

Conflict Prevention Wisdom

An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure!

- There are some wise steps you can take to head conflict off at the pass.
- It is much better to cut it off early than allow it to fester into a whirlwind.

Prevention precludes disaster.

- To avoid car breakdowns it is important to provide your car with preventive maintenance.
- In a similar manner, preventive steps can help preclude conflict from becoming major battles where many individuals are wounded and scarred.

Here are some practical steps you can implement in your life to help preclude conflict from happening.

Deal with conflict early.

- Tension development stage.
 - Eph. 4:26--Let not the sun go down on your wrath.
 - Not legalistically before sunset. In the North Pole, the sun rarely sets. Is it ok to have anger that long?
 - The Scripture is teaching us that we should handle conflict in a timely manner.

Examine yourself first.

- Mt. 7:1--Take the log out of your own eye.
- We're not to judge like the Pharisees: Judgmental, double standard, criticism.
- Self-examination will preclude and prevent a lot of tension and the escalation of conflict.

Make sure communication lines are open.

- Communication either enhances or detracts from the conflict situation.
 - If you communicate in **healthy ways**, it enhances the resolution of conflict.
 - *ERO* (Event...Response...Outcome...Let the Outcome you want determine the Response you make.)
- Do not fail to adequately inform, to seek input, and to listen.
 - Talking helps. Joshua 22--the rival altar. Communication prevented a disaster.
- In my experience, many of the conflict in churches are simply misunderstandings.

Let forgiveness flow like a river.

- Eph. 4:32--Forgiving...as God in Christ has forgiven you.
 - **After receiving the forgiveness of sins as we have, it is inconceivable that we could harbor bitterness and unforgiveness against our brothers and sisters in the Lord.**
 - The pressure of conflict often causes people to say hurtful things they would not say otherwise, and people are often deeply hurt as a result of power struggles.
 - David Ausburger writes that true forgiveness *re-creates* as well as reconciles.
 - **This happens when people release the past, view the present in a new light, and open the future to new possibilities** (1992, 282).
 - E.M. Griffin reports on research he did with college students on forgiveness.
 - When he asked them how they knew another person had forgiven them, a frequent response was “the person mentioned it to me once, but never mentioned it again.”
 - The other person had released the past.
 - If individuals can put away the “*us versus them*” way of thinking about those with whom they have been fighting, a new relationship can be created that allows both parties to see that they really need each other.
 - Finally, both parties should open themselves to new risks so that the present can be transformed into a new reality that did not exist before.
 - Through forgiveness, conflict can be an agent of transformation that will allow God to do a “new thing” in His church.

Admit when you are wrong.

- 2 Sam. 12:13--David said, “I have sinned.”

Major on the majors and minor on the minors.

- Choose your issues wisely. **Pick and choose your battles.**
 - **Don't make a big deal about everything.**
- **Most of the conflict in the church revolves around trivial and insignificant issues.** Petty things, personal preference things.
 - Carpet: “If it's blue I'm through...Well, if it's red you're dead!”
- Keep perspective and balance.
- There are some things worth fighting for, but we do it in a biblical manner.

Submit to spiritual authority.

- This is a big problem in today's church.
 - The church is inundated with a spirit of antiauthoritarianism.
- We live in a culture that has a "me first" mindset.
 - The attitude of many church goers is, "I'll support it if it meets my needs, if it furthers my cause. How dare you tell me what to do and how to do it."
 - This is not *Burger King*...you may not always have it your way.
- God has set up a spiritual order of authority in the church.
 - 1 Cor. 12... "governments"
 - Heb. 13:17--make the job of leaders enjoyable.

Do what you expect of others.

- Mt. 12--Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.
 - How do you want to be talked to?
 - How do you want to be treated?

Keep problems issue centered.

- Don't attack people or the motives. Attack the problem.
- To preclude conflict, deal with things on the issue level.
 - **Destructive Relational Processes**
 - Hard on People...Hard on Problem
 - Soft on People...Soft on Problem
 - Hard on People...Soft on Problem
 - **Constructive Relational Process**
 - Soft on People...Hard on Problem

Don't antagonize.

- Some people in a church are very caustic and destructive.
- 2 Sam. 2:12-23--Abner being antagonized.
- The point is, there are some nasty consequences if you antagonize.

Allow your pastor to be human.

- Remember, there was only one flawless man who ever lived.
- Pastors are growing too.
- They have bad days just like everyone else.

Continue in spiritual maturity with a learning and growing attitude.

- Phases of Spiritual Development

- Babe, Child, Young Man, Father (1 Cor. 3; 1 John 2)
 - 1 Cor. 3: Babes...immature...needing to learn to live by the Spirit instead of their emotions.
 - Rom. 8: *For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the **sons** of God*
 - Greek: **Mature Sons**

In everything love.