

MANAGING CONFLICTS IN THE FAMILY

Conflict is a clash or contrast between people regarding how things are said or done. It is a difference of opinion from one person to another or the actions of people. Conflict in the family then is divergence of opinion and incompatibility in action between a husband and a wife; a parent and a child, nuclear and extended family and members in a house of faith- that may cause a falling out.

Since the beginning of creation, God has always been excited about every one of us. We see the value God has placed on man-to rule and have dominion over the earth and everything therein. In **Gen 1:26-31 NLT**;

Then God created human beings in his own image. In the image of God he created them; Male and female he created them. Then God blessed them and said, "Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth and govern it. Reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, and all the animals that scurry along the ground."

Then God said, "look! I have given you every seed bearing plant throughout the earth and all the fruit trees for your food. And I have given every green plant as food for all the wild animals, the birds in the sky, and the small animals that scurry along the ground- everything that has life." And that is what happened.

Then God looked over all he had made, and he saw that it was very good!

From the above excerpt it is quite evident that man is (male and female) the epitome of God's creation. After creating Adam, and instructing him to eat fruit from every tree except the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Then God said, in **Gen 2:18 KJV**;

"It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a help meet for him."

Conflict between man and God

God caused a deep sleep to fall over Adam, he took one of his ribs closed it with flesh and created a woman. God then brought the woman to man and Adam said, in **Gen 2:23 KJV**;

"This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called woman, because she was taken out of man"

In the garden, the serpent was shrewd than any beast of the field God had made. And he said to the woman, in **Gen 3:1-6**;

"Yea, hath God said you shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" And the woman said unto the serpent, we may eat of trees of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die:

And the serpent said unto the woman, "ye shall not surely die: for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also

unto her husband with her; and he did eat. And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew they were naked; and they sewed fig trees together, and made themselves aprons.

Hearing God walking in the garden in the afternoon, Adam and Eve hid themselves from the presence of the lord. God called Adam and he replied in **Gen 3:10 KJV**;

“I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself.”

After going against God, they hid themselves from him and made themselves clothes of fig leaves. The fig leaves symbolizes the temporariness of man’s solutions to the problems he faces. The fig leaves would eventually wither and dry up. But God being a compassionate and loving father made them clothes of leather symbolizing permanence and durability. The action Adam and Eve took in going against what God had told them marked the entrance of sin into the world-which made God to banish them from the Garden of Eden where everything they needed was taken care of by him.

Conflict between Adam and Eve

It is my assumption at this point that there was a conflict between Adam and Eve. Adam blamed eve for eating the fruit that God had commanded them not to touch or eat. In her presence when god asked him how he knew he was naked, Adam responded in **Gen 3:12KJV**;

“The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat”

Bearing that in mind, he had become defensive and passed the blame to the woman. It would then mean that she was hurt by his actions because she was human and had feelings. Adam at that point just like all of us did not appreciate what God had given him. God in his plan and purposes had made Eve as a suitable helper to Adam; a companion, who was supposed to be in fellowship between with him.

Is it not common place when husbands and wives blame; demean and see their spouses as unworthy of them because they are not right with God? Even those professing salvation for lack of knowledge fall in this category. Whatever ‘small’ or ‘big’ issue alluded to by either spouse can cause rifts in couples if not well sorted out- passing the buck to another does not unravel the problem. The snowball effect of denying responsibility can create other problems. Conflict causes people to be hurt, become defensive, and be out of fellowship with one another and God.

Sources of conflicts

1. perceptual differences

Perceptual differences means the way we view the world. It is **(expand)**

2. priority or value differences

Values are deeply held beliefs. They are the fulcrum on which our principles sway. Adam placed a higher value on his relationship with his wife more than God. This is so demonstrated by the fact that he ate the forbidden fruit given to him by Eve knowing he was going against God. That caused conflict between God and man. His disobedience caused the entry of sin into the world.

In another instance David being the king worshipped the lord with dance with all his might until he was half naked and before his slave girls. Michal, David’s first wife saw what David was doing and despised him. She in essence placed value on David’s kingship and how distinguished he was than on the reason

for his celebration. That led to conflict between them, David rebuked her and she could not get by him because God had closed her womb. Her actions showed that she placed value on how people saw David as king and not how God saw himself before God.

3. unmet expectations

In the home sometimes, husbands feel their wives could do better in terms of cooking, and keeping the home may cause conflicts in the family. Wives who feel their husbands should make more money than they are at any particular time can be a source of conflict in the home.

Parents on the other hand have certain expectations of their children. If they are not met they may cause conflicts between children and their parents. Case in point when David's son Absalom committed an act of coup on his father. It caused strife and finally death in the family.

4. Low /high esteem

Genesis 4, Cain feels dejected when his sacrifice is rejected by God and his brother's Abel is accepted. It causes him to have low self-esteem and this causes envy and jealousy in him. He plots and kills his brother Abel as a result. And for this reason, Cain is in conflict with God.

5. Covetousness

King Ahab was very angry when Naboth refused to sell him his vineyard which he had inherited. So he withdrew from his family and became sullen and couldn't eat or drink anything. His actions caused his wife to take matters in her own hands and organized for the killing of Naboth.

Coveting other people's property can cause people to act irrationally and sin against one another and God. 'Do not covet' is a commandment of God. It in reality causes people to sulk and withdraw from one another.

HOW DO YOU SOLVE CONFLICTS

I. Accommodate one another

1 Samuel 25:24, David's men had shown so much kindness to Nabal's men when they protected his many sheep and goats from being attacked in the wild. When David sent his men to Nabal to ask him for provisions, Nabal because of his foolishness insulted them and sent them on their way empty handed. Nabal's servants went to his wife Abigail, and told her what had happened. She quickly took provisions and set off to meet David who was already on the way to kill Nabal and all his servants.

Abigail bowed down and spoke kind words to him and he averted what could potentially be a massacre and David relented.

2. Focus on issues not personalities

God prospered Abram and Lot until the land could not hold them. A dispute emerged between their herdsmen. Abram seeing that the conflict would escalate, he asked lot not to let it come between them. So he gave lot the option of choosing a direction to go and he would go the opposite direction. They parted ways, Abram went to Canaan and lot to a place near Sodom.

3. Co-operate with each other

As believers we should appreciate what God has given us knowing that because he considers us blessed, whatever he blesses us with we should not be too hung up on it. When the philistines seized the wells his servants had dug, Isaac moved to another place and opened up a new well and there was water.