERE CREATED, BOTH IN THE HEAVENS AND ON EARTH, VISIBLE AND INVISIBLE, WHETHER THRONES OR DOMINIONS OR RULERS OR AUTHORITIES—**ALL THINGS HAVE BEEN CREATED THROUGH HIM AND FOR HIM.**”

1 CORINTHIANS 10:31 – “WHETHER, THEN, YOU EAT OR DRINK OR WHATEVER YOU DO, **DO ALL TO THE GLORY OF GOD.**”

2 CORINTHIANS 5:9 – “THEREFORE **WE ALSO HAVE AS OUR AMBITION**, WHETHER AT HOME OR ABSENT, **TO BE PLEASING TO HIM.**”

- Worship is what we were made for, but because of the Fall, _____ worship is what we do.

ROMANS 1:21-23 – “FOR EVEN THOUGH THEY KNEW GOD, **THEY DID NOT HONOR HIM AS GOD** OR GIVE THANKS, BUT THEY BECAME FUTILE IN THEIR SPECULATIONS, AND THEIR FOOLISH HEART WAS DARKENED. PROFESSING TO BE WISE, THEY BECAME FOOLS, AND **EXCHANGED THE GLORY OF THE INCORRUPTIBLE GOD FOR AN IMAGE** IN THE FORM OF CORRUPTIBLE MAN AND OF BIRDS AND FOUR-FOOTED ANIMALS AND CRAWLING CREATURES.”

EXODUS 20:1-6 – “. . . YOU SHALL HAVE NO OTHER GODS BEFORE ME. YOU SHALL NOT MAKE FOR YOURSELF AN IDOL, OR ANY LIKENESS OF WHAT IS IN HEAVEN ABOVE OR ON THE EARTH BENEATH OR IN THE WATER UNDER THE EARTH. YOU SHALL NOT WORSHIP THEM OR SERVE THEM . . .”

- What are gods?
 - A god is anything you to which attribute the power to control the world, control your circumstances, meet your needs, protect you, provide for you, give you children, bring you happiness, satisfy your desires, rescue you from enemies, define your identity, give meaning and significance in life, give the will to live, etc.
- What does it mean to worship a false god?
 - We worship false gods when we look to any object, person, or situation to achieve for us what only God can do.

JEREMIAH 2:13 – “FOR MY PEOPLE HAVE COMMITTED TWO EVILS: THEY HAVE FORSAKEN ME, THE FOUNTAIN OF LIVING WATERS, TO HEW FOR THEMSELVES CISTERNS, BROKEN CISTERNS THAT CAN HOLD NO WATER.”

ISAIAH 44:9-17 – “THOSE WHO FASHION A GRAVEN IMAGE ARE ALL OF THEM FUTILE, AND THEIR PRECIOUS THINGS ARE OF NO PROFIT. . . . HE TAKES [WOOD] AND WARMS HIMSELF; HE ALSO MAKES A FIRE TO BAKE BREAD. HE ALSO MAKES A GOD AND WORSHIPS

IT; HE MAKES IT A GRAVEN IMAGE AND FALLS DOWN BEFORE IT. HALF OF IT HE BURNS IN THE FIRE . . . BUT THE REST OF IT HE MAKES INTO A GOD, HIS GRAVEN IMAGE. HE FALLS DOWN BEFORE IT AND WORSHIPS; HE ALSO PRAYS TO IT AND SAYS, 'DELIVER ME, FOR YOU ARE MY GOD.'"

- God was to be their source of sustenance and strength and satisfaction. But the Israelites turned away from Him and looked to all kinds of other things to bring them life and strength and joy. *And we do the very same thing.*
- There are all kinds of things that we want because we think those things will bring us happiness and satisfaction and peace and meaning in life. And we're willing to die on those hills. We take what God has given us to worship Him, to serve Him, to please Him, and we twist and distort it into worshipping and serving other things in order to please ourselves. This is the frustration of the heart—instead of worshipping God, we commit idolatry.

"An idol of the heart is *anything that rules me other than God*. As worshiping beings, human beings always worship someone or something. This is not a situation where some people worship and some people don't. If God isn't ruling my heart, someone or something will. It is the way we were made" (Paul Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands*).

JOSHUA 24:14-15 – "NOW, THEREFORE, FEAR THE LORD AND SERVE HIM IN SINCERITY AND TRUTH; AND PUT AWAY THE GODS WHICH YOUR FATHERS SERVED BEYOND THE RIVER AND IN EGYPT, AND SERVE THE LORD. **IF IT IS DISAGREEABLE IN YOUR SIGHT TO SERVE THE LORD, CHOOSE FOR YOURSELVES TODAY WHOM YOU WILL SERVE:** WHETHER THE GODS WHICH YOUR FATHERS SERVED WHICH WERE BEYOND THE RIVER, OR THE GODS OF THE AMORITES IN WHOSE LAND YOU ARE LIVING; BUT AS FOR ME AND MY HOUSE, WE WILL SERVE THE LORD."

- How do you determine if a desire has become an idol in your life? Consider these questions.
 - Do I want something that God does not want for me? *Examples: control, pleasure, wealth, possessions, fame, etc.*
 - Do I want something that God wants, but I want it so much I become ungodly to obtain it or when I don't obtain it? *Examples: health, protection, happiness, employment, salvation of family, being on time to church, etc.*
 - Am I controlled by expectations such that when my expectations are not realized I become ungodly in thought, word, and action? *Examples: expectations of your spouse, children, employer, employees, use of free time, diet, etc.*

- Do I have a perceived right that when I am denied that right I become ungodly in thought, word, and action? *Examples: the right to be treated with respect, loved, the right to be treated justly and fairly, the right that you treat me the way I want to be treated, etc.*
- Do I have an ungodly mindset that leads to ungodly thoughts, words, and actions? *Examples: "I shouldn't worry about finances, so I will spend freely without concern." "I am the man of the home, everyone must do as I say." "I deserve to get a raise; I've worked harder than those getting promotions."*

Two Helpful Questions in Any Conflict

1. What am I wanting that I'm not getting?
2. What am I getting that I'm not wanting?

Whatever the answer is, it has become a craving, a ruling desire, an idol in your life. And these are the things that set the stage for conflict in life.

The Solution

If false worship is the problem, true worship is the solution. All our wants, desires, expectations, perceived rights, and mindsets must be submitted to Christ who alone deserves our worship.

2 CORINTHIANS 10:3-5 – “FOR THOUGH WE WALK IN THE FLESH, **WE DO NOT WAR ACCORDING TO THE FLESH**, FOR THE WEAPONS OF OUR WARFARE ARE NOT OF THE FLESH, BUT DIVINELY POWERFUL FOR THE DESTRUCTION OF FORTRESSES. WE ARE DESTROYING SPECULATIONS AND EVERY LOFTY THING RAISED UP AGAINST THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD, AND **WE ARE TAKING EVERY THOUGHT CAPTIVE TO THE OBEDIENCE OF CHRIST.**”

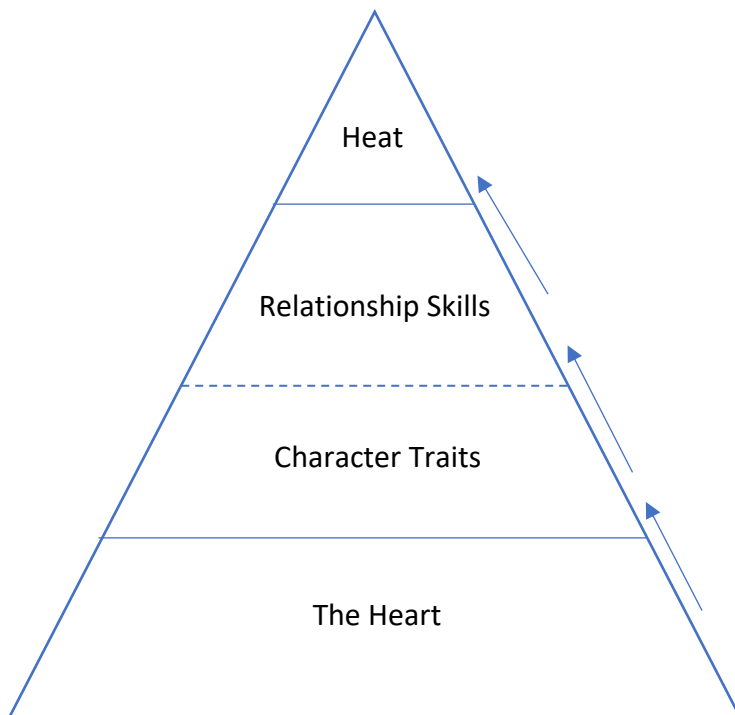
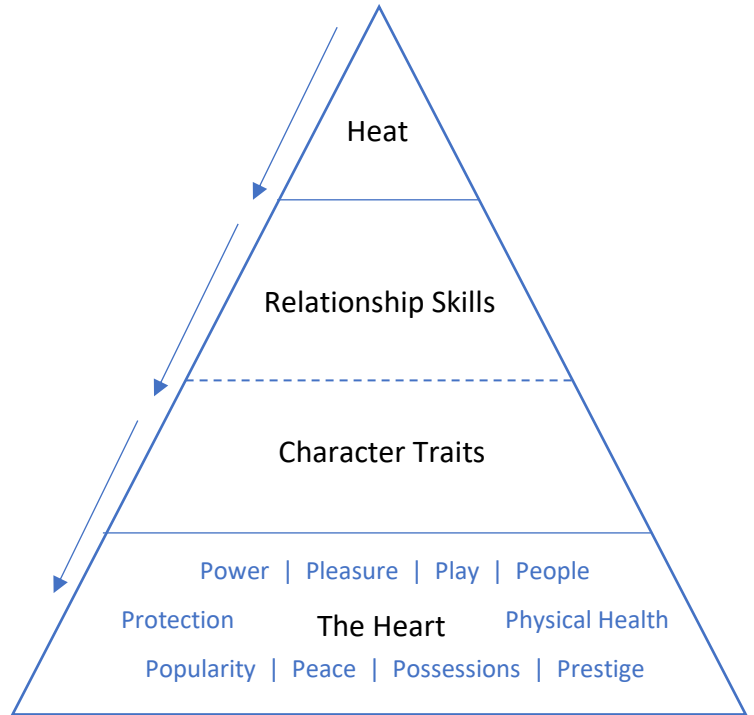
ROMANS 12:1-2 – “THEREFORE I URGE YOU, BRETHREN, BY THE MERCIES OF GOD, TO PRESENT YOUR BODIES A LIVING AND HOLY SACRIFICE, ACCEPTABLE TO GOD, WHICH IS YOUR SPIRITUAL SERVICE OF WORSHIP. AND DO NOT BE CONFORMED TO THIS WORLD, BUT BE TRANSFORMED BY THE RENEWING OF YOUR MIND, SO THAT YOU MAY PROVE WHAT THE WILL OF GOD IS, THAT WHICH IS GOOD AND ACCEPTABLE AND PERFECT.”

In other words, the solution to false worship is to be a disciple of Christ follow the first and basic command of Jesus:

LUKE 14:26-27 – “IF ANYONE COMES TO ME, AND DOES NOT HATE HIS OWN FATHER AND MOTHER AND WIFE AND CHILDREN AND BROTHERS AND SISTERS, YES, AND EVEN HIS OWN LIFE, HE CANNOT BE MY DISCIPLE. WHOEVER DOES NOT CARRY HIS OWN CROSS AND COME AFTER ME CANNOT BE MY DISCIPLE.”

MATTHEW 16:24-25 – “IF ANYONE WISHES TO COME AFTER ME, HE MUST DENY HIMSELF, AND TAKE UP HIS CROSS AND FOLLOW ME. FOR WHOEVER WISHES TO SAVE HIS LIFE WILL LOSE IT; BUT WHOEVER LOSES HIS LIFE FOR MY SAKE WILL FIND IT.”

The Heart of Conflict Illustrated



Taking Responsibility

Last week we concluded with the reality that if false worship is the problem, true worship is the solution. Now we will talk about the first step in moving from false worship to true worship, namely, _____.

MATTHEW 7:1-5 – “DO NOT JUDGE SO THAT YOU WILL NOT BE JUDGED. FOR IN THE WAY YOU JUDGE, YOU WILL BE JUDGED; AND BY YOUR STANDARD OF MEASURE, IT WILL BE MEASURED TO YOU. WHY DO YOU LOOK AT THE SPECK THAT IS IN YOUR BROTHER’S EYE, BUT DO NOT NOTICE THE LOG THAT IS IN YOUR OWN EYE? OR HOW CAN YOU SAY TO YOUR BROTHER, ‘LET ME TAKE THE SPECK OUT OF YOUR EYE,’ AND BEHOLD, THE LOG IS IN YOUR OWN EYE? YOU HYPOCRITE, FIRST TAKE THE LOG OUT OF YOUR OWN EYE, AND THEN YOU WILL SEE CLEARLY TO TAKE THE SPECK OUT OF YOUR BROTHER’S EYE.”

Here we find the second of the Four G’s—Get the Log Out of Your Eye.

Key Truths from Matthew 7

- Matthew 7:1 is the sinner’s favorite Bible verse—but it doesn’t mean what people often think it means. In context, it is not judging that is condemned, but it is _____ judgment that is the issue.
- Matthew 7:15-16 (and many other passages) makes it clear that it is right to examine others by outward appearances, but we must keep in mind both the _____ we judge and the _____ by which we judge.
 - The way we judge must be defined by Christlike character—grace, mercy, patience, love, humility, etc.
 - The standard by which we judge must be Scripture, not our own conscience or personal standards.
- By a “plank” Jesus refers to our _____ behavior, words, and thoughts in this situation as well as in our life in general.
 - Sin can be defined as any lack of conformity to God. It is falling short of God’s holiness, which does not necessarily imply intentionality.
 - We manifest sin in three areas: thought, speech, and action. Our thoughts include our beliefs, attitudes, motivations, and desires.
 - We can sin by _____—thinking, speaking, and acting in ways that violate God’s standard.

- We can sin by _____—*not* thinking, speaking, and acting in ways that God requires. Often when we feel as though we have not sinned in a situation, we should consider if we have *not* done something that we could or should have.

ROMANS 3:9-18 – “WHAT THEN? ARE WE BETTER THAN THEY? NOT AT ALL; FOR WE HAVE ALREADY CHARGED THAT BOTH JEWS AND GREEKS ARE ALL UNDER SIN; AS IT IS WRITTEN,

This is our nature	}	'THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE; THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS, THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD;
This is how we manifest our nature	}	ALL HAVE TURNED ASIDE, TOGETHER THEY HAVE BECOME USELESS; THERE IS NONE WHO DOES GOOD, THERE IS NOT EVEN ONE. THEIR THROAT IS AN OPEN GRAVE, WITH THEIR TONGUES THEY KEEP DECEIVING, THE POISON OF ASPES IS UNDER THEIR LIPS ; WHOSE MOUTH IS FULL OF CURSING AND BITTERNESS; THEIR FEET ARE SWIFT TO SHED BLOOD, DESTRUCTION AND MISERY ARE IN THEIR PATHS, AND THE PATH OF PEACE THEY HAVE NOT KNOWN. THERE IS NO FEAR OF GOD BEFORE THEIR EYES .”

- Jesus presents the proper order: you must start with _____ (verse 5).
 - Starting with ourselves reorients us around God’s purposes. We focus first on what God expects of me versus what I expect of others.
 - Acknowledging your personal sins breeds empathy, compassion, and patience. It helps me realize I am just like those who sin against me.
- Jesus assigns a greater _____ to your sins than to the other person’s sins by calling yours “planks” and his “specks” (verses 3-5).
 - Whatever you can see in the person’s life—their words or actions—you can’t see their heart.
 - Like an iceberg, you can only see what sticks above the surface in their life, but you can know what lies under the surface in your life.
- Humbly dealing with your sins first puts you in a better position to _____ to the other person and help him deal with his sin (verse 5).

Finding the Log

In many cases some of your _____ to the conflict—your sin—will be fairly obvious. You will usually be able to identify sinful attitudes, thoughts, words, and actions that contributed to the conflict. But don't stop there.

Remember that conflict doesn't start when you open your mouth or move your body. It begins in the heart. Finding the log in our heart can be difficult because . . .

JEREMIAH 17:9 – “**THE HEART IS MORE DECEITFUL THAN ALL ELSE AND IS DESPERATELY SICK; WHO CAN UNDERSTAND IT?**”

As a believer you have a new heart—you are a new creation. But the flesh that remains can sometimes _____ our vision. We can also lack the necessary _____ of God's Word that would otherwise help us identify what is going on in our heart. That's why the Lord encourages us to cry out to Him for help.

PSALM 139:23-24 – “SEARCH ME, O GOD, AND KNOW MY HEART; TRY ME AND KNOW MY ANXIOUS THOUGHTS; AND SEE IF THERE BE ANY HURTFUL WAY IN ME, AND LEAD ME IN THE EVERLASTING WAY.”

Our propensity to _____ is why God has given us others in the body of Christ whom we can ask for help.

JAMES 5:14-16 – “IS ANYONE AMONG YOU SICK [OR, SPIRITUALLY WEAK]? THEN HE MUST CALL FOR THE ELDERS OF THE CHURCH AND THEY ARE TO PRAY OVER HIM, ANOINTING HIM WITH OIL IN THE NAME OF THE LORD; AND THE PRAYER OFFERED IN FAITH WILL RESTORE THE ONE WHO IS [WEAK], AND THE LORD WILL RAISE HIM UP, AND IF HE HAS COMMITTED SINS, THEY WILL BE FORGIVEN HIM. THEREFORE, CONFESS YOUR SINS TO ONE ANOTHER, AND PRAY FOR ONE ANOTHER SO THAT YOU MAY BE HEALED. . . .”

(See the following passages where the Greek word for “sick,” ἀσθενέω, is understood to be a spiritual condition, not a physical one: Acts 20:35; Romans 4:19; 14:1-2; 1 Corinthians 8:11-12; 2 Corinthians 13:9; Hebrews 12:3.)

1 THESSALONIANS 5:14 – “WE URGE YOU, BRETHREN, ADMONISH THE UNRULY, ENCOURAGE THE FAINTHEARTED, **HELP THE WEAK**, BE PATIENT WITH EVERYONE.”

GALATIANS 6:1 – “BRETHREN, EVEN IF ANYONE IS CAUGHT IN ANY TRESPASS, **YOU WHO ARE SPIRITUAL, RESTORE SUCH A ONE IN A SPIRIT OF GENTLENESS**; EACH ONE LOOKING TO YOURSELF, SO THAT YOU TOO WILL NOT BE TEMPTED.”

So if, after the following process, you struggle identify the heart issues behind your words and actions, seek the Lord in prayer and reach out to someone who can walk with you and help you. But first, consider the following.

To find the log in your eye, work backwards from what you can see, to what you can't see. Use the following questions to guide you.

1. In what ways were my speech (words, tone, timing) _____ and unedifying? Were my words crass, sharp, stinging, or otherwise hurtful? What was I trying to accomplish by speaking that way?

EPHESIANS 4:29 – “LET NO UNWHOLESOME WORD PROCEED FROM YOUR MOUTH, BUT ONLY SUCH A WORD AS IS GOOD FOR EDIFICATION ACCORDING TO THE NEED OF THE MOMENT, SO THAT IT WILL GIVE GRACE TO THOSE WHO HEAR.”

2. In what ways did my speech _____ the other person? What desire or expectation of mine did they not meet?

MATTHEW 5:22 – “BUT I SAY TO YOU THAT EVERYONE WHO IS ANGRY WITH HIS BROTHER SHALL BE GUILTY BEFORE THE COURT; AND WHOEVER SAYS TO HIS BROTHER, ‘YOU GOOD-FOR-NOTHING,’ SHALL BE GUILTY BEFORE THE SUPREME COURT; AND WHOEVER SAYS, ‘YOU FOOL,’ SHALL BE GUILTY ENOUGH TO GO INTO THE FIERY HELL.”

3. In what ways did my speech deny the _____ of God in the other person? What does such speech reflect about my thinking about them?

JAMES 3:9 – “WITH [THE TONGUE] WE BLESS OUR LORD AND FATHER, AND WITH IT WE CURSE MEN, WHO HAVE BEEN MADE IN THE LIKENESS OF GOD.”

4. In what ways did my speech seek to _____ the other person? How did I attempt to control them?

JUDGES 16:15-16 – “THEN SHE SAID TO HIM, ‘HOW CAN YOU SAY, ‘I LOVE YOU,’ WHEN YOUR HEART IS NOT WITH ME? YOU HAVE DECEIVED ME THESE THREE TIMES AND HAVE NOT TOLD ME WHERE YOUR GREAT STRENGTH IS.’” IT CAME ABOUT WHEN SHE PRESSED HIM DAILY WITH HER WORDS AND URGED HIM, THAT HIS SOUL WAS ANNOYED TO DEATH.”

5. In what ways were my words and actions of the _____ and thus at war with the Spirit? What “desires of the Spirit” did I rebel against?

GALATIANS 5:19-21 – “NOW THE DEEDS OF THE FLESH ARE EVIDENT, WHICH ARE: IMMORALITY, IMPURITY, SENSUALITY, IDOLATRY, SORCERY, ENMITIES, STRIFE, JEALOUSY, OUTBURSTS OF ANGER, DISPUTES, DISSENSIONS, FACTIONS, ENVYING, DRUNKENNESS, CAROUSING, AND THINGS LIKE THESE, OF WHICH I FOREWARN YOU, JUST AS I HAVE FOREWARNED YOU, THAT THOSE WHO PRACTICE SUCH THINGS WILL NOT INHERIT THE KINGDOM OF GOD.”

6. In what ways did I not _____ the fruit of the Spirit?

GALATIANS 5:22-23 – “BUT THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT IS LOVE, JOY, PEACE, PATIENCE, KINDNESS, GOODNESS, FAITHFULNESS, GENTLENESS, SELF-CONTROL; AGAINST SUCH THINGS THERE IS NO LAW.”

7. What _____ was I believing about this situation?

ROMANS 1:25 – “FOR THEY EXCHANGED THE TRUTH OF GOD FOR A LIE, AND WORSHIPED AND SERVED THE CREATURE RATHER THAN THE CREATOR, WHO IS BLESSED FOREVER. AMEN.”

8. In what ways were my desires _____ or _____?
What did I desire so strongly that I was willing to sin to obtain, or sin because I couldn't have it?

JAMES 4:1-2 – “WHAT IS THE SOURCE OF QUARRELS AND CONFLICTS AMONG YOU? IS NOT THE SOURCE YOUR PLEASURES THAT WAGE WAR IN YOUR MEMBERS? YOU LUST AND DO NOT HAVE; SO YOU COMMIT MURDER. YOU ARE ENVOIOUS AND CANNOT OBTAIN; SO YOU FIGHT AND QUARREL. . . .”

Disclaimer: My point is not that we must ask each of these questions every time we are in conflict. That is not possible. The point is that once we start to understand our hearts by thinking through these questions at various times, we begin to see the log in our eye more clearly, and that enables us to deal with our sins more quickly and thoroughly.

What You Must Do Before Confessing to Others

Once you've identified your heart attitudes, thoughts, words, and actions that were sinful and contributed to the conflict, you must remember that sin is first and foremost against _____.

GENESIS 20:6 – “THEN GOD SAID TO HIM IN THE DREAM, ‘YES, I KNOW THAT IN THE INTEGRITY OF YOUR HEART YOU HAVE DONE THIS, AND **I ALSO KEPT YOU FROM SINNING AGAINST ME**; THEREFORE I DID NOT LET YOU TOUCH HER.’”

GENESIS 39:9 – “THERE IS NO ONE GREATER IN THIS HOUSE THAN I, AND HE HAS WITHHELD NOTHING FROM ME EXCEPT YOU, BECAUSE YOU ARE HIS WIFE. **HOW THEN COULD I DO THIS GREAT EVIL AND SIN AGAINST GOD?**”

PSALM 51:4 – “**AGAINST YOU, YOU ONLY, I HAVE SINNED** AND DONE WHAT IS EVIL IN YOUR SIGHT, SO THAT YOU ARE JUSTIFIED WHEN YOU SPEAK AND BLAMELESS WHEN YOU JUDGE.”

Though all our sin is [judicially] forgiven and we cannot undo God's work of regeneration in our lives, it is still _____ to confess our sins to the Lord and receive His [relational] forgiveness.

PSALM 32:5 – “I ACKNOWLEDGED MY SIN TO YOU, AND MY INIQUITY I DID NOT HIDE; I SAID, ‘I WILL CONFESS MY TRANSGRESSIONS TO THE LORD’; AND YOU FORGAVE THE GUILT OF MY SIN.”

PROVERBS 28:13 – “HE WHO CONCEALS HIS TRANSGRESSIONS WILL NOT PROSPER, BUT HE WHO CONFESSES AND FORSAKES THEM WILL FIND COMPASSION.”

1 JOHN 1:9 – “IF WE CONFESS OUR SINS, HE IS FAITHFUL AND RIGHTEOUS TO FORGIVE US OUR SINS AND TO CLEANSE US FROM ALL UNRIGHTEOUSNESS.”

Confession

What if I'm not sure what I've done?

Ask others

Last week we considered how to identify the log in your own eye. We also mentioned that if, after following that process, you simply cannot identify what you may have said or done to contribute to a conflict, the next step is to ask someone else.

In addition to the passages we saw on this point last week (James 5:14-16; 1 Thessalonians 5:14; Galatians 6:1), consider this one . . .

PROVERBS 27:5-6 – “BETTER IS OPEN REBUKE THAN LOVE THAT IS CONCEALED. FAITHFUL ARE THE WOUNDS OF A FRIEND, BUT DECEITFUL ARE THE KISSES OF AN ENEMY.”

One of the ways our hearts deceive us is by causing us to think, “I’m not as _____ as other people think I am.” The average John Doe walking down the street and the person on death row share this common self-evaluation.

We might *say* we’re open to feedback from others, but often when we hear it, we find ways to justify ourselves or discount the accuracy of their feedback. Proverbs 27:5-6 reminds us that when people who love us tell us things that are hard for us to hear, we should listen and take it seriously.

Ask the person

This can be risky, but if we’ve truly exhausted every avenue and we cannot fathom what we could have possibly done, we should go to the person and humbly ask them to help us identify the log in our eye. For example, we could say:

“I sense that our relationship has felt strained lately. Perhaps I’m misreading the situation, but we’ve not been communicating well and I feel like you’ve been upset at me. I’ve sought to examine myself and even asked our pastor to help me think through what I may have said or done, but I just haven’t been able to pin-point anything. I’m sorry if it should be obvious, but it isn’t. Can you help me understand how I have offended you? I really want to make things right between us.”

What if someone has something against me?

Usually in the home we have a pretty good idea if we have offended or hurt someone. But outside those close quarters, it’s possible that we might say or do something and not realize or remember that someone has been offended.

Jesus anticipates this kind of scenario.

MATTHEW 5:23-24 – “THEREFORE IF YOU ARE PRESENTING YOUR OFFERING AT THE ALTAR, AND THERE REMEMBER THAT YOUR BROTHER HAS SOMETHING AGAINST YOU, LEAVE YOUR OFFERING THERE BEFORE THE ALTAR AND GO; FIRST BE RECONCILED TO YOUR BROTHER, AND THEN COME AND PRESENT YOUR OFFERING.”

Unlike the first scenario where you feel the tension in the relationship, here the idea is that the conflict is not _____ you personally, but it is affecting someone else. The reason you don't “remember” it can be varied.

- Perhaps you don't see the person often and so you don't feel the tension in the relationship regularly.
- Perhaps the incident was far enough in the past that you didn't think it was still an issue.
- Perhaps you know you did something wrong, but you didn't think it was that significant.
- Perhaps you weren't even aware that someone had something against you until someone told you.

Whatever the case, it doesn't matter. What matters is that someone has something against you. And _____ someone has something against you, Jesus calls you to go and be reconciled.

So what do you do? Go to the person humbly and graciously and seek to understand how you have offended them so you can move on to the third step in reconciliation.

After identifying the log in your eye and confessing your sin to the Lord, you are ready to confess your sin to the other person.

Seven A's of confession

We tend to be really bad at confessing sin. We'll say things like:

- “I'm sorry.”
- “I'm sorry you were hurt or offended.”
- “I'm sorry... but...”

Our apologies tend to minimize our contribution, or even shift blame on the other person. The following principles will help you make biblical, thorough, and humble confessions of sin.

1. _____ everyone involved
 - The extent of the confession should be as broad as those who were involved, and sometimes even those aware of the situation.
2. _____ “if,” “but,” and “maybe”
 - Take full responsibility without including the other person's contribution.

3. _____ specifically
 - Confess not only the words or actions, but the heart behind them.
 - Use biblical language and categories to refer to your sin (e.g., lie vs. fib, adultery vs. cheating, fornication vs. one night stand).
4. _____ the hurt
 - Affirm the effects your words or actions had on them, regardless of whether you think they are on par.
5. _____ the consequences
 - Some offenses may require a form of restitution or justice.
 - Some offenses may entail a loss of privilege.
 - Some offenses require time and effort to regain trust and unity.
6. _____ your behavior
 - If appropriate, explain what changes you plan to make.
7. _____ for forgiveness, and allow time
 - In order for transactional forgiveness to happen, you must give the other person an opportunity to respond.
 - If the offence was significant, be explicit about allowing them time.

What if the person won't forgive you?

If the person doesn't forgive you right away, keep in mind the central goal of biblical reconciliation, which is to _____ God.

Often we get frustrated and angry when we've done everything right and the other person doesn't respond well. This anger is always produced when our _____ was to manipulate the other person or the situation rather than to glorify God.

With that in mind, consider the following:

1. Pray for the person regularly (Matthew 5:44).
2. Ask them if there is anything you have yet to acknowledge.
3. In humility, do good to them (Romans 12:20-21).
4. Ask if they would be willing to meet with someone who could mediate the conflict.
5. If they continue to refuse to forgive and they are sinning in their interaction with you, seek help from a mature believer who knows both of you, or a pastor who can help (Matthew 18:16).

Portrait of a Peacemaker

Having looked at how to think about conflict and how to address our own contributions to conflict, before we discuss confronting the other person, there are some preliminary issues we need to understand. First among those is the reality that in order to respond to conflict in a way that glorifies God, we must be the kind of person that glorifies God.

COLOSSIANS 3:12-14 – “SO, AS THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN CHOSEN OF GOD, HOLY AND BELOVED, PUT ON A HEART OF **COMPASSION, KINDNESS, HUMILITY, GENTLENESS AND PATIENCE; BEARING** WITH ONE ANOTHER, AND **FORGIVING** EACH OTHER, WHOEVER HAS A COMPLAINT AGAINST ANYONE; JUST AS THE LORD FORGAVE YOU, SO ALSO SHOULD YOU. BEYOND ALL THESE THINGS PUT ON **LOVE**, WHICH IS THE PERFECT BOND OF UNITY.”

EPHESIANS 4:1-3 – “THEREFORE I, THE PRISONER OF THE LORD, IMPLORE YOU TO WALK IN A MANNER WORTHY OF THE CALLING WITH WHICH YOU HAVE BEEN CALLED, WITH ALL **HUMILITY AND GENTLENESS**, WITH **PATIENCE**, SHOWING **TOLERANCE** FOR ONE ANOTHER IN **LOVE**, BEING DILIGENT TO PRESERVE THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT IN THE BOND OF PEACE.”

Character and Actions Rise out of Identity

Notice how Paul begins both passages.

COLOSSIANS 3:12 – “SO, AS THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN CHOSEN OF GOD, HOLY AND BELOVED . . .”

EPHESIANS 4:1 – “THEREFORE I . . . IMPLORE YOU TO WALK IN A MANNER WORTHY OF THE CALLING WITH WHICH YOU HAVE BEEN CALLED . . .”

Far too often professing Christians have a works-righteousness theology and identity. While they say they are saved by grace, they live and think as though they are saved by works. They work to obtain God’s favor, forgiveness, or sense of adequacy.

Here is how the Spirit would have us think about ourselves:

- We have been _____ from Satan’s kingdom (Colossians 1:13; Ephesians 2:1-3).
- We have been _____ from the penalty of sin (Colossians 1:14; Ephesians 1:7).
- We have been _____ to God (Colossians 1:22; Ephesians 2:16).
- We have been _____ in holiness (Colossians 1:22; Ephesians 4:24; 5:27).
- We have been _____ for heaven (Colossians 1:12; 3:4; Ephesians 1:14; 2:6).
- We have been _____ to serve Christ (Colossians 1:9-12; 2:6; Ephesians 2:10).

These are _____ realities. These are what is true about us apart from anything we have done, are doing, or will do. And these are true about us no matter what others have or can do to us. And it is out of these realities that the following qualities can be exhibited in our lives.

PSALM 56:11 – “IN GOD I HAVE PUT MY TRUST, I SHALL NOT BE AFRAID. WHAT CAN MAN DO TO ME?”

1 CORINTHIANS 6:7 – “ACTUALLY, THEN, IT IS ALREADY A DEFEAT FOR YOU, THAT YOU HAVE LAWSUITS WITH ONE ANOTHER. WHY NOT RATHER BE WRONGED? WHY NOT RATHER BE DEFRAUDED?”

Even more specifically, we are to exhibit the following characteristics, not only because of what God has done for us, but because this is how God has _____ us Himself. So as we look at these characteristics, we’re to consider how God manifests these traits.

Compassion

According to one theological dictionary, compassion is a “display of concern over another’s misfortune” (*BDAG*). It is often translated “mercy” or “pity.” Compassion is not just a feeling, it is a feeling that leads to _____.

MATTHEW 9:13 – “BUT GO AND LEARN WHAT THIS MEANS: ‘I DESIRE **COMPASSION**, AND NOT SACRIFICE,’ FOR I DID NOT COME TO CALL THE RIGHTEOUS, BUT SINNERS.”

2 CORINTHIANS 1:3-4 – “BLESSED BE THE GOD AND FATHER OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, **THE FATHER OF MERCIES** AND GOD OF ALL COMFORT, WHO COMFORTS US IN ALL OUR AFFLICTION SO THAT WE WILL BE ABLE TO COMFORT THOSE WHO ARE IN ANY AFFLICTION WITH THE COMFORT WITH WHICH WE OURSELVES ARE COMFORTED BY GOD.”

NEHEMIAH 9:31 – “NEVERTHELESS, IN YOUR GREAT **COMPASSION** YOU DID NOT MAKE AN END OF THEM OR FORSAKE THEM, FOR YOU ARE A GRACIOUS AND **COMPASSIONATE GOD**.”

MATTHEW 14:14 – “WHEN HE WENT ASHORE, HE SAW A LARGE CROWD, AND **FELT COMPASSION** FOR THEM AND HEALED THEIR SICK.”

LUKE 15:20 – “SO HE GOT UP AND CAME TO HIS FATHER. BUT WHILE HE WAS STILL A LONG WAY OFF, HIS FATHER SAW HIM AND **FELT COMPASSION** FOR HIM, AND RAN AND EMBRACED HIM AND KISSED HIM.”

What is remarkable about the compassion of God is that the sad condition of mankind did not come about because of circumstances outside their control. No, our sorry state is the direct result of our own sin and rebellion against God. And despite the severe personal offence we committed against Him, God showed and continues to show compassion toward us.

Therefore, we must show compassion toward others regardless of what they have done to us. If they have sinned against God infinitely more than they have sinned against us, and *He* can show compassion on them, how can we not do the same?

Kindness

Kindness is one of the fruit of the Spirit. It is “uprightness in one’s relations with others. . . . the quality of being helpful or beneficial” (*BDAG*). Kindness is doing the _____ thing in the _____ way for the _____ of the other person.

LUKE 6:35 – “BUT LOVE YOUR ENEMIES, AND DO GOOD, AND LEND, EXPECTING NOTHING IN RETURN; AND YOUR REWARD WILL BE GREAT, AND YOU WILL BE SONS OF THE MOST HIGH; **FOR HE HIMSELF IS KIND TO UNGRATEFUL AND EVIL MEN.**”

EPHESIANS 2:4-7 – “BUT GOD, BEING RICH IN MERCY, BECAUSE OF HIS GREAT LOVE WITH WHICH HE LOVED US . . . MADE US ALIVE TOGETHER WITH CHRIST . . . AND RAISED US UP WITH HIM, AND SEATED US WITH HIM . . . SO THAT IN THE AGES TO COME **HE MIGHT SHOW THE SURPASSING RICHES OF HIS GRACE IN KINDNESS TOWARD US IN CHRIST JESUS.**”

TITUS 3:3-5 – “FOR WE ALSO ONCE WERE FOOLISH OURSELVES, DISOBEDIENT, DECEIVED, ENSLAVED TO VARIOUS LUSTS AND PLEASURES, SPENDING OUR LIFE IN MALICE AND ENVY, HATEFUL, HATING ONE ANOTHER. **BUT WHEN THE KINDNESS OF GOD OUR SAVIOR AND HIS LOVE FOR MANKIND APPEARED, HE SAVED US, NOT ON THE BASIS OF DEEDS WHICH WE HAVE DONE IN RIGHTEOUSNESS, BUT ACCORDING TO HIS MERCY, BY THE WASHING OF REGENERATION AND RENEWING BY THE HOLY SPIRIT.**”

All three of these passages explicitly say that God’s kindness was expressed to sinful, evil, wicked sinners. Scripture does say that God is kind to those who are kind (Psalm 18:25), but His kindness is displayed in all its glory toward those who don’t deserve it.

To say that God is kind is to say that God comes to those least deserving and meets their greatest need. If He has done that for us, should we not meet the needs of those around us, regardless of whether they deserve it?

JAMES 2:14-15 – “WHAT USE IS IT, MY BRETHREN, IF SOMEONE SAYS HE HAS FAITH BUT HE HAS NO WORKS? CAN THAT FAITH SAVE HIM? IF A BROTHER OR SISTER IS WITHOUT CLOTHING AND IN NEED OF DAILY FOOD, AND ONE OF YOU SAYS TO THEM, “GO IN PEACE, BE WARMED AND BE FILLED,” AND YET YOU DO NOT GIVE THEM WHAT IS NECESSARY FOR THEIR BODY, WHAT USE IS THAT?”

1 JOHN 3:17 – “BUT WHOEVER HAS THE WORLD’S GOODS, AND SEES HIS BROTHER IN NEED AND CLOSES HIS HEART AGAINST HIM, HOW DOES THE LOVE OF GOD ABIDE IN HIM?”

The peacemaker is someone who, like their Father, is kind to those with whom they are in conflict, and meets _____ and _____ needs.

ROMANS 12:20-21 – “BUT IF YOUR ENEMY IS HUNGRY, FEED HIM, AND IF HE IS THIRSTY, GIVE HIM A DRINK; FOR IN DOING SO YOU WILL HEAP BURNING COALS ON HIS HEAD. DO NOT BE OVERCOME BY EVIL, BUT OVERCOME EVIL WITH GOOD.” (VS. 20 IS QUOTED FROM PROVERBS 25:21)

Since Jesus has met our greatest need while we were His enemies, what need(s) could your personal enemy have that you could meet?

Humility

To be humble literally means to be “_____.” There are many senses and contexts in which one can be humble—financial, social influence, servitude, etc. As we relate to God, to be humble means to think of ourselves rightly from God’s perspective—we are made in God’s image and thus have inherent dignity and worth, but we are sinners and thus there is no place for pride or haughtiness.

JAMES 4:6,10 – “BUT HE GIVES A GREATER GRACE. THEREFORE IT SAYS, ‘GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE.’ . . . HUMBLE YOURSELVES IN THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD, AND HE WILL EXALT YOU.”

1 PETER 5:6 – “THEREFORE HUMBLE YOURSELVES UNDER THE MIGHTY HAND OF GOD, THAT HE MAY EXALT YOU AT THE PROPER TIME.”

As we relate to others, humility means to think of others as more important than ourselves, regardless of the _____ we may hold relative to the other person. And this is where we see God exemplifying humility.

PHILIPPIANS 2:3-8 – “DO NOTHING FROM SELFISHNESS OR EMPTY CONCEIT, **BUT WITH HUMILITY OF MIND REGARD ONE ANOTHER AS MORE IMPORTANT THAN YOURSELVES**; DO NOT MERELY LOOK OUT FOR YOUR OWN PERSONAL INTERESTS, BUT ALSO FOR THE INTERESTS OF OTHERS. HAVE THIS ATTITUDE IN YOURSELVES WHICH WAS ALSO IN CHRIST JESUS, WHO, ALTHOUGH HE EXISTED IN THE FORM OF GOD, DID NOT REGARD EQUALITY WITH GOD A THING TO BE GRASPED, BUT EMPTIED HIMSELF, TAKING THE FORM OF A BOND-SERVANT, AND BEING MADE IN THE LIKENESS OF MEN. BEING FOUND IN APPEARANCE AS A MAN, **HE HUMBLLED HIMSELF BY BECOMING OBEDIENT TO THE POINT OF DEATH, EVEN DEATH ON A CROSS.**”

Jesus did not humble Himself because it was _____, or because it was _____, or because we _____ it, or for any other reason than He chose to exemplify His _____ character. It would have been right for Him to judge us. It was necessary that He pour out His wrath on us. We deserved infinite judgment. But He chose to humble Himself to reconcile us to Himself.

Since Jesus has done that for you, is there any level that you are unwilling to stoop to for the sake of a person you’re in conflict with?

Gentleness

Gentleness can also be translated meekness. It is *not* the idea of weakness or frailty. Gentleness in Scripture is exhibited by those with power, influence, and strength, toward to those who are weak, poor, and vulnerable. The focus of gentleness/meekness is the _____ and _____ in which we interact with others.

When God interacts with us, He is not harsh, mean, overbearing, crushing, or sharp. He is gentle.

ISAIAH 42:1-4 – “BEHOLD, MY SERVANT, WHOM I UPHOLD; MY CHOSEN ONE IN WHOM MY SOUL DELIGHTS. I HAVE PUT MY SPIRIT UPON HIM; HE WILL BRING FORTH JUSTICE TO THE NATIONS. **HE WILL NOT CRY OUT OR RAISE HIS VOICE, NOR MAKE HIS VOICE HEARD IN THE STREET. A BRUISED REED HE WILL NOT BREAK AND A DIMLY BURNING WICK HE WILL NOT EXTINGUISH;** HE WILL FAITHFULLY BRING FORTH JUSTICE. HE WILL NOT BE DISHEARTENED OR CRUSHED UNTIL HE HAS ESTABLISHED JUSTICE IN THE EARTH; AND THE COASTLANDS WILL WAIT EXPECTANTLY FOR HIS LAW.” (QUOTED IN MATTHEW 12:18-21)

MATTHEW 11:29 – “TAKE MY YOKE UPON YOU AND LEARN FROM ME, FOR I AM GENTLE AND HUMBLE IN HEART, AND YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS.”

As those who’ve been gently ministered to by our Lord, we ought to be gentle in our interactions with those who are in conflict with us. We do this by handling them with care so as to not unnecessarily offend, harm, or discourage them.

1 THESSALONIANS 2:7 – “BUT WE PROVED TO BE GENTLE AMONG YOU, AS A NURSING MOTHER TENDERLY CARES FOR HER OWN CHILDREN.”

PROVERBS 15:1 – “**A GENTLE ANSWER TURNS AWAY WRATH,** BUT A HARSH WORD STIRS UP ANGER.”

GALATIANS 6:1 – “BRETHREN, EVEN IF ANYONE IS CAUGHT IN ANY TRESPASS, YOU WHO ARE SPIRITUAL, **RESTORE SUCH A ONE IN A SPIRIT OF GENTLENESS;** EACH ONE LOOKING TO YOURSELF, SO THAT YOU TOO WILL NOT BE TEMPTED.”

EPHESIANS 4:2 – “WITH ALL HUMILITY AND **GENTLENESS,** WITH PATIENCE, SHOWING TOLERANCE FOR ONE ANOTHER IN LOVE.”

EPHESIANS 4:29 – “LET NO UNWHOLESOME WORD PROCEED FROM YOUR MOUTH, BUT ONLY SUCH A WORD AS IS GOOD FOR EDIFICATION ACCORDING TO THE NEED OF THE MOMENT, SO THAT IT WILL GIVE GRACE TO THOSE WHO HEAR.”

In what ways do you personally struggle with gentleness in the midst of conflict? Identify those areas, seek forgiveness, and be intentional about reversing those habits.

Patience

Patience is the prolonged restraint of _____.

ROMANS 9:22 – “WHAT IF GOD, ALTHOUGH WILLING TO DEMONSTRATE HIS WRATH AND TO MAKE HIS POWER KNOWN, ENDURED WITH MUCH PATIENCE VESSELS OF WRATH PREPARED FOR DESTRUCTION?”

2 PETER 3:9, 15 – “THE LORD IS NOT SLOW ABOUT HIS PROMISE, AS SOME COUNT SLOWNESS, BUT IS PATIENT TOWARD YOU, NOT WISHING FOR ANY TO PERISH BUT FOR ALL TO COME TO REPENTANCE. . . .
REGARD THE PATIENCE OF OUR LORD AS SALVATION . . .”

God’s patience toward us is seen in the fact that He does not rain down on us the just punishment for our sins the first time we sin. Or the second time, or the third, or the fourth, or the fifth, or the hundredth, or the thousandth.

Unlike earthly judges who can only hand down punishment when we are caught and only after we’ve gone through time-consuming legal processes, God knows instantly when we sin, and knowing all the facts there is no need to hold trial. Consider this: He would be right and just to immediately and without reservation allow us to experience His holy wrath the moment we sin the very first time. But He doesn’t. He is patient.

Consider Matthew 18:21-35 in terms of patience.

Aren’t we prone to be like that wicked slave? Though we have been shown infinite patience, we can barely stand someone’s offence for a minute. So how can you grow in patience?

Forbearance

This idea encompasses a number of words such as bearing with one another, putting up with others, enduring, and tolerating. There is significant overlap between forbearance and patience, but the difference can be summed up as patience being more related to _____ and changeable situations whereas forbearance is more related to _____ and fixed situations.

MATTHEW 17:17 – “AND JESUS ANSWERED AND SAID, ‘YOU UNBELIEVING AND PERVERTED GENERATION, HOW LONG SHALL I BE WITH YOU? **HOW LONG SHALL I PUT UP WITH YOU? BRING HIM HERE TO ME.**’ . . . THEN THE DISCIPLES CAME TO JESUS PRIVATELY AND SAID, ‘WHY COULD WE NOT DRIVE IT OUT?’ AND HE SAID TO THEM, ‘BECAUSE OF THE LITTLENES OF YOUR FAITH. . . .’”

We should not read sinful anger or frustration in Jesus’ words. From the beginning to the end of His ministry He knew the disciples lacked faith, that they vacillated and were as easily swayed to believe as they were to question. But Jesus graciously tolerated their weak faith.

In the same way, we are to tolerate the idiosyncrasies that people have—social awkwardness, mannerisms, learning challenges, preferences, etc. Some people struggle to grasp biblical truth more than others. Some struggle to trust in the Lord when hard times hit. We should not get “fed up” with people in their weakness, but tolerate and bear with them.

EPHESIANS 4:2 – “WITH ALL HUMILITY AND GENTLENESS, WITH PATIENCE, SHOWING TOLERANCE FOR ONE ANOTHER IN LOVE.”

Forgiving spirit

Paul’s preferred word for forgiveness comes from the same root word as _____ (*charizomai*). In the New Testament it’s the least common word for forgiveness. The most common being *aphiemi*, which focuses on the releasing of the debt. *Charizomai* has more a focus on the _____ person, or the _____ of the act of forgiveness—that it rises out of a gracious heart and it is a gracious act.

Unlike what some claim, God didn’t become a forgiving God in the New Testament.

EXODUS 34:6-7 – “THEN THE LORD PASSED BY IN FRONT OF HIM AND PROCLAIMED, ‘THE LORD, THE LORD GOD, COMPASSIONATE AND GRACIOUS, SLOW TO ANGER, AND ABOUNDING IN LOVINGKINDNESS AND TRUTH; WHO KEEPS LOVINGKINDNESS FOR THOUSANDS, **WHO FORGIVES INIQUITY, TRANSGRESSION AND SIN**; YET HE WILL BY NO MEANS LEAVE THE GUILTY UNPUNISHED, VISITING THE INIQUITY OF FATHERS ON THE CHILDREN AND ON THE GRANDCHILDREN TO THE THIRD AND FOURTH GENERATIONS.’”

PSALM 130:3-4 – “IF YOU, LORD, SHOULD MARK INIQUITIES, O LORD, WHO COULD STAND? **BUT THERE IS FORGIVENESS WITH YOU**, THAT YOU MAY BE FEARED.”

ISAIAH 55:7 – “LET THE WICKED FORSAKE HIS WAY AND THE UNRIGHTEOUS MAN HIS THOUGHTS; AND LET HIM RETURN TO THE LORD, AND HE WILL HAVE COMPASSION ON HIM, AND TO OUR GOD, **FOR HE WILL ABUNDANTLY PARDON.**”

We will discuss forgiveness in detail next week, but let’s look at Matthew 18:21-35 in terms of forgiveness.

For now let us simply say that we should be willing to forgive in the same way and to the same extent that we have been forgiven.

EPHESIANS 4:32 – “BE KIND TO ONE ANOTHER, TENDER-HEARTED, **FORGIVING EACH OTHER, JUST AS GOD IN CHRIST ALSO HAS FORGIVEN YOU.**”

Love

Love is the _____ to use your energy, time, resources, and abilities for the benefit of another person. It is not primarily a feeling, though it involves feelings. It is not primarily romantic, though it can involve romance. Love is _____, not self-centered.

In our culture love is more akin to, “I love the way you make me feel,” or “I love that you love me as much as I love me.” But when our feelings change or when the person stops loving us as much as we love ourselves, suddenly we have “fallen out of” love. This love is self-centered.

Here is love:

JOHN 3:16 – “**FOR GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD**, THAT HE GAVE HIS ONLY BEGOTTEN SON, THAT WHOEVER BELIEVES IN HIM SHALL NOT PERISH, BUT HAVE ETERNAL LIFE.”

EPHESIANS 2:4-6 – “**BUT GOD**, BEING RICH IN MERCY, **BECAUSE OF HIS GREAT LOVE WITH WHICH HE LOVED US**, EVEN WHEN WE WERE DEAD IN OUR TRANSGRESSIONS, MADE US ALIVE TOGETHER WITH CHRIST (BY GRACE YOU HAVE BEEN SAVED), AND RAISED US UP WITH HIM, AND SEATED US WITH HIM IN THE HEAVENLY PLACES IN CHRIST JESUS.”

1 JOHN 4:10 – “IN THIS IS LOVE, NOT THAT WE LOVED GOD, BUT THAT **HE LOVED US AND SENT HIS SON TO BE THE PROPITIATION FOR OUR SINS.**”

Again I say, love is the giving of oneself for the good of another, not because they deserve it or have earned it. In God’s case, He loved because it is His nature to love. In our case, we love because we have been loved infinitely by God.

Loving one another is of such importance that John says:

1 JOHN 4:7-8, 20-21 – “**BELOVED**, LET US LOVE ONE ANOTHER, FOR LOVE IS FROM GOD; AND EVERYONE WHO LOVES IS BORN OF GOD AND KNOWS GOD. THE ONE WHO DOES NOT LOVE DOES NOT KNOW GOD, FOR GOD IS LOVE. . . . IF SOMEONE SAYS, “I LOVE GOD,” AND HATES HIS BROTHER, HE IS A LIAR; FOR THE ONE WHO DOES NOT LOVE HIS BROTHER WHOM HE HAS SEEN, CANNOT LOVE GOD WHOM HE HAS NOT SEEN. AND THIS COMMANDMENT WE HAVE FROM HIM, THAT THE ONE WHO LOVES GOD SHOULD LOVE HIS BROTHER ALSO.”

Paul thus writes:

EPHESIANS 5:1-2 – “**THEREFORE BE IMITATORS OF GOD**, AS BELOVED CHILDREN; AND WALK IN LOVE, JUST AS CHRIST ALSO LOVED YOU AND GAVE HIMSELF UP FOR US, AN OFFERING AND A SACRIFICE TO GOD AS A FRAGRANT AROMA.”

Jesus said:

MATTHEW 5:43-44 – “YOU HAVE HEARD THAT IT WAS SAID, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AND HATE YOUR ENEMY.’ BUT I SAY TO YOU, LOVE YOUR ENEMIES AND PRAY FOR THOSE WHO PERSECUTE

YOU, SO THAT YOU MAY BE SONS OF YOUR FATHER WHO IS IN HEAVEN; FOR HE CAUSES HIS SUN TO RISE ON THE EVIL AND THE GOOD, AND SENDS RAIN ON THE RIGHTEOUS AND THE UNRIGHTEOUS.”

Conclusion

Here are eight character traits of peacemakers: compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, forbearance, forgiving spirit, and love. Some of these are listed in Galatians 5:22-23 as the fruit of the Spirit. But all of these are the character of God which He produces in our life as we seek Him.

Do you struggle in one, two, or all these characteristics? Here’s how you can grow:

COLOSSIANS 1:9-11 – “FOR THIS REASON ALSO, SINCE THE DAY WE HEARD OF IT, WE HAVE NOT CEASED TO PRAY FOR YOU AND TO ASK **THAT YOU MAY BE FILLED WITH THE KNOWLEDGE OF HIS WILL** IN ALL **SPIRITUAL WISDOM AND UNDERSTANDING**, SO THAT YOU WILL WALK IN A MANNER WORTHY OF THE LORD, TO PLEASE HIM IN ALL RESPECTS, BEARING FRUIT IN EVERY GOOD WORK AND **INCREASING IN THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD**; STRENGTHENED WITH ALL POWER, ACCORDING TO HIS GLORIOUS MIGHT, **FOR THE ATTAINING OF ALL STEADFASTNESS AND PATIENCE . . .**”

The more you increase in the knowledge of God *in spiritual wisdom and understanding*, the Spirit will empower you to imitate God and bear this fruit in your life.

Forgiveness

Forgiveness is one of the most misunderstood concepts in Christianity. On the one hand this is bizarre because of how forgiveness is so central of our salvation. On the other hand it is not surprising given the way the church has been so thoroughly psychologized.

What forgiveness is *not*.

Common misconceptions of forgiveness:

- Sweeping an offense under the rug
- “Forgive and forget”
- Minimizing the offense
- Letting the person off the hook
- Forgiving yourself
- Forgiving God

What forgiveness *is*.

As we saw last week, true forgiveness is modeled after God’s forgiveness. There can be no understanding of forgiveness apart from God, and imitating Him allows us to understand what it looks like to forgive in any and every situation.

First, we must understand that forgiveness involves _____ and _____. Forgiveness is the undeserved releasing of guilt to someone who has sinned against God and toward us. Only God can forgive judicially to release anyone from the death penalty of sin. But we can forgive relationally to release someone from the social and other consequences of sin.

Guilt is not a feeling, it is a _____. A person is either innocent, righteous, or guilty. Forgiveness is the mechanism by which sinners (those guilty of sin) are released from the penalty of sin.

Forgiveness is not the absence of _____. When God forgives, and thus when we forgive, justice is not thwarted. Justice is accomplished in one of two ways: God will either execute justice on a sinner by pouring out His wrath on them for eternity in hell, or He will have executed justice for a sinner by pouring out His wrath on Christ at the cross. Some receive justice; some receive grace; no one receives injustice.

With that in mind, let's see four facets of God's forgiveness of us, and thus how we are to forgive one another.

First, when God forgives us, He does not _____ our sins.

ISAIAH 43:25 – “I, EVEN I, AM THE ONE WHO WIPES OUT YOUR TRANSGRESSIONS FOR MY OWN SAKE, AND **I WILL NOT REMEMBER YOUR SINS.**”

JEREMIAH 31:34 – “THEY WILL NOT TEACH AGAIN, EACH MAN HIS NEIGHBOR AND EACH MAN HIS BROTHER, SAYING, ‘KNOW THE LORD,’ FOR THEY WILL ALL KNOW ME, FROM THE LEAST OF THEM TO THE GREATEST OF THEM,’ DECLARES THE LORD, ‘**FOR I WILL FORGIVE THEIR INIQUITY, AND THEIR SIN I WILL REMEMBER NO MORE.**’”

“Remember” translates *zakar*: “The root and its derivatives have crucial roles in the OT. On the human level, the words embrace reflection, especially on what is in the past. Such reflection may lead to regret or relief, or more actively appreciation and commitment. *God’s remembering has to do with his attention and intervention, whether in grace or in judgment*” (NIDOTTE, emphasis added).

Second, when God forgives us, He does not _____ us of our sins and use them against us.

PSALM 103:10-12 – “**HE HAS NOT DEALT WITH US ACCORDING TO OUR SINS, NOR REWARDED US ACCORDING TO OUR INIQUITIES. FOR AS HIGH AS THE HEAVENS ARE ABOVE THE EARTH, SO GREAT IS HIS LOVINGKINDNESS TOWARD THOSE WHO FEAR HIM. AS FAR AS THE EAST IS FROM THE WEST, SO FAR HAS HE REMOVED OUR TRANSGRESSIONS FROM US.**”

COLOSSIANS 2:13-14 – “WHEN YOU WERE DEAD IN YOUR TRANSGRESSIONS AND THE UNCIRCUMCISION OF YOUR FLESH, HE MADE YOU ALIVE TOGETHER WITH HIM, HAVING FORGIVEN US ALL OUR TRANSGRESSIONS, **HAVING CANCELED OUT THE CERTIFICATE OF DEBT** CONSISTING OF DECREES AGAINST US, WHICH WAS HOSTILE TO US; AND HE HAS TAKEN IT OUT OF THE WAY, HAVING NAILED IT TO THE CROSS.”

Third, when God forgives us, He does not _____ accusations from others.

ROMANS 8:33-34 – “**WHO WILL BRING A CHARGE AGAINST GOD’S ELECT?** GOD IS THE ONE WHO JUSTIFIES; WHO IS THE ONE WHO CONDEMNS? CHRIST JESUS IS HE WHO DIED, YES, RATHER WHO WAS RAISED, WHO IS AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD, WHO ALSO INTERCEDES FOR US.”

REVELATION 12:10 – “THEN I HEARD A LOUD VOICE IN HEAVEN, SAYING, “NOW THE SALVATION, AND THE POWER, AND THE KINGDOM OF OUR GOD AND THE AUTHORITY OF HIS CHRIST HAVE COME, **FOR THE ACCUSER OF OUR BRETHREN HAS BEEN THROWN DOWN, HE WHO ACCUSES THEM BEFORE OUR GOD DAY AND NIGHT.**”

Fourth, when God forgives us, He _____ the barrier that our sin created in our relationship with Him.

ROMANS 5:10 – “**FOR IF WHILE WE WERE ENEMIES WE WERE RECONCILED TO GOD** THROUGH THE DEATH OF HIS SON, MUCH MORE, HAVING BEEN RECONCILED, WE SHALL BE SAVED BY HIS LIFE.”

EPHESIANS 2:13-14 – “**BUT NOW IN CHRIST JESUS YOU WHO FORMERLY WERE FAR OFF HAVE BEEN BROUGHT NEAR** BY THE BLOOD OF CHRIST. FOR HE HIMSELF IS OUR PEACE, WHO MADE BOTH GROUPS INTO ONE AND **BROKE DOWN THE BARRIER OF THE DIVIDING WALL.**”

COLOSSIANS 1:21-22 – “**AND ALTHOUGH YOU WERE FORMERLY ALIENATED** AND HOSTILE IN MIND, ENGAGED IN EVIL DEEDS, YET **HE HAS NOW RECONCILED YOU** IN HIS FLESHLY BODY THROUGH DEATH, IN ORDER TO PRESENT YOU BEFORE HIM HOLY AND BLAMELESS AND BEYOND REPROACH.”

So how can we forgive like God forgives?

Because our forgiveness is relational, not judicial, our forgiveness is a volitional choice of how we will relate with the person. Biblical forgiveness is making the following promises:

1. I promise that I will not _____ on this incident.
 - We cannot promise that the incident will not cross our minds. But we can promise that when the incident comes into our mind, that we will not mull it over, relive, and become embittered.
 - We are promising that when the incident comes to our mind, we will redirect our thoughts according to Philippians 4:8.
2. I promise that I will not bring this incident up to you to use it _____ you.
 - By the time we have reached the point of granting forgiveness, we should have fully dealt with the issue. But if we haven't, we will only discuss the incident to bring resolution.
 - We may also need to bring it up in the future if a pattern is established and we need to give examples of that pattern. But we will not bring it up to guilt, shame, or bring retribution on them.
3. I promise that I will not _____ this incident with others.
 - We won't tell our best friend, close relative, or small group about the situation. We won't bring it up as a prayer request or to let our accountability group know.

- There are two exceptions to this promise:
 - If the law has been broken, the authorities may need to get involved and we necessarily talk about the situation with them.
 - If there are lasting consequences or we need outside help to fully resolve the situation, grow from it, we may need to tell a counselor, pastor, or someone who can help us grow and change.

- 4. I promise that I will now allow this incident to stand _____ us.
 - The majority of conflicts in our lives, and the ways I which we sin against one another do not create lasting relational barriers. Expressions of anger, the silent treatment, broken promises, etc. can almost always be forgiven without any lasting relational consequences.

 - However, some sins have natural consequences that do cause necessary barriers. Here are some examples:
 - Significant acts of broken trust may require a lengthy period of rebuilding trust which involves extreme transparency not needed in most relationships. One example would be adultery.
 - Significant harm—physical, sexual—may make it wise and necessary for a complete separation. Examples include rape or molestation.
 - Failure of integrity may make it unwise to continue working relationships. An example might be firing someone who mishandled business finances.

 - In most cases there can be a fully restored and even strengthened relationship. In some cases the relationship may be altered temporarily or even permanently. In a few extreme cases the relationship may need to be completely severed.

Attitudinal and Transactional Forgiveness

What if the person doesn't ask for forgiveness? Am I still supposed to forgive them?

- There is some measure of debate on this question, but the best biblical approach seems to view forgiveness in two senses: attitudinal and transactional. You might also say vertical vs. horizontal.

- Transactional, or horizontal, forgiveness is when a person has sinned against us, they confess their sin, ask for forgiveness, and we grant forgiveness making the four promises above.
- This is the kind of forgiveness we see in Matthew 18:15-35 and Luke 17:3-5. As those who've received infinite forgiveness from our Father, we extend forgiveness to those who repent and ask for it.

- Transactional forgiveness is so critical that Jesus says this:

MATTHEW 6:14-15 – “FOR IF YOU FORGIVE OTHERS FOR THEIR TRANSGRESSIONS, YOUR HEAVENLY FATHER WILL ALSO FORGIVE YOU. BUT IF YOU DO NOT FORGIVE OTHERS, THEN YOUR FATHER WILL NOT FORGIVE YOUR TRANSGRESSIONS.”

- But what do you do until the person asks, or if the person never asks? You have two options: 1) become bitter by holding on to their offense, or 2) forgive them in your heart.
- Transactional forgiveness is between you and the other person (horizontal). Attitudinal forgiveness is between you and the Lord (vertical).

MARK 11:25 – “**WHENEVER YOU STAND PRAYING, FORGIVE, IF YOU HAVE ANYTHING AGAINST ANYONE, SO THAT YOUR FATHER WHO IS IN HEAVEN WILL ALSO FORGIVE YOU YOUR TRANSGRESSIONS.**”

MATTHEW 18:35 – “MY HEAVENLY FATHER WILL ALSO DO THE SAME TO YOU, **IF EACH OF YOU DOES NOT FORGIVE HIS BROTHER FROM YOUR HEART.**”

- We forgive others in our hearts in four ways:
 1. We remember that while they may have sinned toward us and hurt us, they have primarily sinned against God who will, in His way and at His time, exact justice. So we entrust ourselves and the person to the Lord.

GENESIS 50:19 – “BUT JOSEPH SAID TO THEM, “DO NOT BE AFRAID, FOR AM I IN GOD’S PLACE?”

ROMANS 12:19 – “NEVER TAKE YOUR OWN REVENGE, BELOVED, BUT LEAVE ROOM FOR THE WRATH OF GOD, FOR IT IS WRITTEN, ‘VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY,’ SAYS THE LORD.”

JAMES 4:12 – “THERE IS ONLY ONE LAWGIVER AND JUDGE, THE ONE WHO IS ABLE TO SAVE AND TO DESTROY; BUT WHO ARE YOU WHO JUDGE YOUR NEIGHBOR?”

1 PETER 2:23 – “AND WHILE BEING REVILED, HE DID NOT REVILE IN RETURN; WHILE SUFFERING, HE UTTERED NO THREATS, BUT KEPT ENTRUSTING HIMSELF TO HIM WHO JUDGES RIGHTEOUSLY.”

2. We remember that we are called to not become bitter toward others, so we choose not to cultivate sinful attitudes toward that person.

EPHESIANS 4:31 – “LET ALL BITTERNESS AND WRATH AND ANGER AND CLAMOR AND SLANDER BE PUT AWAY FROM YOU, ALONG WITH ALL MALICE.”

COLOSSIANS 3:19 – “HUSBANDS, LOVE YOUR WIVES AND DO NOT BE EMBITTERED AGAINST THEM.”

HEBREWS 12:14-15 – “PURSUE PEACE WITH ALL MEN, AND THE SANCTIFICATION WITHOUT WHICH NO ONE WILL SEE THE LORD. SEE TO IT THAT NO ONE COMES SHORT OF THE GRACE OF GOD; THAT NO ROOT OF BITTERNESS SPRINGING UP CAUSES TROUBLE, AND BY IT MANY BE DEFILED.”

3. We remember that just as God forgives us instantly when we ask because our sin has been paid for by Christ, we too must be ready to make the four promises of forgiveness and reconcile with them when the person repents.

GENESIS 50:18-21 – “THEN HIS BROTHERS ALSO CAME AND FELL DOWN BEFORE HIM AND SAID, ‘BEHOLD, WE ARE YOUR SERVANTS.’ BUT JOSEPH SAID TO THEM, ‘DO NOT BE AFRAID, FOR AM I IN GOD’S PLACE? AS FOR YOU, YOU MEANT EVIL AGAINST ME, BUT GOD MEANT IT FOR GOOD IN ORDER TO BRING ABOUT THIS PRESENT RESULT, TO PRESERVE MANY PEOPLE ALIVE. SO THEREFORE, DO NOT BE AFRAID; I WILL PROVIDE FOR YOU AND YOUR LITTLE ONES.’ SO HE COMFORTED THEM AND SPOKE KINDLY TO THEM.”

LUKE 15:11-32 – “. . . SO HE GOT UP AND CAME TO HIS FATHER. BUT WHILE HE WAS STILL A LONG WAY OFF, HIS FATHER SAW HIM AND FELT COMPASSION FOR HIM, AND RAN AND EMBRACED HIM AND KISSED HIM. AND THE SON SAID TO HIM, ‘FATHER, I HAVE SINNED AGAINST HEAVEN AND IN YOUR SIGHT; I AM NO LONGER WORTHY TO BE CALLED YOUR SON.’ BUT THE FATHER SAID TO HIS SLAVES, ‘QUICKLY BRING OUT THE BEST ROBE AND PUT IT ON HIM, AND PUT A RING ON HIS HAND AND SANDALS ON HIS FEET; AND BRING THE FATTENED CALF, KILL IT, AND LET US EAT AND CELEBRATE; FOR THIS SON OF MINE WAS DEAD AND HAS COME TO LIFE AGAIN; HE WAS LOST AND HAS BEEN FOUND.’ AND THEY BEGAN TO CELEBRATE. . . .”

LUKE 17:4 – “AND IF HE SINS AGAINST YOU SEVEN TIMES A DAY, AND RETURNS TO YOU SEVEN TIMES, SAYING, ‘I REPENT,’ FORGIVE HIM.”

4. We must pray, bless, and do good to them.

MATTHEW 5:44 – “BUT I SAY TO YOU, LOVE YOUR ENEMIES AND PRAY FOR THOSE WHO PERSECUTE YOU.”

ROMANS 12:20-21 – “BUT IF YOUR ENEMY IS HUNGRY, FEED HIM, AND IF HE IS THIRSTY, GIVE HIM A DRINK; FOR IN SO DOING YOU WILL HEAP BURNING COALS ON HIS HEAD. DO NOT BE OVERCOME BY EVIL, BUT OVERCOME EVIL WITH GOOD.”

Battling Bitterness

Understanding Bitterness

One of the most common attendant sins in conflict is bitterness. If anger is a flash in the pan—strong but temporary—bitterness is the simmering pot—it’s always there, and it can boil over anytime. “Bitterness is what we feel when someone sins against us,” whether that sin is real or imagined (Jim Wilson). In other words, bitterness is what we feel when we think someone is getting in the way of my _____.

EPHESIANS 4:31 – “LET ALL BITTERNESS AND WRATH AND ANGER AND CLAMOR AND SLANDER BE PUT AWAY FROM YOU, ALONG WITH ALL MALICE.”

HEBREWS 12:15 – “SEE TO IT THAT NO ONE COMES SHORT OF THE GRACE OF GOD; **THAT NO ROOT OF BITTERNESS SPRINGING UP CAUSES TROUBLE, AND BY IT MANY BE DEFILED.**”

- Bitterness is a _____ which, if not dealt with biblically, will grow fruit. What kind of fruit?
 - Impatience with others
 - Irritability toward others
 - Explosive anger at any time
 - Malice toward the other person
 - Disrespect toward the other person
 - Jealousy toward others
 - Depression and self-pity
 - Rebellion against the Lord
 - Suspicion toward others
 - Assuming the worst about others

- Consider the examples of bitter people in the Bible:
 - Jonah (Jonah 4)
 - Naomi (Ruth 1:20-21)
 - Saul (1 Samuel 18:8-9)
 - Pharisees (John 11:47-48)

Six Principles to Kill the Root of Bitterness

Meditate on the enormity of God’s love displayed in the cross.

MATTHEW 18:23-27 – “FOR THIS REASON THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN MAY BE COMPARED TO A KING WHO WISHED TO SETTLE ACCOUNTS WITH HIS SLAVES. WHEN HE HAD BEGUN TO SETTLE THEM, ONE WHO OWED HIM TEN THOUSAND TALENTS WAS BROUGHT TO HIM. BUT SINCE HE DID NOT HAVE THE MEANS TO REPAY, HIS LORD COMMANDED HIM TO BE SOLD, ALONG WITH HIS WIFE AND CHILDREN AND ALL THAT HE HAD, AND REPAYMENT TO BE MADE. SO THE SLAVE FELL TO THE GROUND AND PROSTRATED HIMSELF BEFORE HIM, SAYING, ‘HAVE PATIENCE WITH ME AND I WILL REPAY YOU EVERYTHING.’ AND THE LORD OF THAT SLAVE FELT COMPASSION AND RELEASED HIM AND FORGAVE HIM THE DEBT.”

COLOSSIANS 2:13-14 – “WHEN YOU WERE DEAD IN YOUR TRANSGRESSIONS AND THE UNCIRCUMCISION OF YOUR FLESH, HE MADE YOU ALIVE TOGETHER WITH HIM, HAVING FORGIVEN US ALL OUR TRANSGRESSIONS, HAVING CANCELED OUT THE CERTIFICATE OF DEBT CONSISTING OF DECREES AGAINST US, WHICH WAS HOSTILE TO US; AND HE HAS TAKEN IT OUT OF THE WAY, HAVING NAILED IT TO THE CROSS.”

EPHESIANS 2:1-7 – “AND YOU WERE DEAD IN YOUR TRESPASSES AND SINS, IN WHICH YOU FORMERLY WALKED ACCORDING TO THE COURSE OF THIS WORLD, ACCORDING TO THE PRINCE OF THE POWER OF THE AIR, OF THE SPIRIT THAT IS NOW WORKING IN THE SONS OF DISOBEDIENCE. AMONG THEM WE TOO ALL FORMERLY LIVED IN THE LUSTS OF OUR FLESH, INDULGING THE DESIRES OF THE FLESH AND OF THE MIND, AND WERE BY NATURE CHILDREN OF WRATH, EVEN AS THE REST. BUT GOD, BEING RICH IN MERCY, BECAUSE OF HIS GREAT LOVE WITH WHICH HE LOVED US, EVEN WHEN WE WERE DEAD IN OUR TRANSGRESSIONS, MADE US ALIVE TOGETHER WITH CHRIST (BY GRACE YOU HAVE BEEN SAVED), AND RAISED US UP WITH HIM, AND SEATED US WITH HIM IN THE HEAVENLY PLACES IN CHRIST JESUS, SO THAT IN THE AGES TO COME HE MIGHT SHOW THE SURPASSING RICHES OF HIS GRACE IN KINDNESS TOWARD US IN CHRIST JESUS.”

Meditate on your desperate need for God’s forgiveness.

ROMANS 3:9-12 – “WHAT THEN? ARE WE BETTER THAN THEY? NOT AT ALL; FOR WE HAVE ALREADY CHARGED THAT BOTH JEWS AND GREEKS ARE ALL UNDER SIN; AS IT IS WRITTEN, ‘THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE; THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS, THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD; ALL HAVE TURNED ASIDE, TOGETHER THEY HAVE BECOME USELESS; THERE IS NONE WHO DOES GOOD, THERE IS NOT EVEN ONE.’”

ROMANS 3:23 – “FOR ALL HAVE SINNED AND FALL SHORT OF THE GLORY OF GOD . . .”

ROMANS 6:23 – “FOR THE WAGES OF SIN IS DEATH, BUT THE FREE GIFT OF GOD IS ETERNAL LIFE IN CHRIST JESUS OUR LORD.”

EZEKIEL 18:20 – “THE PERSON WHO SINS WILL DIE. THE SON WILL NOT BEAR THE PUNISHMENT FOR THE FATHER’S INIQUITY, NOR WILL THE FATHER BEAR THE PUNISHMENT FOR THE SON’S INIQUITY; THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF THE RIGHTEOUS WILL BE UPON HIMSELF, AND THE WICKEDNESS OF THE WICKED WILL BE UPON HIMSELF.”

COLOSSIANS 1:21 – “AND ALTHOUGH YOU WERE FORMERLY ALIENATED AND HOSTILE IN MIND, ENGAGED IN EVIL DEEDS . . .”

Meditate on your ultimate need for God's mercy.

LAMENTATIONS 3:22-23 – “THE LORD’S LOVINGKINDNESSES INDEED NEVER CEASE, FOR HIS COMPASSIONS NEVER FAIL. THEY ARE NEW EVERY MORNING; GREAT IS YOUR FAITHFULNESS.”

JAMES 2:13 – “FOR JUDGMENT WILL BE MERCILESS TO ONE WHO HAS SHOWN NO MERCY; MERCY TRIUMPHS OVER JUDGMENT.”

LUKE 18:13 – “BUT THE TAX COLLECTOR, STANDING SOME DISTANCE AWAY, WAS EVEN UNWILLING TO LIFT UP HIS EYES TO HEAVEN, BUT WAS BEATING HIS BREAST, SAYING, ‘GOD, BE MERCIFUL TO ME, THE SINNER!’”

Meditate on God's role and yours.

JAMES 4:12 – “THERE IS ONLY ONE LAWGIVER AND JUDGE, THE ONE WHO IS ABLE TO SAVE AND TO DESTROY; BUT WHO ARE YOU WHO JUDGE YOUR NEIGHBOR?”

ROMANS 14:4 – “WHO ARE YOU TO JUDGE THE SERVANT OF ANOTHER? TO HIS OWN MASTER HE STANDS OR FALLS; AND HE WILL STAND, FOR THE LORD IS ABLE TO MAKE HIM STAND.”

GENESIS 50:19 – “BUT JOSEPH SAID TO THEM, “DO NOT BE AFRAID, FOR AM I IN GOD’S PLACE?”

ROMANS 12:19-20 – “NEVER TAKE YOUR OWN REVENGE, BELOVED, BUT LEAVE ROOM FOR THE WRATH OF GOD, FOR IT IS WRITTEN, ‘VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY,’ SAYS THE LORD. ‘BUT IF YOUR ENEMY IS HUNGRY, FEED HIM, AND IF HE IS THIRSTY, GIVE HIM A DRINK; FOR IN SO DOING YOU WILL HEAP BURNING COALS ON HIS HEAD.’”

Meditate on the dual nature of the offender's sin. Their sin is more against God than it is against you.

ROMANS 3:10-12 – “AS IT IS WRITTEN, ‘THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE; THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS, THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD; ALL HAVE TURNED ASIDE, TOGETHER THEY HAVE BECOME USELESS; THERE IS NONE WHO DOES GOOD, THERE IS NOT EVEN ONE.’”

1 JOHN 3:4 – “EVERYONE WHO PRACTICES SIN ALSO PRACTICES LAWLESSNESS; AND SIN IS LAWLESSNESS.”

JOHN 8:34 – “JESUS ANSWERED THEM, ‘TRULY, TRULY, I SAY TO YOU, EVERYONE WHO COMMITS SIN IS THE SLAVE OF SIN.’”

PROVERBS 5:22 – “HIS OWN INIQUITIES WILL CAPTURE THE WICKED, AND HE WILL BE HELD WITH THE CORDS OF HIS SIN.”

Meditate on your own fallibility.

PROVERBS 16:18 – “PRIDE GOES BEFORE DESTRUCTION, AND A HAUGHTY SPIRIT BEFORE STUMBLING.”

1 CORINTHIANS 10:12 – “THEREFORE LET HIM WHO THINKS HE STANDS TAKE HEED THAT HE DOES NOT FALL.”

GALATIANS 6:1-3 – “BRETHREN, EVEN IF ANYONE IS CAUGHT IN ANY TRESPASS, YOU WHO ARE SPIRITUAL, RESTORE SUCH A ONE IN A SPIRIT OF GENTLENESS; EACH ONE LOOKING TO YOURSELF, SO THAT YOU TOO WILL NOT BE TEMPTED. BEAR ONE ANOTHER’S BURDENS, AND THEREBY FULFILL THE LAW OF CHRIST. FOR IF ANYONE THINKS HE IS SOMETHING WHEN HE IS NOTHING, HE DECEIVES HIMSELF.”

Confrontation

Eight Questions That Guide Confrontations

1. Is rebuking even an option for a gracious, loving follower of Jesus? Answer: _____.
 - Because sin distorts, deceives, and destroys, the most gracious, loving thing we can do is follow Jesus in helping people see where they are at odds with God and others.
 - Jesus rebuked the religious leaders (Matthew 23; Luke 11:37-54), the disciples (Mark 8:33; Luke 9:52), and believers (Revelation 3:19), as well as demons (Matthew 17:18; Mark 9:25; Luke 4:41).
 - We are commanded to admonish, reprove, and rebuke others out of love for Christ, the purity of the church, and love for the sinner.

2 TIMOTHY 3:16-17 – “ALL SCRIPTURE IS INSPIRED BY GOD AND PROFITABLE FOR TEACHING, FOR **REPROOF**, FOR **CORRECTION**, FOR TRAINING IN RIGHTEOUSNESS; SO THAT THE MAN OF GOD MAY BE ADEQUATE, EQUIPPED FOR EVERY GOOD WORK.”

2 TIMOTHY 4:2 – “PREACH THE WORD; BE READY IN SEASON AND OUT OF SEASON; **REPROVE, REBUKE, EXHORT**, WITH GREAT PATIENCE AND INSTRUCTION.”

LUKE 17:3 – “BE ON YOUR GUARD! IF YOUR BROTHER SINS, **REBUKE HIM**; AND IF HE REPENTS, FORGIVE HIM.”

2 TIMOTHY 5:19-20 – “DO NOT RECEIVE AN ACCUSATION AGAINST AN ELDER EXCEPT ON THE BASIS OF TWO OR THREE WITNESSES. THOSE WHO CONTINUE IN SIN, **REBUKE IN THE PRESENCE OF ALL**, SO THAT THE REST ALSO WILL BE FEARFUL OF SINNING.”

TITUS 1:12-13 – “ONE OF THEMSELVES, A PROPHET OF THEIR OWN, SAID, ‘CRETANS ARE ALWAYS LIARS, EVIL BEASTS, LAZY GLUTTONS.’ THIS TESTIMONY IS TRUE. **FOR THIS REASON REPROVE THEM SEVERELY** SO THAT THEY MAY BE SOUND IN THE FAITH.”

EPHESIANS 5:11 – “DO NOT PARTICIPATE IN THE UNFRUITFUL DEEDS OF DARKNESS, BUT INSTEAD EVEN **EXPOSE THEM**.”

1 THESSALONIANS 5:14 – “WE URGE YOU, BRETHREN, **ADMONISH THE UNRULY**, ENCOURAGE THE FAINTHEARTED, HELP THE WEAK, BE PATIENT WITH EVERYONE.”

2. What are the wrong ways to handle the overlook-vs-rebuke dilemma?

- We wrongfully “overlook” sin when we want to avoid conflict more than we want to look out for the other person’s interest. That is, we desire our comfort over their holiness.
- We wrongfully “overlook” sin when we want others to like us, and thus we don’t want to get others upset. That is, we have a fear of man more than a fear of God.
- We wrongfully “overlook” sin when we don’t cover it, but instead let it fester in our hearts and it produces bitterness.
- We wrongfully choose to rebuke when we care more about our hurt than we care about their offense against God.
- We wrongfully choose to rebuke when we can’t control our emotions or our words.
- We wrongfully choose to rebuke when we haven’t considered our own contribution to the conflict, or we’ve made assumptions about them based on our limited perception.
- We wrongfully confront when we attack the person, not the problem. We assume their motives, use words like “always” and “never,” and demean their character.

3. How should we discern when rebuke is needed?

- When the person is trapped in sin or a pattern or sin or is in danger of it.

GALATIANS 6:1 – “BRETHREN, EVEN IF ANYONE IS CAUGHT IN ANY TRESPASS, YOU WHO ARE SPIRITUAL, RESTORE SUCH A ONE IN A SPIRIT OF GENTLENESS; EACH ONE LOOKING TO YOURSELF, SO THAT YOU TOO WILL NOT BE TEMPTED.”

- When the person may welcome such rebuke.

PROVERBS 17:10 – “A REBUKE GOES DEEPER INTO ONE WHO HAS UNDERSTANDING THAN A HUNDRED BLOWS INTO A FOOL.”

- When the offense is especially serious as indicated by the lists of sins in Scripture.

PROVERBS 6:16-19 – “THERE ARE SIX THINGS WHICH THE LORD HATES, YES, SEVEN WHICH ARE AN ABOMINATION TO HIM: HAUGHTY EYES, A LYING TONGUE, AND HANDS THAT SHED INNOCENT BLOOD, A HEART THAT DEVISES WICKED PLANS, FEET THAT RUN RAPIDLY TO EVIL, A FALSE WITNESS WHO UTTERS LIES, AND ONE WHO SPREADS STRIFE AMONG BROTHERS.”

1 CORINTHIANS 6:9-10 – “OR DO YOU NOT KNOW THAT THE UNRIGHTEOUS WILL NOT INHERIT THE KINGDOM OF GOD? DO NOT BE DECEIVED; NEITHER FORNICATORS, NOR IDOLATERS, NOR ADULTERERS, NOR EFFEMINATE, NOR HOMOSEXUALS, NOR THIEVES, NOR THE COVETOUS, NOR DRUNKARDS, NOR REVILERS, NOR SWINDLERS, WILL INHERIT THE KINGDOM OF GOD.”

ROMANS 1:28-31 – “AND JUST AS THEY DID NOT SEE FIT TO ACKNOWLEDGE GOD ANY LONGER, GOD GAVE THEM OVER TO A DEPRAVED MIND, TO DO THOSE THINGS WHICH ARE NOT PROPER, BEING FILLED WITH ALL UNRIGHTEOUSNESS, WICKEDNESS, GREED, EVIL; FULL OF ENVY, MURDER, STRIFE, DECEIT, MALICE; THEY ARE GOSSIPS, SLANDERERS, HATERS OF GOD, INSOLENT, ARROGANT, BOASTFUL, INVENTORS OF EVIL, DISOBEDIENT TO PARENTS, WITHOUT UNDERSTANDING, UNTRUSTWORTHY, UNLOVING, UNMERCIFUL.”

- When your relationship is severely strained, undermined, or broken.

MATTHEW 5:23-24 – “THEREFORE IF YOU ARE PRESENTING YOUR OFFERING AT THE ALTAR, AND THERE REMEMBER THAT YOUR BROTHER HAS SOMETHING AGAINST YOU, LEAVE YOUR OFFERING THERE BEFORE THE ALTAR AND GO; FIRST BE RECONCILED TO YOUR BROTHER, AND THEN COME AND PRESENT YOUR OFFERING.”

- When the person is hurting himself and undermining his Christian witness and ministry usefulness.

1 TIMOTHY 5:19-20 – “DO NOT RECEIVE AN ACCUSATION AGAINST AN ELDER EXCEPT ON THE BASIS OF TWO OR THREE WITNESSES. THOSE WHO CONTINUE IN SIN, **REBUKE IN THE PRESENCE OF ALL, SO THAT THE REST ALSO WILL BE FEARFUL OF SINNING.**”

- When the reputation of God, Christ, or His church, or when the health and unity of the church is threatened, injured, or disrupted.

GALATIANS 2:14 – “BUT WHEN I SAW THAT THEY WERE NOT STRAIGHTFORWARD ABOUT THE TRUTH OF THE GOSPEL, I SAID TO CEPHAS IN THE PRESENCE OF ALL, ‘IF YOU, BEING A JEW, LIVE LIKE THE GENTILES AND NOT LIKE THE JEWS, HOW IS IT THAT YOU COMPEL THE GENTILES TO LIVE LIKE JEWS?’”

4. How should I prepare to rebuke someone?

- Have I thoroughly examined myself and confessed my sins to God and others, seeking their forgiveness?
- Am I forgiving the other person attitudinally? (Am I holding a grudge or am I embittered toward them?)
- Do I clearly understand that my goal is to reconcile the relationship, not to defeat an enemy?

- Am I convinced that this is the most loving action I can take?
- Am I cultivating and expressing the attributes of a peacemaker?
- Am I willing to consider the next biblical steps that God might require, if necessary (Matthew 18:15-17)?

If all these things are in line, take these preparatory steps:

1. Carefully think through what you are going to say and how.
 - a. Consider writing it out verbatim, or at least developing bullet points.
 - b. Don't wait until the moment to say whatever comes to mind.
 - c. As you prepare your thoughts, take note to avoid accusations of their character or motivations. Focus on what you can see, and allow the Spirit to convict them of what you can't see.
 2. Pray that the Lord will help your heart be right, and pray for the person that the Lord would be preparing them to receive what you have to say with humility. Also pray that the Lord would help you respond to their response graciously and humbly.
 3. Ask a close friend or family member to pray for you. You don't need to give details. "I am needing to have a difficult conversation with someone. Will you pray that the Lord blesses our conversation with peace and unity?" Then report back to them in equally appropriate terms.
5. What steps should I take to rebuke the person?
- Contact the person privately to express your desire to talk with him/her privately and face-to-face—either at that time or at a mutually convenient time later.
 - DO NOT confront via texting or in any written form unless it is impossible to do otherwise. If face-to-face isn't possible, the next best option is over the phone where tone can be heard and there can be instant feedback and dialogue.
 - Be mindful of the environment. Don't confront serious sins in the foyer after church or other environments where interruptions are highly likely.

- Be mindful about time frames. Don't confront if there are only a few minutes (e.g., right before church) to talk. Give ample time for extended conversation.
- When you meet, state your concern humbly and gently using "I" statements.
 - If appropriate, start by acknowledging your own weaknesses and struggles with similar things.
 - "I want to talk to you about something, but I first want to say that this is something that I know I struggle with and am learning to overcome, so I don't see myself as better than you or having arrived in any way."
 - The point is not to be self-centered, but to avoid language that can be construed as attacking.
 - Bad: The other day I saw you do how could you do that?
 - Better: I saw something the other day that concerned me, and I wanted to see if you could help me understand it. I was ... and it looked like you were ... did I see that accurately? Can you help me understand what was happening that day?
 - Bad: I heard that you said ... about me. Why would you say that? You know it's not true!
 - Better: Someone told me a rumor and I wanted to come directly to you to understand the truth. It was reported to me that you said ... is there any truth in that? Is that an accurate representation of what you said? [If so] Can you help me understand why you said that?
- Ask about the apparent offense—do not assume and do not accuse.
- Listen to the answers with Christlike compassion and wisdom, and interact wisely with them with the goal of clearly expressing your concern and inviting them to repent.
 - Good listening is seeking to understand. Rather than formulating your response while they're talking, listen carefully to understand their perspective.
 - Start your response by restating what they said to ensure you understand their position accurately and to demonstrate to them that you are actually listening (e.g., "What I hear you saying is that...")
 - Ask questions to clarify specific statements or ideas that you don't understand or don't agree with (e.g., "You said that didn't respond to you.

Do you remember receiving my email about this?” Maybe it went to the junk folder!).

- If they bring up something that you hadn’t realized before in terms of your contribution, be quick to affirm what they said and ask their forgiveness.

6. What should I do if the person repents and seeks my forgiveness?

- Grant forgiveness, and possibly explain what you mean by that. As we’ve discussed, forgiveness is very misunderstood today, so it may be helpful to explain what you mean when you say you forgive them.
- Even if their expression of repentance isn’t as clear or thorough as you would desire, listen for the heart behind their words.
- If appropriate, ask them if they would be willing to go with you to another believer for help in growing the relationship.

7. What next steps should we take in a forgiven, reconciled relationship?

- Be intentional about engaging with the person in appropriate ways. Don’t avoid them or be distant.
- Depending on the nature of the sin and the relationship, consider getting biblical counseling to address root issues or to help change longstanding patterns of behavior.
- Practice the promises of forgiveness.
- See notes for next section.

8. What should I do if the person does not repent and seek my forgiveness?

- We will address this in our final session, but remember that their sin is first and foremost against the Lord, and only the Holy Spirit can bring about genuine conviction and repentance. Pray for them out of love and humility.

Reconciliation

You are far more likely to get in a car accident within five miles of your home than when you are further away. There may be multiple reasons for this, but one reason certainly is that most of our driving tends to be within that distance. In the same way, most of our conflict with happen with those closest to us—those in our home, workplace, school, or church. Because of that, we must learn how to not only reconcile, but also live with those individuals after reconciliation. That is what today's lesson is about.

Consider these passages that speak to how we are to relate to those who sin against us:

ROMANS 12:14-21 – “BLESS THOSE WHO PERSECUTE YOU; BLESS AND DO NOT CURSE. REJOICE WITH THOSE WHO REJOICE, AND WEEP WITH THOSE WHO WEEP. . . . NEVER PAY BACK EVIL FOR EVIL TO ANYONE. . . . NEVER TAKE YOUR OWN REVENGE . . . BUT IF YOUR ENEMY IS HUNGRY, FEED HIM, AND IF HE IS THIRSTY, GIVE HIM A DRINK. . . . DO NOT BE OVERCOME BY EVIL, BUT OVERCOME EVIL WITH GOOD.”

MATTHEW 5:39-48 – “BUT I SAY TO YOU, DO NOT RESIST AN EVIL PERSON; BUT WHOEVER SLAPS YOU ON YOUR RIGHT CHEEK, TURN THE OTHER TO HIM ALSO. IF ANYONE WANTS TO SUE YOU AND TAKE YOUR SHIRT, LET HIM HAVE YOUR COAT ALSO. WHOEVER FORCES YOU TO GO ONE MILE, GO WITH HIM TWO. GIVE TO HIM WHO ASKS OF YOU, AND DO NOT TURN AWAY FROM HIM WHO WANTS TO BORROW FROM YOU. . . . LOVE YOUR ENEMIES AND PRAY FOR THOSE WHO PERSECUTE YOU. . . .”

LUKE 6:27-28 – “BUT I SAY TO YOU WHO HEAR, LOVE YOUR ENEMIES, DO GOOD TO THOSE WHO HATE YOU, BLESS THOSE WHO CURSE YOU, PRAY FOR THOSE WHO MISTREAT YOU.”

PHILIPPIANS 2:3-5 – “DO NOTHING FROM SELFISHNESS OR EMPTY CONCEIT, BUT WITH HUMILITY OF MIND REGARD ONE ANOTHER AS MORE IMPORTANT THAN YOURSELVES; DO NOT MERELY LOOK OUT FOR YOUR OWN PERSONAL INTERESTS, BUT ALSO FOR THE INTERESTS OF OTHERS. HAVE THIS ATTITUDE IN YOURSELVES WHICH WAS ALSO IN CHRIST JESUS. . . .”

1 PETER 2:13-20 – “SUBMIT YOURSELVES FOR THE LORD'S SAKE TO EVERY HUMAN INSTITUTION. . . . HONOR ALL PEOPLE, LOVE THE BROTHERHOOD, FEAR GOD, HONOR THE KING. SERVANTS, BE SUBMISSIVE TO YOUR MASTERS WITH ALL RESPECT. . . .”

- As we think about how we are to relate to those who have sinned against us, the consistent biblical mindset is that we are to be _____ in loving, caring, and serving them.
- In our close relationships, we should not burn bridges, cut ties, cut off communication, disavow, or do anything else that is antithetical to unity and love.

- In order to do this, we can't simply think in terms of how to _____ someone, but how to _____ with them.
- Key verbs from the above passages are bless, rejoice, weep, feed, give, do good, go, love, pray, regard, look out, submit, and honor.
- Some of these can be done *to* someone, but most of these must be done _____ someone.
- And if you take time to think about it, Christ did all of these things toward others—those whom He knew would crucify, reject, or betray Him.

Serving others like Christ

How can we go about imitating Christ as we move forward in reconciled relationships?

1. Know the person

- Jesus relates to us according to His knowledge of us (Psalm 78:39; 103:13-14). He knows what we need, what we struggle with, our tendencies, our strengths and weaknesses, our comprehension, our maturity—everything about us.
- We, therefore, need to engage in the reconciled relationship with a growing knowledge of the person.

1 THESSALONIANS 5:14 – “WE URGE YOU, BROTHERS, ADMONISH THE UNRULY, ENCOURAGE THE FAINTHEARTED, HELP THE WEAK, BE PATIENT WITH EVERYONE.”

- We often relate with people without taking into consideration who they are right now. We interact with and communicate with everyone the same way, but that is not like Christ. He interacted with Pharisees, the crowds, individual sinners and sufferers, those seeking to trap Him, and His disciples differently based on what each needed.
- Unlike Christ we don't have innate knowledge of people—certainly not of those we've just met—so we need to take time to think about people. In a relationship where you've been in conflict and experience reconciliation, think about that person:
 - What are their tendencies?
 - What is their communication style?
 - What is their level of life and spiritual maturity?
 - What are their strengths and weaknesses?

- How can you communicate with them in the most effective way?
 - Are they prone to be easily discouraged?
 - Are they prone to jump to conclusions?
 - Do they easily take what you say personally?
 - Do they have certain challenges that make life difficult for them?
 - Do they have weaknesses that require a greater amount of patience?
 - Do they have idiosyncrasies that you need to intentionally cover in love?
- All these kinds of things should affect how you love, care, and serve them.

2. Godly listening and speaking

PROVERBS 18:13 – “HE WHO GIVES AN ANSWER BEFORE HE HEARS, IT IS FOLLY AND SHAME TO HIM.”

JAMES 1:19 – “THIS YOU KNOW, MY BELOVED BRETHREN. BUT EVERYONE MUST BE QUICK TO HEAR, SLOW TO SPEAK AND SLOW TO ANGER.”

EPHESIANS 4:29 – “LET NO UNWHOLESOME WORD PROCEED FROM YOUR MOUTH, BUT ONLY SUCH A WORD AS IS GOOD FOR EDIFICATION ACCORDING TO THE NEED OF THE MOMENT, SO THAT IT WILL GIVE GRACE TO THOSE WHO HEAR.”

COLOSSIANS 4:6 – “LET YOUR SPEECH ALWAYS BE WITH GRACE, AS THOUGH SEASONED WITH SALT, SO THAT YOU WILL KNOW HOW YOU SHOULD RESPOND TO EACH PERSON.”

3. Work together with mutual understanding to solve problems

- Restoring a relationship after sin has taken place doesn't mean that there won't remain a difference of opinion. Confessing, repenting, and forgiving sin doesn't mean anyone changed their mind about the difference of opinion that started the conflict.
- In most conflicts the difference of opinion can be handled simply by one party giving deference to the other.

PHILIPPIANS 2:3-4 – “DO NOTHING FROM SELFISHNESS OR EMPTY CONCEIT, BUT WITH HUMILITY OF MIND REGARD ONE ANOTHER AS MORE IMPORTANT THAN YOURSELVES; DO NOT MERELY LOOK OUT FOR YOUR OWN PERSONAL INTERESTS, BUT ALSO FOR THE INTERESTS OF OTHERS.”

ROMANS 15:1 – “NOW WE WHO ARE STRONG OUGHT TO BEAR THE WEAKNESSES OF THOSE WITHOUT STRENGTH AND NOT JUST PLEASE OURSELVES.”

ROMANS 12:10 – “BE DEVOTED TO ONE ANOTHER IN BROTHERLY LOVE; GIVE PREFERENCE TO ONE ANOTHER IN HONOR.”

EPHESIANS 5:21-6:9 – “AND BE SUBJECT TO ONE ANOTHER IN THE FEAR OF CHRIST. . . .”

- In some conflicts the difference of opinion needs to be settled by mutual agreement and to mutual satisfaction. To accomplish this, consider the follow method as a wise way to work through disagreements to reach a mutually agreeable solution or decision.

A problem-solving tool: Issue-Position-Interests model

This model, developed by Ken Sande, helps to categorize elements of a disagreement to find areas of agreement, disagreement, and then aid in identifying a solution.

Definitions

Issue: The issue should be a question which the final position answers. It is the “problem” that is being solved.

- How should we educate our kids?
- Where should we go on vacation?
- Which home should we buy?

Position: This is each individual’s preferred solution to the problem. Each individual has an answer to the question posed in the issue. This is the point of disagreement!

- They should be homeschooled – They need to go to public school
- Florida – Alaska
- The home on Easy St. – The home on Renovation Ave.

Interests: This is the motivation that drives each individual position. There may be disagreement on interests, but sometimes there is overlap, or ways to accommodate the varying desires. Listed below are individual interests, but usually positions will be motivated by multiple interests.

- I want to teach my children – I want my kids to have a good education
- I want to go to the beach – I want to see snow
- I want just want somewhere to live – I want to make it *our* home

Goal: The goal is the final position which satisfies the most amount of interests, therefore solving the issue. The goal may be one of the original positions, or perhaps a third alternative is discovered.

Process

With these definitions in mind, the process is simple, but not necessarily easy to follow. The key to the process is humility and a commitment to listen and understand the other party. Write down each step so that they are concrete and mutually understood.

1. Work together to identify the _____.
 - a. Agree upon a single question that can be asked.
 - b. If the issue is more complicated, try breaking it down into multiple issues and work through the process with each issue.
2. Identify each individual's position.
 - a. Take care to ensure you each fully understand the other's position and that there aren't presumption or assumptions involved.
 - b. This can be done by stating one's position as fully as possible, and then the other person reflecting that position back. "My position is that we should . . ." "What I'm hearing you say is that your position is that we should . . ."
 - c. While reflecting back to the other person may sound and be tedious, it significantly decreases the opportunity for miscommunication, it fosters good listening, and it slows down the process minimizing emotional spikes.
3. Identify the interests that lead to each person's position.
 - a. Finish statements like, "The reason I think we should do this is because . . ." "What I want to accomplish is . . ." "This will help us by . . ." or any other explanations of why each individual holds to their position.
 - b. As with positions, ensure that each of you understands the other's interests.
4. It's now time to begin considering a final position (goal) that will satisfy both parties.
 - a. Having worked through identifying positions and interests, it's possible that one party will realize they lacked information that now helps them easily accept the other person's position (e.g., "Oh, I didn't realize it would cost that much to do . . . in that case, I'm fine to do what you're suggesting.").
 - b. Sometimes the lack of willingness to prefer the other person is based on wrong assumptions about the other person's interests, and working through them opens the way to preferring the other person (e.g., "I thought you hated my parents and that's why you didn't want to visit them for Christmas; but now that

I see your reasoning, it makes sense that we wait to visit them in the summer rather than in the winter.”)

- c. Sometimes understanding each other’s interests will reveal alternative positions that would easily accommodate both parties (e.g., “How about instead of going either of these places, we go to X because the beach and mountains are both within an hour, and we can spend a day doing each of our preferred activities.”).
 - d. It’s possible that further investigation will be required to find alternative solutions. Unless time is of the essence, don’t feel pressured to find the solution immediately. But if you do have to come back later, review together what has already been identified so that your heart is reoriented to the discussion.
5. Once you arrive at the final position (goal), write it down. Then take a moment to thank the Lord together for helping you work through this disagreement and come to a peaceful solution.

Conclusion

All of our relationships should be characterized by peace, unity, harmony, and love. As we said at the beginning, a reconciled relationship should be stronger than one that hasn’t weathered any storms. If this isn’t true for you, consider how you can serve the other individual, and even repent if you haven’t been treating them like Christ.

When the other person doesn't respond

As we come to the conclusion of this course, we have to recognize that unity and peace is not always possible. We can do everything we are responsible to do, but we cannot control the other person's response. So what do you do when it's clear that they are not interested in resolving the conflict in a way that pleases God?

Five Principles For Glorifying God When Reconciliation Isn't Possible

1. Keep your relationship with God central.
 - Your life cannot be defined by anyone other than God. Your mood, attitude, and outlook on life must reflect that God is your God, not the other person, or the problem between you.
 - Maintain a dependent and growing walk with Christ by abiding in the Word, in prayer, and in fellowship with God's people.
 - While this issue or relationship may be important in your life, it is not the *only* aspect of your life that needs attention. Be intentional about growing in the grace and knowledge of Christ in ways that are not directly related to this issue.
2. Review, renew, and redo your personal peacemaking efforts.
 - In the interest of taking out the log, ensure that you actually have been faithful to what God has called you to. When you confessed your contribution, was it done with humility? When you confronted them, was it done with gentleness? Don't allow pride to keep you from redoing what you feel like you've done.
 - If you conclude that there is more sin you need to confess, or even that you sinned in the process (by omission or commission), confess that to the individual.
3. Seek help.
 - We're not meant to go through the challenges of life alone. Seek help from someone who you are confident will be able to provide biblical counsel and help. Don't look for a sympathetic ear, but for wise counsel.
 - Ask the individual you're in conflict with if they would be willing to meet with an elder/pastor/counselor with you.

4. Frame and follow a practical, Christ-centered, ongoing plan to minister to the other person.
 - _____: Consider how you can do acts of kindness and goodness to/for them. Do they have practical needs? Is there something they would benefit from? Can you lessen their burden in some way?
 - _____: Find ways to speak words of kindness, grace, and encouragement. Write them a card for their birthday, or other noteworthy events.
 - _____: Ask the Lord to work in their heart, to restore them to Himself and to you, and to glorify Himself in their life. If they are promoting evil or seeking to harm you, it is right to ask the Lord to prevent them from accomplishing their plans, and to remove their strength, and to distort their counsel.
5. Keep a God-centered, balanced perspective on your life

- Remember that your life is not defined by this conflict. Your identity, your dignity, your significance, and your hope are all bound up in _____, not in this conflict.

COLOSSIANS 3:4 – “WHEN CHRIST, **WHO IS OUR LIFE**, IS REVEALED, THEN YOU ALSO WILL BE REVEALED WITH HIM IN GLORY.”

- Remember that in this sin-cursed world God’s people will be sinned against, and God’s people will sin. The presence and consequences of sin proves that God’s Word is true and must be followed. Don’t allow the sinful choices of others to diminish your view of God, His Word, and the church.

GALATIANS 6:7-9 – “DO NOT BE DECEIVED, GOD IS NOT MOCKED; FOR WHATEVER A MAN SOWS, THIS HE WILL ALSO REAP. FOR THE ONE WHO SOWS TO HIS OWN FLESH WILL FROM THE FLESH REAP CORRUPTION, BUT THE ONE WHO SOWS TO THE SPIRIT WILL FROM THE SPIRIT REAP ETERNAL LIFE. LET US NOT LOSE HEART IN DOING GOOD, FOR IN DUE TIME WE WILL REAP IF WE DO NOT GROW WEARY.”

- Remember that Christ came the first time to rescue us from the penalty and power of sin, and at His second coming He will rescue us from the _____ of sin. The suffering we experience at the hands of others is painful, but temporary. We must keep our hope on eternity where sin does not exist.

REVELATION 21:4 – “AND HE WILL WIPE AWAY EVERY TEAR FROM THEIR EYES; AND THERE WILL NO LONGER BE ANY DEATH; THERE WILL NO LONGER BE ANY MOURNING, OR CRYING, OR PAIN; THE FIRST THINGS HAVE PASSED AWAY.”

- Remember that there is no true, full, satisfying _____ in this world. God will completely and ultimately accomplish justice at the end of time and all will receive what is due.

REVELATION 21:6-7 – “HE WHO OVERCOMES WILL INHERIT THESE THINGS, AND I WILL BE HIS GOD AND HE WILL BE MY SON. BUT FOR THE COWARDLY AND UNBELIEVING AND ABOMINABLE AND MURDERERS AND IMMORAL PERSONS AND SORCERERS AND IDOLATERS AND ALL LIARS, THEIR PART WILL BE IN THE LAKE THAT BURNS WITH FIRE AND BRIMSTONE, WHICH IS THE SECOND DEATH.”

Recommended Resources

Books

Help! I'm in a Conflict by Ernie Baker

Pursuing Peace by Robert Jones

The Peacemaker by Ken Sande

Peacemaking for Families by Ken Sande

Unpacking Forgiveness by Chris Brauns

The Freedom and Power of Forgiveness by John MacArthur

Websites

Peacemaker Ministries: <https://www.peacemaker.net>

Relational Wisdom 360: <https://www.rw360.org>

Biblical instruction for on conflict: <https://ibcd.org/topics/conflict/>

Message Series

Series: Biblical Reconciliation: <https://www.gracechurch.org/sermons/series/489>

Series on Forgiveness: <https://www.graceky.org/sermons/series/milton-vincent-evangelizing-those-who-wrong-you/>