



Conflict

## RESTORING BROKEN RELATIONSHIPS: HOPE FOR THE HEART

JUNE HUNT

(Matthew 18:15-17)

**I**s there a doctor in the house?" Many a call for help has been heard when sickness strikes and the body dangerously fails to function. Likewise, when a relationship between two people falls into the danger zone, we may be called upon to help "doctor" two wounded hearts.

While no one can escape the pain of broken relationships, they can escape becoming bitter. The Bible powerfully presents the freedom of forgiveness. But even more, Jehovah Rapha, the God who heals, gives each believer "the ministry of reconciliation" (2 Cor. 5:18, 19).

### HOW TO DIAGNOSE THE CONDITION OF THE HEART

Patients with bad heart conditions need to change their unhealthy habits. Heart patients who have "hardening of the arteries" receive regular examinations. Like medical doctors, we can help those who need a "heart examination." We can help to diagnose the problem by testing eight potentially problematic areas:

1. *Pride*: "Do I focus on how much I've been wronged?"
2. *Faultfinding*: "Do I rehearse the faults of others?"
3. *Avoidance*: "Do I avoid being around people with whom I have conflict?"
4. *Silence*: "Do I refuse to share my feelings in a healthy way?"
5. *Isolation*: "Do I withdraw emotionally?"
6. *Unfaithfulness*: "Do I share unnecessary information about my opposer?"
7. *Hopelessness*: "Do I lack faith that God can work in any situation?"
8. *Resentment*: "Do I hold on to my anger until it turns to bitterness?"

The Bible says, "Pursue peace . . . looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble" (Heb. 12:14, 15).

### HOW TO BEGIN RECONCILIATION

The process of reconciliation can occur when both parties are willing to listen without interrupting. They both need to be respectful and understand that there are two sides to every story, two sets of feelings need to be understood, and two hearts that need to be healed. The following lists of do's and don'ts will be helpful to those who are trying to guide two people in reconciliation:

**In the "do" column:** (1) See the situation from the other's point of view. (2) Repeat back: "I hear you saying \_\_\_\_\_. Is that correct?" (3) Use words that encourage. (4) Be respectful, even if you are not treated respectfully. (5) Realize that you have the power to change only yourself. (6) Be at peace, knowing that you have the Prince of Peace in your heart.

**Now for the "don'ts":** (1) Don't forget that your opposer is also God's creation. (2) Don't harbor resentment, bitterness, or hatred. (3) Don't use "you" statements: "You make me mad . . . you should . . . you always. . . ." (4) Don't get drawn into useless arguments. (5) Don't expect an immediate

ciate change. (6) Don't assume that reconciliation is always possible.

### **HOW TO APOLOGIZE**

Physical healing cannot take place unless the patient chooses to do what is healthy. Similarly, the healing of two wounded hearts will not take place if both parties defiantly refuse to ask forgiveness. But since there are wrong ways and right ways of asking, we may need to explain the difference: (1) Don't make excuses: "I couldn't help it." (2) Don't use the blame game: "You made me do it." (3) Accept full responsibility: "My attitude was inexcusable." (4) Accept full blame for your part: "No one can make another person sin. I acknowledge that I sinned against you."

5) With a humble heart say, "I've tried to see our relationship from your point of view. I realize that I've been wrong in my attitude of \_\_\_\_\_. Would you forgive me?"

### **HOW TO FORGIVE**

Some patients have a wound that will not heal because they won't leave the wound alone. Just as a wound needs to be allowed to heal, a person needs to allow forgiveness to do its work. We can be effectively used by God to present practical steps in the healing process. Some of these steps include: (1) Realizing that forgiveness is not letting the offender "off the hook," but an act of releasing the offender from your hook and onto God's hook. (2) Deciding that you want to be free from the pain of the past. (3) Recognizing the unmet need(s) in the one who hurt you. (4) Listing every offense, and then, instead of "picking" at the wrongs, releasing each offense and the offender into the hands of God.

### **HOW TO ENLIST A MEDIATOR**

If a doctor has been consulted and the medical condition seems uncertain, a "second opinion" is often sought. The Bible even speaks of bringing in a wise outside adviser: "Without counsel, plans go awry, but in the multitude of counselors they are established" (Prov. 15:22). Sometimes another mediator is needed. Seek a person whom they both can respect. Say to them, "At times an outside person brings to the table a different perspective. Would you consider a mediator to help think through the problems to reach a successful end?"

Each person must be prepared to experience the possibility of a negative outcome from the process of reconciliation. Ultimately, a relationship may not work out between two people. One person cannot be responsible for the outcome of a relationship. However, each person is responsible for handling the reconciliation process in a godly manner. "If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men" (Rom. 12:18).

### **FURTHER MEDITATION:**

Other passages to study about the issue of conflict include:

- > Psalms 103:6-14; 133:1
- > Proverbs 6:2, 3; 16:7; 17:27
- > Matthew 5:44-48
- > Romans 12:14, 17-21
- > 1 Corinthians 1:10
- > Philippians 2:3; 4:2
- > Colossians 3:2, 13

their angels always see the face of My Father who is in heaven. <sup>11</sup>For the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost.<sup>a</sup>

<sup>12</sup>"What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them goes astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine and go to the mountains to seek the one that is straying? And if he should find it, assuredly, I say to you, he rejoices more over that *sheep* than over the ninety-nine that did not go astray. Even so it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.

#### DEALING WITH A SINNING BROTHER

<sup>15</sup>"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. <sup>16</sup>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.'*<sup>a</sup> <sup>17</sup>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.

<sup>18</sup>"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.

<sup>19</sup>"Again I say<sup>a</sup> 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. <sup>20</sup>For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them."

#### THE PARABLE OF THE UNFORGIVING SERVANT

<sup>21</sup>Then Peter came to Him and said, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?"

<sup>22</sup>Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven. <sup>23</sup>Therefore the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. <sup>24</sup>And when he had begun to settle accounts, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. <sup>25</sup>But as he was not able to pay, his master commanded that he be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and that payment be made. <sup>26</sup>The servant therefore fell down before him, saying, 'Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all.' <sup>27</sup>Then the master of that servant was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt.

<sup>28</sup>"But that servant went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii; and he laid hands on him and took him by the throat, saying, 'Pay me what you owe!' <sup>29</sup>So his fellow servant fell down at

18:11 <sup>a</sup>NU-Text omits this verse.

18:16 <sup>a</sup>Deuteronomy 19:15 18:19 <sup>a</sup>NU-Text and M-Text read *Again, assuredly, I say.*

#### KEY PASSAGE

### RESOLUTION SOLUTION

(18:15-17)



#### Conflict

Conflict is a normal part of life, but when conflicts between believers involve sinful behavior, they must be handled carefully. Jesus outlined a process toward resolving these conflicts. If a brother or sister offends us, our first responsibility is to talk with that person about the offense. At this point, the person can be made aware of the sinful behavior and be able to deal with it. If the personal discussion does not bring about resolution, then we should take one or two other responsible believers with us to confront the individual about the sinful behavior. Finally, and only if those two steps fail, the situation should be taken to the larger church body.

Jesus clearly indicated that it is best to resolve private matters privately, avoiding gossip and public confrontations whenever possible. But when that is not possible, believers must be made accountable to one another in the body of Christ.

To Learn More: Turn to the article about conflict on pages 1258, 1259. See also the personality profile of Paul and Mark on page 1444.

<sup>23</sup>They wrote this *letter* by them:

The apostles, the elders, and the brethren,

To the brethren who are of the Gentiles in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia:

Greetings.

<sup>24</sup> Since we have heard that some who went out from us have troubled you with words, unsettling your souls, saying, "*You must be circumcised and keep the law*"<sup>a</sup>—to whom we gave no *such* commandment—<sup>25</sup>it seemed good to us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, <sup>26</sup>men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>27</sup>We have therefore

sent Judas and Silas, who will also report the same things by word of mouth. <sup>28</sup>For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things: <sup>29</sup>that you abstain from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality.<sup>a</sup> If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well.

Farewell.

#### CONTINUING MINISTRY IN SYRIA

<sup>30</sup>So when they were sent off, they came to Antioch; and when they had gathered the multitude together, they delivered the letter.

15:24 <sup>a</sup>NU-Text omits *saying, "You must be circumcised and keep the law."* 15:29 <sup>a</sup>Or *fornication*



Conflict

### PERSONALITY PROFILE

## PAUL AND MARK— SETTLING THEIR DIFFERENCES

(ACTS 15:37)

The apostle Paul probably intimidated most people he met. His reputation as a former fierce persecutor, his success as a brilliant debater, or his tireless passion for the gospel may have unnerved his companions. Paul's boldness often got him in trouble, along with his partners. Silas spent time with him in prison. Others suffered with Paul. A number of companions proved unable to keep up. John Mark started out in this last group.

Mark joined Paul and Barnabas on the first missionary team sent from the church in Antioch. They sailed to Cyprus and traveled across the island, preaching the gospel in various cities. Then they moved on to the north, to Pamphylia (modern Turkey). Acts simply notes that Mark left the team and returned to Jerusalem (Acts 13:13). Later, Paul refused to let Mark join him on another journey because he thought Mark had abandoned the team and the work on the previous trip (Acts 15:37–39).

This particular conflict had a deadline. By the time the team departed, Barnabas had decided to take Mark on a different outreach and Silas became Paul's new missionary partner. Later biblical comments make it clear that neither Mark nor Paul saw this conflict as a permanent rift. Possibly Mark wasn't ready for Paul's style, and Barnabas could accomplish more helping Mark than he could if he traveled with Paul.

Conflicts can be opportunities to clarify ideas, expectations, and goals. They may bring into the open what needs to be changed. Even good change rarely happens without conflict. Mark probably didn't enjoy the fact that Barnabas and Paul separated over him, but he had to appreciate that someone believed he was worth another chance. Mark eventually grew into a godly disciple whom Paul counted as a trusted friend. Conflicts can lead to good endings.

To Learn More: Turn to the article about conflict on pages 1258, 1259. See also the key passage note at Matthew 18:15–17 on page 1257.

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dren of Israel did so, and put them outside the camp; as the LORD spoke to Moses, so the children of Israel did.

#### CONFESSION AND RESTITUTION

<sup>5</sup>Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, <sup>6</sup>"Speak to the children of Israel: 'When a man or woman commits any sin that men commit in unfaithfulness against the LORD, and that person is guilty, <sup>7</sup>then he shall confess the sin which he has committed. He shall make restitution for his trespass in full, plus one-fifth of it, and give it to the one he has wronged. <sup>8</sup>But if the man has no relative to whom restitution may be made for the wrong, the restitution for the wrong *must go* to the LORD for the priest, in addition to the ram of the atonement with which atonement is made for him. <sup>9</sup>Every offering of all the holy things of the children of Israel, which they bring to the priest, shall be his. <sup>10</sup>And every man's holy things shall be his; whatever any man gives the priest shall be his.' "

#### CONCERNING UNFAITHFUL WIVES

<sup>11</sup>And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, <sup>12</sup>"Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: 'If any man's wife goes astray and behaves unfaithfully toward him, <sup>13</sup>and a man lies with her carnally, and it is hidden from the eyes of her husband, and it is concealed that she has defiled herself, and *there was no witness against her, nor was she caught—* <sup>14</sup>if the spirit of jealousy comes upon him and he becomes jealous of his wife, who has defiled herself; or if the spirit of jealousy comes upon him and he becomes jealous of his wife, although she has not defiled herself— <sup>15</sup>then the man shall bring his wife to the priest. He shall bring the offering required for her, one-tenth of an ephah of barley meal; he shall pour no oil on it and put no frankincense on it, be-

cause it is a grain offering of jealousy, an offering for remembering, for bringing iniquity to remembrance.

<sup>16</sup>And the priest shall bring her near, and set her before the LORD. <sup>17</sup>The priest shall take holy water in an earthen vessel, and take some of the dust that is on the floor of the tabernacle and put it into the water. <sup>18</sup>Then the priest shall stand the woman before the LORD, uncover the woman's head, and put the offering for remembering in her hands, which is the grain offering of jealousy. And the priest shall have in his hand the bitter water that brings a curse. <sup>19</sup>And the priest shall put her under oath, and say to the woman, "If no man has lain with you, and if you have not gone astray to uncleanness *while* under your husband's authority, be free from this bitter water that brings a curse. <sup>20</sup>But if you have gone astray *while* under your husband's authority, and if you have defiled yourself and some man other than your husband has lain with you"— <sup>21</sup>then the priest shall put the woman under the oath of the curse, and he shall say to the woman—"the LORD make you a curse and an oath among your people, when the LORD makes your thigh rot and your belly swell; <sup>22</sup>and may this water that causes the curse go into your stomach, and make *your* belly swell and *your* thigh rot."

"Then the woman shall say, "Amen, so be it."

<sup>23</sup>Then the priest shall write these curses in a book, and he shall scrape *them* off into the bitter water. <sup>24</sup>And he shall make the woman drink the bitter water that brings a curse, and the water that brings the curse shall enter her *to become* bitter. <sup>25</sup>Then the priest shall take the grain offering of jealousy from the woman's hand, shall wave the offering before the LORD, and bring it to the altar; <sup>26</sup>and the priest shall take a handful of the offering, as its memorial portion, burn it on the altar, and

#### SOUL NOTE



**Owning Up (5:6, 7)** God's Law provided the opportunity for a person to correct his or her mistakes by making restitution to the offended person. These laws of restitution held people accountable for their behavior. A person who had wronged another had to *admit* doing wrong and then *do* whatever was possible in order to make things right again. The principle is important today. People should take responsibility for their behavior and, when it's needed, make restitution to the one whom they have wronged. **Topic: Conflict**



Spiritual  
Notes

members of one another. <sup>6</sup>Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, *let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; <sup>7</sup>or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; <sup>8</sup>he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.*

#### BEHAVE LIKE A CHRISTIAN

<sup>9</sup>Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good. <sup>10</sup>Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in

honor giving preference to one another; <sup>11</sup>not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; <sup>12</sup>rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer; <sup>13</sup>contributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality.

<sup>14</sup>Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. <sup>15</sup>Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. <sup>16</sup>Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion.

<sup>17</sup>Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. <sup>18</sup>If it is

#### SOUL NOTE



**Like Oil and Water (12:3)** God is against arrogance. Like oil and water, pride and faith don't mix. God created each person with great care. Every believer is valuable and needed by God. Each has gifts, uniquely given by God, to use in furthering the interests of His kingdom. Believers should humbly serve with those gifts in whatever circumstances God has put them. No one should "think of himself more highly than he ought to think," but "think soberly." We should thank God for His great love and serve Him with all our hearts. **Topic: Pride**

#### SOUL NOTE



**Guidelines (12:9-13)** Christ had said that the two greatest commandments were to love God and love one's neighbor (Luke 10:27). We should run every aspect of every decision through the filter of whether it is loving toward God or loving toward another person. In these verses, Paul gives further advice, warning people against hypocritical love and hanging on to evil ways. He advises kindness, diligence, fervent service, joy, patience, and prayer. In addition, believers should be known for giving and for hospitality. Following this advice through the guidance of the Holy Spirit will help believers live to glorify God. **Topic: Spiritual Growth**

#### SOUL NOTE



**Careful in Conflict (12:14-21)** Conflict is inevitable. Paul advised believers to be careful in conflicts with those outside the faith. Christians must resist the temptation to retaliate against evil; instead, they should bless their persecutors, refuse to repay evil for evil, and "overcome evil with good." That's because God will take care of the vengeance, the repayment, and the punishment. As much as we might like to take matters into our own hands, God will handle the situation for us, in His time and in His way. Following Paul's advice can keep us out of worse situations, and may even help bring the perpetrators to Christ. **Topic: Conflict**

*"To whom He was not announced, they shall see;  
And those who have not heard shall understand."<sup>a</sup>*

#### PLAN TO VISIT ROME

<sup>22</sup>For this reason I also have been much hindered from coming to you. <sup>23</sup>But now no longer having a place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come to you, <sup>24</sup>whenever I journey to Spain, I shall come to you.<sup>a</sup> For I hope to see you on my journey, and to be helped on my way there by you, if first I may enjoy your *company* for a while. <sup>25</sup>But now I am going to Jerusalem to minister to the saints. <sup>26</sup>For it pleased those from Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints who are in Jerusalem. <sup>27</sup>It pleased them indeed, and they are their debtors. For if the Gentiles have been partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister to them in material things. <sup>28</sup>Therefore, when I have performed this and have sealed to them this fruit, I shall go by way of you to Spain. <sup>29</sup>But I know that when I come to you, I shall come in the fullness of the blessing of the gospel<sup>a</sup> of Christ.

<sup>30</sup>Now I beg you, brethren, through the Lord Jesus Christ, and through the love of the Spirit, that you strive together with me in prayers to God for me, <sup>31</sup>that I may be delivered from those in Judea who do not believe, and that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints, <sup>32</sup>that I may come to you with joy by the will of God, and may be refreshed together with you. <sup>33</sup>Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen.

#### SISTER PHOEBE COMMENDED

**16** I commend to you Phoebe our sister, who is a servant of the church in Cen-

chrea,<sup>2</sup> that you may receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints, and assist her in whatever business she has need of you; for indeed she has been a helper of many and of myself also.

#### GREETING ROMAN SAINTS

<sup>3</sup>Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, <sup>4</sup>who risked their own necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles. <sup>5</sup>Likewise *greet* the church that is in their house.

Greet my beloved Epaphroditus, who is the firstfruits of Achaia<sup>a</sup> to Christ. <sup>6</sup>Greet Mary, who labored much for us. <sup>7</sup>Greet Andronicus and Junia, my countrymen and my fellow prisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me.

<sup>8</sup>Greet Amplias, my beloved in the Lord. <sup>9</sup>Greet Urbanus, our fellow worker in Christ, and Stachys, my beloved. <sup>10</sup>Greet Apelles, approved in Christ. Greet those who are of the *household* of Aristobulus. <sup>11</sup>Greet Herodion, my countryman.<sup>a</sup> Greet those who are of the *household* of Narcissus who are in the Lord.

<sup>12</sup>Greet Tryphena and Tryphosa, who have labored in the Lord. Greet the beloved Persis, who labored much in the Lord. <sup>13</sup>Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord, and his mother and mine. <sup>14</sup>Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermas, Patrobas, Hermes, and the brethren who are with them. <sup>15</sup>Greet Philologus and Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints who are with them.

15:21 <sup>a</sup>Isaiah 52:15 15:24 <sup>a</sup>NU-Text omits *I shall come to you* (and joins *Spain* with the next sentence). 15:29 <sup>a</sup>NU-Text omits *of the gospel*. 16:5 <sup>a</sup>NU-Text reads *Asia*. 16:11 <sup>a</sup>Or *relative*

#### SOUL NOTE



**Irreconcilable Differences (16:17)** Some conflicts cannot be resolved. The believers were not to reconcile with those who came into their fellowship and attempted to "cause divisions and offenses." False teachers would come into a church and teach a doctrine contrary to Paul's teaching of salvation by faith in Christ alone. Such doctrine is serious error, and such teachers should be avoided. The best resolution to that conflict is to send the one in error away, knowing that he or she will not be persuaded and will only cause harm if allowed to stay. Taking a stand for Christ means taking a stand against teaching that conflicts with God's Word. **Topic: Conflict**

## GREETING

**1** Paul, an apostle (not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised Him from the dead), <sup>2</sup>and all the brethren who are with me,

To the churches of Galatia:

<sup>3</sup>Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>4</sup>who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, <sup>5</sup>to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

## ONLY ONE GOSPEL

marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, <sup>7</sup>which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. <sup>8</sup>But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. <sup>9</sup>As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.

<sup>10</sup>For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ.

## CALL TO APOSTLESHIP

<sup>11</sup>But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. <sup>12</sup>For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ.

<sup>13</sup>For you have heard of my former conduct in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and *tried to destroy it*.

<sup>14</sup>And I advanced in Judaism beyond many of

my contemporaries in my own nation, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers.

<sup>15</sup>But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, <sup>16</sup>to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood, <sup>17</sup>nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went to Arabia, and returned again to Damascus.

## CONTACTS AT JERUSALEM

<sup>18</sup>Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, <sup>19</sup>and remained with him fifteen days. <sup>20</sup>But I saw none of the other apostles except James, the Lord's brother. <sup>21</sup>(Now concerning the things which I write to you, indeed, before God, I do not lie.)

<sup>22</sup>Afterward I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia. <sup>23</sup>And I was unknown by face to the churches of Judea which were in Christ. <sup>24</sup>But they were hearing only, "He who formerly persecuted us now preaches the faith which he once *tried to destroy*." <sup>25</sup>And they glorified God in me.

## DEFENDING THE GOSPEL

**2** Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and also took Titus with me. <sup>2</sup>And I went up by revelation, and communicated to them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to those who were of reputation, lest by any means I might run, or had run, in vain. <sup>3</sup>Yet not even Titus who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised. <sup>4</sup>And *this occurred* because of false brethren secretly brought in (who came in by stealth to spy out

1:18 <sup>a</sup>NU-Text reads *Cephas*.

## SOUL NOTE



**Careful Conflict (2:11-13)** Paul needed to confront Peter publicly over a very important issue because others were following Peter's poor example. The disagreement involved how Jewish believers were to treat Gentile believers. This issue had the power to divide the church, so in front of everyone, Paul stepped into the gap to resolve the conflict. Because disputes and confrontations differ, they need to be handled differently. Most of the time, conflict can and should be handled privately between the people involved. Believers should deal with their disagreements carefully, seeking wisdom and guidance from God. **Topic: Conflict**



not answering back,<sup>10</sup> not pilfering, but showing all good fidelity, that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things.

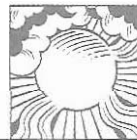
#### TRAINED BY SAVING GRACE

<sup>11</sup>For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men,<sup>12</sup> teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age,<sup>13</sup> looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ,<sup>14</sup> who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works.<sup>15</sup> Speak these things, exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no one despise you.

**GRACES OF THE HEIRS OF GRACE**  
 3 Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work,<sup>2</sup> to speak evil of no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing all humility to all men.<sup>3</sup> For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various and simning, being self-condemned.

#### AVOID DISSENSION

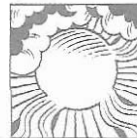
<sup>9</sup>But avoid foolish disputes, genealogies, contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and useless.<sup>10</sup> Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition,<sup>11</sup> knowing that such a person is warped and sinning, being self-condemned.



**Watched (2:7, 8)** As the leader of the church in Crete, Titus was to be a positive example to all the believers, showing a "pattern of good works," always teaching sound doctrine, and always speaking sound words. He also had to teach the Christian men and women how to live for God (2:1-6) so that they, in turn, could be examples to others. Christians are always being watched—younger believers are learning about maturing in the faith by watching more mature believers. We ought to be positive examples to others in our words and in our actions. After all, we are Christ's representatives.

#### Topic: Mentoring

#### SOUL NOTE



**Indisputable (3:9-11)** In his warning about false teachers, Paul told Titus to reject the divisive people and to "avoid foolish disputes" with them about issues that had nothing to do with salvation in Christ. Paul warned Titus against getting involved in quarrels over petty issues, and, when such debates arose, Titus was to rebuke the false teachers for their divisiveness. Divisive people insist on their own opinions without knowing God's Word. They stir up conflict that can divide the church. Such behavior must be stopped. Differences of opinion and style are inevitable in the church and can be healthy, but severe conflict over petty issues should have no place in the fellowship.

#### Topic: Conflict

#### SOUL NOTE

## GREETING

<sup>1</sup>Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy *our* brother,

To Philemon our beloved *friend* and fellow laborer, <sup>2</sup>to the beloved<sup>a</sup> Apphia, Archippus our fellow soldier, and to the church in your house:

<sup>3</sup>Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

## PHILEMON'S LOVE AND FAITH

<sup>4</sup>I thank my God, making mention of you always in my prayers, <sup>5</sup>hearing of your love and faith which you have toward the Lord Jesus and toward all the saints, <sup>6</sup>that the sharing of your faith may become effective by the acknowledgment of every good thing which is in you<sup>a</sup> in Christ Jesus. <sup>7</sup>For we have<sup>a</sup> great joy<sup>b</sup> and consolation in your love, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed by you, brother.

## THE PLEA FOR ONESIMUS

<sup>8</sup>Therefore, though I might be very bold in Christ to command you what is fitting, <sup>9</sup>yet for love's sake I rather appeal to you—being such a one as Paul, the aged, and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ—<sup>10</sup>I appeal to you for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten *while* in my chains, <sup>11</sup>who once was unprofitable to you, but now is profitable to you and to me.

<sup>12</sup>I am sending him back.<sup>a</sup> You therefore receive him, that is, my own heart, <sup>13</sup>whom I wished to keep with me, that on your behalf

he might minister to me in my chains for the gospel. <sup>14</sup>But without your consent I wanted to do nothing, that your good deed might not be by compulsion, as it were, but voluntary.

<sup>15</sup>For perhaps he departed for a while for this *purpose*, that you might receive him forever, <sup>16</sup>no longer as a slave but more than a slave—a beloved brother, especially to me but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord.

## PHILEMON'S OBEDIENCE ENCOURAGED

<sup>17</sup>If then you count me as a partner, receive him as *you would* me. <sup>18</sup>But if he has wronged you or owes anything, put that on my account.

<sup>19</sup>I, Paul, am writing with my own hand. I will repay—not to mention to you that you owe me even your own self besides. <sup>20</sup>Yes, brother, let me have joy from you in the Lord; refresh my heart in the Lord.

<sup>21</sup>Having confidence in your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I say. <sup>22</sup>But, meanwhile, also prepare a guest room for me, for I trust that through your prayers I shall be granted to you.

## FAREWELL

<sup>23</sup>Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, greets you, <sup>24</sup>as do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke, my fellow laborers.

<sup>25</sup>The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with your spirit. Amen.

<sup>2</sup> <sup>a</sup>NU-Text reads *to our sister Apphia*. <sup>6</sup> <sup>a</sup>NU-Text and M-Text read *us*. <sup>7</sup> <sup>a</sup>NU-Text reads *had*.

<sup>b</sup>M-Text reads *thanksgiving*. <sup>12</sup> <sup>a</sup>NU-Text reads *back to you in person, that is, my own heart*.

## SOUL NOTE



**Back Together (10–12)** A conflict was definitely brewing. Onesimus, a runaway slave and thief, was in a bad position. Both Philemon and Onesimus had become Christians under Paul's ministry at separate times and in separate places.

Although Philemon had every right under Roman law to have his slave beaten or killed, Paul urged him to accept Onesimus as a brother in Christ. Believers may have conflicts over any number of situations, but they can be handled best when believers remember what they have in common—salvation in Christ. We often have the right to exact justice, but, as Paul told Philemon, we need to show mercy and grace. **Topic: Conflict**