

From Conflict to Community

Part 2, Genesis 37:12-36

A quick look at Joseph's family

- Dad had "favourites"
- Joseph was not generally liked by his brothers
- Reuben, the oldest, was "bypassed" by the others
- Some of the "hotheads" were willing to murder Joseph!
- Judah does not want to be involved in murder – he has a "softer heart" – suggests selling him instead.
- The picture? Lots of conflict, not much community! Hurt by the sinfulness and "brokenness" in each other! A "type" of many modern family relationships!

A foundation truth

Relationships are unavoidably marked by sin, disagreement, imperfection or "brokenness", and these aspects are usually the ground for conflict. (Romans 3:23) Thus...

- all we get to relate with is sinful, "broken" people, people with whom we disagree at times!
- They, of course, get to relate with sinful, "broken" us!

So...a question...

Is it possible to build deep, fulfilling relationships with people when sin and "brokenness" abounds? Is it possible to build rich, enduring relationships?

- In marriages?
- Family relationships?
- Friendships?
- Teams?
- Church relationships?

The bad news

As "broken" people we often respond with "broken-people" responses!!

- We withdraw, leave, quit relationships/churches/etc.
- We stay in relationship, but judge, gossip, criticize, undermine, "act hurtfully" – very like Joseph's brothers!

Well, how did the early church go?

Relationship Conflicts in Scripture

1. The early church and the Greek widows

In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Hellenistic Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. Acts 6:1.

Relationship Conflicts in Scripture

2. **Paul and Barnabas** had such a sharp disagreement [over John Mark] that they parted company. (Acts 15:39)

3. **Paul and Peter** – when Peter came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned (Galatians 2:11) **Clearly, conflict isn't unique to us today!**

We need to learn from Jesus!

Jesus and the “broken” disciples

NB: He chose them!!

He appointed twelve that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach, and to have authority to cast out demons. Mark 3:13-19

Did they let Him down? Was their “brokenness” troublesome to Jesus?

“Brokenness” in the disciples

Individually, and as a group, the disciples let Jesus down many times.

Mark 4:40 [The storm] *He said to his disciples ‘Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?’*

Mark 9:34 *But they kept quiet because on the way they had argued about who was the greatest.*

Mark 10:14 [The disciples and the children] *People were bringing their children to Jesus...but the disciples rebuked them.*

Peter denied knowing him! All deserted him! etc.

How did Jesus respond to their “brokenness”?

He called them “You of little faith” – “You faint-hearts” (*The Message*). **Matthew 6:30; 8:26; 14:31; 16:8**

He clearly forgave them (**John 21:15-19**)– and taught that we should do the same!

He washed their feet! (**John 13**)

He loved them, taught and equipped them, sent them out! (**John 13:34-35; Matthew 28:19-20**)

So...turning conflict into community

In all our relationships with folk we don’t get along with, whose “brokenness” falls anywhere between frustrating and profoundly damaging, **forgive** and, where necessary, **ask forgiveness!**– 70 times 7!! (**Luke 11:4**)

Pray for the grace to love people (as Jesus did!)

We are also called to ongoing **personal** growth!

Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you. Romans 12:3

Is it possible to turn conflict into community?

1. Note: Reconciliation Between Paul and Barnabas
2 Timothy 4:11 – *Get Mark and bring him with you, because he is helpful to me in my ministry.* (Paul)
2. Note: Reconciliation Between Paul and Peter
2 Peter 3:15 *...our dear brother Paul...* (Peter)
3. Note: Reconciliation in Joseph’s family!

Empowered by God, we can turn conflict to community!!