

War and Peace

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 24 March 2013

Preacher: Chris Thornton

[0 : 0 0] Good morning, Watermark. My name is Chris. I help out with community groups here at Watermark. Over the last three weeks or so, we've been looking at a series in the book of James.

And I like to think of James as a bit like open heart surgery. And James is a skillful surgeon, but he doesn't use a scalpel to deal with the surgery.

It seems like at times he gets a pneumatic drill and is kind of drilling away at the hardness in our heart. And sometimes it's quite intense. Sometimes it's painful.

But actually the result is always something of a transformation in our heart. It's to do us good. It's to change us and to make us more as God wants us to be.

So we've been looking at, over the last three weeks, at how our actions and what we do reveals our heart. So we've looked at how we treat God's word reveals our heart.

[1 : 1 3] We've looked at how when we love the poor or how we don't, that reveals our heart. We've looked at the words that we use, how they reveal our heart.

And today we're going to look at the issue of conflict. Okay? How conflict reveals our heart. Now just a couple of things to introduce it with. Conflict is inevitable.

If you spend enough time with somebody, it doesn't matter whether it's at work, whether it's in a marriage, whether it's even on the MTR, if you spend enough time with people, sooner or later, someone is going to rub you up the wrong way.

Sooner or later, there is going to be conflict. You just have to look, this past week, you've seen the terrible killings that have happened.

You look in the Dayu Islands. Everywhere there is conflict. Because when you get two or more sinful, broken people together, it's like two pieces of flint, which you just keep rubbing them together, and sooner or later, there will be a spark.

[2 : 2 6] It's the reality of living in a sinful, broken, fallen world. Even in churches, we think churches should be the wonderful places where we love each other, and they should, but sooner or later, there will be conflict.

Now, we often don't like to hear that, because we want to have protection. Some of us may have been hurt. Some of us may know the pain of conflict. And yet, conflict is a reality.

It shouldn't actually shock us. In one sense, it's not the end of the world, if there is conflict. Conflict. Because maybe, if we never have conflict, maybe it's our relationships are actually superficial.

Maybe our relationships aren't deep enough. Because conflict comes out of when we are rubbing up against each other in life. But that may not be very comforting to you.

You may be thinking, oh, great. That sounds wonderful. Thank you. You've really made my day, Chris. But here's the second thing we need to remember, is conflict, if we handle it well, can be an amazing blessing.

[3 : 37] It can be used, redemptively, by God, to deepen relationships. And you know that, if you've been in a relationship, where you've actually worked through conflict, and come out the other side, you know it actually deepens, the love between you.

Because now, you're under no illusions, okay, you know the other person is completely messed up. You can see their faults, and yet, you can keep on loving them, knowing full well, of some of what they're like.

That's actually the love that Jesus has for us, knowing full well what we're like, and yet, he just loves us. And that's the kind of church, God wants to make, where there will be conflict, but if we handle it well, it can deepen our relationships.

It can grow us, to actually learn to love one another, better, and more as Jesus wants us to. So, I'm going to look at three, three main points, today.

The first is, three types of conflict. The second is, what causes conflict. And the third is, how to deal with conflict. Okay. If you look, in your passage, at James 4, verse 1, it says, what causes, fights, and quarrels, among you?

[4 : 57] That word, those words, fights, and quarrels, are literally, wars, and fights. Now, I don't know about you, but I personally, haven't been in many wars recently.

And I think of fights, as kind of, what happens, at two o'clock in the morning, after two guys, have just been drinking, a bit too much, and they're punching, each other's lights out. That's my view, of wars, and fights.

But I think, sometimes, that may be, too narrow, a definition. I think, all of us, myself included, engage in warfare, at times.

So, here's three types, that I've thought of. I'm sure there are many more, but for time's sake, we'll just look at three. The first kind, of warfare, I like to call, the silent war, or the cold war.

What I mean by this is, on the surface, everything kind of, looks good. You're being pleasant, to each other. You smile, at each other. You say the right thing, to each other. But underneath, there's a seething indifference.

[5 : 58] There's a bubbling volcano, going on. You may be in one room, the other person's, in the other room, and your thoughts, are going round, and round, and round, and you're just imagining, what you would like to say, to the other person, what you'd like to do, to the other person, if only you were, bold enough, to do it.

But then, when you see each other, it's like, oh hi, nice to see you. But underneath, there is tension. There's maybe, you try and keep the peace, but you know, there's a frosty relationship.

You're not going out of your way, to love that person. You're going out of that way, your way to avoid that person. That's the first kind of conflict, silent, cold war.

The second kind of conflict, I like to think about, is, is what I call, the hand grenade war. Okay, what I mean by this is, you know, things are going along okay, and then suddenly, you lob in, a sarcastic comment, a cynical remark, and a cutting tone, into, into the situation.

It may be, I suppose you expect me, to do that, do you? Typical. Have you seen, what you've done to me? And there you go.

[7 : 16] Hand grenade. But sometimes, we don't do it directly, sometimes we, we kind of do a sneak attack, we kind of do the attack, by the back door. We, we do the, let's turn to somebody else, and tell them, okay, about this person.

So we, we make the cynical remarks. Have you seen, what she did to me? Do you know Chris, you know how irresponsible, he is? He hasn't said, a word, a good word to me, in 10 years.

And so, we go to the other person, but actually, whew, the hand grenade is going over. That's the second kind of war. The third kind of war, I like to think about, is what I call, the all out war.

Okay, the war has kind of, escalated now, to, to new heights. It's, it's, it's the trading insults, it's the blame game, it's the, it's the cheap socks, you're totally insensitive, after all these years, of what I've done for you, and you've given me nothing.

Okay, it's, it's the slamming of the door, it's the trying to undermine, the person in front of others. Do you know what I mean? Now, I'm sure none of you, have ever engaged, in any of those.

[8 : 23] But you know, I'm not a particularly, hot tempered, or angry guy, but actually, I've engaged, in all of those things. Sometimes quite regularly. So, why, do we do this?

Here's the second point. What causes, arguments? Why do we enter in these warfare, these conflict situations? I mean, for example, you take the Dayu Islands, okay?

They're an insignificant, little piece of rock, out in the middle of an ocean, which for a long period of time, no one has bothered about. But suddenly, everyone's bothered about it.

People are on the verge of war, about it. Why? Well, if you look in James, he kind of deals with this question. Verse one. What causes fights and quarrels among you?

Don't they come from your desires, that battle within you? You desire, but you do not have, so you kill. You covet, but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight.

[9 : 28] Why do we have arguments? Well, James says, quite simply, they come from desires within us. Now, this word desires, is actually a word hedone, where we get the word hedonistic from.

It actually really means pleasures. Now, and notice, James doesn't say evil desires here. He doesn't say evil desires. In fact, pleasure, pleasure's not wrong, okay?

In the Garden of Eden, God gives trees, which he says are pleasing to the eye, and are good for food. He says, pleasure is good, okay? Pleasure is good. So, what's going on here?

Well, it seems that, it's not just the fact that they have a desire, but their desire has become too strong. maybe the people that he's talking to are wanting positions of influence.

Maybe they're wanting to be thought well of. Maybe they're wanting to have a position where they can say and speak, and everybody looks at them and says, wow, you're great, aren't you?

[10 : 32] But James says, you covet, you desire something, but you can't get it.

That's why you're fighting. So, so all arguments, all conflicts come down to this. You want something, but you can't get it.

You want something, but you can't get it. So you get angry. So you get frustrated. So you go into those wars. Now, that sounds nice and simple, doesn't it?

Okay? For example, I want you to fold your clothes and put them in the drawer. You didn't do it, so I get angry at you, and I shout until you put the clothes in the drawer.

Okay? What do I want? I want you to put the clothes in the drawer. Okay? That's the reason why we get angry. But, if I see, if I see a pile of clothes like crumpled shirts on the floor, I don't suddenly go into a steaming rage and think, why are the clothes on the floor?

[11 : 38] I probably don't even notice that the clothes are on the floor. So why does one person get angry, and another person doesn't? It's because of our desires.

And maybe, when it gets to the point of getting frustrated and getting angry, it's no longer about the clothes. It's actually about a deeper desire that I have.

Maybe it's a desire to be respected. Maybe it's a desire for control. I want you to do what I say, and you didn't do what I say, and so now it's out of control, and now I've got to get angry.

It's about our desires. But our desires have got too strong. It's become, rather than, I want this, it's, I must have this. I mean, think of the Dayu Islands again.

What do they want? What do people want there? Do they just want the piece of rock? Well, I don't think that's the issue. Maybe you say, oh, they want the resources. Yeah, but they could share out the resources.

[12 : 39] What do they really want? It's about power. It's about control. It's about reputation. That's the real battle that's going on. And you can see, when our desires have become too strong, when I start getting angry, I start getting frustrated, I start getting annoyed.

So the next thing that Job, that James comes on to talk about, he says, you do not have, this is verse two, because you do not ask God.

When you do ask, you don't receive, because you ask with wrong motives. What's James talking about here? James is saying that actually, the fruit of your relationships here, is evidence, of what's going on, with your relationship with God.

So if there's conflict here, it's an indication of something wrong, with your relationship with God. What he's saying is, you're trying to get what you want, in your own way.

And you're not even coming to God, for what you want. You want to get it your way, in the way that you think you can have it. And then even if you do come to pray to God, it's still all about you.

[13 : 57] It's still all about getting what you want, just for yourself. That's what he's saying, is you're just relying on yourself. That's why you're getting angry, guys. That's why you're in conflict, because it's all about you.

Now, James then kind of, kind of ramps it up a bit, and then he says, you adulterous people. Now, I don't think James is the kind of person, I'd invite to a dinner party.

You know, he'd mess the whole thing up. He'd come in, and like, you're there with your parents, and he's like, you adulterous. I mean, it's not a great EQ. Okay. But, but he's got, he's got a point here, which is he's saying, God wants you for himself.

God wants you for himself. He wants you to place all your desires, whether it's power, whether it's control, whether it's reputation, whether it's someone to listen to you, whether it's getting the job you want.

He wants you to place all those things in his hands, and to trust him with those things. But what he's saying here is, he's taking the language of adultery, which is taken from the Old Testament, where Israel will continually follow other gods.

[15 : 13] They were meant to be for God's eyes only. They were meant to be in relationship with God, to love him, but instead they would go off and follow all kinds of other idols. And there's one particular story, which illustrates this.

It's the story of Hosea. In Hosea, God tells this prophet Hosea to take what is called an adulterous wife. And he marries her, and then no sooner are they married, then she's going off with other guys.

As soon as there's another guy comes home, she's off wandering off with him. She even has children with them. But then Hosea keeps bringing her back, forgiving her, welcoming her back in the home.

And then she goes off again, and Hosea, God calls Hosea to bring her back again. And Hosea is continually faithful, and she is continually unfaithful. And James is actually saying to the people here, you're just like Israel was.

You're just like that wife was. You're going off with all kinds of other desires. You're wanting to have your desires in other places rather than in me.

[16 : 24] Now, I'm going to get married in July, and imagine during the vows, you know, they say, oh, do you take Fiona to be your wife? And I say, yes, I do.

But just over at the back, there's Jackie, and I've got her on Tuesday night. And then there's Sylvie, and she's Wednesday night. And oh, yeah.

And now Agatha's at home now with me. Now, what are you going to be thinking? What kind of a husband am I? But James is saying, that's what you're doing.

When you're going into conflict, that's what you're doing. And what are the warning signs of the spiritual adultery? The warning signs are when you're getting frustrated, when you're getting angry, when you're getting irritated with someone and impatient with someone, that's the flashing red light.

That's the signal to you, spiritual adultery alert. That's the overactive desire alert. That's I want something more than God alert. Yeah?

[17 : 36] Because what does God want? In verse 17 of chapter 3, it says, God wants you to be peace-loving, considerate, submissive. Submissive means not insisting on having your own way.

full of mercy, good fruit, impartial, and sincere. And yet, when we're getting angry and frustrated, we're saying, I want what I want.

I want something else other than what you want, God. Now, for me, this sometimes works out when, I don't know, I'm walking along the road, and I'm in a hurry.

Okay? I've got to get somewhere. And then right in front of me is the guy who's obviously training for the world record in slow walking. And, and, and I'm there behind him, and I'm starting to do this little dance, trying to get past him.

But, but he's, he's obviously a racing driver, because every time I try to overtake him on the inside, he cuts me off, and then so I weave the other way, and then he cuts me off the other way, and we're doing this little waltz for about 20 seconds, until finally I see the opening, and I can get past him.

[18 : 45] And there, my blood has been beginning to boil, and I'm muttering to myself, oh, that guy needs to be locked up. Now, I'm sure none of you are like that. But, but, but what's going on there?

What's going on inside my heart there? What do I want? That's the question you need to ask yourself. What do I want? Because what I want is, I want to get on.

I want to get on with my life. I want to rule my world at this moment, and you're getting in the way of my world, and so, so I've got a right to get angry now, because you're in the way of what I need to do.

You see, it's actually become all about me, all about me actually wanting to be the God of my world. And James says, you adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world means enmity against God?

Therefore, anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. That's verse four. Well, what does he mean by that? Well, the world is society, which is basically just saying, get what you want for yourself.

[20 : 01] Do what you want for yourself. It's all about you, actually. Follow your desires. Fulfill yourself first. Put yourself first.

That's what the world is saying, and James is saying, when you're doing that, when it's all becoming about you, when you're frustrated and angry, and you're entering into the silent war, the hand grenade war, the all-out war, when you're doing that, what you're doing is you're just being like everybody else.

You're no different from anybody else. And actually, when you're beginning to get at war with the other person, you're actually at war with God.

That's intense. When you're in conflict with someone, maybe it's all hidden, like me with the guy in front. When you're doing that, you're actually engaging in warfare against God.

And so, conflict is first and foremost between you and God. The fruit of that is then seen in your relationships with each other. Because a desire has grown too strong.

[21 : 14] You want something more than you want to please God and honor Him and obey Him. So, we've looked at the three ways of conflict. We've looked at what causes conflict.

And I just want to think about how do we deal with conflict. There's lots of things we could say. We can only say it briefly. But, chapter 6, verse 6, if I can find my sheet.

Verse 6 to 10 says this. But He gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble.

But, submit yourselves then to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Come near to God and He will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

Grieve, mourn, and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord and He will lift you up. James says, there are two ways to deal with conflict.

[22 : 20] The first is humility. The second is grace. The first is humility. The second is grace. Why do conflicts not get resolved?

Why do we stay in those states of tension? There's always one reason. Pride. Pride is always the reason why conflicts don't get resolved.

What does pride look like? Pride looks like when you can see everybody else's fault. I can see the guy who's being slow and annoying in front of me.

I can see everybody else's fault but I can't see my own. I can see everybody else's fault but I can't see my own. Pride is when I make excuses for my sin because I focus on the other person.

I feel justified in getting angry because look what they did to me. Look how they treated me. Yeah, yeah, okay. I know what you're saying.

[23 : 25] I know I should be kind to them but don't you know how they've hurt me? Don't you know what they said to me yesterday? That's what we do and Jesus says you know that famous passage in Matthew 7 where he talks about do not judge and he talks about the speck taking the speck in the other person's eye from the plank in your own.

You know that? Well, what Jesus says and we sometimes get this confused he tells you to take the speck out of the other person's eye. Some people look at verses in James where it says who are you to judge your neighbor and we think okay, therefore I can never say anything to anybody to correct their behavior and James says no, no, no, no, no, no, no.

That's not what it's about. First of all, what do you have to do? First of all, there's a plank in your own eye. Stop looking at the other person's sin first.

Look at your own heart. Look at what do I want? Where is my desire too strong here? Where am I wanting something more than I want God? Am I wanting the desire for a clean bathroom more than God?

Am I wanting the desire for him to just shut the cupboards one time more than God? Now, those are good desires. They're not wrong desires.

[24 : 51] But maybe if they've led you to frustration and anger and nagging and blaming, it's become too strong. It's become stronger than your desire for God.

And what Jesus says is first humble yourself. What does that mean? It means ask yourself those questions. What do I want?

What do I want? What's the desire that has grown stronger than my desire for God? And he says, submit yourself. Lay down your desires.

They could be good desires. I want her to treat me well. I want her to give me respect. That's okay. But if you're getting frustrated, you can actually deal with those things calmly, submissively, considerately.

But if we're getting angry at those things, it's because my desires are too strong. I need to come and repent before God and say, God, forgive me. I need to lay those desires, submit those desires to God and say, God, I really want him just to spend some time with me.

[26 : 00] I really want her to respect me. But I want you more. And I know that you honor me.

I know that you will provide my needs. I know that I can trust you to do these things. So I lay these things at your feet. When we do that, then we're in a place where we know that we're an adulterer, yet we receive God's forgiveness.

And then we can go and take the speck out of the other person's eye. Then we can talk about the issues calmly, respectfully, gently. That doesn't necessarily mean the other person will always respond the way you want them to.

But it does mean that you can respond to them with grace. And God can work.

You're trusting God to work in their heart without having to nag them, without having to manipulate them, without having to blame them, without having to try and control them by your anger or all those other things.

[27 : 07] So the first thing, humility. The second thing is grace. It says, God gives grace to the humble.

You see, if you've done that first, if you realize where your fault is, where you have put something above God, then he says, he will give you the grace to cope with any and every difficult situation.

Conflict is painful. Conflict is difficult. It's not easy. But God says, if you trust me, if you give me your desires, I will give you grace to cope with it.

And it's not just that. Where do we understand that grace? Well, do you remember that story of Hosea? Remember that story of Hosea where Hosea was completely faithful, completely faithful, while his wife was completely adulterous, yet Hosea kept on loving her, forgiving her, working her back.

That's what God does with us. Though we are spiritual adulterers and adulteresses, every time we get angry, frustrated, irritated, there's your adultery alert.

[28 : 33] But actually, we come back to God and his grace covers over our sin. And the place where we see this lived out most incredibly is at the cross.

At the cross, the one whose desire was not more than his desire for God, actually came into conflict with God, where God turned his back on Jesus, so that we who were in conflict with God and conflict with each other could have restored relationship with God, could know grace of God, so that we can actually know restored relationships with each other.

When you realize how amazing God's grace towards you is, though you and I are a spiritual adulterers, how can I keep bitter and angry with my husband, with my wife, with my colleague, with my community group member?

That's the starting point where we can really begin to deal with conflict. Because at that point, conflict can then be redemptive.

It can grow and deepen your relationships with one another. It can bring a love which knows that each other are broken and you're at fault.

[29 : 57] Let's not have illusions. We are sinful, broken people, but we can know the grace of an amazingly gracious God. So here's two challenges.

If you are not a Christian, the challenge for you is this. Until you submit to God, God, you will not have all the resources you need to deal with all the conflicts that you will face in your life.

Because there will always be people who hurt us and who cause us pain, and unless you know the grace of a loving God, you will not be able to show grace and forgiveness and mercy to those people who really hurt you.

So the call for you is submit yourselves to God, because it can be the start of freedom in your relationship, the end to some of those wars you've been engaged in.

If you are a Christian, here's the challenge. Where are you engaged in conflict at the moment? Where are you engaged in silent wars?

[31 : 15] Where are you engaged in hand grenade wars? Where are you engaged in all-out wars? The first thing, rather than just always saying, well, it's all about them, they've done it, and they may well have hurt you, they may well be totally in the wrong, but first, humble yourself and ask God, what do I want?

Is there a desire that has got too strong? And just submit it to God. Receive his forgiveness and grace towards you. don't go around talking to everybody else about the sin of that person.

That's what James tells you in verse 11. Go to the person, talk to them, but with grace realizing that you are a broken sinner.

And if you know that there are people you really struggle with, I've many times kind of tried to forgive people, but it's only when I actually start praying for them.

It's only when I actually start thanking God for the people who I really struggle with that God actually begins to bring healing into my life.

[32 : 33] So there's a challenge. Think for yourself. Where are you in conflict? Don't be soft on your own sin and just hard on the other person's sin. Where are you in conflict?

Come, humble yourself, submit your desires to God. And it says he will lift you up. He will give you grace. He will restore.

He will do the work. Begin to thank God for the people. Even if you think there's nothing to thank God for them, realize, thank God for the way he sees them.

Thank God for the way he shows grace to them. And maybe, and here's the toughie, go and speak to the person and tell them the things you are thankful to God for them for.

Wow. You need grace to do that. That's supernatural. But it says in verse 17 of chapter 3, the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure, then peace loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere, peacemakers who sow in peace, reap a harvest of righteousness.

[33 : 55] Isn't that amazing? If you start to do this, you can reap a harvest of righteousness. Some of you may be involved in really difficult conflicts.

And if you are, we have, if you could just put the slide on. We have some people that you can contact. It's confidential. You can talk to them and work through some of the issues that you may be dealing with in your marriages, in your families, in all these things.

Here's an email, and there are trained counselors who can talk you through and work you through some of the issues. But don't let conflict continue because God wants to work through conflict to bring you into a harvest of righteousness.

Let's pray. Father, as we think about this difficult topic of conflict, we realize, Lord, that I realize that so often I have been justifying myself, defending myself, putting the blame on everybody else, Lord, and not examining my own heart, and ask you to forgive me.

I'll just give you a minute now to think, where are there areas of conflict in your life? And just humble yourself now. Ask yourself those questions. What do I want? Is there anything that's grown stronger than my desire for God?

[35 : 37] And just repent. Father, thank you for your grace.

Thank you that it is through your grace that we can actually live restored relationships, that we can actually live in freedom in the midst of a broken and sinful world.

Thank you that you desire to bring us into right relationship with you, right relationship with each other. Please let our church be marked with people who can deal with conflict well, who can love people well, who can speak the truth well, and that we grow together to love you more.

In your name. Amen. Please be seated for one minute, please. Thanks so much, Chris, for bringing God's word in a very timely manner.

Hey, we have something that we want to share with you guys, and so I just encourage your patience with this. I need you to listen. I really need you to listen on these things.

[37 : 02] I want to invite the other elders to come up, and we have something we want to share with you. We have been struggling with this for like years, and so when we started the church, we wanted to be a church that was a family, right?

So we wanted to be a family, do things as a family, and realize that there's some people here that you're like, wow, I've never been to this church, and what's going on up there? But the goal was that we always ask, we talk, we involve things with each other, and we ask questions.

So sometimes at the end of the sermons, we talk, and we ask questions at the end of the sermons, and we want to just be as a family. And so sometimes in the family, you have conflict, as Chris was talking about today.

And so we want to share some things that have been on our heart, and ask you to pray for these things, and hear our heart. But I'm going to start with having Franklin pray for us. Let's bow our hand and pray.

Heavenly Father, you have taught us in Genesis 2.18 that it is not good for the man to be alone. Therefore, you have established different communities for us, marriage, family, and church.

[38 : 08] You have prepared these communities for us so that we do not have to walk life's journey alone. Thank you for surrounding us with loving brothers and sisters, to cheer us when we're down, to lift us when we fall, to love us when we're hurt, and to point us in the right direction when we have lost our way, and correct us when we have failed.

Then in James 5.16, you have taught us to confess our sins to each other, and pray for each other, so that we may be healed.

Lord Jesus Christ, now we come before you as one body and of one mind. Holy Spirit, guard our hearts and direct our thoughts as we present to you matters in our community and our family.

We pray all this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. So one of the things we've been praying about as we go on this journey as a church is we said that we want to be a church that teaches all of God's word, and not just the fun, sexy things.

And so we've been really faithful to expound the word of the Lord and talk about things like hell and sin and grace and mercy and what that looks like in our life. And amidst all of it, as we look at James and other passages, we've talked about that we want God's word to be a mirror to us.

[39 : 25] That we don't want to look at other people or what society says and says, how are we doing? Are we doing well? But we want God's word to be the reflection of that, especially as God's family. And so as we desire to preach and teach all of God's word and counsel so everyone knows what it means to walk with the Lord.

So some of you in here, you're really early on your journey and some of you aren't on a journey yet, but you're learning what it means to be a part of the family of God. And so our prayer is that this would be an instructive time.

But as we look at going on this journey, as Chris talked about, sometimes in the church family, we have tension and we have things that don't work right and we have conflict that happens.

And the scripture is really clear about what we do with this conflict. Actually, the New Testament talks about it quite a bit. There's about seven different passages that talk about what do you do if you're in conflict or brothers are sinning against each other and how do you handle that as a church and how do we rejoice in that?

And again, the whole purpose of all of this is to bring restoration. The purpose of the family is to bring people into the family and to bring healing into the family and health into the family.

[40 : 35] And it's not to kick members or kick your family members away, but it's to heal them and show them and love them. And sometimes that's, and you know that as you raise kids, sometimes that's incredibly difficult and hard in relationships and you don't know what to do or how to do it.

And sometimes you wait longer than you should and sometimes you do it too quickly. But amidst all of that, we're trusting the Lord to give us mercy and grace. One of the passages that sticks up often and we use it as elders, so us three are elders here, is the passage in Matthew 18.

And it says really clearly that if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. So it's just the two of those people in that conflict. If he listens to you, you've gained your brother. But if he doesn't listen to you, take one or two others along with you that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses.

This goes back to the Old Testament. It's the idea that prophets were not really prophets until they were validated or before they were affirmed by at least two other witnesses. And so that was always this idea that you bring other people in there.

If he doesn't listen to you in verse 16, take one or two other witnesses along with you and if every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses, verse 17, to listen to you then, tell it to the church.

[41 : 46] And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. So we want to just talk really briefly about this idea of church discipline.

And it's important, again, to remember that discipline is always done with the idea of restoring each other. It's not the idea of punishing, but it's the idea of bringing people back. And so we've been praying about this as we look at Scripture.

And the Bible makes it really clear that we practice church discipline for the good of the person who's in trouble. We practice church discipline for the good of non-Christians because it says the world is looking at us as a church and trying to see are we consistent?

Are our words true? Are we hypocrites? Or are we truthful? And that we practice church discipline ultimately and above all for the glory of Christ.

That the idea is that it's about Christ's name and making his name great. And as leaders and parents, sometimes we find it really hard to do this because we like to be liked and we don't want to be seen as not liked.

[42 : 49] And, you know, I think even in church as a pastor, we struggle with, I use this word often, we want to be sexy. We want to be fun. And we want to be, everybody loves us. And it's the place where everybody loves and everybody's loved and everybody comes together.

And sometimes when we do that, we create a God that's so small that we can control him. He's so small.

Scripture says God is massive. You know, to take away one thing, then we take away who God is. And so as we prayed about what we're going to do, along the lines of just coming and sharing these things with you, we struggle with should we not even share anything?

And as we look at scripture, it says, what does it stand for us to lose as a church if we don't help each other? One of the things it says is we stand to lose the blessing and favor of God.

But God has called us as a church to act certain ways. And if we don't do that, scripture is really clear that God will remove his blessing from us. That's a huge mandate even for fathers.

[43 : 56] Fathers are called to act a certain way. And if we don't, scripture says that God will remove the blessing that he stores for us as dads over all of our family. And so if we don't discipline, if we don't talk about everything in scripture, then we lose God's blessing and favor.

The second thing we lose is we lose just fallen members, the people who are in sin. Because more often than not, what I've seen is if we don't talk about sin, if we don't deal with sin, people continue to walk in sin, and eventually they just give up and walk away.

Because no one cares about me. No one wants to say the hard things. No one loves me enough to come alongside of me. I think we lose faithful members in the church if we don't talk about everything.

Because there's some of us who really desire to walk with the Lord and please him in all areas of life, even in our fallenness and our brokenness. And if we're not a member of a body that has that in their DNA, but we just turn our backs, then the faithful people, you don't want to be a part of a family that isn't a family.

You don't want to be a part of a family that's just a club. And so sometimes we lose faithful people if we don't talk about everything. Sometimes we can lose our witness before the world watching us.

[45 : 13] If you're like me and I share and I talk to people often in my world, one of the biggest reasons most of my friends say I don't want anything to do with Christianity is because everybody's a hypocrite and everybody lives inconsistently.

And they say one thing but they do the other thing and that's also true with the church. And again, we're all broken, we're all sinful, we're all fallen. But we don't want to be known as people who don't walk consistently and struggle in our walk with the Lord.

Because if we don't do that, then we have nothing to say to our friends, especially in their time of need. And finally, what I think we lose if we don't bring in discipline, we don't talk about hard things, we lose just our authority to speak God's word.

And if I were doing a sin over and over and over again, I would have no authority to come up here and preach to you on those things. That if I lived a lifestyle that was contrary to what I'm preaching, I've lost God's blessing and authority.

Because so much, it's not just my words that I say, my words I, but it's God's spirit speaking through those words. And if we don't teach everything, then we've lost an authority to speak anything.

[46 : 34] All right. All right.