

Wisdom in Conflict

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[0 : 00] All right. Well, a lot of folks out of town for Thanksgiving, no doubt, and a few in town for Thanksgiving. We're glad to have you all here. My name is Dave Nannery. I am one of the pastors here at our church, and so I have the privilege for a second week in a row of preaching to you on the subject of conflict. Not at all relevant when family gets together, right? You know, oh man.

You know, Thanksgiving is legendary for that time of year when family gets together. We enjoy one another's company. We're filled with gratitude, and we try not to be at each other's throats, right? There's something about family relationships where you grow up together. You kind of know each other's sensitivities. You have a way of kind of just pushing each other's buttons. It is a thing that happens in our closest relationships. It turns out people are difficult to live with a lot of times, and sometimes that difficult person is, you know, you. That's something that's hard there.

And so talking about conflict is very, very important, and the reality is conflict is a necessity in life. Do you really think you can ever go through life without disagreeing with anybody? Well, no, you are definitely going to reach points in your life in which you disagree with other people, and so how we engage with conflict is really important. So let me open us in, let me start by praying and asking God for our help as we open his word. Father, I thank you that we have this amazing privilege of opening these scriptures. You've not left us merely to just figure this all out over the course of generations and just find what sort of half works and fumble around, but that you have given us your revelation, your scriptures. Your son, Jesus Christ, has come and told us how we can live in a way that is good and faithful and right and pleasing to you. And Lord, you have, and Lord, I pray that you may open our eyes. Your wisdom is here. We confess we do not always see it clearly and understand it. So Lord, this morning, give us eyes to see, ears to hear, hearts to understand the wisdom that you have for us in times of conflict. And Lord God, I pray, as for me, hold me back from saying anything foolish or wrong. Whatever words are good and right and true and helpful, may they come to mind and come to heart. We ask these things in the name of your son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

We're talking about wisdom in conflict because wisdom is just an incredible necessity for life. And I'll tell you what, you almost never need wisdom more than you need it in conflict situations, right?

[3 : 00] It feels very different being in conflict with a wise person versus being in conflict with a fool. And you know this. If you, we, we, you can often tell a wise person because they're engaged and thoughtful, but also, here's the surprising thing, wise people are easy to get along with. You want to know why?

Because they know how to deal with you. They know how to respond to you in a wise and helpful way. You can solve problems together with a wise person. They know how to work with you. They know how to respond thoughtfully and well to what you're saying and doing, even if what you're saying and doing isn't the best. Conflict, the reason we find conflict so unpleasant, so difficult, so awful, is not because conflict is bad, but because of the problem of folly, the problem of foolishness. Foolishness makes conflict horrible. In Proverbs chapter 29, verse 8, we read, scoffers set a city aflame, but the wise turn away wrath. In the book of Proverbs, the worst kind of fool is called a scoffer. It's the fool of fools.

And if you want good, constructive, and rich in conflict, you need to move from being that kind of fool and move to becoming wise. You might have found you can't make other people wise, no matter how hard you try, but you can learn wisdom. If you gain wisdom in engaging in conflict, the conflict is going to go better. It doesn't mean it's going to be perfect. It doesn't mean it fixes everything, but wisdom always makes conflict better. And so I've got good news for you. In Matthew chapter 7, we are being given this wisdom in conflict because we have here the wisest man who ever lived, Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God. He has the wisdom of God. It is his very character

and his very nature. And we are going to learn today, not only the strategies that Jesus teaches us for conflict, but how these strategies show up in his own life. And so one of the things I felt was missing from last week's sermon, and I wanted it to be in this week's sermon a lot, is sometimes we approach

Jesus looking for useful things that he can deliver to us. It's as though we walk up to an apple tree and just start plucking apples from it. How much better it is to first, before you do that, stand back and just take in the whole tree and see how good it is and how beautiful it is and how wonderful it is. Only then can you really, really find how good the apples are on that tree. We are going to take time to look at how these strategies show up in the life of Christ, not merely for an example to imitate, which we do have, but I want you to see that he is good, that he is wise, and to know that in your bones, that this is our Lord and our Savior. So let's look at that wisdom of Christ. It's in Matthew chapter 7, verses 1 through 12. If you're using one of the Bibles of Russia's handout, you'll find it on page 812. Matthew 7, verses 1 through 12. And here Jesus delivers a number of, if you've been around the Bible and been in church long enough, so many of these teachings from the Sermon on the Mount are going to be familiar with you. And my hope this morning is that you grow in your depth of understanding, but that this, in a sense, feels like, yeah, this makes sense with what I know of my Lord. Here is what Jesus says.

[6 : 55] Judge not that you be not judged, for with the judgment you pronounce, you will be judged. And with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.

Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, let me take the speck out of your eye? When there is the log in your own eye, you hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye. Do not give dogs what is holy, and do not throw your pearls before pigs, lest they trample them underfoot and turn to attack you.

Ask, and it will be given to you. Seek, and you will find. Knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds. And to the one who knocks, it will be opened.

Or which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him?

So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them. For this is the law and the prophets. In these words, Jesus is teaching us three strategies that we are meant to use when we start having problems with one another. Three strategies of wisdom in conflict. And so these strategies are in turn to yield, to confront, to withdraw. To yield, confront, and withdraw.

[8 : 54] These are things you can do in a spirit-led way. These are things you can do in love and in wisdom. So let's look at each of these in order. Because there is an order to this. The first strategy of wisdom is to yield. In this strategy of yielding, we move toward others. And so what that means is this. We take responsibility for our own sin. We let go of our own demands and our own preferences and so on. And we are willing to sacrifice, willing to yield to one another. Not because we're, oh, well, I'm supposed to be nice. Not from that mentality of trying to fulfill a role and keep other people happy and appease them. And not because we're expecting good in return.

Being nice in order to get nice back from them. But because we are here to serve. This is a servant's heart to yield. And the heart of this, with a yielding heart, wants to show the grace and mercy to others that it's received itself.

The heart behind this strategy of yielding is what Jesus is talking about in verses one and two, when he says, judge not, that you be not judged. For with the judgment you pronounce, you will be judged. And with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. It's a heart that is not rushing to judge, but wants to show mercy. And that heart comes out in verses three through five, when Jesus tells us, first address the log in your own eye. Take a look at yourself first.

This is where we as Christians want to be in our relationships with one another. To be a Christian means that your heart, where your heart longs to be in your relationship with other people is you want a heart that yields to one another in conflict. Your goal in conflict is to get the relationship to that place where yielding to one another is a productive and helpful and wise and life-giving strategy. As we read in the book of Proverbs, in Proverbs chapter 25, if your enemy is hungry, give him bread to eat. If he is thirsty, give him water to drink, for you will heap burning coals on his head and the Lord will reward you.

This is the same mentality earlier in the Sermon on the Mount. And you can read it for yourself in chapter five of Matthew, where Jesus talks about not retaliating. And he talks about loving your enemies. It is this very heart that comes out. Jesus is telling us this because this is his heart. [11:48] He is not merely telling us this, you behave like this, but I'm going to be different. He's telling us this because this is the way he lived. This is the way he thought. This is what he wanted. At his core, in the very depth of his being, Jesus Christ wants to relate to you and to me in this way, to show mercy, to have compassion, to give. He wants the kind of relationship with his people in which he can move toward them and yield to their good desires. Consider the many moments in Jesus' ministry when this is exactly what he does. When you can see his heart on full display, even in Matthew chapter eight, the very next chapter, there is moment after moment after moment in which Jesus moves toward and yields to the requests of others and looks out for them. Consider Matthew eight, verses one to three, in which Jesus moves toward and yields to the plea of a man that nobody else was going to yield to. When he came down from the mountain, great crowds followed him. And behold, a leper came to him and knelt before him saying, Lord, if you will, you can make me clean.

Now keep in mind in this, you are not supposed to get anywhere near a leper. They were contaminated. They had to be kept in quarantine, often for a lifetime. They were unclean. But what does Jesus do?

Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him saying, I will be clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed. The man is saying, Lord, if you will, saying, if this is what you want, you can make me clean. And Jesus' response is, yes, that is exactly what I want. I want to move towards you. I want to place my hand on you. And I want to make you clean. That is his heart.

In verses five through seven, he approaches somebody who is an outsider. So first he approaches someone who is contaminated. Then he approaches somebody who is an outsider, a Roman, a Gentile, the kind of person that the Jews were not fans of because they were the outsiders, the oppressors.

But when he had entered Capernaum, a centurion came forward to him, appealing to him, Lord, my servant is lying paralyzed at home, suffering terribly.

[14:42] And he said to him, I will come and heal him. He offers to come and heal the man's servant.

And then in verses 14 and 15, in which he enters his disciple Peter's house. And the moment he enters his house, he's attentive to the problems that are happening in that house. He's attentive to the needs there.

When Jesus entered Peter's house, he saw. And so often Jesus, when he finds people in need, the very first thing we see Jesus do is he saw. He looks. He's attentive. He notices. He perceives. He sees. He saw his mother-in-law lying sick with a fever. He touched her hand and the fever left her. And she rose and began to serve him.

The heart of Jesus Christ again and again and again is to yield, to serve, to sacrifice, to help, to lay down his life.

[15:57] Jesus is someone who sees people, who understands them, who is moved by their plight, who longs to help them, who gives his time and energy to fulfill their good desires.

That is who he is. Did you know that that is who he is for you? For everyone who believes in him, the heart of Christ is to move towards you.

Not to shrink back in disgust and disappointment, but to move towards you with compassion and mercy. And that is who we are if we have the mind of Christ.

if we share his mentality, then our heart, by the work of his spirit, our heart is to yield, to move toward others, even when we disagree with them, even when we're fed up with them.

We confess our own sin. We aim to understand. We refrain and slow down from making judgments, just as we talked about last week.

[17:12] we show kindness and we're quick to forgive. Now, okay, maybe you're saying to me, okay, you know, okay, I get it. That's where I want to be.

And maybe that works for someone who is reasonable. Maybe that works for someone who has committed a relatively minor offense or if it's someone who just really isn't that close to me so it just doesn't get to me in the same way.

But Dave, what about people who just keep repeating over and over and over the same ugly offenses? What they're doing is really, really affecting the people around them, including me, is hurting a lot of people and they're just not changing.

They seem blind to what they're doing. What should I do then? Now, Jesus is not naive. Some people seem to think that the Christian faith is one of naivety in which we just let, we're just doormats that let other people walk all over us.

Read the Gospels and try telling me that Jesus was a doormat. Whereabouts, see, he is not a doormat. Yielding to others is his heart.

[18:33] That's where he wants to be. He knows it is your heart too if you belong to him. But Jesus knows sometimes yielding and moving towards other people isn't what they're needing in that moment.

Because sometimes all it does is enable sin and encourage sin. It just allows people to keep walking the way they're walking and even encourages them to do it.

We are not here to honor sinful and foolish behavior. And unfortunately, many of us do that. Like I know how many parents I know who in an effort to appease their children, they just honor sinful and foolish behavior that their children engage in or that other family members engage in.

And you can love your kids without honoring their behavior. We know that because that's what Jesus does. wisdom calls for you to shift to a second strategy in situations and relationships like that.

Here's a second strategy of wisdom in conflict. It is to confront. It is to move against others. And I put against in quotes because sometimes we seem to think like, well, that's an aggressive, you're there to drag them down and destroy them.

[19:51] That's not the case. Against in the sense of challenging. challenging the way they're walking. Challenging the ways that they are thinking and behaving and speaking.

We are not there to knock them down a peg and put them in their place. We are not there to make them get their just desserts to make sure they're ruined.

Vengeance is not your job. We saw that last week. That's God's job, not yours. Leave it to him.

What I mean by this is that we challenge what they're doing, saying, thinking, believing.

And Jesus portrays how to do this sort of confrontation, how to begin it. In Matthew chapter 7 verses 3 through 5, he says, why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?

Or how can you say to your brother, let me take the speck out of your eye when there is the log in your own eye? You hypocrite. First, take the log out of your own eye and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.

[21:04] Jesus is speaking with the assumption, by the way, that some of us really want to jump to the confronting really fast. That's what these first five verses are all about. It's about people who many times we just want to confront other people, just get them to behave better.

Stop it. Stop doing what you're doing. Behave in a way that makes my life easier. And Jesus wants us to slow down and not get there too fast.

That's why he's talking about first, judge not. First, move towards yield. That's your first strategy.

But he does, he does clearly admit here, there is a time to confront.

Jesus is heavily emphasizing, you really should take the speck out of your brother's eye. That speck should not be in their eye. That should not be present. What Jesus says is we go wrong in the manner in which we go about it.

We're angry, but we're not good in our anger. We easily shift from confronting to attacking. Just as we can easily shift from yielding to appeasing, we can easily shift from confronting to just attacking.

[22:20] I know how often the Proverbs warn us about the folly of attacking other people. Proverbs 18, verse 6. A fool's lips walk into a fight and his mouth invites a beating.

I love the Proverbs. They don't mince words, do they? Give you pictures here. Know how this is true. Jesus says, folly is someone who just, the moment their mouth opens, they create a fight.

And they invite a verbal beating or a physical beating, maybe, in the wrong sort of situation. And so, Jesus Christ not only tells us exactly how to begin confronting others, he models it for us.

Throughout Jesus' ministry, he encounters people that he can't just yield to. They're not wanting good things. And yielding to them just gives them exactly, it just allows them to persist in sin.

So Jesus has to confront them. Consider Matthew chapter 8, beginning in verse 18. Jesus, here, he actually challenged his people who are a little bit too eager to follow him.

[23 : 36] Now, believe it or not, Jesus, a lot of times, challenges people who say they want to follow him. They haven't counted the cost, they haven't considered what this is going to mean for their lives.

Jesus is very up front. Jesus is a bad marketer, okay? He doesn't market himself very well because he tells them what the cost is going to be up front. When Jesus saw a crowd around him, he gave orders to go over to the other side, and a scribe came up and said to him, teacher, I will follow you wherever you go.

And Jesus said to him, foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the son of man has nowhere to lay his head. Another of the disciples said to him, Lord, let me first go and bury my father.

And Jesus said to him, follow me and leave the dead to bury their own dead. Jesus understands that following him might cost people comfort and home and even family relationships.

And he is up front about that. He doesn't try to appease people and make it easier. He is straight and he confronts. In Matthew 9, verses 1 through 7, Jesus confronts the mentality of the religious teachers who are very upset at him.

[25 : 04] Notice the way Jesus starts. This is one of his early confrontations with the Pharisees in Galilee. And in these early confrontations, he confronts much more gently with pointed questions.

He makes them, and he does that because he wants them to really mull and think over the situation. Matthew 9, verse 1. Getting into a boat, he crossed over and came to his own city.

And behold, some people brought to him a paralytic lying on a bed. And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, take heart, my son, your sins are forgiven.

And behold, some of the scribes said to themselves, this man is blaspheming. But Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, why do you think evil in your hearts?

For which is easier to say, your sins are forgiven, or to say, rise and walk? But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.

[26 : 08] He then said to the paralytic, rise, pick up your bed, and go home. And he rose and went home. He's very creative in the way that he confronts people, and very wise.

But that doesn't mean people are going to respond well to confrontation, because many of these religious teachers grow more and more resistant, even as he confronts them gently, and wisely, and perfectly.

And so Jesus is not afraid to be very direct in his warnings, and we find that the longer this goes on, the more direct he gets, the more stern he gets, because he is working to get the attention of people who are badly going astray.

Consider Matthew chapter 11, in verses 20 through 24. Then he began to denounce the cities where most of his mighty works had been done, because they did not repent.

Woe to you, Chorazin, woe to you, Bethsaida, for if the mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.

[27 : 26] But I tell you, it will be more bearable on the day of judgment for Tyre and Sidon than for you. And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven?

You will be brought down to Hades, for if the mighty works done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I tell you that it will be more tolerable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom than for you.

The reason Jesus Christ confronts people is not simply to restore his honor, to get back at them, to make sure they're put down so that he looks okay again.

He is not doing this to show off or to elevate himself the way a politician or an activist might do.

Jesus is speaking in this way because his aim is to move people back to a right relationship with himself.

And he needs to let them know how serious the situation is. The way Jesus confronts others, the counselor Brad Hambrick sums it up when he says, create an environment that sets up reconciliation.

[28 : 36] reconciliation. This is your goal, even when you confront other people. Create an environment that sets up reconciliation. How do we do that?

Well, back in Matthew chapter 7, Jesus gives his log and speck teaching us to tell us how. We start with yielding. We take responsibility for our own sins.

When I counsel people who want to confront others about their sin, I usually tell them, hey, first, assess how you yourself have sinned in this situation, in this relationship.

Let's say the conflict is 90% their sin and it's 10% your sin. What you do is you own the 10% first. Sit down with them. Tell them what you did wrong, how you acted wrongly. ask if they will forgive you for it. What I usually recommend to people, it's best to separate this into two conversations.

[29 : 48] Don't try to do it all in one. Ask forgiveness in one conversation. Then follow it up with a second conversation where now you introduce to them the wrong that they have done.

This is to demonstrate, and that's important because every time I've tried to collapse this into one conversation, it always goes badly. You know why? Because the other person immediately feels, oh, you just confessed you're wrong so that you could introduce the wrong that I did.

They view it as a manipulation. Sometimes they're right. Sometimes we do that. Confess a little thing so that, okay, now I can tell you what you did wrong.

when we separate it into two conversations, that shows them that's not my heart. My heart is not just to get to you and use tactics and manipulation.

I really do want to own my own sin first. My heart is to you. I'm confronting not out of a joy but out of a necessity. Most of this time, this approach bears a lot of fruit.

[30 : 57] I remember many years ago helping a newlywed couple through a conflict that they had with the best man at their wedding. This guy, he'd abandoned some really significant responsibilities that had been given to him.

He'd behaved in some really selfish and whiny ways. Their wedding went well but there was a little bit of a stain on it because of the way he had behaved.

If I remember right, I think they'd even had to replace him as best man. because of how it went.

They want to know, what do we do now?

This is a good friend but he's behaved in some really bad ways. What I did is I had them go to him and ask forgiveness first because of their own reactions to him.

It really was a 90% him, 10% them situation. So they did that. They went to him and they sat down with him and they confessed how, you know, some of the ways they'd reacted to him.

[32 : 04] Like, you know, we were wrong in reacting to you this way, will you forgive us? The plan was to have a second conversation with him but they didn't even need to. You know why?

Because immediately he broke down and actually started crying and admitted the wrong that he had done. Sometimes our conflict situations like this, it's a little like two people standing across from each other pointing guns at each other.

And when you show that you are willing to drop your gun first by owning your own sin and showing your heart to reconcile, most people, when they see that, will be like, oh, thank God, and they drop their gun.

And there's a tremendous sense of relief. Sometimes that's what happens right away.

Sometimes repentance comes more slowly. I think it's often good to ask the other person if they need time to consider what you've told them. Give them that opportunity.

[33 : 16] Hey, if you need time to think this over what I've just said, take what time you need. sometimes when you ask to be forgiven, they're going to need time to process it and settle it in their hearts.

I've made the mistake of rushing forgiveness myself, asking someone's forgiveness when I ought to have waited and given them time to think it over. better a delayed forgiveness that is willing and complete than an immediate forgiveness that is pressured and incomplete, that is done just to appease and smooth things over.

Remember, the goal of these conversations is to reconcile. The goal is not, sometimes our goal is just to relieve our own anxieties, to get immediate results so that we feel better and now everything is taken care of.

Okay, whew. That's not our goal, just to make the anxieties go away. Our goal is reconciliation. And if that needs some time and space to do it, we're willing to give it.

When we confront other people this way with this heart, we fulfill the law of God. Leviticus chapter 19 says, you shall not hate your brother in your heart.

[34 : 36] But you shall reason frankly with your neighbor, lest you incur sin because of him. You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people.

But you shall love your neighbor as yourself. I am the Lord. In other words, you don't keep them in a little prison in your heart where you're beating them up and obsessing over them.

You don't bear a grudge. You don't indulge in bitterness. You don't look to put them in their place. But you do reason frankly with them. It may surprise you that the vast majority of our relationship problems can be reconciled when we develop a habit of first yielding and then confronting.

It is amazing what the Lord will do when you have the mind of Christ. He is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think.

God will do and yet Jesus also knows that there are rare occasions in which yielding doesn't help and confronting doesn't help no matter how wisely and how well and how lovingly and graciously you behave.

[35 : 53] Does Jesus have any wisdom for situations and relationships like that? Well, guess what? He does. because keep in mind, Jesus encounters all of these things in his life and ministry.

Sometimes, again, people, you know, back in the day, I think back when I was a kid growing up, kind of the caricature of Christianity was it was a naive religion full of do-gooding rules that didn't really work in real life.

That's ridiculous. People who think that way have never actually read Jesus' teaching. He knows people are like this. He understands conflict in a far deeper way.

He's not giving us this language because he's naive. He's giving us because he's wise and we're not. Jesus gives a third strategy for wisdom in conflict.

In this strategy, we withdraw. With a heart of wisdom and love, we move away from others. You move away from others. others. This may look like waiting for a better time to have the conversation.

[37 : 03] This may look like asking for a break when you're in the middle of a fight. This may look like letting go of a relationship that your heart is to mend but the other person is just not engaging at all.

Consider what Jesus says in Matthew chapter seven verse six. Do not give dogs what is holy and do not throw your pearls before pigs lest they trample them underfoot and turn to attack you.

We have seen the heart of Christ to yield, to move towards others. And when that doesn't work, the next strategy Jesus uses is he shifts to confronting them, to moving against them.

And finally, we are going to see here, and this surprises many people. We're going to see that Jesus is willing to withdraw. He is willing to move away from people when the other two strategies are not helping.

Consider what Jesus did when the Pharisees refused to accept his confrontation, repeatedly confronting them a little more stridently each time over the course of his encounters with them.

[38 : 19] And in Matthew 12, verses 14 through 16, we read, the Pharisees went out and conspired against him how to destroy him. So things have gotten so bad that they're now basically trying to kill him.

Jesus, aware of this, withdrew from there. And many followed him, and he healed them all, and ordered them not to make him known.

Don't run around telling everybody what I'm doing. After this, they began to play games with him.

And you'll see over the course of the ministry how many times people are trying to catch him in traps. Ask questions that are going to get him trapped and stuck. Making demands in bad faith.

And in Matthew chapter 12, verse 38 through 39, we're told, some of the scribes and Pharisees answered him, saying, teacher, we wish to see a sign from you. As though he has not been constantly doing that throughout his ministry.

[39 : 23] But he answered them, an evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it, except the sign of the prophet Jonah.

So their answer is, teacher, we want a sign from you. And his answer is, no. No. In Mark's version, Mark's account of the story, he not only says no, he gets in a boat and goes to the other side of the lake.

Literally just leaves. And when even the people of his own hometown take offense at him, we read in Matthew chapter 13, verse 58, he did not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief.

this is what was best. Not only for Jesus and his disciples. So Jesus isn't doing this out of self preservation, right?

Like some people, we want to like, oh, I'm going to set boundaries to keep, preserve myself and keep myself safe. You may have noticed as you read the gospels, Jesus is not about mere self preservation on account of he goes to the cross willingly and is crucified.

[40 : 29] crucified. So why is he doing this? If not just to protect himself from getting hurt by other people. He's doing this because it's best.

Because this is what wisdom looks like. This is what love looks like. When you're left with no other options. For the people who are treating him with such contempt. There's just no point in engaging further with them at that time.

All that was going to do was give them occasion to sin and sin and sin again. Jesus was not going to play their games. He was not going to get stuck in bad faith conversations.

He was refusing to give dogs what was holy, refusing to throw his pearls before pigs. I'm reminded of a friend from university. She had a sincere love and still does for the Lord.

She knew the gospel message well. She at the time in university had a roommate who was an atheist. And unlike many atheists this one was a scoffer.

[41 : 37] The kind of person who loved, drew joy from ridiculing her for her faith. And this roommate of hers had no interest in the gospel. And I remember telling me on at least one occasion this roommate would gather her friends in her room and then give my friend's cell phone a call.

And they would all be listening on the other end and then she would say, oh, can you share the gospel with me? And then she would start sharing the gospel and they would just be laughing at her the whole time. And ridiculing her.

Some would say that the Lord might use that message even if it is mocked. And maybe he would. Maybe he did. We don't know. But I don't think it was wise. I think the right answer, the wise answer would have been to tell that roommate, no.

Because it's giving dogs what is holy and it's throwing pearls before pigs. There's a reason Jesus told his apostles that if their gospel message was rejected they should shake the dust from their feet as they leave that house or town.

Some people are scoffers fools as the book of Proverbs says. They're fools to such an extreme degree that Jesus says they act like dogs and pigs. The counselor Brad Hambrick, he's got a really helpful article that describes the difference between dogs and pigs.

[43 : 02] Think of, when you think of a dog, don't think of like, you know, your little lap dog that's just so cuddly and warm. Think of an aggressive street dog. Grew up on the streets and it's mean.

You don't take some meat and hand it to them and try to feed them. That sort of fool is aggressive and will attack, humiliate, abuse you and lash out at you.

Such a person is not fit to yield to and not fit to confront. Neither is a pig. A pig behaves in a passive, wallowing, dismissive way. A pig will disdain your words, wallow in self-pity, play the victim, and trample everything you have to say.

Yielding to them, confronting them, doesn't make anything better. And here's the point in all this. Some of us are very quick to rush to avoiding.

To, instead of withdrawing out of wisdom and love, we just avoid. And I confess, like, that's my kind of gut. I rush too quickly to avoiding. Some of you rush too quick to attacking, the anxious type, you know.

[44 : 17] And that's why Jesus gives us these words of wisdom, because there's a way to do these things. Some of us are very quick to say, oh, dog, pig, avoid, avoid, avoid, avoid.

Notice, this is not something Jesus says we rush too. Because your heart grieves for them. Here's the thing. Where is your heart in this?

When you confront them, are you doing it from a sense of self-righteousness? And just, for me, a big warning in my heart when I'm confronting people is, do I feel invincibly righteous?

If you feel invincibly righteous when you confront someone, huge warning sign. Do not confront in that spirit that is unrighteous anger, that is self-righteousness.

How could I possibly be wrong? How horrible they are. You've got to look at the log in your own eye first. Or else you are going to approach them and just jam your finger in their eye.

[45 : 16] And then why do they get all defensive? And similarly, do you withdraw from them? Do you avoid them in the spirit of like, oh, they're dogs, pigs, don't want to deal with them, don't need to

deal with them?

No. Because Jesus, when he confronts, he does with sorrow. When he withdraws, he does it in grief. That is not his heart.

That is not where he wants to be. His heart is for the people he's engaging with. Withdrawing from a fool like this, from a scoffer, is not something you do lightly.

But for Jesus, withdrawing, it's a strategy of last resort. Things have to be very, very, very broken for him to do that.

And we can even see in the gospels at times when unexpectedly a religious teacher will kind of warm to him and say, well, teacher, you respond wisely. And that moment he's like, hey, you're not far from the kingdom of God.

[46 : 17] He is so quick to say, yes, all right, we're getting back to where we want to be. That's his heart. Often, you don't have to go full withdrawal and cutting somebody off.

You can withdraw in little ways, waiting for a better time to talk, saying, hey, can we have a bit of a time out? Like, this is getting really heated. Can we take 30 minutes, take a break, think and pray, and then let's come back and continue talking?

Sometimes, sometimes you just got to wait, like, we're going to need to come back to this tomorrow. The thing is, you actually have to come back. Otherwise, you lose trust. Sometimes, when this is a strategy I'm having to learn to use, telling someone, hey, can I think and pray over what you're saying, and then I'm going to come back at such and such a time, and let's talk again.

Sometimes you've got to arrange to leave for a set period of time. Some people are just, lose control, get verbally and physically abusive, and you've just got to be like, I'm out, I'm leaving, I'm out of here.

We're going to need to get to a place where you can respond with wisdom and grace, and we can actually have a conversation, and then we'll resume. In doing these things, we are obeying Romans 12, verse 18, where Paul says, if possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.

[47 : 48] If you can live in peace with others, do it. But Paul recognized sometimes it just doesn't depend on you. Takes two. Takes two to tango, right?

If the other person won't dance, then don't. If you think you may be in a friendship or family relationship with such a person, what I want to tell you is some people love to just handle this all by themselves and think they're doing it wisely, I can assure you that's a bad move.

It is best to get help from wise, godly friends and counselors. You're going to need help sorting out strategies of wisdom to know best how to love this kind of person in conflict.

Learning to employ these strategies, it's difficult. Pivoting between them is difficult. How do I know what to do? That's that fundamental question. You're in the middle, how do I know what to do?

We turn to the one who shows us that he has this sort of wisdom. We marvel at him. I hope you've seen as we've looked at these stories from the life of Christ and we haven't even really, I just, maybe some of my future, we can just sit down with one of these and just really take it word by word and soak it all in.

[49 : 09] Because I want you to see how good Jesus is. We do not have a Lord and a Savior who just tells us what to do. We have one who shows he knows what to do.

And he is wise and he is good. And he is simply loving other people, engaging with wisdom and conflict and then saying to us, come, follow me.

Learn from me. Walk in my ways. Walk the pathway that I walked. How good is that?

Can you take time to just step back and look at Jesus and say, he is so good. He is so wise. There is no one like this man.

Truly he is the son of God. Do you see how he yields with joy? That is his heart. It brings him joy. How he confronts with sorrow.

[50 : 18] How he withdraws with grief. Do you long to have that mind of Christ? To share his mind, his heart, and be led by his spirit.

Ask your father for this wisdom. In Matthew chapter 7, verses 7 through 11, Jesus says, Ask and it will be given to you.

Seek and you will find. Knock and it will be open to you. For everyone who asks, receives. And the one who seeks, finds.

And to the one who knocks, it will be opened. For which one of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent?

If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him?

[51 : 22] Remember the context of this. He is talking about the wisdom we need in conflict. And his answer is, you need to ask for it. You need to ask, not just, you don't need to just decide what your role and strategy is going to be and then ask for God's help in doing it.

You need to ask him, what is my role and strategy here, Lord? What's my place? What are you calling me to do? I don't even know.

We don't jump in and assume what our role is in a person's life. We ask. And when we have that servant's heart, Jesus says, your father's heart is to give generously the wisdom that you need more than you could ask or imagine.

Ask your father, father, what is my role in this person's life? Father, what is my job in this situation right here and now? What strategy would honor you?

What is your good and acceptable and perfect will, Lord? How do I yield? How do I confront? How do I withdraw from other people in love as I wish that they would do to me?

[52 : 38] What kind of strategies can be prepared? Are there wise friends, Lord, counselors, pastors that I can turn to for wisdom and perspective?

Everyone who asks these things with a humble heart receives. The one who seeks for the sake of love finds. The one who knocks with the spirit of dependence on God will find the door opened.

There is always a way of wisdom in conflict. When I say a way of wisdom, I don't mean there is always an amazing outcome that fixes everything. Well, look at the examples in Jesus' life.

He did all these things and yet people still killed Him. And yet He did it perfectly, sinlessly. How good it is to come out of the other side of conflict no matter how it turns out but to come out with a clear conscience and a sense that I did what my Father called me to do.

I was on mission. I wasn't perfect but even when I wasn't, I asked for forgiveness. And I come out with a clear conscience. Lord, I am your servant.

[53 : 59] It is your Father's heart to give such good things to those who ask Him. And so, let me conclude. Will you walk the way of wisdom in conflict or will you continue in your own ways?

The habits and patterns, the ruts you find yourself in, the ways of folly. Will you continue in that? Or will you place yourself at the feet of Jesus to learn His wisdom?

Let me pray. Our God and our Father, I thank You. You are the Lord. You are good. You are wise. We entrust ourself to You because we confess, Lord, we do not have the wisdom for life.

our thinking, our attitudes, our actions, it's corrupted.

It has been corrupted by sin. And I thank You, Lord, that by faith in You we can be saved and that You are working that all those who have entrusted themselves to You, heart and soul, to forgive them, to wash them clean, to be their righteousness when they could not be righteous, that You now take them and teach them Your wisdom.

[55 : 19] Lord, I pray, give us the mind of Christ, His mentality, what He values, what He loves. Give us His heart.

Lord God, I pray that You would do this work in us. Amen.