**HOW TO RESOLVE CONFLICT (February 1, 2018)**

This sermon is a logical follow-up to my last sermon on “Songs of the Oak Ridge church”. Kids show us how best to resolve conflicts. One minute they can be fighting like cats and dogs and then the next minute they are lovingly playing together. What comes natural for kids is something that we all need to be reminded of from time to time. Resolving conflict is a wonderful and a beautiful thing! I have witnessed it many, many times in my life; in my family, in the work place, and here in this congregation.

**Illustration:** Many years ago I was coaching High School basketball. During a week of practice two young men, Tevon Williams and Brian Mazingo, had been picking at each other and it started to become a distraction and hindrance to the team. The tension between them continued to grow and impact the team. So in the middle of one practice I pulled the two young men on the sideline and sat them cross-legged on the ground facing each other. I told them they would not be allowed to participate in practice until they resolved their conflict. They also knew that if they did not practice they would not be playing in our upcoming game. I didn’t know what their conflict was about and frankly I did not need to know. All I wanted was to restore order and peace and focus to my team. Within 5 minutes they had their conflict resolved and they were not a problem the rest of the season! A couple years later at graduation, Brian Mazingo sought me out to thank me for all the help I had been to him.

At one time or another every congregation of the Lord's people experiences conflict between or among members. The Oak Ridge church of Christ is not exempt from conflict arising between and among members. I know there have been moments where I have been reluctant to work through a problem with a brother or sister. The challenge is when we have a problem with another person, we are reluctant to go to them, one on one, and work through and resolve the problem. We are reluctant because no one likes confrontation. It’s probably one of the harder things we have to do in this life. Imagine how Paul felt when he had to confront Peter as recorded in **Galatians 2:11-21**?

Yet our Lord commands that we work out our problems with one another (**Matt. 5:23-24, 18:15**).

Paul, James, and Peter also encourage this attitude (**Galatians 6:1, James 5:19-20**, and **1 Peter 3:8-9**).

***\*If we truly exhibit the love we are to have for each other, we will be eager to resolve our conflicts ☺.***

**Maybe we just need to:**

* Talk and resolve a misunderstanding
* Study God's Word together to resolve what the Lord says on a matter
* Clear up or repent of something we have done or said to a brother /sister
* Humbly and lovingly approach a brother or sister who has, knowingly or unknowingly, done or said something contrary to God's Word

And notice, the first step is to go to the one we have an issue with or one that we know has an issue with us. The first step is not to tell someone else about the problem, or tell a group about the problem, or try to get someone else to work out the problem for us. The first step is to work things out one on one, to gain a brother and keep our worship and offerings to the Lord unhindered.

When our children were young we would encourage them to work out their problems with one another. Why? Because that is the best way to resolve conflicts and maintain peace. In the workplace, my company encourages conflict resolution by first having the employee talk directly with the employee they have a problem with and try to work out the problem there, with no one else involved.

There is a logical basis for first trying to work out our problems one on one.

(1) The Lord commands it

(2) Resolving issues one and one, keeps the problem from growing and becoming a distraction and hindrance to a congregation

(3) When we work out our problems one on one, we grow closer in the Lord with each other

(4) By working out our problems we keep tension, bitterness, grudges, clicks, and division from developing

(5) We preserve the unity that we are to have with one another

Of course when we need to remember the proper attitudes we are to have toward one another (from "Songs of the Oak Ridge church of Christ" sermon).

**1. Humble and Submissive**

**2. Thankful for each other**

**3. Peaceful and Peacemaking**

**4. Honest with one another**

**5. Patient**

**6. Kind**

**7. Considerate of each other**

**8. Not a stumbling block that hinders a brother or sister**

**9. Love one another**

***\*These apply to the one going to a brother or sister and the brother or sister being approached.***

A great example of a proper attitude is found in **Acts 18:24-28** (**1 Corinthians 3:5-6**). Notice they did not start resolving in public, but took him aside privately.

If problems persist and grow, I have seen where it can lead to:

* Bitterness in brethren toward each other (**Acts 14:2**)
* Opposing clicks form (**1 Corinthians 1:10-13**)
* Congregations split and divide (**1 Corinthians 3:3, 11:18**)

***\*These happen because brethren do not work through their conflicts with one another.***

Let us be reminded of the beautiful and wonderful blessings that come from following our Lord’s commands and resolving conflicts. Just as we see in children, let this attitude of resolving things come natural to us. Let us continue to seek peace with one another (**Romans 12:18, 2 Corinthians 13:11, Hebrews 12:14-15, James 3:18**) and strive for the unity we are to have for the Lord and for one another (**Ephesians 4:1-3**)!

If you are not a Christian this morning and know what the Lord wants you to do; you have a conflict that needs resolving. You have a conflict with God that could result in you losing your soul. We encourage you to decide to follow Jesus and overcome the reasons, or maybe the excuses, that have hindered you from humbling yourself to Him. Repent of your sins and be baptized to wash them all away (**Acts 2:38**).

If any of the Christians here have a conflict that needs resolving, I encourage you to work toward resolution. Maybe you are struggling with resolving a problem and could use prayers and encouragement from the brethren here; we also encourage you to make your wishes known as we stand and sing.