

Free Yourself from Sin – Part 2 Continued

Introduction:

1. Conflict is a part of life. There is no way to avoid it. It is inevitable.
2. Biblically, how do we resolve conflict? We have already learned the first two steps to take when we find ourselves in a dispute.
 - First, we must answer the question, “Is this worth fighting over?”
 - Second, we must examine ourselves and see how we may have contributed to the conflict.
3. Once we begin to see how our own wrongs have contributed to a problem, we must seek to free ourselves from sin, if we are to have any hope of resolving the conflict.
4. This process involves three basic steps:
 - Repentance – Confession – Personal Change
5. Through this three-step process, God has provided a way to obtain forgiveness, clean up the past, and change undesirable patterns of behavior.

Repentance

Confession

Personal change - Let's look at four basic ingredients that combine to create personal change:

First, prayer

- This is the starting point for all meaningful change.
- The qualities that God wants us to develop in our lives are sometimes referred to as “*the fruit of the Spirit.*” Galatians 5:22-23
- A farmer cannot grow apples without the seed, sunshine, and water that God alone provides. Likewise, a Christian cannot cultivate spiritual fruit apart from God's active assistance. John 15:4-5
- Prayer is the means by which we seek that assistance. Hebrews 11:6; Colossians 4:12

Second, focusing on the Lord

- 2 Timothy 2:22 – “*Flee*” is a strong word. It means “to escape by running away.” We do not free ourselves from sinful habits by accident, or by simply wishing we were better people. We do it by deliberately focusing on the Lord and calling upon Him.
- We must change the focus of our affections and thoughts (Colossians 3:1-2). As we invest more of our time, thoughts, and energies in the Lord, He will reign over our hearts more fully. Hebrews 12:1-2
- As we focus on Jesus, He provides for us what our sinful habits could never provide – genuine joy, peace, and contentment. Philippians 4:6-7

Third, study

- The Bible emphasizes the close connection between transformed thinking and personal change. Romans 8:6, 12:1-2; Ephesians 4:22-24
- Colossians 1:9-10 makes it clear that if we are to be spiritually fruitful, we need spiritual wisdom, knowledge, and understanding. These all involve the mind.
- But God does not mysteriously infuse our minds with these qualities. Rather, as we more fully study His Word, He helps us to understand His principles and His ways so that our minds are truly “made new.”
- Regular time spent in God’s Word helps us to identify and guard against sinful habits that compel us to behave in destructive ways. It helps us to recognize and resist the world’s ideas on how to deal with those who oppose us. Ideas like:
 - “Look out for number one.” “Don’t get mad, get even.” “Never forget a friend and never forgive an enemy.” “Just give him what he deserves.” “You’ll look weak if you admit you’re wrong.”
- Unbiblical ideas seem especially appealing in the face of conflict, but they will steadily erode our judgment and character unless we work to counterbalance them with the truths set forth in Scripture.
- The more we study the Bible and carefully absorb what we learn, the more we will be conformed to the image of Christ. 2 Timothy 2:15, 3:16-17

Fourth, practice

- Ephesians 4:24 commands us to “*put on the new man.*” This means we have to practice what we are learning. Philippians 4:9
- In one way or another, every situation that life throws our way is an opportunity to practice something worthwhile.
- We do not put on Christ-like character by chance. It will only happen through dedicated practice. Paul used the illustration of the rigorous training needed to win in the Greek Olympic contests. 1 Corinthians 9:24-27, 1 Timothy 4:7
- Godly character qualities are developed as we seek to be filled with the Spirit, and we begin to practice the desired action over and over again until we have overcome our weaknesses and made that behavior both natural and automatic.
- In 2 Timothy 2:22, the word “*follow*” means “to strive after; track down; or hound.” As we strive to put on the new man, we don’t give up. We are persistent.

In Conclusion:

1. To be an effective peacemaker, we must deal honestly with our own faults.
2. This happens only through:
 - Repentance
 - Confession
 - Personal change
3. As we get the log out of our own eye, we will be better prepared to help others and resolve conflict.