

5 Day Devotional

Day 1: When Conflict Comes Knocking

Devotional

Conflict in the church can feel devastating, but it's actually normal. Even the early church faced serious disagreements that threatened to divide them. When certain believers insisted that Gentile converts needed circumcision to be saved, it wasn't just a minor disagreement - it struck at the very heart of the gospel itself.

The beautiful truth is that God doesn't abandon us in our conflicts. Instead, He provides wisdom and pathways forward. The early church's response teaches us that disagreements, even theological ones, don't have to destroy relationships or derail God's work. In fact, when handled biblically, conflicts can actually strengthen our faith and clarify important truths.

Your church family will face disagreements. People you love and respect may see things differently than you do. This doesn't mean failure - it means you're human. What matters is how you respond when these moments arise. Will you let conflict divide, or will you seek God's wisdom to navigate through it with grace and truth?

Bible Verse

'Certain people came down from Judea to Antioch and were teaching the believers: "Unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved.'" - Acts 15:1

Reflection Question

How do you typically respond when conflict arises in your relationships or church community?

Quote

Contentions and frustrations and aggravations are bound to happen among God's people in the body of Christ. Even in a church.

Prayer

Lord, help me to see conflict not as something to fear, but as an opportunity to grow in wisdom and grace. Give me courage to face disagreements with a heart that seeks Your truth and peace.

Day 2: The Wisdom of Seeking Help

Devotional

Pride whispers that we should handle everything ourselves, but wisdom knows when to seek help. When the early church faced their theological crisis, they didn't try to resolve it in isolation. They brought the matter before the apostles and elders - people who could provide objective, biblical perspective.

There's profound strength in admitting we need guidance. Too often, we view seeking counsel as weakness, but it's actually a sign of maturity and humility. When emotions run high and perspectives clash, a third party can offer clarity that those directly involved cannot see.

Think about the conflicts in your life right now. Are you trying to navigate them alone? Sometimes the breakthrough you need comes through the wisdom of others who can speak biblical truth into your situation. Don't let pride keep you from the help that could bring healing and resolution.

Seeking counsel shows you value relationships and want to see situations move forward in healthy ways. It demonstrates that you care more about finding God's solution than being right.

Bible Verse

'This brought Paul and Barnabas into sharp dispute and debate with them. So Paul and Barnabas were appointed, along with some other believers, to go up to Jerusalem to see the apostles and elders about this question.' - Acts 15:2

Reflection Question

What prevents you from seeking wise counsel when facing difficult situations or conflicts?

Quote

Never be ashamed to seek counsel. It's not a statement that you're weak. It actually shows that you value people, you value the situation going on, and you want to see it go forward.

Prayer

Father, humble my heart to seek wisdom from others when I need it. Help me value relationships and truth more than my own pride or need to be right.

Day 3: Listen First, Speak Second

Devotional

In our rush to be heard, we often forget the power of truly listening. The Jerusalem Council didn't immediately render judgment - they listened to all perspectives first. Peter shared about grace, Paul and Barnabas testified about God's work among the Gentiles, and James provided scriptural insight. Everyone had a voice before decisions were made.

Listening is more than waiting for your turn to talk. It's genuinely seeking to understand another person's heart, concerns, and perspective. When we listen well, we often discover that conflicts aren't as black and white as we initially thought. We might find common ground we didn't know existed, or at least develop empathy for why someone feels the way they do.

Most people enter conflicts already convinced they're right. But wisdom pauses to hear the full story. When we listen first, we honor others and often discover solutions we couldn't see from our limited perspective. This doesn't mean compromising truth, but it does mean approaching disagreements with humility and genuine care for others involved.

Bible Verse

'He who answers a matter before he hears it, it is folly and shame to him.' - Proverbs 18:13

Reflection Question

When was the last time you truly listened to understand someone's perspective rather than just waiting to respond?

Quote

He who answers a matter before he hears it, it is folly and shame to Him.

Prayer

Lord, give me ears to truly hear others and a heart that seeks understanding before seeking to be understood. Help me listen with patience and love.

Day 4: Grace Over Legalism

Devotional

At the heart of the Jerusalem Council's conflict was a fundamental question: Is salvation by grace alone, or must we add our works to God's gift? This wasn't just an ancient debate - it's a battle that continues in our hearts today. Legalism creeps in whenever we start believing that our performance determines our standing with God.

Legalism is seductive because it gives us a sense of control and superiority. It feels good to have rules and standards that make us feel righteous. But legalism ultimately chokes out life and love. It creates pride instead of humility, bondage instead of freedom.

Grace, on the other hand, frees us to love God and others authentically. When we truly understand that our salvation is secure in Christ alone, we're liberated to serve from gratitude rather than obligation. We can extend the same grace to others that God has shown us.

In your relationships and conflicts, are you operating from grace or legalism? Are you trying to earn God's favor through your performance, or are you resting in His finished work? The answer will transform how you handle disagreements and treat others.

Bible Verse

'For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.' - Ephesians 2:8-9

Reflection Question

In what areas of your life are you tempted to add works to God's grace, and how does this affect your relationships?

Quote

Grace frees people up, it doesn't bind them up. Legalism binds them up. Grace is apart from works. Legalism is all about the works.

Prayer

Thank You, Lord, for Your amazing grace that saves me completely. Help me live from this grace and extend it freely to others, especially in times of conflict.

Day 5: Unity in Essentials, Liberty in Non-Essentials

Devotional

Even godly people sometimes can't agree on everything, and that's okay. Paul and Barnabas, despite their shared ministry and friendship, disagreed about taking John Mark on their second missionary journey. They couldn't find common ground, so they parted ways - Barnabas took Mark to Cyprus while Paul chose Silas.

This wasn't failure; it was wisdom. They recognized the difference between essential doctrines that require unity and personal preferences or ministry methods where believers can agree to disagree. Both approaches had merit, and God used both teams effectively.

The key is maintaining love and grace even when we disagree. Some hills are worth dying on - core truths about salvation, the nature of Christ, and the authority of Scripture. But many of our conflicts are about preferences, methods, or secondary issues where unity isn't required.

Learning to distinguish between essentials and non-essentials brings tremendous freedom to relationships. You can disagree with someone about worship styles, ministry approaches, or personal convictions while still maintaining fellowship and mutual respect. Love covers a multitude of differences when we keep the main thing the main thing.

Bible Verse

'They had such a sharp disagreement that they parted company. Barnabas took Mark and sailed for Cyprus, but Paul chose Silas and left, commended by the believers to the grace of the Lord.' - Acts 15:39-40

Reflection Question

How can you better distinguish between essential beliefs that require unity and non-essential matters where you can extend liberty to others?

Quote

In essentials, unity, in non essentials, liberty, and in all things, charity.

Prayer

God, give me wisdom to know when to stand firm and when to extend grace. Help me major on the majors and maintain love even in disagreement.