

MAIN POINT

Sin and hurt will happen in the life of the church. The question is how we will respond when they do.

INTRODUCTION

What is your gut reaction when conflicts arise? Are you more likely to run away, fight back, or ignore the issue?

What are some common issues that cause conflict in the church today?

Living with our families for years gives us years of practice at relational sin. Unfortunately, many of us know how to push our family members' buttons but are not as adept at resolving conflict. As sinners living in a sinful world we should not be surprised to find ourselves in the midst of conflict, including in the church. However, as followers of Christ, we must not be content to leave conflict unresolved. Living faithfully for Christ requires that we seek what is driving the conflict in our lives and uproot it so that we might humble ourselves before God and others.

DISCUSSION

> READ ACTS 15:36-41.

Read Galatians 2:11-14. Had you been Paul, what impact would Barnabas's siding with Peter in Antioch have had on you?

Describe a time when a friend's religious convictions surprised you. How did you resolve your unexpected differences? Why is it important to go to the trouble of seeking reconciliation?

How do you handle situations in which those you trust fall short of your expectations?

What about those within the faith community? Can you give an example?

What impact does emotional attachment have when trying to resolve a conflict among believers? Why might it be important to have an objective party help in those instances?

How does it make you feel to read of the humanity of the men and women that God chooses to use to advance the gospel? How does it reframe your understanding of your own potential?

Consider what it cost Barnabas to stand in defense of John Mark. When was the last time you cared about someone (beyond immediate family) enough to bear a similar weight for the sake of restoration?

Why is it important to have a commitment to restoration within the church?

How intent are you on resolving your disagreements and conflicts with others? How does your desire differ when the conflict is with another believer? Have you ever invited a third party to help you in a particularly difficult conflict?

APPLICATION

What risks are involved in seeking to resolve conflicts? Why should we accept those risks and work to resolve conflicts?