

# HEALTHY CHURCHES VALUE HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

## PAUL'S PLEA TO THE CHURCH AT PHILIPPI



HELP THESE WOMEN. THEY'VE BEEN ROBBED.

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HEALTHY CHURCHES UNDERSTAND THE IMPORTANCE OF BUILDING, MAINTAINING AND REPAIRING RELATIONSHIPS IN THE CHURCH.

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**1. Healthy churches understand the importance of being diligent in maintaining healthy relationships within the body of Christ in order to stand firm in the Lord, 4:1.**

- (Philippians 4:1 ESV) Therefore, my brothers, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved.

- A. Healthy churches understand that healthy relationships within the body of Christ enable the church as a whole to stand firm in the Lord.
- B. Healthy churches understand that building, maintaining and repairing relationships in the church must be according to the word of God.
- C. Healthy churches realize that this is the only way to overcome divisions and contentions so they may be strong and courageous in the Lord.

**2. Healthy churches understand the necessary obligation of the body to help individual members build, maintain and repair relationships with one another, 4:2-3.**

- (Philippians 4:2-3 ESV) I entreat Euodia and I entreat Syntyche to agree in the Lord. 3 Yes, I ask you also, true companion, help these women, who have labored side by side with me in the gospel together with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.

- A. Euodia and Syntyche were sisters in Christ but were divided in their relationship.
- B. Sin on the part of both women was the cause.
- C. They needed the leadership of the church to help them see that this division kept them from standing firm in the Lord.
- D. They needed the leadership of the church to take charge of the situation and insist that they find agreement in the Lord.

The word for help means ... to help; to give help or assistance; be of service; to seize, take one as prisoner; in a hostile sense, to make (one a permanent) prisoner.

- E. Euodia needed someone to help her see beyond herself to understand that Syntyche was not the problem but that her lack of trust in the Lord was the problem. And vice-versa.

**3. Healthy churches understand that being divided in our human relationships is a result of being divided in our relationship with God.**

A. The way back to unity with God and those around us is to direct our minds and hearts to God through an understanding and obedience to his word.

B. Adam and Eve were divided in their relationship with God when their thinking was moved away from agreement with his word.

- (Genesis 3:13 ESV) Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this that you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."
- (2 Corinthians 11:3 ESV) But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ.
- (1 Timothy 2:13-14 ESV) For Adam was formed first, then Eve; 14 and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor.

**4. In his call for them to help these women, Paul would likely have advised the leadership at Philippi to instruct the women in OT and NT teaching for the basics in dealing with disputes and accusations.**

- (Philippians 3:5 ESV) Circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee.

A. A necessary first step is a willingness on the part of the women to use biblical principles to establish exactly what happened.

- (Deuteronomy 19:15-20 ESV) A single witness shall not suffice against a person for any crime or for any wrong in connection with any offense that he has committed. Only on the evidence of two witnesses or of three witnesses shall a charge be established. 16 If a malicious witness arises to accuse a person of wrongdoing, 17 then both parties to the dispute shall appear before the LORD, before the priests and the judges who are in office in those days. 18 The judges shall inquire diligently, and if the witness is a false witness and has accused his brother falsely, 19 then you shall do to him as he had meant to do to his brother. So you shall purge the evil from your midst. 20 And the rest shall hear and fear, and shall never again commit any such evil among you.
- (Matthew 18:16 ESV) But if he does not

listen, take one or two others along with you, **that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses.**

- (1 Timothy 5:19 LSB) Do not receive an accusation against an elder **except on the basis of two or three witnesses.**
- (2 Corinthians 13:1 ESV) This is the third time I am coming to you. **Every charge must be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses.**

**B. The leadership needed to see how important it was to follow Scriptural principles to prevent a root of bitterness from defiling many in their fellowship.**

- (Deuteronomy 29:18 ESV) **Beware lest there be among you a man or woman or clan or tribe whose heart is turning away today from the LORD our God to go and serve the gods of those nations. Beware lest there be among you a root bearing poisonous and bitter fruit.**
- (Hebrews 12:14–15 ESV) Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. 15 **See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no “root of bitterness” springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled.**

**5. Healthy churches know what great loss will be suffered if they do not build, maintain and repair relationships within the body, 4:4-7.**

- (Philippians 4:4–7 ESV) **Rejoice** in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. 5 Let your **reasonableness** be known to everyone. **The Lord is at hand;** 6 do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. 7 **And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.**
- A. The cumulative result of choosing to lean on our own understanding and remain in a contentious relationship versus trusting in the Lord with all our heart is twofold ...**
- The peace of God will no longer be guarding your heart and mind in Christ Jesus so your unguarded heart and mind will be filled with anxiety.**
  - You will no longer be living with the blessed awareness of the reality that the God of peace is with you.**

**B. When we choose to lick our wounds (*taking refuge in ourselves*) as opposed to taking refuge in God, then we quickly forget how good life tastes in the shelter of the Almighty.**

- (Psalm 34:8 ESV) **Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good! Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him!**
- (Psalm 91:1–6 ESV) **He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty.** 2 I will say to the LORD, “My refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.” 3 For he will deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the deadly pestilence. 4 He will cover you with his pinions, and under his wings **you will find refuge; his faithfulness is a shield and buckler.** 5 **You will not fear** the terror of the night, nor the arrow that flies by day, 6 nor the pestilence that stalks in darkness, nor the destruction that wastes at noonday.

**6. The person whose pride keeps them entrapped in a contentious relationship forfeits her ability to trust the Lord with her life and instead sins by leaning on her own understanding.**

- (Proverbs 3:5–7 ESV) **Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding.** 6 **In all your ways acknowledge him,** and he will make straight your paths. 7 **Be not wise in your own eyes;** fear the Lord, **and turn away from evil.**

Here is a partial list of what Euodia and Syntyche forfeit by leaning on their own understanding and not resolving their contention in the Lord. (*To forfeit means to lose or give up something, usually as a penalty for misconduct.*)

**A. She forfeits her testimony.**

**B. She forfeits her firm stand in the Lord.**

**C. She forfeits her opportunity to encourage and build up the body of the Lord Jesus.**

- (1 Thessalonians 5:11 ESV) Therefore **encourage one another and build one another up,** just as you are doing.

**D. She forfeits her opportunity to grow up in Christ.**

- (Ephesians 4:15 ESV) Rather, **speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him** who is the head, into Christ.

**E. She forfeits her ability to be effective and fruitful in**

her knowledge of Christ.

- (2 Peter 1:8 ESV) For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, **they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful** in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

F. She forfeits her joy in the Lord.

G. She forfeits her ability to relate in a reasonable manner to others.

H. She forfeits her awareness of and confidence in the nearness of the Lord.

I. Her pride blinds her to the exalted nature of God and keeps her from humbling herself before God and trusting him with all the cares of life.

- (1 Peter 5:6–7 ESV) **Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, 7 casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.**

#### 7. We need to help the person who is caught up in the throes of contention to think differently, 4:8.

- (Philippians 4:8 ESV) Finally, brothers, whatever is **true**, whatever is **honorable**, whatever is **just**, whatever is **pure**, whatever is **lovely**, whatever is **commendable**, **if there is any excellence**, **if there is anything worthy of praise**, **think about these things**.

A. We are commanded to direct our thinking in general, but clearly defined ways which if obeyed will yield very relevant results for those dealing with division and conflict.

B. For instance this would be a test of sorts for Euodia and Syntyche to help them determine if they are interested in what is true.

C. The general commands — any excellence, anything worthy of praise — if heeded would resolve their conflict and bring peace into their lives and those in the fellowship at Philippi.

D. But this is neither how nor what the anxiety-filled, contentious person is thinking.

E. To not obey this command to redirect her thinking is sinful and is harmful to her spiritual, mental, emotional and physical wellbeing.

F. She has not obeyed God and directed her mind to think biblically and so she does not know the reality

of what actually is going on.

G. Her mind is filled with anxiety because she is running through all the possible scenarios of what is possible within the scope of her human understanding.

H. The way God may make is not typically one contrived in our minds by leaning on our own understanding but is the way of his peace — beyond our comprehension and always better than our way.

I. The rebel mind fills itself with speculation.

J. This is the natural progression of thought for the one who refuses to follow biblical guidelines to establish the reality of the situation.

K. Her mind is polluted with thoughts of winning a battle and not repairing a relationship.

L. Her vision is obscured as she obsesses on herself and her problems.

#### 8. We need to help our sisters (and brothers) by emphasizing the daily spiritual disciplines listed in the previous verses that bring them into the presence of the God of peace, 4:9.

- (Philippians 4:9 ESV) **What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.**

• (1 Thessalonians 4:1 ESV) Finally, then, brothers, we ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus, **that as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God, just as you are doing, that you do so more and more.**

A. It is sin and rebellion to not practice these things.

B. The contentious person does not have the peace of God guarding his heart and mind.

C. This person lives apart from the blessed reality of the God of peace being with her or him.