

RESOLVING CONFLICTS

God wants us to resolve conflicts, be peacemakers, and live in harmony with our companions and neighbors. Jesus emphasized and cautioned us that: *“If you bring your gift to the altar, and remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. Agree with your adversary quickly, while you are on the way with him”* (Mathew 5: 23-25).

Jesus further gave us the blueprint for all conflict resolutions in the Bible: *“**IF your brother sins against you** go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that by the mouth of two or three witnesses, every word may be established. And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the Church. But if he refuses even to hear the Church, let him be to you as a heathen and a tax collector”* (Mathew 18: 15-17).

The beginning of all conflict resolution is to critically examine and find out IF an offence has really been committed --- this is the beginning of the initial step of reasonable indication of a conflict. Sometimes there is NO OFFENCE really committed, but your own wrong perceptions, undue sensitivity, wrong interpretations, and vain imaginations. If you recognize that no offence exists, then deal with yourself, settle the matter between you and God, and leave the other fellow alone without any problem to resolve. If you are convinced that an offence has been committed, then follow the steps outlined by the Lord in the Bible.

We need to learn to forgive and forget. **To forget an offence does not literally mean that it is impossible for it to come into your mind sometimes. What it really means is that you deliberately decide to forgive and NOT HOLD IT IN YOUR HEART AND MIND AGAINST THE PERSON ANYMORE.**

THEREFORE YOU INTENTIONALLY REFUSE TO ALLOW IT TO INFLUENCE AND CONTROL YOUR FEELINGS, ATTITUDE, AND ACTIONS TOWARDS THE INDIVIDUAL. YOU HAVE TO CONTINUOUSLY REMIND YOURSELF OF THIS PRIVATE COMMITMENT YOU HAVE MADE IN THE SECRECY OF YOUR HEART, AND WORK HARD (WITH GOD’S HELP) TO ALWAYS THINK, SAY, AND DO WHAT IS RIGHT UNTIL YOU TRAIN YOUR MIND AND HEART TO LOVE AND FELLOWSHIP WITH YOUR COMPANION AGAIN.

When that happens, even if it becomes necessary for the incident or matter to be mentioned in the future as I explained previously, the people involved will not find it as an old bone of contention. They can rather smile over it, draw lessons out of the past hurt and foolishness, and use it as an occasion to affirm their commitment to each other.

MY WIFE AND I SOMETIMES RECALL SOME PAST MISUNDERSTANDINGS, AND LAUGH OVER OUR STUPIDITIES AS A YOUNG INEXPERIENCED COUPLE.

FOR EXAMPLE SHE USED TO OVERREACT EMOTIONALLY AND DISTASTEFULLY TOWARDS THE TIME I SPENT WITH PEOPLE ON OUR WAY TO A PLACE OR AFTER A PROGRAM WE HAVE ATTENDED. THOSE WHO KNOW ME ARE AWARE THAT I PAY CONSIDERABLE ATTENTION TO PEOPLE AND ENGAGE THEM IN CONVERSATION TO FIND OUT HOW THEY ARE DOING IN LIFE AND IN THE LORD. EVERY WOMAN WANTS ALL OF HER HUSBAND AT THE BEGINNING OF ANY RELATIONSHIP, ESPECIALLY IF PEOPLE ENGAGE HIS ATTENTION MOST OF THE TIME AS A MINISTER. IF I WAS OUT WITH HER, SHE OFTEN SAW ATTENTION FROM ME TO OTHERS IN THAT SENSE AS INTERFERENCE OF OUR PROGRAM. I ALSO SAW HER PROTESTS AS SELFISHNESS, AND NOT HAVING AN EVANGELICAL HEART THAT MAKES TIME FOR PEOPLE. CONTENTION WAS BUILDING IN THAT AREA.

AS WE CONTINUED IN THE MARRIAGE WE BEGAN TO SEE THAT EACH OF US HAD AN IMPORTANT POINT IN HIS OR HER OPINION, AND REALIZED THAT BOTH OF US NEEDED THE RIGHT BALANCE. WE LEARNED TO GET TO THE ROOTS OF THE MATTER, EXAMINE OUR PAST TRAINING AND GOD'S CALL UPON OUR LIVES, ADMITTED OUR DIFFERENCES AS MALE AND FEMALE, SAW THAT WE ARE TOGETHER TO COMPLEMENT AND SUPPORT EACH OTHER, RESOLVED OUR CONFLICT IN THAT AREA, AND LEARNED TO LIVE AND MINISTER NOT AS SINGLE PEOPLE OF THE PAST BUT MARRIED PEOPLE OF TODAY.

NOW WE REJOICE OVER HOW WE HAVE GROWN OVER THE YEARS IN WEAK AREAS OF OUR LIVES, ADMIT WHERE WE STILL NEED IMPROVEMENT, AND FORGE AHEAD BY FAITH FOR A BETTER TOMORROW. IN THIS WAY IT ENABLES US TO DERIVE STRENGTH FROM PAST MISTAKES AND FIND IT EASIER TO DEAL WITH FUTURE OFFENCES AND ALLOW THE ROUGH AREAS OF OUR LIVES TO MAKE US GROW DEEPER INTO EACH OTHER WITH MORE LOVE AND UNDERSTANDING.

As the two people involved in a conflict settle their differences, and labor to do good things for each other, old wounds will be healed, hurts will be replaced by love and peace, and strength will be derived from their weaknesses. The poison of the offences will be nullified in the sweetness of renewed commitment to each other for trust and mutual companionship. Then we can truly forgive and forget the past as we move on to productive lives, supported by happy and healthy relationships.

We must understand that forgiveness is a spiritual discipline. It does not come to us cheaply without any planning and self-sacrifice. It cost God the life of His only Son Jesus to forgive us of our sins against Him. Forgiveness is difficult because it opens us up and makes us vulnerable. However, we will NEVER be like Christ until we are schooled in the discipline of forgiveness. If the other person you are dealing with will not cooperate, leave him or her in God's Mighty and Merciful Hands, but pray for God to still love him or her through your heart.

After forgiveness there is the need for RESTORATION. Let us understand that forgiveness is an act of the mind, but restoration is primarily an emotional process that requires delicate treatment and dedicated attention.

The Lord promises rest and peace to all who come to Him with their burdens and admit that they are laboring under heavy loads of conviction, strife, conflicts, and disobedience (Mathew 11: 27, 28). No matter what conflict you deal with, He is "the God of ALL grace" (1 Peter 5: 10). There is enough grace of every kind for every need of yours. But "God resists the proud (who will refuse reconciliation or continue in their evil ways) but gives grace to the humble" (1 Peter 5: 5). "Therefore humble yourself under the mighty Hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time" (1 Peter 5: 6), and in that way you will obtain all the grace and help you need from Him to deal with conflicts and other problems of life that come your way. You will become a peacemaker and be identified as a true child of God. You and your loved ones will become blessed in this life.

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the sons of God" (Mathew 5: 9).

This is the way for you to become the sweet, loving, helpful, pure, joyful, productive, faithful, and desirable companion and friend that the world has been craving and crying for in you.

THESE ARE THE CLOSING REMARKS IN DR. SAMUEL KISSEADOO'S BOOK "CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND AGREEMENT". YOU CAN OBTAIN A COPY OF THE BOOK FROM: AMAZON.COM, OR FROM: REDLEADBOOKS.COM.

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