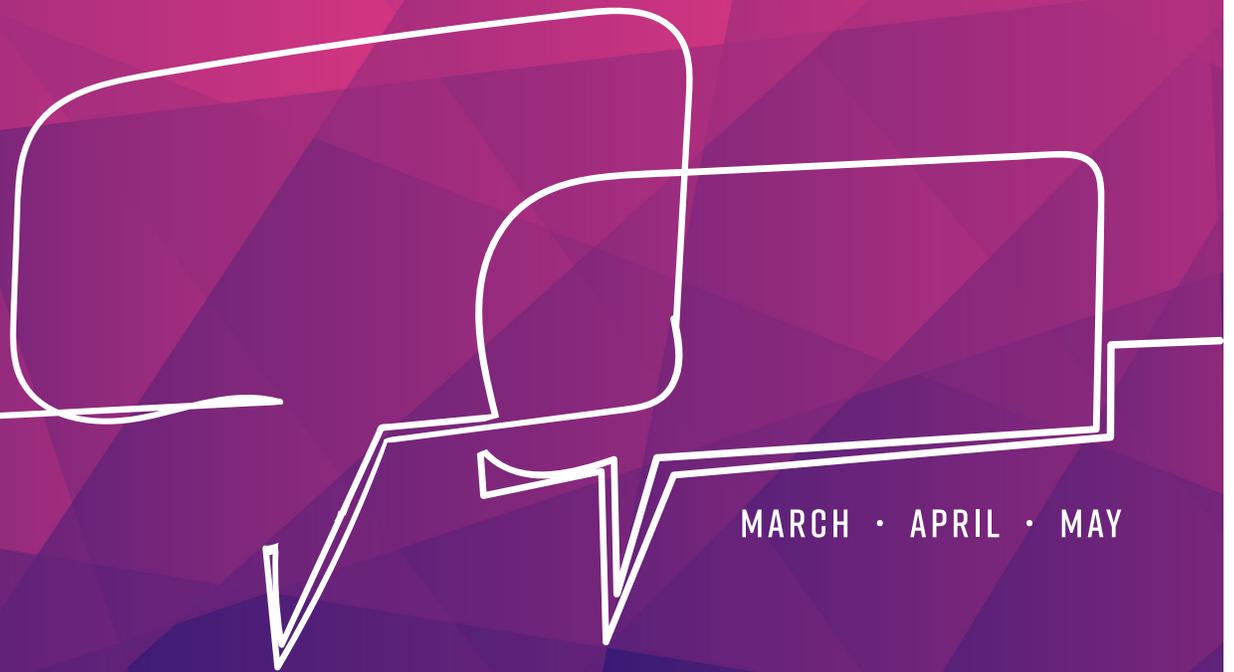


EXTRA DISCUSSION MATERIALS



MARCH • APRIL • MAY

90-DAY

PEACEMAKING CHALLENGE

EXTRA BIBLE STUDIES: REHOBAM

SETTING THE STAGE

King Solomon has died, and appointed his son, Rehoboam, as king. Tensions are high among the tribes of Israel because Solomon had conscripted thousands of Israelites for his building projects and wore them down. The people want to know if Rehoboam is going to be like his father in this regard.

Read 1 Kings 12:1-5

1. What is the blossoming conflict? Who initiated the discussion?
2. Why was Rehoboam prudent not to give them an answer right away?
3. What are Rehoboam's legitimate interests? What are the interests of the ten tribes?
4. Why is it wise to step back and give yourself time to think when you see conflict brewing?

GETTING ADVICE...

Read 1 Kings 12:6-15.

1. Why do you think Rehoboam went to two different sets of advisors?
2. What did the two views represent?
3. How did the advice of the elders address everyone's interests?
4. How did the advice of the young men only address Rehoboam's interests?
5. What was Rehoboam's final decision?
6. Where would you go for counsel when facing a conflict?
7. How do you discern between wise and foolish advice?

THE KINGDOM DIVIDED

Read 1 Kings 12:16-24.

1. How did the ten tribes respond to their legitimate interests being ignored?
2. Did the ten tribes sin in splitting from their King, or were they exercising their legitimate rights? Explain.
3. How did God demonstrate His sovereignty in the middle of this conflict?
4. What are the dangers of ignoring what is important to the person with whom you are in conflict?

WHAT HAPPENED NEXT...

Read 1 Kings 12:25-33.

1. Why do people seem to drift from God when conflict is handled poorly?
2. Why is it important to make what God wants the top priority in conflict resolution?
3. How have you seen conflict end badly? How did it end up affecting you?

EXTRA BIBLE STUDIES: IDOLS

An idol is: *anything other than God that we trust to make us happy or secure*. Anger is a signal that an idol is being poked. Some common idols include: peace and quiet, obedient children, respectful co-workers, financial security, a good reputation, etc.

HOW DOES AN IDOL WORK?

1. Discuss the following path of desires becoming idols.
 - **Desire:** *I really would like to have...* (Psalm 37:4) All idols begin with desire. This desire can be for anything – even something good and healthy!
 - **Demand:** *I must have...* (James 4:1) A desire can quickly change into a demand (*I need*). I now view the thing I want as absolutely essential.
 - **Disappointment:** *You did not give me my desires...* (Genesis 4:6-7) Demand leads to disappointment (*You didn't!*). Much of our disappointment in relationships is not because people have actually wronged us, but because they have failed to give us what we want.
 - **Judgement:** *Because you did not give me my desires, you are...* (Romans 14:10) Frustrated at not receiving my desire, I judge, condemn, and reject those who haven't given me what I want.
 - **Punishment:** *Because you didn't, I will...* (Romans 12:19) I am hurt and angry and strike back. Examples: angry words, gossip, "giving the cold shoulder," etc.
2. What red flags could you look for in your thoughts, words, and actions to stop it from happening?

HOW DO I LOOK FOR IDOLS IN MY LIFE?

1. Reflect individually on the following "X-Ray Questions":
 - *What do you fear? What do you tend to worry about? What do you believe would bring you the greatest pain or misery?*
 - *What do you want? What do you believe would bring you the greatest pleasure, happiness, and delight?*
 - *What would you sin to obtain or sin if it's denied?*
 - *Have you ever "stretched" the truth in arguing for your desire (or against someone else's)?*
2. If you feel comfortable, discuss some of these questions with the group.

3. Where do you perhaps have the beginning of an idol in your life?
4. What can you do to put that desire back in its right place?
5. How could a friend or spouse help and support you in examining and fighting your idols?

HOW DO I DEAL WITH AN IDOL IN MY HEART?

1. Think about the following steps:
 - Repent and confess, and trust God for everything you need (Acts 3:19).
 - Replace idol worship with worship of God (Psalm 37:4).

This is easier said than done. Our hearts are idol factories – always finding new things to love, have, and worship. Consider driving out “little loves” with a “big love” (i.e. a growing love for God will force out the idols in our hearts).

2. How can you focus on God instead of desires that threaten to grow into idols?
3. What will “getting real” or acknowledging our contribution to a problem do to the “idols” in our hearts that might be pushing us towards conflict?
4. Despite the initial discomfort, why is acknowledging our contribution to a conflict such an emotionally freeing thing to do?
5. Reflect on the following statement: *In a conflict, what we need is a mirror (to examine ourselves), but we tend to grab a microscope (to examine others).*

EXTRA BIBLE STUDIES: **CONFESSIONS**

PAUL

Read Romans 7:15-25.

1. What seemed to be a constant tension in Paul's heart?
2. In what sense does Paul acknowledge his inability to deal with this tension, at least under his own power?
3. What role does the Holy Spirit play when it comes to genuine repentance?
4. What are some of the consistent tensions with which you struggle? How might you be able to overcome those challenges by the power of the Holy Spirit?

DAVID

Read Psalm 51.

1. What are all the requests that David makes of God in this psalm?
2. What is David willing to acknowledge?
3. In what sense is sinning against others really sinning against God?
4. **PERSONAL TAKE-HOME:** Rewrite this psalm with your own transgressions in mind.

EXTRA BIBLE STUDIES: **TAKING RESPONSIBILITY**

ADAM AND EVE

Read Genesis 3:8-13.

1. Why do you think Adam and Eve tried to hide from God after they sinned? Why did that prove to be futile?
2. Whom did Adam blame for his sin? How did he try to put some of that responsibility on God? Why does that never work?
3. Whom did Eve try to blame for her sin? Even though she was tempted and deceived by an outside influence, was she still morally responsible for acting on that temptation? Explain.
4. In what ways have you tried to hide from God after you've sinned? Does it work?

CAIN AND ABEL

Read Genesis 4:3-10.

1. How did God try to warn Cain about the power of sin lurking at the door of his heart?
2. How do we know that Cain ignored God's warning? What might have been different if Cain had taken God seriously?
3. How did Cain try to deflect attention away from his responsibility for murdering his brother? What evidence did God present to refute Cain's claims?
4. What evidence might God present in response to our attempts to deflect responsibility for our damaging words and actions?
5. What is a better response when you are confronted with your responsibility in a conflict?

THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS

Read Luke 16:19-31.

1. What was the rich man's sin?
2. Why do you think the rich man never addressed Lazarus, but only Abraham? In what sense was the rich man still treating Lazarus as if the former beggar was "below" him?
3. What is striking about the rich man's complete lack of remorse, even in his state of torment?
4. Is it possible that there dwells within us certain insensitivities to which we are unaware?
5. Have you ever been suddenly made aware of an unconscious attitude of judgement or insensitivity against something? How did you react?
6. How could we become more aware of these perspectives in us? Who could you ask to help root them out?

EXTRA BIBLE STUDIES: FINDING LASTING SOLUTIONS

NEGLECT

Read Acts 6:1.

1. What was the complaint that the Hellenists had against the Hebrews?
2. Why do you think the Hellenist widows were being neglected?
3. What dark motives might the Hellenists be attributing to the Hebrews?
4. Why is it common to assign selfish motives to people with whom we may be in conflict? What often drives that tendency?

DELEGATION

Read Acts 6:2-4.

1. How did the apostles respond to the complaint?
2. Why did the apostles see the need to delegate this responsibility to someone else?
3. What were the qualifications and characteristics of the people to be chosen who would address the problem?
4. If you were to delegate an important responsibility to someone, what characteristics would you want that person to have?

QUALIFICATIONS

Read Acts 6:5-6.

1. How did everyone seem to express their enthusiasm for the apostles' solution?
2. Who did they end up choosing for the task? What can we assume about these men?
3. How did the apostles clearly communicate that they were delegating their authority to these seven men who were chosen for this task?

4. As reflected in the dispute between the Hellenists and the Hebrews, what are the characteristics of an effective biblical resolution to conflict?

RESULTS

Read Acts 6:7.

1. How did the resolution to this problem prove to be effective?
2. What happens in the kingdom of God when conflict is addressed well and resolved?
3. What kind of simmering conflicts might be preventing growth in your circle of influence?
4. How can you effectively address those challenges?