

DEALING WITH CONFLICT

DATE: SUNDAY, 18TH OF APRIL 2021 | JESUS: PART 3

MATTHEW 18:15-17

"If your brother or sister sins [against you], go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.' If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector.

NOTE TO LEADERS:

We are back to four on-site services each Sunday: 07h30, 09h00, 10h30, 18h00

We have also got permission to open our balcony - we can have 250 people downstairs and 250 people upstairs, so there is loads of room for everyone!

Booking is essential and can be done via the website www.cityhillchurch.com

START TALKING

1. Was there anything in Sunday's message that challenged you?
2. What makes a person a good listener?

START THINKING

1. Read Matthew 18:15. What positive consequences can result from resolving conflict well?
2. We all have one of two natural reactions when it comes to conflict: fight (demand) or flight (withdraw). Which is your usual reaction? What one thing from Sunday's message has given you the courage to engage with conflict in a healthy way going forward?

START SHARING

1. Read Matthew 18:15-20. Jesus gives us a blueprint for resolving conflict. Have you ever had someone approach conflict with you in this way? How did it go? What was your reaction?
2. Share about a time that you put "being right/shown respect/getting your way" ahead of keeping a relationship. How did God alert you to the fact that this wasn't glorifying Him? How did the Holy Spirit help you to resolve your feelings and repair the relationship?

START PRAYING

Pray for those currently in conflict that God would give them His grace to follow His blueprint and to engage with conflict in His way.

START DOING

Read Proverbs 4:23. Steve said that conflict is primarily emotional, and going unresolved, those feelings of bitterness and anger can eventually pollute all areas of our lives. Is there some relationship conflict holding you hostage to bitterness, anger or resentment? Commit to taking the first step to resolving that conflict this week?

SUMMARY

OF SUNDAY'S MESSAGE

In week three of our Jesus series, Steve shared a powerful message on how to resolve conflict with other believers. Matthew 18:15-17 is one of the most important texts in the Bible about resolving conflict well: *"If your brother or sister sins [against you], go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.' If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector."*

It gives us some courage in that Jesus spoke about the fact that there is conflict. He could have said, "there should be no conflict because you are my followers!" Yet even among His original 12 disciples, there was quarrelling and arguments. He gives us a blueprint on how to resolve conflict.

Two natural reactions in conflict

1. Fight (demand) or 2. Flight (withdraw)

Jesus shows a different way: He invites us to engage. In Matthew 18:15-17 He gives us a 3-step process to follow. Many of us don't even take the first step (going to talk it out with a fellow believer), let alone the second or third (finding some Christian mediation or help).

The three-step process for dealing with conflict:

1. Speak one on one with that person

Don't try to resolve conflict over email or WhatsApp - you can't judge the tone properly with written words. The other temptation we have with conflict is to tell a whole lot of people about the situation - to get them to validate our view. This can skew other people's perceptions of the third party, and we generally don't go back and set the record straight once we've resolved the conflict.

Having difficult conversations is never easy. All conflict is emotional. If the aim is to resolve the issue one-on-one, it's a good idea to carefully work out what to say and how to say it (make some notes). Use conciliatory statements like "when you...(insert problem here)... I felt let down", rather than accusatory statements like "you are a liar, cheat etc."

2. Include a 3rd party

There are occasions where conflict can't be resolved one-on-one (sometimes the two people don't have the emotional capacity to deal with it one-on-one). In this case, it's important to find a third party to act as a mediator - someone who is respected and will provide wise Christian counsel.

1 Corinthians 6:1 speaks strongly about this in the context of lawsuits between Christians: *If any of you has a dispute with another, do you dare to take it before the ungodly for judgment instead of before the Lord's people?*

3. The elders of the church

More than 90% of situations can be resolved through steps 1 and 2. In the rare case where this doesn't work, then the third step is to approach the Eldership of the church. Every now and then, someone behaves in an evil way (swindling others out of money, spreading malicious rumours etc.) It then becomes a matter of church discipline.

This gives us a safe set of guidelines as Christ-followers. Understanding

this, we can advise other believers to follow these guidelines.

Two questions to ask ourselves in any type of conflict situation:

1. What is the most important thing in this situation?

- Is it being right? Shown respect? Getting my money back?
- Or is it about keeping relationships and glorifying God?

The most important things to our Father - the Head of the church - is relationships and bringing glory to Him.

2. What is happening in my heart?

Conflict is primarily emotional - the feelings of rage, anger, betrayal, upset etc., are difficult to process. Proverbs 4:23 tells us: *Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.* Bitterness, rage, unforgiveness etc., poison the river, which starts to flow out, and it pollutes all of our lives. Peace, forgiveness, calm and resolution clear the waters that flow from our heart.

Thankfully the Holy Spirit is there to help us in these times of conflict! He guides us and directs us to let go of the rage, bitterness etc. and engage in a healthy way to resolve conflict.

The greatest conflict that any of us had is with God Himself! We have all sinned against Him, and there's nothing we can do to fix that from our side. Yet He doesn't get bitter or angry but instead invites us to accept His forgiveness by faith. In light of this, we should live forgiven and forgiving.