

“Conflict”

Beneath the Surface: Deepening Our Relationships—Part 2

January 15th, 2017

INTRODUCTION

This week we continue our series on deepening our relationships. Conflict is one of the important areas we need to address if we wish to improve our relationships. Conflict is more than just a disagreement; it implies the perception of a threat. There are many things that can cause us to feel threatened, and a variety of responses we might have. But as believers we have a strong foundation and an identity in Christ that gives us the tools to withstand and successfully resolve conflicts and be peacemakers and ambassadors of Christ’s kingdom.

Ice Breaker (Optional):

Where have you personally witnessed the most conflicts; sports, television programs, or driving?

Study Questions (45 MIN)

Developing a strong foundation.

Q1. Read Matthew 7:24-27; Ephesians 2:19-22; 1 Peter 2:4-7

Conflict is a normal part of our relationships. But enduring the forces of personal conflict can be like weathering a storm. It has the potential to undermine us if we are not built on a strong foundation. (Matthew 7:24-27) What is the foundation we should be built upon according to Ephesians 2:19-22? Similarly Peter likens us to living stones in a spiritual house. (1 Peter 2:4-7) When stones are built together, the sharp edges need to be chipped away to ensure a proper fit. What kinds of things might need to be chipped away in order to make believers fit together properly? What do these verses tell us results when we are properly joined with other believers?

Q2. Read Romans 12:18; James 4:1-4; Colossians 3:7-9; 2 Timothy 2:24-26

It is clear from Romans 12:18 that we are responsible to try to live peaceably, if possible. Some of the most obvious manifestations of conflict are what the Bible refers to as quarrels and fighting. What are some of the underlying causes of these conflicts? (James 4:1-3) What does Paul tell us to get rid of in Colossians 3:7-9? What are some qualities we should be exhibiting and what good might we expect to result from these attitudes (2 Timothy 2:24-26)?

Embracing our identity in Christ.

Q3. Read 1 Peter 2:9-10; 1 Corinthians 10:31-33; Matthew 22:37-39

Perhaps our strongest advantage in resolving conflict is knowing who we are in Christ. How does Peter identify the believer (1 Peter 2:9-10)? How do our

responses in times of conflict affect our ability to “proclaim the excellencies of Christ” to others? In fact, we are called to be imitators of Christ in all that we do. What did Paul describe as his method and motive for preventing conflict (offense) in 1 Corinthians 10:31-33? In what way does Paul’s attitude exemplify the commandment of Jesus in Matthew 22:39?

Q4. Read Philippians 2:3-4; Romans 15:1; 1 Corinthians 10:24; 1 Corinthians 13:4-5

Following Jesus as an example requires us to stop and take an accounting of how we view others, especially in situations involving conflict. If we feel that we must “win” or “be right” when faced with a conflict, we are focused on our own needs, and not the needs of others. Read through the passages listed above. In what ways do they challenge your natural tendencies to respond in times of conflict? How would you feel if the person you were confronting came to you expressing these attitudes towards you? Here are some “tools” for disarming a conflict: 1. Make understanding a priority, not “winning.” 2. Listen to the other person’s “feelings” not just their words. 3. Be willing to let go and move on. What would you add to this list?

Wrap-Up

If you are involved in relationships, you will probably experience conflict. But conflict can be turned into an opportunity for good when we keep our focus on Christ. We need to stand on the strong foundation established by the founders of our faith (the apostles and prophets) and centered on Jesus our cornerstone. Realizing that we are joined together with other believers so that God’s Spirit may dwell in us. We should chose not to focus on our own needs, but rather to love our neighbors as ourselves. In doing so we embrace our identity in Christ, and represent Him to the world.

Memory Verse

If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.

Romans 12:18 ESV

Prayer (20 MIN)

Ask your group to pray for you regarding one area where you can apply this study in your life: _____

Pray for your group members’ needs: (see back for more notes) _____

Challenge:

If God has brought someone to mind that you need to be reconciled with, first review the verses in Q.4, then contact them with the intention of a peaceful resolution.

Q1

Read Matthew 7:24-27 in your Bible

Ephesians 2:19-22 ESV - 19 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, 20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, 21 in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. 22 In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

1 Peter 2:4-7 ESV - 4 As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, 5 you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. 6 For it stands in Scripture: "Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame." 7 So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe, "The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,"

Q2

Romans 12:18 ESV - 18 If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.

James 4:1-4 ESV - 1 What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? 2 You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask. 3 You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions. 4 You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

Colossians 3:7-9 ESV - 7 In these you too once walked, when you were living in them. 8 But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. 9 Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices

2 Timothy 2:24-26 ESV - 24 And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, 25 correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, 26 and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will.

Q3

1 Peter 2:9-10 ESV - 9 But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. 10 Once you

were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

1 Corinthians 10:31-33 ESV - 31 So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. 32 Give no offense to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God, 33 just as I try to please everyone in everything I do, not seeking my own advantage, but that of many, that they may be saved. 11:1 Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.

Matthew 22:37-39 NIV - 37 Jesus replied: " 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' 38 This is the first and greatest commandment. 39 And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'

Q4

Philippians 2:3-4 ESV - 3 Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. 4 Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

Romans 15:1 ESV - 1 We who are strong have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves.

1 Corinthians 10:24 ESV - 24 Let no one seek his own good, but the good of his neighbor.

1 Corinthians 13:4-5 ESV - 4 Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant 5 or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful;

Prayer Notes cont.
