

How we want to deal with conflict at WCBC

Rules for family living

Proposition: its possible to live in unity with each other IF... we relate to each other God's way.

In 1994 John Bevere published a book called "The Bait of Satan". In my opinion it is the most prophetic book written in the last 30 years and I say that because it interprets accurately what is happening all over the western church.

Luke 17:1 Then He said to the disciples, "It is impossible that no offenses should come,

Jesus said that in the church, in the body of Christ, it is impossible that offences will not come. People will hurt you. In fact, John Bevere says that a sign of the last days is that people will take offence and their love for fellowship and the body of Christ would grow cold. Ie people will start saying I believe in Jesus but I don't like His bride – the church, and they will start leaving church's in droves. The number of people, even in NZ who say they are Christians but won't go to church is staggering. And for many of them the stories of how badly they have been treated are true and so sad.

But Jesus said that it is impossible that no offences should come.

Matthew quoting Jesus prophetic words about the end times records

Matthew 24:10-13

¹⁰ And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. ¹¹ Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. ¹² And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. ¹³ But he who endures to the end shall be saved.

Again Jesus expected conflict and people to hurt each other within the church and so He gave this instruction in

Matthew 18:15-17

¹⁵ If one of my followers sins against you, go and point out what was wrong. But do it in private, just between the two of you. If that person listens, you have won back a follower. ¹⁶ But if that one refuses to listen, take along one or two others. The Scriptures teach that every complaint must be proven true by two or more witnesses. ¹⁷ If the follower refuses to listen to them, report treated like an unbeliever or a tax collector.

report the matter to the church. Anyone who refuses to listen to the church must be treated like an unbeliever or a tax collector.^[b]

Now Satan knows that a church that is free from criticism, a church that is free from gossip, a church that where its members are committed to each other is a church where the blessings and the Power of God will flow and so his tactic is to divide and conquer. And Satan is most effective when we perceive that someone in the church has hurt us and we take offence, that offence then festers and becomes forgiveness, that forgiveness festers and becomes bitterness and if the offence is against a pastor or elder that bitterness may also open up a person to a critical spirit and the jezebellic spirit.

Satan's bait, his way of tempting us to be divided and conquered is to bait us with offence.

Here's how he works.

I recall a time in Taupo, Juliette and I were at a fair. We were going to the local apostolic church and our pastor was there with his wife. As we passed each other and smiled, the pastor asked, how are you guys. Juliette said "my dad just died." To which he replied oh, that's good have a great day.

Right then, Satan pulled out his fishing rod and waved it in front of our noses. Take the bait, get hurt, grumble about the pastor. I admit we were a bit stunned but we loved this guy, he was busy, he really wasn't focused on us. He didn't take it in nor came to visit Juliette. Not the ideal, but we didn't take the bait, we talked about him and prayed for him and continued to support him.

The first day that Juliette and I visited this church, only Turbo knew we were coming and he wasn't here. We asked if we could sit in the church together and pray. The bulk of the people we met that day, who just thought we were strangers from the community, were very unwelcoming and suspicious of us. We could have taken offence. It was not a pleasant experience and I think there have been others who have been through the same thing when coming here.

Some times in a church, unless you are in a small group, its quite possible for people to not know the awful season you are going through. Maybe Marion and I never hear what is happening. And you begin to wonder, where is my church, church is meant to be a family. And Satan dangles his baited hook in front of your nose. Take the bait, take the bait... and we have a choice.

Respond according to the flesh, ie do what is natural or respond according to the Word. Keep loving Jesus and His bride.

Sometimes at church you may be feeling low and no one seems to notice, maybe the guy at the door shook everyone else's hand but not yours. Maybe you shared your views at a meeting and it seemed that no one listens. Right then at that time, old hairy legs come's back and dangles the bait in front of you, take the bait, bite it, get into it. These people aren't good enough, find a perfect church or just get out of church they are all hypocrites, take it, take it..

What do you do in those situations.

Firstly, let me say there are perceived offences and serious offences.

1. A perceived offence.

In the examples I have just listed, people didn't meet our expectations and we find ourselves questioning their motives and we felt offended. Offences that are perceived and not intended are the bait of Satan. You can be a peacemaker and try to work things out biblically or you can take offence and let your love for God's other children grow cold.

The antidote for a perceived offence is to live the agape way.

Normally in life you expect to be thanked when you do a good job or help someone else out. But God's way is to serve and help without expecting any acknowledgement, because your motivation is not recognition or rewards, but Godly love.

The mature Christian says "because He loves me, I choose, no matter how dysfunctional I might perceive you to be, I choose to love you and serve you. Jesus said in

Matt 5:44.. "For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not tax collectors do the same?"

As mature Christians, we love, we give, we serve, without criticizing others or expecting anything back. We do it because He first loved us. His love fills us so we can keep on loving no matter what others do or don't do.

Matt 20:26-28 "Whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant ... just as the Son of man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

2. A Serious offence.

A serious offence is not when you think they might have an attitude toward you or you guess they don't care but when you know another person is out to get you, it's obvious. What then?

The example John Bevere gives is young David in his relating to King Saul.

King Saul openly abused David, and tried to kill him overtly many times and yet David chose to forgive his leader and to honour King Saul.

Joseph was unjustly sold as a slave, made to serve as a slave for 10 years and then was unjustly accused of rape and thrown into a real prison. Then he was unjustly forgotten for two years by a man who he had helped, before Pharaoh makes David the second in charge of all Egypt. I am sure you know the story.

If we look at David and Joseph and especially Jesus we realize that two things helped these men to forgive and maintain the right attitudes throughout their suffering.

The antidote for a serious offence is to

a) Know the call of God on your life

b) Know the consequences of not forgiving

Young David knew the call of God on his life and so when Saul continually tried to kill him he did not try to take revenge or on Saul or seize the throne, David just forgave again and again and waited for God's timing.

Jesus was wrongly accused of so many things however you don't see Jesus defending himself or getting hurt. He could see the big picture and so he forgives and forgives and forgives with a view to His divine purposes being fulfilled.

All the great people of faith knew the consequences of not forgiving. They knew that if they took the bait and offence became criticism and criticism became bitterness, they would be robbed of life and life in all its fullness. They knew that their minds would become twisted and their perception of others coloured.

They also knew the warnings of scripture that if we don't forgive people around you then it would have a profoundly damaging impact on your personal relationship to God. The results of forgiveness eternally are potentially terrifying.

So don't take the Bait of Satan. Be mature. Just keep loving people whether they deserve it or not, just as God continues to love you whether you deserve it or not.

So if someone hurts us just keep forgiving. Tell God alone about what they have done.

And if you know you have hurt someone else Romans 14:19 says that we should approach them and ask them to forgive us.

But what if they are sinning? What if they are doing things and teaching things that are not Christian? What then?

Matthew 18:15-17

¹⁵ If one of my followers sins against you, go and point out what was wrong. But do it in private, just between the two of you. If that person listens, you have won back a follower. ¹⁶ But if that one refuses to listen, take along one or two others. The Scriptures teach that every complaint must be proven true by two or more witnesses. ¹⁷ If the follower refuses to listen to them, report treated like an unbeliever or a tax collector.

Let's imagine that I stood up here next week and preached a heresy. Maybe I preach that there is another way to connect to God other than through His son Jesus. What should you do first?

When you think your brother or sister are sinning what options are open to you?

- a) Get my prayer partner or spouse to pray with me for them**
- b) Tell an elder or the pastor how I am hurt and what my concerns are**
- c) Send the person in error a letter or text or Facebook message pointing out their sin.**
- d) Tell no one, humbly go to the person and try to restore them.**

The ONLY biblical answer is d. If you see your fellow Christian in sin or error, the only option you have biblically is to humbly go and talk to them. You cannot tell your spouse or your prayer partner or your pastor. You cannot text or facebook or write a letter correcting them. You go to them face to face and if you don't have the courage to do that because you care about them then shut up and tell no one. Don't sin.

As a church, we really need to help each other with this one. If someone comes to you and says, someone in the church has really hurt me, I need to talk to you. Your answer should be unless you have gone to them on your own first and then with a support person secondly, they cannot talk to you about it. You don't want to listen to gossip and have your mind, and your thoughts towards that person perverted by an evil report. You don't want to sin. Have you been to them twice? No? Then please don't involve me in this.

But I am afraid of what their reaction might be.

Tough. There is no plan B. If your motivation is to help and not just gossip or illicit personal support, then you must go to them face to face and humbly try to restore them.

The same principal is especially true when concerned about the behaviour or teaching of a pastor or elder.

You must go to them personally, face to face. There will be times that you as a church member will need to do that. Do so humbly and respectfully and speak the truth in love. We all need to grow and learn.

I have never met a perfect pastor and you never will either. However I have seen a particular danger when people start criticising pastors and elders. It rapidly creates divisions in the church and if left unchecked, if no one loves you enough to stop you it can open a persons life up to a critical spirit or even worse a Jezebellic spirit which can have devastating effects on the person and the church.

For those of you in small groups this week I challenge you to watch the full Bait of Satan sermon on the church website and or look at the article by Bill Gothard. We have put some of Gothard's paper in the foyer.

He has an 8 page article on "How to guard against the Defilement of listening to an evil report"

In it he mentions how if you are foolish enough to listen to gossip against someone else, your become defiled by that gossip and your view of that person and your relationship to that person will never be the same.

On page 4 of his article he suggests 5 pushbacks. He suggests that if someone comes to you and wants your advice or your support because they are concerned or have been hurt and you suspect this could be gossip, ie they haven't twice been to the person directly you could say

GOTHARDS SUGGESTED PUSHBACKS AGAINST AN EVIL REPORT

1. **“What is your reason for telling me?”** Widening the circle of gossip only compounds the problem.
2. **“Where did you get your information?”** Refusal to identify the source of information is a sure signal of an evil report.
3. **“Have you gone to those directly involved?”**
Spirituality is not measured by how well we expose an offender, but by how effectively we restore the offender (Galatians 6:1)
4. **“Have you personally checked out the facts?”**
Even ‘fact’s become distorted when not balanced with other facts or when given with negative motives.
5. **“Can I quote you if I check this out?”**
Those who give evil reports often claim that they are ‘misquoted’. This is because their words and overriding impressions are reported.

What should you do when your mind has already been defiled by an evil report?

- a) **Ask God to cleanse your mind from the defilement of an evil report.**
- b) **Pray for God to give you genuine love for each one involved in the evil report.**
- c) **God may ask you to contact the person who spoke to you, gossiped when they hadn’t twice been to the one they are concerned about personally. You may need to remind them of Matt 18:15-17 and or John 17:20-26/ Philippians 2:1-4 on the importance of speaking the truth in love.**

You will know that your mind has been cleansed when you lose your urge to tell someone else the evil report, when you grieve over the fact that you listened to an evil report, when you find yourself humbly examining your own heart and when you feel a genuine love for the person gossiped against.

Friends, why talk about the Bait of Satan, Matt 18 and dealing with evil reports. Why can’t we just be positive and focus on God’s goodness and His promises?

Every church I have ever known has failings in this area of not resolving conflict biblically. Why point it out at central?

I will tell you why. Because if we can love God and love each other, if we do things God's way, what God will achieve through us collectively will impact generations. But we have to help each other. We have to call each other to account. We have to desire a future and create a future together that will release the Power of God on our lives and on this city. I want to be a part of that church and I know you do to.

Lets stand

DECLARATION

WE THE LIVING STONES THAT MAKE UP WCBC ARE DETERMINED

NEVER TO TAKE THE BAIT OF SATAN.

**WE DETERMINE THAT WE WILL ASSUME THE BEST OF EACH OTHER AND
GUARD AGAINST EVIL REPORTS. WHEN OTHERS HAVE HURT US OR
DISSAPOINTED US WE WILL FORGIVE. WHEN WE HAVE HURT OTHERS WILL
ASK FOR THEIR FORGIVENESS.**

WE WILL NOT GIVE SATAN AN OPPORTUNITY TO DIVIDE US.

**IF WE SEE SOMEONE IN SIN OR ERROR WE WILL NOT TELL OUR SPOISE, BEST
FRIEND OR PASTOR. INSTEAD WE WILL GO TO THEM PERSONALY AND
HUMBLY TRY TO RESTORE THEM. WE WILL NOT WRITE LETTERS, SEND TEXTS
OR SEEK THE ADVICE OF OTHERS. WE WILL ACTIVELY STOP OTHERS FROM
SHARING WITH US THEIR EVIL REPORTS AGAINST OUR FAMILY.**

**WE WILL TREASURE THE BRIDE OF CHRIST, THE CHURCH, AND KEEP LOVING
AND SEVING OTHERS EVEN IF THEY DISSAPOINT US OR DON'T MEET OUR
EXPECTATIONS.**

**WE DECLARE THAT WE WILL BE A CHURCH OR GENUINE UNITY AND LOVE, A
BIBLICAL CHURCH, A CHURCH THAT IS KNOWN FOR ITS POWER AND THE
FAVOR OF GOD. WE WILL BE A CHURCH THAT GOD WILL USE TO BLESS
WHANGAREI AND THE FAR NORTH!**