

BOLOCO CHURCH 2011- LOVE AND CONFLICT

(NOTES BASED ON MIKE BICKLE'S TALK AT IHOP – AUG 2010)

The Shocking Story of Love - The Challenge of Conflict

I. BEING "IN CHRIST" AND "CHRIST IN US" - THE IMPORTANCE OF UNITY IN THE SPIRIT

1 John 4:7-21 – we are commanded to love one another. How do we do this? By “abiding in Him (1 Corinthians 1:30), living by the Power of Another Life (Colossians 1:27 and Galatians 2:20).

A. UNITY IS KEY TO OUR GROWTH AND PERFECTION IN CHRIST

Psalm 133 *Behold, how good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!...for there the Lord commanded the blessing - life forevermore.*

The major challenge for any church is dealing with hurt, internal strife and division. It is the history of many churches and has been a particular issue for churches in our region. Jesus prayed earnestly just before His crucifixion that His people would walk in unity. This reveals how much He values it.

²² *That they all may be one...* ²³ *that they may be made perfect in one...* (Jn. 17:21-23)

Keeping the unity of the Spirit requires lowliness, suffering long, and bearing with each other.

¹ *Walk worthy...* ² *with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love,* ³ *endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.* (Eph. 4:1-3)

In his work with the early churches, Paul called the leaders to invest much work into cultivating a like-minded spiritual family. This involves:

- sowing the Word of God into our community
- providing opportunity for two-way communication of ideas
- developing appeal structures, and
- continually repairing relationships.

¹⁰ *I plead with you... that you all speak the same thing... that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.* (1 Cor. 1:10)

² *Being like-minded... being of one accord, of one mind.* ³ *Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.* ⁴ *Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but for the interests of others.* (Phil. 2:2-4)

This is not a statement against diversity or having different opinions but sticking together on the primary issues – eg to be of one mind in relation to our **Purpose together in Christ**, of which each one of us will have a different part to play.

II. BECOMING MATURE IN CHRIST AND SPEAKING THE TRUTH IN LOVE

A. Paul says we should no longer be children tossed to and fro – but we should come to unity of faith, speaking the truth in love, growing up into Him (Ephesians 4:15)

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B. And **He Himself** gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the **edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God**, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that **we should no longer be children**, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, **but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him** who is the head - Christ - from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes **growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.**"

III. THE SHOCKING STORY OF LOVE

A. LOVE YOUR ENEMIES

A. You have heard that it was said, "You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy. But I say to you, **love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you**, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven.....**for if you love those who love you, what reward have you?**" (Matthew 5:43-44)

B. IF WE LOVE GOD WE ARE OBEDIENT TO HIS WORD

A. Jesus answered and said to him, **if anyone loves Me, he will keep My word**; and my Father will love Him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him." (John 14:23)

C. IF WE DON'T LOVE, WE DON'T KNOW GOD

A. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love (1 John 4:8)

D. WE CAN DO THIS BY THE POWER OF ANOTHER LIFE DESPITE OPPOSITION

A. You are of God...and have overcome...because **He who is in you is greater than he who is the world.**" (1 John 4:4)

IV. KEY PRINCIPLES IN RELATION TO DEALING WITH CONFLICT AND DIFFICULTIES IN RELATIONSHIPS

Do not let sin reign in your body that you should obey it in its lusts. Romans 6:12

A. SUBMISSION TO AUTHORITY - A GOD-GIVEN FRAMEWORK FOR RELATIONSHIPS

1. We are to obey God (Acts 5:29 **We are to obey God rather than men**) **BUT**

2. All authority is instituted by God (Romans 13:1)

a. Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. **2** Therefore whoever resists the authority, resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. **3** For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. **4** For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil. **5** Therefore you must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience' sake. **6** For because of this you also pay taxes, for they are God's ministers attending continually to this

and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head - Christ - from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love."

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very thing. **7** Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor. (Romans 13)

3. We all are challenged by authority

- a. We are **ALL** subject to governing authorities
- b. Workers: *Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything you do. Try to please them all the time, not just when they are watching you. Serve them sincerely because of your reverent fear of the Lord. **23** Work willingly at whatever you do, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people. **24** Remember that the Lord will give you an inheritance as your reward, and that the Master you are serving is Christ. (Colossians 3:22)*
- c. Wives: *In the same way, you wives must accept the authority of your husbands. Then, even if some refuse to obey the Good News, your godly lives will speak to them without any words. They will be won over **2** by observing your pure and reverent lives. (1 Peter 3:1). And further, submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. **22** For wives, this means submit to your husbands as to the Lord. **23** For a husband is the head of his wife as Christ is the head of the church. He is the Savior of his body, the church. **24** As the church submits to Christ, so you wives should submit to your husbands in everything. (Ephesians 5:22)*
- d. Children: **1** Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. **2** "Honor your father and mother," which is the first commandment with promise: **3** "that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth." (Ephesians 6:1-2)

B. THEN - TAKE CARE IN HOW WE SPEAK

1. *Let everyone be swift to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger. James 1:19*
2. *But no man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. **9** With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God. **10** Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so. (James 3:8-10)*
3. *A soft answer turns away wrath, But a harsh word stirs up anger. **2** The tongue of the wise uses knowledge rightly, but the mouth of fools pours forth foolishness. (Proverbs 15:1)*

C. BUT WHAT DO WE DO WHEN WE ARE HURT OR OFFENDED OR REALISE THAT SOMEONE IS OFFENDED WITH US?

1. Restore wounded relationships early

- a. The spirit of a relationship can be wounded (without the people themselves being wounded). In other words, when former trust and communication are injured, then the relationship is wounded.
- b. A relationship can be wounded long before it is broken. A broken relationship requires much more skill and attention to heal. If we address the relational wounds or infection at the early stages, then we can avoid divisiveness in the body and "gangrene" that kills the relationship. As a spiritual family, we seek to repair slightly

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wounded relationships before they become broken relationships. It is better to be proactive—an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

- c. It is difficult to win an offended brother back.
 - 1. ¹⁹ A brother offended is harder to win than a strong city... (Prov. 18:19)
 - 2. ¹⁹ An offended brother is more unyielding [unresponsive] than a fortified city... (Prov. 18:19 NIV)
- d. **Don't let the sun go down on your anger** - **26** "Be angry, and do not sin": do not let the sun go down on your wrath, **27** nor give place to the devil. (Ephesians 4:26)
- 2. Forgive one another**
 - a. **21** Then Peter came to Him and said, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" **22** Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to **seventy times seven**. (Matthew 18:21-22)
- 3. Be reconciled to your brother and forgive or you won't be forgiven**
 - a. **23** Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, **24** leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. (Matthew 5:23)
 - b. **25** "And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses. **26** But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses." (Mark 11:25)

V. HOW TO MAKE A GODLY APPEAL WHEN YOU ARE HURT OR WRONGED

- A. When any feel mistreated in our fellowship, they should make an appeal first to the Lord, then to the brother who mistreated them, and then to the leaders who have authority to help with the solution. To share an offense with a friend who is not a part of the solution is slander.

15 "Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. 16 But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that 'by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.' 17 And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector. (Matthew 18:15-16)

Do not receive an accusation against an elder except from two or three witnesses (1 Tim 5:19)

- B. Tell him his fault: **DON'T EMAIL! (if you feel upset and want to email, send it to yourself).**
Usually what is required is a face-to-face meeting. When we meet face to face we feel differently. **Often the Spirit will intervene and we will feel more affection and mercy than when talking about him to others.**

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1. We are changed by the process of gaining courage and clarity in appealing to our brother. We often discover much about our heart and weakness in the process of preparing to appeal to our brother. If we skip this step, we lose opportunity for growth and for our brother to respond to us.

¹ *If a man is overtaken in any trespass... restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.* ² *Bear one another's burdens...* (Gal. 6:1-2)

If two or three witnesses are required, these people are required to be maintain strict confidence.

¹³ *A talebearer reveals secrets...he who is of a faithful spirit conceals a matter.* (Prov. 11:13)

VI. MAKING THE APPEAL

A. Our appeal starts with asking questions, requesting help, and sharing feelings first to the Lord and then to the brother. If needed, we then go to a leader in a position to help with the solution.

B. First, we appeal to the Lord.

- I. Ask questions of the Lord: Before meeting, we ask the Lord what He thinks about them and the conflict. We ask Him to speak into our deficiencies in the conflict and how we lacked sensitivity in the relationship. We use this to humble ourselves before our brother.
- II. Request help from the Lord: Ask Him to prepare the heart of the brother (spouse, child, etc.) before your meeting. The Lord may give a prophetic dream or speak to their heart.
- III. Share your feelings with the Lord: about the brother, the conflict, and relationship. This helps us to get in touch with our positive and negative feelings that are pent up inside us.

C. Second, we begin our appeal to the brother by asking questions, making requests, and sharing. This gives us opportunity to gain insight into blind spots in our heart and to understand his heart better. It is not effective to start the meeting with accusations, or seeking to win an argument.

1. Ask questions of the brother/sister: instead of starting the meeting with statements against the brother. For example, "What were you thinking when you told me...?"
2. Request help from the brother/sister: Ask him for help to understand his heart. For example, "Help me process or understand what I heard or was feeling when you told me..."
3. Share your feeling with the brother/sister: We share how we feel or what we heard him say, instead of making accusations. For example, "I felt rejected when you said..." or "I heard you saying that you wanted me off the team when you said..."

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C. We must confess our faults to our brother. Do not say, "I am sorry, if I have offended you," but say, "I repent of sinning against you," (by coming up short in love). When we say that we are sorry if they were offended, we are actually saying that they are easily offended, and we are not really saying sorry at all.

¹⁶ Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed (James 5:16)

VII. THE SPIRIT REQUIRES THAT WE DWELL IN A CULTURE OF HONOUR

The Spirit is the guardian of the culture of the Body of Christ. He requires that we dwell together in a culture of honour. Blessing comes from honor. Honour heals and dishonour divides. We seek to see their budding virtues that we may bless them. To be of the same mind requires that we seek to be agreeable instead of resistant. We seek to "get on their team." Do not be wise in your opinion; in other words, do not presume to understand all that God sees in them and the conflict.

¹⁰ In honour giving preference to one another... ¹⁴ bless and do not curse... ¹⁶ Be of the same mind toward one another... Do not be wise in your own opinion... ¹⁸ as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men... (Rom. 12:10-18)

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