

Week 3

Loveology – Dealing with Conflict

Intro

We are going to take a different turn this week. And here's why, I honestly think we have a lot to learn about friendship. Maybe not even friendship as much as interacting well with people.

Now as a pastor, I get put in the awkward position a lot of people tattle telling on other people to me. They in turn want me to go to that person, and confront them, or fix them or something. Here's the problem, I'm not great at playing games, and I will default pretty much every time to this passage that we are going to look at.

I will tell you a story, in which none of you know any of the people involved.

- Story / Illustration

Okay that might seem a little extreme. Yeah maybe, but let's talk about your life.

Furthermore, if you want to have a healthy relationship, chances are, you are going to have a disagreement at some point. And at that point, the way you have practiced dealing with conflict for your whole life will come out. So, if you have practiced an unhealthy form, that's what your marriage could potentially look like.

Bible

Okay so let's look at the passage. **Matthew 18:15-17.**

If you were to answer honestly, this is not how you handle conflict. This is not how anyone handles conflict. The first sign of conflict or tension, you have people running off to someone to tell them about it.

"You will not believe what they said. You will not believe what they did."

And part of that comes from our insecurity and our love from watching other people fall. That's not what we are supposed to do.

So, before we dig into this passage too deeply, I want us to look at James.

James 4:1-5b - *What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not*

have, because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions. You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God?

What this may bring to light, is that all fights are actually out of selfishness. You want something so bad, and you can't have it, and that makes you mad. You see that person living the way you want to live or having the friends you want to have, and you can't have it. You think if you have this much money, you'll be happy, but when you see people with the money you want to have fail, then we love it. That's why celebrity gossip is such a thing. You know what we don't talk about, my neighbors that got divorced. But the rich and famous, we know the intimate details about their life because people love to watch them fall. That's horrible. That's disgusting.

And here's what Paul says we as Christ Followers should be pursuing

Ephesians 4:31-32 says, - "Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you." (ESV)

Get rid of all that stuff and then you should genuinely care for one another.

Dare I say, especially those friends of yours that are claiming to follow Jesus. You don't want them to stray. You don't want them to fall or to mess up. You want to build them up and keep them strong.

Matthew 5:9 says, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God." (ESV) - It doesn't say, "blessed are the gossips" "blessed are those that laugh when people fail", "blessed are those that lie to create drama".

So now hopefully we have that out of the way, let's get back to Matthew 18.

I basically don't need to preach this. It's so straightforward.

But I will anyway.

The ESV says, "If your brother or sister sins against you". So, if they wrong you, they say something about you, they hurt your feelings. You go to that person, and you say, "hey, I don't understand why this happened, can you help me". It doesn't say it exclusively in this passage, but we know from the rest of the context of the Bible that we are to go to a person with gentleness. So don't go yelling, don't go screaming, go with a gentle spirit.

I love the movie White Christmas. We watch it every year, but the main conflict in that story doesn't happen if Betty says to Phil, "hey, I heard you were doing this for your own good".

If it doesn't clear it up and there is still drama, then take one other person with you! Just one. So, at this point, who all needs to know about it, 3 people. You don't need to have blasted it out through texts, you don't need to have said, "please pray for John Smith because he is such a horrible person and needs prayer and I'm so much better than him because I'm taking the high ground". You could maybe have said, "hey chat group leader, could you pray for me, I'm going to have a hard conversation tomorrow."

The last step involves the church.

Which brings up an important distinction. This is specifically for Christians. This is how Christians are supposed to act.

It doesn't say cast them out and never talk to them; treat them like people that don't follow Jesus. WHICH...is with Love.

Application

Guys.

There are many reasons to follow what God says. Do you think God put all the verses in the Bible about how gossip was bad because he was like "I'm depriving them of something amazing!". No, he wanted to protect you and help you live a full life. Do you think he put this passage in because it's a terrible way to go? No, this is how we are supposed to do conflict.

AND. 90% of the time, of the relationships that are important to you, will end at phase one. They will. Misunderstanding. A better understanding

And then. In your relationships, it will go so much better.

Here's something that Shelbi (my wife) has never done. She has never talked bad about me to anyone. She hasn't. And I deserve it. I am an idiot, I'm messy, I'm sporadic, and sometimes, I'm just downright mean. And she has never talked about me badly to anyone. That gives me so much confidence in my marriage. That gives me so much trust.

Too often we just can't wait to trash people, what if we looked to protect people, especially those closest to us.

SET UP FADE AWAY

Chat/Small Group Questions

In your experience, do you feel like people handle conflict well?

Read Matthew 18:15-17

- What are some initial takeaways from reading this?
- If somebody wrongs us, what is normally our first reaction?
- What does this passage say about how we should handle conflict?
- Read verse 17 again - what do you think it means? (It still means to treat them with love and respect, just as someone who doesn't believe or follow God like you do.)
- Based on this passage do you think it's a sin to talk about your conflict with someone not involved? why/why not?

Read Hebrews 12:14-15

- What was the writer trying to say?
- How can you try to "live at peace with everyone"?
- What do you think the "bitter root" in v. 15 means?

What is something that stood out to you about conflict tonight?

How can you "do better" at this concept?