**Relational Intelligence 101**

**The Law of Conflict Resolution - Part 6**

May 16, 2021

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**Sermon Background**

Reconciliation and conflict resolution are consistent themes throughout the Bible, especially in the New Testament. Starting with the teachings of Christ, believers are instructed on how to treat one another particularly when there are impasses and differences.

**Introduction**

Is it really that important that conflicts are resolved?

Biblical reconciliation is a command by Christ Himself, “By this, all men will know that you are my disciples if you love one another”. ([John 13:35](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John%2013.35))

1. The biblical concept of peace occurs approximately 550 times in the Bible. The word peace in Hebrew is *shalom* and is mentioned 225 times in the Old Testament.
2. Even if the person lacks the social skills to deal with the conflict, it is our responsibility to cancel the debt and work through the matter.

**What Jesus Said About Conflict Resolution**

* **If you remember that your brother has something against you:**

**Matthew 5:23-24**

23 Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, 24 leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.

* **Blessed are the peacemakers:**

**Matthew 5:9**

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

* **Settle your differences quickly:**

**Matthew 5:25-26**

25 “When you are on the way to court with your adversary, settle your differences quickly. Otherwise, your accuser may hand you over to the judge, who will hand you over to an officer, and you will be thrown into prison. 26 And if that happens, you surely won’t be free again until you have paid the last penny.

**Main Text**

**Hebrews 12:14**

Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord... (NKJV)

**1Corinthians 1:10**

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. (NKJV)

**Matthew 18:15-17**

15 "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. 16 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.'

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. (NKJV)

**Matthew 18:18-20**

18 "Take this most seriously: A yes on earth is yes in heaven; a no on earth is no in heaven. What you say to one another is eternal. I mean this. 19 When two of you get together on anything at all on earth and make a prayer of it, my Father in heaven goes into action. 20 And when two or three of you are together because of me, you can be sure that I'll be there." (The Message)

**Observations from The Passage**

Jesus introduces His four-step escalation method to conflict resolution. At the heart of this story is redemption and the peaceable end to the impasse. Peace and resolution are a central theme throughout the Bible, and Jesus enforces this Kingdom principle in this teaching.

The ultimate objective in this teaching is to “win” or “gain” the brother/sister back into a healthy relationship and the fellowship of believers.

Jesus places a great deal of importance on conflict resolution, He introduces a step escalation process to ensure matters involving the church community are resolved.

**Step 1 – The Crucial Conversation – You and Me**

1. This meeting is to be done in private between the two injured people with the hopes that the offender will repent and be restored. The focus would be on restoration of fellowship and not the end of the relationship.
	* + 1. Discuss the situation
			2. Agree on the problem
			3. Establish possible resolutions and outcomes
			4. Ensure that repentance and forgiveness is applied as appropriate and as required
			5. If restitution is required, that should also take place.

**Step 2 – Involve Others – You and Me and Two or Three**

1. If the individual does not listen, at least two other parties should be involved as a witness
2. These people can also provide feedback and help remove any obstacles (i.e., they can provide objective thoughts and opinions)
3. A mediator or a negotiator may be part of the process in this step
4. Some people have been gifted and anointed with the ability to bring peace and wisdom.

**Step 3 – The Church Family – You and Me and The Family**

1. As a final hope, the church family should be involved. The idea is to involve leadership from the community and mature believers who can judge the situation biblically.
	* 1. This is not to be used for the purpose of gossip or to spread false information
		2. The idea here is to create a consistent message throughout the family of God
		3. Decisions from the community would be considered binding and final.

**Step 4 – Removal from The Fellowship of Believers**

1. The final step is to remove the individual from the community of believers. In other words, the individual is to be cut off from the spiritual life of the family of God.
2. It is clear how seriously Christ takes conflict resolution and unresolved issues. This unrepented toxicity should not be allowed to fester or to spread amongst other believers.
3. The unrepented person is to be treated like a pagan or a Gentile
4. They would be isolated from the life and activity of the community
5. They would not have an opportunity to participate in ministry
6. They would no longer be recipients and benefactors of the blessings that come from the body of Christ
	* + This would be a consistent message and treatment from the community because there would be consistency of communication and people would not take sides due to misinformation; therefore, division could not enter the body of Christ
7. If, however, the individual would repent they would once again be allowed within the fellowship of the believers.

**Additional Scriptures**

**Ephesians 4:1-6**

1 Therefore I, a prisoner for serving the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of your calling, for you have been called by God. 2 Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love. 3 Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace. 4 For there is one body and one Spirit, just as you have been called to one glorious hope for the future. 5 There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6 and one God and Father, who is over all and in all and living through all. (NLT)

**Hebrews 12:14**

Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord…(NKJV)

**1 Thessalonians 5:15**

See that no one renders evil for evil to anyone, but always pursue what is good both for yourselves and for all. (NKJV)

**Galatians 5:22-26**

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

23 gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. 24 And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. 25 If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. 26 Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another. (NKJV)

**1 Corinthians 1:10**

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. (NKJV)

**Romans 14:19**

Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another. (NKJV)

**Quotes**

*“Whenever you're in conflict with someone, there is one factor that can make the difference between damaging your relationship and deepening it. That factor is attitude”. ~*William James

*“The harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph”. ~*Thomas Paine

*“Peace is not absence of conflict; it is the ability to handle conflict by peaceful means”. ~*Ronald Reagan

*“Conflict cannot survive without your participation”. ~*Wayne Dyer

*“One of the main tasks of theology is to find words that do not divide but unite, that do not create conflict but unify, that do not hurt but heal”. ~*Henri Nouwen

**Why Do People Avoid Conflict?**

There are various reasons and motivators as to why people avoid conflict:

* People do not know how to participate in a positive way
* People are uncomfortable
* People get hurt
* It harms a relationship
* People are afraid
* People feel threatened
* People cannot be bothered standing up for what they believe in
* People do not know how to bring important differences to the table
* People feel they will be under attack
* People do not know how they will handle their emotions.

**Quiz**

**Think you handle conflict well?**

Although conflict is usually viewed as always negative, we think of conflict as a normal and healthy part of all relationships and as an opportunity to learn more about ourselves. What matters is how we manage conflict with others. Think you handle conflict well? Take our quiz to find out!

Questions: True or False?

After a conflict, I tend to:

 **True/False**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Focus on rebuilding the relationship and repairing the harm done  |  |
| Forgive and do not bear a grudge or ill feelings about the other person  |  |
| Reflect on my part of the conflict  |  |
| Reach out to make amends or discuss things with the other person |  |
| Consider what I may have done differently |  |
| Not share my side of the situation with others in self-serving and distorted ways |  |
| Apologize for my part of the conflict  |  |
| Gain a better appreciation for and understanding of the other person’s perspective, even if I do not agree with it |  |
| Not blame myself for what I did or said (or did not do or say) and not feel sorry for myself |  |
| Let go of blaming the other person for what was said or done (or not said or done) |  |

**Add up the “True,” and if you marked:**

**10-11 “True”**

You are definitely conflict resilient. You are expressing yourself clearly in the conflict and are engaging in healthy communication behavior.

**7-9 “True”**

You are fairly conflict resilient and may want to explore the areas that are not true for you.

**4-6 “True”**

Your conflict resilience score is low and conflict coaching would be a great way to learn more about your communication and conflict management styles and develop new strategies to manage existing conflicts and build confidence in your abilities to manage conflict as it arises in the future.

**0-4 “True”**

 You may not be very conflict resilient. We suggest scheduling a meeting with a conflict coach.

**Group Discussion & Questions**

1. Describe what is meant by the spiritual life of the community.
2. Why is agreement so critical amongst believers?
3. Give an example from the Old and New Testaments regarding unresolved conflict. What was the outcome?
4. Share a personal success story of conflict resolution. What step was it resolved in?
5. Share your personal strengths and weaknesses when it comes to conflict resolution.
6. List 10 benefits that can be realized when conflicts are resolved biblically.
7. Why should conflicts amongst believers be handled differently than conflicts with non-believers?
8. Why has the church drifted so far from its original design and from what Christ taught? Provide 5 major reasons.