

## CONFLICT RESOLUTION JESUS-STYLE

(Matthew 18: 15-20)

Intro: My son Joel attended a fight-free school.  
-Flynn Park Elementary.  
-University City, Missouri.

For the 2-3 years Joel was a student there.  
-There were no fights.

In front of the school there was a flag pole.  
-Atop the pole was the Stars and Stripes.  
-Just beneath it was a fight-free flag.  
#Flew every day there were no fights.  
#While Joel was a student there.  
\*That flag never came down.

Students were taught conflict resolution skills.  
-Talk it out.  
-Involve an adult.  
#Teacher. #Principal.  
-Walk away.

If 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders can learn conflict resolution.  
-Why do the rest of us have so much difficulty?

### I. Jesus Had His Own Conflict Resolution Strategy.

#### A. It's Recorded In Our Gospel Lesson.

1. Matthew 18: 15-20.
  - a. Talk it out.
  - b. Involve another person or two.
  - c. Walk away.
2. Talk it out.
  - a. "If your brother or sister sins against you,"  
- "Go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone."
  - b. "If they listen to you,"  
- "You have regained your brother or sister."
  - c. Goal.
    - Reconciliation.
    - Conflict resolution.

3. Involve another person.
  - a. "If they don't listen to you,"
    - "Take along one or two others."
    - #Based on Deuteronomy 19:15.
    - \*Testimony of more than one person is needed.
    - +To convict someone of a crime.
  - Another person.
    - #Reinforce the message.
    - #Negotiate a resolution.
  - b. Goal.
    - Reconciliation.
    - Conflict resolution.
4. Walk away.
  - a. "If they refuse to listen,"
    - "Tell it to the church."
  - b. "If they refuse to listen to the church,"
    - "Let them be to you like a Gentile or a tax collector."
  - c. If we learn anything from Jesus' treatment of:
    - Gentiles.
    - Tax collectors.
    - #Such people.
      - \*May be outside of our fellowship.
      - \*But there is an ongoing effort on our part.
      - =To invite them back in.
  - d. Goal.
    - Reconciliation.
    - Conflict resolution.

B. We Have A Tendency To Get It All Backwards.

1. If we perceive.
  - a. Someone has done wrong.
  - b. Someone has done us wrong.
    - First thing we are tempted to do.
      - #End the relationship.
      - #Cut them off.
    - Second thing we are tempted to do.
      - #Not talk with the person.
      - #But talk about them.
      - \*We may involve another person or two alright.
        - +But it's in a gossip session.
        - = "Do you know what he did?"
        - = "Do you know what she said?"
    - Last thing we want to do.
      - #Talk with the alleged offending party.

2. We get it backwards.
  - a. If you have a problem with me, Jesus says.
    - Don't talk about me.
    - Talk with me.
  - b. If I have a problem with you.
    - I shouldn't be talking about you.
    - I need to talk with you.
  - c. Goal.
    - Reconciliation.
    - Conflict resolution.
  - d. Goal is not:
    - Gossip.
    - Character assassination.
  - e. 8<sup>th</sup> Commandment comes into play here.
    - "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor."
    - #What does this mean?
      - \* "We should fear and love God so that we may not deceitfully belie, betray, slander, nor defame our neighbor, but defend him, speak well of him, and put the best construction on everything."
      - + Martin Luther.
      - + Small Catechism.
3. Do the conflict resolution quietly or privately, Jesus says.
  - a. Why?
    - Because the goal is:
      - #Reconciliation.
      - #Conflict resolution.
    - If you challenge me in front of a group.
      - #You're not likely to get:
        - \*Reconciliation.
        - \*Conflict resolution.
      - #I'm likely.
        - \*To dig in my heels.
        - \*To be defensive.
          - +I don't want to look bad in front of the group.
          - +I don't want to lose face.
  - b. Let me give you an example from Major League Baseball.
    - Last Sunday.
      - #Milwaukee Brewers were playing the Pittsburgh Pirates.
      - \*In Pittsburgh.



- c. If the goal is:
  - Reconciliation.
  - Conflict resolution.
  - #Private.
  - #Quiet.
  - \*Better.

## II. In Calling Us To Conflict Resolution, Jesus Offers His Presence And His Promise.

### A. His Presence.

1. "Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them."
  - a. Matthew 18:20.
  2. Usually we interpret this in terms of worship or Bible study.
    - a. When we have:
      - Ice storm.
      - 6 people in church.
      - #We say:
        - \*"Where two or three are gathered in my name,"
        - \*"There am I in the midst of them."
      - #We have worship.
    - b. When we have:
      - Few people for a 5x5 small group.
      - Handful of folks for a prayer meeting.
      - #We say:
        - \*"Where two or three are gathered in my name,"
        - \*"There am I in the midst of them."
      - #We have:
        - \*Bible study.
        - \*Prayer meeting.
    - c. I'm not saying that Jesus isn't present.
      - If we have 2 or 3 people for worship.
      - When we have a small group for:
        - #Bible study.
        - #Prayer.
3. But I think it is always important to understand the context of the text.
  - a. Context in Matthew 18.
    - Reconciliation.
    - Conflict resolution.

- b. Verses immediately preceding our Gospel lesson.
    - Matthew 18:10-14.
    - Lost sheep.
      - #Leaving the 99.
      - #To go in search of one stray.
      - \*So that none would be lost.
  - c. Verses immediately following our Gospel lesson.
    - Matthew 18:21-35.
    - #Next Sunday's Gospel.
    - Peter's question:
      - #"How many times should I forgive?"
  - d. In the context of Matthew 18.
    - Jesus' promise to be present.
      - #When 2 or 3 are gathered in his name.
    - Is in the service of:
      - #Reconciliation.
      - #Conflict resolution.
    - When 2 or 3 are gathered in his name.
      - #To work out their differences.
      - #To restore strained friendships.
      - #To heal broken relationships.
      - \*Jesus offers his presence.
4. Jesus' presence.
- a. Presence of the one.
    - Falsely accused.
    - Wrongly convicted.
    - Made fun of.
      - #By religious leaders.
      - #By imperial representatives.
      - #By people in the street.
    - Nailed to a cross.
  - b. Presence of the one.
    - Who says:
      - #"Father forgive them."
      - \*Luke 23:34.
    - Who embodies.
      - #Love of God.
      - #Love of neighbor.
    - Whose:
      - #Death.
      - #Resurrection.
      - \*In the service of:
        - +Reconciliation.
        - +Conflict resolution.

- Who says:
  - #“Where 2 or 3 are gathered in my name,”
  - #“There am I in the midst of them.”

B. His Promise.

1. “If two of you agree on earth about anything, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven.”
  - a. Matthew 18:19.
2. Usually we interpret this in terms of prayer.
  - a. I’m not saying we shouldn’t join:
    - Our hearts.
    - Our minds.
      - #Not just 2 or 3 of us.
      - #But all of us.
        - \*To pray for those who suffer.
        - \*To pray for peace in our hearts.
        - \*To pray for peace in our world.
  - b. But it’s about more than finding a partner to agree with us.
    - If you’ll pray with me.
      - #So that I can win the lottery.
    - I’ll pray with you.
      - #So that your team can win the Super Bowl.
3. It’s important to understand the context of the text.
  - a. Context is about:
    - Reconciliation.
    - Conflict resolution.
  - b. Jesus’ promise.
    - To bless those who are committed:
      - #To working out their differences.
      - #To restore strained friendships.
      - #To heal broken relationships.
    - To bless those:
      - #Who reach an out of court settlement.
      - #Who love their neighbor as themselves.

Concl: It’s embodied for us here.

- In the passing of the peace.
- In bread.
- In wine.

It’s conflict resolution Jesus-style!



