

THE TAKE AWAY

DISCUSSION GUIDE

Sunday, August 13, 2023

Message Summary:

In Sunday's message in our new series, *Summer of Love*, Pastor Jordan Carter taught us how to navigate conflict in relationships. We are called to have relationships with others, and yet, we are diverse in thought, opinion, and perspectives. These differences often create conflict in relationships. And we each have our own way of responding to conflict. Some may be AVOIDANT, withdrawing from conflict and running in the other direction. Some may be ACCOMMODATING, being so concerned with preserving the relationship, they concede their own desires or goals. Or some may be COMPETITIVE, seeing all conflict as a win-or-lose battle that quickly spirals into destruction. Our response to conflict is often cultivated by our experiences that have taught us how to handle conflict. Unless you have had a godly example of how to deal with conflict, you probably relate to one of these three approaches.

But conflict does not have to be combative. Conflict can actually be a good thing! Conflict can be clarifying for both you and the other person. It can bring things to light things that would have otherwise remained hidden or festered in the shadows. But to obtain the gifts of conflict, it is important that conflict resolution be led by love. Thankfully, the Bible has a lot to say about dealing with conflict and how to reframe it in a way that creates clarity and not combat. If we want to learn how to approach conflict in a healthy and godly way, we have to live by the following principles:

1. **Always remember, you control you.** – Regardless of what another person does, you have the final say over your own behavior. When we allow others to control the attitude and mindset of our lives, we lose the boundaries that make us unique and powerful.
2. **Keep your conflict private.** – We are obligated to talk it out in private. Gossip only makes conflict worse over time. It is better to give someone the truth directly than to pretend like there hasn't been an offense at all.
3. **Communicate with compassion.** – How we communicate matters. Different people require different ways of communication. If you see everyone as a nail, you will act like a hammer. We need to customize the way we communicate based on the person we are talking to and treat others with grace.
4. **Cultivate compromise.** – If a conflict is me against you, it creates combat. When we consider the interests of others, we consider the person over the problem. Compromise doesn't mean giving up your values. Compromise is to find common ground that honors both parties.
5. **Always extend forgiveness.** – We are called to forgive those who trespass against us. So, we have to learn to let it go. We must extend forgiveness to them in the same way God has extended forgiveness to us. Just do your best, and let God do the rest. Holding grudges only hurts you.

So consider this: What if we loved ourselves enough to communicate our feelings and needs? What if we loved others enough to understand them and work toward compromise? What if we loved God enough to trust him to resolve what we cannot? When we lead with love, the cracks get covered by grace. Just as we have received grace, we get the opportunity to give it in equal measure.

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Scriptures:

- **[Proverbs 25:28 NLT]** *A person without self-control is like a city with broken-down walls.*
- **[Ephesians 4:26 NLT]** *And "don't sin by letting anger control you." Don't let the sun go down while you are still angry...*
- **[Matthew 18:15 NLT]** *"If another believer sins against you, go privately and point out the offense. If the other person listens and confesses it, you have won that person back.*
- **[James 1:19 NLT]** *Understand this, my dear brothers and sisters: You must all be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry.*

Discussion Questions:

1. What causes conflict in relationships?
2. When is conflict bad?
3. When is conflict good?
4. How does conflict help us to grow?
5. What are the benefits of being "quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry"?

Life Application:

Over the next week, as you study the key scriptures, ask yourself the following question: Pastor Jordan mentions several ways people respond to conflict. How do you approach conflict: Avoidance, Accommodation, or Competition? How could partnering with the Holy Spirit help you to resolve conflict in a healthy and godly way? This week, invite the Holy Spirit into every relationship in your life. Ask Him for the wisdom and guidance to create healthy and safe spaces in all of your relationships.