

RESOLVING CONFLICT GOD'S WAY

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Life is full of conflict.

Contract and employment disputes, family feuds, divorces, church splits, and neighborhood quarrels.

Conflict with friends, spouse, parents, neighbors, and business associates.

At home, workplace, church and in the neighborhood.

God has told us how to correctly deal with conflicts, but many people are unwilling and try their own ways of handling disputes.

1. Some People Try To Escape Conflicts.

a. Some try to escape by denying that a problem exists.

- They will pretend that everything is all right.
- They will refuse to do what is necessary to resolve the conflict properly.
- Denial brings only temporary relief and usually makes things worse.

b. Some try to escape by blaming everything on others.

- They are not willing to look at themselves and take responsibility for their own sin and failures.
- A pride problem

c. Some try to escape by running away.

- Avoiding the person
- Ending a friendship
- Quitting a job
- Filing for divorce
- Changing churches
- some commit suicide

- In extreme cases escape may be a legitimate response.
 - ♦ Physical danger
 - ♦ A boss who insists that you do unethical things.
 - ♦ Heretical pastor
- In most cases however, running away only temporarily postpones having to deal with the problem

2. Some People Go On The Attack During Times Of Conflict.

a. They may use verbal put-downs.

- Criticism, insults, and disparaging remarks

b. They may gossip to others. cf 1 Timothy 3:11; 5:12; Titus 2:3

- Gossip is sharing negative or confidential information with someone who is not a part of the problem or a part of the solution.
 - ♦ It includes griping and complaining to people who are not involved and can't do anything about it.
 - ♦ It includes venting your frustrations and dissatisfactions to the wrong person.
- The Bible is full of passages that condemn gossip.
 - ♦ **Proverbs 26:20-21** For lack of wood the fire goes out, And where there is no whisperer, contention quiets down. *Like* charcoal to hot embers and wood to fire, So is a contentious man to kindle strife
 - ♦ **II Tim 2: 17a** But avoid worldly *and* empty chatter, for it will lead to further ungodliness, and their talk will spread like gangrene. . .
- Gossip seems to have been a sin that certain women in the early church were susceptible to.
 - ♦ **1 Timothy 3:11** Women *must* likewise *be* dignified, not malicious gossips,

- ◆ **1 Timothy 5:13** At the same time they also learn *to be* idle, as they go around from house to house; and not merely idle, but also gossips and busybodies, talking about things not proper *to mention*.
- ◆ **Titus 2:3** Older women likewise are to be reverent in their behavior, not malicious gossips
- It is easily for us to rationalize and justify the sin of gossip.
 - ◆ It becomes a way of venting to friends when we are unwilling to deal with a problem the right way.
- Gossip is a sinister sin in that it is not only divisive, it raises doubts that are seldom checked out
 - ◆ These doubts continue to linger and cause problems in another person for years after the information was shared.
 - ◇ **Proverbs 18:8** The words of a whisperer are like dainty morsels, And they go down into the innermost parts of the body.
 - ◆ **Jewish Proverb:** Gossip can estrange the closest friends.
 - ◆ **Welsh Proverb:** Lord, remind us often that a gossip's mouth is the devil's mailbag.
- If someone is gossiping to you:
 - ◆ Don't take up their offense against the other person.
 - ◇ **Proverbs 18:17** The first to plead his case *seems* right, *Until* another comes and examines him.
 - ◆ Encourage the gossiper to go the other person or you will have to.
 - ◇ Don't promise to keep it confidential.
- God takes gossip seriously.

- ♦ **Psalm 101:5** Whoever secretly slanders his neighbor, him I will destroy;
- ♦ **Psalm 50:19-21** "You let your mouth loose in evil And your tongue frames deceit. "You sit and speak against your brother; . . . I will reprove you and state *the case* in order before your eyes.

c. They may fight.

- Try to hurt the other person.
- Hurt their reputation with gossip and slander.
- Hurt them financially or professionally.
- Some people will even resort to physical violence as a way of dealing with conflict.

3. The Right Response To Conflict Is To Work It Out.

a. You can choose to overlook an offense. Proverbs 19:11; 1 Peter 4:8

- **Proverbs 19:11** A man's discretion makes him slow to anger, And it is his glory to overlook a transgression.
 - ♦ Since God does not deal harshly with us every time we sin, we should be willing to treat others in a similar fashion.
- **1 Peter 4:8** Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins.
- *Some sins however are too serious to overlook.*
 - ♦ If it is dishonoring to God. cf Romans 2:24
 - ♦ If it is damaging your relationship.
 - ♦ If it is hurting others.
 - ♦ If it is hurting the offender.

- ◇ Proverbs 27:5 Better is open rebuke Than love that is concealed. 6 Faithful are the wounds of a friend, But deceitful are the kisses of an enemy.

b. You may need to talk to the person about the offense. Matthew 18:15; cf Galatians 6:1-3

- **Matthew 18:15** "If your brother *sins*, go and show him his fault in *private*; if he listens to you, you have *won* your brother.
- Before talking to others about their sins, we need to do a self-evaluation.
 - ◆ **Matthew 7:5** ". . . 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.*
 - ◇ Where have our words, actions, attitudes, and selfishness may have contributed to the conflict?
 - ◇ Don't conceal, deny, or rationalize your wrongs.
 - ◇ Don't try to shift the blame.
 - ◇ Don't proportion out the blame.
 - ◇ Instead specifically admit the areas where you were wrong and ask forgiveness.
- **Galatians 6:1a** Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness . . .

c. You may need to get help. Matthew 18:16-17; 1 Corinthians 6:1-8

- We are to go to others only after the problem can't be resolved on a personal level.
 - ◆ **Matthew 18:16-17** "But if he does not listen *to you*, take one or two more with you, so that **BY THE MOUTH OF TWO OR THREE WITNESSES EVERY FACT MAY BE CONFIRMED.** 17 "If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if

he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.

♦ **1 Corinthians 6:1-8**

◇ God's reputation is more important than our rights.

◇ He will ultimately see that justice is done.

4. The Different Responses Have Different Focuses, Goals, And Results.

a. The different responses have different focuses.

- When you and I resort to an escape response the focus is on ourselves.

♦ It's all about "me."

◇ I am looking for what is easy, convenient, and non-threatening for me.

- When you or I use an attack response the focus is on the other person.

♦ "It's all about "them."

◇ We blame the other person and expect him to give in, ask forgiveness, and solve the problem.

- When you and I seek to work it out the focus is on "us."

♦ We are concerned about the relationship and everyone's best interest in the dispute.

◇ Especially God's.

♦ We are working toward mutual responsibility in solving the problem.

b. The different responses reveal different goals.

- People who use escape responses are usually intent on "peace-faking."

- ♦ Making things look good even when they are not.
- ♦ More interested in appearance than in real peace.
- People who use attack responses are “peace-breaking.”
 - ♦ They are willing to sacrifice peace and unity to get what they want.
- People who use work-it-out responses are committed to “peace-making.”
 - ♦ We will work as long and as hard as necessary to achieve true justice and genuine harmony with others.
- c. The different responses generally end in different results.
 - The escape and attack responses almost always result in kissing your relationship good-bye.
 - The escape and attack responses dishonor God.
 - The work-it-out response has a much greater likelihood of reconciliation.

5. Things To Remember

- a. God wants us to live in peace with one another.
Romans 12:18
 - Romans 12:18 If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.
- b. God may be using conflict to help you grow in Christ.
 - He may use conflict to remind you of your weaknesses and to encourage you to depend more on Him
 - He may use conflict to uncover sinful attitudes and habits in your life.
 - ♦ Envy, jealousy, stubborn pride, bitterness, an unforgiving heart, a critical tongue

- c. **Conflict is an opportunity to glorify God by your response.**
- One of the most powerful ways to glorify God is to handle conflict His way.
 - ♦ Ask yourself, “*How can I please and honor God in this situation?*”
- d. **We are to follow Christ’s example and love our enemies. Luke 6:27-28, 35-36; Romans 12:17-21; 1 Peter 3:8-12**
- **Luke 6:27-28** "But I say to you who hear, *love* your enemies, *do good* to those who hate you, 28 *bless* those who curse you, *pray* for those who mistreat you.
 - **Luke 6:35-36** "But *love* your enemies, and *do good*, and *lend*, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for He Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil *men*. 36 "Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.
 - **Romans 12:17-21**
 - cf 1 Peter 3:8-12
- e. **Jesus’ reputation depends upon our unity. John 13:34-35; 17:20-23**
- **John 13:34-35**
 - **John 17:21-23** that they may all be one; . . . *so that the world may believe that You sent Me*. 22 . . . that they may be one, just as We are one; 23 I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, *so that the world may know that You sent Me . . .*
- f. **Be sure that you are at peace with God. Colossians 1:19-20; Romans 5:1**
- **Romans 5:1** Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,
- g. **We need to forgive as God has forgiven us. Psalm 103:9-10; Ephesians 4:31-32**

- **Psalm 103:9-10** He will not always strive *with us*, Nor will He keep *His anger* forever. 10 He has not dealt with us according to our sins, Nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.
- **Ephesians 4:31-32** Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. 32 Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.

6. Biblical Peacemaking:

- Is motivated and directed by a desire to honor and please God. 1 Corinthians 10:31**
- Requires facing up to our own faults, responsibilities, and attitudes. Matthew 7:5**
- At times requires constructive confrontation. Matthew 18:15**
- Involves a commitment to restoring damaged relationships and developing a just and mutually satisfactory agreement if at all possible.**