

Introduction: What better day than Father's Day to talk about preventing conflict!

"And fathers do not bring anger up along side of your children." But rather "bring them up in the discipline & instruction, in the tender nurture and admonition of the Lord." (Ephesians 6:4)

The Biblical Pattern for fathers to prevent family conflict

1. Personhood 2. Partnership 3. Parenthood

Step 1 - Personhood: *"Be very careful, then, how you live – not as unwise but as wise.... Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead be filled with the Holy Spirit." (Ephesians 5:15)*

Step 2 - Partnership: *"Husbands love your wives." (Ephesians 5:25)*

Step 3 - Parenting: *"Do not exasperate your children." (Ephesians 6:4)*

II. Preventing Conflict in God's larger family of faith

- A. The spirit of unity
"Be always humble, gentle and patient. Show your love by being tolerant with one another. Do your best to preserve the unity which the Spirit gives." (Ephesians 4:1-6)
- B. Preventing conflict from getting worse – learning from Paul in the Book of Acts
"Men came from Judea to Antioch and started teaching the believers 'You cannot be saved unless you are circumcised as the law of Moses requires.'" (Acts 15:1)
- C. Acts reveals the conditions that lead to conflict:
 - 1. Change
 - 2. Differences
 - 3. Stress

III. Paul's guide to keep a conflict from getting worse

- A. Evaluate the conflict's size. They *"got into a sharp dispute..." (Acts 15:1)*
- B. Talk it out. They had a *fierce debate (Acts 15:1)*
- C. Get third party help.
"... go to Jerusalem and see the apostles and the elders about this matter." (Acts 15:2)

Conclusion: Following the lead of "Our Heavenly Father."

Monday – Yesterday we celebrated Father's Day. We looked at how Paul wants us to look at God's larger heavenly family and how to prevent conflict within it. Knowing how...and doing it are quite different. How about you? Will you make a commitment to work hard at reducing criticism, complaining and conflict? Reread *Ephesians 4:1-6* and pray for God to reveal where you need to focus to make this plea become reality.

Tuesday – Today we begin to look, starting with chapter 4, at Paul's ethical (practical application) part of his letter. Paul looked at the application of redemption to the church, to personal life and to domestic life. Ethical imperatives dominate the section. He sought unity in the Spirit — one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father. Within the unity, he celebrated the diversity of the individuals within the church, a diversity stemming from the differing gifts Christ gives. (4:7-13) The use of the gifts within the church leads to maturity for the church and its members. Maturity involves growing in Christ, in His love, each doing the work Christ gives.

Wednesday – This has consequences for personal life, calling for a complete transformation from the life-styles of unbelievers. Say a prayer and then read the challenging words of *Ephesians 4:14-31*. Without faith, the individual is devoted to selfish agendas. The believer becomes like God in holiness, purity and righteousness.

Thursday – Paul now turns to personal piety in the opening verses of the fifth chapter. (5:1-14) Notice the use of metaphors of dark and light and Paul's urging to live in the light. This small section is a theological call to be 'imitators of God' and to set an example of unity by the way we talk to and respect one another.

Friday – This changes one's role at home. Submission to one another becomes the key, a submission motivated by loyalty to Christ and love to the marital partner. (*Ephesians 5:15-32*) People often misuse Paul's statement for 'wives to submit to your husbands' as a license to be abusive. Paul never meant for women to be seen as second class, as can be seen from the verses following that indicate submission is mutual and that husbands are to love like Christ loved the church. Such love follows the example of Christ's love for His church. Parents expect honor from children while training children in the Lord's way of love. Similarly, masters and servants respect and help one another. The use of the word 'slave' in some translations was once used to legitimize slavery in America...another way we have misused the words of the Bible when we take it out of context. Thank God for scholarly Bible study to help us make practical applications of God's Holy Word!