

INTRO & SESSION 1: THE NATURE OF CONFLICT

REFERENCES

QUESTIONS

1. What is a relationship in your life that you value? Why?
2. *Peacemaking is applying the gospel and God's principles for problem solving to everyday life* (p.13). What does this statement mean to you? What are God's principles for problem solving?
3. How is the entire Bible a story about conflict and reconciliation? How should this guide us as Christians?
4. How can our sinful desires fuel conflict? Refer to James 4:1-2. Why do you think James uses the image of war to describe out-of-control desires?
5. What is the *spark, gasoline, and fuel* of conflict?
6. Take a look at 1 Corinthians 12:12-31. Discuss what Paul's analogy about the body of Christ tells us about conflict and where it could come from.
7. Read Acts 6: What was the conflict? How did they deal with it? What was the resolution?
8. Read Philippians 2:4. What happens when someone constantly makes his or her interests *more important* than the interests

of others? What happens when someone constantly makes his or her interests *less important* than others?

9. *We are all part of the problem, and the problem is part of all of us* (p.15). Why does conflict happen? Think about some conflicts in your life. What were the causes of those conflicts? How did you deal with the conflict? What part did selfishness play?

a. Think deeper – *peel back the onion*. The cause of a conflict is not an action by one or both of the parties involved; it can always be boiled down to a *heart issue* – specifically a craving, desire, or unmet expectation. Share some examples if you are comfortable.

10. How can conflict be beneficial? What bad results have you seen or experienced from conflict? What good results have you seen or experienced from reconciliation?

11. Talk through the evolution of the root of conflict, *idolatry*, on page 19. When in your life have you seen a desire grow into an idol?

12. PERSONAL TAKE-HOME: *The gospel is both vertical, bringing reconciliation between God and human beings, and horizontal, bringing peace between individual people and groups.*

a. Find three Bible verses that encourage you in finding reconciliation with God and others.

b. Do you believe God can empower you to resolve conflicts? Why?

13. CHALLENGE: Think of a conflict or two in your life that you can reflect on as you proceed through this book. Perhaps take some time to journal about how that conflict played out in your past, and what you would change about your actions based on what you are learning each week.

SESSION 2: THE HOPE OF THE GOSPEL

Read the chapter together as a group; then discuss the following questions. Keep in mind the questions are meant to prompt conversation, so don't feel the need to use or discuss every question.

REFERENCES

John 13:35, John 17:21, 23, Romans 8:3,
Colossians 1:21-22, John 3:16, Romans
3:20, Ephesians 2:8-9, Isaiah 53:1-12,
1 Peter 2:24-25, 2 Corinthians 5:15-21,
Colossians 3:12-15, Ephesians 3:16-19,
1 John 3:16, Luke 6:27-28, Romans 5:8,
Matthew 5:23-24, 18:15, 1 John 1:8-9

QUESTIONS

1. Describe a moment when or place where you felt peaceful.
2. What things or characteristics keep us from living the way God wants us to?
3. How would you describe the gospel in your own words?
4. *Just knowing the right thing to do never brings peace* (p.25). Why? What does bring peace?
5. How do you understand this quote from the book: *We miss God's great plans for us if we think of the gospel only as the key to eternal life...the gospel is for now* (p.28)?
6. Read Matthew 18:21-22. Why do you think Peter was seeking a limit on the number of times a follower of Christ was required to forgive someone?
 - a. What might have been shocking to Peter about Jesus' response?
 - b. Do you think Jesus literally meant more than seventy times?
 - c. What is important about being in a state of "readiness" when it comes to facing an opportunity to forgive someone?

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7. Read Colossians 3:12-15 together. With the new life God has given us, what can we experience? How do the sacraments cultivate this new life in us?
 - a. If the list of things in these verses sound impossible for your life, talk about what God has done for you already.
 - b. How can you let those truths change you?
8. Do you believe that Jesus is God's Son and that He came to reconcile you with God? If so, how has this belief changed your heart and life? How has it changed your response to conflict?
 - a. In conjunction with this, discuss the quote on page 32: *All change comes from deepening your understanding of the salvation of Christ and living out of the changes that understanding creates in your hearts. Faith in the gospel restructures our motivations, our self-understanding, our identity, our view of the world.*
9. *When I understand and experience what God has done for me, my response moves from "I should do that" to "I can do that" and ultimately to "I want to do that" (p.33).* Walk through the list on pages 31 to 32 of what you can do through the gospel. Have you experienced any of these things? What else has the transformative power of the gospel enabled you to do? How does the divine service experience help you understand the gospel and its relevance to your life? Give a specific example.
10. How should the presence of the Holy Spirit in our hearts spill over in the ways we relate with other people?
11. Being part of a community of faith gives us a place to practice loving others, so we can go out in the world and be examples of Christ's love. How could this same principle apply to peacemaking?

12. **PERSONAL TAKE-HOME:** Use Ephesians 3:16-19 as a prayer for this week, changing the “you” to “me”: *I pray that...Christ may dwell in my heart through faith [so] that I, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge – that I may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.*
13. **CHALLENGE:** Based on our chapter today, think of how a peaceful and flourishing relationship might express itself between two people. With someone in your life, read through Colossians 3:12-15 together. Commit to working on these characteristics in your relationship with each other.

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SESSION 3: ESCAPING, ATTACKING, OR PEACEMAKING

Read the chapter together as a group; then discuss the following questions. Keep in mind the questions are meant to prompt conversation, so don't feel the need to use or discuss every question.

BIBLE REFERENCES

1 Corinthians 6:1-8, 1 Corinthians 4:20-5:2, Genesis 4:2-9

QUESTIONS

1. Have you ever gotten lost while on a road trip with someone? What happened and how did you find your way again?
2. When conflict arises, what are our natural human responses? Discuss each response in detail.
 - a. Why do you think these types of responses are instinctual for humans?
 - b. Are they godly or sinful responses, or some combination of both?
3. Why do some people believe if you ignore a problem long enough, it will go away? What usually happens instead?
4. What is *peacefaking*?
5. What is *peacebreaking*?
6. How are the conflict responses of escape and attack self-serving?
7. How does responding with peacemaking shift your focus?
8. **Escaping conflict:** Read 1 Corinthians 4:20-5:2.
 - a. What is the issue the Corinthians were ignoring?
 - b. What excuses could they have used to justify leaving it be?

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c. What did Paul say was the appropriate response to this situation?

d. What would an escape response in a congregational setting look like today?

litigation, or peacemaking)? Why did you respond in that way? Think about how your own desires or self-centeredness may have played a role. How could you have responded differently?

9. Attacking in conflict: Read Genesis 4:2-9.

a. What was Cain's issue with his brother?

b. Did Abel seem aware of it?

c. How did God attempt to confront Cain?

d. What choices did Cain have in this situation?

e. What did he end up choosing?

f. Why do you think some people feel tempted to resort to violence in dealing with conflict?

10. How is conflict an opportunity to point people to Jesus? Have you ever been able to share Jesus with others during a conflict? Share this experience with your small group.

11. What is the *Slippery Slope*? What are the *Four Gs* of peacemaking? How might using these four principles during a conflict help you to glorify God?

12. What is your conflict style? Are you more of an avoider or an attacker? Explain – give some examples, if you're willing!

a. Think about how feelings of resentment could develop as a direct result of addressing a conflict this way.

b. What happens to resentment over time? How could changing your response address feelings of resentment or bitterness?

13. PERSONAL TAKE-HOME: Take some time to think through a recent conflict. How did you respond (denial, flight, attack, assault,

14. CHALLENGE: As you encounter conflict throughout the next week, pay attention to how you respond and write it down.

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SESSION 4: GO HIGHER

Read the chapter together as a group; then discuss the following questions. Keep in mind the questions are meant to prompt conversation, so don't feel the need to use or discuss every question.

BIBLE REFERENCES

1 Corinthians 10:31, John 5:30, Proverbs 3:5-7, John 14:15, Ephesians 5:1-2, Psalm 37:31, Proverbs 19:11, Proverbs 17:14, 1 Peter 4:8, Ephesians 4:2, Psalm 103:8-10, Luke 6:36

QUESTIONS

1. When making a decision, what things do you consider to help you decide?
2. What does it mean to glorify God? Discuss some examples of how Jesus glorified God while on earth.
3. In what situations might you decide to overlook a conflict rather than confront or deal with it? Why is this sometimes an appropriate solution? When is it not appropriate?
4. We put ourselves in conflict with God when we sin. How does He deal with this conflict? How do you deal with this conflict?
5. Why is "Go Higher" the first G principle in resolving conflict? How does this contrast with society's view of conflict.
 - a. Think about expressions such as, "It's my right to..." or "But I'm in the right..." Does it really matter to God who is right?
6. Review the Bible verses on page 53 together. Think of and share examples of when you have been treated with mercy and grace, when someone has overlooked a sin of yours.
 - a. Overlooking is not the same as "forgive and forget." Discuss how overlooking an

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offense is an *active, strong, and practical* choice. Discuss what it would look like to live in an *atmosphere of grace*.

forgiven your sins, how He has been gracious and merciful to you.

7. Read Ephesians 5:1-2 together. How do these verses summarize what you've learned in this chapter?
8. *When conflict heats up, God is usually the last thing on our minds* (p.46). Why is this the case? What can we do to focus on God when in conflict?
9. *It's crucial to realize that you either glorify God or you glorify something or someone else* (p.49). Discuss this quote. When we obey the commands of God, what does that tell the people around us?
10. Do you find it difficult to trust God when you are in conflict? Why?
11. How would your feelings, attitudes, or behaviors change if you were able to start seeing conflict as an opportunity to trust, obey, and imitate God?
12. *Glorifying God brings Him praise and honor by showing who He is, what He is like, and what He is doing in you.* Conflict resolution does not always lead to the resolution we might have in mind. Even if others do not respond positively to your efforts to make peace, you can find assurance in knowing you handled the situation the way God wanted, glorifying Him and showing how He is working in you.
 - a. Discuss why this might be difficult. Share an experience where you tried to make peace but the other person did not want to.
 - b. How did you find peace? Were you able to accept God's forgiveness for the situation?
13. **PERSONAL TAKE-HOME:** Read Psalm 103. Contemplate how God has covered and

14. CHALLENGE: As conflict comes your way this week, think to yourself – *is this worth fighting over? Is this an issue worth taking a hard stance on?*

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SESSION 5: GET REAL

Read the chapter together as a group; then discuss the following questions. Keep in mind the questions are meant to prompt conversation, so don't feel the need to use or discuss every question.

BIBLE REFERENCES

Matthew 7:3-5, Psalm 139:23-24,
Hebrews 4:12, Proverbs 19:20, Proverbs
28:13

QUESTIONS

1. What is amusing about a fun-house mirror? Would it be an effective device to use for getting ready in the morning? Why or why not?
2. When something goes wrong, why do most people want to immediately assign responsibility for what happened?
3. How does knowledge of the Bible help us to “get real”?
4. Why is taking responsibility for your part in a conflict crucial to peacemaking? What is the main question you should ask yourself in this step?
 - a. If you’re having trouble, start with the two following questions: *Why am I so upset about this situation? and What am I hoping to gain by addressing this conflict?*
 - b. What do these two questions reveal?
5. Walk through the *Seven A’s* of a good confession on pages 64-67. Discuss each point and why it is important.
6. What qualities or traits are helpful in “getting real”?
7. Read Matthew 7:1-5.
 - a. What is Jesus teaching us here about our response to conflict?

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SESSION 6: GENTLY ENGAGE

Read the chapter together as a group; then discuss the following questions. Keep in mind the questions are meant to prompt conversation, so don't feel the need to use or discuss every question.

BIBLE REFERENCES

Galatians 6:1, Matthew 18:15-17, James 5:20, Matthew 7:1, Matthew 5:21-24, Luke 17:3, 1 Corinthians 5:1-13, James 1:19, 2 Timothy 2:24-25

QUESTIONS

1. The playwright George Bernard Shaw once said, *"The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place."* What do you think about this quote?
2. Consider the different definitions given of the word *restore* in Galatians 6:1 – *mend, repair, equip, complete*. How do these additional insights affect that way you think about engaging someone about their sin?
3. What are the benefits of initiating a conversation with someone with whom you are in conflict even when you believe it is not your fault?
 - a. Explain the importance of modeling acknowledgment and genuine repentance (what we talked about last chapter) before asking someone else to do that.
4. When is it necessary for you to bring another's sins to their attention?
5. What qualities or traits are helpful in "gently engaging" others?
6. What is God's role in the step of "gently engaging" others? Reference 2 Timothy 2:24-25. How else can God help you to "gently engage" others?

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7. Read Galatians 6:1-6.
- What do these verses warn against?
 - What does it mean to get "caught" in sin?
8. Why might we feel reluctant to confront another's sins?
9. In this chapter, we learn that it is important to actually go and speak face-to-face with the person about their sins. Why is this face-to-face connection important? Why is it so hard to do?
- Is there anything we can do to make this step easier? Discuss the other suggestions on page 81 for when you go to "gently engage" someone.
10. React to this thought: *The governing dynamic is love. A rule of thumb should be to **go in love** or don't go at all.* Discuss how you would like someone else to approach you in a conflict.
11. Consider the PAUSE Principle: Read Philippians 2:1-4, then discuss the following steps:
- Prepare.** (See Proverbs 14:8) Think ahead about the conversation and what you can do in advance to make it go well; pray, read Scripture, develop options, plan your remarks, anticipate reactions, etc. *What can you say or do to help the person you are confronting not feel like they are being backed into a corner?*
 - Affirm relationships.** Every conflict involves both people and a problem. Focusing on the problem and not the people makes things worse. Be sure to make sure the other person knows that you value your relationship with them. Try something like, "We're friends, aren't we? Can I speak openly with you?" *Why is it important to communicate the priority of relationship over the resolution of the issue?*

c. Understand interests. An *interest* is what really motivates someone, the underlying thing they are trying to accomplish. It could be a concern, desire, need, limitation, or something a person values or fears. Take time to understand what the other person really wants and cares about. *Why would it be unproductive to try and guess a person's motives?*

d. Search for creative solutions. Don't get stuck on only two choices. *Why do you think more than two options is important? What does it reveal about your attitude towards the other person?*

e. Evaluate options objectively and reasonably. Include a specific step in the process that checks how the solution is working.

12. PERSONAL TAKE-HOME: Reflect on a time when you had a conversation with someone who wronged you. What about this conversation went well? What didn't go well?
13. CHALLENGE: Is there someone that you need to "gently engage"? Take some time to write down your thoughts about the situation. Do you feel it falls into one of the situations when this would be necessary? Walk through the PAUSE Principle and write an outline of your possible discussion with them.

SESSION 7: GET TOGETHER

Read the chapter together as a group; then discuss the following questions. Keep in mind the questions are meant to prompt conversation, so don't feel the need to use or discuss every question.

BIBLE REFERENCES

Matthew 5:23-24, Ephesians 4:32,
Colossians 3:13, Matthew 6:12, Isaiah
43:25, Isaiah 59:2, Romans 12:18, Luke
23:34, Acts 2:36-41

QUESTIONS

1. Are you forgetful? Is it possible to forget something on command?
2. Discuss what the chapter says about what forgiveness is not, and what forgiveness is (p.88-91).
3. *[Forgiveness] means to release a person from punishment or penalty.* What punishment are we releasing people from when we forgive them? What punishment are people released from when God forgives them?
4. Why is it important to understand how God has forgiven us in order to truly forgive others? Consider that Jesus has also died for that person, and in His eyes, we are all the same.
5. What is the difference between forgiveness and reconciliation?
6. Discuss the Two Components and the Four Promises of forgiveness. How are they connected?
 - a. Which would be the most difficult for you?
 - b. How do you know when you've forgiven someone?
7. Read Matthew 5:21-26.

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SESSION 8: OVERCOME EVIL WITH GOOD

Read the chapter together as a group; then discuss the following questions. Keep in mind the questions are meant to prompt conversation, so don't feel the need to use or discuss every question.

BIBLE REFERENCES

2 Corinthians 10:3-4, Luke 6:27-28,
Romans 12:14, Peter 3:9, Proverbs 13:20,
Romans 12:17, 1 Peter 2:12, Romans
12:18, Ecclesiastes 12:13, Proverbs
20:22, Psalms 37 and 73, Romans 12:20-
21, Psalm 120:4, Colossians 3:15

QUESTIONS

1. Discuss these quotes: *It is better to bite your tongue than to eat your words... Never trust your tongue when your heart is bitter... The tongue, like a sharp knife, kills without drawing blood... The wise person has long ears and a short tongue...*
2. Review some of the basic principles that you have learned in the last seven sessions.
 - a. Spark/Gasoline/Fire of conflict
 - b. The Slippery Slope
 - c. What is an idol?
 - d. The Four G's of Peacemaking
 - e. The Seven A's of Confession
 - f. The Two Components and Four Promises of forgiveness
3. How do humans define success? How does God define success?
4. In reconciliation, what is your job and what is God's?
5. Why is it sometimes hard to respect and cooperate with God's methods for dealing with people who persist in doing wrong?

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13. CHALLENGE: Who is someone you could go to for support and counsel? If you are currently in a conflict, seek out a person that can ground you and encourage you in the love of Christ. This could even be someone in your small group who has gone through this book with you.

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DISCUSSION NOTES

BEFORE YOU BEGIN...

In our modern society, people tend to take a “hard-line” or black and white approach to sin – *this is wrong and that is right*. This often leads to condescending and judgmental attitudes that make it impossible to see things from the other’s perspective. Peacemaking, as taught by Jesus, shows us an entirely different approach to addressing differences of opinions. **His perfect love is the standard.** Approach these materials and your discussions with love first. Nothing in these materials is about proving someone right or wrong, but rather how we can grow to love each other, even in conflict, as Christ loves each one of us. Strive to create an **environment of generosity and love** in your small group.

In the back of the book, you will find some discussion questions, including a few for *“if you are presently in conflict.”* **Your small group discussion should focus on the tenets of resolving conflict**, how we can understand them better and use them in our lives – but should never stray into actual resolution of a participant’s real conflict. The small group setting is not the appropriate place for that, and only those trained in Peacemaking and Conflict Resolution as *conflict counselors* should mediate with the person in that way. You can point participants to those questions to contemplate personally, but not in the discussion. Any relevant questions from the back of the book have been included in the guides.

Resolving conflict as outlined in this book **does not** mean that every conflict in your life will come to a neat and tidy, or expected, resolution if you use these steps. While the book does walk you through how to approach a person you may have conflict with, the only thing that you can control is *your response to conflict as guided by the teachings of Jesus Christ*. The resolution is an **inner resolution and peace**, knowing you have handled the disagreement the way God wants you to. Since you cannot control the other person’s actions, the only thing you can do is reconcile the situation with God and in your heart.

Main ideas in each chapter are *italicized* and pulled out of the main text as **bolded phrases** – be sure to cover these in your discussion. It is not necessary to use every question in the guide. Please pick and choose questions that are fitting for your specific small group, and also feel free to start each session discussing the details from each chapter that each person felt to be particularly interesting.

EXTRA DISCUSSION MATERIALS

REHOBAM

Setting the stage

King Solomon has died, and appointed his son, Rehoboam, as king. Tensions are high among the tribes of Israel because Solomon had conscripted thousands of Israelites for his building projects and wore them down. The people want to know if Rehoboam is going to be like his father in this regard.

Read 1 Kings 12:1-5

1. What is the blossoming conflict? Who initiated the discussion?
2. Why was Rehoboam prudent not to give them an answer right away?
3. What are Rehoboam's legitimate interests? What are the interests of the ten tribes?
4. Why is it wise to step back and give yourself time to think when you see conflict brewing?

Getting advice...

Read 1 Kings 12:6-15.

1. Why do you think Rehoboam went to two different sets of advisors?
2. What did the two views represent?
3. How did the advice of the elders address everyone's interests?
4. How did the advice of the young men only address Rehoboam's interests?
5. What was Rehoboam's final decision?
6. Where would you go for counsel when facing a conflict?
7. How do you discern between wise and foolish advice?

The kingdom divided

Read 1 Kings 12:16-24.

1. How did the ten tribes respond to their legitimate interests being ignored?
2. Did the ten tribes sin in splitting from their King, or were they exercising their legitimate rights? Explain.
3. How did God demonstrate His sovereignty in the middle of this conflict?
4. What are the dangers of ignoring what is important to the person with whom you are in conflict?

What happened next...

Read 1 Kings 12:25-33.

1. Why do people seem to drift from God when conflict is handled poorly?
2. Why is it important to make what God wants the top priority in conflict resolution?
3. How have you seen conflict end badly? How did it end up affecting you?

EXTRA DISCUSSION MATERIALS

IDOLS

An idol is: *anything other than God that we trust to make us happy or secure*. Anger is a signal that an idol is being poked. Some common idols include: peace and quiet, obedient children, respectful co-workers, financial security, a good reputation, etc.

How does an idol work?

1. Discuss the following path of desires becoming idols.
 - **Desire:** *I really would like to have...* (Psalm 37:4) All idols begin with desire. This desire can be for anything – even something good and healthy!
 - **Demand:** *I must have...* (James 4:1) A desire can quickly change into a demand (*I need*). I now view the thing I want as absolutely essential.
 - **Disappointment:** *You did not give me my desires...* (Genesis 4:6-7) Demand leads to disappointment (*You didn't!*). Much of our disappointment in relationships is not because people have actually wronged us, but because they have failed to give us what we want.
 - **Judgement:** *Because you did not give me my desires, you are...* (Romans 14:10) Frustrated at not receiving my desire, I judge, condemn, and reject those who haven't given me what I want.
 - **Punishment:** *Because you didn't, I will...* (Romans 12:19) I am hurt and angry and strike back. Examples: angry words, gossip, "giving the cold shoulder," etc.
2. What red flags could you look for in your thoughts, words, and actions to stop it from happening?

How do I look for idols in my life?

1. Reflect individually on the following "X-Ray Questions":
 - *What do you fear? What do you tend to worry about? What do you believe would bring you the greatest pain or misery?*
 - *What do you want? What do you believe would bring you the greatest pleasure, happiness, and delight?*
 - *What would you sin to obtain or sin if it's denied?*
 - *Have you ever "stretched" the truth in arguing for your desire (or against someone else's)?*
2. If you feel comfortable, discuss some of these questions with the group.
3. Where do you perhaps have the beginning of an idol in your life?
4. What can you do to put that desire back in its right place?
5. How could a friend or spouse help and support you in examining and fighting your idols?

How do I deal with an idol in my heart?

1. Think about the following steps:
 - Repent and confess, and trust God for everything you need (Acts 3:19).
 - Replace idol worship with worship of God (Psalm 37:4).

This is easier said than done. Our hearts are idol factories – always finding new things to love, have, and worship. Consider driving out "little loves" with a "big love" (i.e. a growing love for God will force out the idols in our hearts).

1. How can you focus on God instead of desires that threaten to grow into idols?
2. What will "getting real" or acknowledging our contribution to a problem do to the "idols" in our hearts that might be pushing us towards conflict?
3. Despite the initial discomfort, why is acknowledging our contribution to a conflict such an emotionally freeing thing to do?
4. Reflect on the following statement: *In a conflict, what we need is a mirror (to examine ourselves), but we tend to grab a microscope (to examine others).*

EXTRA DISCUSSION MATERIALS

CONFESSIONS

Paul

Read Romans 7:15-25.

1. What seemed to be a constant tension in Paul's heart?
2. In what sense does Paul acknowledge his inability to deal with this tension, at least under his own power?
3. What role does the Holy Spirit play when it comes to genuine repentance?
4. What are some of the consistent tensions with which you struggle? How might you be able to overcome those challenges by the power of the Holy Spirit?

David

Read Psalm 51.

1. What are all the requests that David makes of God in this psalm?
2. What is David willing to acknowledge?
3. In what sense is sinning against others really sinning against God?
4. PERSONAL TAKE-HOME: Rewrite this psalm with your own transgressions in mind.

EXTRA DISCUSSION MATERIALS

TAKING RESPONSIBILITY

Adam and Eve

Read Genesis 3:8-13.

1. Why do you think Adam and Eve tried to hide from God after they sinned? Why did that prove to be futile?
2. Whom did Adam blame for his sin? How did he try to put some of that responsibility on God? Why does that never work?
3. Whom did Eve try to blame for her sin? Even though she was tempted and deceived by an outside influence, was she still morally responsible for acting on that temptation? Explain.
4. In what ways have you tried to hide from God after you've sinned? Does it work?

Cain and Abel

Read Genesis 4:3-10.

1. How did God try to warn Cain about the power of sin lurking at the door of his heart?
2. How do we know that Cain ignored God's warning? What might have been different if Cain had taken God seriously?
3. How did Cain try to deflect attention away from his responsibility for murdering his brother? What evidence did God present to refute Cain's claims?
4. What evidence might God present in response to our attempts to deflect responsibility for our damaging words and actions?
5. What is a better response when you are confronted with your responsibility in a conflict?

The Rich Man and Lazarus

Read Luke 16:19-31.

1. What was the rich man's sin?
2. Why do you think the rich man never addressed Lazarus, but only Abraham? In what sense was the rich man still treating Lazarus as if the former beggar was "below" him?
3. What is striking about the rich man's complete lack of remorse, even in his state of torment?
4. Is it possible that there dwells within us certain insensitivities to which we are unaware?
5. Have you ever been suddenly made aware of an unconscious attitude of judgement or insensitivity against something? How did you react?
6. How could we become more aware of these perspectives in us? Who could you ask to help root them out?

EXTRA DISCUSSION MATERIALS

FINDING LASTING SOLUTIONS

Neglect

Read Acts 6:1.

1. What was the complaint that the Hellenists had against the Hebrews?
2. Why do you think the Hellenist widows were being neglected?
3. What dark motives might the Hellenists be attributing to the Hebrews?
4. Why is it common to assign selfish motives to people with whom we may be in conflict? What often drives that tendency?

Delegation

Read Acts 6:2-4.

1. How did the apostles respond to the complaint?
2. Why did the apostles see the need to delegate this responsibility to someone else?
3. What were the qualifications and characteristics of the people to be chosen who would address the problem?
4. If you were to delegate an important responsibility to someone, what characteristics would you want that person to have?

Qualifications

Read Acts 6:5-6.

1. How did everyone seem to express their enthusiasm for the apostles' solution?
2. Who did they end up choosing for the task? What can we assume about these men?

3. How did the apostles clearly communicate that they were delegating their authority to these seven men who were chosen for this task?
4. As reflected in the dispute between the Hellenists and the Hebrews, what are the characteristics of an effective biblical resolution to conflict?

Results

Read Acts 6:7.

1. How did the resolution to this problem prove to be effective?
2. What happens in the kingdom of God when conflict is addressed well and resolved?
3. What kind of simmering conflicts might be preventing growth in your circle of influence?
4. How can you effectively address those challenges?