

Turning the Crap of Life, Into the Fruit of the Spirit Conflict

At the office many years ago I was discussing a change in healthcare law that would expand the power of the head of the department of health and human services. It was a talk about what new markets would be coming in during the coming months. This new power gave the head of the department the ability to say what and who was covered for healthcare. My point was that this new power would increase the likelihood of prenatal coverage for unborn babies thereby creating more opportunities for OBs in the area to increase their business. This however, was not how one of the ladies in the office saw it. She saw it as a move against women's rights – primarily to have an abortion. She lit into this litany of how I was a typical man not caring about the needs of women. After an almost 20 minute tirade, I took her folder from in front of her and pointed to a sticker on it about how animals are being slaughtered. She retorted that animals were real, a baby wasn't. Conflict is coming.

If you are alive, chances are you have had conflict. If you haven't, then you haven't left your house in many years probably. It is the problem with the guy you work with that doesn't do his job but loves to take credit. Or it is the person that constantly causes problems just so she can seem like she knows more and acts like the one everyone talks to for solutions. Or maybe it is something more, like problems at home communicating with your spouse. Maybe it is money, or something that takes every moment of your day keeping you what seems like constant conflict. Family, work, home everything and everywhere has the potential for conflict. So what on earth are you suppose to do about it?

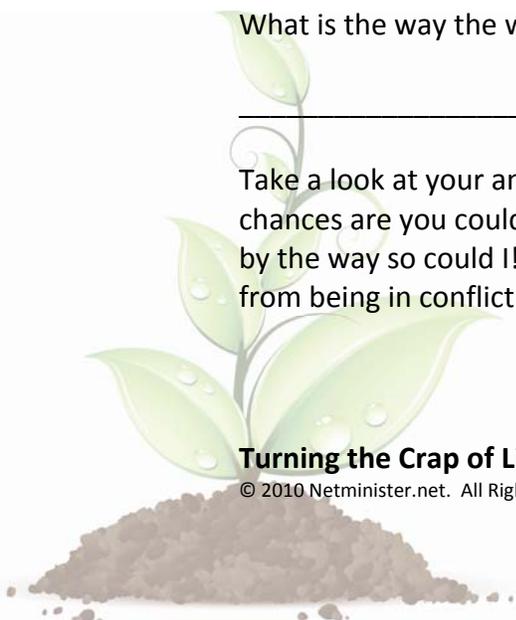
What is something you find that you are in conflict over the most?

What is the way the world generally tells you to handle that conflict?

Take a look at your answers. Do they look like the words of Christ? If they don't, then chances are you could use some help in dealing with Conflict in the Christ-like way, and by the way so could I! So what is one to do with the angry emotions that tend to flow from being in conflict? What do you do with the need to talk it out?

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How should we handle conflict in a Christ-like way?

1. Realize that we have a higher standard

Col 3:8-10

8 But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth.⁹ Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds,

Eph 4:31-32

³¹ Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice.³² And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.

Apple has a great product called the iPhone. Everyone that makes a new cell phone these days is working to be the next iPhone killer. Loaded with proprietary patented systems, no one can seem to dethrone that iPhone. The biggest reason: iPhones are produced to a higher standard than most of the competition. As a result, the product may not have all the cutting edge accoutrements one wants in a phone, but it has a simple, clean look and feel that is getting rave reviews even when a problem comes up. The reason is the standard by which iPhones are produced.

Most of the time when people are hurt in a conflict, the first response is to start talking. And they tend to do a lot of talking. They are mad, and probably justifiably so from the world's standard. But we are held to a higher standard. And not unlike the iPhone killers that come out every few weeks, the devil is sending out a killer of his own to muck up our witness to others.

2. Resolve it fast

Eph 4:26-28

²⁶ "Be angry, and do not sin": do not let the sun go down on your wrath,²⁷ nor give place to the devil.



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You are at church cleaning up with several other people. In the midst of your work, someone walks into the room and begins to dress you down for not doing something more important in another room. What do you do?

You are at the office minding your own business working away when you realize that one of your esteemed co-workers is making fun of you for your work ethic. Eventually it goes from making fun of you to actively conspiring to mess with you. What do you do?

In both cases, the world says to get them back. But the problem isn't the response it is the people you are listening to! Stop! That is our first problem. Instead of dealing with it fast and getting it done, we tend to let it simmer.

Here is where most of us miss the mark when it comes to dealing with conflict. We tend to go around and talk about it to others. Now there is wisdom in council. Council, not complaining or gossiping. There is no wisdom there. But what we tend to do is instead of seeking out wisdom from those that can help us, instead we tend to complain. Mostly because we aren't seeking council, we are seeking justification for our anger.

"You don't know what he did to me," "Did you see the way she was acting?" Are the starting points of many conversations about the way we were treated and how we are seeking approval not to deal with it, but to be justified for our emotions and desire for revenge. That is where we are most likely to go if we are not careful, to vengeance and that isn't our place – that is God's. So be careful when you are doling out vengeance.

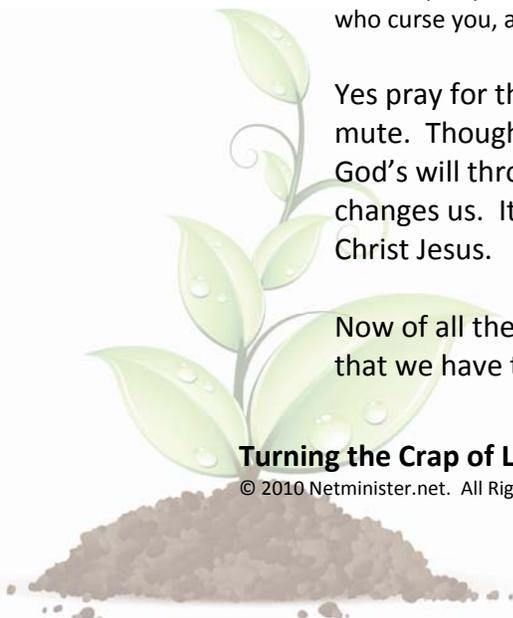
3. Pray for those that we are in conflict with

Luke 6:27-29

"But I say to you who hear: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you,28 bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you.

Yes pray for them. Not against them. Don't pray for them to be stricken blind or mute. Though some definitely should be. Don't pray in anger. We do not see God's will through our own anger. Prayer in this case doesn't change them, it changes us. It changes us to that higher standard we are seeking to be through Christ Jesus.

Now of all the other things, this one is the hard one. Why? Because it means that we have to go to the Lord and make a prayer for those that we are in



conflict with. People that have hurt us. May be trying to hurt us even more. Those that seek to really lay into us and damage us. We should pray for them, WHY!? Because on the Cross that is what Jesus did, he prayed for those that were killing Him. Literally praying for His executioners. And not just the ones who were there nailing Him to the cross, but you and me. When we sin. He was praying for us.

Final Analysis: Conflict is unavoidable. It is coming, so the real question is are you prepared. Preparation means knowing what is expected and having the resources available to deal with it. Have good Godly people whom you trust to give you good wisdom around you constantly. Seek to deal with things quickly. And always pray.



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