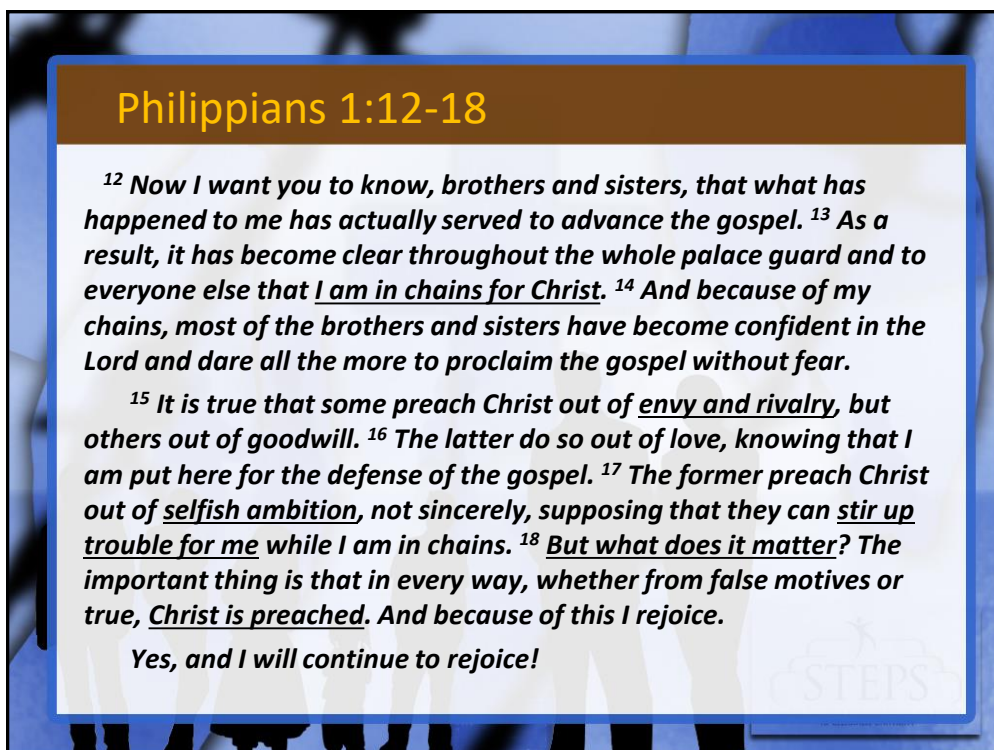


**Resolving Conflict in Ministry**

**Module 1:**  
**Contentious Christians**

*Philippians 1:12-18*  
*“Some preach Christ  
out of envy and rivalry.”*

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**Philippians 1:12-18**

*<sup>12</sup> Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that what has happened to me has actually served to advance the gospel. <sup>13</sup> As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ. <sup>14</sup> And because of my chains, most of the brothers and sisters have become confident in the Lord and dare all the more to proclaim the gospel without fear.*

*<sup>15</sup> It is true that some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others out of goodwill. <sup>16</sup> The latter do so out of love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. <sup>17</sup> The former preach Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing that they can stir up trouble for me while I am in chains. <sup>18</sup> But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. And because of this I rejoice.*

*Yes, and I will continue to rejoice!*

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## What does it mean to “contend”?

Group Discussion:

Jude 3 encourages: “*contend for the faith.*”

- ◆ What is the difference between contending for the faith and being contentious?
- ◆ What type issues are worth contending for?
- ◆ What issues are not worth contending for?
- ◆ Give some examples of Christians being contentious.
- ◆ See [\*Desiring God\* article](#)

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## Potential Issues of Contention

- ◆ Denominational Concerns (secondary)
- ◆ Book of Common Prayer edition preferences (1662, 1928, 1979, or 2019)
- ◆ Ordination of Women
- ◆ Issues of the Culture Wars (LGBTQ; immigration)
- ◆ Creative Approaches to Ministry (Emergent Church; Small Groups; Missional Communities)
- ◆ Romans 14 – Issues of Individual Choice and/or Preference

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## A HIERARCHY OF TRUTH

**TIER #1: CREEDS – UNIVERSAL**

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**TIER #2: STATEMENTS OF FAITH  
– DENOMINATIONAL**

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**TIER #3: FORM & STRUCTURE –  
ISSUES OF PREFERENCE**

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### Characteristics of Contentious Christians:

- ◆ They're misguided: elevate secondary issues.
- ◆ They're militant: don't know the real enemy.
- ◆ They're divisive: oppose fellow believers.
- ◆ They're competitive: rejoice in the set-backs of others and are envious and self-elevating.
- ◆ They're schismatic: believe they alone are bastions of the truth and separate from others.
- ◆ They're verbally violent: argue with and back-bite opponents (caricature).

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## Principles for a Godly Response:

- ◆ Rejoice that Christ is preached.
- ◆ Expect that they will be contentious.
  - Don't seek to reason with them.
- ◆ Stay on task and don't descend to their level.
  - Proverbs 26:4-5: Should you answer a fool?
- ◆ Don't compete or contend with them – you'll only add fuel to their fire.
- ◆ Don't engage them in battle – it only leads to ungodliness.
- ◆ Don't use their tactics – they will backfire.

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## What May Happen:

- ◆ If they are outside your ministry...
  - They will continue to be contentious.
  - They may ultimately see the error of their way.
- ◆ If they are part of your ministry...
  - They may leave – let them go!
  - Since they judge anyone close to them, they will eventually isolate themselves.
  - If they become divisive within your body and will not leave – you may need to follow Romans 16:17-19 (marking and separating from them).

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## Romans 16:17-19

*<sup>17</sup> I urge you, brothers and sisters, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them. <sup>18</sup> For such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own appetites. By smooth talk and flattery they deceive the minds of naive people. <sup>19</sup> Everyone has heard about your obedience, so I rejoice because of you; but I want you to be wise about what is good, and innocent about what is evil.*

- ◆ Note: There are many passages on church discipline.

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## Summary and Related Scripture:

- ◆ Continue to promote Christ.
- ◆ Rejoice that Christ is preached.
- ◆ Don't compete and don't engage!

Related Passages (group analysis):

- ◆ [Romans 12:17-21](#) – Don't repay evil for evil, but overcome evil with good.
- ◆ [2 Timothy 2:24-26](#) – The Lord's servant must not strive, but gently instruct.
- ◆ [1 Peter 3:8-17](#) – Honor Christ the Lord as holy.

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## Romans 12:17-21

*<sup>17</sup> Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. <sup>18</sup> If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. <sup>19</sup> Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." <sup>20</sup> To the contrary, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head." <sup>21</sup> Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.*

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## 2 Timothy 2:24-26

*<sup>24</sup> And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, <sup>25</sup> correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, <sup>26</sup> and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will.*

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## 1 Peter 3:8-17

<sup>8</sup> Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind. <sup>9</sup> Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing. <sup>10</sup> For "Whoever desires to love life and see good days, let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit; <sup>11</sup> let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it. <sup>12</sup> For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil." ...

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## 1 Peter 3:8-17 (cont.)

<sup>13</sup> Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? <sup>14</sup> But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, <sup>15</sup> but **in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy**, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, <sup>16</sup> having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. <sup>17</sup> For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil.

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### Conflict in the Philippian Church – Wisdom Model

Text	Philippians 1:12-18	Philippians 2:12-18	Philippians 3:2, 15-21	Philippians 4:2-3
<b>Type of Conflict</b>	<b>Contentious Christians</b>	<b>Selfish Believers</b>	<b>False Teachers</b>	<b>Conflicting Leaders</b>
<b>How It's Manifested</b>	Envy & Rivalry			
<b>Godly Response</b>	Promote Christ			
<b>If Positive Result</b>	Win an Enemy			
<b>If Negative Result</b>	Isolation Departure Discipline			

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## Collect for Peace

Most holy God, the source of all good desires, all right judgments, and all just works: Give to us, your servants, that peace which the world cannot give, so that our minds may be fixed on the doing of your will, and that we, being delivered from the fear of all enemies, may live in peace and quietness; through the mercies of Christ Jesus our Savior. Amen.

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