

CONFLICT[ED]

STEP ONE

DISCUSS (as a group) the following from the message outline:

CONSTRUCTIVE CONFLICT - leads to clearer thought, purpose, direction
(find a solution to the conflict)

DESTRUCTIVE CONFLICT - leads to avoidance, demoralization, division, isolation

CONFLICT RECLAIMED - enters into the conflict - and through reflection, mediation, and true humility, becomes transformed by the conflict.

In dealing with conflict, which path do you most often take? Does your response vary? If so, what determines that variance? What difference do you see between

CONSTRUCTIVE CONFLICT and CONFLICT RECLAIMED? How might CONSTRUCTIVE CONFLICT become “conflict management” rather than true change?

What long-term benefit might be discovered through RECLAIMED CONFLICT?

STEP TWO

“It’s hard to soar with the eagles when you’re surrounded by turkeys!”

Isn’t that the way we often view our conflicts and struggles?

WE’D be just fine if it wasn’t for all those other people we have to deal with who cause the conflict! But... conflict resides WITHIN us.

Conflict is inside us all. This internal battle between who God created us to be and the image we are attempting to create will routinely spill over into our relationships with others, with damaging effects.

READ James 4:1-2.

Why is it necessary to identify the root of conflict? Do you agree that at the heart of conflict we usually find a desire to maintain some type of false self? Why? Why not?

DISCUSS (as a group) the differences between the desires of our false self and those of our true self. In what ways do you see the desires of the false self in action, both internally and externally? Do you see the relationship between maintaining/clinging to a false self and conflict? Why? Why not?

FALSE SELF – CLINGING TO BE

Security and significance achieved by what we have, what we can do, and what others think of us

Happiness sought in autonomy from God and in attachments

Identity is our idealized self (who we want others to think we are)

Achieved by means of pretense and practice

Maintained by effort and control

Embraces illusion as a means of attempting to become a god

TRUE SELF – CREATED TO BE

Security and significance achieved by being deeply loved by God
[Colossians 3:12, Ephesians 5:2, 1 John 3:1]

Fulfillment found in surrender to God and living our vocation [Ephesians 2:10]

Identity is who we are – and are becoming – in Christ [Colossians 2:9-10, Rom 8:16-17]

Received as a gift with gratitude and surrender [Col 2:7, 2 Timothy 1:9]

Maintained by grace [Ephesians 2:4-8]

Embraces reality as the place of meeting and being transformed by God
[Eph 3:12, 2 Cor 5:17-21, Psalm 139:23-24]

STEP THREE

READ James 4:2b-4 and Romans 7:21-23.

When we attempt to **apply** God to our false self or simply fit Him in, we experience conflict and dissonance. Ask the Holy Spirit to speak to you and to reveal anything which would indicate the presence of inner conflict as you read the following symptoms that result from trying to fit God in as we cling to our false self:

- Religious effort without true change/transformation
- Self-centered prayer life
- Regular disappointment in relationships
- Manipulation of others

Can you identify any of these symptoms currently at work in your life?

If so, which false self can you connect to it? WRITE down the false self you cling to, personalizing how it reveals itself through the symptoms listed above.

WRITE out the corresponding true self - the person you are created to be - next to it. Will you share this with the group?

STEP FOUR

READ Romans 12:2 and James 4:6-8.

The Holy Spirit wants to transform us - to take the fear, anger, conflict and move us away from the desires of a false self toward the desires of our true self... to become more like Jesus.

Transformation can occur through conflict when we have first surrendered the fight before Christ. True reflection, meditation, and honest dialogue with God will reveal the parts of the false self that are involved in the conflict. Through humility and submission, God can transform conflict into something that breathes new life into our spirit, and begins to loosen the grip of the false self we’re all clinging to be.

DISCUSS (as a group) different scriptures which speak to the true self.

Look up the verses listed in the table under TRUE SELF-CREATED TO BE.

Use the concordance in the back of your Bible to find additional scriptures which reveal our true identity in Christ. CHOOSE one which addresses your false self vs. true self symptom you’ve identified in Step 3. COMMIT to memorize this scripture over the next week.

PRAY together:

Holy Spirit, give us eyes to see and ears to hear what You want to teach us. Help us resist isolation and avoidance to push through to understanding and addressing the heart of the conflict. Help us surrender everything we are and hope to be to You. Transform us from the inside out so we may live life differently.