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Being Real
Galatians 2:11-14
November 2nd, 2014, Jeff Germon

How many of you had a conflict, however minor it was, with someone in the last week? How about the last three days? Or the last day? How about the last hour, on your way to church?

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Conflict is so normal to human existence. It is actually a necessary part of life. Everybody has conflicts. We have differing expectations that clash. We have personalities that clash. We have varying ideas of what is normal, depending on how we were raised. And, to top it all off, we are all, at our core, self-centred people. It's no wonder we have conflict. It may well be that our number one goal, in our human nature, is self-preservation. If that's the case, we are all on a crash course with anyone who is in our way. None of us is immune.

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And conflict isn't all bad either. It's a matter of how you deal with the conflict that is either good or bad.

Even the Apostles had conflicts with each other. We are going to take a look at one such conflict this morning.

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Galatians 2:11-14 (ESV)

¹¹ But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. ¹² For before certain men came from James, he was eating with the Gentiles; but when they came he drew back and separated himself, fearing the circumcision party. ¹³ And the rest of the Jews acted hypocritically along with him, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy.

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¹⁴ But when I saw that their conduct was not in step with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas before them all, "If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you force the Gentiles to live like Jews?"

This passage is very interesting in a number of ways, but the thing that jumps out at me most noticeably is that this is a conflict between the apostles. When we read the Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John we can see many instances where the disciples' personalities and agendas clash with one another. And we look at those and we can sort of understand because this was before they received the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. They did not have the Spirit of Christ living in them.

It's sort of shocking, though, to read Galatians and see that the apostles still had conflicts. This was likely about twenty years or so after Christ had risen from the dead and the Holy Spirit had come on them in power. And this is not the only case where we see the apostles having squabbles after Pentecost.

One of the most well known examples is when Paul and Barnabas had an argument that was so heated they had to part company and go their separate ways. I'm going to read this in the *The Message* because it is a narrative and reads easier than the ESV.

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Acts 15:36-41 (The Message)

³⁶ After a few days of this, Paul said to Barnabas, "Let's go back and visit all our friends in each of the towns where we preached the Word of God. Let's see how they're doing." ³⁷ Barnabas wanted to take John along, the John nicknamed Mark. ³⁸ But Paul wouldn't have him; he wasn't about to take along a quitter who, as soon as the going got tough, had jumped ship on them in Pamphylia.

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³⁹ Tempers flared, and they ended up going their separate ways: Barnabas took Mark and sailed for Cyprus; ⁴⁰ Paul chose Silas and, offered up by their friends to the grace of the Master, ⁴¹ went to Syria and Cilicia to build up muscle and sinew in those congregations.

I think most of us don't quite know what to do with this when we first read it. If these pillars of the church who had known Jesus and are such key players in the New Testament couldn't get along, what hope is there for you and me? It could be discouraging.

Or, we could see it from a different perspective. We could gain encouragement from this. We could see that the Christian life and the road to maturity is a process. Maturity is a journey, not an event.

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The process is the goal. So, the question is: Are you entering fully into the process? Are you allowing the Spirit of Jesus to transform your hearts, because it won't happen if you don't allow it to happen? WE WILL NOT COAST INTO MATURITY!

We need to realize that conflict is normal. It's a necessary part of the process. It's how you deal with conflict that is either wrong, or right, immature, or mature.

In that story we just read about the conflict between Paul and Barnabas, Paul was so disappointed with John Mark because he quit half way through a mission. Paul thought that if Mark did it once he'll do it again. But, we read later that Paul had a change of heart.

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2 Timothy 4:11b

Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is very useful to me for ministry.

This is extremely encouraging to me. How many of us have not, at times, felt like we have failed in a relationship, or like we let someone down? How many of us have not felt like we failed in ministry, or our work, or in what we feel is our calling?

Or, on the other side of a conflict, how many of us have not been disappointed by someone, and we are tempted to give up on them? We've all been on either side of the equation. We have been disappointed, and we have disappointed others. But, here we have Mark, who had disappointed Paul in a big way, and is now commended by him as one who is very useful to him in the ministry. That gives me great encouragement when I fail.

When I am tempted to wander down memory lane and let my mind go to all the ways I have been immature in my life I am also coaxed to dive into that pool of muck and mire of self-pity that regularly calls out to me. And when I do give in to that menacing voice I also give way to shame. And shame is a state of being that God does not want us to live in. There are times when we should be ashamed of our behaviour, of course, but to live in a constant state of shame is not God's plan for you. That is the plan of the enemy of your soul, the Devil. God wants to free you from shame.

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So, let's walk through Galatians 2:11-14 again and see what we can learn from it. Just a reminder of what has transpired thus far in Galatians;

Paul had been accused by the Judaizers of twisting the Gospel to make it more appealing to the Gentile Christians. His accusers had been preaching that the Gentiles, aside from believing in Jesus, had to follow the Jewish laws and customs, especially the dietary laws, special days, and circumcision. So Paul corrected them by saying that it was actually they who had been twisting the Gospel by adding the law to it. He then went on to give his testimony of how he had met Jesus on the road to Damascus when he was on his way to persecute the church. And he went from being an enemy of the church to the greatest Christian evangelist and missionary in history. His story was evidence to the fact that he had received his gospel directly from Jesus and it was therefore not open to correction. It was pure and unadulterated.

He also reiterated the fact that he had presented his gospel in front of the other apostles to make sure that it was the true Gospel and they all gave him two thumbs up.

The Gospel that Paul presented was Jesus plus nothing. If you add anything to the Gospel you dilute it to the point where it loses its power. The true Gospel is that Jesus died to pay the penalty for my sins and rose from the dead so that I could have life. FULL STOP!! That's it. I receive that truth by grace through faith.

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I do not earn God's favour after that by being religious, or by doing good deeds, or by any other means. Anything else added to the equation voids the Gospel of its power.

Paul continues his argument to defend the Gospel of Jesus.

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Galatians 2:11–14 (ESV)

¹¹ But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned.

Now, remember that the Cephas mentioned here is the Apostle Peter. Next to Jesus, he is *the* major player in the Gospels.

And Paul says some very strong words about him here. ***"I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned."***

When I read this it jumps out of the page at me. This was obviously not a personality conflict. Now, both Paul and Peter had very strong personalities, so there was always the potential that they could have personality clashes. But, this was different. There was something morally wrong. It was so wrong that Paul knew that he had to deal with it so that it didn't get out of hand.

Some of your translations likely say something like ***"I opposed him because he was clearly in the wrong."*** That's very true. Peter was in the wrong, but the language is much stronger than that. The language actually implies that he stood condemned before God. Not condemned to hell, but God, as the Judge looks on his behaviour and it is clearly out of sync with him. The way that he was acting was so counter to the Gospel that Paul could not overlook it. He had to address it. And he faced Peter head on with force.

Paul understood what loving friendship looks like. How many of you have ever been out to eat with a group of friends and you get food on your face, but you don't know it until you go to the washroom and see it in the mirror? And you wonder, "How long did I have that on my face? How come nobody told me?" Friends tell friends that they have food on their face.

Now, food on the face is a small thing, but something like what Paul faced Peter with is huge. It has eternal consequences, not for Peter, but for those who might follow him.

Paul then goes on to explain what happened.

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¹² For before certain men came from James, he was eating with the Gentiles; but when they came he drew back and separated himself, fearing the circumcision party. ¹³ And the rest of the Jews acted hypocritically along with him, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy. ¹⁴ But when I saw that their conduct was not in step with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas before them all, "If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you force the Gentiles to live like Jews?"

Do you see what's happening here?

In Acts 10 Peter had received a vision from the Lord in which God told him that he does not distinguish between Gentile and Jew. This was something new to Peter. And from that point on he began to associate with Gentiles. He had a complete paradigm shift in his thinking. Prior to that, according to the Jewish law, he wouldn't because it would make him ceremonially unclean.

And then in Acts 11 Peter was challenged by some Judaizers about eating with Gentiles.

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Acts 11:1–18 (ESV)

¹ Now the apostles and the brothers who were throughout Judea heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God. ² So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcision party criticized him, saying, ³ "You went to uncircumcised men and ate with them." ⁴ But Peter began and explained it to them in order:

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⁵ "I was in the city of Joppa praying, and in a trance I saw a vision, something like a great sheet descending, being let down from heaven by its four corners, and it came down to me. ⁶ Looking at it closely, I observed animals and beasts of prey and reptiles and birds of the air. ⁷ And I heard a voice saying to me, 'Rise, Peter; kill and eat.'

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⁸ But I said, 'By no means, Lord; for nothing common or unclean has ever entered my mouth.' ⁹ But the voice answered a second time from heaven, 'What God has made clean, do not call common.' ¹⁰ This happened three times, and all was drawn up again into heaven.

¹¹ And behold, at that very moment three men arrived at the house in which we were, sent to me from Caesarea.

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¹² And the Spirit told me to go with them, making no distinction. These six brothers also accompanied me, and we entered the man's house. ¹³ And he told us how he had seen the angel stand in his house and say, 'Send to Joppa and bring Simon who is called Peter; ¹⁴ he will declare to you a message by which you will be saved, you and all your household.'

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¹⁵ As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on them just as on us at the beginning. ¹⁶ And I remembered the word of the Lord, how he said, 'John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.' ¹⁷ If then God gave the same gift to them as he gave to us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God's way?" ¹⁸ When they heard these things they fell silent. And they glorified God, saying, "Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance that leads to life."

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So, now back to Galatians, Peter, since that revelation from God, had been regularly eating with Gentiles. He was having real fellowship with them. All the walls of hostility had been broken down. And then certain men, some devout religious Jewish Christians came into town and he all of a sudden gets struck with the disease of fear of man – or what we commonly called peer pressure, and he disassociated himself from the Gentiles.

And if that's not bad enough, he was leading others in that direction as well, even Barnabas, Paul said. Paul called him, along with the others who followed him, hypocrites. That's pretty strong language. A hypocrite is a play actor. A hypocrite puts on a mask and pretends to be something he is not. He is a chameleon, a coward.

Peter, the Apostle, the one who was the most prominent player in the Gospels, next to Jesus, Paul said, was acting like a hypocrite. Now, before we judge Peter, and Barnabas, and the others who followed them too harshly, let's look at ourselves.

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Hypocrisy is when your behaviour collides with your values. When you behave in a way that contradicts what you know to be true you are acting hypocritically. There is dissonance between what you believe and the way you behave. Do you ever do that? I think if we took some time to think about it, we could come up with all kinds of ways that we act hypocritically.

For instance, we all know by now that God's plan for us is that we would continually work in cooperation with the Holy Spirit allowing him to transform our lives so that our characters are aligned with the character of Jesus. Our lives should reflect the image of Jesus. We should act towards others in accordance with the fruit of the Spirit (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness and self-control). We know we are supposed to be that way. We know that a year from now we should be more of those things than we are right now if we are allowing the Spirit of Jesus to work in our hearts and minds.

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What happens when our behaviour does not line up with what we know to be true? Our behaviour clashes with our values.

What happens when we behave in a way that clashes with what we know is true, is that there will be a battle raging within you and you won't be able to rest until your behaviour comes in line with your values, or until you continue in your wrong behaviour so long that your values change, and your conscience becomes dulled to what is right. It's very dangerous to continue living with misaligned values, because if we carry on down that road we will become okay with the person we know we shouldn't be.

I've said many times that we need to become okay with not being okay, but it's not okay to stay there. We need to all the Holy Spirit to transform us.

It takes a tremendous amount of courage to deal with these things, but it is so worth it. That's why we need friends like Paul who love us enough to risk showing us our blind spots. And like I've said before, we all have them. Sometimes we don't like to face our blind spots because there is a huge amount of pain and shame attached to misaligned behaviour.

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But, Jesus said in John 8:32, ***“The truth will set you free.”*** If we don’t deal with the truth we keep ourselves in bondage. And when we do finally own up to and face that unwanted self that we all have, and allow the Spirit of Jesus to deal with it we have freedom.

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Susan Scott, in *Fierce Conversations* wrote, ***“I am successful to the degree that who I am and what I live are in alignment.”***¹

Success in life is not winning at everything. It is being the me that God created me to be. It’s not trying to live someone else’s life. It is faithfully addressing the sin, shortcomings, and failures that the Holy Spirit brings to our attention and making them right.

Paul, in our passage today, lovingly and very firmly told his friend and colleague that he was in the wrong for his behaviour. That is a good friend. Had Peter not paid heed to Paul’s rebuke, it would have been a huge failure. But, Peter, obviously dealt with his sin, picked himself up and grew from the experience. That is a successful failure. We do not have to live in shame of past failures. We do need to deal with them though.

Here are some parting comments before we celebrate communion together.

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Be open to giving permission to certain people you trust to tell you where you may have some blind spots.

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You will fail. Guaranteed. That’s ok. We all do. Don’t beat yourself up. If you feel shame even though you have authentically dealt with the misalignment of your values and behaviour, but don’t quite get it right sometimes know that the sense of shame does not come from God. It is from the enemy of your soul – Satan.

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On the other end of the equation; **If someone gives you permission to help them see their blind spots, be a friend. Love them enough to graciously show them.**

Remember what Proverbs 27:6 says,

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“The wounds of a friend are better than the kisses of an enemy.”

We are going to celebrate the Lord’s Supper together now. At the cross almost 2000 years ago Jesus took your sin and your shame on the cross. He finished the work. If you have blown it in the past, and I know you have because you are human, you do not have to go back and dig all that stuff up. It’s done. You do not have to do anything to earn God’s love, acceptance or favour. He did it all. That is the message of Galatians. And it is why Paul was willing to risk his friendship with Peter by publicly rebuking him. The Gospel of Jesus was at stake.

Let’s take a couple minutes of silence before the servers come forward. Ask the Spirit of Jesus to speak to your heart. If you have any business to take care of with the Lord make sure you do it now.

¹ Susan Scott, *Fierce Conversations*. p. 64



Galatians: Learning to Live in the Freedom of Christ
Being Real
Galatians 2:11-14
Week of November 2nd, 2014

Objective of this study: To understand that maturity is a process not an event and to enter purposefully into the process with Jesus.

Worship (5 – 10 minutes)

1. Spend five minutes in silent prayer asking God to prepare your heart for how he wants to speak to you.
2. After the five minutes of silence have someone interrupt the silence and read **Psalms 139:1 & 23-24** meditatively to the group. Then pause for about a minute and let it sink in.
3. Sing a song or two of praise and thanksgiving to God.

Welcome (5 – 10 minutes)

When driving, have you ever been surprised to discover another car in your blindspot?

Word (20 - 30 minutes)

1. What stood out from the sermon?
2. Read Galatians 2:11-14 and Acts 11:1-18
 1. Why did Peter originally eat with Gentile believers (Acts 11:1-18)?
 2. Why did he stop (Galatians 2:11-14)?
 3. In each case, what effect did his behaviour have on others? (see Acts 11:18 & Galatians 2:13.)
3. Sermon Quote: **"Hypocrisy is when your behaviour collides with your values."** Read Proverbs 29:25. Some key terms from the sermon are: hypocrisy; fear of man; blindspots. How did each of these contribute to the conflict between Peter and Paul?

Work (30 - 40 minutes)

Sermon Quote: **"Maturity is a journey, not an event. The process is the goal. So, the question is, Are we entering fully into the process? Are we allowing the Spirit of Jesus to transform our hearts? — because it won't happen if we don't allow it to happen. We will not coast into maturity."**

1. How have fear of man, hypocrisy, and blindspots led to conflict in your life? If you don't know, ask your spouse, children, siblings, parents, friends etc. :=()
2. Sermon Quote: **"Friends tell friends when they have food on their face."** Read Proverbs 27:6 and Ephesians 4:14-16. How does this apply to Peter and Paul's conflict?
3. People can tend towards "truth telling" or "love" when in conflict (Ephesians 4:15). Why is it hard to do both? Why is it important? What do you tend towards? This is why we need God to help us grow, another example of why maturity means not just doing what comes naturally.
4. **"If Billy and I never disagreed one of us would be unnecessary"** - Ruth Bell Graham. Sermon Quote: **"We need to realize that conflict is normal. It's how you deal with conflict that is either wrong or right, immature or mature."**
 1. How do you feel when or after you have a conflict?
 2. What is your conflict journey? What has God shown you? How has he helped you grow?
 3. How does grace apply to handling conflict?
 4. How can we extend grace to those we are in conflict with? What about to ourselves?

PRAYER TIME/HOMEWORK

1. Spend time worship God for his amazing grace through Jesus.
2. Read Galatians again this week at least once more in one sitting.
3. Meditate on verses that God uses to speak powerfully to you, perhaps **Ephesians 4:14-16**, passages from Galatians, or others verses used in the sermon.
4. Journal about what God is showing you.