

## Conflict and Reconciliation

Relationship Series Part 5

2 Corinthians 5:16-21, Philippians 4:2-9, Matthew 6:12-15

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### Introduction to Conflict

- If you were to ask a camper what their top three favorite things to do at church camp were, I would say almost everyone would list pranks in their top three.
  - When I was in middle school I decided to prank the senior high guys by myself. I was able to spray them with shaving cream. I succeeded! But afterwards they made me eat shaving cream.
- An example of a prank/conflict - show clip from *The Office* (2:09-3:39).<sup>1</sup>
- We have all experienced conflict. Some of us are experiencing conflict with another person now. We've all been offended by someone. We've all been hurt by people.
- We are in the middle of a relationship series. One thing that is common in almost all Christian relationships is conflict. Whether you're single, dating, married, and just have friends, there will be conflict.
- Tonight we are going to look at a few assumptions concerning conflict and look at a few passages of scripture that will give us biblical insights into the subject of conflict and reconciliation.

### Three assumptions of conflict

- Conflict is going to happen.
  - Conflict will always be around because we are all sinners. We all sin and fall short of the glory of God (*Romans 3:23*). There is no such thing as a perfect relationship or friendship because there are no perfect people.
  - Even among the Apostles there was conflict. In *Acts 15:36-41* the Apostle Paul and Barnabas wanted to go visit and check up on some of the churches they started. Barnabas wanted to take John Mark with them, and Paul did not want to take him. This caused two of the greatest missionaries in the history of the church to split up.
- Conflicts in and of themselves are not bad.
  - In other words, when a conflict evolves between you and a friend, it does not mean that one of you are evil or have sinned.
  - For example, one of the earliest conflicts in many marriages is the decision of where to go to go during the holidays. The husband for his whole life has done this every holiday, and the wife has done that, and most of the time it is impossible to go to all family events on both sides. This does not mean that one spouse is more evil than the other, nor does it mean that one family is worse than the other. It is just a hard discussion and decision that needs to be made.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w\\_y-y2P0oUo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w_y-y2P0oUo)

- Conflicts should not be avoided.
  - Rick Warren said that the old adage “Time heals all wounds.” is not true at all.<sup>2</sup>
  - Most conflicts will not just go away. Conflicts that are not addressed will eventually create anger and resentment.
  - Ignoring the conflict will not solve the issue.
  - Do any of you hold grudges? I’ve known people to hold stuff against people for decades.
  - Sometimes we must have difficult conversations with people.

### **Seek forgiveness (*Matthew 6:12-15*, page 473 in the HFC Bibles)**

- In Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount, he teaches us how to pray. We refer to the prayer Jesus taught us as the model prayer or the Lord’s Prayer.
- Jesus models that we are to ask God to forgive us of our debts or sins as we forgive our debtors or those who sin against us (*Matthew 6:12*). He even adds after his prayer (and this is the real kicker) that if we forgive those who do wrong against us God will forgive us, but if we do not forgive others, God will not forgive us (*Matthew 6:14-15*).
- This is hard. I know it is. It is not natural to forgive. We want to do harm to those who do wrong against us, but God expects us to forgive.
- Three reasons we forgive (two smaller reasons and one ultimate reason)
  - We forgive because God commanded us to forgive.
  - We forgive so we can let go of anger. Forgiveness sets you free from anger and resentment. You give it over to God.
  - We forgive because God offers us forgiveness.
    - We find it hard to love and serve those who did wrong to us when we did not deserve it. But do you know someone else who was sinned against when he was innocent but he forgave them anyway? Someone once came to the earth he created, to save the people who committed wrongs against him, and he loved them. In return he was beaten, mocked, and humiliated. But instead of giving us what we deserved, he forgave us. This man’s name was Jesus.
- If you’re struggling to forgive someone, know this: you’re not the only one to ever struggle with forgiveness. Forgiveness is hard, but it is worth it.
- Here’s my piece of advice concerning forgiveness: **Remember that God forgave you.**
- I also want to encourage you to especially forgive your brothers and sisters in Christ. If you have been forgiven by God, and they have been forgiven by God, why can’t you forgive them. If God does not count their sins against them, you should not either.

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<sup>2</sup> Sermon preached by Rick Warren at Saddleback Church in Lake Forest, California.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l1udN6OShf4>

### **Guidelines for dealing with difficult people from *Philippians 4:2-9*.<sup>3</sup> (Page 571)**

- Philippians is one of the most positive letters written by the Apostle Paul. A major theme of Philippians is joy. One of the only problems with the church at Philippi that Paul addresses in the letter is an apparent dispute between two prominent women: Euodia and Syntyche.
- We all have certain people that drive us crazy. When they enter the room, your blood pressure raises a couple of points. Everything they say drives you crazy. This passage from Philippians 4 I hope will help you deal with difficult people and people with whom you are in conflict with.
- What to do in the midst of conflict:
  - “Agree in the Lord” (4:2).
  - If you see two brothers or sisters in conflict, it is your responsibility to help them be reconciled. (4:3)
  - “Rejoice in the Lord always” (4:4)
  - In everything be prayerful (4:6)
  - In everything be thankful (4:6)
  - Focus on the “peace of God” (4:7)
  - When in conflict with someone, what is true about them? (4:8)
  - When in conflict with someone, what is pure about them? (4:8)
  - When in conflict with someone, what is commendable about them? (4:8)
  - When in conflict with someone, what is worthy of praise about them? (4:8)
- “Think about these things” (4:8).
  - What do you think about when you’re around that person you struggle with?
  - If you practice these things, the “God of peace” (4:9) will be with you?

### **God is the God of reconciliation. (2 *Corinthians 5:16-21*, page 562 in HFC Bibles)**

- The ultimate reason we can have hope of reconciliation in the midst of conflict is because God reconciled us to himself through Jesus. (2 *Corinthians 5:19*).
- Sin separates us from God. In the beginning in the garden, humans and God had this intimate relationship. When humanity rebelled and sin entered the world, they were cast out from the presence of God. But ever since then, even before the world was made, God had a plan, a divine rescue mission to send Jesus to take the burden of our sins on himself. He lived the life that we could not live and died so that we would not die. If we are in Christ we are righteous and reconciled to God.
- You can be reconciled to God today. That division between you and God can be brought down today. God wants you back so much that he sent Jesus to die so that you can be reconciled back to him.

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<sup>3</sup> I got this idea from Dr. Carlus Gupton’s “Paul and the Philippians, Part 1: A Model for Leading the Anxious Church” and “Paul and the Philippians, Part 2: Soulful Engagement” which was required reading in my Managing Conflict and Change in Ministry class at Harding School of Theology in the spring of 2018.

**Questions you submitted**

- What do you do when a friend betrays your trust? Do you forgive the friend or cut ties completely?
  - Being hurt by your friend hurts much worse than being hurt by an enemy or stranger.
  - You must forgive your friend. Jesus commands us to forgive (*Matthew 6:14-15*).
  - Concerning cutting ties: as we talked about earlier, God is the God of reconciliation (*2 Corinthians 5:19*). If you are a Christian and your friend is a Christian, you have both been forgiven by God and have received God's grace. Reconciliation is preferred.
  - But we should use *wisdom*. Maybe the friend has not repented. We use wisdom with trust
    - For example, it is not wise to trust someone with money when they embezzled money.
    - *James 1:5* tells us that if we ask God for wisdom, he will give it to us.
  - Sometimes we do cut ties with people. But even if the relationship is not restored to what it was at one time, you still need to forgive them.