



Dysfunctional Relationships – Part Two

Fear of Conflict (Artificial Harmony)

Something Worth Fighting For -- 1 Corinthians 16:1-24

- How many things do you have in your life that fit under the heading of “it’s better to get a new one than to try to fix the old one?”...
 - and is that list getting longer or shorter?...
- my guess is, it’s getting longer...if that thing breaks, we would just get a new one...
 - when I was growing up, our next door neighbor owned a TV repair shop...
 - and that was just the way it was...when your TV broke, you either fixed it yourself...or you took it to the shop...
 - I’m sure some of the older folks here remember taking the back off your TV, pulling out one of those tubes that had gone bad, taking it down to the shop and matching it up with a replacement, coming back home and popping the new one in and you were back in business...
 - or letting them come and pick it up and take it back to the shop for a few days and then deliver it when it was fixed...
 - in fact, our neighbor had a delivery van that he drove back and forth for that very purpose...
 - the thought that you would just replace your TV when it stopped working wasn’t part of the way many of us were raised at all...
 - well, for a variety of reasons, you just don’t fix things like that anymore...it’s not worth fighting for...you just get a new one...
 - in fact, I would be stunned if there were more than a handful of people in our services today whose primary TV is over ten years old...
- and I’m not saying that’s there anything necessarily wrong with that...it’s more of an observation...we live in a throwaway society...
 - and one of the upshots of that is...we have fewer and fewer things in our life all the time that are really worth saving...are worth fixing...are worth fighting for...
 - and the corollary to that is – whatever items fit into that category become all the more valuable to you...because they’re so rare...
- for long-time residents of our town, we faced that as a city when Atlanta-Fulton County Stadium was torn down about the time of the Olympics
- now, here’s my question...in general, ...and in particular, are relationships like that to you?
- with that question in mind, please open your Bible to 1 Corinthians chapter 16
 - Paul is finishing up addressing many problems
 - now, the question is – how is Paul going to land the plane?...

- there's no doubt that this church is riddled with problems...and he has systematically, and sometimes forcefully addressed their questions and his concerns...
- then he gave us the most comprehensive discussion of the doctrine of the resurrection of Christ found anywhere in Scripture...
- so what's the final verdict?...
 - is it like one of today's TV sets – if it stops working, just go get a new one?...

- let's listen in – **read 1 Corinthians 16:1-24...**

- we're talking this morning about how relationships are **Something Worth Fighting For...**
 - and perhaps the central part of the argument is found in verse 13...there's no question about what Paul thinks about the Corinthian church...
 - even the people who had divided up among different groups...I'm of Paul...Apollos...Cephas...Christ...
 - or of the carnal Christians who could only be fed milk when Paul really wanted to give them meat...
 - or of those who would not elevate purity in the church by dealing with incestuous man...
 - or of the people who were taking one another to court...or using their bodies in an ungodly fashion...
 - or those who didn't care about pleasing their spouses sexually...or those who weren't valuing single people in the church...
 - you could march your way logically through the entire book and think, surely Paul is going to wash his hands of the entire matter...just start over – it's easier to give birth than the raise the dead...
 - but that's what he says in this central part of the argument...
 - instead he pleads with them... **1 Corinthians 16:13-14 - Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong. Let all that you do be done in love.**
- there it is in a nutshell...relationships are something worth fighting for...even with all of their challenges and weaknesses...be on the alert, stand firm in the faith...
 - function in God's house in a way that is both careful and compassionate...

- now, with the time we have remaining, let's look for **4 ways we show that we value each other...**

I. By Practicing Financial Integrity

- it's interesting and instructive that right after an extended discussion of the resurrection, Paul immediately turns to the issue of how we handle our finances...
- now, let me just say a couple of things about that...
 - We are talking about giving...
 - I had a counselee say to me last week that he and his buddies have watched this church grow and develop over the years and they used to like to justify their unbelief by saying – well, that church is only interested in your money...
 - and now his life is a mess and he's asking for counseling and he said – you know, I'm embarrassed, because you're helping me and I've learned so much about what it means to be a follower of Christ, and how God's Word has direction and answers for daily living...
 - it's obvious to me now that what I used to say about Christ simply isn't true I'm ashamed I used to say it without having any idea what I was talking about...

- also, the Bible actually says a lot about money, but about much more than simply giving to the church...
 - but the word stewardship is a very big word...that covers all aspects of life...anything that God has entrusted to us and whether we're being faithful to the trust...
 - and then when you start boiling that down...what Scripture says about money is much broader than just the issue of giving...
- God's Word has principles for how we earn money, and how we spend money, how we save it...what place it should have in our lives...
 - and this year, because of everything that is happening in our economy...
 - and the pressure and concern that many people have...we should focus on various aspects of our giving: time, finances, everything that we have been given
 - there are a lot of questions out there about money, and a lot of concerns, and fears, and confusion...these are all issues that can hurt a marriage
 - now, back to this text...one of the ways we show that we value one another is by practicing financial integrity...in other words, we're the real thing, and one of the things that proves that is the condition of our checkbooks...
- now, what motivates that kind of generosity?...the answer in part from this text is...
 - A. A concern for the needs of others.**
 - **v. 1 – Now concerning the collection for the saints...**
 - there is a historical setting to this passage with which you may not be familiar...
 - you need to understand it at least in seminal form to really be impacted by all of this the way God desires...
 - one of the amazing aspects of the church is that it was multi-ethnic...God was bringing Jews and Gentiles together...
 - and people were in the process of paying a huge price for opening declaring that they were followers of Christ...
 - that was especially true of Jewish men and women who were often ostracized from their families as soon as they trusted Christ...
 - compounding that was the fact that a famine had hit Jerusalem and the surrounding area...
 - so the Christians in the church at Jerusalem were especially suffering...and Paul was in the process of organizing a love offering to be given to the Jewish Christians...
 - you can read more about that in places like **Acts 11:27-30** and **Romans 15:25-26**
 - now, there a lot more we could say about that – in the providence of God, there was a marvelous opportunity here to bring these two groups of people together...it was a perfect way to put feet on verse 14 – Let all that you do be done in love...
 - and Paul is now instructing the men and women in Corinth...be the real thing...don't just talk about the way you love others...but take out your checkbook...
 - not out of obligation, or duty...but because you really care about the needs of others...
 - now, let's add another detail from verse 2...
 - B. In a consistent fashion.**
 - **1 Corinthians 16:2 - On the first day of every week each one of you is to put aside and save, as he may prosper, so that no collections be made when I come.**

- the first day of each week – they certainly understood what that meant...the first day, Sunday...(like Hyundai)...when the church came together...part of their worship to God was to participate in a generous, financial offering to meet the needs of others
- you may know that many churches and other non-profit groups are really hurting this year...there was another article about that in the news this week...
- and that's serious – most missionaries would tell you that they are regularly hearing from their supporting churches with news that they are able to continue to provide the same level of financial support...so here's a missionary family on the other side of the world depending on the America churches that sent them and now they're stuck for sure...
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- why is that...humanly speaking?...
- why has the average person who attends one church, with very little fanfare or instruction from the Pastor, gotten in the habit of the first check they write (or transfer they authorize) is to their church?...week after week or month after month?...
- it's because they care about the needs of people...and they want the light of the gospel of Jesus Christ to be proclaimed brightly around the world?...
- and does that mean they think their church is perfect...of course not...they're part of it...but the mission is worth fighting for...
- one other detail we want to bring into this discussion...even in the early church, there were...

C. With the appropriate checks and balances.

1 Corinthians 16:3 - When I arrive, whomever you may approve, I will send them with letters to carry your gift to Jerusalem;

- did you see that – whomever you approve...
- Paul didn't say – just gather up the money and I'll take it...no, he was expecting financial integrity from them, and he welcomed it for himself...
- Families that do not openly practice how they function financially with one another are often in turmoil. Why?...It goes back to the first Dysfunction – LACK OF TRUST
- There is no way they can proclaim – to God be the glory...
- Here is the real key: NEVER DO ANYTHING WITHOUT THE ENTHUSIASTIC AGREEMENT OF YOUR SPOUSE.
- here's the overall point – if YOUR MARRIAGE is a like a TV to you...there's not much commitment to keeping it going...
- and I would just ask you straight up – what does your check-book reveal about how valuable you consider your Lord, and your GIVING DECISIONS, to be?...
- a second way we show that we value our church is...

II. By Constantly Looking for New Ministry Opportunities and Challenges

- 1 Corinthians 16:8-9 - But I will remain in Ephesus until Pentecost; for a wide door for effective service has opened to me...

A. Expecting God to provide wide doors for effective service.

- see, even at this point in his life and ministry, Paul still believed that God was mediating his plan and program through the establishment of local churches...that was God's plan A, plan B, and plan C for this age...
- and sure there were challenges---we'll talk about that more in a minute...but Paul was plumb fired up about the open doors of ministry---there's no way around that...
- COUPLES WHO ARE THRIVING ARE VISIONARY PEOPLE IN MINISTRY...constantly looking for the next ministry opportunity...

- ..
- in the back of their minds...they say, let's move ahead...SOME ministries are worth fighting for...We want our children to see us fighting for the right things
- What other open doors for ministry is God giving you...
 - but here's the headline for what effective marriages built on ministry will be about...
- let me just give you a sampling of some of the kinds of things that are highlights...

1. The number of men and women who have come to Christ...
2. The opportunities to connect others to opportunities for ongoing growth and service
3. A good influence on neighborhood kids
4. Incredible openness to minister to neighbors...

B. Accepting the challenges that come with open doors.

- what Paul says at the end of that verse is amazing...
- **1 Corinthians 16:8-9 - But I will remain in Ephesus until Pentecost; for a wide door for effective service has opened to me, and there are many adversaries.**
- but notice carefully – it's not – there are many adversaries so I'm out of here...
 - there's many adversaries, so the church is a like a TV – trash it and get something else...
 - no, it's like the old stadium – there are problems, and we're going to face the problems head on...

III. By Looking Out for One Another

- what we read in verses 10-12 is just a classic example of people who love each other watching one another's backs...

A. Timothy's timidity.

- there is no question about how useful Timothy was to the apostle Paul – it was a special and treasured relationship...
- **Philippians 2:19-22 - But I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, so that I also may be encouraged when I learn of your condition. For I have no one else of kindred spirit who will genuinely be concerned for your welfare. For they all seek after their own interests, not those of Christ Jesus. But you know of his proven worth, that he served with me in the furtherance of the gospel like a child serving his father.**
- no there was no question about his worth...but the Scripture also makes it clear that Timothy struggled with fear, with timidity...
- and so Paul had to decide what he was going to do with that...
- and you can tell a lot about how much a person truly loves someone else by the way they respond to their weaknesses...
 - some people exploit other people's weaknesses, or ridicule them, or expose or magnify them...
 - not Paul – Timothy was part of the church, and the church building team...and so he had his friend's back...
 - and there were times he talked to Timothy directly about his fear—we have examples of that in Scripture...
 - but he didn't let other people misuse his friend...
 - **See that he is with you without cause to be afraid**

- **He is doing the Lord's work**
- **Let no one despise him**
- **Send him on his way in peace**

- in other words – mess with Timothy, and I'm going to whack you upside the head (that's in the original Greek)

- he does the same thing regarding...

B. Apollos' schedule.

1 Corinthians 16:12 - But concerning Apollos our brother, I encouraged him greatly to come to you with the brethren; and it was not at all *his* desire to come now, but he will come when he has opportunity.

- it's not hard to figure that one out – some people had wanted Apollos to come to Corinth for a visit and Apollos decided that wouldn't fit his schedule...and so some folks were fussing about it...imagine that...

- and Paul had to decide what he was going to do with that criticism of his friend...

- and it's pretty clear what's happening here, isn't it?...

- he had his back...not excusing sin...no evidence of that at all..

- but remember, there were some people in the church who were doing the whole I'm of Paul, I'm of Apollos...thing...

- this would have been a perfect opportunity for Paul to have thrown his friend under the bus and tried to attract all those people to him...

- no way – this isn't a game...that's why he said in verse 13 – act like men...

- Apollos didn't come because it didn't fit his schedule – get over it...

- you might say – I wish I had some people looking out for my back like that -- that's one of the great benefits of being part of a marriage that is working God's way...)

IV. By Cultivating Appropriate Thankfulness and Appreciation for the Team

- did you notice that Paul ends this book by talking about people...

- **v. 15 - Household of Stephanas (the first fruits of Achaia)**
- **v. 17 – Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus**
- **v. 18 – churches at Asia greet you**
- **v. 18 – Aquila and Prisca**

- we value the church because it is filled with souls, with human beings---Jesus valued them, and we should too