

Conversation Starters

- Did you ever get into conflict with other kids when you were younger?
- How were you taught to "handle it"?

Discuss

There will without a doubt be times when we have conflict with other people. Jesus gave clear instructions on how to handle conflict, particularly if you profess faith in God. His first step for us was to simply not give in to hate – simple, but hard to do. While we will certainly be on one side of offense, the point is really that our reaction from that offense is a choice that we can control. Instead of responding with hate, we must choose grace and look at people beyond what they do. Think, "How does that person look in God's eyes?" or "What must they be dealing with in life right now?"

"But I say, if you are even angry with someone, you are subject to judgment!" (Matthew 5:22a NLT)

- Have you ever stopped to think of someone you've had conflict with in this way?
- How has your upbringing or environment or culture affected how you respond to conflict?
- How much conflict in your life would end right away if you gave more grace to others?

Jesus next instructed us to pursue reconciliation with others we are in conflict with. Followers of Christ are called to take the initiative in this. It was so important to Jesus that he said this was to take place before anything else (even quiet time, prayer, etc.). And you should always go directly to the other person you are in conflict with and that person only – and without delay.

"So if you are presenting a sacrifice at the altar in the Temple and you suddenly remember that someone has something against you, leave your sacrifice there at the altar. Go and be reconciled to that person. Then come and offer your sacrifice to God. When you are on the way to court with your adversary, settle your differences quickly..." (Matthew 5:23-25a NLT)

- Are there people that you have unresolved conflict with right now?
- Have you noticed any disruptions in your relationship with God?
- Have you taken your offense to someone else other than the person you have conflict with?
- Have you let an offense become worse because you have delayed resolution?

Jesus strongly encouraged reconciliation with others, and never wants to see people separated. He wants us to have healthy and thriving relationships. So we should always actively work towards that. However, there may be times people do not want to resolve conflict and you have done all you can. If it comes to this, then you have to be mature and let it go and see if you need to set any boundaries in place with that person. But make sure you earnestly made every attempt possible first.

Warn a quarrelsome person once or twice, but then be done with him. It's obvious that such a person is out of line, rebellious against God. By persisting in divisiveness he cuts himself off. (Titus 3:10-11 Msg.)

- Can you honestly say you have pursued resolution with someone, but never made progress?
- Have you let it go and not allowed it to affect other relationships or your daily living?
- What boundaries can you put in place with that person to avoid further conflict and damage?

Next Steps

How are your current relationships? Do you have any unresolved conflict with others in your life right now? Within the next 24 hours, figure out one next step towards reconciliation and take it. Write out an action plan, call that person or arrange a time to speak in person. Don't delay!

Consider taking the following class for some more help as you navigate conflict resolution:

How to Deal with Conflict

Date: Every Monday, from 10/15/2018 - 10/29/2018

Time: 6:30 PM - 8:00 PM

Location: 8335 Browne Road, Charlotte, NC 28269 (Meck's North Charlotte Campus)

Register: www.Mecklenburg.org/classes

Further Reflection

"You have heard that our ancestors were told, 'You must not murder. If you commit murder, you are subject to judgment.' But I say, if you are even angry with someone, you are subject to judgment! If you call someone an idiot, you are in danger of being brought before the court. And if you curse someone, you are in danger of the fires of hell. So if you are presenting a sacrifice at the altar in the Temple and you suddenly remember that someone has something against you, leave your sacrifice there at the altar. Go and be reconciled to that person. Then come and offer your sacrifice to God. 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. (Matthew 5:21-26)

Pray

God, pursuing conflict resolution with others is not always easy. It can be awkward and intimidating and difficult all around. But we know that it does not always have to be and that you desire for us to be in a right and healthy relationship with others. Help us to identify relationships that may need repairing and to act quickly to restore those. Give us an urgency to not delay or avoid healthy resolution. Give us wisdom when we speak with others and to grow in giving more grace to others, and remind us of the grace that we have been given and what it is like to receive it.