

8: CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Portions of this outline are adapted from material taught by Scott Cormode of Fuller Seminary.

The Gospel and Conflict

- In II Corinthians 5:18-21, God calls us to the ministry of reconciliation. Not only are we called to reconcile the world to Jesus but we're called to do the work of reconciliation with each other (Galatians 6:1; Philippians 2:1-11; James 3:1-4:10).
- When we do the work of reconciliation, we magnify the power and promise of Jesus' death and resurrection.

Conflict Defined

- Conflict occurs when our assumptions and expectations are revealed in the mirror of others' assumptions and expectations and both parties are willing to be honest enough to admit it.
- Combat and competition occur when one or both parties' demand that their assumptions and expectations are met at the expense of the other (Philippians 2:1-11; James 4:1-10).

Conflict is Normal and Natural

- Conflict is God's method to mature us into cruciform family where God's agenda is bigger than our personal, and even corporate agenda. It's God path into greater alignment between heaven and earth and the space between the members of Jesus' family.
- Biblically, conflict is what we experience just before we step into deeper intimacy and unity.
- Some people are more comfortable in conflict but all leaders need to be competent in it.
- Since conflict is normal and natural, our posture should be one of vigilance and initiative. When we see problems brewing, we can step into them before they explode.

Frame the Origin and Object of the Conflict

- From where does the conflict originate—you, others in the conflict, or someone else?
- At whom is the conflict pointed—you, others in the conflict, or someone else?
- Who has authority to participate and facilitate in the resolution?
- Sometimes, conflict originates in a cultural assumption or pattern of a family, group, or church. Don't be afraid to consider this possibility—and don't default to this possibility.

Conflict Resolution Begins with Commitment

- Within the bounds of God's Word, we will do whatever it takes, however long it takes, no matter what the cost to arrive in the place of peace.
- As Scott Cormode says, "This conflict will not undo us."

Conflict Resolution Requires with Listening

- Jesus: Listen to Jesus through the Word and Spirit (Deuteronomy 6:4).

- Self: Listen to your thoughts, feelings, desires, responses/reactions, actions, and allegiances.
- Others: Listen to others' thoughts, feelings, desires, responses/reactions, actions, and allegiances (Proverbs 20:5).
- Issues: Listen for the stated, observable issues but more importantly, listen for the unstated, unknown, and/or defining issues.

Take Ownership in the Conflict

- First, we take ownership over our part.
- Second, we must give space for others to take ownership over their part.
- Third, and most important, we must share ownership over the problem as family and attack the problem, not the others involved.

The Process: Agree, Narrate, Table

- Agree: Find places of agreement—and disagreement.
 - Start with your view of the conflict, why it matters, and what resolution looks like to you.
 - Give space for others to state their view of the conflict, why it matters, and what resolution looks like to them.
 - Find the points of agreement—and have both parties agree that they agree.
 - Find the points of disagreement—and have both parties agree that they disagree.
 - Once the points of disagreement are clear, discuss what both parties think is necessary to achieve resolution and peace.
- Narrate: Narrate your experience and invite others to do the same.
 - As conflict unfolds, you must be ready to discuss and remain fixed on the genuine issues that created the conflict in the first place. Some are stated and observable; some are unstated and unknown.
 - However, strong emotions, desires, and assumptions will surface as communication takes place. When this happens, resolution is often elusive because unstated assumptions turn into condemnation, accusation, and despair.
 - If this happens, you must narrate your experience and listen to others' experience.
- Table: Put the conflict over “there” so both parties examine it from one side of the table with the conflict on the other side of the table.
 - Write out what you think the conflict is and what you think about the conflict.
 - Write out how you think the other person will respond—good or bad, right or wrong.
 - Write out how you feel about their anticipated response.
 - Assess.

RESPONDING...

Choose: Choose a conflict that needs to be resolved

Agree: Find the places of agreement.

Narrate: Narrate the experience with each other.

Table:
