

Dealing with Confrontation

(Compiled by Paul R. Blake)

Introduction:

- A. As long as humans have interacted, there has been conflict - Gen. 4:3-8
 - 1. It does not matter the size of the group: a marriage, a family, an organization, a company, or even a government or a country.
 - 2. Whenever you have more than one human being involved, you will have disagreement.
- B. Part of the human makeup.
 - 1. After all, God made us all to be different in many ways.
 - a. Rom. 12:3-6; 1Peter 4:10
 - 2. Difference has its value; our differing strengths and weaknesses can complement one another.
 - 3. But difference means that there will be differences of perspective and opinion on various matters.
- C. The question is not if, but when.
 - 1. We can try to end every conflict, but it is impossible.
 - 2. We do better to consider how we should handle conflicts when they arise so that the end result will be encouragement and edification.
- D. God knows we will have conflict (He made us), and has provided the means by which we can resolve them.

I. CONFLICT AND THE SCRIPTURES

- A. What is conflict?
 - 1. "A striking or dashing against each other, as of two moving bodies in opposition; a fighting; combat; Contention; strife; contest; Struggling with difficulties; a striving to oppose, or overcome; A struggling of the mind; distress; anxiety; Opposing operations; countervailing action; collision; opposition." (Webster's)
 - 2. When there is clear disagreement and both parties contend with each other, conflict is present.
 - 3. When there is a mental struggle with another (for whatever reason), even if the other person is not aware of it, conflict is still present
- B. God has spoken many times regarding conflicts.
 - 1. Matt. 5:23-24, 18:15-17; Acts 15:1-12; Rom. 14; Gal. 2:11-14

II. HANDLING CONFLICT

- A. Conflict must be dealt with.
 - 1. In all the examples we've considered, we have not seen a conflict left open and unresolved.
 - 2. There is a scriptural expectation to resolve conflicts when they arise.
 - a. Phil. 4:2-3
 - 3. If something has been said or done that causes anxiety, anger, strain, frustration, it must be dealt with directly and immediately.
 - a. Prov. 12:25, 14:10, 15:13

- B. Conflict must be dealt with personally with the persons involved.
 1. In the examples we considered, we did not see anyone talking behind the backs of others; they spoke to the other party in the conflict.
 2. It was not left to simmer over time.
 3. It was also not taken to someone not involved or responsible to help, or to someone in another congregation.
- C. Pray - 1Thes. 5:17; James 1:5-7; 1Peter 5:6-7
 1. Ask God for wisdom in instruction about how to handle the conflict.
 2. Pray for humility, gentleness, and respect, so that we may win over our brother - Col. 4:6
- D. Seek counsel from those equipped by the word of God to offer wise advice.
 1. The elders, evangelist, or another strong, older, and wise Christian.
 2. Phil. 2:17
- E. Assess the conflict.
 1. What is the nature of the conflict? Is it a matter of Bible authority, a matter of personal liberty, or a matter of individual judgment?
 2. Rom. 14:17
 3. Is the disagreement significant enough or bothersome enough to need addressing in a public manner, or is it something that we can overcome personally? Choose your battles wisely.
- F. Consider ourselves.
 1. Assuming the conflict is significant, we should ask:
 2. What are we trying to do in this conflict?
 3. Whose purposes are we serving?
 4. Are we being humble servants of God who seek to encourage each other to work in God's Kingdom, or are we just being cantankerous or judgmental hypocrites?
 5. Matt. 7:1-5
- G. Approach the conflict with a calm spirit.
 1. Forethought and planning in how to handle the conflict.
 2. Psalm 4:4; Prov. 15:28; 1Peter 3:16; 1Cor. 13:1-7
 3. We must remember that we are addressing fellow children of God who have equal worth and dignity in the eyes of God Who loves them as much as He loves us, and we must treat them appropriately.
- H. Speak with the person - Matt. 18:15-17; Rom. 14:12

Conclusion:

- A. Conflicts are bound to come up whenever people are involved.
- B. What are we going to do about them?
- C. Are we going to let disagreements turn into strife, contention, and discord?
 1. These things are works of the flesh that keeps one out of the Kingdom - Gal. 5:19-21
- D. Let us strive to have the courage to follow God's will and handle conflicts when they arise!