

CALL to PRAYER -

Pray for peace within the church...no division

*Philippians 4:1-3 - Confronting Conflict in the Church*

Intro - The last 2 weeks have been rather uncomfortable for the clergy at CBBC (self-inflicted hotseat). Our series on *Ecclesiology* has moved to *Messy-ology* .... and we first examined messes in the ministry. We looked at the qualifications & job description of an elder and then corruption within church leadership. Today I expand the party to include all of us in the mess...or in cleaning up the mess at church. Churches can be messy places. They are full of broken people who are all in process of being mended. God is working on all of us, and we are in different stages of sanctification. And have you noticed that God puts us together in unusual groupings. Sometimes the people He puts together don't always mesh (kind of like marriage). There is an inevitability of difficulty in marriage and in church. Conflict happens...expect it ...talk about how to deal with it. *MINOR CONFLICT*      *MAJOR CONFLICT*      *MORAL CONFLICT*

*MINOR CONFLICT*

- Phil. 4:2 mentions two godly women who couldn't get along
  - These are not pagan women.      They are godly women in the church
    - They struggled in the gospel (4:3) Paul's fellow laborers
    - their names in the Book of Life (4:3) they were the real deal
  - Paul doesn't pick sides or say one was right and the other wrong
    - Probably a personality conflict - two strong women going head to head
    - This never happens in a church.....does it?
- 'Live in harmony in the Lord' - "be of the same mind" - KJV      "attitude" - Phil 2:5
  - An orchestra warming up is not in sync, so it doesn't sound right
    - The problem isn't the notes but the timing/placement of the notes
    - Euodia & Syntyche were out of sync - pushing their own parts/personality
  - We can sing/play different notes in the church but still make good music
    - The problem isn't different personalities...it is harmony
  - In fact - the difference in tone is what enhances the sound. (88 keys in right combo)
    - "Ebony and ivory go together in perfect harmony..."
  - God places different people together to create a more beautiful harmony
  - Daddy can sing bass and momma can sing tenor....the trick is how to harmonize
    - Harmony doesn't just happen in music or relationship
    - Harmony isn't easy, but it sure is easy on the ears
    - A harmonious church is a beautiful thing (right attitude -Phil. 2:5)
- Helpful reminders for minor issues
  - Don't elevate      Don't be #1      Don't overpower or be loudest voice in choir
    - Phil. 2:2-5      Others are more important than you
    - Rom. 12:10      (have a "You first" not "Be first" attitude)
    - Be humble and be last.      Kingdom principle - last/first - Mark 9:35
    - Don't push your preference and be a bull in a china-closet - James 4:1

- Don't retaliate
  - 1 Peter 2:21-23      Is. 53:7      (a closed mouth can solve a lot of conflicts)
  - David and Shimei      2 Sam. 16:5-14
  - Matt. 5:38-41
  - Rom. 12:17-21
- Do meditate
  - You don't have to always confront it; you can absorb it - Prov. 19:11
  - Col. 3:12-15      (love=longsuffering/bears all things - 1 Cor. 13:7)
  - Water off a duck's back.      We don't have to always get our panties in a wad
  - Not easily angered      James 1:19-20
    - In minor issues....take a chill pill..... no big deal
    - Sometimes we get upset over the silliest things

### **MAJOR CONFLICT**

- Escalation and confrontation      not all issues are small issues (little messes)
  - Determine the size of the issue      mountain or molehill?
- Mature Christians can have major disagreements
  - Acts 15:36-40      the first church split was a missionary split
    - The team of Paul and Barnabas broke apart over a major conflict
    - Two teams were formed, and they went in two different directions
  - Their disagreement/division doubled their mission
- Major conflict is often public
  - Open conflict can cut down the gossip
  - Gal. 2:11-14
    - Major conflict (open conflict) between Paul, Barnabas, and Peter
  - If the Apostles had issues ... don't be surprised if we have issues
- Major Conflict is bad.....but I can also be beneficial
  - 1 Cor. 11:18-19
    - Divisions happen in church      (1 Cor. 1:11-12)
    - There MUST be factions      (heresies = "a choice")
      - Divisions disclose the two sides of the issue
        - We need clear lines of demarcation to separate choices
      - Divisions disclose approved disciples
      - Divisions disclose true doctrine
        - Conflict can make us search the content of the scripture
  - Judges 3:1-2
    - God left nations in the Promise Land so a new generation would learn war.      They needed to learn to fight
    - There is major conflict in our denomination
      - We need to weight the issues and learn to fight for what is right
    - Major conflict helps to sort out issues and who is on what side

### **MORAL CONFLICT** (next week)