

10/27/08

Reaching Across – Getting Along with One Another

When two or more people come together long enough, there will be inevitable conflict – differing opinions, different ideas, different ways to do things. Sometimes you don't even need a second person to have conflict! ☺ How do we work through conflict? As we work through these devotions this week, consider a conflict you are currently experiencing or perhaps one you might foresee in the days ahead. Then consider applying some of these devotions to your situation. In the end, it is my hope that you see God in the midst of the struggle, and all parties involved will grow through it. –Pastor Mike

Day 1: Reaching Across – Even in Conflict

What are some truths you learned from last Sunday's message? How can it make a difference this week?

Day 2: Getting the Log Out

Read Matthew 7:1-5.

Conflict is difficult to resolve when we blame the other person(s) for 100% of the problem. They may be responsible for some of it, but I have never seen only one party be fully responsible for a conflict. "It takes two to tango," as they say. Perhaps it is better said, "It takes two to tangle." Own up to your part of the problem.

To Consider:

Have you ever been in a conflict when you realized part way through your partial guilt in it? How did owning up to your part help repair the conflict?

Are you currently experiencing a conflict? If so, take some time over the next few days to pray. Ask the Lord to reveal to you your heart condition and any actions that are unbecoming of Christ. Be prepared to hear Him bring to mind areas and activities that need His cleansing. Avoid the tendency to justify your actions and attitudes. Confess to Him your part in the conflict.

Day 3: Apologize with Humility

Read Matthew 5:23-26.

In consideration of yesterday's devotional, it is good and right to confess to God our guilt and our part of a simmering conflict. But while that is a necessary part of our relationship with God, it is clear from this passage that our relationship with God is connected to our relationship with others. If we know someone is holding something against us, God wants us to address that issue with the other person even before we go to the altar of worship. Let's face it, it does seem a little hypocritical to worship God when we know we have offended one of His beloved and are ignoring it.

To Consider:

When you have owned up to your part of a conflict, it is not enough to confess it to God alone. God desires that we make amends quickly. In humility, apologize for your part. Avoid the temptation to say, "but, you..."

Is there someone you know that needs your humble apology? Just do it! While it may be difficult, it is necessary to ease the conflict and begin on the right path toward resolution.

Day 4: Be a Team Player

Read Philippians 4:2-3.

Two women who apparently struggled to get along... two people who worked side by side with Paul. The NIV says they “contended at my side for the cause of the gospel.” The Greek word for “contend” comes from a word meaning “to engage in a contest” or “contend for a prize.” How sad it is when the contention is not against a common enemy in Satan, but in a fellow brother or sister in Christ! These were two women who worked toward a common goal in the gospel. They were the on the same team, but acted like they were engaged in a contest against one another.

To Consider:

Conflict is more easily resolved when we recognize we are on the same team in Christ. We both (hopefully) want what is best in the sight of God. The next time you enter a conflict, consider that you are working on the same team. Your opponent is not your co-worker; your opponent is out there (Satan) trying to divert attention away from Him and the progress of the gospel.

How have you seen this truth work in a conflict in your life? Is Satan getting the best of a conflict in your life? How can you affirm your teammate that you aren't trying to work against him or her? (Note: This applies to marriages as well.)

Day 5: Investing in the Kingdom

Read Philippians 1:15-21.

A few weeks ago at the Fall Conference, Dr. Terveen shared some thoughts on this passage. He spoke of Paul's attitude despite the poor motives of others. He rejoiced that regardless, the gospel was being preached, and that made it more than possible to see past their bad motives. There is a lesson to be learned in Paul's attitude when it comes to conflict. If we can see any amount of good in a situation, even in conflict, it is good to dwell on those things and rejoice in the process. Nothing makes a conflict more discouraging than having a hopeless attitude. Considering the good in a conflict (no matter how little there may seem to be) is a helpful way to stay constructive and hopeful. Read again Paul's jubilant words in vv. 19-21.

To Consider:

How can one see past the difficulty and negativity of a conflict to see the silver lining? Is this something we can *choose* to do? If you are going through a conflict, take some time to think about how God is present in the situation. Dwell in that hope rather than living in the critical world of conflict.

Day 6: Review

Look over your notes from the past week. What one or two things did God impress upon you this week?

Home Group Questions

Week of October 27, 2008

Opening: How have you seen God work this week?

1. "It takes two to tangle." Have you ever been in a conflict when you realized part way through your partial guilt in it? How did owning up to your part help repair the conflict?
2. From Matthew 5:23-26, it is clear from this passage that our relationship with God is connected to our relationship with others. If we know someone is holding something against us, God wants us to address that issue with the other person. How have you seen the effects on your worship of God knowing that you have offended someone without dealing with it? Why is it so hard to apologize?
3. Conflict is more easily resolved when we recognize we are on the same team in Christ. Your opponent is not your co-worker; your opponent is out there (Satan) trying to divert attention away from him and the progress of the gospel. How have you seen this truth work in a conflict in your life? Has Satan ever gotten the best of a conflict in your life? If so, share about it. How can you affirm your "teammate" that you aren't trying to work against him or her? (Note: This applies to marriages as well.)
4. In Phil. 1:15-21, we read about Paul's ability to rejoice in a potentially conflicted situation. He was able to rejoice because he could see the good in it. Considering the good in a conflict (no matter how little there may seem to be) is a helpful way to stay constructive and hopeful. How can one see past the difficulty and negativity of a conflict to see the silver lining? Is this something we can *choose* to do? If you are going through a conflict, take some time to think about how God is present in the situation. Share with others to help you see past the situation and, more importantly, see past the shortcomings of others.

As you go into your prayer time, consider the following questions:

- How have you struggled this week?
- How can the others in the group help you?