

HOW TO GROW CLOSER THROUGH CONFLICT

9/6/2015

Ephesians 4:1-6, 15, 25-32

I. Introduction

A. God's plan for us as His church is to unify us so that the world sees God through our unity.

We are saved not just so we can believe but so we can help to build a spiritual family that people would love to belong to. That can only happen if we're willing to pay the price for unity. A big part of that price is being people willing to pay the price to grow through conflict.

We can achieve anything if we have unity, but nothing if we will fail to embrace it.

B. Whereas the world often walks away from relationships when conflict comes, God calls us to walk _____ relationships when conflict comes; because that is what Jesus did with us.

In the world relationships are often seen as dispensable; in Christ relationships are always seen as redeemable. Satan's plan is to divide us through conflict, God's plan is to _____ us even more through conflict.

- *"As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another."* (Prov. 27:17)
- *"For perhaps he departed for awhile for this purpose that you might receive him back forever... not as a slave but as a brother."* (Philemon 1:13)

C. Observations about conflict

1. It is natural, neutral, and inevitable. Our choices determine whether we blow up, clam up, or grow up!

2. In Christ there is no hurt too deep, no issue too divisive, no chasm too wide to bridge if we're willing to walk the path Jesus walked of forgiveness and _____.

3. Conflict is something God uses to test and _____ our hearts.

"Disillusionment with people is good because it destroys false expectations of perfection. He who loves the dream of community more than the Christian community itself becomes a destroyer of the latter." –Dietrich Bonhoeffer

4. Conflict is what God uses to turn shallow relationships into more _____, Christ-like relationships.

II. Ways to grow closer through conflict

A. Make a commitment to "speak the truth in love." Our level of honesty determines our level of _____. We grow through conflict when we are intentional about inviting honest feedback in our relationships together.

To grow through conflict we must make a commitment to go through "the tunnel of truth." We cannot grow in our relationships if we have hidden _____.

Marriage and family researchers have found that the long term health and happiness of a marriage relationship and any other relationship is directly tied to people's willingness and ability to accept input, feedback, and influence from the other party.

- B. When conflict occurs take the initiative to resolve the issue and strengthen the relationships.

5 key steps:

1. Be the one who takes the _____ step.
"Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift."
(Mat. 5:24-25)
2. Prepare your _____ and seek God's perspective through prayer.
 - *"Out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks."* (Luke 6:45)
 - *"Hypocrite! First get rid of the log in your own eye; then you will see enough to deal with the speck in your friend's eye."* (Mat. 7:5 NLT)
3. Forgive by surrendering anger and your right to _____.
"Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you." (Eph. 4:32)
4. Empty your arsenal of verbal weapons.
"Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen." (Eph. 4:29)
5. Be willing to be on a mission to understand first before you seek to be _____.
The key to being a person who is good at speaking truth into other people's lives is being a person who is good at seeking and receiving feedback from others about their own life.
6. Be sure to _____ the person at the same time you're tackling an issue. Make it the goal not for them to see it your way or you to see it their way, but for you both to seek to see it God's way together.
7. Choose your _____ and words carefully.
8. Ask for help if necessary

Conclusion: Imagine what would happen if all of those under the surface tensions were dissipated and there was true unity in our homes, our friendships, and our businesses.

"And the Lord said, Behold. They are one people and they have one language; and this is only the beginning of what they will do, and now nothing they have imagined they can do will be impossible for them." (Gen. 11:6 AMP)

(**Answers:** I. towards, unite, reconciliation, refine, authentic II. intimacy, hostilities, first, heart, resent, understood, affirm, timing)