



Tweets from Heaven

#4 Philemon: Resolving Conflicts

I. Introduction

There was a conflict between Philemon and Onesimus – and it needed to be resolved. And unknowingly, there was also a conflict between Paul and Philemon.

Sometimes, conflict is rather like the arrival of “ET” into one’s world. On first acquaintance, ET seems grotesque, repulsive, etc. His lovable qualities and his abilities to transform self-centered lives emerges only gradually. Conflict – creative conflict – is similar, it may be a blessing in disguise.

II. First, let’s review the causes of conflict

A. Satan himself

1. Right from the beginning, Satan has made it his business to pit us one against the other (Genesis 3).
2. We should expect conflict induced by Satan and recognize the Biblical way to deal with him.
3. Fight – Satan, not each other (Eph. 6:10-11). Resist (James 4:7) this is the Greek Word “antihistamine:” to stand against or oppose; Be firm (1 Peter 5:8); Strive together (Phil. 1:27); and Pray (Eph. 6:18).

Generally, be alert and ready to take the initiative. Look at 1 Peter 5:8.

B. Our own selfish natures

Look at James 4:1-12, “Where do all the fights and quarrels among you come from? They come from your desires for pleasure...you want things but you cannot have them so you are ready to kill, you strongly desire things, but you cannot get them so you quarrel and fight.” Look at Romans 7:15 – 24 and Mark 7:20 – 23.

C. Others, and their selfish desires

1. We need to expect each other to be sinful, unpleasant at times, and difficult to live with. Remember, no one’s perfect – lower your expectation level.
2. We need to learn to forgive. Look at the standard for Biblical forgiveness – “...not seven times, but 77 times!” Matt. 18:21-22 and Eph. 4:31-32.

III. Conflict can be a blessing in disguise

Notice Paul’s comment in verse 15 – “...perhaps for this reason, he parted from you for a while, that you should have him back forever...”

Sometimes conflict provides the necessary information we need to show us where we need to improve or be changed by Christ. It's a way of renewing or refreshing a relationship. It's a tool to strip us of our self-centeredness.

IV. **Principles found in the Book of Matthew** (material came in part from James Jackson's sermon notes). **Look at Matt. 5:23-25, 7:5 and 18:15-17**

A. Matt. 5:23-25: Do it quickly

We can't love God and hate a brother:

1 John 4:20 *"Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen."*

How quickly? Same day:

Eph. 4:26 *"In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry,"*

B. Matt. 18:15: Do it face to face and do it one on one

We need to talk to the Lord first, before we approach the offender:

Matt. 7:5: *"You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye."*

We need to talk to the offender. We can't talk to others about the offender.

Prov. 19:11: *"A person's wisdom yields patience; it is to one's glory to overlook an offense."*

C. Matt. 18:16-17: If necessary, get help

1. Consider finding a mature brother or sister in Christ who can coach you through the process.
2. Perhaps involving one or two others (known and respected by both parties) that can meet with you and provide guidance in resolving a dispute.

See 1 Cor 6:1-8

V. **Some practical considerations**

- A. Identify the source: make sure the "problem is the problem." When and how did this conflict begin? Who is actually involved? Can you stay out of it?
- B. Focus on creative communication
 1. Take a minute and think about your own biases or "triggers"
 2. Avoid being "confrontive" – watch your pronouns: "I" vs "you"
 3. Learn to listen – really listen. Pay attention to "active listen" ingredients (facial expression, body language, etc.)

C. Take time to identify where both parties may have failed.

1. Learn to confess your faults. Ask "Lord, what can I do to make it right?"

James 5:16 "Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective."

2. Learn to forgive

Matt. 18:21-22 "Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?" Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times."

Col. 3:13 "Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you."

D. Focus on the solution (look forward, not backwards)

Ask "what can I/we do so that this does not happen again?"

E. Consider a constructive "break" to allow emotions to "catch up" with the decisions that are being made.

F. Reaffirm your commitment to one another.

Rom. 12:10 "Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves."

VI. **So what? Is there a conflict that needs to be resolved in your life? Pursue peace!**

Rom 12:18 "If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone."

Discussion Questions

1. What kinds of things typically trigger conflicts in your life? How could you avoid them?
2. Have you successfully resolved a major conflict? Share how you accomplished that.