

Weekly Study of Sunday's Message.

March 17, 2024 "Resolving Conflict"

I Intro.

Welcome to our companion devotional to Sunday's message. It's just a part of all we have to offer to you. We don't want you to miss out on anything. So, make sure you stay connected to keep informed. We hope you are fed and ministered to by NCC, and that you can be an essential part of us moving forward. We have many ways you can plug into life at NCC. You can find all those through our website, app, and social media sites. Our app is the best way to livestream our services, but you can also livestream on FaceBook and YouTube. You can revisit past services, sign up for events and even give. We're encouraged by your presence when you gather with us. New and familiar faces join us every Sunday. If you join us online, we appreciate your presence. We are 100% committed to our virtual attenders. We are your church family, and if there is anything you need, prayer, or anything else, please let us know. This is our weekly devotional that gives you some specific things to work through from Sunday's message. Whether you were able to participate in this service or not, this devotion is free-standing. You can use it to help you dig deeper into your own spiritual walk. We hope you find this tool helpful on your spiritual journey.

II Recap.

We're in the third Sunday of our series on relationships; *"Above and Beyond: elements of Healthy Relationships"*. This isn't only about romantic relationships, but we're covering all the close relationships we have in our lives. Friendships, co-workers, family, neighbors, and any other relationships you may find yourself in. Relationships can be messy, because people are messy. Including us. So, this is kind of a deeper dive into some of the more obscure and difficult aspects of maintaining relationships. We believe we were created for connection. To be in relationship. With both God and each other. And since these relationships can challenge us, we want to be curious, students, and admit that no matter how long we've walked this earth there is always more we can learn about how to make our relationships even better. First Sunday we talked about helping walk a friend through the process of recovering from making some poor choices and the shame that comes with it. Last week we talked about forgiving. Today we talk about resolving conflict in our relationships.

III Sunday.

We have to begin this conversation by drawing a distinction between the work of forgiveness (last week) and the work of resolving conflict. There is a good bit of overlap, but two very different end products. Put as simply as possible, the process of forgiveness is the work of either reconciling and restoring a relationship through the process of addressing the hurt. Conflict resolution is the work of settling a dispute, an issue, apart from healing the relationship or dealing with the hurt. Now hopefully forgiveness can grow out of conflict resolution. But sometimes a matter just needs to be addressed and settled. And then if possible the hurt is dealt with and the relationship is restored. So, let's talk about conflict resolution.

Where do you struggle with working out an issue?

What have you learned about conflict resolution and yourself, that helps you address issues?

We'll never be able to completely avoid conflict. But we can learn to navigate it in a healthier way. And to also learn to self-regulate to help lessen the number of conflicts we do have. There were two

different scriptures we used Sunday. One, to help us walk through resolving conflict. The second passage listed specific traits that can help us grow in a way to lessen the number and intensity of conflicts. We're going to go through them one at a time. So, read **Matthew 18:15-19**.

What jumped out to you about this passage?

What specifics did you notice in the process of working through conflict?

Considering this process in scripture, here are some practical truths to help resolve conflicts.

1. Believe the other person has good intentions. This is the work of seeing the other person in the best light possible. Not reactively assuming the worst in the other person.

2. Stay open minded. You only know what you've experienced and thought about. There will be perspectives and experiences you need to listen to as objectively as possible to get a clearer picture..

3. Directly express your thoughts and feelings. Keep them simple and concise. But share as much as you are able, how you are experiencing, and seeing the conflict.

4. Don't blame the person. Own all your feelings and perspectives. Don't say; "*You make me...*". No one makes you do anything. You may not consciously choose to feel or believe what you do. But your reaction to the conflict is coming from inside the house. Own your reaction in the conflict.

5. Stick to one argument at a time. Whatever that specific conflict is, only talk about that one thing. If there are side issues, pick the most important ones that affect the primary issue. We're more likely to stick to one issue at a time when we can address each issue when it comes up. This is about addressing the most pressing issue at hand. Set the other ones aside for the time.

6. Communicate clearly. Make sure they understand. This is called "*active listening*". It requires a lot of back and forth conversation that feels cumbersome and awkward. But it is essential in making sure you're talking about the same things. We always hear things through our filters, biases, and preconceived beliefs. This may require learning new words to describe how you feel and see things.

7. Don't sweat the small stuff. This demands the work of identifying what small things are. And what things are the big things, and need to be addressed. The smaller things may need to be dealt with at some point, but don't let them cloud the current conflict.

Now read the second passage, **Colossians 3:12-17**. When these are practiced well, and incorporated into our daily life, can help lessen conflicts.

What jumped out to you about this passage?

What are some specific behaviors or attitudes that could help lessen conflicts?

How can you see these helping in lessening the number and intensity of conflicts?

Here are some specific habits that can help lessen conflicts.

1. Clear Communication: Open, honest, and clear communication is essential for preventing misunderstandings and miscommunications that can escalate into conflicts. Encourage dialogue, active listening, and mutual respect in all interactions.

2. Establishing Boundaries: Setting clear boundaries and expectations in relationships, whether personal or professional, helps prevent conflicts by defining acceptable behavior and limits. Respect others' boundaries and communicate your own boundaries assertively.

3. Addressing Issues Early: Addressing minor concerns or disagreements promptly can prevent them from escalating into larger conflicts. Encourage a culture of addressing issues constructively and collaboratively rather than allowing them to fester.

4. Promoting Understanding: Foster empathy, understanding, and respect for diverse perspectives and experiences. Encourage dialogue and collaboration among individuals with different backgrounds, opinions, and beliefs.

5. Clarifying Roles and Responsibilities: Clearly define roles, responsibilities, and expectations within teams, organizations, or groups. Ensure that everyone understands their role and contribution to prevent confusion and potential conflicts over tasks or decision-making authority.

6. Regular Check-Ins: Conduct regular check-ins or feedback sessions to assess team dynamics, identify potential sources of tension, and address concerns before they escalate into conflicts. Encourage open communication and feedback channels for individuals to express their thoughts and concerns.

IV Challenge.

Again, this is just a lot of information. Don't feel like you have to have it all memorized and down pat before you can work through conflict. The ability to deal with the emotional intensity of conflict, and to navigate the process of working through the issues that caused the conflict, is a learned skill. And it takes many years to actually get good at it. Give yourself grace when you don't handle conflict well. Learn from those times you don't. And work these specific conflict solving practices, and the traits and behaviors, into your life to help you deal with those conflicts in the future.

So, what are one or two things from each list could you begin to practice?