

Influence 2022 Pt. 8

Pastor James Foley – Sunday, July 17 & 31, 2022

INFLUENCE

Thank you for joining us! Whether you are here in person or joining via the livestream you are most welcome! Please have a Bible at the ready and be prepared to take notes as you desire. We have much to cover in a rather short space of time.

OPENING REMARKS

In recent weeks we have outlined three tiers and/or levels of relationship that should be present in our lives (i.e., mentee, mentor and mutual). However, where there is human connection there remains the potential for human conflict and, thus, the need for conflict resolution. This is true even within the Church and amongst the most sincere of believers! Thus said, we do well to consider the following...

Q1. WHAT causes or drives interpersonal conflict?

Q2. WHY should we seek resolution in the midst of conflict?

Q3. HOW are we to pursue reconciliation per scriptural teachings?

KEY – Let us A these Q's in this NON-EXHAUSTIVE study on the themes of conflict and conflict resolution...

ROOT CAUSE(S)

Q1. WHAT causes or drives interpersonal conflict?

NOTE 1 – Scripture is clear that conflict happens amongst individuals, people groups and nations. It is both a universal and abiding reality of the human condition. Among the more notable instances of conflict recorded in the Bible are the hostilities between Cain and Abel (Gen. 4), Abram and Lot (Gen. 13), Jacob and Esau (Gen. 25–27, 32), Jacob and Laban (Gen. 29–31), Saul and David (1 Sam. 18–31), Mary and Martha (Luke 10), Jesus' disciples (Mark 9; Luke 22), Paul and Barnabas (Acts 15), and the Corinthians believers (1 Cor. 1, 3, and 11). This does not even touch upon the OT enmity between Israel and the surrounding nations!

Q. Yet what drives the turmoil and tumult within our earthly associations?

A. The root cause of our conflict is the presence or operation of sin. We are sinful beings given to dysfunction! Left to our own devices we operate according to carnal instincts that both create and perpetuate brokenness and ruin. Consider the following...

Galatians 5:16–17, 19–21 (NIV, Emphasis Mine)

16 So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. 17 For the **flesh** desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want. . . . 19 The **acts of the flesh** are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; 20 idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions 21 and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

NOTE 2 – Scripture, particularly the Book of Proverbs, notes that it is our propensity for greed (28:25), hatred (10:12), gossip (16:28), anger (15:18; 29:22) and the like that makes healthful connection so very difficult. Our external associations are hindered by internal matters of the heart, resulting in discord, strife and fracture! Every broken relationship, toxic connection or relational conflict finds its root in our own sinfulness...

FYI – One of the greatest texts on this matter comes from the Book of James...

James 4:1–3 (FYI – Penned to Christians)

1 What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? 2 You desire but do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask God. 3 When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

NOTE 3 – It should be noted that many experience relational dysfunction due to the reality they are hurting. As the adage goes, "Hurting people hurt people and are easily hurt by people." As long as a person has gaping spiritual and/or emotional wounds that need healing, it will be difficult for them to experience truly vibrant and life-giving connections. How can those with no peace within hope to have peace without?

HOWEVER...

KEY 1 – In the Lord we find healing for our hurts...

Psalms 147:3

3 He heals the brokenhearted
and binds up their wounds.

MOREOVER...

KEY 2 – In the Lord we find release from the ruinous elements of our fleshly nature...

2 Corinthians 5:17 (NKJV)

17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

Galatians 5:16, 22–23 (NIV)

16 So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. . . . 22 . . . the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

KEY 3 – You can learn to have healthy connections. You can learn to navigate conflict as it inevitably rises...

THUS SAID...

A WORTHY PURSUIT

Q2. Why should Christians seek resolution in the midst of conflict?

1) Personal & Relational Vitality

NOTE 1 – Many Christians prefer to avoid conflict resolution than put in the work of addressing matters. However, avoidance of conflict, with no effort to resolve it, postpones a proper response and exacerbates the problem. Conflicts that are allowed to fester unaddressed will always worsen and have negative impacts on both you and the relationship. To quote my father, “I have never seen a problem fix itself!”

Q. You want more peaceful and healthful relationships? Pursue conflict resolution when necessary!

NOTE 2 – Let it be made clear that we are called to be “peacemakers” and not “peacekeepers” (cf. Matt. 5:9). A peacekeeper will keep their mouth shut for the temporary illusion of peace while a peacemaker will speak the truth in love (cf. Eph. 4:15) in order to achieve actual, lasting peace. Do you want healthful relationships? Be willing to put in the work!

NOTE 3 – Others prefer to “abort” relationships or react in carnal ways v. pursue peace. This is woefully tragic!

2) For the Sake of Unity

NOTE – Christ declared that the world would know us by “our love for one another” (John 13:35). Thus, nothing diminishes the reputation and witness of the Church more than a bunch of knuckleheaded Christians who refuse to get along! Show me a local church given to infighting and I will show you a church that is missionally dead, ineffective and impotent! For Christ’s sake, let us learn to get along and resolve our conflicts! Unity in the Body matters more than our petty squabbles and drama...

Philippians 4:2–3

2 I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. 3 Yes, and I ask you, my true companion, help these women since they have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are in the book of life.

Q1. Do you really want to be the one to hinder the fulfillment of Jesus’ High Priestly Prayer? (cf. John 17)

Q2. Do you really want to be the one used of the enemy to hinder the broader work of Christ locally, etc.?

3) A Matter of Obedience

Q. Why pursue resolution when you are at odds with another?

A. Because the Bible tells you to! What if we just did what God said?

NOTE – Scripture commands believers to live at peace with one another (Rom. 12). It also commands us to do those things that make for peace. For instance, we are repeatedly instructed to love one another (John 13:34; Rom. 12:10), to settle our differences among ourselves (2 Cor. 13:11), to be patient, kind, and tender-hearted toward one another (1 Cor. 13:4), to consider others before ourselves in humility (Phil. 2:3), and more. Ultimately, conflict is the antithesis of God’s will for our lives, so resolution is a necessity when possible!

CONFLICT RESOLUTION (PRACTICAL)

Q3. How do we pursue resolution per the teaching(s) of Scripture?

1) Take Responsibility and Apologize When Applicable

NOTE 1 – Sometimes we hurt others with our words and deeds. Be quick to apology ensuring reconciliation.....

Matthew 5:23–24

23 “Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, 24 leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift.”

NOTE 2 – We often hesitate in apologizing due to pride, yet the Bible continually exalts the virtue of humility....

Philippians 2:3a

3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves . . .

2) Consider the Necessity of Resolution

Q. Does the action or behavior of another truly warrant offense and subsequent resolution?

Proverbs 19:11 (Emphasis Mine)

11 A person’s wisdom yields patience;
it is to one’s glory to **overlook** an offense.

NOTE – Not everything requires an intervention. Oftentimes the best thing to do is to overlook the offense. Show others the mercy and grace you would desire. Also, the vast majority of matters can simply be dropped (i.e., seeing as though most conflicts are over non-issues like personality style, miscommunications, etc.). Sometimes the best thing to do is move on and have a good laugh when applicable...

ILL – Years ago, a large statue of Christ was erected high in the Andes on the border between Argentina and Chile. Called "Christ of the Andes," the statue symbolizes a pledge between the two countries that as long as the statue stands, there will be peace between Chile and Argentina. Shortly after the statue was erected, the Chileans began to protest that they had been slighted -- the statue had its back turned to Chile. Just when tempers were at their highest in Chile, a Chilean newspaperman saved the day. In an editorial that not only satisfied the people but made them laugh, he simply said, "The people of Argentina need more watching over than the Chileans.

HEED THE WISDOM OF THE PROVERB...

Proverbs 19:11

11 A person’s wisdom yields patience;
it is to one’s glory to overlook an offense.

KEY – Of course, there are times when matters must be addressed (i.e., particularly if sin is involved).

Q. What does the Bible command at such a moment?

MATTHEW 18 PT. 1

Matthew 18:15a

15 “If your brother or sister sins [against you], go and point out their fault, just between the two of you.

NOTE 1 – This is the first step Christ outlines in the midst of interpersonal conflict. Go to the individual alone....

NOTE 2 – Few things are more counterproductive to reconciliation and relationship than starting by telling everyone else (i.e., those who are not involved) about the issue. It is not your job to build alliances wherein people agree you were wronged! It is your job to seek reconciliation per the words of Christ. PERIOD.

Matthew 18:15a (Emphasis Mine)

15 “If your brother or sister sins [against you], go and point out their fault, **just between the two of you.**

NOTE 3 – To share something that should stay between you and your friend with another is gossip...

Proverbs 26:20

20 Without wood a fire goes out;
without a gossip a quarrel dies down.

James 1:26

26 Those who consider themselves religious and yet do not keep a tight rein on their tongues deceive themselves, and their religion is worthless.

KEY 1 – Assuming that you are willing to go alone per the words of Christ, in what manner are you to go?

KEY 2 – Allow me to share the following that your initial “going” may be successful and effective...

MATTHEW 18 PT. 2

1) Seek Peace w/ God First

Before you try to address relational problems with another, make sure that your relationship with God is solid. You cannot have peace with your fellow man until you know peace with God through Christ. It would appear that our horizontal relationships only work when the vertical connection is firmly in place and established...

Proverbs 16:7 (NIV, 1984)

7 When a man’s ways are pleasing to the LORD,
he makes even his enemies live at peace with him.

QUOTE – “NO Jesus NO peace – KNOW Jesus KNOW peace”

2) Consider the Condition of Your Own Heart & Life

Often the sin we hate in others is the sin we are most guilty of ourselves. Before you rebuke the (mis)deeds of another, do some personal soul-searching to ensure you have victory over such vices. That way your words will ring true v. hypocritical. Moreover, a time of prayerful consideration will ensure humility v. pharisaical arrogance...

Matthew 7:3–5 (NIV)

3 “Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? 4 How can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? 5 You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.”

3) Be Quick to Listen (i.e., To Both God & Man)

James 1:19a

19 My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen . . .

Q1. What is God sharing with you before you go?

Q2. Are you truly seeking His wisdom and leading?

NOTE – Be ready to hear the heart of the one you are going to. There may be more to the story than you know! For instance, perhaps the coldness you feel from them in recent weeks, a coldness you feel needs to be addressed, stems from a pain they may not have shared with you. Be gentle in your approach and give them opportunity to share as necessary!

Proverbs 18:13

13 To answer before listening . . . is folly and shame.

QUOTE – “Good listening is like tuning in a radio station. For good results, you can listen to only one station at a time. Trying to listen to my wife while looking over an office report is like trying to receive two radio stations at the same time. I end up with distortion and frustration. Listening requires a choice of where I place my attention. To tune into my partner, I must first choose to put away all that will divide my attention. That might mean laying down the newspaper, moving away from the dishes in the sink, putting down the book I'm reading, setting aside my projects.” –Robert W. Herron

4) Be Slow to Speak

James 1:19a, b

19 My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak . . .

Proverbs 15:1

1 A gentle answer turns away wrath,
but a harsh word stirs up anger.

5) Be Slow to Anger

James 1:19

19 My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry,

NOTE – Mind your temper. Anger gone amiss can do great damage! “In your anger do not sin” (Eph. 4:26a). You may not love everything that comes out of the mouth of the other person, so watch yourself. I have seen far too many spiral needlessly into bitterness when they were on the verge of relational breakthrough because of flared tempers.

Proverbs 15:18

18 A hot-tempered person stirs up conflict, but the one who is patient calms a quarrel.

6) Be Quick to Forgive

NOTE 1 – If you go to the individual and they are repentant, show forth the pardon you yourself received...

Colossians 3:13

13 Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.

Luke 17:3–4

“If your brother or sister sins against you, rebuke them; and if they repent, forgive them. 4 Even if they sin against you seven times in a day and seven times come back to you saying ‘I repent,’ you must forgive them.”

NOTE 2 – Sometimes we are hesitant to forgive because we want the other person to know how much they hurt us. Don’t be that kind of person. Be like Christ, who was so quick to show you mercy for far greater crimes! Again...

Luke 17:3–4

“If your brother or sister sins against you, rebuke them; and if they repent, forgive them. 4 Even if they sin against you seven times in a day and seven times come back to you saying ‘I repent,’ you must forgive them.”

MATTHEW 18 PT. 3

Q1. What do you do if the conflict continues and/or the other person rejects your olive branch of peace?

Matthew 18:15–16

15 “If your brother or sister sins [against you], go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. 16 But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that ‘every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.’

FYI – There is process herein, giving the sinful causing conflict EVERY opportunity to repent and restore peace!

Q2. What do you do if the conflict continues and/or the other person still ejects your olive branch?

Matthew 18:15–17

15 “If your brother or sister sins [against you], go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. 16 But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that ‘every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.’ 17 If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector.

Q. Purpose of this discipline?

A. To bring them to repentance.

KEY – Let us consider one biblical example of this principle in action...

1 Timothy 1:18–20 (Emphasis Mine)

18 Timothy, my son, I am giving you this command in keeping with the prophecies once made about you, so that by recalling them you may fight the battle well, 19 holding on to faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and so have suffered shipwreck with regard to the faith. 20 Among them are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have **handed over to Satan** to be taught **not** to blaspheme.

NOTE – Note that the reason Paul metes out such a harsh apostolic judgment is the benefit of all those involved. The church would be purified, and the erring individuals would be brought to repentance. The goal for Hymenaeus and Alexander was that they “be taught not to blaspheme” (1 Timothy 1:20), and saved from ultimate spiritual ruin.

MATTHEW 18 PT. 4

Q. What do you if the resolution does not work? What if they persist despite the principles noted today?

A. You can rest assured knowing that you have done all that you can in Christ to promote the cause of peace!

FYI – We are only called to obey and do as He commands! The rest is up to Him. I love the following passage....

Romans 12:18 (Emphasis Mine)

18 If it is possible, **as far as it depends on you**, live at peace with everyone.

ILL – A childhood accident caused poet Elizabeth Barrett to lead a life of semi-invalidism before she married Robert Browning in 1846. There’s more to the story. In her youth, Elizabeth had been watched over by her tyrannical father. When she and Robert were married, their wedding was held in secret because of her father’s disapproval. After the wedding the Brownings sailed for Italy, where they lived for the rest of their lives. But even though her parents had disowned her, Elizabeth never gave up on the relationship. Almost weekly she wrote them letters. Not once did they reply.

After ten years, she received a large box in the mail. Inside, Elizabeth found all of her letters; not one had been opened! Today those letters are among the most beautiful in classical English literature. Had her parents only read a few of them, their relationship with Elizabeth might have been restored.

Q? Why am I sharing this story?

A. There is a particular beauty despite the tragedy. Though Elizabeth was left to wonder “what if my parents had only read my letters?” she NEVER had to wonder “what if I had only taken the time to write my parents?” She could live with a clear conscience knowing she had done all that she could to pursue peace. Similarly, if you have done all that you can do promote peace, you may know the pain of losing a relationship. However, you will also know the joy of obedience and the comfort of His abiding presence.

SUMMATIONS

Much has been shared today. Much has been shared throughout this entire two-month series...

Q. What will you do with what you have been given?

CONCLUSIONS

NOTE 1 – Those who wish to give online may do so at www.NewLifeBarre.org. Those who wish to give in person can utilize the offering boxes located throughout the church facility. Thank you for your faithfulness in supporting the work of the Lord!

NOTE 3 – Sunday School weekly at 9:15am; Thursday Bible Study at 6:30pm. **FYI** – August ministry sabbatical....

NOTE 4 – Annual Church BBQ & Baptism coming upon after church on Sunday, August 21. Those interested in being baptized by water should notify me of their intentions following service today. It would be my joy to baptize you!

NOTE 5 – Those who wish to linger in this sanctuary may feel free to do so. This is to be a house of prayer, so those who feel the need to pray may do so as they please. Moreover, I would be more than happy to pray with those who have need(s).

Numbers 6:24–26

24 The Lord bless you
and keep you;

25 the Lord make his face shine on you
and be gracious to you;

26 the Lord turn his face toward you
and give you peace.