

Thanks

This is our last session about approaching conflict and responding to conflict in a way that glorifies Jesus Christ. We've been talking about the two fires of conflict. We've talked about the wild fire and the peace fire. We talked about the choice that exists in every conflict that you face, of which fire will ignite your response to that conflict. In these last two sessions, we've been introducing the first two of three things that every conflict firefighter must know. In this section, we'll introduce the third thing every conflict firefighter must know.

These three things are three things that help us as we seek God's presence to give us a frame of reference. Three principles that help us understand that the Lord is always at work in the midst of conflict, that He is at work looking for people to use, someone whose heart has turned toward him, and we want to be one of those people. When a conflict occurs in our life, one of the first things that come to mind is the Lord is at work. I want to seek Him. I want to be someone whom He can use in this conflict and so I'm going to pursue Him.

He's also at work transforming His people into His image. So we'd be aware of that. Are there opportunities in this conflict for the Lord to change something in my life or in the life of one of the people that I'm in conflict with? What is he doing? The third thing that He's always at work doing is accomplishing His purpose in good pleasure. We talked about that two sessions ago.

In the last session, we introduced the second thing that every conflict firefighter must know and that is that the reproof of instruction is the way of life, and that often in conflict there are tremendous opportunities for the Lord to expose attitudes, desires, habits that do not reflect His image and that He exposes those for the purpose of changing us, that we are His workmanship, that He's begun a good work in every one of His children. When something is exposed, He gives us the opportunity to change the way we look at something, to change the way we respond to something, to get the logs out of our own eye so that He can change us and help us see things as they really are, as He sees them. This all happens at the peace fire.

The third thing every conflict firefighter must know is something that the Lord wants us to do every time we come into His presence. In fact, it's something that the Lord declares in His words that "When you come into my presence, come bringing this thing and give it to me." The third thing that every conflict firefighter must know is to give thanks. When was the last time you had a conflict and your initial response was to give thanks? It's not a natural response to conflict, but it is one that the Lord instructs us in His word when we pursue His presence and to come before Him.

It is the way that the Lord instructs us in scripture to enter His presence with the gate of thanks giving Him praise. In Psalms 100:4, we read, “Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise. Give thanks to him. Bless his name.” The Bible also tells us that it is God’s will that we give thanks even in the midst of conflict. In 1 Thessalonians 5:18, the apostle Paul writes, “Give thanks in all circumstances for this is the will of God and Christ Jesus for you.”

Giving thanks in the midst of conflict can sometimes be difficult. Sometimes it’s a tragedy. Sometimes there’s been a vicious attack on your life. The last thing you want to do is give thanks. You would rather go seek vengeance, get revenge, make that person who has wronged you pay for what they’ve done. But the Lord calls you to come to Him first and make choices. Give Him your choices and let Him encourage you and instruct you in the way that you should go.

As we come before His presence, it is to give thanks. It may seem a bit counterintuitive to give thanks when you’re in the middle of a conflict wild fire. Why should you give thanks and what should you give thanks for? Well, giving thanks requires us to take our eyes off of the conflict wildfire and put them on Jesus Christ. A peace fire. As you seek His presence, you will realize that there is much to be thankful for. You can be thankful for who He is, that He is trustworthy, that He’s always at work transforming you into His image, that He never leaves you or forsakes you, that He’s able to do far above all that you can ask or think. You can thank Him for His reproof.

The Bible encourages you to rejoice even in your sufferings, even in the midst of conflict. The apostle Paul wrote, “Therefore since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through Him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.” Romans 5:1-5.

Giving thanks requires a faith posture of humility that brings you into the Lord’s presence. Giving thanks causes you to fix your eyes on Jesus Christ. This puts you in a position where the Lord can change your perspective on what is happening in the conflict wild fire. Let’s review the flash points from this session.

The Lord is always at work, the reproof of instruction is the way of life and giving thanks in the midst of a conflict. Three things every conflict firefighter must know. It’s God’s will that we give Him thanks. We can give thanks even in the midst of suffering. Giving thanks in praise brings us to His presence. Implementing these three principles as a habitual response to conflict will draw you to the peace fire in God’s presence that will change your perspective on a conflict. At the peace fire, you can

examine your heart before the Lord. Remove the logs out of your own eye before trying to remove what might be in someone else's eye.

If you're interested in learning more about the dynamics of conflict and how the Lord can use you to glorify His name, I invite you to take a look at the two fires of conflict course that is available at our web site at www.peacefire.net. May the Lord bless you and reveal Himself to you as you seek Him in the midst of conflict.