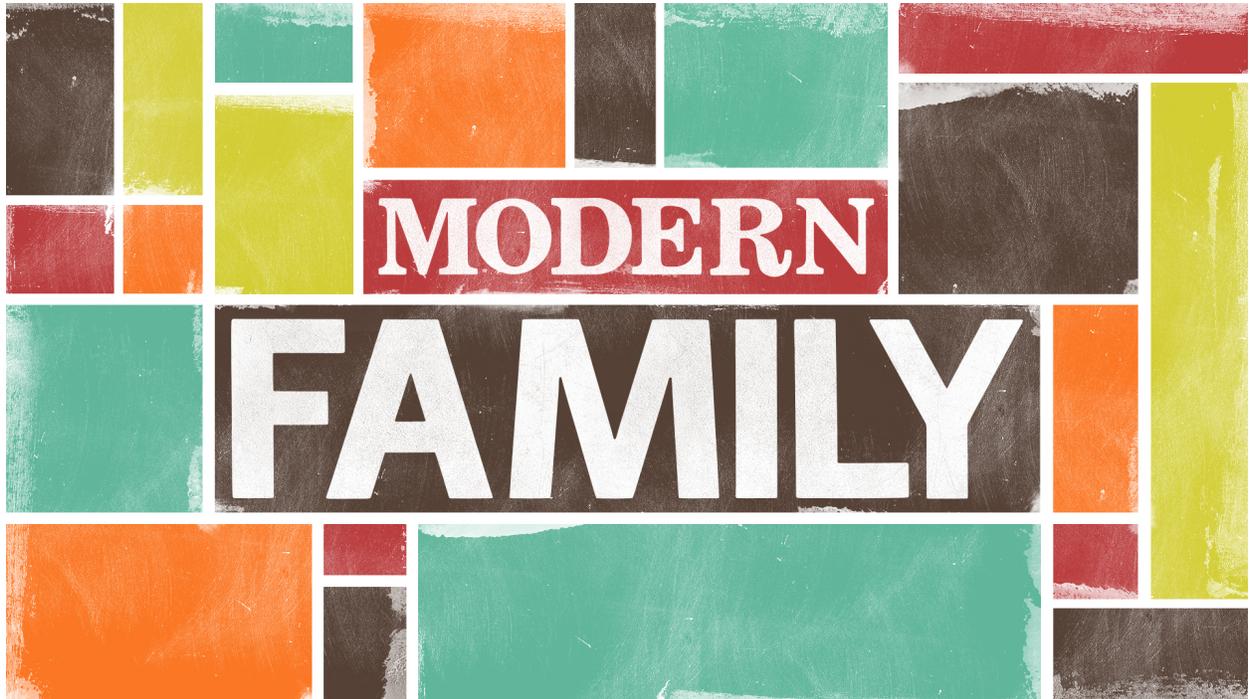




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Internal Challenges

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August 25, 2013

There is a family in the Middle East, an older gentleman had three sons. At the end of his life he realized that he was going to give all that he had to his sons, and all he had was 17 camels. When he passed away his sons were reading the will and figuring out how he wanted it divvied up. He wanted those 17 camels divvied up this way: the oldest son was going to get half of them, the middle son was going to get a third of them, and the youngest son was going to get a

ninth of them. Seems pretty fair. Problem was that 17 can't be divided in half, by thirds or by ninths. They came to the table and they were discussing this problem. You can imagine the brothers were starting to get into a little bit of conflict because someone was going to get the short end of the stick. Someone was going to get an advantage, and so they began to fight and argue and conflict arose. Before they did anything that they were going to regret they decided to go find a wise old woman in the village. She had been known for conflict resolution, so they show up and tell her they have 17 camels, half, third, ninths and what do we do? The old wise woman said, "I can't help you. The math is the math and nothing I can do for you." They were dejected and she could see it. She says, "But what I can do is give you my camel." They took the camel, said "Thank you." On their way home they realized they now had 18 camels and 18 can be divided by two and thirds and ninths, so they did that. The oldest son got his half, which was 9. The middle son got his third, which was 6, and the youngest son got his ninth, which was two. They were all excited and then they looked up and they realized that there was one camel left over because $9 + 6 + 2 = 17$. (congregation laughs) They realized that wise old woman knew what she was talking about and they took it to her. They realized that it wasn't that she couldn't handle the problem. She wanted them to figure it out. Isn't that good?

Wouldn't it be nice if all conflict would have an 18th camel kind of resolution to it? You could just kind of throw another camel in and everything's fine. In my house I've noticed that we need an 18th Lego because there's never enough Legos. There's never enough wheels or wing pieces. I've tried to figure out how in the world you can make chocolate chip cookies the exact same size. And there would be the exact same amount of chocolate chips in them because my kids may not like math, but when you put a plate of chocolate chip cookies on the table they have them counted, divvied up, they know how many each person gets, they have them ranked from largest to smallest, they have them ranked from how many chocolate chips to the least amount of chocolate chips. Anybody else with me on that one? (congregation laughs)

Conflict. It's all around us. When we think about our Modern Family series we've talked about men, women, marriage, parenting, prepping for marriage, and today we're going to talk about some challenges to the family and one of those is conflict. It happens in all shapes and sizes, forms, and opinions in ways from Legos to cookies to where are we going for Thanksgiving to "What would you like to eat tonight? I don't know, what do you want to eat tonight? I'm not sure where do you want to go, where do you want to go?" Conflict arises. It's the simplest things. Some of us aren't dealing with those kinds of conflicts. Some of us are dealing with larger conflicts. Some of us are maybe in the throws of a messy divorce. We've lost someone and we don't know how to

divvy up the will. Others may have just found out about infidelity in a marriage. There's all kinds of conflict. Today we want to know how can the family resolve conflict in a God-honoring, Biblical way.

So if you've got your Bibles turn with me to 2 Samuel 13. This is an extreme example of conflict in the family. We've got David and three of his children, and they're going to have a pretty serious conflict that's going to end in a very sinful way. And this lets us know a couple of things. Some of us may say, "Well that doesn't apply to me. Our conflict in our home isn't that extreme." No, this story is going to give us some good practical things that we can do even in what we might think is insignificant conflict or insignificant disagreements. And then there are some of us who would say, "My conflict is so bad that there's no way the Bible addresses it." And I'm going to tell you it does. The Bible is sufficient and gives us hope for no matter how messy the situation is. And this story, it is messy. So let's jump right in.

"In the course of time, Amnon son of David -"

That's King David, the guy that killed Goliath.

"fell in love with Tamar, the beautiful sister of Absalom son of David."

David has multiple wives, he's got several children from those wives. These are all half siblings. So Amnon looks at Tamar and says, "I'm in love with her," and it's a half sister.

"Amnon became frustrated to the point of illness on account of his sister Tamar for she was a virgin and it seemed impossible for him to do anything to her."

Right upfront we see the conflict. Right upfront we see the frustration. We see Amnon who looks at his half sister and says, "I'm in love with you. I want to have a physical relationship with you." But Tamar over here is saying, "No, no, no I'm waiting to do this the right way. I'm waiting until marriage whether that's arranged or not. That's what I want to do." So we have a difference of opinion, we have a difference in purpose and it's frustrating someone. Matter of fact, it's not just frustrating him, look what happens next.

"Now Amnon had a friend named Jonadab son of Shimeah, David's brother. Jonadab was a very shrewd man. He asked Amnon, 'Why do you, the king's son, look so haggard morning after morning? Won't you tell me?' Amnon said to him, 'I'm in love with Tamar, my brother Absalom's sister.'"

So it is apparent he is so frustrated, he is so upset, he has got the - he's got all of these desires so pent up that it is showing on his face. And Jonadab looks at him and says, "You're the king's son. Nothing ought to be wrong with you. You've got it made." He goes, "No I don't. I'm in love with Tamar and I can't do anything about it." These first four verses give us a little bit of insight into conflict.

First thing I want to do is define conflict for us. I want to define it. You'll see it right there in your worship guide. **Conflict = A difference in opinion or purpose that frustrates someone's goals or desires.** It's a difference in opinion or purpose that frustrates someone's goals or desires. We see that here. We see that Amnon has one specific purpose. He wants to have a physical relationship with Tamar, and we see Tamar's purpose and her desire is to get married and do it the right way. And it's frustrating and so there is conflict. And you would say, "Well of course there would be conflict. That's a sinful desire Russell. That's a sinful purpose." Well can I just tell you that there are some desires that we can have a difference of opinion on that aren't sinful. Matter of fact, they are halfway decent in and of themselves. I have a few desires. Can I share them with you? I have the desire to come home from work and my house be peaceful and quiet. (congregation laughs) That's not bad, that's not sinful, is it? That's my desire. I want to come home and I want to open up a good book or have a nice conversation with my wife. The problem is that my children have a different purpose don't they? They have a different desire that they want to see happen. They want to run around and scream and all of those things, and so somebody is going to get frustrated, aren't they? (Russell raises his hand) Somebody's going to get frustrated.

Or here's another one, this one's real simple. I have the desire to be able to take my family and go to a restaurant and not be the entertainment for the entire establishment. (congregation laughs) That's not bad, is it? It's a great desire. I would love to be able to go and my kids sit the right way and not smack and not hang over the chair and drop stuff and spill a drink, and the twins bang simultaneously on the table. I would love it, but they have a different desire, they have a different purpose. And because of that somebody gets frustrated. (Russell raises his hand) Conflict. You see what I mean. See you can have great desires. Sometimes we have sinful desires, we do. And Amnon has a sinful desire here. There are other sinful desires. Sinful desires that say I want to fornicate or I want to have an affair, or sinful desires that say, "I'm going to have all the money that I want and I don't care what I'm going to do to get it." There are all kinds of sinful desires, but sometimes our conflict arises just from halfway decent desires. Desires that say I want my kids to respect me. Desires that say I just want to have a closer relationship with my spouse. Just normal desires, peace and quiet.

So that gets us to the first lesson, this first point as we think about the progression of conflict. You ready? All conflict starts with a desire. All of it. **I Desire** is what we say. It's what we want. Sometimes it can be bad, sometimes it can be sinful, sometimes it can be fine, well meaning, even a good thing. But all conflict can start from a desire. All of it, and here in this passage we see the desire. It's a sinful one. He wants to have a relationship with his half sister so let's see what happens next. After he tells Jonadab why he's got this haggard look in the morning, verse 5 he says:

"Go to bed and pretend to be ill," Jonadab said. "When your father comes to see you say to him, 'I would like my sister Tamar to come and give me something to eat. Let her prepare the food in my sight so I may watch her and then eat it from her hand.'"

Jonadab is giving some very poor advice here, isn't he? Not good. He's trying to get the two of them alone. That's what he's doing. "Thanks Jonadab, but no thanks." You would hope that would be what Amnon says, but listen to what he does.

"So Amnon laid down and pretended to be ill. When the king came to see him, Amnon said to him, 'I would like my sister Tamar to come and make some special bread in my sight, so I may eat from her hand.'"

And surely David is going to recognize this is a plot. Surely David is going to stand up and say, "No, this is weird." (congregation laughs) Right? David completely aloof to the situation says this:

"David sent word to Tamar at the palace: 'Go to the house of your brother Amnon and prepare some food for him.' So Tamar went to the house of her brother Amnon, who was lying down. She took some dough, kneaded it, made the bread in his sight and baked it. Then she took the pan and served him the bread, but he refused to eat."

It wasn't quite the right setting. What does it say next?

"Send everyone out of here," Amnon said. So everyone left him. Then Amnon said to Tamar, 'Bring the food here into my bedroom so I may eat from your hand.' And Tamar took the bread she had prepared and brought it to her brother Amnon in his bedroom. But when she took it to him to eat, he grabbed her and said, 'Come to bed with me, my sister.'"

Uh oh. This desire has turned into something, hasn't it. This desire is not just sitting out there and it's just something that's frustrating. Now the desire has taken the next step. It's now **I Demand** that I have this. I'm going to demand it, "I'm going to grab you, I'm going to set up the scenario where the two of us can be alone and I'm going to get this. This is mine. I demand." You see, when we get to the point of I demand it's where our desire is something we want so bad we're willing to hurt others to get it. It's when our desire becomes an idol. It becomes something we want so bad that we're willing to hurt other people to get it. Watch this. You ready? Look at what Tamar says in the passage after he grabs her hand and he makes his declaration she says:

"No, my brother!" she said to him. 'Don't force me! Such a thing would not be done in Israel!'"

She goes back to the law and says this would not honor God. This would not honor God. You know your desire becomes a demand and an idol when you don't care even if it dishonors God. You don't even care. God is the last thing on your radar. That's the first thing she says. Then she goes on to say this:

"Don't do this wicked thing. What about me? Where could I get rid of my disgrace?"

"Not only is this going to be bad for God and the way he looks and you're going to dishonor him, but this is going to hurt me. How am I going to live with this? No man's going to want me after this. How am I going to deal with it?" But again, your desire has become a demand and an idol when you don't care who you hurt. And he didn't care if he hurts Tamar or not. He didn't care. She's just collateral damage. And then she brings up another point. Watch this:

"And what about you? You would be like one of the wicked fools in Israel."

You know your desire is become an idol when you're willing to cut your nose off to spite your face for your own stuff. He doesn't care about his reputation. He doesn't care about how he's perceived. He is willing to sacrifice all of it - his relationship with God, his relationship with Tamar, his relationship with his father, his relationship with his other brother Absalom. He's willing to sacrifice it all. "I don't care even if I look bad, I want mine." Does that sound familiar? Desire, demand, and then look at what takes place. Verse 14:

"But he refused to listen to her, and since he was stronger than she, he raped her."

He got it. He forced it. He demanded it. Then in verse 15, look at what takes place next. This is interesting:

“Then Amnon hated her with intense hatred. In fact, he hated her more than he loved her.”

He hated her now. He looks at her and he recognizes “This isn’t the way I drew it up. This isn’t how I wanted it. No, no, no, I wanted you to cater to my desires. I wanted you to feel the same way about me that I feel about you. And because it had to be forced, because it had to be demanded, because you didn’t feel the same way, and you didn’t meet my expectations now I’m going to judge you.” You see, I desire, I demand, and now **I Judge**. I hate you. I hate you.

We say judgmental things like this: “If you loved me you would.” “After all that I’ve done for you, you owe me.” Or in the words of Amnon, “You know how I feel about you. You ought to make me happy.” You see it? He hates her. Didn’t go down the way he wanted, it was a missed expectation, failed expectations, and then look at what he says. Not only did he hate her, but at the end of the verse 15 Amnon said to her:

“Get up and get out!” “No!” she said to him. ‘Sending me away would be a greater wrong than what you have already done to me.’”

She just basically says, “We’ve got to get married now.” This is a legitimate woman here, I’m just going to tell you that. Wow. She goes, “Don’t send me away now. Two wrongs don’t make a right. We’re hitched!” He says:

“But he refused to listen to her. He called his personal servant and said, ‘Get this woman out of my sight and bolt the door after her.’”

You see our desire becomes a demand and an idol, we’re willing to hurt other people, then we judge them, we hate them, we say, “If you would only meet my expectations you would,” and then we punish. **I Punish**. “Bolt the doors, get her out of here. I don’t want anything else to do with her. I’m done with her. I don’t care. I don’t care if I’ve ruined it for her.” The rest of the story says she weeps, she has to tear her clothes. I mean this is a terrible situation and now he doesn’t want anything to do with this woman. He just punishes her. And I can see the look on your faces as you sit back and you read this extreme example, right, of conflict. And you would say, “Russell, I see it. His desire turned into a demand and he judged and he punished, but Russell we’re just trying to figure out where to go for Thanksgiving. It’s not that bad, is it?” (congregation laughs) “It’s not that bad.”

Let me show you how even the best desire can turn into sinful conflict. Let me give us a few examples, you ready? Wife has a great desire, a simple desire. She wants her husband to spend more time with the family. Isn't that a good desire? That would be a noble desire, a good thing you would want. Husband's been working long hours, even maybe working on the weekends. She expresses her desires for him to be home more with her and with the kids, and to be at the practices and all of those things, but he sits back and he says, "You know what? This is the way that I provide. I work more so that I can make more money so I can provide for the weddings and the colleges and give all of the kids the things they want. Leave me alone. These are the things that I do." So we have conflict, two different opinions about the way to provide for the family. The desire is not bad, but the difference of opinion is the conflict. So now all of a sudden the wife begins to demand this. "You need to be home. You need to spend more time with the kids. You can't miss another practice." And now we're willing to hurt other people because now it's the only thing she thinks about when she thinks about her husband. "He's never at home. He's missing supper again. There's another practice that he missed." Now she begins to judge. "If he were a good husband he'd be at home right now. If he were a good father he would be coaching this team, not missing the practice. If he were worth anything he would truly show up." And now she begins to punish because now when she talks to her mom she begins to talk and slander and gossip about the way he doesn't show up. And when she meets with all her girlfriends she says "Yeah, my husband is a deadbeat. He's missed 14 games this year. He's never at home." And then the ultimate way she begins to punish is she says, "You know what, I want somebody that's going to be around. And I'm willing to do whatever it takes to get it, and I don't care if it hurts the kids or me. You know what, why don't we just get a divorce and call this thing even." I desire, I demand, I judge, and I punish.

What about the teenager? Concert next week. Wednesday night goes to mom and says, "Can I have my curfew extended just a couple of hours? I would love to go to this concert. I would love to be a part of it." Mom and dad say, "No, we don't want you to go. It's the first week of school. We really want you to start school on the right foot and do a great job, so we're going to say no on this one." The teenager responds with the fact that now this desire didn't get met, there's a friction and there's a difference in opinion on the matter, and so now the desire becomes a demand and an idol. It's the only thing he thinks about. Matter of fact he's so self-conscious he might be made fun of, what are his friends going to think when he doesn't get to go to the concert and everyone else does. It's the only thing that matters, it's the only thing that he cares about. So much so that he's willing to hurt others to get it. Willing to make jabs at mom and dad about, "You know Johnny's parents are letting him go." Then he begins to judge his parents and say stuff like, "If you really loved me

you would let me go. It's my senior year, why can't I make this happen?" Begin to judge. "My parents are no good. I can't believe they treat me like this." Then we begin to punish because the next time it's brought up over dinner we just leave the table, storm off slam the door behind us shoving ear buds in our ears and just trying to get away and ignore our parents for the next two hours.

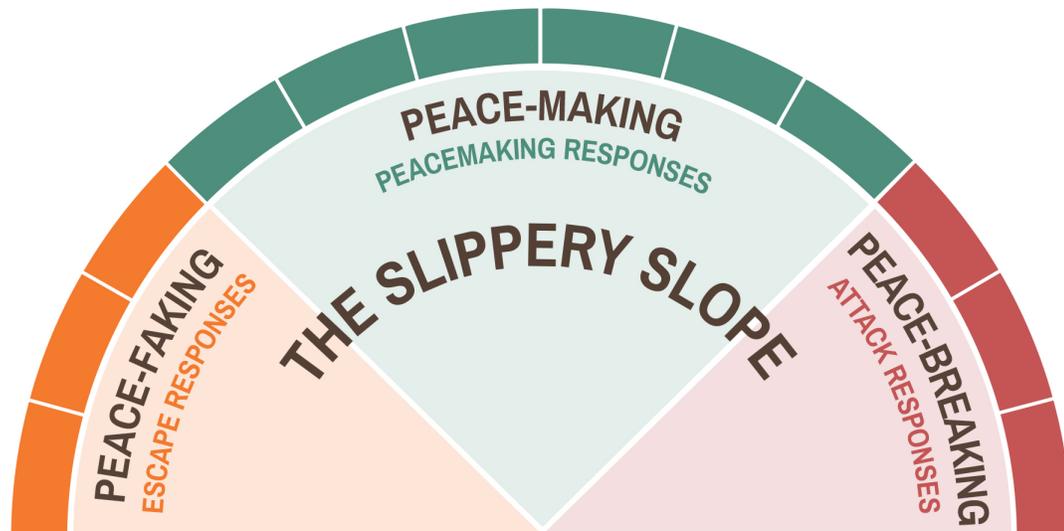
You see it? I desire, I demand, I judge, and then I punish. Can I give you one more example? Just in case we're not putting it all together. Mother-in-law (congregation laughs) sees her son as married to this daughter-in-law. "They're not coming over like they used to. They're not spending enough time with us. I would love to see the grandkids." That's a good desire, isn't it? Fantastic desire. That's my desire. I would love for them to come more often, so now it's such a desire they're not coming when I request and so now I'm going to demand it and I'm going to make them know that this is something I really want. I'm going to use those passive aggressive jabs like, "It's my birthday coming up. Sure would love to spend it with the grandkids. You know it's been two Thanksgivings since you've been here." And we keep saying those things and we demand and it's the only thing we talk about. When we think of our daughter-in-law we just sit back and think, "If I just had a better daughter-in-law she would show up." And so then we begin to judge and we say those kind of things. We just begin to make comparisons. You say, "If she just loved my son she would make sure that those grandkids got to see their grandmother." Then we begin to punish. Next time we're on the phone we've already taken a tally, "Well you know you've seen your parents 13 times this year and you've only seen us 4." That's not punishment, is it? Those aren't hard conversations, are they? Awkward? As we sit back and punish, and then we go even further by withholding things by saying, "Well if you're not going to be here for Christmas I guess I don't need to get y'all anything." And just continue that punishment of, I have a desire, I'm going to demand it, I'm going to judge you, and then I'm going to punish you. You see, even the smallest of desires, even the noblest of desires can turn into conflict.

I desire, I demand, I judge, I punish. You say, "Well Russell, what do we do, how do we respond? We want to make sure that we are responding well and not letting this thing snowball downhill so that we're in massive conflict" because here's the problem, you ready? Most of us don't recognize the conflict until we get to the punishment phase. Most of us walk in and the kids are fighting over something. The conflict was way before that. We walk in in the middle of a gossip session - listen the conflict was way before that. It started right here with the desire.

So how do we do it? Let me show you the slippery slope. It's going to be on the screens and it's also on the backside of your worship guide.



I didn't come up with this. A guy named Ken Sandy came up with it at Peacemaker Organization. I think it's fantastic. When you think about the slippery slope you really want to be on the top of it. You want to be on the top of the slippery slope. You want to maintain balance there; that's where we want to be. Unfortunately, we go to one of two extremes. The first extreme we go to are Peace-Fakers. These are Peace-Fakers. These are people that escape the conflict. We want to deny the conflict, we run from conflict. We do stuff like this. When someone says, "Hey how's everything going?" we say, "Oh it's fine. It's great. Couldn't be better." That's Peace-Faking. Or when we sit back and we're in the middle of conflict and it starts to get heated we say, "I'm going to have to go spend some time with my mom for a few days. I just need some time by myself." We're running from conflict. Some of us like to put our head in the sand and we just act like if everything is okay it will become okay, but that's not the way it works with conflict, is it? We have some Peace-Fakers in this passage. If you keep reading in verse 21 it says David is furious at what happens to Tamar. But you know what? We don't see him do anything. Just denies it ever happened. Doesn't even say a word. Peace-Fakers. I know this doesn't happen in our parking lot, but there are some parking lots that before you get out of that car everybody is choking each other, and when you slam the door, "We're all good now." (congregation laughs) "Halleluiah." Peace-Fakers.



The next response is Peace-Breakers. These are Peace-Breakers. These are folks that don't escape, they just look to the assault. They're ready to move to the attack. These are Peace-Breakers. These are people ready to say harsh words, these are folks like when they see conflict they're "Bring it on. I've got my jabs, I've got my cards, I'm ready to go." Most of the time we don't get into physical confrontation even though there's no doubt in my mind that happens. Most of it's a verbal assault. We call each other names, we yell at the top of our lungs, we grunt, we slam doors. Assault. We also gossip, we slander, we do all of those sort of things. Those are Peace-Breakers. Litigation, we sue, we divorce, we do all of those attack responses. Ultimate attack would be murder. Absalom in two years is going to murder Amnon for what he did to Tamar. That would be Peace-Breaking.

The appropriate response would be at the top of the slope, and this is called Peace-Making. This is Peace-Making. This is where we recognize that this is where we want to stand. This is where God asks us to be. There's a lot of words there, but I'm going to sum them up in three ways. The first one is to overlook. It's not that bad of a difference, it's not that big of an offense. I'm going to overlook it. I'm not going to hold it against you. I'm not going to keep bringing it up. Matter of fact it's a done deal. I'm overlooking it. I'm not going to let this escalate." Can you imagine what would happen when the teenager heard his parents say, "You can't go to the concert," instead of letting it become a demand and an idol, what would have happened if he had just said, "I'm going to overlook this difference. It makes sense. Mom is just looking out for

my best.” Overlook. Wouldn’t have that been the right way to do it? Then another way we can do it is work it out, talk it out, reconciliation where two parties come together and they do Matthew 7 and they bring their conflict to the table and they work it out. How would the mother-in-law and daughter-in-law have been a different situation had they come together, shared their desire, and worked it out in a Biblical grace and truth type of deal instead of letting it escalate to the punishment. Wouldn’t that have worked? Or finally, when we think about Peace-Making sometimes we need to go get some help. Sometimes we need a third party. What would have happened if the husband and wife instead of just continuing on their opposite paths would have said, “We need some help. We need somebody to speak into this. It’s apparent that I have this desire and you have this desire. We need to go get some Biblical counseling. We need to get somebody to look at this and help us work through this.” Wouldn’t that have been better than letting it escalate to punishment? That’s Peace-Making.

Can I just tell you something. When you think about 2 Samuel 13 there was a person in this passage who had the opportunity to be a Peace-Maker, wasn’t there? Jonadab. When Jonadab said “Why do you look so haggard, what’s wrong?” and when Amnon said, “Well, I love Tamar.” He should have looked at him and said, “Hey you need to put those thoughts out of your mind. That’s the wrong thoughts. You need to quit that.” Instead, Jonadab poured gas on the fire, helping create that desire into an idol and into a demand. Can I just speak real candidly with you? I think we have a lot of Jonadabs out there pouring gas on fires. “You’re right, your husband is sorry.” “You’re right, man I can’t believe your wife would say that.” “I can’t believe these teenagers act like that.” You see, what would it look like if we had some Peace-Makers who were able to step in and say, “Hey, you need to get control of that desire. It’s not a bad one, we just need to make sure we’re doing it the right way.” We need some people who aren’t going to act like Jonadab and watch those desires turn into demands.

You say, “Russell, how do we do it? We don’t want to get to that punishment. We don’t want to see it become a demand and judge. We don’t want to see our desires go crazy and end up in sinful conflict. We want to be peacemakers. How do we do it?” Well let me see if I can wrap this up at the bottom of your outline. You ready? We’re going to have to whiz through it. The four G’s. I didn’t come up with these. This is an absolutely amazing book called *The Peacemaker*. You need to grab it, it is great. The first G’s. The first one is this: You want to have Biblical peacemaking in your home, the first G is **Glorify God (1 Corinthians 10:31) How can I please and honor God in this situation?** You come to the conflict and you recognize that every conflict has the ability and has the opportunity to bring glory to God. Every conflict no matter how bad,

how weird, how sinful, no matter what, it has the opportunity to bring glory to God. This is how. Because we were in conflict with God because of our sin, and Jesus, the Prince of Peace was sent as the person to bring reconciliation so that we could have a right relationship with God. And therefore, I am a Minister of Reconciliation according to Corinthians, and therefore, I'm supposed to live at peace with everyone Paul says in Romans 12. That's pretty good, isn't it? We are to be peacemakers, and every opportunity of conflict is a chance to bring glory to God demonstrating the ultimate reconciliation between God and man. That's the first G. This is the question you need to ask: How can I honor and please God in this conflict? How can I honor and please God in this situation? That's what you need to ask yourself in the middle of the conflict.

Second G is this: Get the log out of your own eye. **Get the Log Out (Matthew 7:5) How have I contributed to the conflict and what do I need to do?** When you come into conflict not only are you saying God how can we honor and please you. The next thing you're asking is this: How did I contribute to this? How did I contribute? What did I do? What sin did I participate in? What did I say? What behavior did I do? How did I contribute? Matthew 7:5 says get the log out of your own eye. Much too often we're looking at everybody else. Can you imagine what a conversation would start like in Biblical peacemaking and conflict resolution if you started with "I'm sorry, I was wrong." It's pretty good. Get the log out.

The third one is this: Gently restore. **Gently Restore (Matthew 7:5) How can I help others understand how they have contributed to the conflict?** Matthew 7:5 says not only do you get the log out, but now it's your opportunity to get the speck out of your brother's eye. This is the question of how do I help them understand their part in this conflict? How do I help them understand their part? Because it's apparent there's two of you. You have a difference of opinion. How do I help you understand it? So I'm going to gently do it with grace and truth, and love I'm going to pull that speck out.

And the final one, it's the hardest one. Go and be reconciled. **Go and Be Reconciled (Colossians 3:13) How can I demonstrate forgiveness and encourage a responsible solution?** Reconciliation means being able to walk shoulder-to-shoulder in forgiveness. You can ask yourself this question about go and be reconciled. How can I demonstrate forgiveness and offer a reasonable solution to this? Encourage a reasonable solution. Forgiveness. This is where it gets hard because now in the middle of it we sit back and say, "I want to glorify God and I've got get the log out of my own eye, and now this is what you have done, but now we're going to go and be reconciled. It's over, we live in forgiveness. We're not holding grudges, we're not tucking it away for

later. It's done." The same way Jesus Christ forgave us and doesn't bring them back up against us. That's the way we forgive, right? This is the hardest one.

You say "Russell, that's well and good. Give it to me in a normal situation." You ready? See if this sounds familiar. "All I wanted was a little peace and quiet when I came home from a long day at the office. But I was not getting it. My children Meagan and Jeff had been trying to control each other all week. Their constant friction had exhausted their mother's patience. Instead of resolving their quarrels with their usual calm, Corlett found herself resorting to some sharp words and threats of 'Wait until your Father comes home.' So instead of walking through the door and finding smiling children and a serene, affectionate wife I found nothing but sullen faces, irritable voices, and a general sense that I had walked into a war zone." Sound familiar? "Each evening Corlett and I wanted to work to break the cycle of conflict, but it would start again in a day or two and by Sunday morning I was feeling frustrated and resentful toward my children. Corlett had gone to church early that morning to meet with some other women and I followed 30 minutes later with the kids. As we approached the car a new contest began. 'It's my turn to sit in the front seat.' 'No, you got to yesterday.' 'Well you shouldn't sit there anyway, you're so small the airbag could kill you.'" Love that one. "I don't care, I'm not sitting in the back seat.' Then a new voice entered the exchange, 'Be quiet' I shouted. And then pointing to each child in turn, 'You get in the back seat right now and you get in the front seat, and I don't want to hear another word out of either of you.'" That sounds really familiar. "Climbing into the car myself I gave into the anger that had been building in me all week, and I even adjusted the rearview mirror so I could glare at Meagan as I lectured her in the back seat." You're not supposed to do that? (congregation laughs) "Among other things I told them I was very angry at the way they had behaved all week and I was now going to make things miserable for them." (congregation laughs) Strike three. "When I finally pause to take a breath, Jeffrey saw his opening. 'Daddy' he said meekly, 'Do you think you should pray to Jesus and ask him if it's rightful anger?'" (congregation laughs) No! (congregation laughs) "His words must have been guided by the Holy Spirit because they instantly cut me to the core, and I saw an empty parking lot and pulled in. Before I even turned off the engine I knew what I needed to say." And before I read the rest of the story I'll tell you how it works at my house.

Unfortunately I say those things and I do those things and I give into my anger, but I'm going to tell you the sweetest conversations I have with my children are when you're pulled over. And you recognize and you see it in their face and their eyes, or your wife, and you know you said something wrong. You knew you took it too far, and the conflict is there. And before you let it escalate anymore the best conversations I have with my kids aren't when we celebrate a

100 on a spelling test or a homerun at a ballgame, it's when we're sitting on the bottom bunk and I look at them and I say, "I'm sorry. Dad blew it. I did not honor God with that. I didn't. I'm sorry. Will you forgive me?" And then I just try to gently restore and say, "And you guys will help me a ton when we don't fight over what we eat we sit in, what we say at the table. And I forgive you, and can we just pray right now and ask God to help us in these situations. And as we pray and we embrace, sometimes cry, the best conversations are there because before we walk out of that bedroom I say, "It's over. It's done. I love you." I would venture to say some of you have had those kind of conversations and you know how good they are. So here's my question for you. How are your desires? Are they turning into demands? Are you judging? And are you punishing? And we all want to be peacemakers, so can you glorify God? Get the log out, gently restore, and then go and be reconciled.

Let me pray for us. God we love you and we thank you for your Word. I thank you for your Word that even in this extreme case, that there is hope. Hope for those that are hurting and in major conflict this morning. Hope for those of us who are arguing over petty things. God I thank you that your Word gives us solutions. It tells us that you have come to be the peacemaker and you have modeled that for us. And I pray that we will follow that example for the family. Thank you for that. God we love you, and I do pray that we take every opportunity when we see the conflict to bring you glory. It's in your Son's name we pray. Amen.