

Abraham and Abimelech II



Our consideration of Conflict and Resolution involve matters concerning men, either in their relationship with one another, or with God, or both. In many cases Conflict desires a Resolution. When a Conflict exists there has been “competitive or opposing actions of incompatibles: antagonistic state or action (as of divergent ideas, interests, or persons,” or a “mental struggle resulting from incompatible or opposing needs, drives, wishes, or external or internal demands.” When such arises, for men to have peace, i.e., an agreement based on a similarity in goals, certain steps must be taken to accomplish a peaceful Resolution.

When the Lord spoke to his disciples, concerning conflict and resolution, he said, “And if thy brother sin against thee, go, show him his fault between thee and him alone: if he hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he hear thee not, take with thee one or two more, that at the mouth of two witnesses or three every word may be established. And if he refuse to hear them, tell it unto the church: and if he refuse to hear the church also, let him be unto thee as the Gentile and the publican.” (Matthew 18:15–17). The prophet Amos, put it this way, “Shall two walk together, except they have agreed?” (Amos 3:3). When a

Resolution is accomplished, then surely the words of David are fulfilled, saying, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" (Psalms 133:1).

There was a 6th century Chinese philosopher, who said, "If there is to be peace in the world, there must be peace in the nations. If there is to be peace in the nations, there must be peace in the cities. If there is to be peace in the cities, there must be peace between neighbors. If there is to be peace between neighbors, there must be peace in the home. If there is to be peace in the home, there must be peace in the heart" (Lao-Tzu).

In the last segment the Conflict under consideration involved Abraham and Abimelech king of Gerar: Abraham and Sarah had deceived Abimelech by withholding the true nature of their relationship, i.e., Abraham said of Sarah his wife, "she is my sister: and Abimelech king of Gerar sent, and took Sarah" (Genesis 20:2).

Having been warned of God Abimelech was instructed to "restore the man's wife; for he is a prophet, and he shall pray for thee, and thou shalt live: and if thou restore her not, know thou that thou shalt surely die, thou, and all that are thine" (Genesis 20:7): Resolution one.

Resolution two: "And Abimelech rose early in the morning, and called all his servants, and told all these things in their ear. And the men were sore afraid." Then Abimelech called Abraham, and said unto him, What hast thou done unto us? And wherein have I sinned against thee, that thou hast brought on me and on my kingdom a great sin? Thou hast done deeds unto me that ought not to be done. And Abimelech said unto Abraham, What sawest thou, that thou hast done this thing? And Abraham said, Because I thought, [how many of man's conflicts arise from that statement?] Surely the fear of God is not in this place. And they will slay me for my wife's sake. And moreover she is indeed my sister, the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother; and she became my wife: and it came to pass, when God caused me to wander from my father's

house, that I said unto her, This is thy kindness which thou shalt show unto me. At every place whither we shall come, say of me, He is my brother. And Abimelech took sheep and oxen, and men-servants and women-servants, and gave them unto Abraham, and restored him Sarah his wife. And Abimelech said, Behold, my land is before thee. Dwell where it pleaseth thee. And unto Sarah he said, Behold, I have given thy brother a thousand pieces of silver. Behold, it is for thee a covering of the eyes to all that are with thee. And in respect of all thou art righted” (Genesis 20:8-16). In this case apparently a form of restitution was made to Abraham, and to Sarah, her honor had been righted.

Up to this point in time, and the Conflict and Resolution accounts we have consider there has been conditions placed upon the offender: whether repentance, and/or restitution. When conflicts arise there is always an offending principal, and that principal is required to recognize their error, and respond appropriately.

When Moses gave the Law to the children of Israel, right before going in to possess the land, he dealt with the importance of resolving conflicts, saying, “If there arise a matter too hard for thee in judgment, between blood and blood, between plea and plea, and between stroke and stroke, being matters of controversy within thy gates; then shalt thou arise, and get thee up unto the place which Jehovah thy God shall choose; and thou shalt come unto the priests the Levites, and unto the judge that shall be in those days: and thou shalt inquire; and they shall show thee the sentence of judgment. And thou shalt do according to the tenor of the sentence which they shall show thee from that place which Jehovah shall choose; and thou shalt observe to do according to all that they shall teach thee: according to the tenor of the law which they shall teach thee, and according to the judgment which they shall tell thee, thou shalt do; thou shalt not turn aside from the sentence which they shall show thee, to the right hand, nor to the left. And the man that doeth presumptuously, in not hearkening unto the priest that standeth to minister there before Jehovah thy God, or unto the judge, even that man shall die: and thou shalt put away the evil

from Israel. And all the people shall hear, and fear, and do no more presumptuously.” (Deuteronomy 17:8–13). Let us not be presumptuous when it’s our turn.