


Conflict Field Guide

2020



**Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they shall be called sons of God.
Matthew 5:9**

A Disciple is...

someone who is becoming more like Jesus, in all of life through the power of the Spirit.

And community is one gift the Spirit uses to make us more like Jesus. But community inevitably creates conflict. So to receive the Jesus-forming gift of community, we must grow in the way we handle conflict. As a church we are committed to resolving conflict in a way that makes Jesus look attractive and us more like Jesus. We trust that the following guide will serve as a continual resource for you, especially in the context of conflict.

**Scriptures to read
and remember
when considering
conflict:**

Proverbs 6:16-29 \\ Proverbs 16:32 \\ Proverbs 17:14

Proverbs 18:19 \\ Proverbs 20:3 \\ Matthew 5:23-24

Matthew 18:15-35 \\ Romans 12:14-21 \\ James 4:1-10

1 Peter 5:5-7 \\ Ephesians 4:1-3 \\ Philipians 2:5-11

The Peacemaker's Pledge

As people reconciled to God by the death and resurrection of Jesus, we believe we are called to respond to conflict in a way that is distinctively Christian. We also believe conflict provides an opportunity to glorify Jesus, serve others, and grow in Christlikeness. Therefore, in response to God's love and in reliance upon His grace, we commit to respond to conflict according to the following FOUR PRINCIPLES:

Glorify Jesus

Get the Log Out

**Go, Gently Restore
Your Brother**

Be Reconciled

Glorify Jesus

Instead of focusing on our wounds or what others have done (or will do), we focus on the person of Jesus. As a disciple of Jesus, we seek to please Jesus by depending on Him, faithfully obeying His commands, and by seeking to maintain a loving, merciful, and forgiving attitude.

Get the Log Out

Instead of attacking others or dwelling on their wrongs, we will take responsibility for our own contribution to conflicts by: confessing our sins, asking Jesus to change our attitudes and habits that lead to conflict, and seeking to repair any harm we've caused.

Go, Gently Restore Your Brother

Instead of pretending that conflict doesn't exist or talking about others behind their backs, we will choose to overlook minor offenses, or talk directly **and** graciously with those whose offenses seem too serious to overlook.

When conflict with another Christian cannot be resolved in private, we'll ask others in the body of **Christ** to help us settle the matter in a biblical and gracious way.

Be Reconciled

Instead of accepting premature compromises or allowing relationships to wither, we will actively pursue genuine peace and reconciliation by forgiving others as God has forgiven us, and by seeking just and mutually beneficial solutions.

By God's grace, we'll apply these truths, realizing that conflict is an opportunity, not an accident.

We will remember that success in God's eyes is not a matter of specific results, but of faithful obedience.

And we'll pray that our service as peacemakers makes Jesus look attractive to a watching world.

The rest of this guide applies these principles to three stages of conflict resolution:

1. Preparing

2. Going

3. Enduring

Before You Continue...

Stop, read the passages on the previous page, and pray. Ask Jesus to give you an abiding desire to adorn the Good News of Jesus, especially through conflict.



1. Preparing

The Opportunity of Conflict

Contents

Glorify Jesus

Serve Others

Become More Like Christ



Preparing the Opportunity of Conflict

Conflict is not necessarily bad or destructive. Even when caused by sin and causes great harm, God uses conflict for good (Rom 8:28). As Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 10:31- 11:1, conflict provides beautiful opportunities to:

GLORIFY JESUS by trusting Him, obeying Him, and imitating Him.

SERVE OTHERS by bearing their burdens or confronting in love.

BECOME MORE LIKE CHRIST by confessing sin and turning from attitudes that promote conflict.

When Paul urged the Corinthians to live "to the glory of God," he meant in their day-to-day life, especially in hard moments of conflict. Making Jesus look attractive is always the goal, in everything. What better way to show the difference Jesus makes, than by showing the difference He makes in conflict?

So during conflict, we must stay in school by humbly asking Jesus,

WHAT DO YOU WANT TO USE CONFLICT TO TEACH ME?

Jesus often uses conflict to teach us more about ourselves than others; this is why the Bible instructs that we remove our own logs before addressing another's speck.

GET THE LOG OUT

The most challenging part of peacemaking is found in Matthew 7:5, where Jesus admonishes us to...

"...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..."

There are two kinds of logs to look for while in conflict.

FIRST

Consider your own attitudes and biases. Critical, negative, or overly sensitive attitudes lead to unnecessary conflict. One way to see your attitude is by meditating on Phil 4:2-9, which describes a distinctively Christian attitude, especially in conflict.

SECOND

Consider your sinful words and/or actions. We are often blind to our own failures, and quick to justify our behaviors. So we all need honest friends who will help us see our contribution to conflict.

Getting the log out of our eye requires getting to the root cause of the wrong behavior. The Bible teaches that conflict comes from the "desires at war within you" (Jam 4:1-3; Matt 15:18-19). Some of these desires are obviously sinful (wanting to conceal the truth, revenge, etc.) In many situations, however, conflict is fueled by good desires elevated to a sinful place, such as an unhealthy craving to be understood, loved, respected or vindicated (1 Pet 2:23).

Any time you become excessively preoccupied with something (even a good thing), and seek to find satisfaction, significance, or security in it rather than God, you are guilty of idolatry. Idolatry inevitably leads to conflict with God and others. As James writes, when we want something but don't get it, we kill and covet, quarrel, and fight (Jam 4:1-4).

PEACEMAKING STEPS

Here's a seven-step process to help examine yourself before you move forward in peacemaking:

1. Ask Jesus and others for help with self awareness (1 Jn 1:8).

Ask God to show where you have been guilty of "wrong worship," focusing on something other than Jesus and His desires (Ps 139:23-24).

- Give others permission to speak into your life and regularly ask them to help you see any "logs" both in attitude and action.
- Pursue right worship. Fix your heart and mind on Jesus, and seek joy in Him alone.
- Identify and renounce the desire contributing to the conflict.

2. Address the people involved as soon as possible (Matt 5:23-24, Prov 6:1-5).

Beware of inviting a third person into the conflict before you've talked to the one you're in conflict with.

That's creating an **unholy trinity**. If you talk to a third person, abide by the 24 hour rule. Limit yourself to 24 hours to talk to the one you're in conflict with.

3. Avoid "if, but, and maybe." Don't make excuses; be specific, when possible with both attitudes and actions (Lk 15:17-24).

4. Apologize by expressing sorrow over your sin and the harm it's caused (Lk 15:21).

5. Ask for forgiveness (Prov 28:13).

6. Accept the consequences (Lk 19:1-9).

7. Alter your behavior. Commit to changing harmful habits (Eph 4:22-32, Jh 8:11).

These seven steps are often overlooked in conflict. But it's always wise to first ask how Jesus wants to use this conflict to make us a more like Him.

2. Going

Gently Restoring Your Brother

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Overlook Little Stuff

Don't Spread Big Stuff

Stay At The Table

Seriously... Stay At The Table

Be Reconciled

Negotiate Biblically



Overlook Little Stuff

Peacemaking involves going to others to help them understand how they have contributed to conflict. However, before confronting, remember that overlooking minor offenses is commended (Prov 19:11). As a general rule, an offense should be overlooked if you can answer "no" to any of the following questions:

Is the offense seriously dishonoring God?

Has it permanently damaged a relationship?

Is it seriously hurting others?

Is it seriously hurting the offender?

Don't Spread Big Stuff

If you answered "yes" to any of the questions above, an offense is too serious to overlook. The Bible's clear, go and talk to the offender gently, lovingly, and privately (Matt 18:15). We call this running to the tension.

AS YOU GO, REMEMBER TO:

Pray for humility
(1 Pet 5:5).

Plan your words
carefully; think of
how you'd want to
be confronted
(Prov 15:1-2; 18:23).

Anticipate likely
reactions and plan
responses
(Prov 20:18).

Choose the right
time and place
to talk in person
(Prov 16:2; 27:12).

Trust Jesus
(Psalm 37:3).

Assume the best
until facts prove
otherwise
(Prov 18:17).

Ask for feedback
from the other
person (Prov 18:2).

Listen carefully
(Prov 18:13).

Speak only to
build up (Eph 4:29).

Stay At The Table

If an initial confrontation doesn't resolve the conflict, don't give up. Stay at the table. Review what was said and done, and look for ways to approach the other person more effectively. Try again with even more prayer support. If you have done all you can to share your concern, and the matter is still "too serious to overlook," you should ask one or two others to meet with you and the person to help resolve your differences (Matt 18:16-20).

Seriously... Stay At The Table

Sadly, there are times when the only solution left is to expand the circle of accountability and wisdom to an even wider group within the church to preserve unity. When conflict persists, it's the job of the wider community of faith to speak boldly into the matter and, when necessary, separate itself from hard hearts that refuse to deal with sin too serious to overlook (Matt 18:17a; 1 Cor 5:1-2). That may include necessary separation until the particular sin(s) creating the conflict are owned and dealt with.





Be Reconciled

One unique feature of biblical peacemaking is the pursuit of genuine forgiveness and reconciliation. Even though Christians have experienced the greatest forgiveness in the world, we often fail to show it to others. To hide our disobedience, we often use statements like, "I forgive her; I just refuse to have anything to do with her again." Thank God He never says that to us! Instead, He forgives us in a way that welcomes genuine reconciliation. He calls you to forgive others in the same way (Eph 4:31-32; Is 43:25). We imitate God's forgiveness when we live out these actions and attitudes:

I will not dwell on this incident.

I will not revisit this incident or use it against you.

I will not talk to others about this incident.

I will not allow this incident to hinder our relationship.

Forgiveness requires more than willpower, it requires the empowering grace of Jesus. So ask Jesus to give you grace to reflect what you've received.



Negotiate Biblically

Even when you manage to resolve conflict through confession and forgiveness, you may still need to deal with substantive issues, which cannot be overlooked (money, property, the exercise of certain rights, etc). These issues should be negotiated in a God-honoring way, in a cooperative manner rather than a competitive manner. In other words, instead of aggressively pursuing your interests alone, you should seek **solutions** that are mutually beneficial (Phil 2:3-4; Matt 22:39; 1 Cor 13:5; Matt 7:12).

A biblical approach to negotiation can be summarized in five basic steps, which we refer to as the...

PAUSE PRINCIPLE

PAUSE Principle

Prepare

(pray, get the facts, seek godly counsel, etc)

Affirm

(show genuine concern/respect for others)

Understand Interests

(identify others' concerns, desires, needs, limitations, or fears)

Search For Creative Solutions

(prayerful brainstorming)

Evaluate Options Objectively and Reasonably

(evaluate, don't argue)



3. Enduring

When Peacemaking Is Painful

Contents

Be Prepared For Unreasonable People

Get Help From Above

Get Help From The Church



Be Prepared For Unreasonable People

When you're responding to conflict, some may harden their hearts, refusing reconciliation. There are two ways you can prepare:

FIRST

Remember that God doesn't measure success by results but by your obedience. He knows you cannot force others into obedience. So, God won't hold you responsible for their actions or for the outcome of a conflict. All God expects is for you to obey His revealed will as faithfully as **possible** (Rom 12:18). If you do that, no matter how the conflict ends, you can walk with a clear conscience before God.

SECOND

Don't give up on finding a biblical solution. If a dispute isn't easily resolved, you may be tempted to say, "Well, I tried all the biblical principles, and they just didn't work. It looks like I'll have to handle this another (worldly) way." A follower of Jesus should never close the Bible.

STAY AT THE TABLE

When you try to resolve a conflict but don't see the results you desire, seek God even more earnestly through prayer, His Word, and the counsel of His church. As you do so, keep your eyes on the person and work of Jesus (Col 3:1-4).

It's also helpful to meditate on Romans 12:14-21, where Paul encourages us to:

- Tame our tongue. "Bless those who curse you."
- Stay humble. "Do not become haughty."
- Seek godly counsel, rather than becoming "wise in our own eyes".
- Leave room for God, rather than retaliate.
- Use the ultimate weapon: Jesus-portraying love (Jn 3:16; Lk 6:27-31).

Paul's encouragement protects you from being consumed by toxic bitterness if others continue to oppose you. And in some cases, God may eventually use such actions to bring another person to repentance.

Get Help From Above

None of us can make complete and lasting peace with others in our own strength. We must have help from God. But, before we can receive that help, we need to be at peace with God Himself.

If you have never confessed your sin to God and believed in Jesus as your Savior, Lord, and King, you can do so now by sincerely praying this prayer:

For every follower of Jesus, it's essential that you find fellowship in a church where the Bible is faithfully taught and applied. This fellowship will help you learn about Jesus, grow in your faith, and obey what He commands, especially involving in conflict.

Lord Jesus,
I know that I am a sinner, and
I realize that my good deeds
could never make up for my
wrongs. I need Your forgiveness.
I believe that You died for
my sins, and I want to turn
away from them. I trust You
to be my Savior, and I will fol-
low You as my Lord and King.
Here's my life, save me.

Get Help From The Church

"Conflict is common. Peace is precious. Therefore peacemakers are prized. Jesus gave them the highest name possible: 'Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.'"

- JOHN PIPER

As God grows you as a peacemaker, you will be able to resolve most conflicts on your own. Sometimes, however, you will encounter situations you don't know how to handle. In such situations, it's wise and appropriate to turn to spiritually mature people in your community for counsel.

In very difficult disputes, you should ask one or two mutually respected friends to meet with you and the one you're in conflict with to help you settle your difference through mediation or arbitration (Matt 18:16-17; 1 Cor 6:1-8).





Summary

Stonegate, these principles are so simple that they can be used to resolve the most basic of conflicts, and they are so powerful that they have been used to mediate the most bitter of conflicts. So the world is watching, and waiting. Let's show the difference the Gospel of Jesus Christ makes, especially in conflict.



Special Thanks

This document was adapted from Watermark Church's "Field Guide to Conflict" and from Ken Sande's book called "The Peacemaker: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict."