

## **Weekly Study of Sunday's Message.**

**Sunday September 20, 2020. "Relationships: Doing Better at Being Together. Conflict."**

### **I Intro.**

Welcome to the weekly devotional that gives you some specific things to work through from the message this Sunday. Whether you were able to watch the live stream service or not, this devotional is free-standing and you can still use it to help you dig deeper into your own spiritual walk.

Take as long as you need to dive into this material and feel free to share it.

No matter how you worship with us, we still are your church family and if there is ANYTHING you need, prayer, ideas or suggestions you have, please pass them our way. We feel just as isolated as you, and we want to maintain that connection with each of you.

### **II Sunday.**

Okay, Sunday we were still virtual because of dealing with COVID among our tech and praise teams, and we want to do all we can to keep you as safe as possible. Even with all the precautions we put in place for ourselves, it still snuck into our group. And it has been really rough on some of the people. So, all of that to say. **"PLEASE take this seriously!!"** We have had a couple of people who had to make ER visits because of it, AND some of the ones who are well past the quarantine period are STILL experiencing some long term effects of it. Okay, I'm stepping off the soapbox now.

Sunday, we hit the third in our relationship series, and this time we dove straight into that most important aspect of healthy relationships...conflict resolution. As we said last week, this specific element of healthy relationships is tightly connected to good communication. So, in our conversation about how to deal with conflict in a healthy, productive way, there will be some overlap with communication. And honestly all of the elements of this series are tied together. So we're aware how much each of them overlaps with the other. But first, some questions about conflict.

**We're going to go waaaay back. How did your parents handle conflict? Did you see them disagree, argue, and what was their way to deal with conflict?**

**Do you have any of their habits in the way you deal with conflict?**

**How would you describe your conflict resolution style?**

The first truth shared, and you can watch the service online to see this article, psychologists have discovered that couples who argue regularly are ten times more likely to stay together than couples who don't argue. There is something healthy, real, and life-giving that comes from two people who feel comfortable enough, can trust each other enough, to be vulnerable and share their real selves. Even if it creates some uncomfortable tension. So we enter the conversation about dealing with conflict with the understanding that handling conflict well will actually grow relationships.

**Ultimately the purpose of conflict resolution is forgiveness.** To unchain yourself from the hurt.

That is the reason and desire behind working these steps. So, don't begin the process of working

these steps, having these conversations, until you are ready to move forward. Not necessarily move on. That's always very difficult to do. But to at least admit you're tired of being mad, hurt, carrying around the resentment. And once you're ready to move forward, this is the best way to do so.

The scripture is found in a classic passage. So classic that it's been turned into a verb. Read **Matthew 18:15-17**, and we'll look at the process of dealing with conflict.

**What jumped out to you about this passage?**

**Think about the steps of dealing with a hurt, or conflict, what did each mean to you?**

Okay, let's talk about the three steps of restoring strained and/or broken relationships.

### **1. 'One on one' FIRST.**

This is not posting it online in some passive-aggressive, "*you know who you are*" way. Or sharing what happened in your group as a 'prayer request' talking about how someone hurt you. There is a place to seek counsel from a close, mature, trusted, wise friend, about how to word this conversation. Not to prop you up, but for you to bounce some of your hurt and ideas off of. This has to be the first step towards healthy conflict resolution.

#### **How this step works.**

Remembering this is always the first step of the process towards forgiveness. You have a conversation to clarify the original communication or cause of hurt. ASK; "***I experienced what happened in this way. Is that what you experienced or intended?***" It's going to the other person, not to attack, or blast, but to **clarify what actually happened**. Review the incident to see if both of you saw, experienced it in the same way.

**How have you experienced clearing up a hurt or misunderstanding with another person?**

### **2. Bring some wise neutral friends to your situation.**

Again, only do this if the 'one on one' didn't work, AND you really want to work things out. Your desire has to be either salvage the relationship, restore whatever you had, or come to some understanding and move forward. If you have no desire to save, rebuild the relationship, then you simply move on and don't do this. But your goal still must be towards forgiveness. I will over repeat that truth.

#### **How this step works.**

This is NOT bringing your people against their people. This is NOT a gang fight. It's finding 2-3 people, who are wise, mature, thoughtful, deliberative, who can sit and listen to both sides of what happened, and help guide the process of reconciliation. They can either know the both of you, or be a neutral party that knows neither of you. That could be like a marriage counselor, minister, etc. Bring other people into the conversation, to resolve this conflict, that will be honest with all the parties involved. And to help you each see things you may be missing.

**What would be the challenges of finding neutral parties to help people walk through a disagreement or hurt?**

**How could you overcome those challenges?**

### **3. Last resort is to bring it to a like-minded faith community.**

This one has unfortunately been so abused, weaponized, I cringe at the mention of it. This step has been used in the past to drag poor people caught in some sin, (ALWAYS a sin different than the ones we commit), and humiliate them in front of the entire church. I feel this strongly about the real nature of this step. Matthew 7 says; in the way we judge others, we too will have our own specific weaknesses and sins judged in the same way. Which means...in my harshness towards people who have been harsh with others, I will receive that harshness also. (Mind blown...right?).

#### **How this step works.**

This is possibly coming under the guidance of a committed, caring, small group, (why we ALL need to be in some type of small group), who can help walk people through this. A.A. and other support groups work in this way. Belonging to a caring group of people, all wanting the same thing out of life you'll find a loving environment of truth telling that's always done AND felt in love..

**Have you ever belonged to a group that had a close bond, and who helped you through conflict? What was that like?**

**What elements made that group a safe place to deal with hard things?**

### **III Challenge.**

Next to clear effective communication, the ability to navigate the tricky waters of conflict, and work towards forgiveness, (the ultimate goal), is the key in healthy relationships. This could be either reconciliation and restoration of the relationship, or a parting of ways that allows you to let go of the hurt. This is an acquired skill that takes years and years to even get to the point of understanding, and gaining some kind of control over your emotions, to make it work well. But these steps work. And whether you reconcile and rebuild a broken relationship, or at some point along the way decide to end the relationship, but not drag that hurt with you, healthy conflict resolution is an essential skill to learn. And just a being in the world question.

**How could learning to work these steps and do this well help with all of the division and conflict you see in the world?**