



Tested Conflict (May 11)

Series Summary: Situations and emotions come up in life that test our faith. The question is not if these situations and emotions will come about. Instead, the question is how will we respond when they do?

Big Idea/Question: We must glorify God with how we handle conflict.

GET THEM TALKING

How does conflict test our faith?

Are arguments or disagreement by default sinful?

What could make an argument or disagreement sinful?

GROUP DISCUSSION

(is this disagreement worth it?)

2 Timothy 2:22-26 Flee the evil desires of youth and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. **23** Don't have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments, because you know they produce quarrels. **24** And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. **25** Opponents must be gently instructed, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, 26 and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will.

Vs 23- How do you know if an argument is foolish?

Are we more likely to engage in a foolish disagreement on social media? If so, why?

Leader Note / Answer: Yes!! Across all social media platforms and all age demographics, people are more prone to start an argument and escalate an argument on social media. Why? I believe this is due to the risk of confrontation being removed. People are more bold and foolish if they do not have to look the other person in the face.

Vs 25- What did Paul mean when he said opponents should be gently instructed?

Leader Note: A guiding principle to any disagreement is that if we can gently instruct our opponent we should have the disagreement. If we know our temper will get the best of it we are not in the right frame of mind to have the conversation.

How does social media and cell phones affect how we “gently instruct opponents”?

VIDEO TEACHING

Conflict is not always avoidable. Infact, some disagreements need to happen. However, they need to happen in a God-honoring way.

Context: Paul and Barnabas were leaving on a missionary journey to share the Gospel but they had a disagreement over who they should bring regarding John-Mark

Acts 15:36-41

Here we see two faithful believers in Jesus try to work through a disagreement. Scripture does not state who was right because that is not the point. In reality, both men had valid points to back up their strong convictions. In the end, they could not work out their differences. Did this make them terrible Christians? No. Paul and Barnabus did the hard work of working out their differences face to face. They were disagreeing over important matters.

Takeaway(s): We should avoid foolish arguments. But that does not mean every argument is foolish. Some disagreements need to be had. The key is that they need to be had the right way.

Transition - in small groups we're going to discuss how we can work through conflict in a God-honoring way.

GROUP DISCUSSION

(disagreement the right way)

Is there such a thing as a God-honoring conflict? If so, what does that look like?

Leader Noten / Passage Context: The passage below is speaking specially about a Christian confronting another Christian who is living in sin. This is important because not every disagreement fits into this mold. However, the principle in the passage below does guide us in every disagreement.

Matthew 18:15-17 "If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. **16** But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.' **17** If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector.

What does this passage teach us about how to deal with conflict in a God-honoring way?

Why is it important to deal with conflict face to face (just between the two of you) as said in verse 15?

How can conflict go wrong if we choose to engage in the conflict via text or IMs?

Vs 16- The "two or three witnesses" in vs 16 are brought along to help bring peace to the situation and be witnesses. This is vastly different than bringing along your closest friends to gang up on this person. So what kind of people should you bring with you? How do you go about choosing these people?

Leader Note: We are called to be peacemakers (Matt 5:9, Rom 14:19). This means that we must do the hard work of making peace. So we have to ask two questions.

1. Are we trying to make peace or are we trying to "win" the argument?
2. Are the people we are bringing along with us also peacemakers? Is their goal to make peace? If the answer is no, you brought the wrong people!

Vs 17- As was stated earlier this passage is in reference to blatant sin issues in the life of a believer. That being said this does show a universal norm that not all disagreements will or can reach a peaceful understanding. So how do you know you are at the point where you need to go your separate ways?

Vs 17- If you do have to part ways over a disagreement how do you do so well? What are the dos and don'ts of this situation?

Leader Note: If this process includes endless gossip you have done it wrong (Eph 4:29)!