

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

(A key to maintaining unity)

The Bible says much about the importance of maintaining unity within the Body of Christ.

The Apostle Paul wrote, “Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.” **(1 Corinthians 1:10) and**

“Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion.”

(Romans 12:16)

THE EARLY CHURCH MOVED IN POWER. UNITY AMONGST BELIEVERS WAS A SIGNIFICANT FEATURE OF THE EARLY CHURCH

“Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common. And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all.” **(Acts 4:32-33)**

“And through the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were done among the people. And they were all with one accord in Solomon’s Porch.” **(Acts 5:12)**

WHEN GOD IS MOVING IN A CHURCH THE DEVIL WILL DO EVERYTHING HE CAN TO BRING STRIFE INTO OUR FELLOWSHIPS.

“Now in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenists, because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution.” **(Acts 6:1)**

ONE OF OUR BIGGEST CHALLENGES IN LIFE IS DEALING WITH THE CONFLICTS THAT WE EXPERIENCE IN OUR LIFE AS A RESULT OF:

- 1) Offenses**
- 2) Misunderstandings, and**
- 3) Disagreements**

THE WEBSTER DICTIONARY DEFINITION OF CONFLICT IS:

- **Prolonged struggle**
- **A clashing or sharp disagreement**
- **To be in opposition**

CONFLICT HAS THE POTENTIAL TO:

- **Destroy marriages and friendships**
- **Split churches**
- **Ruin Businesses**
- **Start Wars, and**
- **To drive some people to commit suicide**

CONFLICT IS HOWEVER A PART OF LIFE

In life we will all experience conflicts at time. Conflicts are not necessarily harmful if they are dealt with creatively and in a reconciling way. Handled creatively people can experience personal growth and gain improved perspectives on how to do things in the future. Conflicts have the potential to hurt our church and to create ongoing friction between two or more people.

HOW DO WE DEAL WITH THOSE PEOPLE IN OUR CHURCH WHOSE DIVISIVE BEHAVIOUR IS BRINGING STRIFE INTO OUR CHURCH

The Apostle Paul wrote, “Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition, knowing that such a person is warped and sinning, being self-condemned.” (Titus 3:10-11)

The Apostle Paul in his epistle to Titus makes it clear how we are to deal with difficult people.

Don’t argue with them – warn them and if they reject the warnings reject them.

THERE ARE CERTAIN TIMES WHEN THERE IS A GREATER LIKELIHOOD OF EXPERIENCING CONFLICTS

- **When buying land or when renting or building new premises**
- **When a church adopts a fresh and new vision**
- **When appointing new leaders**

SOME THINGS TO CONSIDER IN RELATION TO HANDLING CONFLICTS CAUSED BY DIVISIVE PEOPLE THAT WILL AFFECT THE CHURCH

- **Don't bark at every car** (do not constantly be looking for problem people to address)
- **Pick your battles carefully** (Focus your attention on resolving those conflicts and divisive attitudes which must be addressed)
- **We need to look at addressing those problems and differences which will adversely affect others, our church and the vision for our church**
- **For major conflicts it is also wise at times to seek the counsel of other mature Christians before confronting those who are causing division in the church**
- **We need to do what God wants – Sooner rather than later**
- **The importance of prayer – fasting – before addressing conflicts**
- **As leaders it is important to seek God's timing and to know the right words to use when dealing with conflicts with church members**
- **Never publically address people when addressing conflicts with them. Otherwise people in the church may take sides against us as leaders**

HOW PERSON TO PERSON CONFLICTS SHOULD BE ADDRESSED WITHIN A CHURCH

When there is a conflict between two or more people in a church, the Bible makes it clear how we should handle these situations:

“Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that ‘by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.’ v.17 *And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector.*” (Matthew 18:15-17)

VERSE 17 MAKES IT CLEAR THAT IF INDIVIDUALS CAN NOT SORT OUT THEIR DIFFERENCES BY THEMSELVES OR IN FRONT OF ONE OR TWO MORE WITNESSES THE MATTER MUST BE TAKEN TO CHURCH LEADERSHIP (*The elders of the church*)

CERTAIN TYPES OF PEOPLE ARE MORE PRONE TO CONFLICT

- 1) **Know it all's** – Everyone else is wrong
- 2) **Perfectionists** – Sees everyone's faults except their own
- 3) **Self appointed judges** – They have a tendency to condemn people or to make assumptions about people
- 4) **Insecure people** – They can never admit to being wrong. They have the potential to hurt you
- 5) **Domineering** – Controlling and Unteachable
- 6) **Gossipers** – They spread rumours which cause strife (**Proverbs 18:8**)
- 7) **Angry People** – They invariably stir up strife and offend others
- 8) **Liars** – They exaggerate things and tell tales about others
- 9) **Quiet People** – Have the tendency at times to suppress things until they reach a breaking point and explode

THE BIBLE MAKES IT CLEAR THAT UN-DEALT WITH CONFLICTS HAVE THE POTENTIAL TO CAUSE GREAT HARM TO PEOPLE

Genesis Chapter four speaks about man's first un-dealt with conflict between two brothers called Cain and Abel.

1) Jealousy – competition

Genesis 4:5

“But He did not respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell”

2) Resentment

Genesis 4:6

“So the Lord said to Cain, “Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen?”

3) **Revenge**

Genesis 4:7

“If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it.”

4) **Murder**

Genesis 4:8

“Now Cain talked with Abel his brother; and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him.”

A QUESTION TO ANSWER REGARDING A POTENTIAL CONFLICT – Is it worth it?
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5) **God sees what we do and *knows the attitudes of our heart***

Genesis 4:10-11

“And He said, “What have you done? The voice of your brother’s blood cries out to Me from the ground. So now you are cursed from the earth, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother’s blood from your hand.”

6) **Conflicts result in a lack of productivity**

Genesis 4:12a

“When you till the ground, it shall no longer yield its strength to you.”

7) **People who have unresolved conflicts tend to be wanderers**

Genesis 4:12b

“A fugitive and a vagabond you shall be on the earth”

Genesis 4:16

“Then Cain went out from the presence of the LORD and dwelt in the land of Nod on the east of Eden.”

a) Those with unresolved conflicts never settle too long.
Relationships...Work...Church

b) Something happens – someone, something reminds them of their past hurt-
OFF THEY GO.

8) Our unresolved conflicts affect the next generations

Genesis 4:23

“Then Lamech said to his wives: “Adah and Zillah, hear my voice; Wives of Lamech, listen to my speech! For I have killed a man for wounding me, Even a young man for hurting me.”

- ***Lamech was Cain’s descendant***
- **That un-dealt with conflict –that angry spirit which was not dealt with – came out and two people die**
- ***Conflict affects us all***
- **We either learn to handle them or they will destroy us.**
- **WHEN FACED WITH CONFLICTS WE MUST EITHER:**
 - i) **Let it go, if it is not important**
 - ii) **Sort it out**
 - iii) **Or if you cannot sort it out, let it go, or let them go – you have tried. (Romans 12:18) *“If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men”***

SOME REASONS FOR CONFLICTS BETWEEN PEOPLE

- **Different DESIRES – I want a new lounge – red, blue, yellow**
- **Unmet NEEDS in a relationship / church meeting**
- **Different IDEAS – i.e. My ideas or we will not go ahead and do it**
- **Uncommunicated EXPECTATIONS (You expect, but other person unaware)**
- **BEHAVIOUR TRAITS – Arrogant, Harsh, Soft**
- **LEADERSHIP STYLES – Pastoral versus Leadership**
- **The biggest is simply MISUNDERSTANDINGS that were not clarified**

HOW NOT TO DEAL WITH CONFLICT

- 1) **Win** – I am right you are wrong. (We should always want to aim for a win-win situation)
- 2) **Withdraw** – this is hopeless they will not change
 - Avoiding conflict at all cost
 - Many use the “back off” approach to protect themselves
- 3) **Yield** – Some people’s perspective on conflict is “**Differences are disastrous**”
 - It’s far better to be nice, to submit, just go along with others demands
 - Personal goals or our needs are sacrificed when we yield. This will invariably lead to resentment
- 4) **Kill each other with words** (Proverbs 18:21)
- 5) **Poison people** - Negatively expressing our grievances to others in such a way that affects the church, the other person’s reputation and our relationships with others. A root of bitterness defiles many
- 6) **Taking on the victim mentality**
- 7) **Separating from one-another in resentment**

EIGHT BARRIERS TO HEALTHY CONFLICT RESOLUTION

- 1) Being locked into old patterns – behaviours
- 2) Being discouraged from past failures
- 3) Wrong beliefs or values
- 4) Fear of being hurt or rejected
- 5) Anger (Hostility or indifference)
- 6) Denial (Ignoring the conflict)
- 7) Personal sin or weakness
- 8) Lack of communication or relational skills

HOW BEST TO RESOLVE CONFLICT

We need to first have a desire to resolve the conflict. To help in this conflict resolution process we need to:

- 1) **Listen and Communicate** – Make it easy for the other person to respond. In marriage we need to hold up the yellow card
- 2) **Identify our own contribution to the conflict**
- 3) **Choose the Right Moment** – (No tempers)
Proverbs 30:33
“For as the churning of milk produces butter, And wringing the nose produces blood, So the forcing of wrath produces strife.”
- 4) **Identify the real issues** (Major on the Majors)
- 5) **Get to the facts** – We must never respond to tales, emotion, or exaggeration
- 6) **Consider a mutual compromise**
 - i) Negotiate meeting half way
 - ii) Everyone comes part way
 - iii) But never compromise our values
- 7) **Practice Forgiveness**
- 8) **Re-build Trust with the other person**
- 9) **Put healthy boundaries in place**
- 10) **Give the other person an assurance of acceptance**
- 11) **Be nice – “Relax”**

IF WE DO ALL OF THE ABOVE AND THERE IS NO CHANGE WE MUST MOVE ON. WE ARE ONLY RESPONSIBLE FOR OUR SIDE – AS MUCH AS DEPENDS ON US