

Intimacy with God, the Road to Resolving Conflict

The more we encounter those who are struggling with unresolved conflicts through our counseling ministry, the more we are convinced that there is one primary reason why ongoing conflict continues to exist in our personal lives and marriages. And that reason, is a lack of maturing intimacy with the Lord through the Word and prayer. Intimacy with God will ultimately always produce intimacy between individuals and spouses and bring resolution to their conflicts.

Conflict was not in God's plan when He created man in Genesis 1:26-31. God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness..., so God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it... God saw all that He had made, and it was very good..."

If God did not purpose to create us to live our lives in unresolved conflict, where did it start? When we ask ourselves this question, we quickly go to the garden where God placed His creation Adam and Eve. In Genesis 2:25 we are told that "The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame." At this point they had an intimate, conflict free relationship with their Creator, God and one another. It was shortly thereafter that Satan tempted and convinced Adam and Eve that they would be like God if they would eat of the forbidden fruit from the tree that God had previously instructed them not to eat of.

In Genesis 3:7 we see what happened to them as a result of their disobedience. "Then the eyes of both of them were opened and they realized they were naked..." It was at this time that man broke his intimate relationship with God and rebelled against the image he was created in. As a result, man has habitually walked in selfishness and rebellion when he breaks a relationship of intimacy with God. Today, that rebellion which started in the garden shows up in many different ways.

First of all, by the lack of submitting our lives to Christ. Because of the rebellion manifested in the garden we come into this world alienated from God. It is only when we recognize our sinful nature and ask Jesus Christ to come into our lives that we have an opportunity to develop an intimate relationship with our Creator that is free from ongoing rebellion and conflict. If this is so, why do we continue to see believers in consistent conflict? Anytime, as in the garden, that we choose to rebel and sever our intimacy with God, unresolved conflict evolves. For instance, why do we see so much marital conflict and resulting divorce? When both husbands and wives refuse to submit to God and fulfill their God assigned roles, intimacy is broken between them and God and one another resulting in rebellion towards His Word.

Jesus responded to the Pharisees when questioned about Moses allowing divorce in Matthew 19:8 "... Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because their hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning." Furthermore in Mark 10:9 we are told "Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate."

What about conflict that exists between parents and their children? God reminds us in Psalm 127:3 that "our sons are a heritage from the Lord, children are a reward from Him." If we refuse to recognize our children as a gift from God and treat them otherwise, then we break intimacy with God by rebelling against His Word. In so doing, we bring God's judgment upon ourselves. Matthew 18:6 reminds us that "If anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea."

What about conflict that we allow to separate us from those around us? God's Word is very clear in Matthew 5:44 where we are told to "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you." If we obey, then He promises us in verse 45 that we will become sons of our Father in heaven. If we disobey, we bring God's judgment upon ourselves.

We also produce conflict when we rebel against those who govern us. He tells us in Romans 13:12 that He establishes all authority and that if we rebel against that authority, we bring judgment upon ourselves.

If we want to be free from unresolved conflict in our personal lives and marriages, then we must forgive and release those who have offended us to the Lord. Then we must deal with the ungodliness in us revealed by the Holy Spirit. Next, we must focus upon God through the Word and prayer in order to develop an ongoing, growing intimate relationship with Him. This allows us to see those who have hurt us through His eyes and not our own; thus, forgiving, loving and accepting them as He forgives, loves and accepts us.

Paul expresses intimacy with the Lord very well in Philippians 3:10, 11 - "I want to know Christ and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in His sufferings, becoming like him in His death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead."

Let us all purpose to develop, like Paul, a relationship of intimacy with God through the Word and prayer in order to resolve any conflicts that we may face in our personal lives as well as in our marriages. Remember, intimacy with God will always produce intimacy with others and bring resolution to our conflicts.