**Biblical Conflict Resolution**

(Some intro on the importance of dealing with conflict well...) Mission. God will be glorified in us. Spiritually dead will be brought to life by Christ. If we are doing anything at all of value here in Gburg, we can expect attack.

Spiritual Warfare--Satan does not like that we are here working to free people from the domain of darkness & transfer them into God's kingdom. If we are at all a threat to his plans here, you can bet there will be some opposition. Nothing would be more effective than breaking up our team; diverting our focus from our mission.

Our community itself is a powerful witness to those around us. If each of us is walking in the power of the Holy Spirit, our community should look very different from secular organizations or groups. We want to present a relationship with Christ, and living in community with His people, as the attractive lifestyle that it is.

As Dan said, conflict is inevitable. We are all sinners and it just happens. We step on other's toes, they step on ours. So we'll look at a few instructions the Bible gives us on how to deal with it properly.

So let's say someone sins against you. This is going to happen a lot. Sometimes, we just need to do as it says in Proverbs 19:11 and "overlook an offense," or in 1 Peter 4:8, to let our love cover a "multitude of sins." However, if we feel that there is any bitterness or resentment taking root in our hearts, we need to speak up and address it with the offender. We do not want to "give opportunity to the devil." (Ephesians 4:27) Flip over to Matthew 18:15-17.

(Have someone read loudly)

**Jesus lays out 3 steps for us here, and it is very important that we follow them in order, as needed.**

**The first step is to "go and tell him his fault, between you and him ALONE.**" The goal of this step is to "gain a brother." The relationship is the most important thing here. You hope that he "will listen to you," that he will be soft-hearted and repentant. Most conflict I've seen can be dealt with very simply by just step one.

Notice again that the instruction is between you and him alone--this means, no one else needs to know about it. We DON'T go talk to our roommates about it, "venting" etc.

A few years ago, sweet friend of mine, student at one of my schools showed up with something on her mind. Asked her what was going on, and she answered, "My roommates are really sweet girls, BUT…" I saw where this was going and I just said uppuppupupupup...I showed her this passage & asked what she thought she should do. She realized she needed to Matthew 18 these girls, privately.  You see, people often need help practicing this--if we don't, we run into a multitude of sins, such as participating in gossip or slander. I am asking all of you to help hold each other accountable to this--sometimes you may need to stop each other and ask, "Is this a Matt 18 situation? Have you practiced step 1?" etc.

**But what if you follow step 1, and your brother is still hard-hearted,** and you part ways and are not reconciled? Then you move to step 2. You get 2 or 3 other witnesses to come along with you to speak to your brother and to help you be reconciled. Again, you hope that he will be soft-hearted & repentant, and that the air is clear--that there is nothing between you. You want to GAIN YOUR BROTHER.

I remember receiving a phone call after CRU a few years ago--there was a**big blow up between a few students** involved in our movement & one of the girls tried to initiate reconciliation, and was blown off. She explained to me the situation, and I walked her through resolving it. At that point, it was appropriate for her to ask for my help. A day later, the whole thing had been dealt with, biblically, and the air was clear.

**But what if even after addressing your brother privately**, then with a few witnesses, your brother is hard-hearted and unrepentant? Then,  you move to step 3. You "take it to the church." In our context, that means to appeal to someone with authority over that person. If the brother refuses to listen even to the church, Jesus instructs the authority to discipline him--to remove him from the fellowship until he repents. YOU STILL WANT TO GAIN YOUR BROTHER.

**Chad on project**--student did something very disrespectful. Step 1 & 2 completed, and the student still unrepentant. Project directors asked this person to pray about their response, and if the person didn't repent, he would have to leave project & go home.  Thankfully, the student was grieved over his sin, confessed it, and asked for forgiveness. All parties involved were reconciled & had a great summer.

**So let's use a project example.** Let's say someone in your room does something really rude, and it has driven a wedge between you.

First, you should:

If that works, great! If not, who should you bring along? (roommates, D-group leader)

If that doesn't work, who should you appeal to? (authority, project director)

I know that I should walk with God & obey Him because He is God and he is entitled to my worship. But you know, I LIKE walking with God  because it just makes my life better and happier. Lots of advantages to walking with God--one of my favorite is that doing so brings great blessing, peace, and joy.

**As I've obeyed God in the area of dealing with conflict, I've experienced a lot of good things.** First, b/c I know that my staff team practices Matt 18, I don't have to worry if a teammate is secretly mad at me. Know that if I've stepped on their toes, they'll just come talk to me about it. I don’t worry that they are talking behind my back. Practicing the "Matthew 18 Principle" cuts a ton of sin off at the pass--gossip, slander, cliques, divisions, etc.--these things should not be characteristic of a community that claims to know Christ. It would really be hurtful if my teammates moved right to step 2--I'd feel ganged up on when maybe I wasn't even aware that I had sinned.  My teammates are like family to me, largely in part because they have not let unresolved conflict distort our deepening relationship.

Barry mentioned yesterday that we should "keep short accounts, and not let things build up." Relationship that ended b/c girl I discipled did not practice Matt 18 principle. One day I met her at the caf and she told me thing after thing that I or someone else in Cru did that offended her, and she basically "broke up with me." The sad part is, that I had no idea I had ever hurt her feelings, and none of the offenses were really that big of a deal. But she let them bottle up over a year, and just decided to cut herself off from me and a bunch of other Cru people.

That doesn't have to happen if we'll just deal with conflict the right way.

**What if you realize that you've stepped on someone else's toes? That you're the offender. In the midst of some very strong words about anger, Jesus says this:**

Matt 5:23-24 "So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift."

This must be**really important to God, if he is literally telling us to abandon worship of Himself, in order to go be made right with our brother.**He wants us to return to worship, but only after we've been reconciled to our brother.

You know,**I don't get Matthew 18'd that much anymore**--which is good, because it's not my favorite thing in the world to have someone else approach me about my sin. The reason I don't get Matthew 18'd much is not because I'm not very sinful; the reason is because I Matthew 5 people a lot. Honestly, I'm a prideful jerk a lot of the time, and I step on people's toes a lot. Probably a few times a month, I have to call a person on my staff team and apologize for some un-edifying, sinful, sarcastic thing I said in staff meeting.

If you are aware that you've offended a brother or sister in Christ, I'd challenge you to take the initiative to make it right. It is the responsibility of all of us to preserve unity in Christ.

**Remember why we can & must forgive each other:**

Ephesians 4:32 "Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you."

Matthew 18:21-35 \*Read later

Matthew 18, and Matthew 5 are our friends.

In the words of King David, "How good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell together in unity!" Psalm 133:1