

Share Responsibility - LG Study

Scripture Focus: Matthew 18:15-17 & Philippians 4:2-9

Resolving Conflicts within Community

Read Matthew 18:15-17

Observation Questions

1. What is the first step in addressing conflict according to Jesus?
2. How many steps does Jesus outline for conflict resolution?
3. What is the final recourse if reconciliation fails?

Key Principles of Conflict Resolution

- Address conflicts directly and privately
- Seek understanding and restoration
- Involve others only if initial attempts fail
- Maintain dignity and love throughout the process

Reflection Questions

1. Why might direct, private conversation be challenging?
2. How can we approach difficult conversations with grace?
3. What motivates genuine reconciliation?

Practical Steps

1. Speak privately with the person
2. Listen actively and empathetically
3. Seek mutual understanding
4. Involve trusted mediators if needed

5. Preserve community unity

Group Discussion Prompts

1. Share a time when direct communication resolved a conflict
2. What barriers prevent honest communication?
3. How can we create safe spaces for difficult conversations?

Personal Application

- Identify an unresolved relationship
- Pray for wisdom and courage
- Plan a humble, direct conversation
 - with support if needed/appropriate

Principles & Practices

Read: Philippians 4:2-9

The passage above is really well-known and much loved by many. It outlines really practical steps which can help enormously as we seek to steward conflict and move toward reconciliation.

The passage begins with Paul pleading with two colleagues to resolve their differences. Notice that Paul doesn't focus on the steps required for them to settle their differences; instead he focuses in the steps to take to develop a proper attitude to the situation.

Paul outlines five helpful principles to help get ourselves right before addressing conflict with others:

1. Rejoice in the Lord always v4

- It is a truly God-centred approach. Paul repeats the call to rejoice, as if to say "don't skip this - it's important". However bad the conflict there's always something to rejoice about - even if it's ***only*** your salvation - start with an attitude of praise. Satan wants you to focus on the

negative stuff and keep the conflict going. He wants you to remain so wrapped up in yourself and your feelings that you don't look to God.

2. Let your gentleness be evident to all v5

- Translators note that "gentleness" means forbearance, big-hearted, considerate, lenient, generous and moderate; that's the opposite of abrasiveness and irritability. Being gentle in the midst of conflict is a powerful way to breathe grace into others. It demonstrates Christlikeness - that's really powerful too.

3. Replace anxiety with prayer v6

- Negative feelings tend to multiply when we're in the middle of a conflict/dispute.
- You can't just stop being anxious (*or can you? see "Going Deeper" below*)
- Replace anxiety with "prayer, petition and thanksgiving (gratitude)"
- We can then begin to experience peace - internal at first, but as it grows it can become external - leaving to reconciliation

4. See things as they really are v8

- Don't focus on the negative things or your negative feelings about a person or situation - this can lead to exaggeration which makes reconciliation harder
- Negativity can lead to bitterness and a distorted perspective
- Think about aspects of the other person that are right, noble, true, lovely, admirable, excellent and praiseworthy
- Think on these things to get your perspective right and counterbalance your natural tendency to focus on the bad stuff
- Golden result - as your perspective and attitude become more positive, hopefully theirs will too

5. Practice what you've learned v9

- Put into practice what you've seen, heard, learned and experienced
- Follow good role models and behave as they do
- "and the God of peace will be with you" shalom/wholeness

Going Deeper

Anxiety and Gratitude: A Neurological Perspective

We are fearfully and wonderfully made by an awesome Creator God. But that doesn't mean that life is easy and without challenges. But God's perfect design of our bodies is incredible.

It has been said that "anxiety and gratitude cannot exist in the brain at the same time" and that a helpful way of overcoming anxiety is to practice gratitude/thankfulness. Explore the phenomenon a little further below and consider trying it the next time you're struck with anxiety.

Physiological Mechanism

- Anxiety and gratitude activate different neural pathways in the brain
 - Gratitude stimulates dopamine and serotonin production
 - dopamine is a chemical which sends signals between nerve cells in the brain and body
 - serotonin is a chemical which affects mood & sleep (among other things)
 - Practicing gratitude/thankfulness reduces cortisol levels
 - cortisol is the primary stress hormone which triggers fight/flight response and disrupts neural balance
- As cortisol reduces, balance in the mind is restored and the communication facilitated by dopamine can become more regulated (reducing overthinking)
- Neuroplasticity allows brain to rewire through consistent gratitude practice
 - it is possible to change the physiological response of our brains with appropriate training/practice
 - "Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but **be transformed by the renewing of your mind.**" Romans 12:2a

Reflective Questions

Understanding Your Anxiety

1. What specific thoughts trigger anxiety in you?
2. How does anxiety manifest physically in your body?
3. When do you feel most anxious during your typical week?

Exploring Gratitude

1. What three things are you genuinely thankful for today?
2. Who has positively impacted your life recently?
3. What unexpected blessings have you experienced this week?

Practical Gratitude Exercises

- Keep a daily gratitude journal
- Share appreciations with others
- Pause and mentally note three gratitudes each morning
- Practice mindful breathing while reflecting on thankfulness

Neurological Transformation

Regular gratitude practice can:

- Reduce stress response
- Improve emotional regulation
- Enhance overall mental resilience

Read Philippians 4:4-9 again in light of the above and ask God to reveal to you how He can transform you by the renewing of your mind.