

Series	Untangled (Part 1)
Bible	Philippians 4:1-3; Ephesians 4:1-5
Title/Topic	It's Bigger Than Me
Overview	We might have a narrow focus when it comes to relational conflict—thinking that it's just about us and whoever it is that we have conflict with. But what if it was more than that? What if there was a bigger picture at play? What we learn from Philippians 4:1-3 and Ephesians 4:1-5 teaches us that conflict impacts more than just us. It's much bigger than you and me.
Scripture Breakdown	<p>Main Point: Because of what's at stake, we must be eager to maintain unity and deal with relational conflict.</p> <p>Additional Comment: The situation between the two women mentioned in Philippians 4:1-3 should not be automatically assumed as a huge, messy argument that we often think of when it comes to conflict. We aren't told what it is, but Paul seemed concerned enough to address it. Not every conflict we face warrants enormous stress and sleepless nights, but we must not allow even smaller conflict to go unchecked because of what it can lead to.</p> <p>WHAT'S AT STAKE IF WE DON'T DEAL WITH CONFLICT:</p> <p>1) Our Gospel <i>efficiency</i> is at stake.</p> <p>If you've ever had that dreaded check engine light come on in your car, you know how frustrating that can be—especially if you live in an area where emissions tests are required for your vehicle, in which case it will not pass. What this indicates is that at some level (even if minor), your car is not running as efficiently as it should. You can act like it's not there all you want, but if left untreated you will be destined for obstacles and further frustration down the road.</p> <p>In Philippians 4:1-3, Paul is addressing a situation with two women (Euodia and Syntyche) who are going through conflict. Paul calls them his fellow workers, which means they were active as he was in spreading the Gospel. This text almost seems out of place in a letter that talks a lot about joy, Christ-like humility, and worry-free living. Why would Paul call this out in what seems like a tangent? Because he knows that we must be eager at all times to maintain the unity of the Spirit, even if the conflict may be minor, since this is part of what it means to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which we have been called (see Eph 4:1-5). Paul didn't want this causing any obstacles to future ministry and gospel efficiency in the church at Philippi. Because of this, he addressed it.</p>

2. Our Gospel *focus* is at stake.

If you've ever tried to focus on something when there's all kinds of distractions around, you know how this is next to impossible. Some people even suggest that no one can truly multitask even if they say they can focus on many things at once. The goal of multitasking is to do two or more things at the same time at 100% efficiency. Because of the limits of our brain capacity, some suggest that this can't actually happen. To give 100% to something, our brains must focus on one thing at a time.

So why was Paul eager to address the situation with Euodia and Syntyche? Because he knew that the church's ability to focus on the Gospel mission would be divided if this continued. They would not be able to give 100% focus to the Gospel mission if this conflict was left unaddressed and unresolved. Because of this, he wanted the church at Philippi to take this matter seriously—even if on the surface it appeared as no big deal.

3. Our Gospel *testimony* is at stake.

No one likes being told one thing and getting another. No one likes being told that this or that is going to happen when what actually happens is something completely different.

Imagine being a non-Christian who has suddenly become interested in the things of God. You're told by a Christian friend that you should come to his/her church because of the warm, friendly atmosphere you will experience. You agree to join your friend the following Sunday, but you walk into an atmosphere that has the stench of conflict. You can feel it in the body language of the people and how they interact with each other. You walk away from that experience discouraged and wondering if you should return the following week or even if the whole Jesus thing is actually worth it.

This may sound like just a hypothetical scenario, but sadly many churches have to admit this has happened many times before. They had an opportunity to reach someone with the Gospel, but because of conflict in the atmosphere, their testimony was impacted.

Paul knew this would eventually happen in the church at Philippi if it wasn't beginning to happen already. Because of the conflict between Euodia and Syntyche, Paul knew the church's Gospel testimony was at stake.

Gospel	All of us are born into conflict with God because of our sin nature. If this isn't addressed, it will cause death and destruction. The only way to have this resolved is through Jesus Christ. Will you trust him today in this matter?
Next Steps	Do you have a brother or sister in Christ with whom you're in conflict? What needs to be done to resolve it? Remember what's at stake.

If you have any questions or need assistance, you can email me at jasonp@newlifechicago.org.