

Resolving Conflict in Ministry

**Module 4:
Conflicting Leaders**

Philippians 4:2-3
***“I entreat Euodia and I entreat Syntyche
to agree in the Lord.”***

95

Philippians 4:1-3 (ESV)

***Therefore, my brothers, whom I love and long for,
my joy and crown, stand firm thus in the Lord, my
beloved.***

***I entreat Euodia and I entreat Syntyche to agree in
the Lord. Yes, I ask you also, true companion (“loyal
Syzygus”), help these women, who have labored
side by side with me in the gospel together with
Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose
names are in the book of life.***

{Return}

96

What are the Characteristics of Conflicting Leaders?

- ◆ The leaders are beloved by the Body.
- ◆ The leaders enter into conflict over an issue.
 - Note: Paul does not define the issue.
 - Selfishness? Offense? Grievance?
 - Not an issue of immorality or doctrine.
 - *How can we be certain of this?*

98

What are the Characteristics of Conflicting Leaders? (cont.)

- ◆ The leaders allow the issue to:
 - fester into a personal conflict.
 - divide them in fellowship.
 - keep them from working together.
 - negatively impact the Body.

99

What are the Principles for a Godly Response?

- ◆ Treat the leaders even-handedly (note: entreaty).
- ◆ Preserve the dignity of the leaders.
- ◆ Give the leaders an opportunity to choose what's right {*entreat* not *command*}.
- ◆ Do not take sides – make their issue a “non-issue.”
- ◆ Appeal to:
 - “Unity in the Lord” – “what does God want done?”
 - Higher priorities – “What really matters?” (Phil.1:9-11)
- ◆ Enlist the Body in seeking reconciliation.

100

What may happen when reconciliation is attempted?

- ◆ The leaders may choose higher ground and be reconciled for the sake of the unity of the Body and the cause of the Gospel.
 - If so, you will have preserved their influence.
- ◆ If reconciliation does not come and continues to be visible and divisive:
 - The leaders may separate willingly.
 - Example: Paul and Barnabas in Acts 15:36-41 (below)
 - The Body may need to take disciplinary action.
 - As stated in Romans 16:17-19.

◆ KEY: The ministry belongs to Christ!

101

Summary and Related Scripture

- ◆ Promote reconciliation by appealing to the higher purposes of God.
- ◆ Enlist the Body in the cause of unity.
- ◆ Do not allow “petty grievances” to take precedence over the “cause of the Gospel.”
- ◆ Settle issues quickly (but not rashly).
- ◆ Acts 15:1-35 – Jerusalem Council
- ◆ Acts 15:36-41 – Barnabas & Paul Separate
- ◆ 1 Corinthians 6:1-8 & Galatians 6:1-5
- ◆ 3 John 5-10 – Diotrephes

102

Paul & Barnabas in Acts 15:36-41: A Test Case

- ◆ What was the disagreement about?
 - Paul & Barnabas disagreed over John Mark (what was his issue?)
 - Mark had turned back in 1st journey.
- ◆ What was their resolution to the issue?
 - Paul & Barnabas parted company.
 - Paul took Silas to Asia and Europe.
 - Barnabas took Mark to Cyprus (and Egypt/Africa?).

103

Paul & Barnabas in Acts 15:36-41: A Test Case

- ◆ What was the result of this resolution?
 - The church was not enmeshed in the conflict.
 - The work of Christ was not hindered.
 - Two missionary teams went forth instead of one.
 - In time, these men were reconciled (2 Tim.4:11 – *“very useful to me for ministry”*).
- 🔑 Separation without “war” allowed for reconciliation.

104

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 |
|---------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Type of Conflict | Contentious Christians | Selfish Believers | False Teachers | Conflicting Leaders |
| How It’s Manifested | Envy & Rivalry | Complaining & Arguing | Deception & Preying | Disunity & Distraction |
| Godly Response | Promote Christ | Promote Servanthood | Promote Truth | Promote Reconciliation |
| If Positive Result | Win an Enemy | Gain a Fellow Servant | Protect the Flock from Danger | Preserve Unity & Influence |
| If Negative Result | Isolation Departure Discipline | Immature Ineffective Discipline | Exposure Discipline | Separation Discipline |

108

Acts 15:36-41 – Paul & Barnabas

And after some days Paul said to Barnabas, “Let us return and visit the brothers in every city where we proclaimed the word of the Lord, and see how they are.” Now Barnabas wanted to take with them John called Mark. But Paul thought best not to take with them one who had withdrawn from them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the work. And there arose a sharp disagreement, so that they separated from each other. Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus, but Paul chose Silas and departed, having been commended by the brothers to the grace of the Lord. And he went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.

Return

109

Case Study Revisited: Lessons Learned

What are some wisdom principles that were learned through this scenario?

- 1. Be sure your church’s constitution makes provision for church discipline.**
- 2. Be diligent to protect the vulnerable children from sexual predators.**
 - ***If you err, err on the side of children’s safety.***
- 3. Former ministers need to leave their places of ministry.**

110

Case Study Revisited: Lessons Learned

4. If needed to exercise discipline upon a church leader, do not promise to keep necessary information private.
 - *The unity of the church is at stake.*
 - *Do not share more information than is necessary.*
 - *Good honest communication will satisfy the curiosity of most people; others need to be rebuked for gossip.*

111

Case Study Revisited: Lessons Learned

5. Enlist the prayer and spiritual support of the body of Christ to bring healing to all those involved.
6. Never allow someone who has a history of sexual perpetration against children to have a leadership position over children of any age below 18 years old.

112

Concluding Thoughts to Series

There will always be conflict in ministry.

Develop an ability to recognize various forms of conflict and define proper responses.

Embrace Paul's wisdom and courage.

Allow Christ and the work of His Kingdom to be the ultimate issues of our ministries and the true basis of our unity.

113

Concluding Thoughts

***“Finally, brothers,
whatever is true, whatever is noble,
whatever is right, whatever is pure,
whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—
if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—
think about such things.
Whatever you have learned or received or heard
from me, or seen in me – put it into practice.
And the God of peace will be with you.”
--Philippians 4:8-9***

114