

INTRODUCTION:

Rodney King was a taxi driver who became internationally known when a tape was released of him being beaten on March 3, 1991 by the Los Angeles Police Department officers following a high-speed car chase. The footage showed four officers brutally and repeatedly striking a defenseless King while other officers stood by and did nothing. The four officers were charged with assault with a deadly weapon and use of excessive force. At the trial none of the officers were found guilty of any of the charges. Within hours the 1992 Los Angeles riots started because of outrage over the outcome. It lasted six days, during which 63 people were killed and more than 2,000 were injured. In the midst of the violence Rodney King himself appealed for calm by asking the now famous question, "Can we all get along?"

When Abram and Lot's possessions became so great the land they were both dwelling in could no longer sustain them, there was strife between the herdsmen of Abram's livestock and Lot's livestock which led Abram to say to Lot, "Please let there be no strife between you and me, nor between my herdsmen and your herdsmen, for we are brothers" (Ge 13:8).

Sadly, many of God's people still have a very difficult time getting along with brethren and other people. Christians who should be blessing their churches, homes, workplaces, classrooms, and communities with peace are often guilty of cursing them with strife. 1 Co 1:10-11.

That we might get along with each other and all as we ought, in this morning's lesson let's consider what God teaches us in His word about strife.

DISCUSSION:

1. **What is strife?** Strife is *eris*, "contention, strife, wrangling."
 - A. Contention is "anger and disagreement."
 - B. Strife is "very angry or violent disagreement between two or more people or groups."
 - C. To wrangle is "to argue angrily with someone."
2. **Is strife a serious matter?** Pr 6:12, 14, 16, 19; Ga 5:19-21; Philip 2:14, 16; 1 Ti 2:8.
3. **Why strife? What is the cause? Why don't we all get along?**
 - A. **Generally.** Strife flows from perverse men (Pr 16:28) whose minds are depraved, deprived of the truth (1 Ti 6:5), foolish (Pr 18:6), fleshly (not spiritual), and immature (1 Co 3:1-3).
 - B. **Specifically.** Strife can stem from one or more things, none of which are good.
 - 1) **Enmity or hatred, i.e. treating people in thought, motive, word and/or deed like enemies, people to be destroyed rather than brothers to be won.** Pr 10:12.
 - 2) **Jealousy (unrestrained zeal).** 2 Co 12:20; Ro 13:13; Ja 4:2, "You are envious (*ze/oo*) and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel." Ironically, unrestrained zeal for the truth causes a tremendous amount of strife.
 - 3) **Sinful wrath and anger.** Pr 15:18; 30:33.
 - 4) **Disputes (selfish ambitions, partisanship), i.e. greater concern for the interests of a few than the best interests of all.** 2 Co 12:20; Lu 9:46; Ja 4:1-2A.
 - 5) **Slanders.** 2 Co 2:12; Pr 16:28.
 - 6) **Gossip.** Pr 26:20.
 - 7) **Arrogance.** 2 Co 12:20; Pr 28:25; 13:10.
 - 8) **Disturbances.** "Instability, confusion, disorder." The lack of communication, leadership, etc. 2 Co 12:20.
 - 9) **False teaching.** 1 Timothy 6:3-4.
 - 10) **The morbid interest in controversial questions and disputes about words, contentiousness.** Pr 26:21; 1 Ti 6:4.
 - 11) **The use of mind altering substances.** Pr 23:29.
 - 12) **Etc.**

(OVER)

4. **What are the fruits of strife? What are its effects?**

- A. **More of the things which cause strife.** Ga 5:19-21. Hatred or envying, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes (selfish ambitions, partisanship). Strife is a vicious downward spiral into ever greater depths of degradation.
- B. **Licentiousness.** Ha 1:3B-4A.
- C. **Verbal and physical abuse.** Ne 13:25A; 1 Ti 6:4.
- D. **Evil suspicions.** 1 Ti 6:4.
- E. **Constant friction.** 1 Ti 6:5.
- F. **Standing apart.** Ga 5:19-21; Pr 18:19.
- G. **Factions (*hairesis*, choosings).** Ga 5:19-21.
- H. **Stress, frustration, and misery.** De 1:12; 1 Co 3:1-3; Pr 19:13.
- I. **Waste and ruin.** Ga 5:15; 2 Ti 2:14.
- J. **Etc.**

APPLICATIONS: What must we do to prevent and eliminate strife? We must ...

- 1. **Resolve to prevent and eliminate strife.** Pr 20:3.
- 2. **Focus first and foremost on whether we are doing all we can to prevent and eliminate strife.** Mt 7:5.
- 3. **Pick our battles.**
 - A. **Have I really been harmed?** Pr 3:30.
 - B. **Should I just give them what they want?** Ge 26:18-22.
 - C. **Would it serve a constructive purpose?** Ti 3:9.
- 4. **Listen.** Ja 1:19-20; Job 13:5-6; Ti 2:9, “not argumentative;” NASB footnote “not contradicting;” NKJV “not answering back.”
- 5. **Calm down, pray, and think long and hard before we say or do anything.** Pr 15:1-2; Ne 5:6-7 (“after serious thought, I rebuked the nobles and rulers” NKJV).
 - A. Trying to resolve conflict when we are angry is as foolish as trying to put out a fire with gasoline. It is better to do nothing when we are angry than do something in and make matters worse.
 - B. Jesus did not quarrel or raise His voice in anger. Ma 12:19. He knew how to contend without being contentious, how to disagree without being disagreeable and so must we.
- 6. **Stop strife as soon as it starts.** Pr 17:14. Even if we did not start it, we must do all we can stop it. Jdg 8:1-3; Pr 22:10; Ti 3:10-11. Withdrawing from a relationship is not a first step, sometimes it is never a step and all other times it is the last step, one we can only take after we have exhausted all scriptural means of saving the relationship. We certainly cannot terminate relationships simply to avoid having to look inward and make the changes we must to love our neighbors as ourselves.
- 7. **Learn from our mistakes.**
- 8. **Etc.**

CONCLUSION: Peaceful relationships are the real source of joy in life. The difference between relationships that bless and curse is not the absence or presence of conflict, for all relationships have conflict, but how the parties involved view and handle conflict. The parties in blessed relationships do not see conflict as a problem, but as an opportunity to identify problems they need to resolve through love so their relationships become more blessed over time. They do not allow conflict to become yet another problem that needs to be resolved.