

Tough Love

Resolving our conflict when we're angry is often very difficult.

Read James 1:19-20

- Is there such a thing as righteous anger?
- If so, what makes it different than the kind of anger described here?

Read Ephesians 4:25-27

- How does anger change us when we hold on to it?
- Do you think this literally means do not go to bed if you are still angry?

Matthew 5:23-24

- Do we know when someone has an issue with us?
- Why does it say that we should go immediately?

Telling the truth in love to each other has got to be the most life changing behavior modification we can undertake in our lives. We grow more, mature more, learn more about ourselves and our love or lack of love of others every time we attempt to confront in love.

Let's look at what Jesus told us to do when dealing with conflict.

Read Matthew 18:15-17

"Jesus talks about three steps. The first one is, if there's an offense, if someone has sinned against you, if there's conflict, go to that person. Just go directly to the person. Go in private. Go for the purpose of reconciliation. If that doesn't work, then go get help. Bring another one or two people along, people that are wise and trusted and so on. If that

doesn't work, go to the church. The way that that would work here for us in our context would be the steering team, who are charged with the caring and watching over of the church."

- What do you think the purpose of the 'witnesses' is in the second step?
- What kind of person should you choose as a witness for the second step?
- What does it mean to treat them like a pagan or tax collector?
- Why have churches traditionally interpreted this to mean kick them out of the church?

Read John 17:23

In other words, what Jesus is saying is that the credibility of his being sent by the Father rests on the unity, the oneness of the church. His plan is for people to look at the church and to see our harmony and unity and to say it must be true. God surely must have sent Jesus if a community with this kind of oneness has been formed.

- Why do you think Jesus chooses unity to be what he places the credibility of his message on?
- How does it make you feel?

"Let's say there's me and let's say there's Dave. And I get hurt by something Dave says. He makes a comment about my time management skills and I feel hurt. So Dave and I have conflict over this, but he doesn't know anything about it at this point. So let's say we have this other friend, Ryan. And instead of going to Dave and talking to him about our conflict, let's say I go talk to Ryan about it. I tell him how frustrated I am and how Dave's always doing stuff like this and it just ticks me

off that Dave is so insensitive. At this point Ryan has been given a live grenade that he must either ignore or get rid of. In other words, Ryan may now feel responsible for my pain, but he has no authority to fix it for me. So, Ryan has my problem, but he can't fix it. So what can he do? Well he can go tell Dave, "Hey Man, Tim's hurt" He might think he's fixing the problem, but all he's done is try to get rid of his own responsibility and anxiety. I'm still offended even though Dave now knows there is a problem. And Dave and I still aren't talking. Instead we get to stew over it. And most likely blow up the conflict in our imaginations, prepare for battle, get defensive, and imagine the worst of each other."

"The difference between admonishment and confrontation is this – we confront when we are personally hurt or offended. But admonition is when we see someone caught in a destructive pattern of behavior. And we aren't hurt, but they are in trouble – so we admonish them. Admonishing is when we see someone with a habit of anger, or out of control spending, or they just chose to always see the down side – they habitually complain, or neglect their family; or someone who habitually chooses to lie so they can make themselves seem more powerful or important."

- When is it appropriate to admonish someone?
- Do we have to have first-hand knowledge that they're in trouble?
- What about things we see in the online world of Facebook, MySpace and others?

"May God give us the ability to confront and admonish in love. May we be willing to accept confrontation and admonishment from others. And may we become a community of amazing love and unity that can forgive."

- What are things we can do to resolve conflict the right way?
- How can we be a community that resolves instead of avoiding conflict?

Notes:

