

Wisdom on Conflict

Passage: Proverbs

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Series: Wisdom from Proverbs

Date: UPBC PM 26 February 2006, UPBC AM 27/8/2017

[PPT]

Do you like conflict?

My own family 'loves' conflict.

- Father Maori / Mother red head - what chance did we have!
- When conflict comes - people Fight Flight Freeze Fracture
- guess what my instinct is - Fight
- Sister Adele and I - fighting at visit
- Family reunion

Personally - found conflict challenging.

Living rooms are where most conflict is lived at

- often forms us in dealing with conflict
- Because family of origin - conflict was so personal and aggressive.
- Now see and deal with conflict helpfully and hopefully.

Professionally

As a Pastor a significant part of my role has been in conflict transformation

- inter-personal relationships, family dynamics, marriages, church conflicts

The book of Proverbs knows conflict is painful.

17:1 Better a dry crust with peace and quiet than a house full of feasting, with strife.

better to go without decent food than to be live in the midst of conflict

In fact it is better to live on a corner of the roof or in the desert than be caught in the midst of fighting at home.

18:19 An offended brother is more unyielding than a fortified city, and disputes are like the barred gates of a citadel

Conflict can cause friends, even family to treat each other as enemies. To put the walls up. To close their hearts to any future possibility of relationship.

[PPT]

Conflict is hard.

You don't know what's going to happen.

Well actually we have our suspicions about what is going to happen.

Which is why we find it hard.

People might: cry, get angry, stomp out, accuse you, get defensive, blame others

Most importantly we know we will have a lot of

uncomfortable feelings.

And most of us don't like uncomfortable feelings.

Throughout the book of Proverbs there is much wisdom on constructive and destructive ways of facing conflict.

And **what we will find as we journey through Proverbs is that 2 factors determine whether a response is a constructive or destructive**

[PPT]

Self Interest and self control.

- Self Interest: is the degree to which we put our own interests above the interest of another
- Self control: is the degree to which we exercise control over our own words, emotions and attitudes.

Mapped this out in a Matrix

[PPT]

Q2 Clown - Low control low, self interest

Nothing in it for them – this is conflict for fun sake

At best this is the Clown at worst Proverbs would call this person a Fool.

18: 2 A fool finds no pleasure in understanding but delights in airing his own opinions.

13 He who answers before listening!" that is his folly and his shame.

This fool is not invested enough to learn something new, yet cannot control their words or behaviour

Against this Proverbs says there is a better way

12: 15 The way of a fool seems right to him, but a wise man listens to advice.

Can you see the high self control and low self interest that is required to live Proverbs wisdom?

The wise person is humble enough to put aside their opinion and take the position of learner

In a conflict, this opens me up to seeing this as a learning experience. To hopefully seeing my part in this conflict and what I can address to resolve the challenges

Or again

12: 16 A fool shows his annoyance at once, but a prudent man overlooks an insult.

- Prudence: having a clear understanding of the situation
- and Patience: having a clear sense of what it will take for this conflict to be resolved.

[PPT]

Q3 Crafty (or Cruel) High Self Control, High Self Interest

It appears the Wisdom of Proverbs is to stay away from these types

Prov 23

Do not eat the bread of a man who is stingy; do not desire his delicacies, for he is like one who is inwardly calculating. "Eat and drink!" he says to you, but his heart is not with you. You will vomit up the morsels that you have eaten, and waste your pleasant words.

Prov 9.8

Whoever corrects a scoffer gets himself abuse, and he who reproves a wicked man incurs injury. Do not reprove a scoffer, or he will hate you; reprove a wise man, and he will love you.

There is no teaching such people. They know how to use words, emotions and behaviours to achieve their ends.

16: 28 A perverse man stirs up dissension, and a gossip separates close friends.

Be wise to such dangerous people and their schemes.

[PPT]

Q4 Combative – Low Self Control, High Self Interest

Explosive conflicts where people react by battling often from anger.

With wonderful imagery Proverbs describes the destructiveness of anger

30: 33 For as churning the milk produces butter, and as twisting the nose produces blood, so stirring up anger produces strife."

10: 12 Hatred stirs up dissension

29: 22 An angry man stirs up dissension, and a hot-tempered one commits many sins.

Such difficult emotions are not necessarily 'wrong' to feel

But they are destructive when we failure to handle them properly when we lack self-control. (what are you like when you are angry?)

Anger is often a God given mechanism to injustice. But instead of providing the impetus to move towards justice and resolution!" all we can think about is resolution by destruction!" there is something wrong!

[On the pinching my girlfriend situation]

Wisdom meets such explosions with profound self control

15: 18 A hot-tempered man stirs up dissension, but a patient man calms a quarrel.

[PPT]

Conflict is hard, In fact Proverbs says it can be downright dangerous.

17:14 Starting a quarrel is like breaching a dam; so drop the matter before a dispute breaks out.

Part of the point of the proverb is to respect the power and danger of the conflict.

And to have the wisdom to know whether the conflict needs to be dropped or dealt with.

At times a conflict needs breaching!

An undealt with conflict can and probably will choke up the river flow in relationships.

When conflict isn't dealt with it festers, creates bad feelings, escalates, gets blown out of proportion. It creates pretending and a false realities.

Finally not dealt with, conflict takes on a life of its own and soon it's controlling you instead of you controlling it.

[3 day rule – deal with it]

Dealing with conflict is a bit like going to the

dentist: you hate the idea of it. You wait forever to make the appointment and you are so relieved when it's over. And most of the time, it wasn't so bad after all.

Besides dealt with properly, conflict can be actually good.

18:17 The first to present his case seems right, till another comes forward and questions him.

Teams have required conflict to best answer a need, or move forward. The end result of our discussion and disagreement is that the solution is thought through and we are better for the conflict!

Conflict can be a time for a new level of honesty in the relationship: a bit of "speaking truth in love"

22: 26 An honest answer is like a kiss on the lips.

27: 5 Better is open rebuke than hidden love. 6 Wounds from a friend can be trusted, but an enemy multiplies kisses.

29:23 He who rebukes a man will in the end gain more favor than he who has a flattering tongue.

Or a conflict between a husband and wife can serve as an opportunity for open and honest discussion, which can lead to greater understanding between the two and, in turn, a better relationship.

[I have found significant growth times through conflict: ie Frank with running late]

[PPT]

Q1 The sweet spot in dealing with conflict is High Self Control, Low Self Interest

- High Self Control means we regulate our emotions and respond with considered words and behaviour
- Low Self Interest means we don't have to use energy to protect ourselves and instead can look to respond creatively to this conflict

This is what Paul writes of in Philippians 2 to a church experiencing conflict

Phil 2: 1If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, 2then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. 3Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. 4Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

High Self Control, Low Self Interest find best expression in the response of love

10: 12 Hatred stirs up dissension, but love covers over all wrongs.

Hatred: seeks to end the conflict at the cost to the other (I win, you lose)

love (which covers all wrongs): seeks to end the conflict at cost to itself.

Proverbs has some practical examples:

17:9 He who covers over an offense promotes love, but whoever repeats the matter separates close friends.

Here love says that let's let history be history. Sure there was an offense but I choose not to act on it. I choose to not let it shape our future together, I choose to not let it be a barrier.

Martin Luther King Jr said "Forgiveness is a catalyst creating the atmosphere necessary for a fresh start and a new beginning."

25: 21 If your enemy is hungry, give him food to eat; if he is thirsty, give him water to drink.

22 In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head, and the LORD will reward you.

Love says in conflict do good to your enemies!

We would love to think that the burning coals is about causing them pain in some way!" because of these good acts!

In some ways this could be true: the imagery of the "burning coals" represents pangs of conscience, more readily effected by kindness than by violence. But to what ends does love do this? To rescue the enemy from themselves. From their own self interest.

Once upon a time a man was shipwrecked on a deserted island. He was an industrious, hard-working sort of man, so by the time he was rescued, 15 years later, he had managed to transform the island into a collection of roads and buildings. The people who rescued him were amazed at his accomplishments and asked for a tour of the island. He was more than happy to oblige.

"The first building on our left," he began, "is my house. You'll see that I have a comfortable three-bedroom estate, complete with indoor plumbing and a sprinkler system. There is also a storage shed in the back for all my lawn tools." The rescue party was astonished. It was better than some of their homes on the mainland.

"That building over there is the store where I do my grocery shopping. Next to it is my bank, and across the street is the gym where I exercise."

The rescuers noticed two other buildings and asked what they were. "The one on the left is where I go to church."

"And the one on the right?" they inquired.

"Oh, that's where I used to go to church."

[PPT]

[Our church and conflict

It is inevitable, I choose to see it as good?

If I approach it with high self control and low self interest – or with love.

Are you in conflict?

What will you need to grow in?

Self Control

Self Interest?

Ask God to work this in you

Prayer