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DEVELOPING CONFLICT RESISTANT RELATIONSHIPS (PART 1)

2 Corinthians Series | *2 Corinthians 12:11-14*

[PRAYER] Lord, I just pray you'd keep our family and friends safe in this rain. Keep us safe as we drive. I'm grateful for these brave folks who have such a commitment to you and a commitment to this church that they would get out on a very stormy day today. There's warnings out. So Lord, I ask that you would make us really a light in the storms of life. That other people who see us would see that we're different. We think differently, we act differently. Lord, as we look at the most valuable thing that we have here in our relationships with each other and with you, I pray that you would speak to us today and reveal some important things to us about how we handle those relationships in particular. Use your word in our lives today. We ask this in Jesus' name, amen.

Healthy relationships have conflict. Healthy relationships have disagreements. Healthy relationships have differences. There's a way that Christians handle relationships differently that allows them to weather the storms or to face the conflict or to deal with the challenges that they experience. I want to talk about that today.

As Christians we think differently than non-Christians. We at least should, although sometimes we don't. Sometimes we embrace the tactics of the world in our interpersonal relationships and they drag us down in ways that aren't helpful and they hinder our development and our future. So today we're going to zero in on relationships because that's what 2 Corinthians 12 is bringing us to.

I'm just so grateful I'm a Christian. I have this code of ethics when it comes to conflict that guides me through it.

I was talking to a man this week who was in conflict with someone in his neighborhood. His first response when he was in conflict is he went to the community. On Facebook there's a community group and he told everybody about the conflict he was having. Well that didn't work out so well for him with the conflict with the person. So the next thing he did was to get the legal system involved. So he tries to do legal kinds of things to resolve this conflict. Then the next thing he wanted to do was to get a mediator because the legal thing wasn't working either. Now he wants to get a mediator to talk to this person because he didn't feel like he could talk to them individually.

I'm thinking that is just the opposite of the way that Christians handle the conflict. As Christians when we have a problem with someone, what do we do first? Matthew 18 gives us a process.

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First we talk to the person in private in hopes to win them. If that doesn't work, what do we do? Then we get a mediator. This is all in Matthew 18. If that doesn't work then we start taking it into other places. But we have a process. I'm just so grateful that I live by a code of ethics that's different than I typically see in the world.

But I want to talk about today the way we handle that conflict in our lives. I think this will be helpful for you because Paul gives us some really good ideas about what to do and how to address it. So let me read the passage of scripture first and then after I read this passage of scripture we'll dig a little bit more into this in a way that I think will help you. If you're a young person today, I want you to listen to this because if you can sense some good patterns now for dealing with differences, disagreements, and conflict. Those are three different words – differences, disagreements, and conflict.

Stand with me as we read God's word in 2 Corinthians 12:11-14. If you're opening your Bible you can see it there. If not, it's on the screen. Paul says these words to start out with: *I have made a fool of myself, but you drove me to it.* That is such a funny statement I feel like that could be on the back of a plaque on some of our walls somewhere. *I have made a fool of myself, but you drove me to it. I ought to have been commended by you, for I am not in the least inferior to the "super-apostles," even though I am nothing. I persevered in demonstrating among you the marks of a true apostle, including signs, wonders and miracles. How were you inferior to the other churches, except that I was never a burden to you? Forgive me this wrong! Now I am ready to visit you for the third time, and I will not be a burden to you, because what I want is not your possessions but you. After all, children should not have to save up for their parents, but parents for their children.*

He birthed that church, so he's thinking of himself as kind of the father of the church and parents are to give to their children, children to their parents. So he's using that analogy.

You may be seated.

I believe that healthy relationships or Christian relationships can be conflict resistant. I don't mean by that that we'll be able to avoid conflict because I don't even think that's good necessarily. Conflict is made up of a difference or a disagreement plus emotion. You have a disagreement plus emotion equals conflict. If you don't have the emotion then it's just a disagreement. But when emotion starts getting involved it turns into a conflict. So these conflicts wear at us, they damage us, they damage the relationship, and they create walls of resistance and rob us of the intimacy that we could have in a close relationship.

I want to talk to you today about being resistant to conflict in a relationship. How you can prepare yourself for that. Because that's what I think Paul is sharing with us here.

Are you familiar with the silica gel packs? These are little gel packs that come in your supplements when you buy supplements. That little pack that's in there. They say don't put it in your mouth. It's dangerous. It also comes in electronics. They keep things dry. I keep those and I don't throw them away. I put them in a Ziploc bag in case I need them.

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I needed them a couple weeks ago when my wife, Carrie, spilled water on her computer. Immediately she turned it upside down to try to keep the water from going into the components. She brought it to me and I immediately turned it off because electricity and water don't match too well. So by turning it off, that cut the electricity or supposedly cuts out the power from functioning. Then I laid it down and I unscrewed the back of the computer and took it off. I took some compressed air and I sprayed the water. There was a lot of water that just kept coming out. I just sprayed this water out and got the water out. Then I left it open, stuck it in a bag with about ten of those gel packs. Stuck them in there over night and it's supposed to suck up the water. Those things could dry a bathing suit out. On a trip if you want to put them in there, they're amazing. Anyway I put them on there, left it over twenty-four hours, and by God's grace the next day her computer is working fine and it's still working.

Now I share that with you because it seems to be a good illustration of having a plan for some kind of a problem in life. Life hacks is what we often call them. There's life hacks for challenges that come. Here's what you do to solve them. I want to suggest some life hacks today for dealing with conflict because when conflict comes into our life how are we going to manage it. The problem is people have instant reactions developed over a period of time on how they handle these things and those instant reactions are often worldly, sometimes sinful, and at least damaging to those relationships. Relationships get ruined over this, so we want to be really careful.

But I want to talk to you today about developing relationships that will be conflict resistant. That is when conflict comes you'll be able to manage it or handle it in a way that doesn't do the damage that it possibly could. I think it takes some work in order to make that happen in our lives. It means preparing ourselves, it means preparing the relationship, it means doing something to make all of this work together. I think that's what we're seeing in Paul's message to us today.

There are actually three different things that I'm going to suggest to you. Now these aren't solutions for handling conflict when it comes at you. The Bible has some ideas about that, but that's not what we're talking about. We're talking about preparing relationships so they can handle conflict. If you are in a conflicting relationship then you can use these things in order to strengthen yourself and the relationship significantly. View it this way: There's you here, there's the other person here, and there's this relationship up here. The relationship is like a person and that relationship needs to be managed well in order for these two people to get out of this or deal with this in a significant way.

Let's go back into the passage now. Let me show you one verse at a time some of the ideas that Paul is sharing with us that I think produce for us some ways to make our relationships conflict resistant.

The first one comes from this passage. The very first word – *I have made a fool of myself, but you drove me to it. I ought to have been commended by you.* Do you see what Paul is doing? He's giving the "here's what should have happened". You see in Paul's relationship with them, as we've seen already in the book of 2 Corinthians, Paul is defending himself because a lot of the people of the church have been influenced by a few people, false teachers or worldly people, that

have come into the church, and they're putting Paul down and questioning his integrity. They're actually calling themselves the super-apostles. Paul is just an apostle, but they are the super-apostles. So what are they doing in the midst of all of that?

There's a manipulation technique that I think happens in relationships. You may see it as subtle. It comes into our relationships. It's not only in antagonistic relationships. A husband and wife or parent and child, or friends, or work relationship. These kinds of things happen. I'm going to suggest first the manipulations that we see in the passage.

Here's the first one. This manipulation is put-downs or making your problems seem trivial. So if you say to someone, "Wow. The traffic today was horrendous. I had to be in traffic so long. I can't believe it." And the other person says, "Well that's nothing. I have to be in traffic every day. It's taking years off my life being in traffic. Think about that the next time you're in traffic." What have they done? They've made your problems sound trivial.

There's some people you tell them a problem and what is their first response? "Well I can tell you a bigger problem than that. Let me tell you what happened to me." So they make your problem seem trivial. It's dangerous. It's a manipulation. What somebody ought to do is say, "Oh wow. That's really terrible. Have you been able to overcome that yet?" Have some empathy in the midst of that. That's not what's happening in a lot of situations.

Secondly notice put-downs because they were calling themselves super-apostles and of course Paul was only an apostle. It's like a put-down. "Who are you?" When put-downs take place sometimes they're done in sarcasm, they're done in subtle ways to say "you're not as good as I am." That's the manipulation.

So what should we be doing? If we're going to develop a relationship that is conflict-resistant then I think the first thing we want to do is what Paul did. *I should have been commended by you.* You saw that in the first part. So that's what he's saying. You should have been commending me for who I am and what I am doing.

I would suggest we want to have in our relationships admiration. We want to build other people up. I would suggest we live in a world where there is an admiration deficiency, where people have a need in their hearts for someone to come along and recognize who they are. Admiration is for who you are as a person. This isn't flattery. This is a genuine recognition of a person. It does a lot for dealing with relationships.

Now much of my work is working with parents of children and young people. Invariably when I work with a parent of a young person... In the last two months I worked with a sixteen year old who ran away, a seventeen year old who can hardly wait to be eighteen so she doesn't have to listen to her parents anymore, and a fourteen year old who's just plain disrespectful to his mom. In all three cases one of the first things I'm suggesting is we're going to use some firmness and I'm going to show you how to do this.

I want to suggest that one of the most valuable things you can do is to build some relationship here. Because the pressure we're going to put on is tough. When you put pressure on a young

person, it's hard. So let's add some relationship here. What can you do to strengthen the relationship? I would suggest one of the things you can do is say this to your child: "I admire you in this way." Now most parents have never thought of that statement to say I admire you when it comes to this aspect of your life. But I would suggest in most every young person's life there's something we can admire about that. Not everything they're doing is evil. Not everything is bad. So let's find something we can admire about them and that admiration does something to the relationship that's fascinating.

For the sixteen year old who ran away (I think I told you about him already) I told them, "I can't work with you until you get your son home." So they went to the police, got him home, and they started working. Dad came to this realization about his own anger with his son and how he's using that as his primary parenting vehicle, and he needed to change, and the relationship changed. He was just so amazed after the few weeks that we've worked together.

The seventeen year old (I think I told you about this story too) girl is going to be eighteen and she can hardly wait to be eighteen so she didn't have to listen to her mom anymore. Mom started to admire her and build relationship and be firm with her. "I'm glad you're going to be eighteen. That's great. We need more adults around here that will help pay the rent," and so on. So good things we did with firmness, but at the same time some relationship took place.

So working with this fourteen year old, he's doing better in school, but he's still very disrespectful to his mom. Just this morning I shot an email out to her. One of the things she can do is build relationship with her son. We have an admiration deficit in our society and people need affirmation in their lives.

One of the scriptures that we see that helps us understand this and characterizes us as Christians is this one in 1 Thessalonians 5:11. It says – *Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.* Don't you like the way Paul does this? He says to them, "Here's what I want you to do, but you're already doing that." I like that. When I'm working with parents and young people, I say if they ever do anything successful, I mean if they ever do anything right and actually turn their homework in or they see something around the house that they can help with, instead of just being demanding, anything like that, then you want to say to them, "You want to do this just like you're doing." That's what Paul is saying to them.

And notice what he's saying. Encourage one another. This encouragement that we do in a relationship does an immense amount to allow conflict resistance. Because the relationship then has something to cushion the conflict that's there. Any way that you can bring affirmation into the relationship in a genuine way will do a lot and can do a lot to cushion the conflict, the differences, or the disagreements that come into a relationship. I would also suggest that as Christians, especially in a marriage relationship or in a family relationship, that whenever we affirm someone, the ultimate goal is to point them to the Lord if we can. That's what I think good affirmation does.

Notice what Paul is saying in this passage. *May the God who gives endurance and encouragement...* two very important words in any disagreement, difference, or conflict situation. We need endurance, right? We need endurance and we need encouragement. *May the God who*

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gives endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude of mind (we'll come back to that in a minute) toward each other that Christ had.

Now the *attitude of mind* is very important because an attitude is a pre-packaged response. It's like the habit you have, the way you think whenever somebody attacks you. If someone attacks you in a particular way, whether it's overt or covert (some people are really good on the covert tendencies to attack), whenever they do that, you have a pattern. That pattern is an attitude that you've developed. All you need is a trigger and it comes out. So much of what we have to do then is we have to change our attitude, our pre-packaged response to the attitude that Christ Jesus had *so that with one mind and with one voice may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

We're trying to establish unity and that unity happens in relationships. Conflict resistance is achievable when we have a high level of affirmation in the relationship. I would suggest that affirmation is most effective when it points to our relationship with God. Because God of course is the one that's uniting us, He's the one that's bringing us closer together.

Well that's number one. We can stop there. We can go home. I just think that's so valuable. We all need that. And if we raise the affirmation level in our homes, conflict would reduce.

Let's go on to a second one that Paul mentions by going to the next verse. He says – *I persevered in demonstrating among you the marks of a true apostle.* So here's all these things I've done. He says I'm not like a b-postle. I'm an a-postle. That's what he's saying. I'm one of the true apostles. And I did these things, *including signs, wonders and miracles. How were you inferior to the other churches, except that I was never a burden to you?*

Now what Paul is saying here is that when he went into the church of Corinth he didn't ask them for money to support him while he was doing his work as a missionary. He did in other places that he went, but in Corinth he was a tent maker. So as a tent maker he didn't require or he didn't ask them for money. So he's saying, "I wasn't a burden for you." What should that do to them? If they think about that, that should make them feel grateful. Paul is imagining that they're not feeling grateful. Notice "here's all the things I've done, here's who I was." But they're not feeling this grateful. Even some are being demanding.

So I want to suggest that there's another manipulation that often takes place in relationships that often creates significant problems: demandingness and ungratefulness.

Let's stop for a moment. You say, "What if I live with a person who's like this?" "What if I have a boss that's like this?" Now that's not really the focus of our session today. We're not looking at how do we respond to people that are like that. Although I do think these things help in that. There are a lot of things that God gives us to manage conflict that comes up. That's more a corrective approach. Right now we're looking at a proactive approach. Do you understand the difference here? Today we're looking at a proactive approach. So I'm not suggesting that every time someone is mean to you you just thank them. That's appreciation. That's not what we're talking about here. I'm just talking about how do you prepare a relationship so that it will

withstand the conflict. If there's conflict that exists and it's coming at you then there are other passages of scripture we can go. Maybe someday we will go there.

There are things like you can confront the person, you can take a stand for righteousness. If you're going to confront them, you're going to do it alone and you're going to go with someone. The Bible also talks about praying for your enemies. We have other spiritual resources that can help us to deal with the challenges that we face.

In preparation for the sermon each Sunday, I meet with my small group. In my small group we talk about the sermon upcoming and the sermon from last week. So we were talking about this and Josh Jurik was in the group this last week. He's a police officer. So I was eager to ask him about conflict because you know he sees it a lot.

We got to talking about domestic violence and how often a police officer is called into a situation where a man has hit a woman. If she's been hit then they'll take him out of there. If there's any marks on her body or anything, they'll take him out and arrest him and so on. But he says the challenge is they're called back to the house two weeks later. Why? Because she drops the charges because she loves him and she's getting something out of the relationship and they're back in the situation again two weeks later. There's this problem of recurring conflict and they don't have a plan for dealing with it.

I really believe that we have to teach our young people as they're growing up that when they get into a relationship and their relationship starts to turn negatively, certainly if somebody hits somebody else, you need to stop it immediately. You get help right away. You do something about it. You do not let that continue.

I heard a story this week about one woman who said to her husband, "Look, the way you're treating me (he wasn't hitting her, but he was verbally being mean and unkind), the ways that you're treating me, it takes me days to recover when you do that to me. I'm not going to continue in this. If you do it again, I'm going to take the kids, we're going to go out, and we're going to leave you for a while." Well the next time it happened, she did. She took the kids, she went to her mom's, and stayed there for three days, and then wanted to come back. Her husband in this case realized there is a significant problem and he went to counseling to get some help for it. That's big. That's important.

I'm not saying that always happens in any relationship, I'm just saying we have to help our young people who get in these situations with conflict know that you don't just put up with that because you love someone. You deal with it. You have a plan. Get help when you're in that situation.

That was a parenthesis because we're not talking about managing the conflict that comes. We're trying to now help you set up yourself and your relationship for some kind of a resistance that will help you be able to manage conflict as it comes so it doesn't penetrate your heart, so it doesn't damage the relationship.

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So the second thing that Paul is mentioning here is I think going to address the demandingness and the ungratefulness that the people were experiencing. He says – *I was never a burden to you*. Basically what he's saying is (and I think this is the second thing that makes us think differently about conflict than the person who's not a believer) that is we embrace this idea of gratefulness and appreciation.

I would suggest that most of us in our relationships don't think enough about other people and what they do for us. Humility can be defined as being grateful for what God and others are doing for us. That's just gratefulness. If we would be more grateful for what we have instead of demanding things we don't have, relationships would be better. We would have more conflict resistance because when people don't do exactly what we want, we don't have to be demanding toward them, but instead we're able to pull back and we're able to be more appreciative and grateful.

So we go to another verse in 1 Thessalonians, a few verses after the last verse we looked at where Paul is saying this characterizes us as Christians. *Give thanks in all circumstances*. See, Christians are characterized by this attitude of thankfulness in their lives and that's why they can have more successful relationships. Gratefulness.

It really talks about God's will. You want to know what God's will is? Let's start right here. Start thanking people. *Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus*. You can either thank people or thank God for what's going on. You want to know God's will? Start thanking more. It's part of what God's will is. It characterizes us as believers. We want to be grateful and appreciative. That's going to build this strength in this relationship that allows the relationship to be strong and not damaged with years and years sometimes of damage that can take place. So appreciation can often go a long way to help that.

Let's go to a third one that we see right in this passage that I think is helpful. Because Paul says – *Now I am ready to visit you for the third time, and I will not be a burden to you, because what I want is not your possessions but you*.

A contrast is being made between two things. That's what the *but* word here is. Possessions and you. If a person is more concerned about possessions than the person, then what we say about that person is that they have become possessive and selfish. That comes right out of the passage. Possessive and selfish. If you're possessive and selfish that means "it has to be done my way and if it's not done my way then I'm going to let you have it. Because this is my time, this is my way of doing things, this is my kitchen, this is my car. This is..." whatever. So when it becomes my stuff and then I start demanding those things of someone else then I become possessive and selfish. And what happens then? Possessions become more important than people.

I suppose this is a really big one. Because it's easy for us to get locked into our possessions and things that we have and how we like them kept and how we want them fixed and taken care of. So when they aren't done the way we like, we can get upset and then it generates conflict in the relationship. People are more important than time, more important than things. They're more important than anything. People are really important.

I learned this lesson through a rebuke. I was in Kenya. You got to love the African people. African people, by character, value relationship more than things or time. Every person you come to in Africa, you greet them. You start out greeting them before you enter your business or anything else.

I was the professor at the college there teaching family courses and Bible courses to indigenous African people in nine tribes and they would be going out to be pastors in the community in the country of Kenya. They'd be going out to those places. They'd often come to Bible college in order to be trained as pastors. Many of them would go on to pastor several churches because there weren't enough pastors around at that time, so they would be pastoring several churches. So my job was to equip them to do that in the areas that I was teaching.

I remember at one point I went to the office where they had an assistant that would do things like photocopy things for the faculty. I walked into the office and I said, "Hey, I just wanted to see if my photocopies are done." And she says to me, "Dr. Turansky, you didn't greet me yet." She was just kind of smiling when she said that, but it was a reminder to me that here we go again. I didn't even realize it. I'm just so busy running through life doing what I want, thinking about my stuff, thinking about what I want, being selfish, and I didn't even greet her. It just reminded me again that relationships are more important than looking at my watch, relationships are more important than getting things done.

I think if we would take this into our marriages and something happens in the midst of that that we would be more gracious when things don't go the way we expect.

Let me give you a hint. Men, are you ready for this? If your wife calls up and says, "Hey, I just got in a car accident." You don't say, "How is the car." You say, "How are you? Are you okay?" You just got to know that. Okay? Sometimes we as men are not as sensitive in relationships as we should be, so we become more interested in the things than in the people. That's a classic example of the car accident.

I would suggest probably the things that happen every day, when something happens, we tend to look at our possession and our things instead of the person. "Are you okay?" instead of looking at the damage that might have been done around us. In order to avoid the possessiveness and the selfishness, I would suggest that the word says to value people over things. If we value people over things, do you see we're setting the relationship up so it's conflict resistance. When a potential conflict comes into the picture, it's the people that are more than the solution or whatever this thing is we're trying to argue about.

But see, this is easier for Christians who are really committed to the Lord and here's why. Because as Christians this is what we're taught. Right? Things that we have are not that important. You can't take them with you to heaven, right? Relationships go with you to heaven. Your relationship with God goes with you to heaven. The Bible lives forever. There are things that last forever, but not things. You can't take them with you. So we're taught about these things that they're not important. So just as Christians before you get into a relationship, we're prepared for them because things are not important.

We just bring that idea now into relationships. We go, “Well, you know what, leaving the gas cap at the gas station isn’t that important. I don’t have to get mad at you.” Or “you didn’t buy exactly the kind of coke I wanted, so I don’t have to get mad.” It’s not the things; it’s the people that are most important in the daily interaction of life.

There’s a passage. Just look at how God is teaching us through His word through Paul’s word to Timothy where he talks about the value of things. The first line says: *Command those more rich in this present world.*

Now let’s just stop right there because I don’t want you to say, “Oh that’s not me because I’m not rich.” This week I saw statistics of what it takes to be in the 1% richest people in the world. How much do you think you have to make every year in order to be in the top 1% of the richest people in the world? Do you know what that number is if you take all the population? Do you think it’s a million dollars? Do you think it’s half a million dollars? The answer is \$32,400. If you make more than \$32,400 you’re in the top 1% of the richest people in the world. As I’m reading this, don’t write yourself off and say I’m not rich. You’re up there.

Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. And then what do you do with things? Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. You’re using things to bless people because people are more important than things.

This is not talking about relationships per say, but just bring this into a relationship and now people are more important than things. That person you’re arguing with is a person, has a soul. Maybe they’re not even a Christian. People are more important than things.

In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life. I just really like this idea of trying to develop a relationship that is conflict resistant.

Now maybe you’re in a relationship that is heavy on the conflict. Or maybe you’re one of those people that avoids conflict. There’s all kinds of people when it comes to conflict. But I want to suggest that conflict isn’t always bad because it gives us an opportunity to go deeper in our relationship and to work it through.

I think I’ve told you before that years ago when I came to New Jersey I was a pastor in a church that had four equal pastors. We were all co-equal. It’s not a good way to run a church. The church eventually died, but partly because of the way it was designed with four equal pastors. But I loved that church. For eight years I worked in that church. Ed Miller and I were both pastors at that church. Four equal pastors. Do you know what that means? It means you can’t do anything until all four of you agree. And we have very different opinions about life. We didn’t agree on a lot of things. We’re Christians, we’re committed to the Lord. We had to spend hours and hours talking about things. So many hours that it was very tedious for us to get anything done. But I tell you I grew deeper in my knowledge of Jesus Christ and my understanding of the

Bible to defend some of my positions and understand things about how we ought to lead the church. And I grew deep with those other men.

Conflict isn't bad if it can be managed well. Conflict resistance I just think is such a valuable thing in our relationship. It's defined this way because I'm sure it has to do with identity. Rather than seeing differences, disagreement, or conflict as an assault on your identity (which is the common problem), the reason I'm defending myself is because you attacked my identity. That's why I come on the way I come on. That's why I treat you the way I treat you. So now it says rather than seeing differences, disagreements, or conflict as an assault on your identity, look at it as an opportunity to put your identity into practice. Because your identity is where? Your identity is in Jesus Christ. And when your identity is in Jesus Christ, you think differently about life. It means changing habits.

When I work with a couple, if a couple comes to me for counseling, I don't do the traditional kinds of counseling – “Okay, tell me about your problems. Let's see how we can work this out.” I don't do that. If you want that kind of counseling, you have to go to somebody else. If you're coming to me for marriage counseling, we do training. I don't even have to listen to your problems. I know here's where we got to start. So we start week one, week two... We're learning how to listen, we're learning how to affirm each other, we're learning how to empathize with each other. In the course of the training a lot of the bad stuff starts to dissipate because the relationship starts to grow closer. I just think we need more training in our lives.

I'm suggesting that you want to look at this idea of being conflict resistant in your own life. It would be nice if you could do it before you get into a relationship, but most of us are in relationships now, so this is a great way to enhance those relationships to make them better so they can manage the challenges that will come. They will come into the relationship. We'll be ready for them.

This is the first part of a two-part message because Paul goes on to share it looks like four more things that will help us to be conflict resistant. So we'll pick that up next time we're together in this passage. But I hope you'll just take these three things. We could have just stopped after number one. Just take these three things, start to think about them, embrace them in your life, and watch what happens to the relationships in just a short period of time. God wants to do great things in our lives.

Of course if you don't have a relationship with Jesus Christ, that's where you want to start because He gives you this whole code of ethics of handling challenges. You want miracles to take place in your life and in the life of other people? Start by getting saved, accepting Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. That's the most important relationship you can ever have.

Let's stand and pray together.

[PRAYER] Heavenly Father, we're coming before you now and asking that you would impress on each of our hearts. Lord, I'm just asking for each person here that you'd give them some area they can work on more in their relationships. I pray for young people here today that you would bless them with these truths and encourage them to be more affirming to their parents, more

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appreciative of their parents, value people more than things. And the other way around. Parents and children, marriage relationships, friendships, business relationships. Lord, I pray that you would do some amazing things in this area of relationship that will change them. And that through all of this we'll be able to point to you and to who you are and what you're doing in our lives and how you're tying these things together. Thank you for your design of this world and our relationships. We're very grateful. In Jesus' name, amen.