

THE HEART OF CONFLICT

What's Happening Within

Teaching and Q&A by Dr. Stuart Scott
September 18th, 9:45-11 am in Upper Auditorium



GRACE
FELLOWSHIP

THE HEART OF CONFLICT: WHAT'S HAPPENING WITHIN?

Notes

Introduction

- God's view on relationships (Vertical and Horizontal, Mat 22:37-40)

1. Who is involved?

- a. Unbelievers (Eph 2:1-3; Titus 3:3)
- b. Believers (Eph 4:1ff; 2 Cor 5:14-15; etc.)
 - i. The Gospel Context – Eph 1- 3:21; 4:1-6:24 (Position and Practice)
 - ii. The importance of one's attitude of humility in light of the Gospel of Christ (Eph 4:1-3)

2. What is going on?

- a. All creation is created to worship God (Isa 43:7; Rom 1:18-25)
- b. Only God is worthy of worship (Ex 20:2-6; Rom 11:33-36)
- c. We must understand worship: seek (Jer 2:13; 1 Ki 18:21), serve (Jos 24:14-20; Rom 6:16), sacrifice (Ex 20:1-6,23; Rom 12:1), spend (Mt 6:21), speak (Mt 12:34), trust in someone or something (Ps 115:8-9; 135:18)

“An idol is anything that we consistently make equal to or more important than God in our attention, desire, devotion, and choices.” (*The Exemplary Husband*, 91)
All idols are objects of our lusts and thus assist us in worshipping ourselves for our own glory (2 Cor 5:15).
- d. Worship was defiled at the Fall (Idolatry as a means of self-worship had its beginning by not giving the Creator His rightful due) – Gen 3:1-22

3. Where is all of the activity originating?

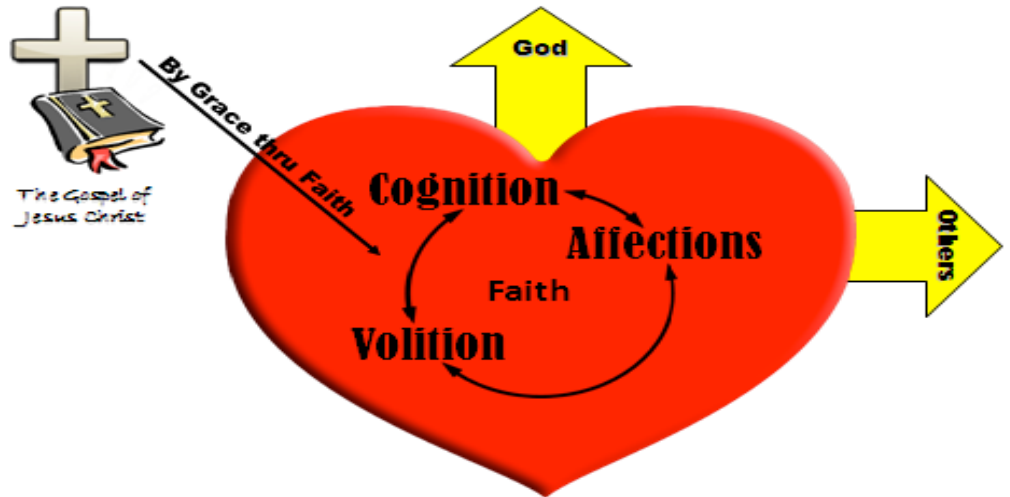
- A. The Heart is the “real” you (1 Sam 16:7; Prv.4:23)¹
 1. Our Cognition (thoughts, beliefs)
 2. Our Affections (desires and motives)
 3. Our Volition (will, choices into actions)
 - Our Emotions (in some degree often starts here)
- B. The Heart is the temple of Worship (Ezk.14:1-12; Rom.1:18-25;1 Cor.6:19-20)
- C. The Heart is the fountain of behavior issues (Prv.4:23; Mk.7:21ff)
- D. The Heart is where belief and unbelief take place (Rom 10:8-10)²

¹ “The whole man is viewed from his intentionality; it is the source of the will, emotion, thoughts, and affections.” *The New Linguistic and Exegetical Key to the Greek New Testament*, Rogers and Rogers, 351.

² I'm appreciative for the clarity on the heart from Dr. Jeremy Pierre (unpublished dissertation – SBTS).

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The Worshipping Heart



Belief & Unbelief



- E. There Are Many Terms for Sinful Heart worship
 1. Old Testament words = craving, lusts, idolatry of the heart (Ezk.14)
 2. New Testament words = lusts, enslavement, entanglement, idolatry (Jas. 1: 13-15; 4:1ff; 1 Jn.2:15-17; Heb.12:1; Titus 3:3)
- F. Biblical lists of Idolatrous lusts (1 Cor.6:9-11; Gal.5:19-21; 2 Tim.3:1-5)
- G. Contemporary labels for idolatrous lusts that can all be self-serving (e.g. man's approval, attention, health, wealth, pleasure, safety, comfort, leisure, sports, security, significance, respect, fairness/justice, success, possessions, freedom/independence, money, ministry, education, marriage/family, traditions, perfectionism, workaholism, control, appearance, love, peace, etc.). All of these specific lusts are manifestations of one of the

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three categories given to us in 1 Jn 2:15-17
“...lusts of the eyes, lusts of the flesh, and the pride of life....”

- H. It's helpful to recognize Idolatrous Lusts
 - 1. A desire (sometimes good in and of itself) becomes idolatrous as I am consumed with it for my own benefit (Jas.4)
 - 2. I am usually willing to sin to get this desire or sin if I don't
 - 3. Sure tip offs to idolatrous lusts
 - a. Words (e.g. expectations, needs, rights, must haves, etc.)
 - b. Misplaced priorities/extremes (perfectionism, workaholism, unfaithfulness)
 - c. Sinful patterns (Lying, life dominating sins)
 - d. Sinful responses (anger, self-pity, depression, suicidal, etc)

- I. Beware of Introspection
 - “But what is the difference between examining oneself and becoming introspective? I suggest that we cross the line from self-examination to introspection when, in a sense, we do nothing but examine ourselves, and when such self-examination becomes the main and chief end in our life. We are meant to examine ourselves periodically, but if we are always doing it, always, as it were, putting our soul on a plate and dissecting it, that is introspection. And if we are always talking to people about ourselves and our problems and troubles, and if we are forever going to them with that kind of frown upon our face and saying: I am in great difficulty- it probably means that we are all the time centered upon ourselves. That is introspection, and that in turn leads to the condition known as morbidity.” Martin Lloyd-Jones, *Spiritual Depression*, 17

- J. The unsaved life in Idol Worship (Rom.1:18-25; 3:10-18; 8:1; Eph.2:1-3; Titus 3:3)
 - 1. They are an idolater (worshiping a substitute god for self-worship) and dead in their sin

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2. They are condemned by God
 3. They can do nothing except what is in accord with their selfish nature
 4. They see it as good to worship what they want (sugar-coated poison)
 5. A new heart is needed to respond to God's drawing (Rom.5:1-2; cf. 1 Thess.1:9)
 - a. The remedy is Christ
 - b. The Gospel of Christ needs to be proclaimed in its fullness (Rom.1:16; 10:17)
- K. Even the Saved Must Grow In Worshipping God Alone (2 Cor.3:18; Col.1:28-29)
1. Christians cannot be full-blown idolaters
 2. Christians at times can be compromising and syncretistic in their worship of God – they can be involved in partial and voluntary worship of self at times
 3. Sanctification often involves God revealing our lusts (out of unbelief) and self-focused moments
 4. It can sometimes be hard to distinguish the difference between an unbeliever and the believer who is a “so-called brother” (1 Cor.5:11-13).
 5. The Gospel (Union) must carry over into the Gospel (Communion or sanctification) all by God's grace
- L. We can Look Forward To Perfect Worship of God alone In Glory (1 Cor.13:12; 15:50-58; Rev.21-22)

Further Resources on the topic:

- Brad Bigney – *Gospel Treason* ;
Stephen Charnock – *The Existence and Attributes of God*; Elyse Fitzpatrick – *Idols of the Heart*; John MacArthur – *1 Corinthians Commentary* (Chp.10); John MacArthur – *2 Corinthians Commentary* (Chp.5); Martha Peace – *The Excellent Wife* (Chp.7); Stuart Scott – *The Exemplary Husband* (Chp.7); Mark Shaw – *The Heart of Addiction*; Ed Welch – *Addictions- A Banquet in the grave*

4. Communication is needed to avoid and resolve conflict

a. The Definition of Communication (Wayne Mack):

- A process of sharing information with another person in such a way that the people involved are mutually strengthened, enriched, and encouraged, and thus experience harmony, unity, and emotional closeness (*“as much as depends on you.” – added by sscott; Rom 12:18*)
- “Good communication from God’s perspective is sending a message that is true, holy, purposeful, clear, and timely. The recipient in love, humility and with care should listen to what is being said, trying to understand where the communicator is coming from without reacting – clarifying with questions if needed. Upon receiving the message, the recipient should then ponder before answering and continue using these biblical principles. sscott
- Maxim: “If you can’t communicate, you won’t be able to solve conflicts.” (Jay Adams)

b. Review: Four Helpful Teachings on Communication (Eph. 4:25-32, remember this is in light of our Union with Christ and the fact that we are new creatures in Christ)

1. PRINCIPLE 1 – Be honest in the Family of God (Eph. 4:25)
2. PRINCIPLE 2 – When provoked, don’t sin & keep current (vv. 26, 27 – this is spiritual warfare).
3. PRINCIPLE 3 – Don’t Tear Down but Build Up in Christ (vv. 29,30 – don’t grieve the Holy Spirit with fleshly responses).
4. PRINCIPLE 4 – Respond like Jesus, not in the Flesh (vv. 31,32).
 - Changing our hearts and lives (habits) is impossible on our own and is difficult even with God’s help. But, by God’s Spirit and His strengthening grace, it can and must be done. 1 Corinthians 10:13 ; Philippians 2:12-13; 1 Timothy 4:7-9; Romans 8:13

- Remember the goal in communication is Love for God and others (Mt 22:37-40; 1 Tim 1:5; 1 Cor 10:31; Col 1:28-29)

5. LOVING RESOLUTION: THE BIBLICAL PATH TO PEACE⁴

A. Exactly What Is a Conflict?

1. Literally = Strike, fight against

2 A General Definition:

...not all conflict is bad; instead, it teaches that some differences are natural and beneficial...not all conflict is neutral or beneficial, however. The Bible teaches that many disagreements are the direct result of sinful motives and behavior...the Bible teaches that we should see conflict neither as an inconvenience nor as an occasion for selfish gain, but rather as an opportunity to glorify God, to serve others, and to grow to be like Christ. (KSande, *The Peacemakers*, 19,20)

Conflict is when both parties *usually* sin against one another (in their communication and/or their actions) and are then in opposition to one another. (SScott, *usually* is added)

B. Key Scriptures: Prv 6:16-19; 13:10; 18:1-2; Rom 12:9-21; Rom 14; 1 Cor 8-9; 2 Cor 5:14-15; Gal 5:19-21; Jas 1:12-15; 4:1-12; etc.

C. What Does God Think of Conflict?

D. Where Do Conflicts Come From?

1. Source

- Prv 4:23; Mk 7:21ff; Gal 5:19-21; Jas 1; 4
 - Ours & Other's Pride and the Flesh⁵ (I desire; I demand; I judge; I punish)

2. Kinds

- a. Differences (experiences, traditions, upbringing, health issues, education, interests, etc.)
- b. Preferences
- c. Conscience
- d. Wisdom
- e. Offenses (Sin)

⁴ Largely taken from *Communication and Conflict Resolution*, Scott

⁵ Taken from *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands*, Paul Tripp (85-88).

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E. Benefits of Differences and Disagreements

1. They can encourage us to search the Scriptures (Ps. 119:71-72).
2. They can help us think carefully about how and what we think or what we believe (Prov. 15:28).
3. They can help us work harder at communicating effectively (Eph. 4:25).
4. They can produce maturity and endurance (Jas. 1:2-5).
5. They can help us sharpen one another (Prov. 27:17).
6. They can strengthen our faith in the truth that God is working all things together for good (Rom. 8:28-29).
7. They give us opportunity to practice servanthood and preferring one another (Phil. 2:2-3).
8. They give us opportunity to love and glorify God (1 Cor. 10:31-32)

F. How Do We Avoid Conflicts?

1. Some Sinful Ways to Avoid Conflict

- a. Just keep quiet (cf. Eccl. 3:7b; Eph. 4:29-31; Col. 3:19).
- b. Stay away from one another (cf. John 15:12; 1 Pet. 4:8)
- c. Change the subject (cf. Prov. 12:22; Prov. 24:28)
- d. Hide information, sins, or bitterness (cf. Prov. 24:8; 28:13).

2. Some God-honoring Ways to Avoid Conflict

- a. Seek to know the other person well, appreciate him/her and understand his/her perspective (1 Peter 3:7).
- b. Gather plenty of data before speaking (Proverbs 18:13, 17).
- c. Pray, study and think about the issue before speaking, if possible (Proverbs 15:28).
- d. Demonstrate and/or communicate your love and care at the time of disagreement (Romans 12:9-10).
- e. Listen more than you speak, but do speak.
- f. Refuse to sin in your communication (Proverbs 8:6-8).

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- g. Be more interested in God's glory and the other's good, rather than having your own way, or being right (Joshua 22:5; Romans 15:2).
- h. Give a gentle and caring answer to their angry words (Proverbs 15:1).

G. Resolving Conflicts⁶

1. Some Sinful Ways to Resolve Conflicts

- a. Let time heal it (cf. Mt. 5:23-24; Eph. 4:26).
- b. Try to bury it. (ill. Achan, Jos 7)
- c. Pretend it never happened (cf. Phil. 4:8a – “things that are true...”).
- d. Wait for the other person to initiate the resolution process (cf. Matt. 5:23-24).
- e. Punish the other person until they change and take all the blame (cf. Gal. 6:1; Rom. 12:9-20).

2. A Biblical Way to Resolve Conflict

- a. Confess (repentant confession) any sin that you are aware of to God (Ps. 139:23-24; 1 John 1:9-10).
- b. Go to the other person, ask for forgiveness for each thing you did specifically and discuss your plan not to do those things again but instead seek the biblical replacement (Eph. 4:32; James 5:16). This is a repentant confession.
- c. Express a desire to resolve the conflict fully and decide together when the best time to do that would be (Prov. 15:28).
- d. Come together at the appointed time.
- e. Pray together for God's wisdom, self-control, and speech (Prov. 16:32; Jas. 1:5).
- f. Review God's principles of communication (Eph. 4:15, 26-32).
- g. Begin discussing the issues that precipitated the conflict (what kind(s) of issues were they? Often there is a mixture and each has to be handled in the appropriate way.

⁶ Ken Sande suggests using the **P.A.U.S.E.** principle, **P** – Prepare; **A** – Affirm relationships; **U** – Understand interests; **S** – Search for creative solutions; **E** – Evaluate options objectively and reasonably (*Peacemaking for Families*, 97).

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h. Decide what kind of issue(s) you are dealing with (each offers input).

(1) Differences

- Col 3:13 “bearing with one another” – put up with people’s differences

(2) Preferences

- In matters of preference, prefer the other person (Romans 12:10; Phil 2:3-4).

(3) Sin

- In matters of sin, confess if you sinned and then approach the other person in love (Ephesians 4:15; Luke 17:3; Matt 7:3-5; 18:15ff; I Jn 1:9).

(4) Conscience

- In matters of conscience, suggest searching the Scriptures (2 Timothy 2:15) and don’t legislate your preferences on others.

(5) Wisdom

- In matters of wisdom, seek to learn and grow on any given subject (primarily from the Bible and from godly people) - the Proverbs, 11:14); Rom 14:23; 1 Cor 8-9

i. Decide on specific steps to resolve the issue (each offers input).

j. Together, begin carrying out the appropriate steps to resolve the issue.

k. Decide if and when you need to discuss the issue again.

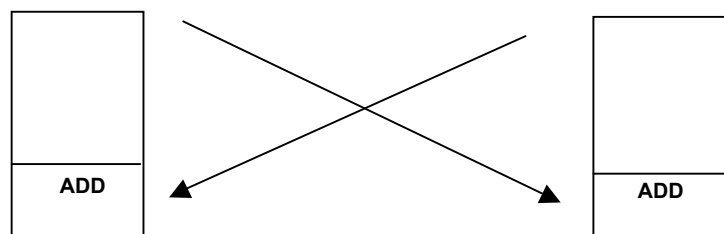
l. End your time together with prayer. Remember the goal is Love for God and each other

- 1) Confess and repent of one’s own sin along with additions to God and those sinned against
- 2) Prioritize each other’s list (From God’s perspective)
- 3) Begin on your #1—specifically and concretely—then on #2, etc.

Her Log List

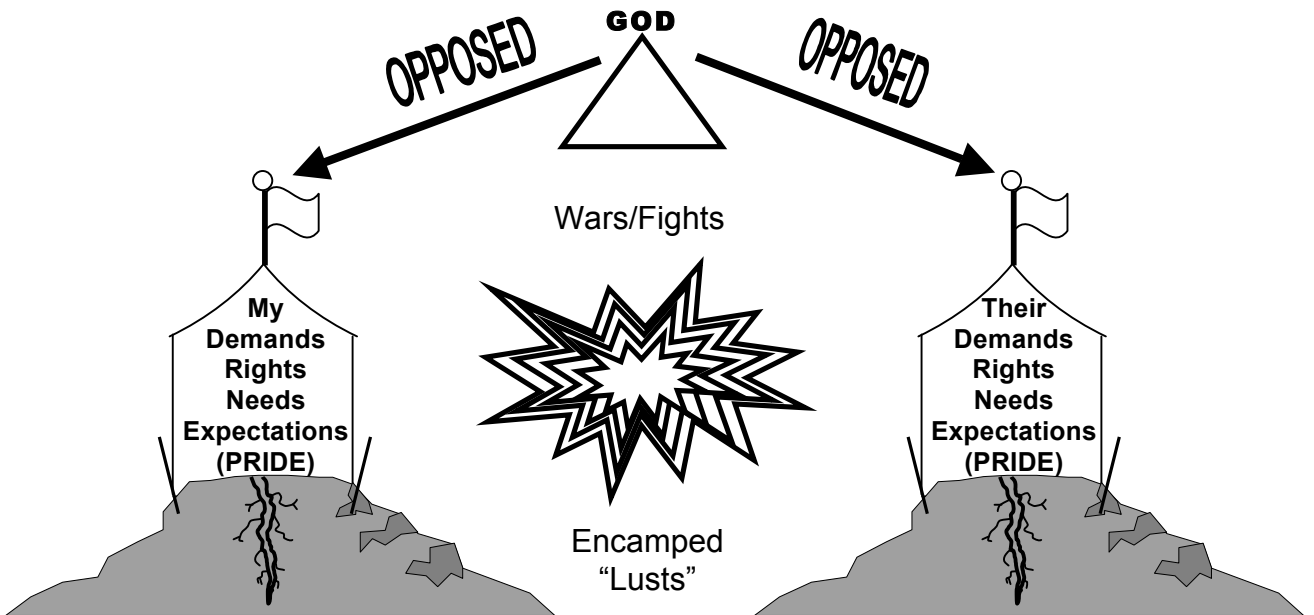
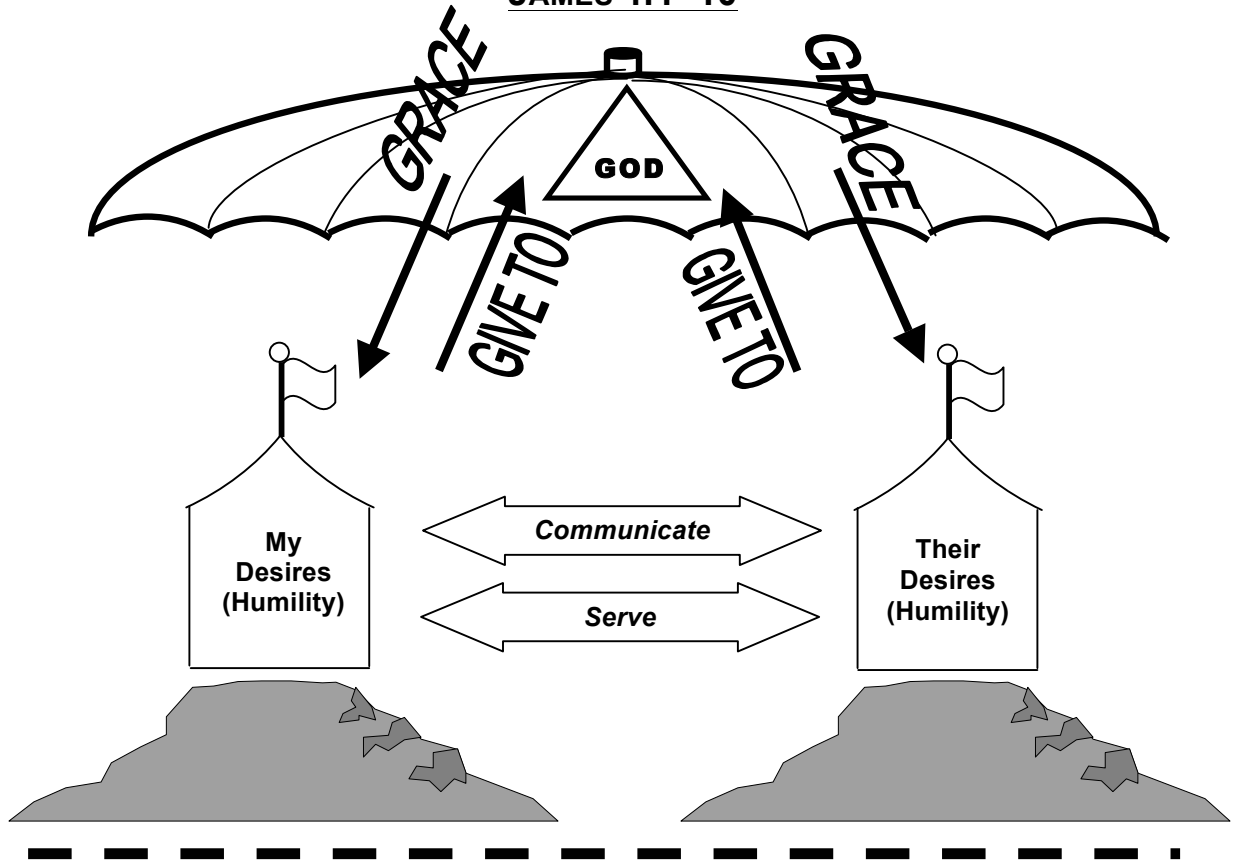
Matt 7:3–5

His Log List



TWO RESPONSES TO CONFLICT⁷

JAMES 4:1-10



⁷ Appreciative of the illustrations from Dr. John Bettler