

Jacob's Well

Lesson Title: Conflict—You Are the Problem



Key Concept: Conflict is inevitable, but as disciples of Jesus we are called to handle it differently. When there is a pattern of conflict in our lives, it is our responsibility to get to the heart of the matter.



Scriptures:

“There is one more man who could consult the Lord for us, but I hate him. He never prophesies anything but trouble for me! His name is Micaiah.”

(1 Kings 22:8 *New Living Translation*)

Everything is pure to those whose hearts are pure. But nothing is pure to those who are corrupt and unbelieving.

(Titus 1:15 *New Living Translation*)

Context Scriptures: Genesis 3:12; Exodus 32:22–24; Deuteronomy 3:26; 1 Samuel 15:15; Ezekiel 36:26



Lesson Thoughts:

Life circumstances and experiences have scarred us all. Those hurtful wounds leave some of us struggling with internal conflict: we are not okay with ourselves. One way of coping with this conflict is to blame others instead of looking inward and being honest about the source of conflict.

Consider the person who battles insecurity and always sees others as a threat, assuming bad intentions from innocent interactions. Or consider the liar who automatically sees others as dishonest. When facing consequences, the person who refuses to see their bad behavior paints the agent of truth as the “bad guy.” This was the case with King Ahab in his interactions with the prophets Micaiah and Elijah. Ahab consistently wrought wickedness in Israel, which led to ominous prophesies about him. These prophesies led Ahab to exclaim, “He never prophesies anything but trouble for me!” Ahab failed to mention his wrongs:

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marrying the wicked Jezebel, introducing the worship of Baal into Israel, and throwing a tantrum over Nabal's vineyard that led to Nabal's murder. The problem wasn't the prophets; the problem was Ahab.

In psychology, "projecting" is a defense mechanism where someone attributes the problem they have to others. Think of that person who is always displeased with the waitstaff, or always finds themselves in arguments, or just can't keep a job. It's always the poor service, the other person is always wrong, and it's always the employer's fault. It's never them; it's always the other. These types of recurring situations are telltale signs of a person dealing with internal conflict. It may be different people, different locations, and different scenarios, but the common factor is always one person. Ahab could have moved away from everything and everyone he knew, and he would have encountered "Micaiahs" of different names, because he could never escape *himself*.

Pure hearts see decent actions, and corrupt hearts see crooked actions, because our inner condition affects what we see. It's clear why God wants to give us a new heart and a new spirit (Ezekiel 36:26). They are needed to heal and transform our innermost being and make us right with one another. For this to happen, however, we must be honest about ourselves and allow God—and when necessary, mental health professionals—to help us. And the signs that we need help are obvious. Consistent conflict with others, especially in unconnected situations, is an indicator that the problem is not others; the problem is you!

**Discussion Questions:**

- 1) Who in the Bible, besides King Ahab, shifted blame to others?
- 2) Has destructive conflict followed you (or someone you know) consistently? If so, could you/they be the problem? How can you know?
- 3) Why do you think it's so difficult for us to deal with ourselves and get help?
- 4) How does not addressing internal conflict affect our relationship with God?
- 5) How should we respond to someone who is projecting their issues on us?

Next Lesson: Remaining Christian in Conflict

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Notes and Reflections

- 1) Think about yourself (if you can see it) or someone you know who refuses to see their part in destructive conflicts. Consider why the lack of insight.

- 2) What type of past experiences can condition us to not accept blame and be accountable for our wrongs?

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Notes and Reflections, cont.