

HOW TO REDUCE CONFLICT WITH OTHERS
How to Enjoy the Rest of Your Life - Part 3 of 12
Philippians 2:1-8
Rick Warren

PHILIPPIANS 2:1-8

"... make my joy complete by being likeminded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose." (vs 2)

HOW TO HAVE UNITY

(In Your Family, Business, or Church)

1. DEFUSE _____ (vs. 3a)

"Do nothing out of selfish ambition ..."

"Never act from motives of rivalry ..." (Ph)

"There must be no competition among you ..." (JB)

"What causes fights and quarrels? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You want something but you don't get it." James 4:1-2

1st Cause of Conflict:

2. DELETE _____ (vs. 3b)

"Do nothing out of ... vain conceit."

"Never act from motives of personal vanity" (Ph)

"Don't do anything ... from a cheap desire to boast" (GN)

"Pride only breeds quarrels." Prov. 13:10

2nd Cause of Conflict:

3. DECREASE _____ (vs. 3c)

"... in humility consider others better than yourselves."

DEF: Humility is not thinking less of yourself, but rather -- not thinking _____!

4. DEMONSTRATE _____ (vs. 4)

"Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others."

"Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives ... so that nothing will hinder your prayers."

I Peter 3:7

4th Cause of Conflict:

5. DEVELOP _____ (vs. 5)

"Your attitude should be the same as that of Jesus Christ."

vs. 6

vs. 7

vs. 8

5th Cause of Conflict:

"Do your best to preserve the unity which the Spirit gives, by the peace that binds you together."
Eph. 4:3 (GN)

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One of the major causes of unhappiness in our world is strained relationships. Conflict is a kill joy. How do you handle the conflict in your life? Unity is a key ingredient for success and fulfillment in life. To have a successful business the employees must work together. To have a successful football team the players must work together. To have successful government the congress and the president must cooperate. To have a successful family the members must work together. To have a successful church we must work together. Very little is accomplished in life by yourself. Success is never a one man show. Very little is accomplished without cooperation. When there is unity there is tremendous power and potential. The problem is people don't always get along. How do you reduce conflict and increase cooperation?

In Philippians 2 Paul talks about how to have unity and he deals with these things.

v. 1-2 "If you have any encouragement for being united in Christ, if any comfort from His love, any fellowship with the spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like minded, having the same love, being one in the Spirit and one in purpose." He gives four expressions of unity here.

"Be like minded"

"Have the same love"

"Be one in the spirit"

"Be one in purpose"

Paul outlines five practical steps:

1. DEFUSE COMPETITION

Too often we compete with people on our own team. Instead of complementing each other they are competing with each other. They are fighting each other. They have conflicting desires.

V. 3 "Do nothing out of selfish ambition" ("Never act from motives of rivalry"-- Philipps; "There must be no competition among you" -- Jerusalem Bible)

Defuse means to reduce the tension, strain and anger. V. 3 in Philipps says, "Never act from motives of rivalry". As a kid you were involved in sibling rivalries. You competed with your brothers and sisters and now you're much older and much more sophisticated. But some of you are still competing with your brothers and sisters, trying to prove that you're better. You're an adult and you're still trying to compete! You're on the same team, the same family!

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James 4:1-2 "What causes fights and quarrels? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You want something but you don't get it." He's saying that the first cause of conflict is competing desires. Our society teaches us instant gratification. When my needs conflict with your needs, we have trouble. We live in a very competitive world. If you want to have unity you've got to diffuse competition.

2. DELETE CONCEIT

Get rid of the pride issue. Don't do things just to show off your ego, just to gain praise or glory from others. V. 3 "Do nothing out of vain conceit" (Never act from motives of personal vanity -- Philipps; "Don't do anything from a cheap desire to boast" -- Good News). An egotist is an "I" specialist. His I's are too close together. All he can see is himself. The Bible says "Pride goes before destruction". The person who gets too big for his britches will eventually be exposed in the end.

Proverbs 13:10 "Pride only breeds quarrels."

The first cause of conflict is competing desires. The second cause of conflict is personal pride -- when I've got an ego and refuse to admit it when I'm wrong. That just breeds quarrels. If you could eliminate ego you would solve most of the people problems in today's world.

3. DECREASE CRITICISM

v. 3c "In humility consider others better than yourselves." When he says "better" he doesn't mean "superior". He means "worthy of respect". He says you're not to put people down, you treat them better than yourself.

This is a radical concept. Treat others better than yourself? Humility, consider them better? That's the exact opposite than our culture in America. We are full of people who think they are better than everybody else. We have elevated selfishness to an art form, a character quality.

He says decrease criticism because when you're critical you're thinking that you're better than the other people.

Humility -- not thinking less of yourself, but rather not thinking of yourself at all. Your focus isn't on you. It's not that you think less, it's just that you don't think about yourself. Your focus is on other people. You're other centered rather than self centered. The person that thinks he's humble, isn't. The humble person doesn't even know it because he's focusing on everybody else.

James 4:11-12 "Anyone who speaks against his brother or judges him speaks against the Law and judges it. There is only one Lawgiver and Judge. Who are you to judge your neighbor?" Anytime I judge somebody else, I'm playing God. Who are you to judge your neighbor? You don't know their motives, their background. Anytime I'm critical of somebody else in a judgmental attitude, I'm playing God. The problem is that it's fun to criticize. We like to criticize and pick out faults of

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other people because it makes us feel superior. We think we build ourselves up by putting other people down. The Bible says the exact opposite. If you want to get rid of conflict in your life, decrease criticism. Stop judging other people.

The third cause of conflict is when I fail to value other people, when I treat them with less respect than they deserve.

4. DEMONSTRATE CONSIDERATION

v. 4 "Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others." Don't just be interested in your own affairs. Circle "look". The Greek word is "scopos" from which we get the word "scope" -- like the scope on a rifle. Telescope in on it. Pay attention to the needs of other people. But we don't do it and that's why we have problems in our marriage, with our kids, with people whom we work with. We don't pay attention to their needs. Look and listen is how you pay consideration. Could you name the five greatest interests of your wife? husband? kids? Because you know them and have paid attention and you know what's interesting to them. Demonstrate consideration.

I Peter 3:7 "Husbands in the same way, be considerate as you live with your wives so that nothing will hinder your prayers." The way you treat your spouse affects your prayer life. Be considerate of each other so that nothing will hinder your prayers. Nothing I'm saying is new; we just don't do it.

The fourth cause of conflict is when I'm insensitive to other's needs. When I only see my needs, my feelings, how tired I feel, how pressured I feel, what I'd like to do on my day off.

5. DEVELOP CHRIST-LIKENESS

v. 5 "Your attitude should be the same as that of Jesus Christ." Jesus was a master at relationships. He is our model and great example. If you want to know how to get along with people, even those who are hard to get along with, look at Jesus. Get the same attitude that He had.

What was his attitude?

v. 6 - "Who being in the very nature of God did not consider equality with God something to be grasped." He didn't demand His rights. The person who yields his rights to God, gets God as defender of his rights. Who do you want defending you, yourself or God? Who can do a better job of it? He didn't defend His rights but He willingly gave them up.

v. 7 - "But made Himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant being made in human likeness." He had a serving attitude. How do you know if you have a serving attitude? How do you respond when people treat you like a servant?

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v. 8 - "And being found in appearance as a man He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even death on the cross." He was willing to sacrifice for the benefit of others.

It's impossible to live a lifestyle of total unselfishness on your own. It is human nature to be selfish, to think only of me. We all have that nature to do what we want to do. I cannot live totally unselfishly with my wife or my kids or the people I work with, etc. I can't do it by myself. "Let this attitude be in you that was in Christ."

The fifth cause of conflict is living without Christ. Unity is a gift of the spirit. Ephesians 4:3 "Do your best to preserve the unity which the Spirit gives, by the peace that binds you together." The Spirit puts unity in our lives and families. In order for you to get along with other people you must grow more and more like Jesus Christ. It's not imitation but habitation. Every day when I consciously choose to put somebody else's rights before my own, to serve another, to build people up instead of tearing them down, to sacrifice for the benefit of others I am becoming more like Jesus Christ. And that is the secret of lasting joy.

As long as you are asking "What's going to make me happy?" you're never going to be happy. You've got to get a purpose bigger than yourself to live for. The problem with a self-made man is that he usually worships his maker. And that's a small god.

Review:

1. Diffuse competition. Is there competition going on in your marriage? Are you competing over free time? or money? or television? or goals? The root of most marriage problems is plain old selfishness -- me first.
2. Pride. Do you want your way all the time? and everybody revolves around you? Do you like to admit it when you're wrong? Teenagers, is it just possible that your parents might be right? Parents, is it possible that you kid might be right? Pride causes quarrels.
3. Criticism. Do you give more strokes or pokes? Conflict comes when we fail to value people.
4. Consideration. Are you considerate with those closest to you? Do you tend to take them for granted? just assume that they'll always be there? You assume that you have a right to certain things. Do you take into consideration the emotional needs of your mate? Or do you just pretend they don't exist? Do you take into consideration the sexual needs of your mate? Or do you just pretend they don't exist? Consideration is the key to harmony and unity.

The good news is that it is possible to live a happy, satisfying life with other relationships. It is possible. It is possible to live in harmony with those you choose to live in harmony with. It is possible to have a meaningful relationship with that person you married. And it is possible to enjoy the people around you. How? The solution is letting Jesus Christ live through you. When Jesus Christ is in me and Jesus Christ is in you, Christ is not going to fight with Christ. Wherever there is disunity there is sin. Somebody isn't living like Jesus.