

## Study 2: Owning our Part of Relationships

### Introduction

It is so easy to put expectations on people around us when it comes to relationships. We find it easy to give ourselves the benefit of the doubt and wonder why “so and so” isn’t doing their part. This can be true when we are getting along with each other and when a misunderstanding arises. Many of us are quick to play “the blame game” and not own our part or responsibility for “koinonia” – experiencing unity and community with each other. Adam started the blame game when he blamed God for the woman God gave him. We keep playing it when we say; he started it, it’s his fault, etc.

Remember we are praying and encouraging everyone who is part of Cross of glory to pray:

“...asking God to transform us into a people of deep unity and rich community.”

He needs to transform us and we need to be open to and expect him to do so. Rather than assume we are innocent or have done our part in developing healthy biblical relationships that honor God we need to own our part. It is important that we keep asking ourselves questions like: “How can I best glorify God in this situation?” “What is my part in this misunderstanding?” “How can I take responsibility for my actions?” How can I stop playing the blame game when I get hurt or criticized?”

We are dealing with all aspects of relationships and addressing our part in them. What is true about us in conflict is helpful to know as we seek to develop healthy Biblical relationships with each other. One of the earliest conflicts we know about is the one between Cain and Abel the first two children born to Adam and Eve. The story is found in Genesis 4.

[Those who are preparing for this ahead of time – please read through Genesis 4:1-9. Try to focus on what Cain does, what God does and the interaction that takes place between them. Try not to focus on why one sacrifice was acceptable or not.]

Genesis 4:1-9 study notes:

### Getting the log out of our own eye first

There is a time and place to talk to or confront someone who we believe has wronged us or with whom we have an unresolved issue. Before we go there we need to learn to do healthy self evaluation.

Jesus addresses this in Matthew 7. One of the most challenging principles of developing healthy biblical relationships is found here where Jesus tells us that will be judged as we judge others and calls anyone a hypocrite who tries to “take a speck out of a brother’s eye” without first looking at themselves. When we own our part of the relationship and remove the log or plank out of our own eye first then he says we will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.

[Those who are preparing for this ahead of time – please read through Matthew 7:1-6 and think about what Jesus is saying about taking responsibility for ourselves in relationships].

Matthew 7:1-6 study notes:

Ken Sande is the founder of Peacemaker ministries. In this ministry he has written much on conflict resolution and what he writes applies to us even where there is no conflict or at least not yet. According to Ken Sande:

There are generally two kinds of "logs" you need to look for when dealing with conflict. First, you need to ask whether you have had a critical, negative, or overly sensitive attitude that has led to unnecessary conflict. One of the best ways to do this is to spend some time meditating on Philippians 4:2-9, which describes the kind of attitude Christians should have even when they are involved in a conflict.

The second kind of log you must deal with is actual sinful words and actions. Because you are often blind to your own sins, you may need an honest friend or advisor who will help you to take an objective look at yourself and face up to your contribution to a conflict.

When you identify ways that you have wronged another person, it is important to admit your wrongs honestly and thoroughly. [This is where Biblical confession takes place which will be discussed in detail at a different point].

The most important aspect of getting the log out of your own eye is to go beyond the confession of wrong behavior and face up to the root cause of that behavior. The Bible teaches that conflict comes from the desires that battle in your heart (James 4:1-3; Matt. 15:18-19). Some of these desires are obviously sinful, such as wanting to conceal the truth, bend others to your will, or have revenge. In many situations, however, conflict is fueled by good desires that you have elevated to sinful demands, such as a craving to be understood, loved, respected, or vindicated.

Summary of Ken Sande's teaching and conclusion:

### Small group time:

We all have idols or little gods in our lives. There are things we value more than God and our relationship to him. There are things more important to us than how we relate to and get along with each other. When what we desire or demand drives the relationship with God or others there is a good chance we have an idol controlling us. What follows is again from Ken Sande:

Any time you become excessively preoccupied with something, even a good thing, and seek to find happiness, security or fulfillment in it rather than in God, you are guilty of idolatry. Idolatry inevitably leads to conflict with God ("You shall have no other gods before me"). It also causes conflict with other people. As James writes, when we want something but don't get it, we kill and covet, quarrel and fight (James 4:1-4).

There are three basic steps you can take to overcome the idolatry that fuels conflict. First, you should ask God to help you see where you have been guilty of wrong worship, that is, where you are focusing your love, attention, and energy on something other than God. Second, you should specifically identify and renounce each of the desires contributing to the conflict. Third, you should deliberately pursue right worship, that is, to fix your heart and mind on God and to seek joy, fulfillment, and satisfaction in him alone.

As God guides and empowers these efforts, you can find freedom from the idols that fuel conflict and be motivated to make choices that will please and honor Christ. This change in heart will usually speed a resolution to a present problem, and at the same time improve your ability to avoid similar conflicts in the future.

Interact with each other about "idols" then look up James 4:1-4 and discuss it together:

What are some potential idols in your life? How are they like logs in your eye? How does God want to help you get rid of them?

Prayer suggestion: Break up in 2's or 3's at the most and pray for each other.