



BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS

Dealing with Conflict
Biblically

1 INTRODUCTION

READ Romans 12:18, Colossians 3:15, and Matthew 18:15

- 🕒 What do these verses tell us about conflict?

These verses tell us that conflict is inevitable. Every relationship, especially with your spouse, will include conflict that you will have to work through somehow.

Ken Sande, Author of the book Peacemaker, says,

“Conflict can make life very awkward. It often catches us off guard and leads us to say or do things we later regret. When someone offends us, we can react without thinking. Soon it’s as if we’re sliding down a slippery slope, with things going from bad to worse.”

Thankfully God has given us the instruction and grace we need to handle conflict in a way that glorifies Him and preserves and mends relationships.

- 🕒 According to Matthew 7:24-27 what is the indicator that a person is like the wise man that built his house upon the rock?

- 🕒 How do you view conflict?

Much of how we respond to conflict is dependent on how we view it. Conflict provides opportunities for either sinful responses or for responses that honor God.

2 SINFUL RESPONSES TO CONFLICT

1. WITHDRAW FROM CONFLICT

Most people don't like conflict and will do everything they can to avoid it. Rather than try to solve a problem or mend a relationship, they run from it. Their motto is: "Don't rock the boat," or "peace at all costs." They conclude that if you try to do anything, the problem will only get worse or nothing will be resolved. If we just forget about it, it will go away.

✎ In what ways do these responses sound familiar to you?

✎ List any withdrawing responses you practice:

2. ATTACK

Those who don't withdraw may go to the other extreme and attack. They will do whatever it takes to get what they want. They may attack verbally, physically, or even with litigation. They might use phrases like, "I just yell and get it over with," or "I just need to get things off my chest right away."

✎ Are these responses typical of how you respond to conflict?

✎ List any attacking responses you practice:

3 RIGHTEOUS RESPONSES TO CONFLICT

1. TO LOVE GOD AND GLORIFY HIM THROUGH SEEKING PEACE

In the New Testament, the believers in Corinth were having disputes about what they should eat and drink.

- ☑ According to 1 Corinthians 10:31 what was to be the guiding motive in all of their actions?

2. TO LOVE OTHERS BY SEEKING THEIR GOOD

- ☑ What does Philippians 2:3-4 tell us about where our focus should be?

- ☑ How is this different than what the world teaches us?

- ☑ According to Ephesians 4:29, what should the end result of our words be?

3. GROW TO BE LIKE CHRIST

According to Romans 8:28-29, God's plan is to transform us into the likeness of His son. Verse 28 indicates that He will do so by working all things together for our good. Times of conflict can reveal the sinful attitudes and actions in us that God desires to change for His glory and our good. So, while conflict is difficult, it can bring about a personal transformation to the likeness of Christ as we recognize our weakness and take Biblical steps of growth and change.

- ☑ Can you think of a time where conflict helped you see your sinfulness?

4 WHAT RESPONSE SHOULD WE HAVE TO CONFLICT?

- What do the following verses say about this?

Proverbs 17:9

1 Peter 4:8

Proverbs 10:12

Proverbs 19:11

The following questions will help you to determine when to cover an offense in love:

- Is the offense a sinful habit that is regularly hindering the individual in their growth in godliness?
- Is the offense public knowledge that would harm the person's testimony or is it continuing to dishonor God?
- Is the offense a violation of the law?
- Is the offense a clear violation of a Biblical command or principle rather than a matter of personal preference?

1. GET THE LOG OUT OF YOUR OWN EYE

So what does it look like to "get the log out of your own eye?"

Matthew 7:1-5 says,

"Judge not, that you be not judged. For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you. Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when there is the log in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye."

- What do the following verses say about this?
- In the verses above, underline the words or phrases that indicate the need to examine yourself first before you try to confront someone else about their side of the problem.
- What dangers can you see to solving conflicts with others if a person doesn't examine himself first to determine his side of the problem?

A. Examine Yourself

In times of conflict, we each tend to want to defend ourselves and our desires. If we aren't careful, we may be guilty of sinful motives and actions on our part.

To resolve a conflict Biblically, I must be humble enough to consider how I have contributed to the conflict. Then I must plan specifically to seek forgiveness from God and any others I may have sinned against.

Things to examine in yourself:

- Motives – Have I been selfishly motivated in the situation?
- Words – Have my words or my tone of voice indicated selfish ambition?
- Actions – Have my actions indicated a desire to solve the problem or have I withdrawn from or attacked the other person?

It is always wise to ask God to help you see your sin so that you can repent of it. Honest introspection is the first step in conflict. If you determine that you have sinned in the matter then you need to work through the following steps:

B. Confess Your Sin

Ken Sande, in his book "The Peacemaker" outlines 7 helpful "A's" to remember in confession:

1. Address everyone involved

READ 1 John 1:9 and Matthew 5:23-24

🕒 Who do these verses indicate that you should confess your sin to?

2. Avoid the words if, but, and maybe

These words, and others like them, indicate a sense of excusing what you did and an unwillingness to take full responsibility for your actions.

3. Admit Specifically

Specific admissions of sinful behavior communicate to the hearer that you know exactly what you have done that is dishonoring to God.

4. Acknowledge The Hurt

Acknowledging the hurt that you have caused indicates that you understand the effect your words or actions had on the individual.

5. Accept The Consequences

Sinful actions may have some natural consequences. Your willing acceptance of the consequences will communicate genuine repentance.

6. Alter Your Behavior

Indicating to the other individual how you plan to change your behavior shows that you understand how you should have handled the situation and what will characterize your behavior in the future.

7. Ask For Forgiveness

Forgiveness will be further explored later in this lesson. But know that asking “will you forgive me” is the final step in taking care of your side of the problem.

2. GENTLY RESTORE

Restoration of relationships will, many times, need more than simply identifying and confessing ones own sins. Biblical love may include helping the other individual identify his wrong and change.

It is important to plan how to approach an individual to encourage biblical repentance on his part.

Make sure that what the person has done is actually sin and not your personal preference.

READ Matthew 18:15 and Galatians 6:1.

- 🔍 What key words in these passages indicate that the issue you confront is to be a sin?

3. GO TALK TO THE OTHER PERSON

- Plan your words

This gives you time to think carefully about what you will say and hopefully avoid misunderstandings due to a lack of clarity.

- Choose the right time and place

Don't go with the attitude of “I just want to get this over with.” Try to think of and suggest a private place that would be conducive to an uninterrupted conversation.

- Talk in person

Face to face conversation is best when dealing with difficult issues. This may be somewhat unnerving, but you can see how the individual is receiving what you have to say and avoid possible misunderstandings.

- Speak with grace

When you go, talk as one who is also in process of growing and changing as well as one who has been shown grace and forgiveness. Do not go as one who has arrived, never struggles with sin and does not need the gospel.

5 FORGIVENESS

Forgiving others is the base level indicator of how much you understand your own forgiveness. I'm more willing to forgive others when I understand how much I need forgiveness. You cannot be living in the joy and forgiveness that you have been shown through the gospel yet also be unwilling to forgive.

So what is forgiveness?

Forgiveness means, "To release a person from an obligation."

- 🔪 What does Ephesians 4:32 and Psalm 103:12 say about the forgiveness we have?

- 🔪 How should that motivate us to forgive others?

1. WHY WE DON'T FORGIVE:

- Debt is power

When I hold onto the sins of my spouse I have power over them. I can now use that wrong that they have committed to get what I want from them.

- Debt is identity

Sometimes we want to be the victim. We want to be the victim so much that we begin to identify as the victim. Sometimes, I choose not to forgive because I like being the victim. I like the sympathy I get from others or whatever identifying as a victim brings me.

- Debt is entitlement

If you have wronged me you owe me something. If I forgive you then I am releasing you from the debt. Often I don't want to release you because I want you to owe me something for your offense.

- Debt is weaponry

We all know that it is only a matter of time before we fail. Sometimes, I hold onto debt sometimes because I know I might need this as ammunition for future fights. What you did is far worse than what I've done and I'm going to let you know it in our next argument.

- Debt makes us God

Ultimately, we always want to feel like we know better than or are higher than God. Being the one who holds on to unforgiveness makes us feel like we have the authority and power of God.

- How does the Gospel answer our desire for the following things more than holding onto unforgiveness does?

Debt is power

Debt is identity

Debt is entitlement

Debt is weaponry

Debt makes us God

In order to forgive (release someone from an obligation), you need to use the words, "Will you forgive me?" This is different than saying "I'm sorry." I'm sorry puts the other person in a position where they will often say something untrue like, "well it's ok." The reality is if you sinned against God and them, it is not ok and they should not be put in a place to make that statement. Forgiveness is the Biblical model not, "I'm sorry."

When you commit to forgive you are making three major commitments:

1. I will not hold the offense against you ever again.
2. I will not talk about it with others.
3. I will not talk to myself about it.

True forgiveness requires that I never talk about it, never use it against the other person, and that I will not dwell on it in my mind. These three things are challenging and require a constant dying to self and reminder that the Lord does this for me therefore I can do it for others.

🗒️ Is there any unforgiveness standing between you and someone else?

🗒️ What steps do you need to take to correct those?