

Study for Sermon on January 9, 2022

When Conflicts Come
GET THE LOG OUT
Matthew 7:5

*You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye. **Matthew 7:5***

Getting Started

Attacking others only invites counterattack. Jesus teaches us to face up to our own contributions to a conflict before we focus on what others have done. When we honestly admit our own faults, our opponents will often respond in kind. As tensions decrease, the way may be opened for discussion, negotiation and reconciliation.



Group Discussion

IS THIS REALLY WORTH FIGHTING OVER

Rights and responsibilities. The tendency, these days, is to focus on my rights and pay less attention to my responsibilities. Too often, this leads to conflicts with others.

Scripture, such as Matthew 7:3-5, requires that we think differently. We are called to take account of our responsibilities before asserting our rights. This is easier to do when we spend time clarifying the issues that confront us as either substantive or personal. In many instances, the best response is to overlook an offense. Other times we will need to pursue a godly solution. In either setting, Paul calls us to rejoice in the Lord always.

James counsels us to consider it “pure joy” (*James 1:2-4*) when we face trials of many kinds. We are to see ourselves as stewards of rights and responsibilities and use them to bring glory to God and healing to relationships.

DISCUSS

- Describe the difference between “material,” or “substantive” issues, and “personal” issues. Is the difference clear to you? Explain.
- Equally important is the distinction between “overlooking” an offense and “denying” that there is a problem. Many people confuse the two, telling themselves that they have overlooked a wrong, while not fully forgiving the wrongdoer. Have you ever experienced this? What was the impact on your relationship?
- Paul and James counsel us to be joyful in every circumstance. How can a Christian “rejoice in the Lord always,” (*Philippians 4:2-9*) while also confronting serious challenges?
- Recall a time when you or someone you know failed to count the cost of pursuing their “rights.” What was the impact on the relationship involved? On the person who continued to pursue their rights?

CONFLICT STARTS IN THE HEART

This section is all about idols, not the kind made of wood and stone, but the kind we build in our hearts. We are created to desire, but too often even our godly desires become demands that set us on a destructive path with others. When desires drive our attitudes and behaviors in ungodly ways, we have crossed the boundary into idol-worship. Ken quotes David Powlison: *"When you and I fight, our minds become filled with accusations: your wrongs and my rights preoccupy me. We play the self-righteous judge in the mini-kingdoms we establish."* This is why getting logs out of our own eyes is such an important first step. Repentance is the solution to idolatry, replacing idol worship with worship of the true God.

DISCUSS

- What are some of the idols worshipped in your culture? What sorts of "sacrifices" do people make as they worship those idols?
- Are there idols within the Christian community? Within your church? What are they? And what impact do they have on the unity of believers?
- Finally, where in your own life are you tempted to idol worship? What do those idols tell you about your priorities? Is your struggle with sinful desires? Or is it with good desires wrongly pursued? What does repentance look like for you?

CONFESSION BRINGS FREEDOM

The gospel brings freedom to wrongdoers. In Christ, our sins are removed from us "as far as the east is from the west." Recognizing we are both sinful and forgiven enables us to strip away pride and pretension, examine ourselves honestly and confess our sins when we are wrong. Confession is seldom easy, but when done well, it brings freedom and helps us to be reconciled to others. Godly sorrow opens the door to transformation of our hearts and transformed hearts lead to changed behavior. We are never too old to experience God's transforming love, or so sinful that his grace cannot penetrate.

DISCUSS

- Have you ever experienced the freedom that comes from confessing and renouncing sinful behavior? Recall the experience and what you felt. What impact did it have on your attitude? On your behavior?
- Describe the difference between worldly sorrow and godly sorrow. In your experience, do most Christians understand the difference? If not, how might the gospel both convict them of wrongdoing and free them to fully repent?
- Are apologies and confessions common among Christians where you live? If not, how do Christians respond when they have sinned against someone? When they have been sinned against? Are these responses consistent with Scripture?
- Describe one lesson that you have learned from this study and how you plan to incorporate it into your life.

Next Steps

- Take some time praying for one another.
- Ask the Lord to reveal any idols in your life and then confess them and repent.
- Stay connected to your church community.
- Read and study God's Word and listen to what it has to say about Peacemaking.



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<https://rw360.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Peacemaker-Study-Guide.docx>