

**Get the log out of your eye**  
**Texts: Matthew 7: 1-6, Philippians 4: 1-9**

What is at the heart of conflicts? In preparation for this sermon, I watched quite a few videos where conflict is shown. The most repeated word in conflict conversations is “I”. “I” is used in defence of one’s own positions and the word “you” is used when the negativity or wrongness the other person’s view is described. In his book, *The Peacemaker*, Ken Sande suggests that the root cause for conflict is **unmet desires in our hearts**. He makes this suggestion based on James 4:1-3 – v1: *What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don’t they come from your desires that battle within you?...* and also from Jesus’ teachings that we find in Matthew 15: 19 and Luke 12: 13-15. Ken says, **“When we want something and feel that we will not be satisfied unless we get it, that desire starts to control us. If others fail to meet our desires, we sometimes condemn them in our hearts and fight harder to get our own way.”**

We hate to admit it, but many of us, in some way or the other fall prey to this need to have our unmet desires met. We might not realise this all the time, but what we are essentially doing is making “our desire” or “ourselves” as idols.

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Progression of an idol  
***I desire → I demand → I judge → I punish***

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When our desires are demanded and then not met, and if we are obsessed with ourselves, all that we do is judge the opposite person or people without even realising that we are so self-obsessed. The final step in the promotion of the idol within us is the punishment that we impose on others.

When we have a high view of ourselves, our needs and our rights and we have a low view of others, their needs and their rights... and naturally an exaggerated view of their mistakes and sins. Jesus knows that we have this capacity to blow things out of proportion and hence he has taught us Matthew 7:1-5. But first, if we are serious about peace and conflict resolution – we need to deal with our idolatrous hearts. How do we do that? I think we need to revisit last week’s sermon. **Glorify God**. When we develop a right view (high view) of God, we understand His grace, His generosity... we understand our unworthiness, our smallness, our sinfulness. When we realise that all that we do should be done for the glory of God – our decision making, our dining table conversations, our conversations with our colleagues, and the list goes on – in all of them, we will have a right view of God, a right view of ourselves and naturally a right view about the other persons. It is no longer about **our unmet needs**, but about, **what glorifies God!**

**Jesus’ teaching to his disciples (us)** – Jesus is in the business of transforming his community to become like Him. But he does not anticipate that the Christian community or the community of his disciples will be perfect. He assumes that we will have conflicts and tensions. And he knows too well as to how we respond to conflicts and tensions naturally. We judge, we exaggerate, we punish. So, he teaches us a better way, a Christian way of responding (Matthew 7) –

**1. Do not be a judge (v1-2)** – Jesus is not asking us to suspend our thinking and discerning in relation to other people, truth and error, good and evil etc. Unfortunately, lot of people use this verse to preach to Christians when we stand up or speak for certain values that are biblical. Verse 6 of the same chapter contradicts such a view. We ought to think critically and discern. But, as John Stott says, we should not judge people harshly. We should not be fault finders who are negative and destructive towards other people. We should not enjoy

actively seeking out others' failings. We should not put the worst possible construction on their motives and ungenerous towards their mistakes.

**2. Do not be a hypocrite (v3-4)** – Jesus now presents this imagery of a person who has a log in his eye trying to remove a speck from someone else's eye. Scottish Theologian A. B. Bruce wrote – exalting ourselves by disparaging others is a very cheap way of attaining moral superiority. He called it as a Pharisaic vice. When you read about Pharisees in the gospel stories, we often find that they are inaccurate in their comparison – magnifying their own “righteous deeds” and also magnifying the “sins” of the tax collectors and other people. **“You hypocrite”** in v 5a is the key word here. Some people demonstrate apparent kindness (removing the speck) with a condescending, morally superior, egoistic attitude, whilst they themselves have a log/s in their eyes.

What, instead, we should do is to apply to ourselves at least as strict and critical standard as we apply to others. We will not be hypocrites if we are critical to ourselves and merciful to others. This is the Jesus way!

**3. Be a brother (or sister) (v5)** – Jesus is not stopping us from challenging or critiquing our brothers and sisters. Jesus wants the church to have high standards and healthy relationships. This would require discipline, discernment, challenge, restoration etc. But what Jesus is saying is that in all our relationships and conflict management, we should not play a judge (harsh and condemning), or a hypocrite (excusing ourselves while blaming others)... but instead **be a brother (or a sister)**– caring for the other so much that we first correct ourselves so that we have a right assessment of the other. Only then we can be constructive and helpful.

Conflicts are inevitable and good. We will disagree with each other. Conflicts help us grow in love – only when we respond to others in the conflict as God wants us to. We need to get the logs out of our eyes. We need to deal with idols and logs. But focussing on logs does not rescue us. Let us ask Jesus to remove the logs from our eyes. Let us humble ourselves and he will rescue us. He will fill our hearts with brotherly love. Let us humble ourselves and go to the people with whom we have not behaved as brothers and sisters, but rather as judges and Pharisees. Let us apologise to each other and forgive each other.

### **Conclusion (Paul's practical advice)**

In the church at Philippi there was tension among two wonderful, servant hearted Christian women. This is not an uncommon or surprising feature. I have had differences of opinions with some wonderful brothers and sisters in this church. Some of you wonderful people whose names are definitely written in the book of life, and you who are truly co-workers in the gospel might have differing opinions. God, through Paul, is asking us to be of one mind.

I want to close by summarising and adding to Paul's words –

*Dear brothers and sisters, when you have conflicts – seek to glorify God. Remember to get the log out of your own eye before getting the speck out of your brother's eye. Be a good brother. Be of one mind.*

*V4 - Rejoice in the Lord always, even during conflict. Rejoice that your brother or sister with whom you are disagreeing is saved. Rejoice, knowing that God can work out something wonderful out of this conflict.*

*V5 - In all your conversations, be gentle. God is with you. And if you think, the other person is unfair, hey, Jesus is returning soon. He will sort things out.*

*V6-7 – is the conflict overwhelming? Don't be anxious. Don't get worked up. Pray. He is in control. What you need the most is for the peace of God to guard your hearts in Christ Jesus.*

Having heard all this, let us think about these. God will help us to get our logs out and help each other out by removing the specks as brothers and sisters – for His glory. God's peace will be with us. Amen.