

Dealing with Conflict

SUBJECT: Relationships
THEME: Conflict in Relationships
PROPOSITION: We need to deal positively with relational conflict.

Introduction: Conflict is part of living in a fallen world. There is no way to avoid it, and in fact, it would not be good to avoid it.

- A. We all need to learn to deal with conflict as part of our personal growth.
- B. Dealing with conflict is difficult.
 - 1. This lesson is designed to help us begin to evaluate how well we handle conflict.
 - 2. This lesson looks at some of the basic principles of conflict resolution.
 - 3. It takes time and practice to learn to apply these principles.

Transition Sentence: We can deal positively with relational conflict by understanding and applying Biblical principles that relate to conflict.

I. Understanding Biblical Principles

- A. Work toward agreement or oneness (Romans 12:18; Philippians 2:2).
- B. Be careful what you say and how you say it (James 3:3-6; Ephesians 4:29; Proverbs 15:4).
- C. Be sensitive to the needs of others (Ephesians 4:29; Philippians 2:3-4).
- D. Speak the truth in a loving manner (Ephesians 4:15).
 - 1. We cannot change another person. God can, and we can pray to that end.
 - 2. God has called us to ministry, not to manipulation. Ministry and manipulation have different motives.
 - a. The goal of manipulation is to pressure a person to change to meet another's needs. It is selfish and ineffective, and the person being manipulated usually rebels against it.
 - b. The goal of ministry is to tell someone the truth in order to help him. Ministry is not selfish, and the person usually senses love and concern.

- E. Take the log out of your own eye first, before trying to correct another (Matthew 7:1-6).
- F. Be willing to receive correction (Proverbs 12:1; 15:32).
- G. Stay under control when in a conflict (Proverbs 12:18; 14:29; 15:1, 18; 16:32).
- H. Gain wisdom through the counsel of others (Proverbs 15:22; 19:20).
- I. Listen carefully before giving an answer (Proverbs 18:13).

II. Applying Biblical Principles

- A. Because there are innumerable forms conflict can take, it is impossible to address them all.
- B. The following guidelines will help you work within Biblical parameters.
 - 1. Emotions - If emotions become too intense, take a time out.
 - a. Agree to separate, cool down, pray and try again.
 - b. There are several ways to cool down: do physical activity; write about what is happening; talk with an objective, safe third party.
 - c. Try to use emotion words instead of expressing emotion by yelling or making condemning statements.
 - 2. Communication - Communicate feelings, not judgment.
 - a. Use "I" statements instead of "you" statements.
 - b. Example: "I feel threatened when you raise your voice."
 - c. Another helpful variation is to include your perspective (interpretation or impression) of what happened. By doing this you have acknowledged that it is your interpretation and that it might be wrong. Then the other person has the opportunity to explain his intention.
 - d. Example:
When I hear you talk very loudly, I understand it to mean that you are
(objective fact) (my interpretation)
angry, and I feel threatened.
(my emotion)
 - 3. Stay on the subject.
 - a. Deal with only one issue at a time. If you have another issue, bring it up at another time.

Teaching Outline—Equipping for Ministry (Phase III)

- b. Focus on the problem, not the person. It is usually helpful to state what you appreciate about the person, and not just talk about the problem.
 4. Negotiation - When there is disagreement on a decision that needs to be made, it can be helpful to negotiate a solution.
 - a. In a negotiation all parties need to present what they need and want.
 - b. Possible solutions need to be presented that take into account everyone's concerns.
 - c. The goal is to find a win-win solution. It may be that the only way this can happen is through compromise
 5. Consequences - If there has been a serious offense which causes a conflict, it may be necessary to state and carryout a set of consequences in order to effect change.
 6. Ask for help - If you are unable to resolve conflict, you may need the help of an objective third party
 7. Stay current - If conflicts are not dealt with when they arise, not only will they not be resolved, there may eventually be an emotional explosion (Ephesians 4:26).
- C. We also need to be realistic about conflict.
1. It takes two people who are willing to work on and solve problems before there can be success.
 2. Not all battles are worth fighting. Choose your battles wisely.
 3. Spiritual warfare is involved in conflict because Satan is a major player in any conflict (Ephesians 6:12).

Conclusion: By applying biblical principles we can constructively deal with conflict.

Application Suggestions:

- Think back over the last conflict you had. What did you do well? What areas do you need to improve in?
- Discuss these principles with someone you have a close relationship with and mutually agree that this is the way you want to handle conflicts in the future.