

Interpersonal Conflicts

Listed Scriptures

Ex 14 – 20; Num 11 – 14, 16, 20

Lesson Aim

- 1) That the students may acquire the skills of handling interpersonal conflicts, using the insights we learn from examples in the Bible

Memory Verse

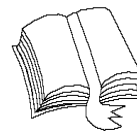
“A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.”

(Prov 15:1)

Bible Reading For This Week (for students and teachers)

Ex 14 – 20; Num 11 – 14, 16, 20

B I B L E B A C K G R O U N D



The Bible teaches us to speak the truth with love (Eph 4:15). Indeed, lying lips are an abomination to God (Prov 12:22). While it is important to speak the truth always, it is important to know HOW to speak it. Many people are truthful and sincere but when a message is communicated in a wrong way, even sincere words can create conflicts.

In this lesson, it is important to stress to the students that as children of God, we must always speak the truth and not be hypocrites. However, we have to pray for wisdom to know how to communicate our sincerity effectively and diplomatically. It is a lesson that’s not easy, and it’s for both the teacher and the students.



Do you ever have difficulty getting along with people?

If so, you are not alone. Someone commented, "It's easy to love humanity; it's people I can't stand." Sometimes, getting along with people can be a pain. Getting along with others other pushes us to the limits of our endurance.

But you are not alone. People in the Bible who walked with God had their own struggles with certain individuals too. Their own patience was pushed to the limit. Today, we will talk about Moses, who was drafted by God to lead a nation. The nation of Israel repeatedly rebelled against God and against Moses. How did Moses handle these people? Let's find out!

B I B L E S T U D Y



Part 1

The Israelites' Conflicts with Moses

Have your students read their assigned Scriptures, then work together to file a report for our church magazine "Manna" summarizing what happened. Encourage them to use their imaginations to fill in some of the gaps as they write their stories. Have them detail the feelings and frustrations of the people as they reacted against Moses. Have them read their finished reports to the class. Supplement their stories with the following commentary.

The Israelites had every display of God's wondrous power and every provision any person could need and want, yet their faith failed virtually every time it was put to the test.

1. Exodus 14:11-12. The Israelites should have been rejoicing now that God had handpicked Moses to lead them into the land flowing with milk and honey. Instead, they groused and complained.

2. Exodus 15:24. The Israelites attacked Moses for not having any water. Once again, they lost their focus on God and grumbled against His provision.
3. Exodus 16:3. The Israelites complained that they didn't have any food. It is amazing that they were not rejoicing over their freedom in the new land but rather thinking about the old days in Egypt. If God had provided water earlier on, God could also provide food.
4. Exodus 17:2-3. The Israelites grumbled and complained to Moses when they faced a shortage of water. They really should have remembered how God had miraculously provided for their needs in recent situations. This time, Moses was really about to lose his patience.
5. Exodus 20, 32. God appeared to the nation, spoke to them in a voice, demonstrated His greatness through thunder and lightning (20:18) and gave them the Ten Commandments. In chapter 32, the people of Israel turned their backs on God and chose to worship a golden calf.
6. Numbers 11:4-6. Here the Israelites again groused about their food. Moses really lost his patience and asked God why he was stuck with these unthankful people.
7. Numbers 12:1-2, 9-10. Moses' sister Miriam decided to include her brother Aaron, the high priest, to help her overthrow Moses. God was very angry and Miriam became leprous.
8. Numbers 13-14. The Israelites didn't want to enter the land after Moses sent 12 spies to survey the land for 40 days. So God granted their wish. For 40 years, one day for each day the spies were in the land, the entire nation wandered aimlessly in the desert. Eventually, the older generation died and the next generation enjoyed the promised land. Remember, complaining and grumbling to God is not acceptable.
9. Numbers 16:3. Korah led a revolt. He and his entire company were destroyed.
10. Numbers 20:3-5. Moses had lost all patience. He blatantly disobeyed God, and took credit for a miracle that had just been performed. As a result, Moses was told he could not enter the land.



Part 2

Reacting to Confrontational Situations

Being able to react calmly and tactfully in a situation of conflict is very important. Let's take a look at two contrasting biblical examples to see how a difference in the way we respond in a conflict can lead to changed outcomes.

A. Gideon Spoke Respectfully to the Ephraimites

Gideon had a roaring victory over the Midianites. He had used only three hundred warriors, as instructed by God. The Ephraimites were unhappy that they were left out of the battle and came to Gideon in anger. Let's read what the two parties said to one another and how the conflict was resolved.

"Now the men of Ephraim said to him, 'Why have you done this to us by not calling us when you went to fight with the Midianites?' And they reprimanded him sharply. So he said to them, 'What have I done now in comparison with you? Is not the gleaning of the grapes of Ephraim better than the vintage of Abiezer? God has delivered into your hands the princes of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb. And what was I able to do in comparison with you?' Then their anger toward him subsided." (Judges 8:1-3)

B. Jephthah Intensified the Conflict with Harsh Words

This is a similar situation as in the previous example, where the Ephraimites demanded to know why they were excluded from battle. Read the following passage to see what a great contrast Jephthah's answer was and how the ending was tragic compared to what happened in the case of Gideon.

"Then the men of Ephraim gathered together, crossed over toward Zaphon, and said to Jephthah, 'Why did you cross over to fight against the people of Ammon, and did not call us to go with you? We will burn your house down on you with fire!' And Jephthah said to them, 'My people and I were in a great struggle with the people of Ammon; and when I called you, you did not deliver me out of their hands. So when I saw that you would not deliver me, I took my life in my hands and crossed over against the people of Ammon; and the LORD delivered them into my

hand. Why then have you come up to me this day to fight against me?' Now Jephthah gathered together all the men of Gilead and fought against Ephraim. And the men of Gilead defeated Ephraim, because they said, 'You Gileadites are fugitives of Ephraim among the Ephraimites and among the Manassites.' The Gileadites seized the fords of the Jordan before the Ephraimites arrived. And when any Ephraimite who escaped said, 'Let me cross over,' the men of Gilead would say to him, 'Are you an Ephraimite?' If he said, 'No,' then they would say to him, 'Then say, "Shibboleth!"' And he would say, 'Sibboleth,' for he could not pronounce it right. Then they would take him and kill him at the fords of the Jordan. There fell at that time forty-two thousand Ephraimites." (Judges 12:1-6)

Questions:

1. Who do you think is the wiser of the two judges – Gideon or Jephthah? Why?
2. Why did the words of Gideon please the Ephraimites?
3. Why did the words of Jephthah anger the Ephraimites?
4. What are the lessons to learn from these two contrasting examples?

C H E C K F O R U N D E R S T A N D I N G



1

When the Israelites complained about not having water to drink in Ex 15 & Ex 17 respectively, what happened?

2

How did Miriam revolt against Moses and why? What was the outcome?

3

What did Korah and his family do against Moses, and what happened to them in the end?

4

How did Gideon and Jephthah deal with confrontation from the Ephraimites? What lessons can we learn from the different ways they handled the situations and the outcomes that ensued?



Part A- Case Studies

Read the following scenarios. Then answer the questions.

Case 1

My best friend thinks I've been spreading rumors about her and her family. I never did that, but she won't let me explain. Every time I call her, she hangs up the phone on me. I sent her an email, but she didn't reply. What can I do? At school, she just ignores me.

Case 2

My parents just don't seem to understand. Every time I come home after being with my friends, they would ask me a bunch of questions. They question me about this friend and question me about that friend. I've never had a friend they liked. Why don't they get off my case? The other day I came home way past the curfew. I was having fun at a party and did something stupid. Then, my parents yelled at me. They just don't understand me. Worse than that, they will never trust me again.

Case 3

My school teacher thinks that I stole some money out of the fund-raising box. Someone, I'm not sure who, told my teacher that I was acting kind of funny, and that I was hanging around that fund-raising box the other day. But I had nothing to do with it. I didn't even know where they kept the money. Now, my teacher watches every move I make. In fact, I've caught other school friends watching me too. I can't stand it anymore.

Discussion

Interpersonal conflicts are really tough to deal with. When a relationship breaks down because we are misunderstood or misjudged, it really hurts. Discuss the above scenarios and have your students respond to these questions.

Questions to think about:

1. What would you say to someone who came to you with these problems?
2. What attitudes do we need to bring healing to these kinds of divisions between people?

3. Describe a situation where you patched up a severed relationship.
4. What could you do as a third party to help in any of these three situations?
5. How would you ask God to help you if you were having these problems?
6. How would you think God wants us to bring healing to broken relationships or help friends patch up theirs?

Part B- Conflict and Peace

The Bible is the best guide to good relationships with anyone. It's much better than any self-help guide available in bookstores. If only we were more diligent in discovering the many tips on communication that are found in the Bible! Below are some Bible verses that teach us about communication. For each of these verses, describe a situation that you have experienced or witnessed where the biblical advice was shown to be at work, or could have helped avert conflicts. These four questions may help you when you analyze the situations: What was the situation? What did the parties involved do or say? What were the consequences? What did you learn from that incident?

1. Think before we speak, for many a time, hasty words cause a breakdown in communication and generate defensive attitudes.

"Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath." (Jas 1:19)

"Do you see a man hasty in his words? There is more hope for a fool than for him." (Prov 29:20)
2. Allow the other party to finish or explain his side of the story. Conflicts often occur because one party simply misunderstands the actions or words of the other party, and the misunderstanding is not clarified.

"He who answers a matter before he hears it, it is folly and shame to him." (Prov 18:13)
3. When facing a conflict, be careful not to say anything nasty that will cause us to regret our words later. As Christians, let our words always be gracious.

"Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers." (Eph 4:29)

4. When caught in an argument, it is good to always stop ourselves right away and calm down before trying to resolve the conflict. It may help to wait until another day.

“It is honorable for a man to stop striving, since any fool can start a quarrel.”
(Prov 20:3)

5. It is important to always try to be calm and controlled, even if it means having to walk away from a situation and take a long walk!

“He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules the spirit than he who takes a city.” (Prov 16:32)

R E F L E C T I O N & P R A Y E R



Conflicts occur among Christians much more frequently than we would dare to admit. The Bible contains examples of how touchy situations can be smoothed over and resolved with a level head and appropriate words. God also promises a special blessing to those who bring peace between people. Read Matthew 5:9 together with the students.