

## CONFLICT AND THE CALL TO BLESS

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The couple was on the verge of separating. In meeting with them it was apparent they had both been deeply hurt and unwilling to forgive. What struck me was the depth to which each had gone in order to avoid the fears and areas that left them feeling so vulnerable. The sadness of hearing and watching them shame each other was overwhelming.

Each of us has areas where life has taught us to not trust. Instead, some life experiences teach people to fear or expect pain. To protect oneself, it is natural to find yourself doing whatever is known to do to protect the already bruised areas. These defenses are unconscious as well as conscious. Peter talks to husbands and wives in I Peter 3 in which he gives directive to both about their behavior and the condition of their hearts. Interesting to note is his concluding directives to them in which he states, "Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous; Not returning evil for evil, or reviling for reviling, but blessing; on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing. He who would love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit. Let him turn away from evil and do good; Let him seek peace and pursue it..." (NKJV)

We all have vulnerable areas. We are all loved by God. Having "...one mind..." cannot happen unless we see how we are equal. It is understandable and easy to see why people "...render evil for evil..." We want them to hurt as we have hurt. That actual desire for retribution also keeps us from receiving the blessing of the Lord. We have been called to bless one another. Learning to bless one another is not an instantaneous change. It takes time, lots of time and blessing requires nurturance.

God loves us. He is no respecter of persons. If you find yourself in a similar pattern with a loved one, do what it takes to obey God and bless the very one who has hurt you. Find out what it is that they do well and then say so. Dare to express admiration for the attributes you appreciate. They are still there even if it does not seem so. It is a way to create an atmosphere in which compassion, respect and love is nurtured. As the passages states it opens the way for God's blessing to come to you.

*(Correlates with Handout: Expressing Appreciation)*

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