

THE PURPOSE DRIVEN LIFE
Or, The Forty Weeks of Purpose
A Sermon Series Based on the Book by Rick Warren
Message Twenty-One (Week Twenty): Restoring Broken Fellowship
Dr. Greg Tyree, BBC, AM, September 19, 2004

INTRODUCTION:

Chuck Wilson, of New Hope, PA, shares this provocative story:

I was a youth pastor driving a kid (Jeremy) from our youth group home, when we saw a dog just “sitting” in the road. I swerved and tried to miss it, but two of my tires hit it! I stopped the car, got out, and noticed that the dog was still breathing, but barely alive. I was so upset!

Jeremy and I went to a house nearby to see if they were the owners. They said the owners lived on the other side of the road. When we went back we saw that the dog had been hit again! Take note; the dog had been hit by two cars, and was still living! Oh, what suffering he must have been feeling.

We went to the owner’s house, and discovered he was in bed. He was not happy to be awakened. We led him down to where the dog was; I had my headlights shining on the dog. He was still breathing.

The man asked, “What should I do?” I said, “Take him to the vet or put him to sleep, but whatever you do, do it soon, for he is suffering.” He was so indecisive, wavering back and forth with what to do. Finally he said, “I’ll have to put him down.”

He went to the house, I assumed for a rifle or gun. He came back with a sledgehammer! “You’re going to put him out of his misery with a sledgehammer?” I asked. “I can’t do it,” he replied. “You do it!” I told him I couldn’t do it, either. Jeremy said, “I’ll do it!” And the man handed this teenager the sledgehammer.

Jeremy hit him right on the head! His whole body bounced on the pavement, he hit him so hard! At least he was out of his misery. But wait! He was still breathing! Jeremy hit him again! He was still breathing! This happened six times! The dog was still breathing.

The man desperately went to the house and came back with two garbage bags, placed the poor dog inside, doubled the bag, tied it up airtight, and said, “There; that’s that.” He figured he could bury him in the back yard the next day.

The next day I drove by the house, feeling oh so guilty. Guess what I saw? The dog sitting on the front porch! He was twisted and contorted, but nonetheless alive and sitting up! Later on I drove by the house only to see the dog playing with the kids! He was one jumbled up mess of a deformed dog, but he was playing catch!

Some Christians feel like that dog. People are always beating on them with the sledgehammer of persecution, knocking them down with a mouth full of insults, or tying them up with there hurtful ways! What do you do when someone “sins against you?”

Key Text: 2 Cor. 5:18.

Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation...

We must forgive; we must not become bitter. Ron MacManus said, “Bitterness is like drinking poison and waiting for the other person to die.”

Anger-Management Styles

Whether people realize it or not, we all have an “anger-management style”. To help you understand this, I have developed *The LeadingPoint™ Anger-Management Style Indicator* (in the appendices). It will be most helpful as you read this section.

There are basically five anger-management styles:

- The **Addressor**
Deals with the Issues; Externalizes Conflict; Healthy Method.
- The Suppressor
Holds Anger In; Internalizes Conflict; Unhealthy Method.
- The **Repressor**
Puts Anger Off; Externalizes But Procrastinates Anger; Somewhat Unhealthy.
- The Depressor
Puts Anger Under; Externalizes But “Hides” Anger; Unhealthy Method.
- The **Aggressor**
Pushes Anger On Others; Externalizes But “Blames” Anger; Very Unhealthy.
(Aggressors are also known to push their anger on a third party, thus “shifting” the blame to someone not even involved in the conflict!)

When two people are interacting in conflict, there are a total of fifteen anger-management style combinations. When there are more than two people (and in a church, there usually

is), the anger-management style combinations at work are unlimited! No wonder there is so much conflict in the church.

As you are involved in the conflict process, keep in mind these five anger-management styles, and try to lead people to become “addressors”. Deal with the issues.

Expressions of Anger

A further nuance of conflict is how people “express” anger. Having considered the ways people manage conflict, we must also understand the way the express it. Anger is expressed either *passively* or *aggressively*.

Passively, anger may be “minor,” such as “irritation,” or it may be “major,” such as “retaliation” (“getting even” in “socially acceptable” ways). Aggressively, anger may be expressed in an “emotionally” hurtful way, such as “disapproval,” or in a “physically” hurtful way, such as “destruction” or total “devastation” (“seek and destroy”). Many factors, such as the cause of the hurt, the relationship between the wounded and the aggressor, and the personality of the offended, affect the way anger is felt, processed, and acted out.

From Reality to Theory to Reality

Before I complete this chapter, I would like to offer a little mental exercise. It’s beneficial for anyone who has been wronged or violated or hurt to keep in mind that the process of dealing with the ensuing anger or pain is two-dimensional; one will move between *reality* and *theory*.

- **Abuse** (Reality-Concrete)
- Analyze (Theory- Abstract)
- **Approach** (Theory- Abstract)
- Action (Reality- Concrete)

First, the *abuse* (the violation, hurtful action, etc.) occurs. Second, the abused must step back and *analyze* the situation (“How do I deal with this hurt?”; “How do I confront my abuser?”; “How does God want me to handle this?”). Third, an anger management *approach* is determined. This is, in essence, an action plan. Finally, the offended puts his plan into *action*. He takes deliberate steps to resolve the conflict or pain.

The pain or offence (abuse) happens in the “real world” (reality). That’s why it is so hard not to “act” on it right away. We want retribution, revenge, or at least justice. The analysis and approach take place in the “potential world” (theory), and are not valid until applied. The application (action) takes place in reality, right where the hurt began. This process helps a hurting person to resolve conflict and hurt in a healthy way.

The Resolution of Conflict

I have read extensively on the subject of conflict resolution. There are many good books and resources with which to familiarize you on this topic, many which are in the bibliography. Based on my reading and research, as well as what I have learned in the “school of hard knocks,” I have devised *The LeadingPoint™ Conflict Resolution Chart*. This chart comes in two parts (see the appendices). It is important that you look at this chart as I explain its contents.

PROPOSITION: Today we shall explore three intensive areas of conflict resolution.

I. THE TWELVE STEPS TO CONFLICT RESOLUTION.

Matt. 18:15-22.

¹⁵“Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. ¹⁶“But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that ‘by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.’ ¹⁷“And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector. ¹⁸“Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. ¹⁹“Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven. ²⁰“For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.” ¹Then Peter came to Him and said, “Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?” ²²Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.

These sequential steps are:

1. **VIOLATION**: The actual offense is made.
2. **CONSTERNATION**: Concern and hurt sets in, and the offended may not even understand why.
3. **INDIGNATION**: Anger sets in after the offense “sinks in”. At this point the offended may not yet “know” he is angry, yet feels conflicted.
4. **REALIZATION**: The offended party “recognizes” his anger as “anger,” and may begin to think and act in angry ways.
5. **HESITATION**: The offended party should “wait” before responding in anger toward the offended (or others on to whom they may “project” the anger).

6. ILLUMINATION: The offended party should pray for guidance from God, who will illuminate the right way for resolution.
7. **IDENTIFICATION**: After God illuminates the source and reason for anger within the offended, the offended is able to “pinpoint” the cause for his anger and pain.
8. ARTICULATION: Now the offended is able to “describe” his pain, thus enabling him to move toward reconciliation.
9. **EVALUATION**: At this point, the offended must discern whether or not the hurt he feels is “legitimate”. In other words, is he justified in having this anger, or is he merely being immature or sinful?
10. ACTIVATION: If the offended decides his hurt and anger is justified, he carefully must choose his steps of action that will lead to reconciliation.
11. **RECONCILIATION**: If the offender confesses his sin and is truly sorry he has hurt the offended, the offended then forgives the offender.
12. RESTORATION: Things do not just automatically “go back to normal”. They both must work toward restoring the relationship, which may never be the same, but nonetheless can be restored to a high degree.

II. THE ACTION STEPS TO CONFLICT RESOLUTION.

Once the offended party reaches step ten (activation), he can choose one of at least six increasingly intense action steps (depending on the severity of the offence and the affect on the offended):

1. **Choose** to Let Go: This is self-explanatory. Some things are just not worth getting upset over.
2. Conversation: Rather than talk to others or keep it inside, “talk” with the offending party and try to hash things out.
3. **Compromise**: You may discover that the offended and the offender can come to some kind of compromise and begin the healing process.
4. Counsel: In some cases, there will need to be a third party who can offer counsel. This may be a pastor, counselor, or objective friend or colleague.
5. **Compassion**: This much over-looked option means that the offended may decide to show compassion to the offender. This is not the same as “choosing

to let go”. In this choice, the offended actually helps the offender in some way. This step requires that the offended be a very godly person.

6. Confrontation: Obviously, in many cases the other five choices will not work. The offended has no choice but to confront the offender and require some kind of recompense. This confrontation will come in the form of one or more of four increasingly intense methods (see the second part of the chart):
 - a. ***Negotiation***. This goes beyond compromise. When we compromise, we generally meet someone in the fuzzy place we call “halfway”. In negotiation, however, we hash out a more rigid “give and take” that is less ambiguous, and usually more serious. See the section, *A Note About Negotiation*, at the end of this chapter.
 - b. Mediation. If negotiation does not work, the next step is mediation. This is when a third party mediates between the two (or more) in conflict. It is much more complex than “counsel,” for the mediator must serve as a sort of “referee” in the conflict. The mediator is generally selected by the offended, but there can also be a mutual agreement between the offended and the offender.
 - c. ***Arbitration***. This is a step beyond negotiation and mediation, and is to be pursued only when these others do not work. An arbitrator will hear both sides of the conflict and determine a “judgment” based on his informed opinion. The offender and the offended both agree to abide by the outcome determined by the arbitrator. This is called “binding arbitration”. This will only work, of course, if both parties agree to each detail of the arbitration. The offended has to be willing to “let go” after the requirements of arbitration are met.
 - d. Excommunication. A church can execute excommunication, which is the removal of an offending, unrepentant person in their congregation. This is based on the sequence of steps in the famous “If Your Brother Sins Against You” passage in Matthew chapter eighteen (see next page). These steps are to be pursued, of course, only when there is reasonable evidence that there has been a genuine offense that justifies a confrontation (see the *Matthew 18 Principle in Action Chart* in the appendices). We know these steps to be:
 - i. Go to your brother alone. Confront him with his offense. If he responds appropriately, it ends there. If he does not, proceed to step two.
 - ii. Take one or two brothers (witnesses) with you. Confront the offending party in the presence of the witnesses. If the offender

repents; good. It ends there. If he does not, proceed to step three.

- iii. Take the offending person before the church. I believe that this means the Elders, not the congregation (although there are times, though rare, when this is necessary). If the Elders concur with the offended and the witness that the offender has indeed committed a sin of which the offender needs to repent, they will call the offender to repentance and restitution.
- iv. If the offender refuses to repent, he is to be “excommunicated,” or expelled from the fellowship of the church.

It must be noted at this point that if the offender is excommunicated, the offended must “let it go”. There is no more action that the offended should take. If there are legal implications that fall outside of the civil authority of the modern church, there may need to be litigation, but this is to be avoided at all costs.

III. THE NEGATIVE STEPS TO CONFLICT RESOLUTION.

You will notice that the second part to the *Conflict Resolution Chart* shows two negative directions of response to conflict the offended can take: 1) AVOID (negative behavior); and ATTACK (sinful behavior).

1. **AVOID**: The increasingly passive responses are:
 - a. Contradiction. The offended person simply denies that he has been wronged. While this will not bring him justice, it helps him avoid conflict with the offender.
 - b. **Circumvention**. The offended person “goes around” the problem by making excuses for the offender.
 - c. Complacency. The offended person regresses to a state of utter complacency. They reason that confronting the offender will accomplish nothing so why bother?
2. **ATTACK**: The increasingly aggressive responses are:
 - a. Coercion. The offended, not happy with the outcome from positive confrontation (including excommunication), even if that outcome produced some level of justice for him, may begin to manipulate, intimidate, and otherwise threaten the offender.

- b. **Court**. If this does not work, and if he can get it “before the judge,” the offended may seek litigation for damages. Except in very, very rare situations, this is totally unacceptable for Christians (regarding other Christians). Believers should be willing to accept the judgment of the church leaders (see the section immediately after cruelty- 2c).
- c. Cruelty. If the case does not go to court, or the offended loses in court, the offended may resort to obscenities, violence, and cruelty. In other words, he may reason, “I’m not getting mad; I’m getting even!”

APPLICATION:

Point to Ponder: Relationships are always worth restoring.

Question to Consider: Who do I need to restore a broken relationship with today?