Family Drama

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[0:00] This is the First Mustang Pulpit Podcast. A podcast of the weekly preaching and teaching at First Mustang.! Thank you for joining us. Much doctrine and much theology, but it's not separate from real life.

One example of that we just studied last week as Joey was preaching Sunday evening from the Mount of Transfiguration. And one of the things that you see when you study that text of the Mount of Transfiguration is it is this very high and holy moment.
It's one of the most spectacular events recorded in all of the pages of Scripture. It was so phenomenal that it's hard to even put into words all that is taking place there on that mountain where Christ is transfigured in front of the disciples.
And when this monumental event, this most phenomenal event takes place, when Jesus comes down off that mountain with His disciples who had been with Him for that experience, what is the very first thing Scripture records for us that happens after the Mount of Transfiguration?
Mark 9, verse 14. And when they came to the disciples, they saw a great crowd around them and scribes arguing with them.
[2:10] The first event that happens after the Mount of Transfiguration is an argument. From the high and the phenomenal and spectacular instantly then thrust into the drama of conflict.

I assume you can relate to that. It's pretty common in real life that after wonderful experiences, right away you're right back into the headaches.
Maybe for you it was taking a special vacation and you enjoyed time away from work and time with the family and just got to see some things that you always wanted to see.
And it's just this incredible time of vacation only to go back into the office and the very first thing that greets you is an argument.
Maybe for you it was going on a mission trip and you were away and challenged physically and challenged spiritually and challenged emotionally but were able to see the Lord at work in a very unique and powerful way and as you returned back home all you're thinking about is how great the trip was and how much you learned and how much you've grown spiritually only to return home and the first thing that greets you is some kind of conflict.
[3:48] Maybe you've been at youth camp or kids camp and you come home from camp and it's been such a week of joy and singing and worship and preaching and your heart is so full of all the good things the Lord has done only to come back from camp and go back home and immediately be thrust into family conflict or family drama.

This is just real life. Mountaintop experiences are wonderful but it's not where we live. There are occasional places we get to visit but we don't live on the mountaintop.
Just like Jesus and the disciples who were there they descend down from that mountain and they go right back into real life and real ministry and because of that real conflict.
Well the exact same thing happens with where we are in Philippians. If you were with us last Sunday morning you know that we spent our time in chapter 3 verses 20 and 21 just dealing with heaven.
Our citizenship is in heaven and from it we await a Savior the Lord Jesus Christ who will transform our lowly body to be like His glorious body by the power that enables Him even to subject all things to Himself.
[5:28] Verse 1 of chapter 4 Therefore my brothers whom I love and I long for my joy and my crown stand firm thus in the Lord my beloved.

Wouldn't that be a great place to end the letter? Heaven Hope Love When he's into chapter 3 by talking about our real home is heaven it's not here it's there and our forever eternal bodies will be

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like Christ's glorified bodies not like these fallen bodies that break down and the joy that we have is because the Lord will reign forever and we are going to be able to enjoy His reign because He has the power to subject all things to Himself which means in the end everything will be in its rightful place.
There's no greater way to end the letter than where chapter 3 ends. But we come down from the mountaintop of chapter 3 into the real life drama of chapter 4.
Verse 2 of chapter 4 says I entreat Euodia and I entreat Syntyche to agree in the Lord. Yes, I ask you also a true companion help these women.
When Jesus comes down from mount transfiguration the first thing He finds is conflict. And last week we looked at the glories of heaven and we come down from chapter 3 and what greets us? [7:29] The reality of people in the church in conflict. specifically in chapter 4 two ladies Euodia and Syntyche who can't seem to get along.

This is real life. The mountaintops are great but that's where we visit. It's not where we live.
I don't remember the first time I heard this expression but since then I've heard it too many times to count and the expression says ministry would be great if it wasn't for people.
Maybe you've heard that too. And the sentiment is saying that singing is wonderful and studying and preaching the Bible is wonderful if there just weren't people involved to bring so much conflict.
Now we understand though there is no real ministry apart from people. That's what ministry is. It's about taking the hope of the gospel to real people who are suffering and going through real challenges.
[8:43] And by the way let's none of us be too quick to point the finger at somebody else because just understand if we were to get rid of all the imperfect people here there wouldn't be a single one of us to be here this morning.

ministry is all about people and people are imperfect which means ministry will be imperfect.
The truth is for me my greatest thrills my greatest joys in ministry have been with people with you with seeing God at work through your lives seeing God heal your families seeing God do wonderful spiritual things among us.
But ministry is not perfect. People aren't perfect and life isn't perfect. And sometimes the truth is that we can sing about heaven and think about heaven and long for heaven and focus on Christ but what awaits us on the other side of that is real conflict.
The question is what do you do in your life when real conflict presents itself? What do churches do when conflict presents itself?
[10:14] for some they quit attending quit participating in the life of the church and just blame somebody else.

This happens all the time maybe even for some of you that are in here today this has been part of your story that you're active in church and then you got frustrated or upset by somebody and because you kept your eyes on them and not on Christ you withdrew from the church and all the while even though in disobedience you would be quick in your mind to blame somebody else for the excuse that you would give.
That happens all the time. But don't be fooled by the tricks of the enemy with that.
The Bible never hides from us that ministry is going to be difficult. The Bible never hides from us that even church life while wonderful and blessed is going to be imperfect.
And one example is right here in Philippians 4 this beautiful ending of chapter 3 goes right into chapter 4 where we've got two people in the church who can't seem to get along with each other.
[11:35] So just please understand even if part of your life and part of your background has been that you've withdrawn from the church and you've blamed it on conflict or blamed it on somebody else just understand that what you are experiencing what you have experienced is common.

Doesn't mean it's right but it's common. So don't think that your life or your experience is somehow the exception and what does chapter 4 tell us to do when there's conflict in the church doesn't say to bail on the church doesn't say to walk away from the faith doesn't say to stay home and blame other people it tells us how to handle that conflict and we need to be able to do this because everything in your life is going to at some point be stained with imperfection.
Marriage is wonderful but it's not perfect. But don't bail on your spouse the first time they disappoint you.

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The Lord grants children what an incredible blessing but the children will be imperfect and I'm confident in saying that because they come from us.
You don't bail on your kids the first time that conflict arises. And the same thing is true in the church. The gift of the church is such a wonderful thing the Lord has given to us.
[13:13] What an amazing reality we can enjoy as the body of Christ but no local assembly is going to be perfect. How do we know that? Because they're all filled with sinners.

So what do you do when the imperfections of people manifest themselves in the church? Well you don't give up on the church.
You don't quit the church. You don't stop being obedient and just sit back and blame somebody else because they're not our standard.
The Bible is our authority. And wouldn't it be great if every Sunday was just the mountaintop of chapter 3, 20, and 21 and every Monday was just a continuation of that.
But that's not the way it works. Last Sunday morning we sang all songs about heaven. And we read about heaven and I preached about heaven.
[14:16] And when I came to work Monday morning there was no choir greeting me with when the royal is called up yonder. It was work. It was back to real life.

Preparing, dealing with issues, trying to minister to people, trying to do the best we can imperfectly to serve people that we love. That was true for your life as well.
We have to be able to handle the difficulties of life and that includes even life in the church.
Probably like you, I could tell you an endless number of stories and conversations I've had through the years of people, some that I know, some that I've just met in different places, who do not attend church.
And when you ask them why, the first words out of their mouth are blaming somebody else. You go to church, I don't go to church because this person over here hurt me and this person over there disappointed me and that church over there let me down and when I was a kid I went here and that church didn't do what I wanted.
And it's amazing how rather than thinking about the good gift God has given us in the church and our responsible to be obedient to the Lord, how comfortable people can be with disobeying what God has called us to do and immediately blame not themselves but put the blame on somebody else.
[15:56] If I've heard one story like that, I've heard a thousand and I don't even exaggerate with that number. And if church was chapter 3, 20 and 21, all day, every day, if ministry was nothing but singing about heaven and teaching about heaven and glorying in heaven and that's all that it was, if it was all mountaintop experiences, then everybody would stick around.

But the reality is, you've got to come down from the mountain. When you come down from the mountain, you are often greeted with struggle. And don't think that's unique to you. It's literally what a way to Jesus and the disciples after the mount of transfiguration, an argument among people.
so don't buy the lie of the enemy that somehow your life is unique or the exception to that and that you've got the valid excuse to withdraw from the life of the church.
And there's people who will still attend church but have absolutely no part in the life of the church and I get why many times because you've been hurt. And I don't want to make light of what you've been through but neither do I want you to think that somebody else's sin has somehow become the standard by which you choose of how to live your life.
We've got to be able to be faithful when we come down from the mountaintop. We've got to be able as moms and dads to be faithful to our children even when they are imperfect and when we are imperfect.
[17:40] are imperfect. We've got to be able to be godly husbands and wives even when our spouses are imperfect and when we are as well.

So chapter four deals with this reality. We're down from the mountaintop of talking about heaven and we've entered the real world where conflict awaits.
verse one, therefore my brothers whom I love and long for my joy and crown stand firm thus in the Lord my beloved.
Before we get to the conflict of Iodia and Syntyche, I want you to make note, I'm going to give you three things to make note of this morning to help us to think through how to handle conflict. Number one, Christian brothers and sisters are your true family.

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Christian brothers and sisters are your true family. Then right beside that sentence, just write the word relationships.
[18:44] So we're talking about the church relationships. Therefore my brothers whom I love and I long for. You can just feel the compassion and love that Paul has for the church.

He cares deeply for them. He misses them. Remember, Paul is under house arrest and it's been years since he's able to be with this church. He longs to see them.
He longs to worship with them. He longs to renew his friendship with them. The way he describes it, you're my brothers and I love you and I long for you.
He goes on, you're my joy and my crown. The people are his joy. It's not his achievements.
It's not his spiritual resume. That's not what he finds delight in. His delight is in the Lord and the people that the Lord has given to him.
[19:49] That's what brings him joy. In fact, if you look at the language of this, it's just stunning.
You are who I love and I long for. You're my joy. Then he says, you are my crown.

You're my crown. It's a reward. The word for crown here is the laurel wreath that would have been placed on the head of an athlete who won an athletic contest.
That was their prize. That was what was given to them as a result of having won the race. And Paul says, when I think about the reward the Lord gives to me, the joy he gives to me, when I think about the blessing that's been given to me, it's not money, it's not fame, it's not recognition.
He says to the church, it's you. You are God's gift to me. You are what brings me joy. You are what God has given to me as a blessing.
I read this. I can't help but just be thankful and grateful for you because this is precisely how I feel. I had the privilege to meet with a couple of different young pastors just this last week.
[21:09] And one of the things we were talking about is how do you endure. For any of us in ministry, you've got seasons and moments and headaches and all kinds of things you have to go through.

One of the things with one of the guys I was sharing about is one of the things that keeps me so joyful and so hopeful and wanting to continue to do this as long as the Lord gives me breath is you. You are God's great gift to me that I get to be a member of the church with you, that you are my brothers and sisters in Christ, that you are people that I can pray for and you'll pray for me, that I can worship with you and sing with you and talk with you and I get to be strengthened by the ministry that you provide and I get to spend my weeks and my time trying to serve you.
What greater gift could God ever give to somebody? I mean, I look at you and say, you like Paul says of them, you are my joy and you are my crown, you are God's sweet gift in my life.
Is our church imperfect? Of course. Are there things that we want to do better? Absolutely. Tomorrow at 835 in our conference room, we're tackling them.
[22:21] We're always trying to get better. We're always trying to improve ourselves as leaders and do a better job of leading and serving you. Absolutely, we're imperfect. But my goodness, has God been good to us.

To have a facility like this where we can gather together and sing about Jesus and teach about Jesus and be surrounded by people who love Christ and there are people all over this church this very moment who would pray for you and help you and serve you and encourage you.
This is as sweet as it gets this side of heaven. Your Christian brothers and sisters are your true family. This is why I encourage you to be involved in the life of the church, not just to show up and attend on occasion, but to be involved in the life of the church.
To get to know your brothers and sisters, to view them that way. To take initiative to build conversations and build relationships and to be able to have people that you can serve and people that you can rely on.
People that you can pray for when they're hurting and people who you know will lift you up when it's your season of struggle. Christian brothers and sisters are your true family.
[23:56] Stand firm in the Lord, he says. This is like a command given to a soldier to guard his post and never forsake it, to be firm and steadfast, to be unmoved, to be unshaken.

And look how he ends verse 1. My beloved. The tenderness here is just all over the place. You're my brothers. I love you.
I long for you. You're my joy. You're my crown, my blessing from God. You are my beloved. This is such a rich expression of love and of grace and of tenderness.

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Christian brothers and sisters are your true family speaks to our relationships. Point two. But, like your earthly family, sometimes brothers and sisters have conflict.
Christian brothers and sisters are your true family, but, like your earthly family, sometimes brothers and sisters have conflict.
[25:14] just put beside that the word reality. This is just the reality. Raise your hand if you've got an earthly sibling, a brother or sister.

Raise your hand if you've got a brother or sister. Leave your hand up if your brother or sister has ever frustrated you. Leave your hand up if you wish your sibling was as perfect as you were growing up.
What's going on? Well, because sometimes brothers and sisters have conflict.
Family drama. Drama. If there's one thing I do not like, it's drama.
I don't care for it. It doesn't interest me. It doesn't excite me. I don't love to hear the latest drama from I just have no interest.
[26:26] Maybe for some of you that's your past time and hobby. I want a drama-free life. I don't mind conflict. I don't mind problems.

It's real life. I understand that. I'm just not interested in the family drama side of it. I have enough challenges to fight out there.
I don't want to fight them at home before I go fight out there. I want to retreat to home where it's joyful and fun and a gift and a blessing and relaxing.
I don't want to go from the stress and rigors of out there only to go home and have more drama.
But, like your earthly family, sometimes brothers and sisters have conflict.
Verse 2, I entreat Euodia and I entreat Syntyche to agree in the Lord.
[27:33] Paul, you could have ended the letter at chapter 4, verse 1. You could have left us on the mountaintop of talking about heaven, the mountaintop of love, and the mountaintop of rejoicing, but I'm kind of glad he didn't.

Because if he did, I might be tempted to think that's how real life is. And my experience tells me that's not how real life is. The reality is that brothers and sisters have conflict.
I'm not talking about conflict from the world. I'm not talking about conflict from unbelievers. We're talking in chapter 4, verse 2, about conflict from within.
Paul descends from the mountaintop of chapter 3 and the first of chapter 4 to say, I've got to deal with this. I'm entreating Euodia and I'm entreating Syntyche to agree with the Lord.
He entreats them. Compound word, para kaleo, to call beside. He comes beside them. He's putting his arm around them as it were.
[28:48] He's under house arrest many miles away, but he's putting his arm around them and saying to this church, help these ladies.

Come beside them. Not pointing a finger at them, not yelling at them from a distance. Come beside them and put your arm around them and help these ladies.
These ladies who labor together in the gospel. Now, you may be tempted to assume that these two ladies, Euodia and Syntyche, must just be troublemaker ladies.
Or maybe you assume that they're not real believers. They're just unconverted people who are a part of the church and that's why there's conflict. Or maybe you thought, well, they may be believers, but I bet they're the kind of ladies who sit on the sidelines.
They don't really do any work. All they do is sit back and complain and nitpick and argue about things. I bet they're not actually ladies who are actively working in the gospel, but that's not the case at all.
[30:00] I entreat you, Odea, and I entreat Syntyche to agree in the Lord. Yes, I ask you also, true companion, help these women who have labored side by side with me in the gospel and the end of verse 3 whose names are in the book of life.

These aren't unconverted ladies. These aren't troublesome ladies. ladies. These aren't lazy ladies. These aren't people standing on the sidelines just pointing the finger and complaining. Paul says these are ladies who have labored. They've worked diligently side by side with me and not for their own purposes.
He says it was done in the gospel. are you telling me there can be people who are converted who love Jesus who love the church and are working using their spiritual gifts but sometimes they can't get along with another person in the church doing the same thing?

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Is that possible? It's not just possible. It's reality. reality. This is just reality.
[31:29] So much so that nobody who's active in a church reads this and says oh I don't believe that for a second. What is Paul talking about?

What kind of weird church? There's ladies that can't get along with each other? There's church members who have a difficult time agreeing? There's conflict among the brothers and sisters? What church is that? Every one of us that reads that says sounds about right.
I've been through that. Their name wasn't Iodian Syntyche but it was fill in the blank right? I'll give you a long list of names if you'd like to see them.
You've got your list too. And not about conflict from out there. Not about conflict from even in here among those who are just sitting on the sidelines.
[32:31] This is about conflict of people who are truly converted, truly doing gospel work, really who care about the right things but they just can't seem to get along.

wrong. My friends, if you don't have the spiritual strength to stay committed to Jesus in the midst of imperfection, I've got to ask you, who were you committed to in the first place?
Because the Bible doesn't hide this at all. This isn't tucked away in some hard to find place of your Bible.
This isn't filled with language that's hard to comprehend. This is right in front of us. This is why chapter 4 verse 1 ends, stand firm in what?
In who? The Lord. Oh, I would, but you don't understand how difficult this person is. No, that's why you stand firm in the Lord.
[33:35] Well, I would, but my church is imperfect. That's why you stand firm in the Lord. Well, I would, but sometimes my pastors disappoint me. That's why you stand firm in the Lord.

Well, I would, but some people in Sunday school class don't follow through with what they said they're going to do. That's why you stand firm in the Lord. I could go on and on. Our focus is to be on Christ.
And every time I have a conversation with somebody who says something like, I love Jesus, I just don't love the church, or I would love ministry if it wasn't for people, or I would go to church, but they're full of hypocrites.
All that does is expose that whatever their focus is on, it's on anything other than the Lord. Because this is just real life.
do I wish that everyone in our church was more patient? Sure. Do I wish everyone in our church was more obedient?
[34:47] Sure. And I put myself on the front of that list of wishing I was better. But the Lord has given to His people the gift of the church, and what a sweet gift it is.

Are there challenges? Yeah. Because just like earthly families, sometimes brothers and sisters have conflict. And so what do you do?
Well, He's entreating them, He's begging them, He's urging them to find resolution. He says, I want you to agree, but notice this, what's your next phrase?
Agree how? In the Lord. In other words, take your conflict, and you've got to reorient your conflict back to the Lord.
If not, you're going to be stuck on your opinions, and your preferences, and your suggestions, and your desires, and you're never going to get past that. We agree in the Lord.
[35:55] Let's start with this as home base when there's conflict conflict in the church among its people. Let's start by agreeing in the Lord. Let's start with who is Christ.

Let's start with reorienting our problem and our perspective around what Christ wants from us. Which would take us back to chapter 2, verse 4.
Let each one of you look out not for his own interest, but also to the interest of others. chapter 2, which was full of this high Christology, is also deeply practical because the way you deal with conflict in chapter 4 is by looking at Christ first and then treating other people as the mind of Christ would direct us.
That's exactly what that whole text was about. So if I can just push pause for a minute, let me give you a few things to think about in terms of conflict and ministry.
When you think about conflict and ministry, number one, ministry has challenges. Just accept that. Ministry has challenges.

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[37:13] challenges. Number two, ministry with people makes things complicated. Tomorrow, if I showed up for staff meeting and I was the only one there, there would probably still be disagreement because I don't always agree with myself.

But it would be less complicated if I always got my way. It would be less complicated if no one ever had a differing opinion than I have. But I've got to listen to other people's wrong opinions like you do, right?
I'm really grateful for the brothers and sisters who I meet with on Mondays who don't always have the same opinions I do. I'm really glad for that because I know my own limitations. I know my own weaknesses.
I know how imperfect I am. And if I thought that all the leadership was based just on me, I would not be a member of this church. I would be too afraid. Does it make it complicated sometimes?
Sure it does. Does it slow things down sometimes when there's disagreement you've got to work through it? It absolutely does. Does it make decisions harder to come by?
[38:26] Because we've got to spend not one week, but sometimes two or three or four or eight weeks as a staff talking about things and issues that are pretty big and weighty? Yeah, it'd be much easier if I could just say, you know what, here's my decree, here's what we're doing, but that wouldn't be biblical nor safe nor wise for any of us.

And the truth, people, can be complicated, but number three, don't let conflict drive you away from the Lord or His church. Don't let conflict drive you away from the Lord or His church.
Incidentally, when Paul writes this letter, he wants Christians to read this letter, where is the letter read?
In the church. He sent it to the church. Why? Because it's the expectation that that's where Christians will gather. Christians gather with the church.
Number four, other people are not your standard. Christ is. Don't forget that. If you're married and your spouse speaks to you a little harshly, don't respond the way they did and say, well, they started it.
[39:55] They're not your standard. Christ is. And inside the church, if a fellow member maybe is dismissive of your kindness or maybe doesn't show appreciation for your ministry, that's not good.

But don't repay that when it's your turn back and say, well, that's how they treated me. They're not your standard. Christ is. That's the whole point of chapter two, to have the mind of Christ.
For a student ministry, if somebody snubs you, don't snub them back and say, well, that's how they did to me. They're not your standard. Christ is. Don't forget that.
Don't take your eyes off of Jesus. Number five, God does not allow us to be disobedient and simply blame it on somebody else. God doesn't allow us to be disobedient and just blame it on somebody else.
The Lord doesn't grade His people on a curve. It's by a standard of righteousness revealed to us in the Word and personified in Christ.
[41:13] Christ. Number six, conflict is inevitable, but combat is optional. Conflict is inevitable.

Combat is optional. If you're married for five minutes, no problem. If you're married for ten minutes, you're probably going to have some conflict.
It doesn't take long. That conflict's inevitable. Two sinners, 1,200 square feet, you do the math, right? Conflict's coming.
But combat, that doesn't have to happen. It's true in the church. Conflict is inevitable.
There's going to be problems. There's going to be disagreements. There's going to be struggles. But combat? That doesn't have to be. And I'll just tell you, for those who may be new to our church and wondering, if you were to ask me, is this a hard passage to preach?
[42:27] I'd say, not here, praise God. It's so much easier to deal with these things when they're not present than to deal with them when they are. Our church doesn't have combat. combat.

But all it takes is one person who refuses to live like Christ for it to start. In your ministry, in your Sunday school class, in your family, conflict is inevitable.
Just know that. That's just the reality, but combat's not. Number seven, focus on Christ as the common ground. Verse one of chapter four, stand firm in the Lord.
Stand firm in the Lord. Christian brothers and sisters are your true family, but like your earthly family, sometimes brothers and sisters have conflict.

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If you're just signing on a family vacation, and one of you wants to go to New York, and one of you wants to go to Los Angeles, how are you going to solve that?
[43:36] You say, let's meet in the middle. Let's go to Nebraska. Good. Now nobody's happy. We can go to New York and have one happy kid and one mad kid. I can go to L.A. and have one happy kid and one mad kid.

Or I can go to Nebraska and the whole family would be miserable. Apologies for those of you from Nebraska. Go Big Red. What are you going to do when you have conflict?
What are you going to do as a church when one of you prefers this way and someone else prefers that way? How do you solve that? Well, let's meet in the middle. We can meet in the middle, but now nobody gets their way.
What are you going to do in your ministry, in your Sunday school class? What are you going to do in the area you serve in where you've got difference of opinion and not difference of opinion among people who don't care, difference of opinion among people who are giving their life to this?
That's what Iodian Sintake is doing. They're engaged in the work. You give me two church members who care deeply about something, I'll tell you a couple of things.
[44:42] Number one, you're going to get a lot of work done, but eventually you're going to have conflict because they care so much about it. If you give me people who don't care, they'll just say, whatever, just do whatever you want. That's fine, but there's no buy-in there.

But you get people who care about the work, who labor in the work as Paul describes them. You run that long enough, you're going to have some difference of opinion. Well, then what?
You're going to quit if you don't get your way? You're going to pout if you get outvoted? You're going to stick around and make it miserable? Man, we've done some things through the years here, and it was exactly the way I wanted it to be.
We've done some things through the years where it was basically the way I wanted it to be. And there's been some things where I say, that's not how I would do it if it was all by myself. That's not what I would have done.
And together, you've got to say, can we walk in peace through this? And there's a whole lot of times where I can look back and say, I'm so thankful that that process was slower, not faster.
[46:08] More difficult, not easy. More diverse opinions, not just my own. And when you can have conflict, and conflict's not a bad thing, conflict is just a difference of opinion or a difference of preference.

When you can have that, but you do it in the Lord, you recognize we really can do what God's called us to do.
And we can rejoice the whole way through it. We're going to pick this up next Sunday morning to finish this part on conflict, but let me just give you a sneak preview.
After this conflict, verse 4, rejoice in the Lord always. Do you see how beautiful Scripture is here? Chapter 4, verse 1 is about love and joy.
Joy. Chapter 2 and 3 is about conflict. And chapter 4 is about rejoicing in the Lord. The presence of conflict doesn't have to steal your joy.
[47:17] And it doesn't have to split your church. Not when we, verse 1, stand firm in the Lord.

So, here's your brothers and sisters. You say, well, I didn't choose them.
Well, I didn't choose all mine either. It's the family God's thrown us into. If you believe He is sovereign, and if you don't, call me.
He is. If you believe He's sovereign, could it be that even that person in the church that's a little more frustrating to you might be there on purpose for God to use them to grow you, to strengthen you, to help you?
Could it be that ministry you're a part of that just is good but not yet perfect may just be that way to remind you that you've got to be prayerful, that you don't have it all figured out?
[48:27] Could it be that conflict that the Lord even allows in the church is there to remind us of how we must be gracious and forgiving and patient because just like you've got to tolerate the person beside you, guess what?

They've got to deal with your imperfections too. And this is all life in the church. Don't run away. You're not going to stay on the mountaintop forever. You've got to come down and live. You've got to come down and serve. And I'll just tell you as for me and my house, there is no other family I'd rather be a part of.

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We're imperfect. We've got things to improve. I sure do. But there's nobody I'd rather spend my life with than you.
I learn about the grace of Christ with you. I learn about grace and forgiveness and mercy and hope and perseverance from you. You're my joy and my crown.
[49:57] And together as we strive and labor, I think we experience the nearness of God and the presence of God and the power of God and praise Him, the peace of God as a church family.

If you're on the outside just looking in week after week, jump into the life of the family. We'll talk more next week of how that happens.
Lord, thank You today for Your Word and we pray that You would use it to encourage us. Your Word has dealt with very real issues and we give You thanks for that because we need help with real issues.
I pray that even today this would strengthen our resolve to stand firm in the Lord and to love the people You've given to us to walk through this journey together with in Christ's name.
Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.
[51:11] Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

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