

TLP 545: Biblical Conflict Resolution, Part 11 I speak biblically

I. Speak the Armor of God.

- Ephesians 6:13-28
 - When it comes to speaking boldly about the mystery of the Gospel (of which we are all called to be ambassadors), how can you apply the Armor of God to conflict resolution?
 - You will not stand firm and be victorious if you're not rooted in and speaking truth.
 - You will not stand firm and be victorious if you're not speaking righteously.
 - You will not stand firm and be victorious if you're not speaking in Gospel-accurate ways.
 - You will not stand firm and be victorious if you're not speaking in faith.
 - You will not stand firm and be victorious if you're not speaking from the position of your justification in Christ.
 - You will not stand firm and be victorious if you're not speaking biblical commands and principles.
 - You will not stand firm and be victorious if you're not speaking to God in prayer as you pursue reconciliation.
 - All of our communication—our internal monologue, our silent prayer to God, and our communication with the person in front of us—will only be successful as we speak God's truth about the situation.

II. Target the sin in the situation.

- II Corinthians 10:3-6
 - Listen to how Paul describes our words in times of conflict resolution: warring, weapons, destruction, captive, and punish. That doesn't sound too friendly, does it?!
 - And, for those of you who too often give in to the temptation to be tone police, these words are accurate and good. We are to fight and war against sin. The issue is that we view our conflict as being against another person. But it's not. We do not war according to the flesh.
 - So, even though we're talking with a person, we're talking about the sin. And sin absolutely needs to be attacked with the weapon of Scripture. Those sinful thoughts need to be torn down and taken captive in Christ.
 - It's all about the target of our words.
 - This step here is the one we spend the most time on in reconciliation counseling. It's relatively easy for people to mentally acquiesce to the biblical facts about how we are to think and approach conflict resolution. But when we open our mouths, our words prove what we really believe, and the vast majority of professing Christians in the church today just do not have a habit of speaking biblically.
 - Therefore, the words spoken in what should be times of reconciliation often create more conflict by distracting from the most important topics or attacking the person or just reveling in self-worship.
 - John MacArthur once said that the best confrontation is done with an open Bible. Of course, he meant that we actually have to be looking at and speaking the truth of that open Word of God into the situation.

III. Stay on target.

- II Timothy 2:14-17
 - It's so easy to get distracted in confrontation. We start by speaking truth, but before long we're waist deep in useless wrangling and empty chatter.
 - To help battle this tendency, when pursuing conflict resolution, focus on *one* issue at a time. You may have to revolve priorities throughout the conversation in order to clarify misunderstandings, come to agreement on events, or address sinful reactions. But, generally speaking, this time should be used to address the main sin of the moment.
 - Biblically identify the root sin, address that first, and then deal with the ancillary sins that sprung from the root. Once the individual sees what the truth of God's Word has to say about their main sin, it will be much easier to see the consequential sins as well as the outwardly good things they may have done but which were done in the wrong way or for the wrong reasons.
 - So many of these attempts at conflict resolution play out like a fireworks factory and a lit match. One topic is addressed, and—before you know it—every single grievance is exploding in a fiery torrent.

IV. A Biblical Example of Conflict Resolution

- II Timothy 3:1-17
 - Verses 1-9 describe the conflict.
 - Verses 10-17 describe the only source of truth that is guaranteed to result in pleasing God.
 - In addition to learning from others how to live (verses 10-11), verses 14-17 provides us with the teaching, reproof, correction, and training necessary to glorify God in persecution and conflict.
 - Sin is the clear and obvious issue in this passage. So, what are we supposed to do when faced with this kind of behavior?
 - In general, we need to make a practice of avoiding these kinds of people. We're going to see that in this passage momentarily. Now, this is not to say that we don't pursue reconciliation for conflict that grows from such behavior. And it's also not dismissing the importance of evangelizing the lost. The point that's going to be made in this passage is that we not fellowship with them and be like them. We have a higher calling. We are to be a light to the lost, not buddies in their self-destruction. We don't want to walk with sinners, stand with the wicked, and sit with scoffers because we want to protect our influences.
 - We must continue in the truths which we have learned from the Scriptures. We have to teach and reprove and correct and train using God's Word. Those are the only words that will result in us being adequate, equipped for every good work, and that's definitely the goal of biblical conflict resolution.
- Regardless of what anyone else does, we must speak truth into the conflict. Sure, the other people may use that to justify their sin, but at least you will be pleasing the Lord.