

Fired up: Conflict, Forgiveness and Joy

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(9 min.)

Three readers: Narrator, Performer 1, and Performer 2

Narrator: An organization of interest could be a homeowners' association, a church, a charity, or a professional group. It doesn't matter, a group of people has leaders, followers and objectors. By chance, two members from the same organization meet on the street corner. Let's hear what they have to say.

1 (Humming a lilting melody.)

2 Well, imagine meeting our group leader here. What are you so all-fired happy about?

1 I'm merely enjoying this cool, sunny day. How are you?

2 Fine too, I guess—if it doesn't rain.

1 Aw, then we could be happy for rain.

2 That reminds me, you were out-of-town at the last group meeting. We

needed you to settle an issue. Some want a fundraiser event outside, and others want it inside in case of bad weather. We practically had a *schism* over this.

Tempers flared and two walked out, steaming. What side of the fence do you fall on?

1 I'm not falling. I'll praise those who want it outside and thank them for their offer to organize outside events *and* the bad weather alternatives.

2 They didn't offer to do any of that themselves.

1 Then their wants don't mean much. I would say "sorry you're unable to do that. Good idea though; we can do it sometime when the talent's available to organize and set it up. We can have the event inside this time."

2 You *inspire* me with your clever, tactful solutions...But some still won't be happy.

1 Not my problem. Mine is to know their wants without prejudice and make the fairest offer I can. That's how I can be at peace with myself.

2 But people don't always agree on what *is* fair. And they're suspicious of others' motive. How do you rest at night when you know how screwed up the world is? Human beings are a pain.

1 People are wonderful—and imperfect. Or *better* said, still in the process of

becoming. Most anger occurs when people think their value or importance is threatened by the desires of others. Sometimes I feel that way. But I try to remind myself that it's not my responsibility to always get my way, even if I know best.

2 So it's best to hold back on your opinions?

1 Heaven's no. My obligation is to offer my best opinion, not stifle it. But it's not my burden to correct a reluctant world without help. You'd be surprised at how many fearful people are making an unconscious effort to micromanage the universe.

2 (Chuckles)You exaggerate.

1 A little, but you get the point.

2 So we should separate our sense of self-value from successfully getting our way? Does religion help here?

1 Spirit does. Spirit tells you to be bold enough to express your perception of truth, humble enough admit mistakes, and to know that God is not solely dependent on you to manage the universe.

2 Yeah. There wouldn't be much difference in the universe even if I weren't around. The world would carry on.

1 Big difference in *your* world, though. You have a right to be, and there is a world inside you that can experience a *lot* of difference. That inner world is your real responsibility. I feel that if you get that right, anything you do in the outer world is going to be better, even if it doesn't seem to work.

2 Doesn't work, hmm. After all, my soul is just learning, right?

1 *Sometimes* a wrong path can lead to painful lessons more valuable than taking sage advice. So forgive the objectors. But if someone *wants* to follow your lead, by all means help them.

2 I hear a lot about forgiveness. It's supposed to make you feel more alive. But there's nobody I need to forgive. If they wronged me, I just write them off and move on. I'm not chewing anger nails, and yet most of my life is a bit dreary.

1 You bring up an important point. Forgiveness might go way beyond what we normally think it is. I often have the feeling I have missed some grand mission in life. That maybe I took more than I was able to give. Others have achieved far more. They've created novel businesses, demonstrated more intelligence, more energy, more spirit, established beneficial foundations. The list goes on.

2 I had no idea you ever felt that way. Join the club.

1 Then I think, maybe I hold a slight grudge against those people, collectively. Not that they did wrong *to* me but they stole thunder *from* me. This is all an

irrational, vague perception, almost unconscious. But it drapes a numbing veil over me, like disappointment.

2 I never thought of disappointment that way. How do you get past it?

1 First, I have to realize I *feel* that way, and hold in mind all those overachievers I secretly envied. I intend to forgive them, but something is in the way...It's my false perception of *me*. I must instead see myself as valuable because I am a small part of the *Divine*. Not every seed hits fertile ground, but the seed that doesn't is just as vibrant and genuine as those that do. I have to know I have *greatness* because of what I am a part of.

2 Then you're ready to forgive, right?

1 Almost. To fix this realization, I have to act, somehow express it. Maybe in a letter, in a conversation, or by a random act of kindness. That makes the truth of my inner nature more perceptible, and then I can face the achievers in my mind and feel powerful enough to forgive them. What this really means is that I release the feeling of *my* being unworthy, which I associated with their superior deeds. It's the same as forgiving myself.

2 Wow, that's quite a process for dealing with feeling you failed a grand mission. But not all wondrous works are big and splashy. I remember one night at my daughter's school play, a nervous kid with a slight speech impediment messed up his lines. Afterwards, other kids laughed and put him down. I went over and

told him that most people forget lines once in a while. And that I liked the way he looked at the audience and kept his composure until he remembered the last line so others could take it from there. It wasn't much to compliment him on, but years later at a sales convention I saw this kid, now a young man and manager in his company. After giving a lucid, flawless pitch on his product, he recognized me. He told me my words to him that night made all the difference in the world. It gave him courage to improve his speech and successfully pursue a career where public appearance was an asset.

1 We'll never know how a much small deed can multiply. Help for our good actions often lies hidden in the corners, ready to amplify them.

2 Your story makes me wonder if I have attitudes I don't recognize. I had no idea all this could build up in the unconscious mind.

1 The everyday world does it. Despite the good, rumors, media negativity, illness and disputes counter our highest dreams.

2 How do we fix this?

1 You know the answer. We need support in a variety of ways. Humans are not capable of *constantly* realizing the true magnificence of existence. We need reminding through deeds, inspiration, surprises, story-telling, friendship and forgiving.

2 Well, that could only come from a community that acts like a family. One that reaffirms the wonder that lies beneath the mundane. That same community that's sometimes griping, cynical, frustrating and lethargic can also be inspiring, fired up and resourceful in helping us uncover our *real* selves and appreciate just how glorious creation is. A man from Nazareth once looked at a crowd and said "The Kingdom of God is among you."

1 Now you inspire *me*. I can't wait for our next group meeting. I have to go now, but have a nice day, and maybe we can tame that wild bunch of event planners the next time we meet.

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