



Growth Group Discussion Questions

Lesson: DEALING WITH CONFLICT

Key Bible Verses: Proverbs 20:3; Proverbs 21:9; Proverbs 26:21;
James 4:1-3; Philippians 2:1-4; Matthew 18:15-20

Spring Quarter - Lesson 8 - Week of May 23, 2021

GETTING TO KNOW YOU

1. What was your reputation as a teenager?
2. Growing up, how did your family handle conflict? Did your parents ever fight in front of you?

DISCUSSION

We cannot eliminate conflict from our families or from the Church. The Church has always had instances of conflict; however, it is critical that we are successful in dealing with it. If conflict is handled properly and people do not run from it, relationships can be saved and they can grow.

Dig Into It:

Read Proverbs 20:3; Proverbs 21:9; and Proverbs 26:21 and answer the following questions:

1. Why does quarreling have such a devastating effect on the family?
2. Why are those who are “quick to quarrel” considered fools? (Proverbs 20:3)
3. Is this problem more common in men or women?

Read James 4:1-3 and answer the following questions:

1. What is the root cause of fighting and quarrels?
2. In what ways are fights and quarrels the result of refusing to submit to God?
3. What should be the first step toward resolving conflict (verses 2b, 3)? How is this passage often taken out of context?

Read Philippians 2:1-4 and answer the following questions:

1. In what ways are humility and unity related?
2. What is the center of agreement that would cause us to be “likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind” (verse 2)?
3. If there is a disagreement between two Christians (especially in marriage), whose interests should have priority (verse 3)?
4. How can you look after both your own interests and the interests of others at the same time (verse 4)?

Reflect on It:

1. Do you think of yourself as a “fair” fighter when it comes to quarrels with your spouse? If you are single, do you consider yourself as a “fair” fighter with people? Why or why not?
2. Are your fights usually resolved quickly, over a long period of time, or not at all?
3. How should being a Christian affect the way that we resolve our differences?

Steps in Resolving Conflict God’s Way:

In Matthew 18:15-20, Jesus outlines a clear and specific way for conflict to be addressed. This is based upon the fact that relationships between people are especially important to God. We should have the maturity to follow Christ’s powerful wisdom in this area. There are four steps involved in Jesus’ reconciliation process.

Step 1: Go in Private.

Jesus clearly explained that the first step to resolving conflict is to go privately to the one with whom you have an offense and seek to restore the relationship. Here, believers explain to one another the wrongdoing and its consequences (“go and tell him his fault” - verse 15) and offer to give and receive forgiveness. The goal is not to blame or to win the argument but to “gain your brother” (verse 15). Many conflicts can be resolved in the Church if this first step in resolving conflicts God’s way would be practiced.

Step 2: Take one or more with you.

If, after a private encounter, the conflict is not resolved, Christians should take one or two others who may help as objective third-party facilitators (verse 16). This is not a “gang up” or to accuse, but rather to clearly identify fault and to use the counsel of witnesses to impartially discuss the validity of a charge. They may be able to verify what was actually done, as well as the weight of the offense, and they can observe what is said in the conversation and how it is said.

Step 3: Tell it to the Church.

Since Jesus is advocating an escalating process that includes more people only as the conflict continues to exist, it is appropriate to assume that Jesus would encourage the “need to know” nature of this process to continue even at this third level. In other words, when Jesus says, “tell it to the Church” (verse 17), he is not necessarily advocating a public gathering of the entire congregation. The idea is that church leadership should be involved at this point due to the possibility and necessity of formal church discipline taking place.

Step 4: Cut off the unrepentant.

Just as a commitment to restoring relationships is important to the health of a congregation, so also is the commitment of church leaders to protect God’s flock from harmful people. After great strides are made to resolve conflict in the body, there is clear teaching here from Jesus on how to handle one who is unwilling and unrepentant. This assumes that there are such people in the world. In reality, there are people who actually do not want conflict resolved and

who are unwilling to make peace. Such people should be dealt with shrewdly and always with the motivation to protect God's church.

We must understand that while reconciliation is the goal, it does not always occur. Consequently, resolving a conflict is not always the same as reconciliation and does not always include restoration. This form of resolution is consistent with new Testament teachings regarding the handling of the unrepentant (see Romans 16:17-18; I Corinthians 5:1-13; Titus 3:9-11; II Thessalonians 3:13-15).

When Jesus said, regarding the unrepentant, "let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector" (Matt. 18:17), the wording is important. The idea is to treat them as you (the Jewish people of his day) would a Gentile and a tax collector (the author of this gospel being one) and encourage love toward them as outsiders. But he knew how his audience looked upon such people. Using the way they isolated themselves from these individuals as an example, he instructs them to separate from the unrepentant believer. The key is that, ideally, we want to resolve conflict early so that we can avoid taking it to the church.

Prayer Focus: Pray that God may help you to be willing to address conflict like He declares in His word.