

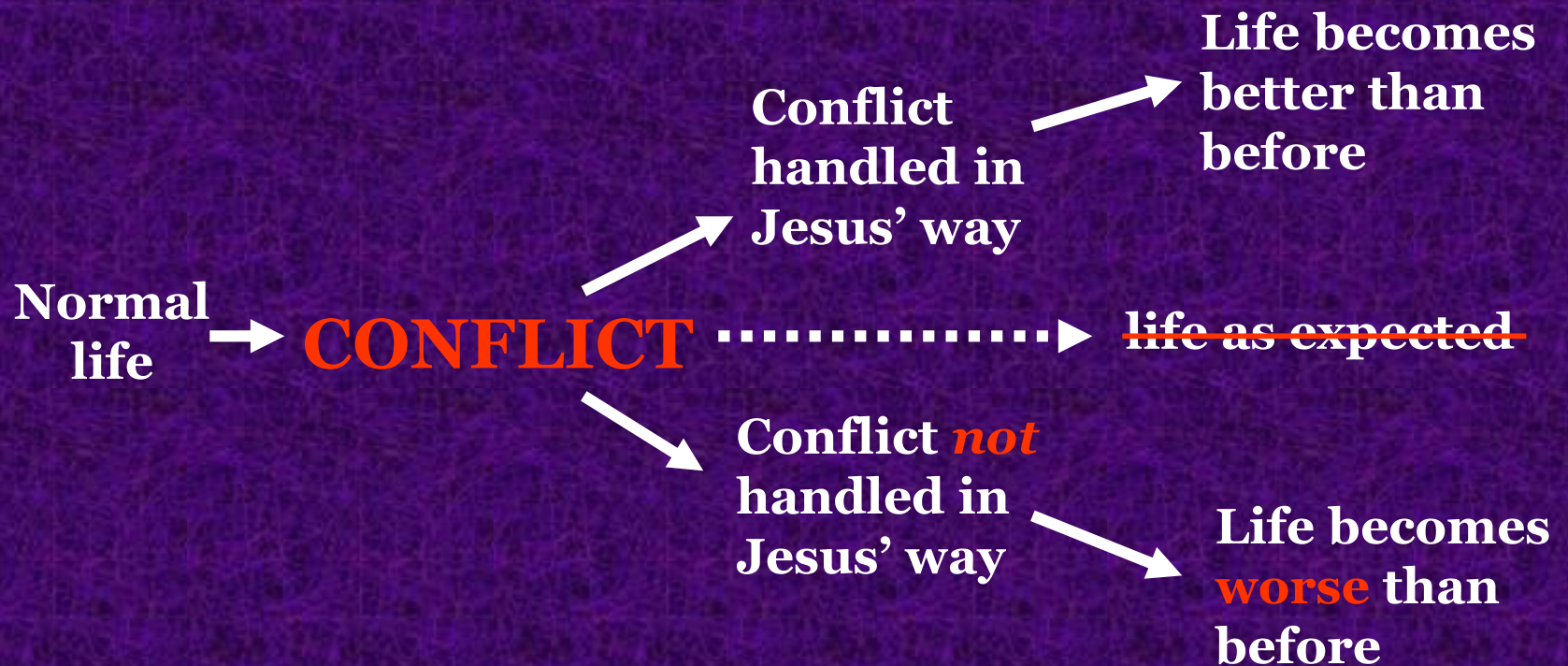
Living in the Path of Peace

*Steps to overcoming conflict
Jesus' way*

Session 1

- Form groups of 4 people each
- Take one minute to get to know each other (if you don't already)
- What are some kinds of conflict that often happen in interpersonal relationships or in ministry?
- (Have someone write these on a sheet of newsprint.)

Every Conflict Offers an Opportunity



Small Group Discussion

- Tell a story of a situation you've seen or experienced where a conflict brought about a situation that was better than before.
- (Note: avoid gossip, leave out names)
- Brainstorm a list of dangers that can arise if conflict is avoided or not handled well.
Have someone take notes

“Saul and all the Israelites were dismayed and terrified.”

“Too scary!”



“What will be done for the man who kills this Philistine and removes this disgrace?”

“Let no one be lost heart on account of the Philistine; your servant will go and fight him.”

- Do I want to respond to like Saul or like David?
- Talk to God about a conflict or a person with whom you've had conflict.

When we avoid God's instructions in dealing with conflict

- 1. We disobey Jesus' clear command (Mat 5:23,24)
- 2. We invite God's judgment on us if we don't forgive (Mat 18:21-35)

“In anger his master turned him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed.

This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart”

(Matthew 18:34,35).

When we avoid God's instructions in dealing with conflict

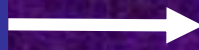
- 1. We disobey Jesus' clear command (Mat 5:23,24)
- 2. We invite God's judgment on us if we don't forgive (Mat 18:21-35)
- 3. The world doesn't see the testimony Jesus commanded us to give (John 13:35; John 17:20,21)
- 4. We miss the blessings God wants to give (Psalm 133:1, 3b)
- 5. Gossip

The Foundation: Who Jesus is, and Who We are in Him

- Jesus is the Prince of Peace. (Isaiah 9:5)
- 2 Cor 5:18-21
- God, through Christ,
 - “reconciled us to himself”
 - “gave us the ministry of reconciliation”

The process of reconciliation as described in 2 Cor 5:18-20

We are reconciled to God.



God gives us the ministry of reconciliation.



Other people become reconciled to God.

Responses to Conflict as Described in James 3



Personal Application

- Think of a conflict you've experienced or observed recently. Consider the attitudes, actions and words of those involved.
- 1. In what ways did those attitudes, actions and words reflect the upward path, and in what ways did they reflect the downward path?
- 2. What would need to change, for the conflict you're thinking of to be addressed according to the "wisdom from above"?

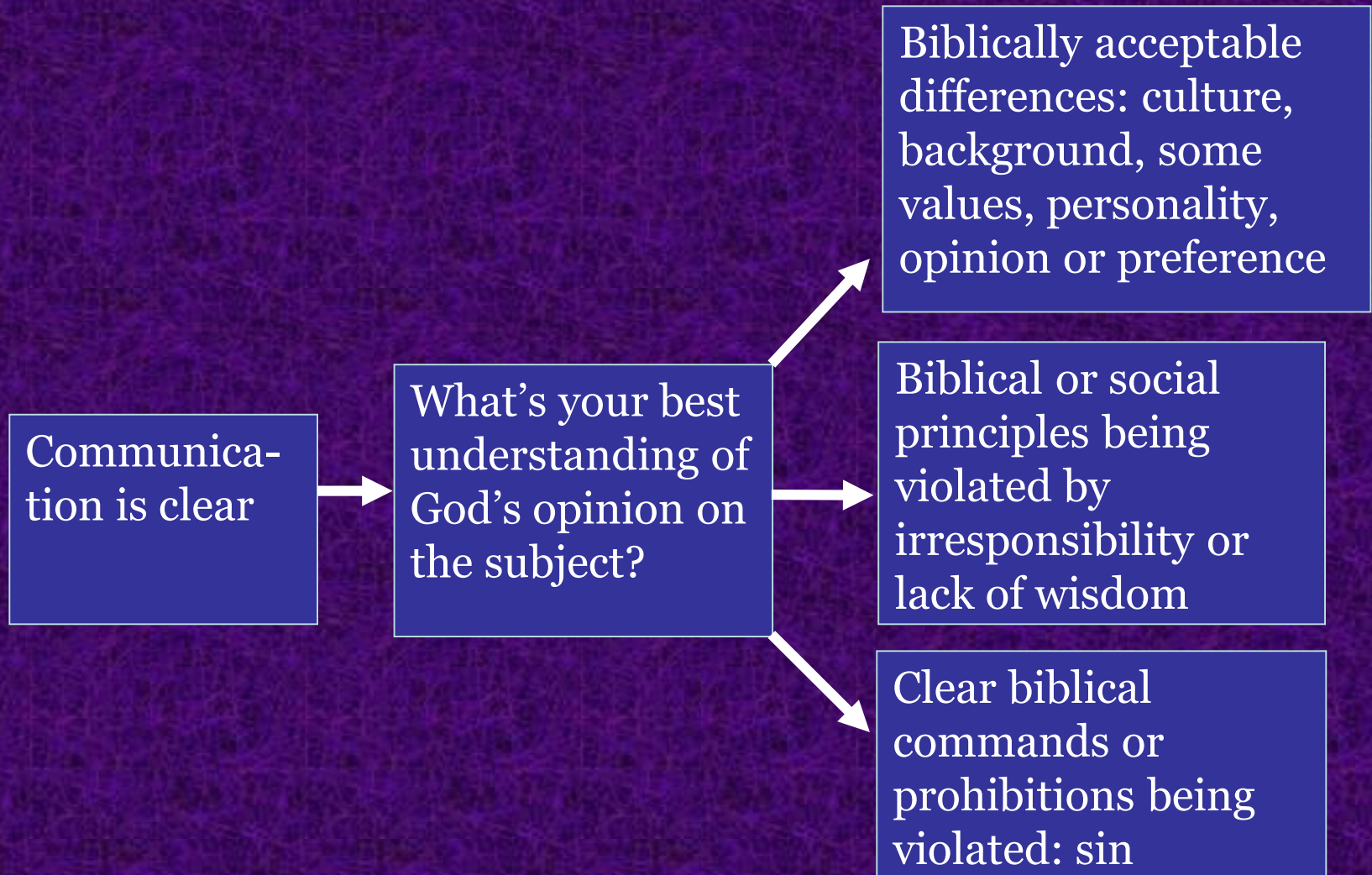
The Four Most Common Causes of Conflict

1. Miscommunication
2. Differences in Culture, Background, Values, Personality, Opinion or Preference
3. Irresponsibility, Lack of Wisdom, or Insensitivity (to others' feelings)
4. Selfishness or Other Sins

How can we tell which of these four is causing a particular conflict?

- Check them in this order:
- 1. Is it communication?
- 2. If that's not the problem, next consider:
- What do you think is God's opinion on which *kind* of problem this is?

Which is it?



Session 2

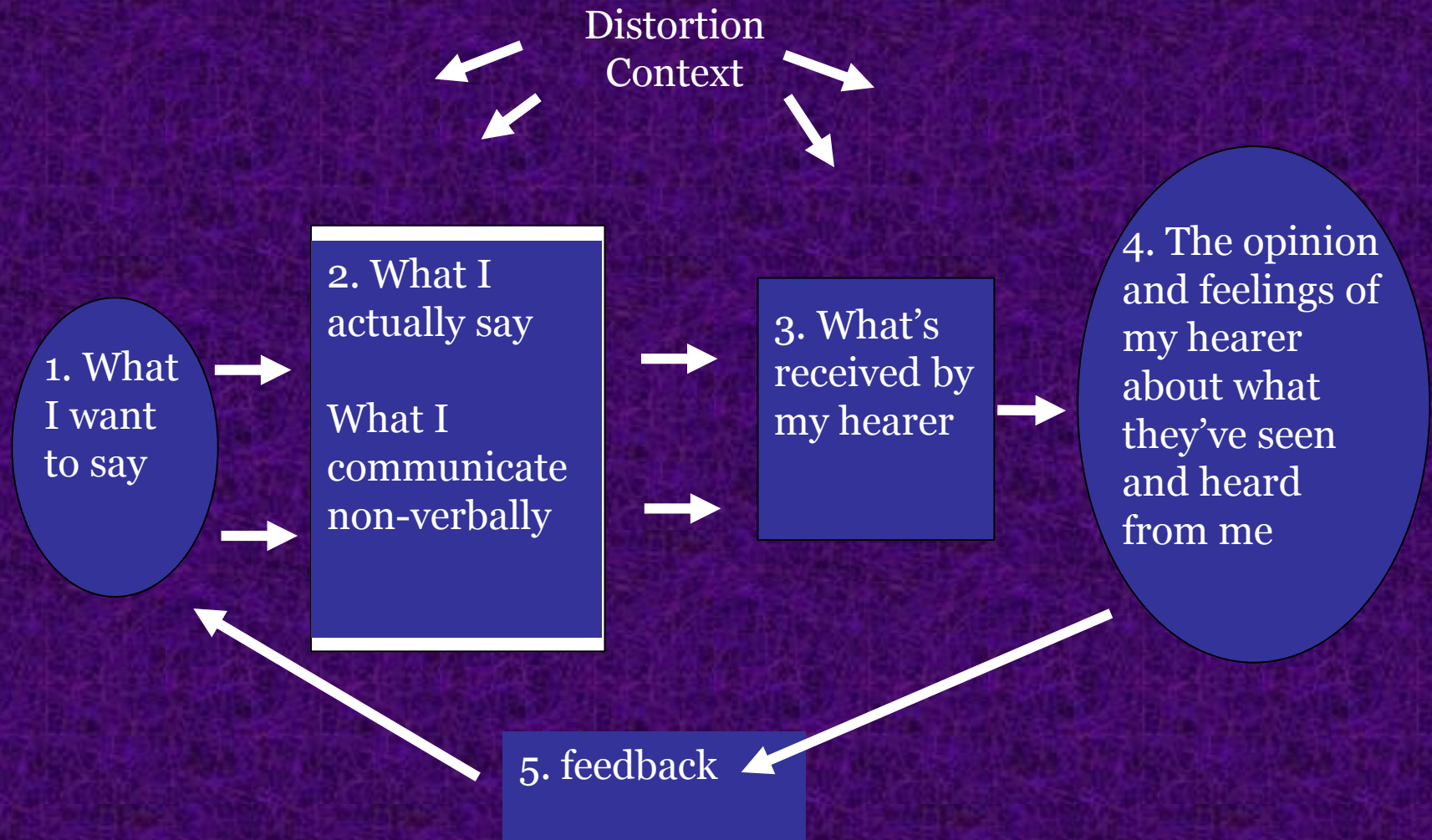
The Most Common Causes of Conflict

Overcoming Conflicts Caused by Miscommunication

“You don’t need to go to the store on your way home.”

“You need to go to the store on your way home.”

Overcoming Conflicts Caused by Miscommunication



Feedback: in pairs

1. Choose a partner for this exercise.
2. One of you think of a recent event or issue of importance in your life – something that has touched your emotions in one way or another - that you can share comfortably with your partner, without it reflecting negatively on anyone.
3. For just *2 minutes*, shares with your partner about the event or issue, including your thoughts, emotions, hopes, disappointments (if there were any), and plans, related to the event or issue.
4. After the story is finished, your partner will take *1 minute* to give feedback on what they heard, including the thoughts, emotions, hopes, disappointments and plans.
5. In *1 minute*, the person who shared will give feedback on how much their partner recounted it accurately, and how much the story got changed in the process.

**2. Overcoming Conflicts
Caused by Differences in
Culture, Background,
Values, Personality,
Opinion or Preference**

Our Basic Problem

- I AM
- Always right
- The standard of what's good and best
- Worthy of praise
- Deserving of honor and respect
- Greater and more important than those around me
- etc



Our Basic Problem

- We want to be God – to set ourselves up as the standard of what's right in the universe.
- There's only one "I AM," and you're not it.



- We need to really believe and live that it's okay for other people to be different from us in a lot of ways.
- Some differences are good and God-given.
- Some are just a matter of preference.
- Even some differences that are sinful, God has said he will take care of later.
- It's not our job to fix everything that's wrong in the world, or try to make everyone conform to our standard.

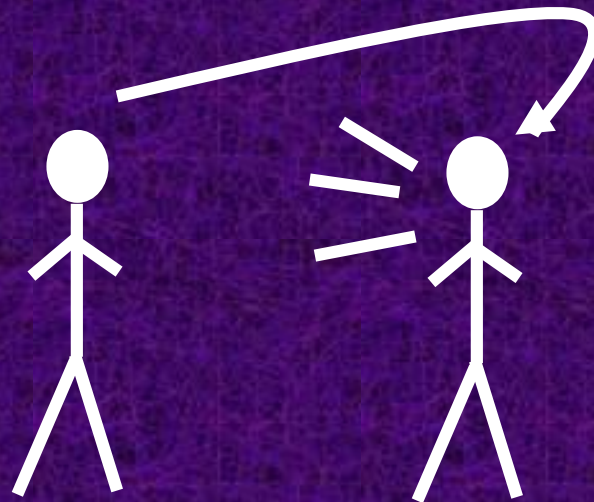
“What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Are you not to judge those inside? God will judge those outside. Expel the wicked man from among you.” (1 Cor 5:12,13)

Sometimes it's good to ask, "What makes this important to you?" and then just **listen**.

"Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also the interests of others"
(Phil 2:4).

This involves seeing and trying to understand where the other person's coming from.

God sees their point of view (whether he agrees with it or not).



Romans 14:1-23 says it's okay to differ on minor issues.

Summary: “Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God” (Rom 15:7).

To Overcome Conflicts Influenced by Differences

1. Take into account (and view in a positive light) differences in personality and background, between yourself and others involved in the conflict.
2. Give feedback about what you're catching of their view.
3. Listen as they correct where you may have gotten it wrong.
4. Accept all kinds of people and differences that God accepts.

Small Group Discussion

Based on the principles in Romans 14, start making a modern-day list of issues on which it's OK for Christians to have differences of opinion.

Overcoming Conflict Caused by Irresponsibility, Lack of Wisdom, or Insensitivity (to others' feelings)

What's the nature of your relationship with this person?

1. What authority has God given you?
2. What authority has society or your position given you?
3. What amount of respect or authority do you have in the eyes of this person? How much have they invited you to speak into their lives?

It's important *how* we address the issue

- Are we speaking (and thinking) in a way that's likely to bring actual change?
- “A word *aptly spoken* is like apples of gold in setting of silver. Like an earring of gold or an ornament of fine gold is a *wise* man's rebuke to a listening ear” (Prov 25:11,12).
- Invest the time and energy to consider what approach is most likely to bring good fruit.

Small Group Discussion

- 1. List some conflicts that could arise because of these kinds of issues, and discuss the best way to handle a couple of them.
- 2. Discuss some examples from different kinds of relationships, such as: your own children, someone else's children at church, a neighbor's children, a coworker you don't know well, a coworker who claims to be a Christian but you're not sure, a close friend, someone you know from church who's not a close friend.

Overcoming Conflict Caused by Selfishness or Other Sins

“What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don’t they come from your desires that battle within you?” (James 4:1)

Lots of conflicts happen because one or both people are being selfish.

The temptation is to see how *other people* are being selfish, and entirely miss the ways that *we ourselves* are being selfish.

Jesus' Way of Responding to Other Christians' Sins

"If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over.

But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that `every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.'

If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector.

(Mat 18:15-17)

Jesus' Way of Responding to Other Christians' Sins

1. Admit and deal with our own flaws. (Mat 7:3-5)
2. If you're stuck and don't know whether you should talk to the person or not, consult someone to ask for wisdom; without sharing the person's name.
3. Talk with the person, "just between the two of you." Don't grumble against them to someone else. (James 5:9)

Jesus' Way of Responding to Other Christians' Sins

4. Clarify the facts, to make sure you've got them straight (Prov 18:13). Use polite and friendly questions (not accusatory).
5. Base all your comments on clear teachings of Scripture, not your own ideas or feelings. The goal of the process is *restoration* - of relationship with God and others.

Jesus' Way of Responding to Other Christians' Sins

6. If the person reacts by accusing *you*, listen with patience and humility. Ask the Lord if there's *anything* in what they say that you can agree to and apologize for. Be a model of openness and the kind of attitude you hope they'll have.
7. After you've talked through whatever issue they may have raised, return to the issue with which you started.
8. If they acknowledge their fault, pray with them, and let them know you don't hold anything against them. (Mat 18:15b)

Jesus' Way of Responding to Other Christians' Sins

9. If your word of correction is rejected, bring someone else along. Choose 1 or 2 people who are wise, and respected by this person (not someone sure to take your side). (Mat 18:16a)
 10. Final steps. (Mat 18:17-20)
- * If the person is not a believer, the process is different. 1 Cor 5:12,13; Rom 12:18.

What to Do When Conflict Resolution Fails

“If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone” (Rom 12:18).

Notice the command has 2 caveats:

“If it is possible

“as far as it depends on you”

Two implications:

1. It may not always be possible
2. It sometimes depends not only on you, but also on the response of someone else.

What to Do When Conflict Resolution Fails

But with that understanding,
we still pursue the goal:

“live at peace with everyone”

What to Do When Conflict Resolution Fails

- 1. Ask the Lord, “Is there anything else I can do?”
- 2. Make sure you’ve forgiven.
- 3. Seek wise counsel.
- 4. Pray for those involved, that God will bless them.

Some factors that make us weak and not at our best.

- These aren't *causes* of conflict, but make it easier for conflict to arise, and harder to deal well with it.
- Physical factors: sickness, hunger, thirst, tiredness
- Mental factors: stress, worry, feeling oppressed or disempowered

Sometimes when we realize these factors are at work, it's helpful to tell others about it.

- "Sorry, I'm not at my best today."
- "Sorry, I'm not mad at you."
- Lots of conflicts can be overcome if we have the humility to realize and admit these factors.

Small Group Discussion

1. According to Jesus (“...The spirit is willing, but the body is weak.” - Mat 26:41) what should we do when various factors are making us weak?
2. Of the “factors that make us weak,” are there any that you’ve been experiencing in times of recent conflict? Are there any factors that others involved in the conflict were experiencing or might have been experiencing?
3. Role play: Each member of the group practice telling someone in the group about a factor you’re experiencing that’s affecting you negatively (can be real or made up). Give each other feedback on how the message came across.

Session 3

The Way Out of Conflict (Step 1)

Get God's Perspective & Choose God's Way

- A. Realize and acknowledge (at least to yourself) that there's a conflict. "Better is open rebuke than hidden love" (Prov 27:5).
- B. Try to determine what cause(s) is/are at work in it.
- C. Pray for the situation and the person or people involved, asking the Lord for wisdom. *Surrender* yourself, the people involved and the situation into the Lord's hands, to accomplish His will.
- D. Get a better perspective. The mind of Christ (1 Cor 2:16b) = Jesus' perspective on things.

Get a Better Perspective

There are 3 steps we can take to help us grow in seeing our situation more from Jesus' perspective.

1. Check your own eye. (Mat 7:3-5)
2. Check and process your feelings.

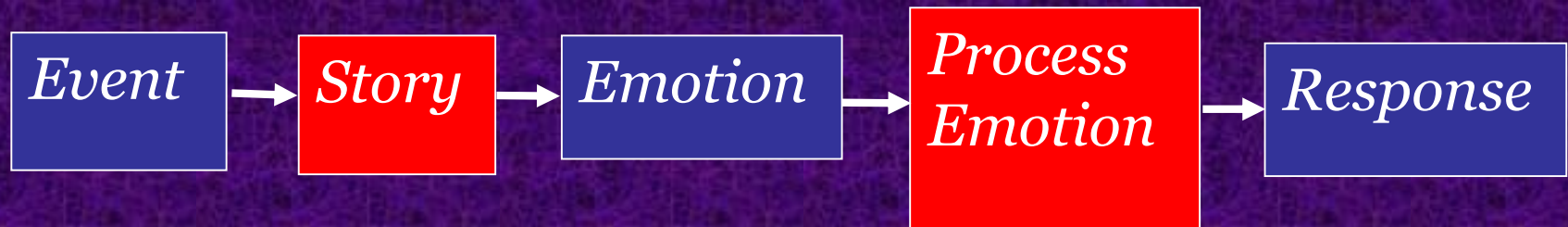
Three Choices

- **“Stuff” the emotion**
- **Respond (automatically) in accordance with the emotion**
- **Process the emotion**

The typical human pattern:



Our goal is to insert into the “natural” process two additional elements:



The processing of emotions can be broken down into six steps

a) Acknowledge and identify our feelings.

{If we're feeling angry, it's likely that just beneath the surface of (and just prior to) the anger, we were feeling one or more of four things: **frustration, fear, hurt** and/or **shame**.}

b) Acknowledge and understand the cause of the feelings, along with the “story” we’ve told ourselves.

- Does he/she *not like* me?
- Is he/she *mad* at me about something?
- Does he/she think he's *better* than me?
- Did he/she *not see* me?

When our emotional response seems out of proportion to the trigger, that's usually a sign we would benefit from some form of wholeness prayer.

The processing of emotions can be broken down into six steps

- c) Surrender the cause and the feelings (along with related people and events) to the Lord.
- d) Ask the Lord to help us distinguish between the facts and our “story,” and show us if there’s another “story” or motive that’s possible.

The processing of emotions can be broken down into six steps

Think of a situation where someone irritated you. Apply the first 4 steps.

e) Receive the Lord's perspective and ask for His help.

Wholeness Prayer Principles

- 1. *Identify* (take captive) your negative feelings, thoughts, and actions**
- 2. *Bring* these to God and ask Him to reveal a related recent memory**
- 3. *Ask* God to reveal any root(s) – the first time (or pattern) when you thought, felt, and/or acted this way**
- 4. *Receive* His perspective - first at the root, if there is one**
- 5. *Apply* this perspective in everyday life.**

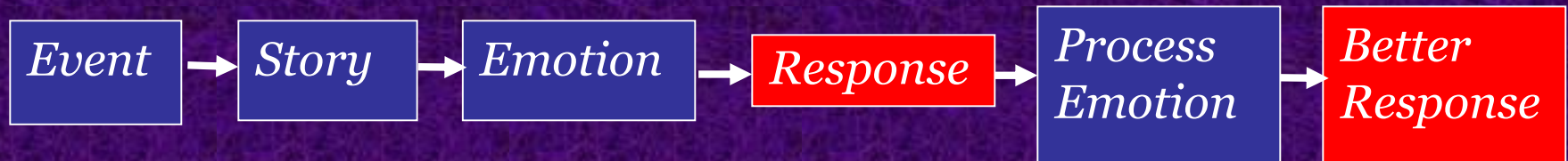
Available on www.freemin.org

- Wholeness Prayer – Simplified Version
- Raising Godly Children
- This workshop
- Other Resources

The processing of emotions can be broken down into six steps

f) Consider an appropriate response, consistent with God's best.

It's still not too late!



* Continue the 6 step process, with the situation or person you began to process earlier.

* **Personal Application:**

Write down the action steps the Lord wants you to take for processing your emotions.

Understand the spiritual warfare dynamics of the conflict

- Our enemy is not flesh and blood. Eph 6:12
Even for those who act like our enemies: (2 Tim 2:24-26)
 - Reject the false accusations that run through our heads about the other person/people, and take our thoughts captive. (Ex 20:16; 2 Cor 10:5)
- Satan's efforts to divide us (2 Cor 2:11).
 - Resist the temptation to see Satan as being directly behind the other person/people, especially if they're followers of Christ.

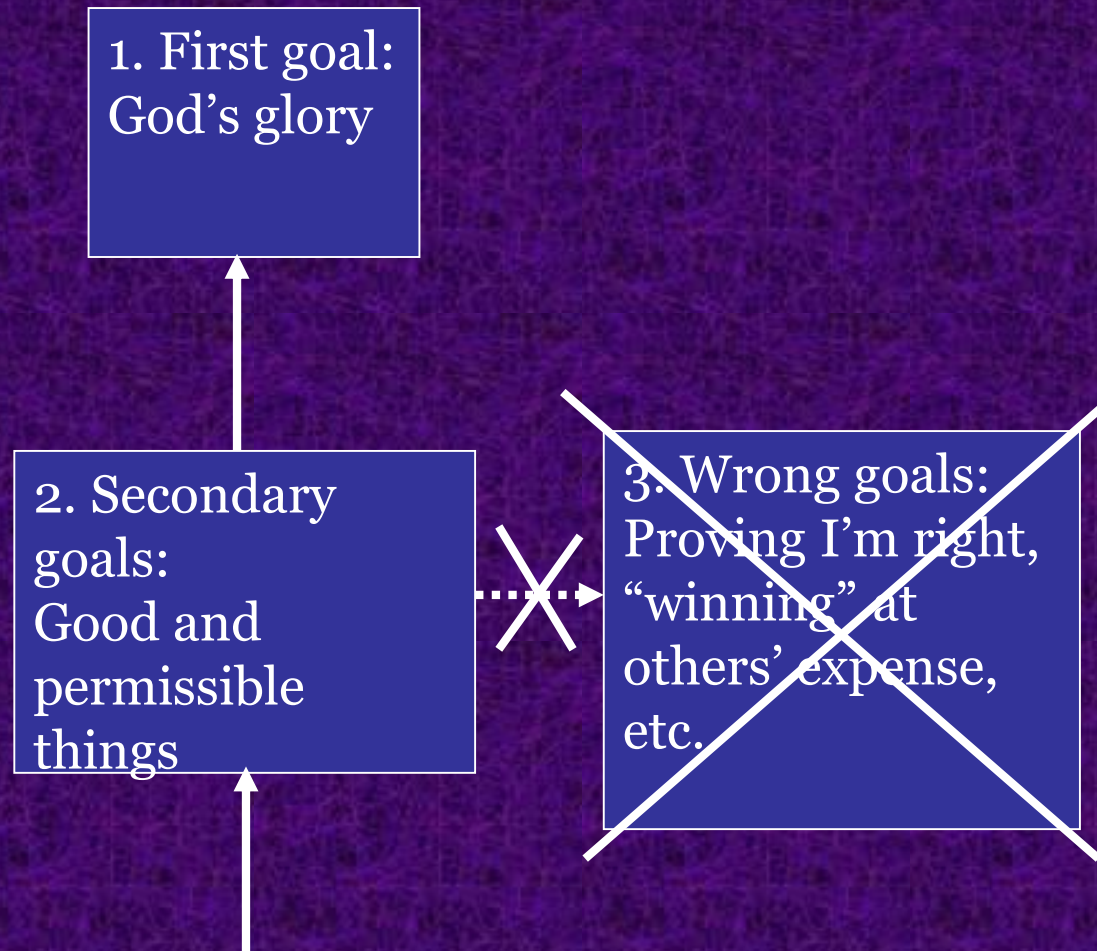
Get God's Perspective

- A. Realize and acknowledge that there's a conflict.
- B. Try to determine what cause(s) is/are at work in it.
- C. Pray for the situation and the person or people involved.
- D. Get a better perspective.
- **E. Choose to will act in accordance with God's Word and the way of Jesus.**
- **F. Check and correct your motivation.**

Ask yourself: "What do I really want in this situation?"

Resist the temptation to have your goal change from what it originally was, to winning the argument or proving the other person wrong.

Keep the Right Goal



Small Group Discussion

Choose one of the situations from the handout you received in Session 2, or create your own. What might be some wrong goals in the situation? What might be some good secondary goals in the situation?

Get God's Perspective

G. Hope for the best and believe the best.

Love “believes all things and hopes all things” (1 Cor 13:7)

Session 4

The Way Out of Conflict (Steps 2-4)

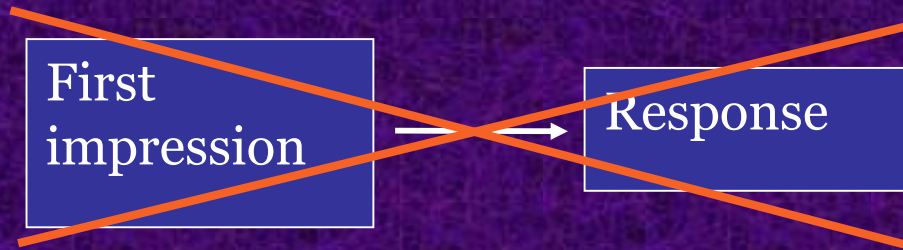
2. Dialogue God's Way

Talk with the person or people involved,
with the following purposes:

A. Check the facts of the situation (Prov
18:13)

“Do you mean “ABC?”

Check the Facts



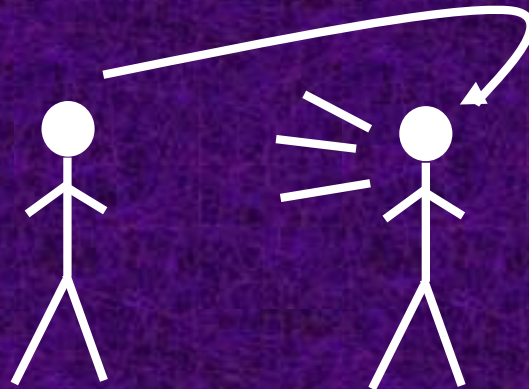
“A fool shows his annoyance at once..” (Prov 12:16)



“He who answers before listening – that is his folly and his shame” (Prov 18:13).

Dialogue God's Way

- B. State your commitment to overcome the problem in a way that's consistent with Jesus' love.
- C. Try to see the situation from the other person's perspective: how does it look and feel to them? Listen first, and give feedback to see if you're getting it right!



In Pairs

- Choose a situation from Session 2 (handout #2).
- Each person chooses a role.
- The first person begins to share their perspective.
- The second person asks questions (only to clarify as needed).
- When the first person finishes sharing their perspective (2 min), the second person repeats (to the best of their understanding) the second person's perspective, and asks for feedback on how accurate their understanding is (1 min).
- The first person gives clarifying feedback as needed until the second person can repeat back the first person's perspective accurately (2 min).

Dialogue God's Way

D. Talk through the issues, speaking the truth in love. (Eph 4:15)

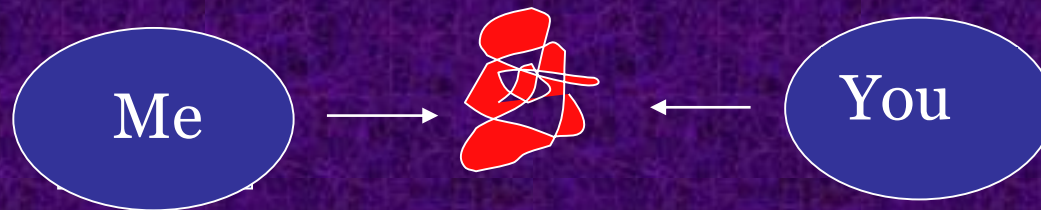
Try to determine the cause of the conflict, without making accusations.

E. Apologize for any fault, problem, or weakness on your part – however small.

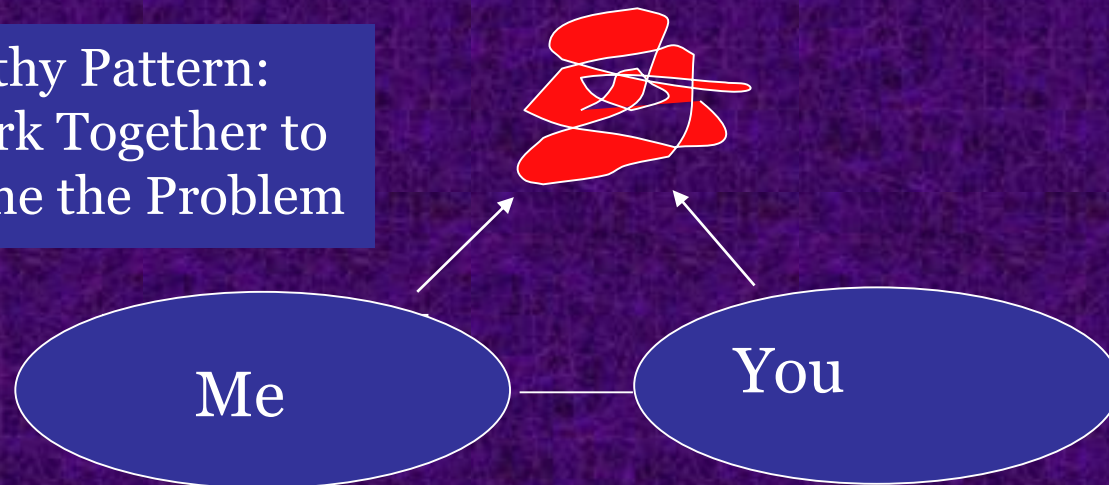
F. Value people as God does. A loving relationship is more important than the problem itself.

Dialogue God's Way

*Un*healthy Pattern:
The Problem is
Between Us



Healthy Pattern:
We Work Together to
Overcome the Problem

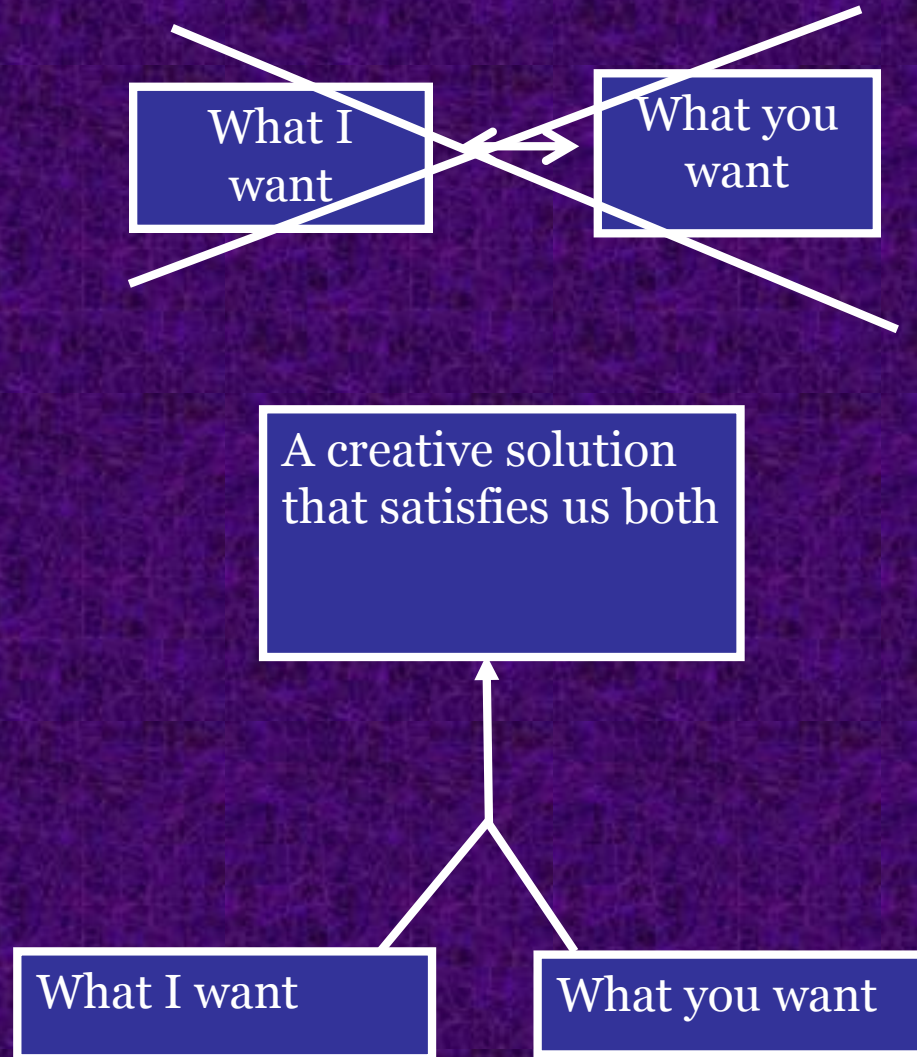


Dialogue God's Way

Homework for married people:

Tell your spouse that they're more important to you than anything else in this world, including anything you ever argue about.

G. Look for Creative "Win-Win" Solutions.



Dialogue God's Way

H. If needed, find a mediator.

3. Forgive as God Commands (from the heart)

Indicators you have fully forgiven someone:

- You have compassion on them.
- You don't say negative things about them.
- You can freely bless them.
- You're free from all bitterness, anger, resentment, hate, and/or rage toward them.
- You don't accuse, blame or judge them.
- You don't seek repayment or revenge.
- You let go of the offense.

Forgive as God Commands

Indicators you have **not** fully forgiven someone.

- You feel negatively about them.
- You say negative things about them.
- You curse them.
- You feel bitterness, anger, resentment, hate, and/or rage toward them.
- You accuse, blame or judge them.
- You want repayment or revenge.
- You hold onto the offense.

Forgive as God Commands

Forgiving someone means releasing the offenses and the results of those offenses to God. It doesn't mean that what the person did was right, or that they should be trusted.

3 steps related to forgiving someone:

Bind and cast out evil spirits

Forgive the sin

Receive the person.

Follow-up step: Pray a blessing on the person

Common “Rubber Bands”

- “If I forgive it means that what happened is okay.”
- “If I forgive it means it could happen again.” (I won’t be protected by my unforgiveness.)
- Desire for revenge
- Desire to punish
- Self-protection

Large Group Discussion

1. If you were Sam, how might you feel? (Sam, how did you feel?)
2. If you were Mike, how might you feel? (Mike, how did you feel?)
3. Where did you see God work in this prayer time?
4. How might wholeness prayer help in developing healthy relationships?

4. Release All into God's Hands

- A. Release people and situations into God's sovereign hand, then go on your way rejoicing.
- B. Do everything you can do to bring God's blessing to those involved in the conflict.

- **Personal Application:** Take 2 minutes to pray for people with whom you've had conflict.
- Ask God what you could do to be a blessing to them. Write down your ideas.
- **Personal Application:** Choose a conflict you are experiencing or have experienced in the past. Talk to God about it and in your own mind, practice steps A-F above.
- **In Pairs:** Practice a fictitious conflict (or a real conflict if you'd rather, but without names). You may want to use the list of potential differences you brainstormed (from Romans 14), or samples from Session 2.

Personal Application

Pray and write down:

- Highlights of what you've learned in this workshop
- Application steps
- Remaining questions – to discuss with someone

Ask God what things may need to change within you to apply the principles in this seminar. For each of the things that would need to change, ask yourself and God these two questions:

- **“Is it worth it?”** Is it worth the extra effort it will take to resolve conflicts in ways that are more in line with God’s best?
- **“Can I do it?”** With God as my helper, can I grow in these ways? Do I choose to do this? Who can I ask for help if I get stuck?