

September 24, 2023, Pastor Jason Smotherman

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How has conflict shaped your ability to love more or less?
2. What is your opinion on the greatest love in scripture (Eros, Charity, Friendship, Affection)
3. Scripture tells us that as we get closer to the rapture and the 2nd coming of Christ that the environment of our world is going to shift to extreme offense and hatred of one another. What are some ways you can guard yourself and still be a person that loves others.

SERMON NOTES:

1 John 3:14 (ESV)

For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. ¹²We should not be like Cain, who was of the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own deeds were evil and his brother's righteous. ¹³Do not be surprised, brothers, that the world hates you. ¹⁴**We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers.** Whoever does not love abides in death. Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.

Scripture tells us that the aged apostle John, in bidding farewell to his congregation, admonished them to love one another. Early church historians record that the reason why John repeated this admonishing was because of a want that the people had. "But we want something new," they said. "Give us a new commandment." John replied, "Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning ... that we should love one another!" (1 John 2:7; 3:11).

CS Lewis in his book, *The Four Loves* (storge, eros, philia, agape), wrote:

"To love at all is to be vulnerable. Love anything and your heart will be wrung and possibly broken. If you want to make sure of keeping it intact you must give it to no one, not even an animal. Wrap it carefully round with hobbies and little luxuries; avoid all entanglements. Lock it up safe in the casket or coffin of your selfishness. But in that casket, safe, dark, motionless, airless, it will change. It will not be broken; it will become unbreakable, impenetrable, irredeemable. To love is to be vulnerable."



Almost from the beginning, the Bible paints the picture of a world in **conflict**. More specifically than the world, relationships is disarray.

Conflict (defined) - a serious disagreement or argument, **typically a protracted one**.

Wikipedia's admission and definition of conflict is interesting - A conflict is a struggle and a clash of interest, opinion, or even principles. **Conflict will always be found** in society...

The Biblical narrative of conflict is obvious and simple, **there has been a lot of it and there will be more to come**:

Adam and Eve had barely been created and the serpent ushers in a conflict. Genesis 3 tells the story. The serpent knew that conflict need only begin with a seed of a question. **Did God really say?** There is something about our will, that when not anchored upon the truth of God, **can pave a way for a destruction of everything good in our life**. It also can anchor every good thing in His will. We have a choice.

Conflict was found in the first family.

Gen 3:1-6 details the conflict this family had with God.

Genesis 4:8 details the conflict this family had with each other.

Referenced in our text is the conflict between Cain and Abel.

Conflict with God will always come to the forefront with conflict with people. One of the first signs that you are out of relationship with God is conflict in your relationships. One of the last signs to leave is your spiritual giftings.

You will know how your vertical relationship with God is doing by how your horizontal relationship with your fellow man is going. They are not mutually exclusive. They are expressly tied and linked to one another. The self-test is not how you love those you like, but those you don't like.

James 2:1

My brothers, **show no partiality** as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory.

Partiality – judging or showing favoritism based on external appearance, motivated by hope of personal gain.



Friendship and faith that only feeds me is not biblical.

The markings of great day look like this (Donnie Moore):

- 1) **Pray for favor** with God and man. You don't need everyone to like you just the right person to like you.
- 2) **Pray for wisdom.** Wisdom come through three ways. Wisdom comes through pain, wisdom comes through people, wisdom comes through prayer.
- 3) **Pray for someone** to come through my path today that I could do something for that could never repay me.

Man's history largely has been the opposite.

Man's history books are filled with timelines of war.

The point of reference we teach our kids is not peace but conflict.

God desires the opposite for us. **That they would know us not by our conflict but by our love for each other.**

We learn about yesterday through wars and conflicts.

Mankind has been in constant battle. To understand why man, since the beginning has been in conflict, one only needs to look at the conflict found within. **People who walk by the flesh will even have conflict with those who are trying to help, especially those who are trying to help.**

Jesus lived this. The very people that were awaiting his arrival were the very people blinded by their own power that killed Him.

The serpent hasn't gone away.

1 Peter 5:8-9

Be sober minded; be watchful. **Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.** Resist him, firm in your faith.

Here is what Jesus said the signs of the last days will be: Matthew 24:10 states that one of the signs of the last days is that there will be a spirit of offense that will rise like has never been seen. People will betray one another and hate one another.

Matthew 24:3-14

Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be? And what *will* be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?"

4 And Jesus answered and said to them: "Take heed that no one deceives you. **5** For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many. **6** And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all *these things* must come to pass, but the end is not yet. **7** For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. **8** All these *are* the beginning of sorrows. **9** "Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake. **10 And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. 11 Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. 12** And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. **13** But he who endures to the end shall be saved. **14** And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.

Look at the sequencing.

Offense and hate precede the changing of the church to teachers and preachers who are false prophets. **Offense and hate cloud godly sight.** The one way to surely not see what God is doing, put on the glasses of offense and hurt.

Paul describes a world in the last days that is void of humility, servanthood, and love.

2 Timothy 3:1-5

But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: ²For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, ³unloving, ^[b]unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, ⁴traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, ⁵having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!

Paul writing to Timothy in **2 Timothy 4:3-4** writes there will be a time coming where people will not endure sound doctrine, but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears. In other words, don't offend us, tell us what we want to hear, not what we need to hear.

In the environment of offense, lack of humility, love, and self-control. Selfishness will be running rampant, **perhaps the greatest miracle that will happen in the last days is a church that will love each other.** Even further, a church that will love their neighbor. Even further a church that will love their enemy. Even further, a church that will love other churches!



Our instructions are clear.

In this environment.

2 Timothy 4:5 gives us instructions.

But as for you, always be sober minded, endure suffering, do the work of the evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

Sober-minded – be watchful. As in be watchful of yourself.

Maturity is when you tell your flesh and feelings what to do, not your flesh and feelings telling you what to do.

Endure Suffering - to *undergo hardship*: — be afflicted, endure afflictions (hardness), suffer trouble.

In the context of relationships in the last days, be willing to take the high road and be afflicted. Reject the hard heart that comes with tough times. Learn to have Rhino skin and a soft heart. **When people wrong you, don't let it hurt your heart to offense, let it hurt your heart to burden.**

Do the work of an evangelist –

Work (to *work*); *toil* (as an effort or occupation); by impl. an *act*:— deed, doing, labour, work.

Evangelist – a preacher of the gospel.

To people who kept criticizing his administration, **President Lincoln** once told the following story:

"A traveler on the frontier found himself, as night came on, in a wild region. A terrible thunderstorm added to his trouble. He floundered along until his horse gave out and then had to get out to lead him. Occasional flashes of lightning afforded the only clue to the path, and the crashes of thunder were frightful. One bolt, which seemed to crush the earth beneath him, made him stagger and brought him to his knees. Being by no means a praying man, his petition was short and to the point: **"Oh Lord! If it's all the same to you, give us a little more light and a little less noise!"** **President Lincoln**

Isn't that a beautiful prayer. Lord, thank you for the direction but make sure you don't withhold your protection. The noise is necessary though. The noise prepares and makes way for the authentic and genuine.



Scripture states this about the “noise” found in relationships.

1 Corinthians 11:19 (ESV)

for there must be factions among you in order that those who are genuine among you may be recognized.

Ruth Graham

If two people agree on everything, one of them is unnecessary.

The enemy’s power to persuade wills requires a firm faith that resists.

1 Peter 5:8-9

Be sober minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith.

If I am ever to see the conflict end:

My will needs to be anchored (fixed, attached) and submitted (yield, defer) to God’s will if I will experience life as He has created it to be. That requires faith, my belief coupled with trust in God.

A persons “will” (defined):

- The power by which one deliberately chooses or decides upon a course of action.
- Volition - the faculty or power of using one's will:
- The power to arrive at one's own decision and to act upon independently despite opposition.

You have been given a will, so that by your own choice, **you may choose** to Love God and Love others or choose to reject God and reject His will. **Outside of God depositing choice in you, love could not be returned to the person who authored love.** God’s great desire is no secret, He created man with one goal, to have relationship with them.

Deuteronomy 30:19

“I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, *that* I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore, **choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live:**”

It’s your choice:

Your choice determines blessing or cursing.



Also, your choice affects more than you.

When we speak of breaking generational curses, what we are saying is, the power of choice to follow God's will over mine will cause blessings to overcome to the curse. His grace and mercy pave the way for victory over the conflict of the ages.

Again, the Biblical story is clear and repetitive:

Moments of pure joy in relationship with God and each other, then seemingly "out of nowhere", a conflict arises.

The battle of wills. **My old will is never so dead that it can't be resurrected.** We must die to ourselves daily.

We see the "conflict of the ages" in operation daily in relationships all around us.

- God's will vs. My will
- Husband's will vs Wife's will
- Parent's will vs Child's will
- Nation vs. Nation

Take a look at the current headlines for further proof of the conflicts that abound:

- <https://www.foxnews.com/us/florida-mother-kills-2-kids-herself-murder-suicide-losing-custody-battle-sheriff>
- <https://www.foxnews.com/us/colorado-dentist-enter-plea-fatal-poisoning-wife-mother-six>
- <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/unc-chapel-hill-graduate-student-charged-murder-fatal-shooting-faculty-rcna102303>

Stories like this have become normal.

Overdoses, murders, conflicts, wars, tragedies, divorces, custody battles, broken homes, have become the norm.

One researcher pointed out that if you were born after Sep 11, 2001, **all you know is a world at war.** All you have ever known is hyper partisanship, church fights, breakdown of the family, an atmosphere of stress has been on our nation for 20 plus years now.

2 Timothy 3:1-2 (AMP)

But understand this, that in the last days dangerous times [of great stress and trouble] will come [difficult days that will be hard to bear]



What's even more obvious is that scripture states that these conflicts will increase as the last days grow closer and closer. From Genesis 4:8 to Revelation 20:7-9, **the only escape to relational and personal turmoil is to surrender your will and way to God's.**

Things you need to know about offense and church "hurt":

- 1) Understand you are living, if you are a Christian, under new Kingdom principles.
- 2) You do not have the right to keep offenses, you have the right to forgive and move on.
- 3) As a church body, be the first to show grace and humility.
- 4) Choose to believe the best in others.
- 5) Offense is a good sign. It means your being vulnerable and loving. If it has been a long time since you have been offended, it can be a sign of apathy and complacency. Use it as an opportunity to tell your flesh who is in charge.

In the backdrop of a world in chaos, God offers a better way.
The #1 sign you are on the road to the better way is found here:

1 John 3:14 (NIV)

We know that we have passed **from death to life**, because we **love** each other.

When the world is full of turmoil, the Body of Christ should be full of peace.
When the world is full of immaturity, the Body of Christ should be full of maturity.
When the world is full of dissension, the Body of Christ should be full of unity.
When the world is full of hate, the Body of Christ should be full of love.