



Who Is My Brother I: Local Unity

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“And I do not ask on behalf of these only, but also on behalf of those who believe in me through their word, that they all may be one, just as you, Father, are in me and I am in you, that they also may be in us, in order that the world may believe that you sent me. And the glory that you have given to me, I have given to them, in order that they may be one, just as we are one — I in them, and you in me, in order that they may be completed in one, so that the world may know that you sent me, and you have loved them just as you have loved me. (John 17:20-23 LEB)

Who Is My Brother?

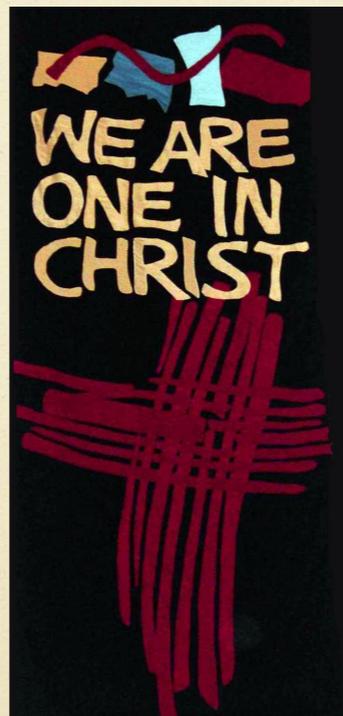
Universal

Faith

In Christ

Conscience

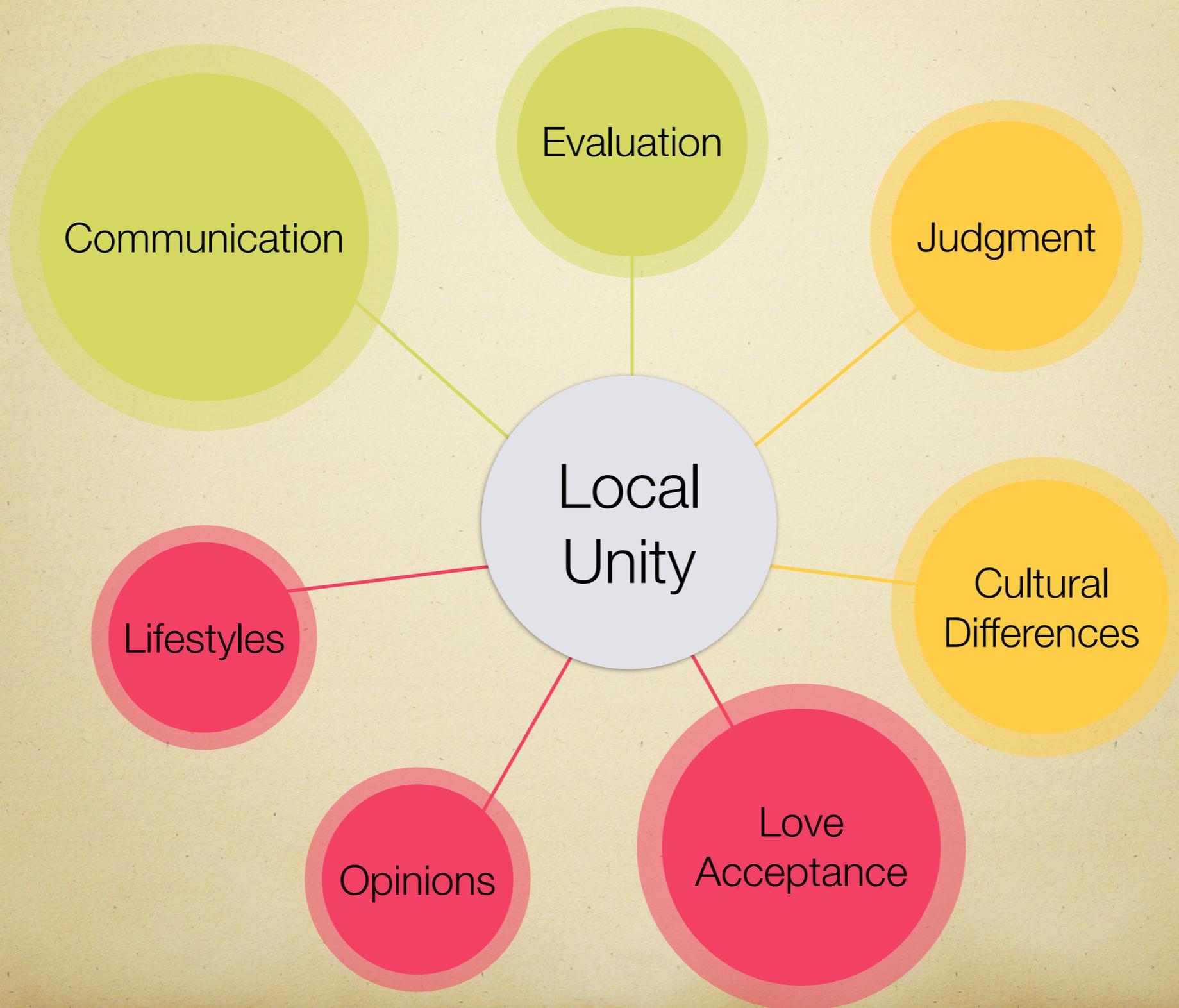
Local
Congregation



The Restoration Movement



Unity in the Local Congregation



FRIDAY



Morning Session

LOVE

Unity Begins With God

“For God loved the world in this way: He gave His One and Only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send His Son into the world that He might condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.

(John 3:16, 17 HCSB)

Dear friends, let us love one another, because love is from God, and everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. The one who does not love does not know God, because God is love. God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent His One and Only Son into the world so that we might live through Him. Love consists in this: not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Dear friends, if God loved us in this way, we also must love one another. No one has ever seen God. If we love one another, God remains in us and His love is perfected in us.

(1 John 4:7-12 HCSB)

This is how we know that we remain in Him and He in us: He has given assurance to us from His Spirit. And we have seen and we testify that the Father has sent His Son as the world's Savior. Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God — God remains in him and he in God. And we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. **God is love, and the one who remains in love remains in God, and God remains in him.**

(1 John 4:13-16 HCSB)

In this, love is perfected with us so that we may have confidence in the day of judgment, for we are as He is in this world. There is no fear in love; instead, perfect love drives out fear, because fear involves punishment. So the one who fears has not reached perfection in love. We love because He first loved us. (1 John 4:17-19 HCSB)

“The one who does not love does not know God, because God is love.

If anyone says, “I love God,” yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For the person who does not love the brother he has seen cannot love the God he has not seen. And we have this command from Him: The one who loves God must also love his brother.”

1 John 4:8, 20, 21 HCSB

Unity Is Relational In Christ

- Christian unity is based on relationship, rather than structure (John 13-17)
- When we are baptized, we are not baptized (immersed) into a church, we are baptized into Jesus (Rom 6, Gal 3, etc.). We don't join a "church", we join Christ. We don't join a church or go to church, we are the church, the body of Christ.
- Christian unity is based on being united with and in Christ (John 15, Ephesians)

And one of the scribes came up and heard them debating. When he saw that he answered them well, he asked him, “Which commandment is the most important of all?” Jesus answered, “The most important is, ‘Listen, Israel! The Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God from your whole heart and from your whole soul and from your whole mind and from your whole strength.’ The second is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”

(Mark 12:28-31 LEB)

“I give you a new command:
Love one another. Just as I
have loved you, you must also
love one another. By this all
people will know that you are
My disciples, if you have love
for one another.”

(John 13:34, 35 HCSB)

“Love is patient, kind,
not jealous, does not boast,
does not become conceited,
does not behave dishonorably,
is not selfish, does not become angry,
does not keep a record of wrongs,
does not rejoice at unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth,
bears all things, believes all things,
hopes all things, endures all things.

Love never ends.

1 Corinthians 13:4-8a

Cultural Differences

Now in these days, as the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint arose by the Greek-speaking Jews against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. So the twelve summoned the community of disciples and said, "It is not desirable that we neglect the word of God to serve tables. So, brothers, select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and wisdom, whom we will put in charge of this need. But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word." And the statement pleased the whole group, and they chose Stephen (a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit), and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolaus (a convert from Antioch), whom they stood before the apostles. And they prayed and placed their hands on them.

(Acts 6:1-6 LEB)

Now I urge you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree in what you say, that there be no divisions among you, and that you be united with the same understanding and the same conviction. For it has been reported to me about you, my brothers, by members of Chloe's household, that there is rivalry among you. What I am saying is this: Each of you says, "I'm with Paul," or "I'm with Apollos," or "I'm with Cephas," or "I'm with Christ." Is Christ divided? Was it Paul who was crucified for you? Or were you baptized in Paul's name?

1 Corinthians 1:10-13 HCSB

Acts 15

And some men came down from Judea and began teaching the brothers, “Unless you are circumcised according to the custom prescribed by Moses, you cannot be saved.” And after there was no little strife and debate by Paul and Barnabas against them, they appointed Paul and Barnabas and some others from among them to go up to the apostles and elders in Jerusalem concerning this issue. So they were sent on their way by the church, and passed through both Phoenicia and Samaria, telling in detail the conversion of the Gentiles and bringing great joy to all the brothers. And when they arrived in Jerusalem, they were received by the church and the apostles and the elders, and reported all that God had done with them. But some of those who had believed from the party of the Pharisees stood up, saying, “It is necessary to circumcise them and to command them to observe the law of Moses!” (Acts 15:1-5 LEB)

Both the apostles and the elders assembled to deliberate concerning this matter. And after there was much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, “Men and brothers, you know that in the early days God chose among you through my mouth that the Gentiles should hear the message of the gospel and believe. And God, who knows the heart, testified to them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as he also did to us. And he made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith. So now why are you putting God to the test by placing on the neck of the disciples a yoke that neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? But we believe we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus in the same way those also are.” And the whole group became silent and listened to Barnabas and Paul describing all the signs and wonders God had done among the Gentiles through them. And after they had stopped speaking, James answered, saying, “Men and brothers, listen to me! Simeon has described how God first concerned himself to take from among the Gentiles a people for his name. (Acts 15:6-14 LEB)

And with this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written: 'After these things I will return and build up again the tent of David that has fallen, and the parts of it that had been torn down I will build up again and will restore it, so that the rest of humanity may seek the Lord, even all the Gentiles who are called by my name, says the Lord, who makes these things known from of old.'

Therefore I conclude we should not cause difficulty for those from among the Gentiles who turn to God, but we should write a letter to them to abstain from the pollution of idols and from sexual immorality and from what has been strangled and from blood. For Moses has those who proclaim him in every city from ancient generations, because he is read aloud in the synagogues on every Sabbath." (Acts 15:15-21 LEB)

Then it seemed best to the apostles and the elders, together with the whole church, to send men chosen from among them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas—Judas who was called Barsabbas and Silas, men who were leaders among the brothers— writing this letter to be delivered by them: The apostles and the elders, brothers. To the brothers who are from among the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia. Greetings! Because we have heard that some have gone out from among us—to whom we gave no orders—and have thrown you into confusion by words upsetting your minds, it seemed best to us, having reached a unanimous decision, and having chosen men, to send them to you together with our dear friends Barnabas and Paul, men who have risked their lives on behalf of the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore we have sent Judas and Silas, and they will report the same things by word of mouth. For it seemed best to the Holy Spirit and to us to place on you no greater burden except these necessary things: that you abstain from food sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from what has been strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these things you will do well. Farewell. (Acts 15:22-29 LEB)

So when they were sent off, they came down to Antioch, and after calling together the community, they delivered the letter. And when they read it aloud, they rejoiced at the encouragement. Both Judas and Silas, who were also prophets themselves, encouraged and strengthened the brothers by a long message. And after spending some time, they were sent away in peace from the brothers to those who had sent them. But Paul and Barnabas remained in Antioch teaching and proclaiming the word of the Lord with many others also. (Acts 15:30-33, 35 LEB)

And after some days, Paul said to Barnabas, "Come then, let us return and visit the brothers in every town in which we proclaimed the word of the Lord, to see how they are doing." Now Barnabas wanted to take John who was called Mark along also, but Paul held the opinion they should not take this one along, who departed from them in Pamphylia and did not accompany them in the work. And a sharp disagreement took place, so that they separated from one another. And Barnabas took along Mark and sailed away to Cyprus, but Paul chose Silas and departed, after being commended to the grace of the Lord by the brothers. And he traveled through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches. (Acts 15:36-41 LEB)

And he came also to Derbe and to Lystra. And behold, a certain disciple was there named Timothy, the son of a believing Jewish woman but of a Greek father, who was well spoken of by the brothers in Lystra and Iconium. Paul wanted this one to go with him, and he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in those places, for they all knew that his father was Greek. And as they went through the towns, they passed on to them to observe the rules that had been decided by the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem. So the churches were being strengthened in the faith and were growing in number every day. (Acts 16:1-5 LEB)

BREAK

Study the Letter to the
Ephesians Carefully

HOMework

LUNCH



Afternoon Session

Small Group Topics

Discuss for 1 Hour, Then Present Findings

- Greed, Wealth, Materialism
- Non-violence, Pacifism
- Veil
- Dating outside our fellowship
- Politics
- alcohol consumption/legal drugs/smoking
- gift of healing
- dress (esp women)
- career/using talents
- popular entertainment

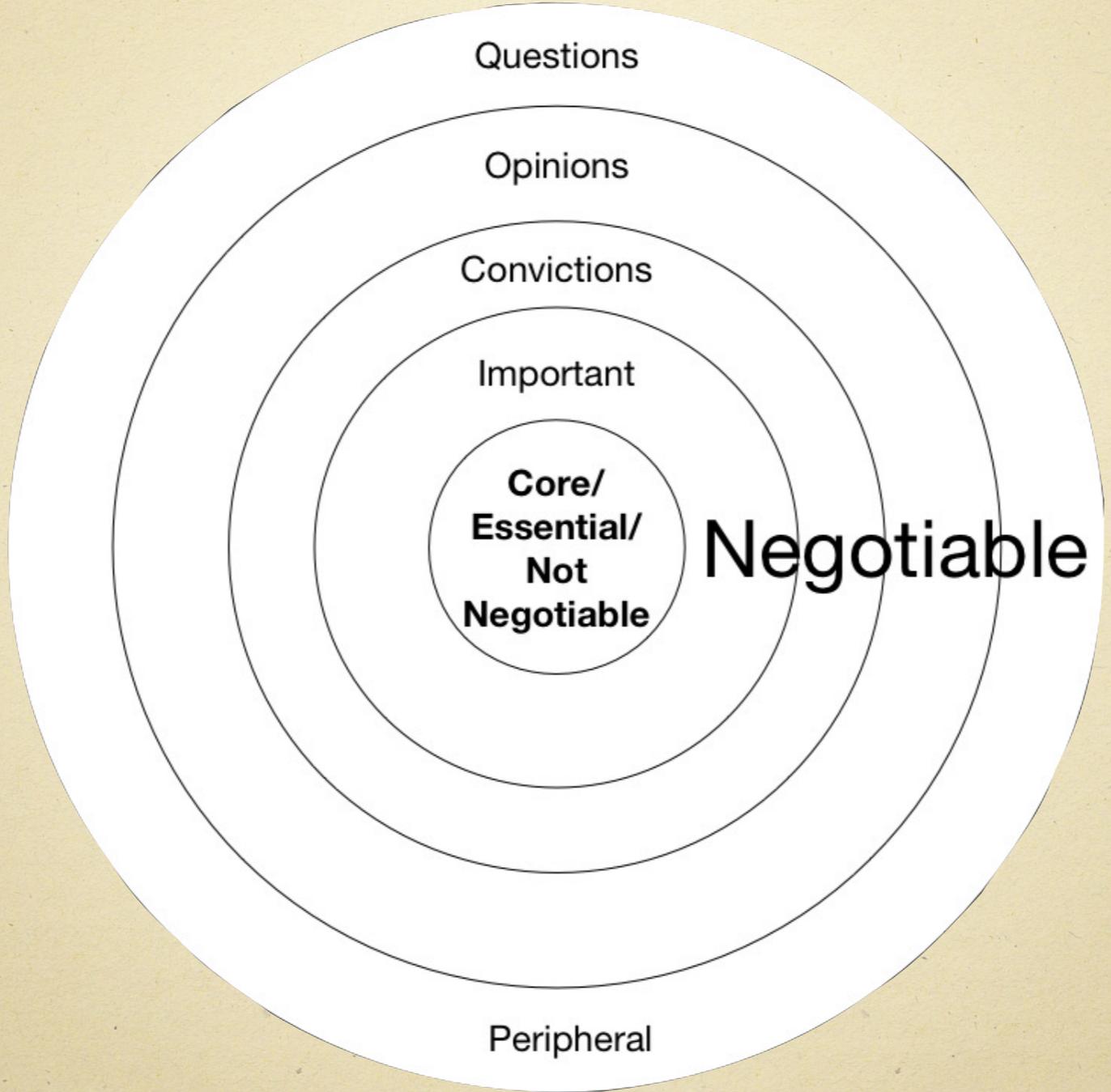
Focus on Process

SATURDAY



Morning Session

Evaluating Doctrine



Examples

Core:

John 13:34-35
Acts 2:36-39
Galatians 1:6-12
James 1:27
Hebrews 6:1-2

Important:

Leadership
Structure
Worship Style

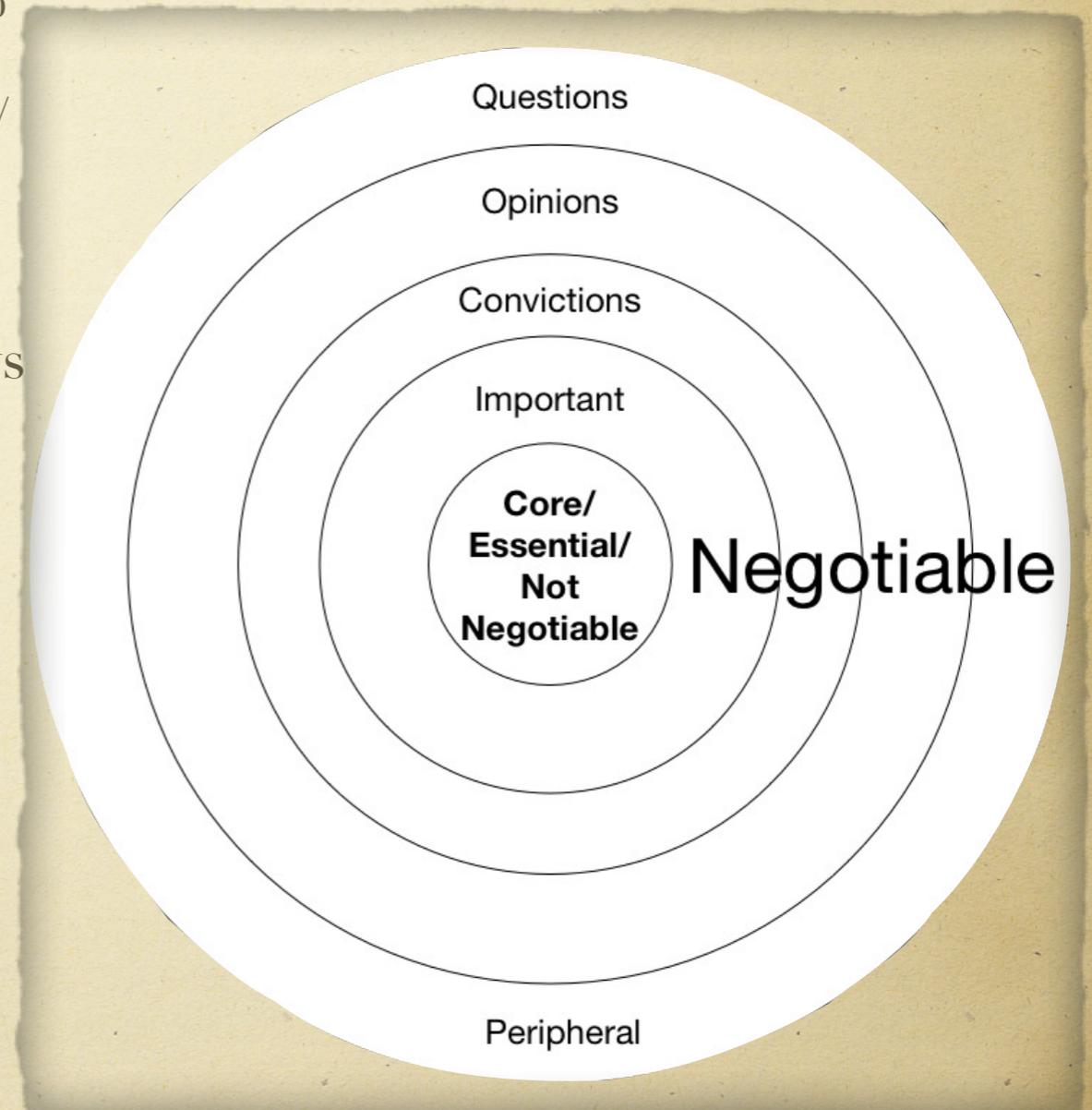
Convictions and Opinions:

Romans 14
1 Corinthians 8

Questions/Peripheral:

Some ?'s for Evaluating Doctrine

- Is it rational?
- Is the doctrine stated clearly in the Bible? What is it based on? Is it both biblical and **rational**?
- How does the doctrine relate to the character/nature of God? Is it consistent with God's character/nature?
- How does the doctrine relate to the good news as expressed in the person of Jesus?
- How often in the Bible is it taught, and what weight does the Bible place upon it?
- What effects does it have on other doctrines?
- What is the historical and current consensus among believers/interpreters (i.e., past and present)?
- How does it influence personal and church life?
- Is cultural or personal pressure to deny a teaching of Scripture a factor in believing this?



Evaluating Behavior

1 Corinthians 6, 8, 10

All things are permitted for me, but not all things are profitable. All things are permitted for me, but I will not be controlled by anything. Food is for the stomach, and the stomach for food, but God will abolish both of them.

(1 Corinthians 6:12, 13a LEB)

Now concerning food sacrificed to idols, we know that “we all have knowledge.” Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. If anyone thinks he knows anything, he has not yet known as it is necessary to know. But if anyone loves God, this one is known by him. Therefore, concerning the eating of food sacrificed to idols, we know that “an idol is nothing in the world” and that “there is no God except one.” For even if after all there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth, just as there are many gods and many lords, yet to us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things, and we are for him, and there is one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and we are through him. But this knowledge is not in everyone. But some, being accustomed until now to the idol, eat this food as food sacrificed to idols, and their conscience, because it is weak, is defiled. But food does not bring us close to God. For neither if we eat do we have more, nor if we do not eat do we lack. But watch out lest somehow this right of yours becomes a cause for stumbling to the weak. For if someone should see you who has knowledge reclining for a meal in an idol’s temple, will not his conscience, because it is weak, be strengthened so that he eats the food sacrificed to idols? For the one who is weak—the brother for whom Christ died—is destroyed by your knowledge. Now if you sin in this way against the brothers and wound their conscience, which is weak, you sin against Christ. Therefore, if food causes my brother to sin, I will never eat meat forever, in order that I may not cause my brother to sin. (1 Corinthians 8:1-13 LEB)

All things are permitted, but not all things are profitable. All things are permitted, but not all things build up. Let no one seek his own good but the good of the other. Eat everything that is sold in the meat market, asking no questions for the sake of the conscience, for “the earth is the Lord’s, and its fullness.” If any of the unbelievers invites you, and you want to go, eat everything that is set before you, asking no questions for the sake of the conscience. But if someone says to you, “This is offered to idols,” do not eat it, for the sake of that one who informed you and the conscience. Now I am not speaking about your own conscience, but the conscience of the other person. For why is my freedom judged by another’s conscience? If I partake with thankfulness, why am I slandered concerning that for which I give thanks? Therefore, whether you eat or you drink or whatever you do, do all things for the glory of God. Give no offense both to Jews and to Greeks and to the church of God, just as I also please all people in all things, not seeking my own benefit, but the benefit of the many, in order that they may be saved.

(1 Corinthians 10:23-33 LEB)

1 Cor 10:23-33—Principles

- A. All things are permitted, but not all things are profitable.
- B. All things are permitted, but not all things build up.
- C. **Let no one seek his own good but the good of the other.**
 - 1. Eat everything that is sold in the meat market, asking no questions for the sake of the conscience, for “the earth is the Lord’s, and its fullness.”
 - 2. If any of the unbelievers invites you, and you want to go, eat everything that is set before you, asking no questions for the sake of the conscience.
 - 3. But if someone says to you, “This is offered to idols,” do not eat it, for the sake of that one who informed you and the conscience (i.e., of that other person)
- D. whether you eat or you drink or whatever you do, do all things for the glory of God. (*Ask yourself: Does _____ glorify God?*)
- E. Give no offense (*to anyone*); not seeking my own benefit, but the benefit of the many, in order that they may be saved (*ultimately*)

Practical Application
of

1 Cor 10:23-33:

Questions for Evaluating Personal Behavior

Is it ok for me to _____?

- What (if anything) does the Bible say about _____?
- Is _____ beneficial to others?
- Does _____ build others up?
- Does _____ glorify God?
- Has anyone expressed a specific objection to me about _____?
- Might someone (with or without faith) find _____ to be offensive? On what grounds?

Judging vs Being Judgmental

Judging

κρίνω: to judge; to discern; to evaluate; to pass judgment on; to distinguish between; to decide; to sentence; to bring to trial; (plus many more definitions)



Broad Semantic Range

“Do not judge, so that you will not be judged. For by what judgment you judge, you will be judged, and by what measure you measure out, it will be measured out to you. And why do you see the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the beam of wood in your own eye? Or how will you say to your brother, ‘Allow me to remove the speck from your eye,’ and behold, the beam of wood is in your own eye? Hypocrite! First remove the beam of wood from your own eye and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye!

(Matthew 7:1-5 LEB)

“I did one work, and you are all amazed,” Jesus answered. “Consider this: Moses has given you circumcision — not that it comes from Moses but from the fathers — and you circumcise a man on the Sabbath. If a man receives circumcision on the Sabbath so that the law of Moses won’t be broken, are you angry at Me because I made a man entirely well on the Sabbath? **Stop judging according to outward appearances; rather judge according to righteous judgment.**” (John 7:21-24 HCSB)

Do not speak evil of one another, brothers. The one who speaks evil of a brother or judges his brother speaks evil of the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge of the law. There is one lawgiver and judge who is able to save and to destroy. But who are you to judge your neighbor?

(James 4:11, 12 LEB)

Therefore, any one of you who judges is without excuse. For when you judge another, you condemn yourself, since you, the judge, do the same things. We know that God's judgment on those who do such things is based on the truth. Do you really think — anyone of you who judges those who do such things yet do the same — that you will escape God's judgment? Or do you despise the riches of His kindness, restraint, and patience, not recognizing that God's kindness is intended to lead you to repentance? But because of your hardness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath, when God's righteous judgment is revealed. He will repay each one according to his works:
(Romans 2:1-6 HCSB)

The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. The spiritual person judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one. (1 Corinthians 2:14, 15 ESV)

And finally, all of you be harmonious, sympathetic, showing mutual affection, compassionate, humble, not repaying evil for evil or insult for insult, but on the other hand blessing others, because for this reason you were called, so that you could inherit a blessing.

(1 Peter 3:8, 9 LEB)

1 Corinthians 5-6

It is reported everywhere that there is sexual immorality among you, and sexual immorality of such a kind which does not even exist among the Gentiles, so that someone has the wife of his father. And you are inflated with pride, and should you not rather have mourned, so that the one who has done this deed would be removed from your midst? For although I am absent in body but present in spirit, I have already passed judgment on the one who has done this in this way, as if I were present. In the name of our Lord Jesus, when you are assembled, and my spirit, together with the power of our Lord Jesus, I have decided to hand over such a person to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, in order that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord. (1 Corinthians 5:1-5 LEB)

I wrote to you in the letter not to associate with sexually immoral people. By no means did I mean the sexually immoral people of this world or the greedy people and swindlers or idolaters, since then you would have to depart out of the world. But now I have written to you not to associate with any so-called brother, if he is a sexually immoral person or a greedy person or an idolater or an abusive person or a drunkard or a swindler—with such a person not even to eat. For what is it to me to judge those outside? Should you not judge those inside? But those outside God will judge. Remove the evil person from among yourselves.

(1 Corinthians 5:9-13 LEB)

Does anyone among you, if he has a matter against someone else, dare to go to court before the unrighteous, and not before the saints? Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if by you the world is judged, are you unworthy of the most insignificant courts? Do you not know that we will judge angels, not to mention ordinary matters? Therefore, if you have courts with regard to ordinary matters, do you seat these despised people in the church? I say this to your shame. So is there not anyone wise among you who will be able to render a decision between his brothers? But brother goes to court with brother, and this before unbelievers! Therefore it is already completely a loss for you that you have lawsuits with one another. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be defrauded? But you wrong and defraud, and do this to brothers! (1 Corinthians 6:1-8 LEB)

Brothers, even if a person is caught in some trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a person in a spirit of humility, looking out for yourself, lest you also be tempted. Carry the burdens of one another, and so fulfill the law of Christ. For if anyone thinks he is something although he is nothing, he is deceiving himself. But let each one examine his own work, and then he will have a reason for boasting in himself alone, and not in someone else. For each one will carry his own burden. (Galatians 6:1-5 LEB)

Romans 14-15

*Don't be judgmental toward one another in matters of
personal conviction and opinion*

Now receive the one who is weak in faith, but not for quarrels about opinions. One believes he may eat all things, but the one who is weak eats only vegetables. The one who eats must not despise the one who does not eat, and the one who does not eat must not judge the one who eats, because God has accepted him. Who are you, who passes judgment on the domestic slave belonging to someone else? To his own master he stands or falls, and he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand.

(Romans 14:1-4 LEB)

One person prefers one day over another day, and another person regards every day alike. Each one must be fully convinced in his own mind. The one who is intent on the day is intent on it for the Lord, and the one who eats eats for the Lord, because he is thankful to God, and the one who does not eat does not eat for the Lord, and he is thankful to God. For none of us lives for himself and none dies for himself. For if we live, we live for the Lord, and if we die, we die for the Lord. Therefore whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. For Christ died and became alive again for this reason, in order that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living. (Romans 14:5-9 LEB)

Strong vs Weak

- **Strong = More Free**
- Eats all things
- Treats every day alike
- All foods are clean

The strong should bear the weaknesses of the weak. 15:1

- **Weak = Less Free**
- Eats only vegetables
- Prefers some "special" days over others
- Some foods are unclean

But why do you judge your brother? Or also, why do you despise your brother? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. For it is written, "As I live, says the Lord, every knee will bow to me, and every tongue will praise God." So each one of us will give an account concerning himself. Therefore, let us no longer pass judgment on one another, but rather decide this: not to place a cause for stumbling or a temptation before a brother. I know and am convinced in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean of itself, except to the one who considers something to be unclean; to that person it is unclean. For if because of food, your brother is grieved, you are no longer living according to love. Do not destroy by your food that person for whom Christ died. Therefore do not let your good be slandered. For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. For the one who serves Christ in this way is well-pleasing to God and approved by people. So then, let us pursue what promotes peace and what edifies one another. Do not destroy the work of God on account of food. All things are clean, but it is wrong for the person who eats and stumbles in the process. It is good not to eat meat or to drink wine or to do anything by which your brother stumbles or is offended or is weakened. The faith that you have, have with respect to yourself before God. Blessed is the one who does not pass judgment on himself by what he approves. But the one who doubts is condemned if he eats, because he does not do so from faith, and everything that is not from faith is sin. (Romans 14:10-23 LEB)

But we who are strong ought to bear the weaknesses of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let each one of us please his neighbor for his good, for the purpose of edification. For even Christ did not please himself, but just as it is written, "The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me." For whatever was written beforehand was written for our instruction, in order that through patient endurance and through the encouragement of the scriptures we may have hope. Now may the God of patient endurance and of encouragement grant you to be in agreement with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, so that with one mind you may glorify with one mouth the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore accept one another, just as Christ also has accepted you, to the glory of God.

(Romans 15:1-7 LEB)

Thus let a person consider us as servants of Christ and stewards of God's mysteries. In this case, moreover, it is sought in stewards that one be found faithful. But to me it is a very little matter that I be judged by you or by a human court, but I do not even judge myself. For I am conscious of nothing against myself, but not by this am I vindicated. But the one who judges me is the Lord. Therefore do not judge anything before the time, until the Lord should come, who will both enlighten the hidden things of darkness and will reveal the counsels of hearts, and then praise will come to each one from God.

(1 Corinthians 4:1-5 LEB)

But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. Now early in the morning he came again to the temple courts. And all the people were coming, and he sat down and began to teach them. Now the scribes and the Pharisees brought to him a woman caught in adultery. And standing her in their midst, they said to him, testing him, “Teacher, this woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery! Now in the law, Moses commanded us to stone such women. So what do you say?” (Now they were saying this to test him, so that they would have an occasion to bring charges against him.) But Jesus, bending down, began to write with his finger on the ground, taking no notice. And when they persisted in asking him, straightening up he said to them, “The one of you without sin, let him throw the first stone at her!” And bending down again, he wrote on the ground. Now when they heard it, being convicted by their conscience, they began to depart, one by one, beginning with the older ones, and Jesus was left alone—and the woman who was in their midst. So Jesus, straightening up and seeing no one except the woman, said to her, “Where are those accusers of yours? Does no one condemn you?” And she said, “No one, Lord.” So Jesus said, “Neither do I condemn you. Go, and sin no more.”

(John 8:1-11 LEB)

Summary

- Don't be judgmental. (Matt 7, Rom 14)
- Judge yourself before you judge others (Matt 7, John 8)
- Learn to *evaluate* rightly (John 7)
- Don't speak evil of others (James 4, I Pet 3)
- When we judge others, we condemn ourselves...and God *will* judge us all (Rom 2)
- Spiritual things are spiritually discerned (I Cor 2)
- We should pass judgement on blatant sin in our midst and deal with it as a community (I Cor 5-6)
- Accept differing opinions while building up (Rom 14,15)

"Therefore, all who are mature should think this way. And if you think differently about anything, God will reveal this also to you. In any case, we should live up to whatever truth we have attained."

Philippians 3:15, 16 HCSB

Having Conversations About
Difficult and Sensitive Topics

Recommended Reading

- Cloud, Henry, and John Townsend Sims. *How to Have That Difficult Conversation You've Been Avoiding: With Your Spouse, Adult Child, Family, Boss, Coworker, Friend, Parent or Someone You're Dating*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006.
- Day, Katie. *Difficult Conversations: Taking Risks, Acting with Integrity*. Bethesda, MD: Alban Institute, 2001
- Patterson, Kerry, Joseph Grenny, Al Switzler, and Ron McMillan. *Crucial Conversations*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2012.
- Stone, Douglas, Bruce Patton, and Sheila Heen. *Difficult Conversations: How to Discuss What Matters Most*. New York: Penguin Books, 2010

The Three Conversations

What Happened?

- * No blame. Not about who's right or wrong.
- * Not about facts; it's about perceptions, interpretations, and values
- * We assume that we know the intentions of other people when we don't and when we're unsure of someone's intentions, we too often decide that they are bad

Feelings

- * Don't focus on who to blame, focus on identifying why things went wrong and how to correct things moving forward.
- * Listen to feelings and accept that all feelings are valid (but may or may not be justified).
- * How did each person contribute to the issue and how could their

Identity

- * What does this situation say about me as a person?
- * How is it affecting me?
- * Is this consistent with who I thought I was?

The "What Happened?" Conversation

- Stop Arguing About Who's Right: *Explore Each Other's Stories*
- Don't Assume They Meant It: *Disentangle Intent From Impact*
- Abandon Blame: *Map the Contribution System*

Explore Each Other's
Stories

Stop Arguing About Who's Right

Why We Argue

- We think *they* are the problem
- They think *we* are the problem
- We *each* make sense in *our* story of what happened
- Arguing blocks us from exploring each other's story
- Arguing without understanding doesn't help
- Stephen Covey's "Seek First to Understand" Principle

We All See Things Differently

- *We all have different stories about the world because we take in different information and interpret it in our own unique ways.*
- **We have different information**
 - We notice and select different things
 - We have access to different information, especially about ourselves.

➤ **We have different interpretations**

➤ Influenced by past experiences

➤ We have and apply different "rules" for the way things are "supposed" to happen or how people "should" behave in different circumstances

➤ Our conclusions about any given situation very often reflect self-interest

Begin to Explore

- Become curious about their story
- Become curious about what you don't know about yourself
- Stories aren't mutually exclusive: embrace *both* stories! Understanding someone else's story doesn't mean you have to give up your own. You don't have to agree with their story, only understand it.
- Seek first to understand. Yourself and the other party.

Disentangle Intent
From Impact

Don't Assume They Meant It

Our Assumptions About Intentions Are Often Wrong

- *We can't and don't actually know what someone's intentions are.*
- We assume intentions from the impact on us.
- We assume the worst
- We treat ourselves more charitably
- We assume bad intentions mean bad character
- Accusing others of bad intentions makes them defensive
- Our attributions can become self-fulfilling

Good Intentions Don't Make Everything Better

- We assume that because our intentions are good and understood by the other, they should no longer feel bad. When we do this...
- We don't hear what they are really trying to say
- We ignore the complexity of human motivations
- We aggravate hostility—especially between groups (e.g., cultural, racial, social, gender, etc.)

Disentangle Impact and Intent

1. **Actions:** What did the other person actually say or do?
2. **Impact:** What was the impact of this on me?
3. **Assumption:** Based on this impact, what assumption am I making about what the other person intended.

I Am Aware Of

I Am Unaware Of

My Intentions

The Other Person's Intentions

The Other Person's Impact on
Me

My Impact On The Other
Person

Share the Impact On You; Inquire About Their Intentions

1. State what the other person did
2. Tell them what it's impact was on you
3. Explain your assumption about their intentions, careful to make it clear that it's only a hypothesis you're checking out rather than asserting it to be true
 - Don't pretend everything is ok
 - Expect some defensiveness from the other person

Listen For Feelings, And Reflect On Your Intentions

- When you are the "other person", the one being accused of having bad intentions:
- Learn to listen past the accusation for the feelings. Start by listening for how they feel.
- Be open to reflecting on and considering the complexity of your intentions

Map the Contribution
System

Abandon Blame

Distinguish Blame From Contribution

- **Blame is about judging and looks backward**
 - Who's fault is it? How should they be judged? Should they be punished, and if so, how?
- **Contribution is about understanding and looks forward**
 - How did we *each* contribute to bringing about the current situation? How can we move forward from here?
- **Contribution is joint and interactive**

The Costs of Blame

- When blame is the goal, understanding is the casualty
- Focusing on blame hinders problem-solving
- Blame can leave a bad system undiscovered

The Benefits of Understanding Contribution

- Contribution is easier to raise than blame
- Contribution encourages learning and change
- **A few misconceptions about contribution:**
 - "I should focus only on my own contribution": Finding your contribution in no way negates the other's contribution.
 - "Putting aside blame means putting aside my feelings": Feelings need to be acknowledged and expressed.
 - "Exploring contributions means 'blaming the victim'": We each need to take full responsibility for our contribution.

Spotting Contributions

➤ Four Hard-to-Spot Contributions

➤ Avoiding the issue until now

➤ Being unapproachable

➤ Differing patterns of response to a situation

➤ Problematic role assumptions (e.g., codependency, enabling behavior, hierarchy, etc.)

Spotting Contributions

- **Two Techniques to Help Spot Contributions:**
- **Role Reversal:** "What would they say I'm contributing?"
- **The Consultant:** Pretend you are a consultant called in to help resolve the issue in an impartial, nonjudgmental way. How would you describe what each person was contributing?

Map the Contribution System

- **List each person's contributions:** What am I contributing? What are they contributing?
- Ask who else is involved? What might they be contributing?
- Take responsibility for your contribution early
- **Help them understand their contribution:**
 - Make your observations and reasoning explicit
 - Clarify what it is that you would have them do differently

The Feelings Conversation

- **Feelings Matter**
- We often ignore feelings or try to frame them out of the problem
- Unexpressed feelings have a way of leaking into the conversation anyway
- Unexpressed feelings make it difficult to listen
- Unexpressed feelings can take a toll on our relationships and self-esteem/self-image

“Feelings are not some noisy byproduct of engaging in difficult talk, they are an integral part of the conflict. Engaging in a difficult conversation without talking about feelings is like staging an opera without the music. You’ll get the plot but miss the point.”

–Stone, Douglas, Bruce Patton, and Sheila Heen. *Difficult Conversations: How to Discuss What Matters Most*,. New York: Penguin Books, 2010

Dealing With Feelings

- Accept that feelings are normal and natural. (For example, anger is not a sin... "In your anger, do not sin.")
- "Good people" can have bad feelings.
- Your feelings are just as important as those of others.
- Feelings are complex and often come in packages.
- Look for hidden feelings.
- We translate our feelings into judgments, attributions, characterizations, and problem-solving
- Use the urge to blame as a clue to find important feelings

Dealing With Feelings

- Feelings aren't set in stone; negotiate with them.
 1. Before you express your feelings, negotiate with them. Change your thinking through increasing understanding...your feelings will change as your understanding increases.
 2. Try to express everything you're feeling

Don't Vent: *Describe* Feelings Carefully

- Frame feelings back into the problem: explicitly address the feelings involved in the situation.
- Express the full spectrum of your feelings.
- Don't evaluate your feelings, just share them.
- Express your feelings without judging, attributing, or blaming.
- Don't monopolize. Allow everyone to express their feelings. Make sure feelings are understood and acknowledged on both sides.
- Learn to say, "I feel..."

The Identity Conversation

Three Common Core Identities

- Am I competent?
- Am I a good person?
- Am I worthy of love?
- **Case Study:** The Woman at the Well (John 4)
- Difficult conversations threaten our identity and when our identity is threatened it can trigger our "fight-or-flight" response.

Identifying Identity Issues

- Avoid "all-or-nothing" binary thinking about identity (e.g., "I'm either good or bad", etc.). This kind of thinking leads to denial or exaggeration, either way, we allow the other's feedback to define who we are.
- Become aware of your identity issues and "complexify" your identity.
- Understand that you will make mistakes, your intentions are complex, and you have contributed in some way to the problem.

Regain Your Balance In the Conversation

- Let go of trying to control their reaction.
- Prepare for their response. Imagine it in advance. What can you learn about them? How will you respond to them?
- Imagine that it's months or years from now...in that future, what did you learn from this experience now?
- If necessary, take a break.

How to Approach Sensitive topics and Difficult Conversations

1. Focus on what you really want
2. Observe/Notice when things become crucial
3. Make it safe
4. Separate fact from story
5. Share and receive everyone's stories
6. Actively explore everyone's views
7. Move to mutual decision and action

“I give you a new command:
Love one another. Just as I
have loved you, you must also
love one another. By this all
people will know that you are
My disciples, if you have love
for one another.”

(John 13:34, 35 HCSB)

“Love is patient, kind,
not jealous, does not boast,
does not become conceited,
does not behave dishonorably,
is not selfish, does not become angry,
does not keep a record of wrongs,
does not rejoice at unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth,
bears all things, believes all things,
hopes all things, endures all things.

Love never ends.

1 Corinthians 13:4-8a



Afternoon Session

Working Together for the Good of All

Diversity in Unity:
Spiritual Gifts, Ministries, and
Activities

“I give you a new command:
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(John 13:34, 35 HCSB)

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the **same Spirit**, and there are varieties of ministries, and the **same Lord**, and there are varieties of activities, but the **same God**, who works all things in all people. But to each one is given the **manifestation of the Spirit** for what is beneficial to all.

(1 Corinthians 12:4-7 LEB)

1 Corinthians 12:4-7

➤ Varieties of:

- Gifts
- Ministries
- Activities

➤ But only one Spirit, one Lord, and one God

➤ Spirit => Gifts | Jesus => Serving | God => Works/Deeds/Activities

➤ *The Holy Spirit is manifested (i.e., made visible) in each Christian in ways that benefit the whole congregation. Being of "benefit to all" is the purpose of spiritual gifts, ministries (lit. services, ways of serving), and activities.*

Therefore I, the prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk worthy of the calling you have received, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, accepting one another in love, diligently keeping the unity of the Spirit with the peace that binds us. There is one body and one Spirit — just as you were called to one hope at your calling — one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.

(Ephesians 4:1-6 HCSB)

Now grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of the Messiah's gift...And He personally gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, for the training of the saints in the work of ministry, to build up the body of Christ, until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of God's Son, growing into a mature man with a stature measured by Christ's fullness. Then we will no longer be little children, tossed by the waves and blown around by every wind of teaching, by human cunning with cleverness in the techniques of deceit. But speaking the truth in love, let us grow in every way into Him who is the head — Christ. From Him the whole body, fitted and knit together by every supporting ligament, promotes the growth of the body for building up itself in love by the proper working of each individual part. (Ephesians 4:7, 11-16 HCSB)

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