**Bumper video:**

Great to be with you all today – (explain where I have been - gathering with pastors)

Today **we continue our series** entitled **“Conflict”** – in this series we have been looking at **FOUR** ***unhealthy strategies for handling conflict***.

YOU MAY BE WONDERING **WHY FOUR WEEKS ON CONFLICT**?

Because **we all have it – it is unavoidable** and many of us don’t know how to handle it in a healthy way!

In fact, when it comes to conflict - many of us go into our **default human response** of ***fight or flight!***

This means we have an **active or passive response** that at it’s core is unhealthy**.**

Truth be told, **we have a hard time handling conflict** in a Godly way that **fulfills what Jesus commanded** when He said:

***Matthew 5:23-24 (NIV) 23  "……. if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, 24  leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift.***

**Reconciliation is the heart of God!**

God willingly **sacrificed His son to reconcile with us** and He wants **us to live in a spirit of reconciliation** with each other.

This is **why the first week of our series** we talked about how to navigate the **NEGATIVE ACTIVE RESPONSE** of **“Fight to Win.”**

When you confront conflict with the motive to **win at all cost** you have **positioned yourself to turn conflict into warfare.**

This makes the **other person the loser** so **you can prevail as the winner.**

Last week, we looked at the **NEGITIVE passive response** of putting our **“Head in the Sand.”.**

This **passive response to conflict** pretends like nothing is wrong and **attempts to ignore the conflict** - hoping that it will go away.

**Has anyone used this strategy? Did it work? Conflict will never go away when you ignored it, it only gets bigger.**

Next week, we’ll look at another unhealthy **passive response** to conflict. HOWEVER-

Today I want us to look at another UNHEALTHY **ACTIVE RESPONSE** to conflict known as **“Run and Hide.”**

**I remember when I was in the third grade** - I was dealing with a conflict.

We were **given an assignment in class** and I **didn’t want to do** it.

So I **came up with a brilliant plan**, I would just fake being sick!

For this amazing plan to work, **I had to convince my teacher and the school nurse to agree with my third** grade professional diagnosis.

With the **sickest look I could muster**, I went to my teacher and **proclaimed my desperate need to be released** from school.

My teacher gave me compassion and said, **“oh I’m so sorry let me send you to the nurse.”**

Looking back, I’m sure she didn’t believe me.

Nevertheless, **getting that pass to visit the nurse** made me believe **I had pulled one over on her**.

When I got to the nurse **she wasn’t as easy to win over**.

She took one look at me and said, **“I don’t believe you’re sick - go back to class.”**

So I did what most people would do…….well I think…….**I WALKED HOME**. (pause)

When I got to my house, I went and hid in my bedroom, **waited about four hours until my mom and dad**, (who had been called by the school) came home.

Needless to say, my **attempt to run and hide from my conflict** didn’t work.

Not only did I have to complete the assignment - I had additional work and an extra punishment to go along with it.

I find it amazing how we can be **easily deceived into believing** that **running from our conflicts** will actually **make the situation better.**

Why do we do this…**I blame it on our ancestors!**

If we go all the **way back through the gene pool of our 23 and me ancestry DNA**, we would find ***this response comes natural***.

You see our **first parents reacted like this**.

**Adam and Eve** - You can read their story in the Genesis chapter 2 and 3

After they disobeyed God by eating from the forbidden tree, ***known as the tree of the knowledge of good and evil***, the knowledge of the evil began to fill them with guilt and shame.

Their first reaction when they experienced this new emotion was to **run and hide**.

They knew their **actions would create conflict with God**, so they **actively ran and hid to avoid** the guilt, shame and **pain** of their failure.

When **God came for His daily walk**, they didn’t show up because they were in hiding.

For the first time, **guilt, shame, and fear came between man and God.**

And It’s been going on ever since.

We see this in our children.

It’s ***COMMON*** for our children to run and hide when there is a conflict.

We all understand this reaction don’t we? **Because many of us adults still do this today!**

For many of us, **it is easier to run away from conflict** than it is to **walk into the chaos and forge our way into reconciliation!**

**So Why do we run?**

Sometimes it is because of **SHAME**.

We are **ashamed of how we have behaved** or by what we have experienced.

We know that we have **said some things we shouldn’t have said or done somethings we shouldn’t have done.**

We have all **said or done hurtful or stupid things** during the heat of a **conflict that we deeply regret.**

We have all experienced something we think no one would understand.

We feel **shame because maybe we think we could have stopped what happened** or we are **embarrassed because we believe we are to blame for the situation.**

Sometimes we run because of **FEAR**.

We are afraid of what might happen, we build up the **“would have - should have - could have”** walls in our mind and we become **gripped with fear.**

Fear about **what people will think, fear about what people will say, fear about how they will act.**

So we run away.

Sometimes it is just to avoid the **PAIN**.

The **perceived pain of dealing** with a conflict seems greater than **escaping it all together by running away**.

Sometimes we run because we have been **JADED BY OUR EXPERIENCES**.

We believe **nothing can be done to resolve the conflict**, because the **person has been unreceptive** in the past.

We prefer to **run away rather than work to make things better because things never seem to change.**

We just **quit trying and end up living a lifestyle of escape** rather than dealing with the conflicts around us.

**Running and hiding not only is natural to us - many of us have master’s degrees in running and hiding.**

(Transition)

One of the reasons **I love the Bible** is it captures **real life stories of individuals who faced real life problems** …… even conflict.

Through the Bible we gain a **front row seat of individuals in history and see how they dealt with conflict.**

This could be **conflict they created or conflict** that was happing around them.

When you go to the **first book in the Bible Genesis**, which is all about origin stories----

You will **find the historical account of Jacob and Esau** - in Genesis chapter 25.

Their story **begins with a father praying for his wife** to have kids.

God hears his prayer and opens the womb of his wife **granting her twin boys!**

Are there **any wives in the room who would like to come forward** and have your husband pray for you this way?

These **twin babies were active even jostling** around in the womb.

**Rebekah**, the mother, prays and asks God about this and He replies, ***“You have two nations in your belly, they will end up separated and the older will serve the younger!”***

Esau **was born first** but Jacob **was fighting for a close second**.

He was **holding onto Esau’s foot with a defiant grip** when he was born as to say, ***“you’re not going to beat me into this world!”***

In the customs of that day, **the oldest son would have the birthright and because of this**, he would be in line for the biggest **blessing** and the **majority of the inheritance.**

When they were old enough to care, **Jacob came up with a scheme to deal with this birth order blessing custom**. (Genesis 25:29-34)

Esau **was a hunter and would go out on what we will call**, “all out hunting trips.”

Jacob was **more of a mama’s boy** so he would hang back at the tent and chill.

On one occasion, **Esau came home from a hunting trip** starving while **Jacob was at home making a batch** of stew.

Esau was so **famished he begged Jacob** for some of what he had made.

Jacob seizing an opportunity and said **“sure I’ll trade you for the birthright.**”

Esau was so hungry he shouted, **“what good is that to me if I die, give me the food.”**

So in this moment Jacob took advantage of Esau.

Then on top of this, **it was also customary for the oldest son to receive a special blessing prayer** from their dad.

This **blessing would position the oldest to take over dominance in the family** and gain the majority of the status and inheritance.

Esau’s dad, Isaac, **sent him on a mission to hunt for some game and fix a meal** that he loved and **afterwards he would bless Esau.**

Jacob’s **mother learned of this and came up with a plan** to steal this blessing from his older brother.

Rebekah used her **culinary skills to make Isaac a batch** of his favorite stew.

Then she **sent Jacob to deliver it to his dad while wearing a disguise**, tricking his father into believing he was Esau.

**It worked** - Isaac blessed **Jacob pronouncing him as a great nation that would get all of the privileged status of a first-born.**

Anyone out there, have a baby brother or baby sister like this?

When Esau found out about this, **he was livid!**

In fact, after a lifetime of conflict with his brother Esau said,

***(Genesis 27:36, NIV) “Isn’t he rightly named Jacob? This is the second time he has taken advantage of me: He took my birthright, and now he’s taken my blessing!”***

That’s just the beginning of Esau’s rage!

He began to **build a grudge against his brother Jaco**b and listen to what He says to himself.

***“The days of mourning for my father are near; then I will kill my brother Jacob.”* (Genesis 27:41 NIV)**

When **Jacob’s mom heard about this she went to Jacob telling him what was going to happen and encouraged** him to get out of dodge.

**So Jacob did what many do in conflict, he ran and to hide!**

Do you see how **unresolved conflict leads to grudges** and motivates revenge and even violence?

Esau was **about to employ a fight to win strategy** on his brother and Jacob **instead of repenting to make things right**, ran and hid far away in another country.

Even though Jacob had messed up, God was with him.

While he was escaping, **God gave him a vision about who he would become and what would happen in his life.**

God spoke to him in a dream that **showed a ladder that ascended into heaven**, in this dream, the Lord stood before Jacob and declared:

***“I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying. Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring. I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.””* (Genesis 28:13–15, NIV)**

Jacob was overcome by the vision; he set up a pillar named the place Bethel, he gave an offering vowing to return someday.

**But Jacob wasn’t prepared to deal with his conflict.**

So he continued to run to Haran and spent the next **20 years of his life in a time of spiritual refinement.**

You really need to read this **part of his story on your own** to get the full depth of this refinement. (Geneses chapter 27-31)

The **irony of one who had deceived** being treated, just like he treated his brother, had to have worked on Jacob’s heart.

In these 20 years, **Jacob got a good dose of his own deceptive** behavior.

Then God spoke to him and reminded him of his vow to return to his homeland and reconcile:

***“I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed a pillar and where you made a vow to me. Now leave this land at once and go back to your native land.’* (Genesis 31:13, NIV)**

Jacob knew that this **meant facing his conflict** with his brother Esau.

You, **see “run and hide” doesn’t work**. At some point, **you will have to face reality.**

Running and hiding only brings separation and anxiety.

It **prolongs the inevitable** and can **cause you to miss out on the best life** God desires for you.

Think about this, **Jacobs mom and dad missed 20 years of relationship with Jacob.**

They missed a wedding, two of them in fact.

They missed **celebrating the birth of their grandchildren** all because Jacob ran and hid.

Running and hiding causes **missed opportunities, and missed moments.**

When we run and hide, **we miss the best there is for us** and this will **increase your anxiety as you consider** it all.

We can only imagine the **anxiety that Jacob was feeling** as he headed home.

He was **afraid of Esau’s reaction so he sent messengers** and gifts ahead to prepare Esau.

Sometimes it’s helpful to **send a third party to help break the ice.**

But it is no substitute for a face-to-face.

Jacob was **gripped by fear**, he separated his family into groups to **hopefully soften his brother’s heart.**

This was a scary time for Jacob as he was ***“In great fear and distress”***as he anticipated his meeting with Esau.

So the Bible records that **Jacob spent the night in prayer when he was alone and this is where he wrestled with God** over this situation.

How many of you have wrestled with God?

You feel that **God is telling you to do something hard but you are afraid and you wrestle with God** as you want to go back to your old way of responding ---- **“Run and hide!”**

God wrestles with Jacob as Jacob says, ***“I will not let you go unless you bless me.”***

Have you ever been that desperate in prayer? Have you ever wrestled with God in prayer?

It was a **transforming experience**, because now **Jacob was not trying to deceive his way out or “run and hide.”**

He desperately needed **God to assure him of His presence**.

Finally, God asked him a weird question, ***“he asked, “What is your name?” “Jacob,” he answered.*”**

Why was this an important question? God knew what his name was….**so why did he ask him?**

I believe it was because **God wanted Jacob to see that he had been acting out his name.**

Jacob means ***“heel holder” or “supplanter”*** *basically it meant deceiver.*

**What are you known by? How has your behavior in conflict defined your reputation?**

Jacob through his entire life had been supplanting Esau.

God wanted **Jacob to know that there needed** to be a transformation.

God declared:

**“Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel, because you have struggled with God and with humans and have overcome.”” (Genesis 32:26–28, NIV)**

God changed **Jacob** from a “supplanter” or deceiver to **Israel** which means “God prevails”.

From this moment on, **Jacob was transformed by God as demonstrated by his new name Israel.**

He was no longer going to deceive and connive, but he was going to trust in a “God who prevails.”

**Do you need a transformation today? Do you need your reputation to be redefined?**

Instead of “running and hiding”, Israel learned to pray and let God prevail for him.

How can we avoid this “run and hide” conflict management style?

First, **we have to face who we are** – what are you known by?

Let God transform our name!

When people think of your name, do they think- WOW - **this is a person that faces conflict in a healthy way or will you be known as a runner?**

An encounter with God is the only way you can have this redefinition!

**Secondly**, we have to allow God to **redefine our responses**.

Have you asked God to help you **move into the conflicts in your life with the spirit of reconciliation?**

**Third,** we need to be willing to **pay the price** of reconciliation.

Jacob now called Israel **was willing to give all** he had to make things right with his brother.

What are you willing to give to make things right with the people in your life?

John Maxwell has defined **“The Ten Commandments of Confrontation,”** that I think would be helpful in recovering from the **“run and hide” reaction to conflict.**

As we wrap up today, I want us to **keep in mind the overall goals of clarifying, and achieving the vision Jesus** had for us in reconciling with others.

Here are the Ten Commandments of Confrontation:

* **Thou shalt confront as soon as possible and not look for “a better time.”** –You want to eliminate fear - then don’t run and hide become quick to resolve differences!
* **Thou shalt confront others in private.** – Go to the person, when we **do this in the right heart it will lower** our anxiety and give us perspective as we listen to the other person!
* **Thou shalt remember to highlight the person’s positive contributions.** – Think others not yourself when you do this, you may learn your fears are not valid and that the other person may really want what you want!
* **Thou shalt ask questions and offer suggestions.** – Seek to understand before you’re understood. **When we listen, we learn and there may be more to the story than you first understood,** this leads to peace!
* **Thou shalt stick to the issue at hand.** – don’t pile on deal with the issue at hand. This can help us lower our anxiety as we seek to deal with one issue at a time!
* **Thou shalt make thy point and not repeat it.** – don’t pile drive, deal with the issue with a humble heart, you will be amazed at how this keeps you from becoming jaded!
* **Thou shalt deal only with actions that can be changed**. – focus on what you can control not what fear you have or what concerns you this will really lower your anxiety.
* **Thou shalt avoid sarcasm (especially in an email or text)**. – choose love not shame, you don’t like feeling shame don’t heap it on others.
* **Thou shalt avoid words like always and never because they are rarely accurate.** – Because this NEVER WORKS!
* **Thou shalt not apologize for the confrontation.** – Conflict is inevitable, wade into is with a humble heart. **The first one to humble themselves will become the catalyst for resolving the conflict!**

***Conflict isn’t always bad it is a doorway for deeper levels of intimacy***

Bottom line we need to ask ourselves:

**Rather than creating distance and making gaps between us - how can we build a bridge for relational closeness?**

You cannot do this when you run and hide!

What needs to change in me to keep me from running and hiding?

**Let’s pray**

Response

* Maybe you are running from a conflict, and you need courage to face it – come and pray
* Maybe you have been hurt and you need healing
* Maybe you have become jaded and you need to open your mind
* Maybe your gripped with fear and you need peace