

GFBC Thursday Night's Scriptural Study
Lesson # 104
Scripture Reading: Acts 15:35-41 {KJV}
Teaching Verses: 39-40
FEBRUARY 1, 2024

TEXT - ACTS 15:39-40

TITLE - THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION

VV-39-40-"And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other: and so Barnabas took Mark and sailed unto Cyprus. And Paul chose Silas, and departed, being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God."

Conflict always involves differences of opinions. Conflict can cause anger, malice, resentment, division, and or separation. Conflict is usually fueled by disagreement, differences of opinions, and or strong opinionated views.

The first human conflict mentioned in Scripture was that between Adam and Eve's sons, Cain and Abel. John MacArthur said in his commentary notes of his study Bible that, although Able brought an acceptable offering unto the LORD according to "what God must have revealed to him though not recorded in Genesis" {John MacArthur Study Bible, Genesis 4:4-5}.

Genesis 4:2 {NKJV} says, "**Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground.**" And although this was the first time that the Scripture mentions an offering being made by Abel or Cain, it appears that both were familiar with the sacrificial system of worship.

When Abel and Cain brought their offering unto the LORD, each of their offerings were reflective of their profession. Abel was a shepherd and Cain was a farmer.

Abel brought and offered unto the LORD the firstborn of his flock and Cain brought and offered unto the LORD the fruit of the ground. In Genesis 4:4b {KJV} the Scripture says, "**And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering.**"

The New King James translation of Genesis 4:4b says, "**And the LORD respected Able and his offering, but He did not respect Cain and His offering. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell.**"

The acceptance of Abel's offering and the rejection of Cain's by the LORD were different. It is my opinion that they were different because the LORD is more interested in the offering of the heart than the offering of the hands.

Rejection is not always easy. And because the LORD did not have respect for Cain or his offering, Cain became angry. In Genesis 4:5b of the King James translation, the Scripture says, "**And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell.**"

The rejection of Cain and his offering made him very angry “in front” of the LORD. In Genesis 4:7 of the New King James translation, the LORD told Cain, **“If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you**

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should rule over it.”

And some time when you are under the influence of anger, it can push you to go further than you had planned. After worship, after being in the presence of the LORD, Genesis 4:8 {KJV} says, **“Now Cain talked with Abel his brother; and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him.”**

Like Cain, whenever we allow unresolved issues, anger, bitterness, resentment, malice, hatred, and or unconfessed sin to linger in us, it can calcify the heart. The harder a worshipper of God heart becomes, the more it can become resistant to the word and ways of God.

The longer we allow anger, bitterness, malice, resentment, jealousy, envy, and or hatred to fester in our heart, the more it will infect the body. And whenever unconfessed sin goes unchecked or untreated in us, it kills something in us.

When the heart and mind become calcified and harden, the more difficult it becomes to acknowledge self-contribution to what caused the conflict and infection. Therefore, making it even more difficult for us to experience inner reconciliation and peace.

Effective conflict resolution can begin by being honest and coming clean with yourself regarding your contribution to the conflict. Conflict resolution requires you to take responsibility for your own contributory action to the situation.

I believe Cain killed his brother Abel in his heart before he physically murdered him. Before Cain killed Abel, something died inside of him.

Love and respect for life had died in Cain. And when we allow the warmth of love to grow cold in us, we become distant, insensitive, and uncaring. Anger, hostility, resentment, hatred, and unforgiveness had assassinated the love in Cain for his brother.

Conflict resolution is a transformative healing process that can lead to wholeness. The teaching text draws our attention to a conflict between two Christians, two Preachers, two friends, two missionaries, two kingdom ambassadors, and two church leaders.

After the LORD saved Paul, he had a reputation of persecuting those who believed in Jesus. Although Paul preached the gospel of Jesus Christ, there were some of the Jerusalem disciples who were afraid of him and did not believe he was a disciple of the LORD {Acts 9:26, KJV}.

Acts 9:26, NKJV says, **“And when Saul had come to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, and did not believe that he was a disciple.”** In other words, Paul’s reputation had preceded him.

Despite Paul's reputation, Barnabas took Paul, befriended him, and took Paul to the apostles, and put in a good word for him. In Acts 9:27, NKJV, Luke says, **"But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. And he declared to them how he had seen the LORD on the road, and that He had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus.**

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As believers, we need to be careful about how we talk and treat others. We never know who the LORD will use to put in a good word for us. When Paul came to Jerusalem it was Barnabas who befriended him and put in a good word for him to the Apostles.

However, the teaching text informs us that while Paul and Barnabas were in Antioch, ministering the word of the LORD, Paul desired to revisit every city where they had preached to perform a spiritual "wellness check."

The teaching text says, **"Then after some days after Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us now go back and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the LORD, and see how they are doing" {Acts 15:36, NKJV}.**

When Paul made this suggestion to Barnabas, Barnabas was "all in." However, when Barnabas suggested to Paul that John Mark joined them on this fact-finding missionary expedition, Paul rejected Barnabas' suggestion.

John Mark had deserted Paul and his missionary team and consequently, Paul felt very strongly that he should not be a part of this mission. However, Barnabas felt equally as strongly that John Mark should accompany them.

Watch this! Now, it appears to me that for whatever reason John Mark left Paul and his team before, Paul never got over it. It seems like whatever happened in that situation, it was still annoying Paul and therefore, flaring up anger and resentment in Paul.

Scripture does not tell us if Paul had previously discussed the matter with John Mark. When disagreements and unresolved issues go undiscussed, it can ejaculate bitterness that can ultimately cause conflict.

And because Paul rejected Barnabas suggestion to take John Mark with them, the teaching text says, **"the contention became so sharp that they parted from one another."** The dispute between Paul and Barnabas was so sharp that they separated.

Conflict doesn't resolve itself. For conflict to be resolved, there must first be internal resolution. You must acknowledge, you have to admit, you have to come clean with yourself in order for the for the Holy Spirit to begin your healing process toward wholeness.

Conflict resolution can never be resolved where sin abounds; where there is an unwillingness to self-forgive and a willingness to forgive, it can be difficult to successfully resolve conflict resolution.

The work of the Holy Spirit in conflict resolution is to heal and deliver us from those things and persons that are incarcerating our liberty and freedom in the LORD. The work of the Holy Spirit is to show us a more excellent way.

The work of the Holy Spirit in us is to heal us, make us healthy, and whole. For He who has begun a good work in us will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ {Philippians 1:6b}.

Sometimes it takes time for the Holy Spirit to soften and transform our hearts and renew our minds in order for conflict resolution to be resolved. Despite of the sharpness of the conflict

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that took place between Paul and Barnabas, it did not prevent the work of the Holy Spirit from reconciling the conflict between Paul and John Mark.

The work of the Holy Spirit in conflict resolution is not only for healing and wholeness but His work in us is to teach us how to forgive and to give us another chance. In the closing days of Paul's life, he sent for John Mark.

In 2 Timothy 4:11 {NKJV}, Paul informed Timothy that, **“Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for ministry.”**

In closing, I want you to know tonight that it is never too late to forgive. The sooner you allow the Holy Spirit to help you resolve your unresolved issues, the more fulfilling you can experience the joy of the LORD. The Holy Spirit is always available to guide and give wisdom to the believer in conflict resolution.

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