

Teens, Conflict and Instant Communication

Over the past several weeks, FPC Youth have talked about conflict. We viewed videos of teens talking about real issues, and we shared our own. We studied scripture to look for guidance in how to internally handle conflict, and how to outwardly respond to it. One thing we learned is that conflict is unavoidable. We cannot control other people's actions or reactions, but we *can* control how we react to them. It is okay to feel anger, but we don't have to react *in* anger.

We discovered that one of our main struggles is how to *not* respond to conflict (particularly in this world of instant communication). We realized that there is some sort of internal need for "permission" not to respond at all. Texting, instant messaging, Facebook, MySpace, and other mediums of communication have created conversational atmospheres that have no down-time. The need exists for a very conscious decision to step away from (or remove your thumbs from) the conversation before firing back a response without discernment. Think of it this way: If you weren't constantly connected to others via technology, you would have time to cool off, calm down, think about, and step away from the situation. If you feel that you *MUST* be connected at all times, realize that this *does not obligate you to participate in any of the conversations or posts occurring on your cell phone or social site.*

Look at Romans 12-14, particularly Romans 13:8. In this passage, Paul extends and intensifies the concept of obligation. We are obliged to expand and perfect the giving of love. Love is not an added duty, but a motivating power that frees us and helps us to serve with our whole heart and our whole spirit. Perhaps the most loving thing you can do in some situations, is not acknowledge them. When we participate in the drama, feed the fires, and hurt people for the sake of hurting them, we are not acting out of love, but *reacting* to the actions of another. Free yourself by listening to your heart of hearts, to God. Create a game plan for how you will handle conflict. If someone sends you an inflammatory text, message, or post, STOP before you respond. Have a plan of action for what you will do to give yourself time to reflect on the situation and decide how you will respond (if at all). Choose to use your time wisely and in a manner that exhibits your Christian beliefs.

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