

Don't Waste Your Conflicts

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[0:00] The following message was given by Walt Alexander, pastor at Trinity Grace Church in Athens, Tennessee. For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us at TrinityGraceAthens.com.

! If you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth.

This is not the wisdom that comes from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder in every vile practice.

But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good works, impartial and sincere.

And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace. What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you?

[1:15] Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel.

You do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive because you ask wrongly to spend it on your passions. You adulterous people!

Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore, whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. Or do you suppose it is of no purpose that the Scripture says he yearns jealousy over the spirit that he has made to dwell in us?

But he gives more grace. Therefore, it says God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. Submit yourselves, therefore, to God.

Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

[2:23] Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord and he will exalt you.

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Please be seated. Well, it was supposed to be a restful day of hiking.

I had recently taken my first job as a pastor. Kim and I had been married for a little over a year and a half or two years, something like that. We didn't have any kids yet. And so we set aside a day to do something that we love to do together, hiking.

We were driving down the interstate in our old Camry when we had a conflict. She was cold, so she turned the temperature dial from all the way cold to over into the red.

If you know, before you had this little touch button, onto the hot side, the car began warming to her liking. All I could feel was the steam. All I could feel was the steaming lava coming from the vents.

[3:35] I was hot and rapidly getting hotter. So when she wasn't looking, I cranked the dial in the other direction.

It didn't take long for her to notice. Back and forth we went for a few moments until an all-out conflict broke loose in our 1999 Camry.

It had all the markers, the absolutes. You always, you never. It had the silence, the icy silence, the sulking, the pouting.

And sadly, as it often used to include for me, the quitting. Okay, that's it. No hike today. No happiness today.

We're going home. Now, perhaps you've never argued about the temperature dial. Perhaps you're having second thoughts about visiting this church after hearing the pastor argued about the temperature dial.

[4:37] I hope you haven't argued about it, but I have no doubt you found yourself in conflict. Conflict's a fact of everyday life.

Conflict occurs when our expectations and desires collide with that of another person. Their desires, their expectations, their wants. It begins at a young age when we're asked to share our Legos.

Or when one of our siblings uses our makeup, but it continues long after we're grown. It occurs in everyday moment when someone fails to notice the hard work we put into around the house, around the workplace, or something like that.

Or even happens when someone snubs you at the pool party. Has more distance in relating to you than you would expect. It happens in those everyday moments.

But it happens in extraordinary moments as well. When nations draw up battle lines and declare war. There is a conflict taking place.

[5:38] But conflict is not just for everyday people. Those unable to make themselves immune by money, possessions, vacations, and freedom. There ain't no house big enough or nice enough to keep conflict out.

Conflict is a problem for us all. But the problem is not just that we have conflict. The problem is we don't know how to deal with it.

Like elk who've locked horns. We get into conflict pushing and shoving. And we don't know what else to do. It's so obvious if you take a look around in our culture right now.

All the outrage, disagreement, inability to communicate. It's an inability to handle conflict. But biblically, conflict is an opportunity to glorify God, serve others, and grow to be more like Christ. If we don't waste them. This morning, that's where we're going. A little shift in the schedule. Don't waste your conflicts.

[6:52] That maybe goes against our grain. We think conflict is something we're supposed to avoid. And yet, biblically, don't waste your conflicts. We turn to some precious verses in Holy Scripture.

There's so many books on conflict resolution. But these verses are inspired by God. And get to the heart of conflict like nothing else. David Pallison says about these verses.

A wise counselor. No more accurate, profound, or thorough analysis of the dynamics of conflict has ever been written. No more hopeful and condensed description of the dynamics of peace could be written.

No more powerful promise of aid has ever been given. And these are the verses that we're attending to this morning. God is speaking and addressing us.

And these verses are for you. Whether you're having a hard time sharing your Legos. Or a hard time making it through a family dinner without an argument. These verses are for you.

[7:54] If you feel like your marriage has ran into a brick wall. And you don't know a way out. These verses are for you. If your friendships have fallen apart. And you don't know what thread to pull.

To pull them back together. These verses are for all of us. In a word where we're going. Don't waste your conflicts. Turn every conflict into an opportunity to glorify God. And grow to be more like Christ. Don't waste your conflict.

Turn every conflict into an opportunity to glorify God. And grow to be more like Christ. The first point is wasting conflicts. Wasting conflicts.

This letter is from the Apostle James. He's the brother of our Lord. How would that be? Growing up with Jesus around the house. You know. He's writing to members of the Jerusalem church.

That have been scattered by persecution. So he's writing them to address them where they are. And one of the things going on with where they are. Is they are having conflicts. The presence of conflicts is obvious.

[8:53] Look down in 4.1. What causes quarrels. And fights. He says there's war among you.

Verse 2. Again he says. There's murdering. There's fighting. There's quarreling. Now as we've said. Conflict results from a collision. When our expectations and desires collide with that of another person.

It's a collision. It's a conflict. It's a fight. It's a quarrel. Now maybe you don't like to call what happens around your house as a fight. And hopefully it's not with fisticuffs.

But even just with your words. And yet it is biblically a fight. A conflict. When the collision occurs. We have a decision to make.

How are we going to respond? The collision is unavoidable. And yet the response.

[9:50] It's not. It's so easy to stumble in the wrong direction. When conflicts occur. Whenever it occurs. One author says. Conflict is a slippery slope. Like walking across a freshly mopped floor.

Conflict tends to leave you sliding in one of the wrong directions. We often slip and stumble into attacking others or avoiding others.

We attack. We go on the offensive. The recipients of this letter had clearly been attacking. Look in verse 2. You desire and do not have.

So you murder. Now James is not pointing at bodies on the ground. James is pointing at the presence of sinful anger in the heart. Which our Lord says is no less significant and deserving of the judgment of God.

Than shooting with a gun. Anger at its roots is simply I don't like that. You know.

[10:55] That's simply what anger is. But anger often morphs into resentful thoughts. Destructive words. Out of control actions. Several months ago I was reading an article in a newspaper.

Police were called to a house in Butler County, Pennsylvania. Apparently the husband of the house of 42 years to his wife had come home after a night of drinking.

And the wife said the marriage is over. And he said if the marriage is over I'll tear down the house. Well he kept his promise and climbed into the excavator.

And began ramming the house. Ripping down nearly half the house before he could be stopped.

Now we may not have climbed in the excavator this week.

And yet we all know the wreckage of sinful anger. But not all attacking is loud. Sometimes we attack through the silent treatment.

[11:56] We attack through underhanded ways. Purposefully exchanging warmth and kindness for distance and disregard. Ever encountered someone with whom you were in conflict.

And thought of the nice thing to do. And chosen not to do it. If you haven't you're a liar. That's another problem. But you know.

That's what happens right. Right. Taking up cold sarcasm. Savoring bitterness and unforgiveness. Holding a grudge so tight the Hatfields and McCoys would give a second thought. Anger is not one size fits all. But however it works. However it looks.

Sinful anger always makes conflicts worse. So we attack. We also avoid. We cover it up. Like every good southern family. We sweep it under the rug.

[12:55] Act like it didn't happen. We look the other way. We turn a blind eye. As they say. Act like it didn't happen.

We just ignore it. Or sometimes we avoid it by retreating in fear. We don't want to speak up. We don't want to deal with it. We don't want to risk losing a friend. We don't want to rock the boat. So we run away. And we worry. And after all things always get better with worrying. Right. Still other times we withdraw in critical judgment.

So even in our avoiding. We're straying far from the Lord. You may be thinking me. Judge. No way. And yet critical judgment happens again and again. When we put a harsh construction on the actions of others. Now what I mean by harsh construction.

[13:54] Well when your husband comes home from work and doesn't immediately kiss you. Do you conclude that he's burdened from the day? Or looking at other women? Or ignoring you or something like that?

Or when you see a friend at Walmart and they barely even say hey do you conclude that they were in a hurry? Or that they must not like you?

When you hear of a gathering of friends in which you weren't invited. Do you conclude that you were maliciously struck from the list? Or it just happened to not come to mind?

See every time we draw conclusions about the motives of others by the actions alone we're committing sinful judgment. This is so important.

Every time we draw conclusions about the motives of others by their actions alone we're committing sinful judgment. We do it all the time and it's wrong. James says later do you who who made you the judge and law giver?

[14:59] It's so crucial. It rips apart relationships so quickly. Who made you to judge? Judge not that you be not judged. With the measure you judge it will be measured to you.

And so we waste it. That's how we waste conflict. We waste it by attacking. But we don't just waste it by attacking. We waste it by avoiding. Even though it might be a southern virtue it's not a biblical one.

Wasting conflict. Secondly receiving conflicts. Receiving conflict. James warns us about wasting. But how do we receive them?

How do we not waste conflict? How do we press through them? How do we benefit from them?

Well we receive conflicts by learning where conflicts come from. Look in verse 1 of chapter 4.

What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? And that is the \$64,000 question. If we could just find out who done it. If we could just find out whose fault it is.

[16 : 02] If we could just find out who started it. Then it would all make sense. But James does not say you are fighting because the other person is an imbecile. He does not say you're fighting because of your hormones.

He does not say you're fighting because the devil is attacking you. That's where conflict comes from. He does not say you're fighting because your needs are not being met. He does not say you're fighting because you have deep emotional wounds or passed down from your family or something like that.

Or because you're tired and stressed out. Or because you woke up on the wrong side of the bed. James alerts us that you are fighting because of something going on within you.

Look at what he says. It's arresting. What causes fights and quarrels among you? Such an important question. Right?

Is it not this? That your passions are at war within you? Is it not that these cravings and desires within you?

[17 : 10] When answering what's wrong with the world, the people with degrees on their walls typically swing back and forth every decade or so. They say it's nature.

It's the hard wiring. It's our chemical makeup. And so we need to be attentive to how we're made genetically and what we're predisposed to because of our genetics. Or we say that it's because of nurture.

It's because of our environment, our family background. Because we're maladjusted in some sort of way. And it's not as though nature and nurture have nothing to teach it. But when answering the question about what is wrong, why there is fighting the Bible's consistent answer, is selfish desires in our hearts.

The emphasis on desire just runs through this section. Verse 14, bitter jealousy and selfish ambition, errant desire.

Verse 16, jealousy and selfish ambition. Again, verse 1, chapter 4, your passions. Verse 2, desire. Verse 2, covet.

[18 : 16] Verse 3, your passions. What is going on? He's alerting us. The problem, the main problem is these desires. One author says, idolatry in the Old Testament often is, you know, kneeling before a piece of wood painted up to look like some god.

Well, idolatry in the New Testament is selfish desire. It's ungodly desire. So, that's why immediately James says, you idolatrous people.

Why? Because if we limit idolatry to who bows down to Baal or something like that, Ashtoreth, then we'll miss it. So, the biblical analysis is straightforward.

Why do you fight? Why do you argue? Why are you hard to get along with? You fight for one reason, because you're not getting what you want. That's why I fight, too.

You know, often when we're at loggerheads, when the horns are locked, it seems so confusing, so frustrating, so discouraging, but it's quite simple, biblically. What are you wanting that you're not getting?

[19 : 31] Now, this is not a new teaching with James. This is straight from our Lord's playbook. Jesus taught this principle powerfully. Look in Luke 6.

He says, For no good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does bad tree bear good fruit, for each tree is known by its fruit. For figs are not gathered from thorn bushes, nor are grapes picked from a bramble bush.

The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of the evil treasure produces evil. For out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks. Now, Jesus often uses familiar things to speak or to teach about unfamiliar truths, and that's what he's doing in

this passage.

He's talking about a species of tree produces a specific fruit, right? Thorn bushes do not produce figs, and so there's a species and fruit relationship, but also good trees produce good fruit. Bad trees produce bad fruit. What are you saying? There's a persistent organic relationship between a tree and its fruit, and he says the same is true of us. The good person out of his good heart produces good fruit.

[20 : 40] The bad person out of his bad heart produces bad fruit. For out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks. So you cannot say, I did not mean it, because when it comes out of your mouth, it's come from your heart.

There is this inseparable relationship. That's what he's saying. So we announce, he made me angry. And James would say, I don't know if that's the full story, you know? Or we argue, if you had been there, you would have done the same thing.

Again, that's not true biblically. Or we shout, these kids are making me crazy. But Jesus teaches us that nothing that happens to you makes you do or say anything.

Life doesn't work that way. Life doesn't flow from the outside in. Certainly, nurture and circumstantial things are temptation. They're part of what draws out.

But life flows from the inside out. Everything you say or do is an overflow of the heart. This reality landed in my life like a ton of bricks.

[21 : 44] Helping me to see the enemy within. I just felt like so many people had taught, you know, I was in school learning so many things.

And yet no one could help me understand my heart. And these truths were so important. I remember a friend explained this reality to me while holding two glasses of liquid.

One glass filled with water. The other glass filled with soda of some sort. Then he had someone push him slightly so that the liquid in both glasses spilt a bit.

Now, this is going to be Captain Obvious, but water spilt out of the glass with water. Soda spilt out of the glass with soda. And unpacking the meaning, what he was saying is the bump didn't make it water or soda.

The bump just revealed what was within. So we receive conflict by coming to grips with its source.

[22 : 53] Conflict doesn't happen to us, you know. Hit a rough patch in the marriage or something like that. Conflict doesn't work like that. It's a collision of expectations.

Conflict doesn't work like that. It reveals the overflow of our hearts. So we receive conflict by asking ourselves, what am I wanting right now that I'm not getting?

After learning that conflict comes from within, we receive it by honestly assessing ourselves first.

That's what our Lord taught, right?

Why do you see the speck that is in your neighbor's eye, but you don't notice the log in your own eye? How can you see the speck that's in his eye and not notice the log in your own eye?

Why you hypocrite? Take the log out and then you might be able to see the speck. What's going on there biblically? Well, he's alerting us to a real change in perception, but also to a change of priority.

[23 : 50] Conflict begins with an honest look in the mirror. An honest assessment of our hearts, ourselves, our contribution. It takes two proud people to tango, but it only takes one humble person to solve most conflicts.

We're only looking for one humble person. And most conflicts come to a quick end. These truths can be truly life-changing if you put them into play.

It'll change the way we look at others when we realize the enemy within us. It'll change the way we view others in conflict. Listen to this quote from Jonathan Edwards. I find this so helpful.

He says, The humble Christian is more apt to find fault with his own pride than with other men's.

He's more apt to find fault with his own pride than with other men's pride.

He's apt to put the best construction on others' words and behavior and to think that none are so proud as himself. But the proud hypocrite is quick to discern the mote in his brother's eye in this respect while he sees nothing of the being in his own.

[25 : 04] You see, it changes. Understanding this changes the way we view other people. Instead of the harshest construction, we put the best construction. It changes who we look to for who's at fault, you know.

If we scan the last 24 hours, the last seven days, whose faults are foremost in your mind? It changes the way we respond in conflict, more willing to find fault with ourselves than with others.

After all, we know the selfishness of our own hearts, but don't notice that of others. And I think in a wonderful way, in a local church like this, it should leave us just easy to talk to, open, welcoming. I remember hearing recently of a man going to his community group and announcing, one of my friends said to me, it's time to grow up, and I want you all to know.

And I just love that, just announcing out loud, this was a bit of reproof I received, and I want your help. That's what we should be. If we know this, then we shouldn't be difficult to reason with.

[26:17] But it begs the question, do people walk on eggshells around you? Are people paranoid about having the best moment to speak into your life?

Do people tell you the truth? If not, you're in grave danger.

Firstly, because you're missing what's going on. God wants to help you and work in your life.

Thirdly, redeeming conflicts.

So, wasting conflicts, receiving conflicts, redeeming conflict. Wasting, receiving, redeeming. How do we redeem these conflicts?

If conflicts are a fact of everyday life, if they come from our hearts, then what do we do? How do we redeem these conflicts? And I just find it so striking. If you look down, look down in chapter 4.

[27:19] You see the context. He's alerting them to what is going on. He's alerting them to this enemy within. He's alerting them. Stop pointing out. Stop blaming all the people around you.

Be awakened to what's going on in your heart. But look at verse 6. He said, Those words just jump off the page. Why? Because God's grace is greater than our sin.

When selfish, angry, bitter, harsh, vindictive, critically judging, selfishly withdrawing, sinners turn to Him. God does not give what we deserve. He gives the good stuff.

And that's what's underlined in these verses. He gives more grace. He gives grace to the humble. It says, Draw near to God.

He will draw near to you. Verse 10. Humble yourself before the Lord. He will exalt you. And I so believe you might have arrived here this morning in one of those jams.

[28:18] You know? In one of these situations where you see no way out. I want to hear these words. God gives more grace. How do we redeem conflict?

By awakening to what God is doing. The grace of God. Isn't it His kindness that leads to repentance? And so that's what He holds out for us in these verses.

How do we redeem conflict? We thank God. Biblically, a sign of God's judgment is when He gives you over to what you want.

So when there's a collision that keeps you from getting what you want, you have God to thank. Imagine that.

If you put that into play. Thank you, God, for not giving me what I want. Fight breaks out at dinner. Not that that would happen this week.

[29:22] Dinner table. All up in arms. All I want is peace. God, thank you for giving me something more than what I want.

Thank you for continuing to work in my life. I don't know how many conflicts have rescued me from going over the edge. Over the cliff, so to speak.

God's brought order back to my life. Thank God. Confess specifically. Now, sometimes we say, I'm so sorry, babe, for that thing that happened back there a few minutes ago.

You know, as if this just amorphous thing took us over and that's our confession and we're supposed to move on and, you know, let it all go. Like something like that. That's not what's going on here.

These verses urge us to take confession seriously. You saw it. This language almost doesn't seem like it fits in the New Testament. Resist the devil. Cleanse your hands, you sinners. You know, purify your hearts, you double-minded, be wretched, mourn.

[30:19] And we, what he's saying, take confession seriously. Sin is not an aberration in our character. Sin is rebellion against God.

Sin is not an aberration in our character. So instead of being general, confess specifically. I'm sorry, babe. I was irritated when you asked me to help with the dishes.

I wanted my own comfort. My own ease more than that. Wanted to sit and watch the game or something like that. And confess specifically.

Confess your own sin too. You know, your hands, your hearts. You know, sometimes we, I call it repenting with your finger pointed. You know, you say, I'm so sorry.

I was irritated when you jumped into my face and yelled at me harshly. Okay. Who's confessing here? Why do you confess sin?

[31:22] Specifically. I think he who's forgiven much loves much. Makes you aware of the grace of God. Make peace quickly. Matthew 5 says, leave your gift at the altar and go to your brother if you have something against him or he has something against you.

Ephesians 5 says, don't let the sun go down on your anger. 1 Corinthians 13 says, love keeps no record of wrongs. So if we're not to keep a record, we should go to our brother or sister quickly. Why?

Because the longer we wait, the longer it is to make peace. It doesn't feel good to go make peace. I have never once in 25 years of being a Christian felt the joy of repentance before repentance.

I always hate it. Please forgive me. Had to do it this morning. You know, window into our Sunday mornings. It's just sin everywhere. Not everywhere. Grace of God's even more present.

But repenting. Ah, I want to obey even when I don't want to obey. Because I want to encounter the grace of God.

[32:25] John Erskine says, divisions like diseases when neglected in their first beginnings become incurable. How does cancer become incurable? Not at the first outbreak.

Because it's become malignant. Because it's grown. So too, you know. This is so important. You might need to go to somebody today. You might need to go and patch something up with somebody today.

You might need to go humble yourself. What better way to redeem the day than that? Forbear with little offenses eagerly.

You know, we should look over little things. We should look over little things. Like differences in personality. Or preferences or desires that can be easily overlooked. Many of the things we get worked up about in a family or in a relationship.

It's straight from this, you know. He leaves his socks on the floor. She takes too long to respond to text. He smacks his lips when he eats. She's a blanket hog. Or something like that. There's so many different things.

[33:32] She laughs too loud. Or whatever. There's all these little things. And we should overlook little things. We also should overlook little offenses. You know, if you think, on the one hand, there's no little offense.

Every offense is worthy of the judgment of God. And yet, in a relationship, sins out of the ordinary are little offenses. Sins of lesser importance.

What I mean by that is in our relationships, we want to be very concerned about pride and selfishness, selfish ambition. But maybe a little irritability.

We can look over. You know? Because we're trying to avoid being a nitpicker. A judge. And so we can overlook far more.

And then when the big ones pop up, we say, let's talk, man. Let's talk through this. Forbear with the little ones, forgive bigger offenses continually.

[34:33] The number one marriage killer is not incompatibility. It's unforgiveness. You could probably argue the number one relationship killer is unforgiveness.

The fact is, as long as we're in the world, we've got to sin. Daniel said, we won't be freed until we're seeing the Lord face to face. And that means we're going to be sinned against.

It means we're going to sin against others. We're going to be sinned against. But that's not why I say forgive continually. I say because we forgive continually because I think forgiveness is misunderstood. Sometimes we think forgiving equals forgetting is biblical.

It's not biblical. It's nowhere in the Bible. Forgiveness means continually choosing to not remember and hold the sins of others against them.

That's why we take great comfort in the Lord saying, I will remember your sins no more. We're not hoping that the Lord somehow loses his omniscience. That's not our hope that he forgets.

[35:35] What our hope is, is that when he remembers, he chooses to remember Christ and to not hold these sins against us. So we're called to forgive continually.

Not one time fits all or one time, one point in time. But to forgive continually because we're called to imitate God. And so we, again and again, when we're sinned against, we're reminded of the ways we're sinned against in a relationship, in a marriage, or something like that.

We're choosing to remember the work of Jesus Christ. To remember that confession. To remember that repentance. And not hold their sin against them any longer.

We're choosing to remember in so many ways how much we've been forgiven. Every time we face conflict, we're given an opportunity to compare again the difference between their sins against us and our sins against God.

That's the invitation. That's a great opportunity. What are you going to dwell on? Are you going to dwell on their sins against you or your sins against Almighty God? How many times have we failed Him?

[36:46] How many times have we stiffened our necks? How many times have we rejected His command? And yet, He's never failed to chase us down and forgive us.

To extend grace and mercy and help in our time of need to forgive us. And that's the privilege we have. That's what I offer you this morning.

I offer you real forgiveness. A final deliverance. You know, there's two words used for forgiveness in the New Testament. One means to just treat graciously.

Treat overwhelmingly and kindly. That's a wonderful thing. The other means to set the... To relieve the debt. Forgive one another's their debts, even as your Heavenly Father has forgiven your debts. What does that mean? You know what forgiveness is? It's the release from prison. That's what it is. It's handing you the keys.

[37:48] You know, we even think about this. The way we understand forgiveness and don't extend it, that you go into the doghouse, right? What does that mean? You're going back into prison. We put the people back in prison when we practice unforgiveness with them. But God does not put us back into the prison.

He gives more grace. That's what these verses are alert to. That's what we get to extend. That's what I offer to you. Repent and receive forgiveness from Almighty God.

I don't care how the relationships are. God is offering true forgiveness. True deliverance through His gospel.

To His ransom pay. I had a number of points in there.

We'll put them in the email if you want to look at them again. Sixty, in this little sub-point. Pursue trust again. Why is that in there?

[38:48] Sometimes I think we stop at forgiveness. Yeah, I forgive you, but don't you come around here no more. You know? That's not forgiveness. It doesn't mean you throw caution to win.

You're not wise. But it does mean no matter, particularly in the church, no matter how much you've been burned, you have a responsibility to be leaning forward in trust.

Why? Because the grace of God that saves us also transforms us. The person that sinned against you is changing. And you get the opportunity of giving trust again to Him.

So don't waste your conflicts. They're coming this week. I mean, I was writing this message. I don't know how many conflicts I found myself in. Whether they were all internal or more than a few were outside.

You know, it was supposed to be a restful day of hiking for Kim and me. We turned our little Camry around and said, that's it. No more hiking. No more happiness.

[39:56] In God's mercy, after turning the car around, Kim and I called a dear friend of ours. And we drove over to their house. And said, hey, we can't even drive down the interstate together.

Would you help us? And, man, tell you what. I think two things we learned firsthand that day. Is that God gives grace to us when we humble ourselves in conflict.

And I think by God's grace, that's been something we tried to apply. Lord, we're just going to go wherever we need to go to humble ourselves. Because we believe God gives grace to humble.

The second thing we learned is God gives even more grace to us when we ask for others to help us in conflict. And I just want to urge you.

This is on my heart. These verses are on my heart this week. Let's don't waste these as a church, you know. I mean, familiarity breeds contempt.

[41:03] You know, we're eight years or close to eight years in. You know all my words. I know yours, too. That's the problem. You know, it goes both ways. You know, you go both directions on this street. And yet, so we have a responsibility.

Why do we see those things? God's entrusted us to them. Not to nitpick, but to help one another grow to be more like Christ. If we steward this as a church, we won't be the only thing going on in

town.

But God, by his grace, would use this church. If we don't steward these things, he'll snuff us out. Just like everything else. Every other church that turns against him. We have an awesome privilege to do that together.

To continue to pursue unity and love. Make every effort. Maintain the unity of the spirit and the bond of peace. To not waste our conflicts. So I would. Today may be the day.

But if not today, I think tomorrow you'll have an opportunity to not waste. Let's press on together. Father in heaven, we thank you. We humble ourselves before you. We give you thanks for your word.

[42:01] And we thank you for how relevant it is to our lives. And Lord, I pray that you would give grace.

Lord, we want to humble ourselves before you. I pray for every individual in this room. Every marriage. Every family. Every household.

Every friendship. Every community group. Every serving team. Every disappointment. Relationally. Every ongoing conflict.

Every nagging frustration. I pray, God, that you would give light. That you would lead us. Out of this. What can so often be a debilitating, discouraging darkness. Into the walking in the light. Lord, your word says. If we walk in the light as you are in the light. We have fellowship with Jesus Christ and the blood.

[43:00] His blood covers us of all our sins. And so we want to walk. Help us, God. I pray for our church. I pray that you would help us. I pray that you continue your work in us. We thank you, God, that this is not our church.

Not my church. Not the church of any individual in this room. This is the Lord's church. And you said, I will build my church. The gates of hell won't prevail against it. We pray you continue that work. Deep work, we pray.

Knitting us together. Helping us walk together. In the fear of the Lord and the comfort of the Spirit, we pray in Christ's name. Amen. Amen. You've been listening to a message given by Walt Alexander, pastor at Trinity Grace Church in Athens, Tennessee.

For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us online at trinitygraceathens.com. Thank you.