

Is This Really Worth Fighting Over? - Part 2

Introduction:

1. Conflicts generally involve two kinds of issues: material and personal.
2. One of the first things to do when you are involved in a conflict is to define the personal and material issues, and discern how they relate to one another. Then you can begin to decide which steps you must take to resolve the problem.
3. It is wise to begin this process by asking yourself, "Is this really worth fighting over?"
4. The Bible **does** teach and indicate that, in many situations, the best way to resolve a conflict is simply to overlook the offences of others. Proverbs 19:11, 17:9, 14; 1 Peter 4:8; Ephesians 4:2; Colossians 3:13
5. Since God does not deal harshly with us every time we sin, we should be willing to treat others in a similar fashion. This should take place under two conditions:
 - The offense should not have created a wall between you and the other person, or caused you to feel differently toward him or her for more than a short period of time.
 - The offense should not be doing serious harm to God's reputation, to others, or to the offender.
6. But, many times, even when we should overlook an offense, it is a difficult thing to do.

In this lesson, we will explore three practical principles that will help us to overlook an offense when we decide that an issue is not worth fighting over.

First, check your own attitude.

Second, count the cost.

1. Another reason to overlook some offenses and examine our attitude toward the offender is to spare ourselves from unnecessary grief and distraction.
2. Conflict is often far more costly than we may realize (loss of money, time and energy spent, loss of testimony, hinders our relationship with God, hurts those close to us, does further damage to the relationship).
 - In legal disputes, not only can your personal finances be drained, but prolonged litigation can consume a great amount of time and energy, leaving you emotionally and spiritually exhausted.
 - Worst of all, as long as a disagreement is unresolved, there is the potential for further damage to a relationship.
3. In 1 Corinthians 6:1-8, the apostle Paul teaches us that there are times when a Christian **could** get embroiled in a conflict, but it simply isn't worth it.
 - We may lose our testimony in the community as a result of continuous conflict, creating negative gossip and publicity.

- Also, ongoing hostility can destroy us from the inside, giving an advantage to Satan, and hindering our relationship with God. 2 Corinthians 2:10-11
 - Moreover, the anxiety and negative thinking generated by conflict can spill over and hurt people who are close to you, such as your family, or co-workers (you take it out on them).
4. It is all too easy to ignore these costs when we are actually entangled in a dispute. This is why we need to make a conscious effort to evaluate the true cost of conflict, and make a spiritual decision about whether or not an issue is worth fighting over.

Third, be willing to lay aside your rights.

1. Sometimes we resist overlooking offenses and forgiving others by arguing, “I have my rights, and it wouldn’t be just to let him or her off so easily.”
2. Think about this: Where would you be if God administered rigid justice? We would already be condemned to hell.
3. To those of us who have trusted Christ, we understand the truth of Psalm 145:8. God expects us to treat one another the same way (Ephesians 4:32). Sometimes we aren’t right to assert our rights.
4. Even if we are legally and morally justified in exercising a particular right, it may be better not to.
 - One aspect of “mercy” is to show sympathy, kindness, and compassion toward someone who is in need of help, whether or not he deserves it.
Illustration: Good Samaritan
 - One way to do this is to refrain from exercising legitimate rights, and thus release others from their obligation. Matthew 18:21-35
5. The Bible is filled with examples of this kind of mercy.
 - Abraham relinquished his rights and gave his nephew Lot first choice on where to settle in Canaan. Genesis 13:5-12
 - Joseph did not exercise his right to bring his brothers to justice for kidnapping and selling him into slavery. Genesis 50:19-21
 - King David chose not to punish Shimei for cursing him when he was fleeing from Absalom. 2 Samuel 16:5-12, 19:19-23
 - Paul gave up his right to financial support from the church in Thessalonica. 2 Thessalonians 3:8-9
 - Jesus declined to call down legions of angels to rescue Him from the cross. Matthew 26:53-54
6. Of course, the Bible teaches there are times when it is appropriate to exercise our rights, to confront others, and to hold them fully accountable for their responsibilities and their wrongs.
7. So, at times we should be willing to lay aside our rights, but at times it is proper to assert our rights. How can we know when to do which?
8. 1 Corinthians 10:31-11:1 provides some guiding principles. From this text, we can derive some questions to ask ourselves whenever there is a question about our rights:

- Will exercising my rights please and honor God?
 - Will exercising my rights advance God's work, or will it advance only my interests at the expense of His work?
 - Will exercising my rights benefit others?
 - Is exercising my rights essential for my own wellbeing?
9. As we have seen in this lesson, many disputes can be resolved simply by overlooking minor offenses, and relinquishing our rights for the sake of God's work.
10. Therefore, before focusing on your rights, check your attitude, count the cost, and ask yourself, "Is this really worth fighting over?"