

Living in the Path of Peace

Steps to overcoming conflict

By Dave Coles - © 2013 Freedom for the Captives Ministries

Goals.

Cognitive: *Knowing you're not God; He is. "I can do things His way and leave things in His hands."*

Affective: *Hopeful that their relationships can significantly improve. Feeling good about God's way and desiring to live it out; feeling capable of doing it.*

Action steps: *Responding to conflicts in God's way.*

Session 1: Introduction. (Total for this session: 65 min)

Where there are people, there is conflict. How can we make the most of it? And what does God have to say about all this?

Large group questions (2 min): When did conflict first enter the world?

2. Will humanity ever be free from conflict? When?

3. Was Jesus ever involved in conflict? Was the apostle Paul? Peter? Abraham? Moses? King David? The early church (Gal 2:11; Acts 15:36-39; Gen 13:5-12; Ex 10:24-29; 11:4-10; Psalms 3:2-9; Mat 20:20-28; Acts 6:1-7)

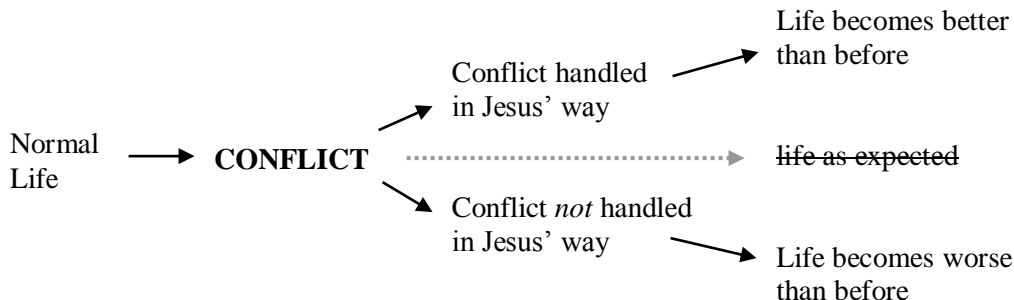
4. Form groups of 4 people, take **one minute** to get to know each other (if you don't already), then discuss: **PP** What are some kinds of conflict that often happen in interpersonal relationships or in ministry? [Have someone write these on a sheet of newsprint (collect, to use later)] (7 min)

PP Every Conflict Offers an Opportunity (8 min)

It's natural to desire to live without conflict. That's what we were created for. Before the Fall, there was no conflict in the Garden of Eden. But when sin entered, the conflicts began. (describe: Adam & Eve hide from God; Adam says It's Eve's fault; Eve says it's the serpent's fault. God tells them "Get out of my garden," Cain tells Abel "Get out of my life." And things go from bad to worse). God has a plan for a perfect world, where there's no more conflict. Every human heart longs to be in that place – no more conflict, pain or tears.

While we're in this world that's touched by sin, we will have conflicts. And that's not an entirely bad thing - because within every conflict, God has hidden opportunities. (Very quick overview of Acts 6:1-7.)

When conflict comes, life will not remain the same. It will either get better or worse. And the choice is largely up to you. **PP**



Example (Working on the seminar – my wife said simplify. It was irritating, but I knew I needed the input. I was a good sport. ☺)

A lot of us would rather avoid conflict, and just hope the problem will go away - or that the problem person will just go away. But that is not Jesus' way. He has something better for us.

Skit (5 min)

Narrator: Betty is the leader of the Small Group ministry at their church; Ann has just attended her second ministry meeting, and approaches Betty after a meeting with a suggestion.

A: I've got an idea.

B: OK, what have you got?

A: (Kind of critical and pushy.) I think we should have all the small groups meet on Wednesdays. If we just let people have small groups any day they like, our weekly children's ministry will never get off the ground.

B: OK, I hear your ideas, but I'm not sure you've caught the background of why we're headed in the direction we are. At this point, the group has some good momentum with the small group plans we've been working on since January. And I don't think we have the resources or momentum to launch a program like you're suggesting.

A: Well, if you don't like my ideas, fine! You can just do it your own way. [Walks off in a huff.]

Narrator: When she gets home.

C (her husband): Hi Honey. How was your meeting?

A: "I shared some ideas, but I feel like Betty didn't really listen to me. I felt disrespected, not really valued, isolated. I don't wanna be involved in this ministry anymore.

C: How about if we pray about this?

A: That'd be great if you would pray for me, but I'm feeling like I really need to not think about this any more right now.

A: Arrg, 3 AM and I can't sleep. I keep thinking about my conversation with Betty. Maybe if I'd explained my reasons better she would have understood why my plan is so much better than what the group is doing. [Pause.] I think God might be trying to tell me something, but I'm not sure I want to hear it. Ohhh..., I just remembered that conflict resolution seminar I went to last month. There was something in there about feeling peaceful. I don't feel peaceful. Maybe there's something in my notes that would help me find peace and go to sleep.

Narrator: At 4 AM, Ann gets up and pulls out her notes from conflict resolution seminar. A: prays through the pattern from Phil 4:6, 7.

1. She *caught* the fact that she was feeling something unpleasant.
2. She *took time to talk about the problem with the Lord*, sharing her feelings and thoughts.
3. She *presented her request* to the Lord in prayer.
4. She *gave thanks* for a number of things related to the issue and the person involved. (details)
5. She *waited quietly* to hear the Lord's response.

The Lord brings to mind Phil 2:4, (where she has a bookmark, left from the conflict resolution seminar two weeks ago): "Each of you should look, not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others." Ann realizes she wasn't thinking about other people's perspectives, but just about her own idea. She realizes she was rude in her comments about other's plans & ideas. She confesses that to the Lord, plans to call Betty and apologize, and feels the Lord's peace.

Narrator: That afternoon, she calls Betty.

A: "Betty, I think I blew it yesterday. I'm really sorry. Can we get together and talk some time soon?"

B: OK. Tonight's good.

Narrator: That evening

A: Hi. I'm sorry for how I came across yesterday. I didn't mean to insult everybody else's ideas, but I realize that's how it came out.

B: Thanks.

A: I realize I need to learn more about the background of what the group is doing and why. How could I best get that information?

B: How about we talk about that now? I'd like to hear more about what you're thinking as well.

A: That would be great. Thanks so much!

If handled in a biblical way, conflict can bring personal growth and progress in ministry. (An example is found in Acts 6:1-7.) The steps to conflict resolution are not all easy. Some of them are at odds with our selfish human nature. But if we're willing to be shaped by God and follow the instructions He has given us in his owner's manual, *every* conflict can bring spiritual growth and good fruit in our lives.

Small Group Discussion: In two minutes or less per person, tell about a situation you've seen or experienced where a conflict brought about a situation that was better than before. (Avoid gossip, leave out names.) (4 min + next point)

Dangers that Arise if Conflict is Avoided or not Handled Well

Still in small group: PP Brainstorm a list of dangers that can arise if conflict is avoided or not handled well. Have someone take notes. (3 min)

In 1 Samuel 17, we see an example of someone trying to avoid conflict. (story + teaching, 10 min)

In this story, King Saul and the whole army of Israel had gathered to do battle with the Philistines. They had gathered to do battle, but they weren't doing battle. Why? When they heard the threats of the giant Goliath, PP "Saul and all the Israelites were dismayed and terrified." (1 Sam 17:11). Even now, a lot of us avoid conflict for the same reason. PP "Too scary!"

What was David's attitude toward the conflict? We see in verse 26 that he really believed the problem (which in this case was the giant) could be overcome: PP "What will be done for the man who kills this Philistine and removes this disgrace?" (He believes that on the other side of this conflict is a good outcome.) And then he says to Saul – to the KING! PP "Let no one lose heart on account of the Philistine; your servant will go and fight him."

With which of these two men was God pleased? Saul or David? When a conflict arises, let's ask ourselves: PP Do I want to respond to this like Saul or like David? PP Talk to God about a conflict or a person with whom you've had conflict, while you listen to this:

Play clip of "Voice of Truth," v 2 (1 minute)

Here are *Some of the results when we avoid God's instructions in dealing with conflict:*

PP 1. We disobey Jesus' clear command. "Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift." Mat 5:23,24

According to Jesus, resolving conflict is so important that it takes first priority!

PP 2. We invite God's judgment on us if we don't forgive.

One time Peter asked Jesus, “Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me?” (Mat 18:21-35) And Jesus responds with a story. [Man owed the king very large sum, couldn't pay. Wife & kids & all sold to pay. Man begged the king to give him time. Went to fellow servant, choked, had him imprisoned. King: “Wicked servant. Shouldn't you have had mercy?”] Story finishes with the horrifying words, **PP** “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.” I dare say some people would not recognize this heavenly father Jesus is talking about. And some of those people have not forgiven their brother from their heart. According to Jesus, this is a very serious matter. It is essential to forgive from the heart.

Forgiveness is an essential part of conflict resolution. If you have a conflict with someone and you've not forgiven them, that's an issue to work through as soon as possible. We plan to talk more about that in session 3.

PP 3. *The world doesn't see the testimony Jesus commanded us to give. “By this all [people] will know...”* [John 13:35;17:20b,21] **READ** Our love for one another is the number one evidence of the gospel. If we don't have the primary proof God intends, this hinders people's interest in the Good News. Conflict among Christians is a major reason unbelievers often conclude: there's no difference in the way we live.

Let me ask you – would you rather love or not love? Why? Jesus invites us to love a whole lot of people! That can be an incredible blessing. Let's not miss it!

PP 4. *We miss the blessings God wants to give. (Psalm 133:1, 3b)* **READ** God wants to do amazing and wonderful things among us. Let's keep the door open for him to do that transforming work.

PP 5. *Gossip* The problem needs to be talked about. But it looks *too hard* to talk to the person who's actually involved. It seems a lot easier to talk to our friends, who will just listen to our side of the story and sympathize with us. “Oh yes, she's so awful. She did that to me once, too.” And instead of getting rid of the poison, we spread it around.

Like a pan boiling with the lid stuck on. You can't keep it in. If you try, it will eventually explode. If you don't deal with the problem, it *will* leak out somewhere. Better to take the pressure off in God's way.

The Foundation of Conflict Resolution: Who Jesus is, and Who We are in Him (5 min)

PP *Jesus is the Prince of Peace. Isaiah 9:5b*

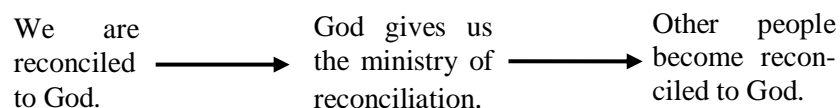
Peace between us and God; in our own hearts; peace with other people.

Read 2 Cor 5:18-20

God “reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation” Notice there are two parts to this. [tell] What we've experienced in our own relationship with God, we tell about and put into practice in our relationships with others.

What God has given us, we share with others.

PP



The process of reconciliation as described in 2 Cor 5:18-21

This process is not automatic; it takes work.

Personal writing; not to share: On a scale of 1 to 10, how much are you experiencing: Peace within your self? Peace with God? Peace with other people? (3 min)

Two Ways of Handling Conflict (6 min total, including 2 min thumb project, 3 min small group)

Before telling them we're starting this section, do the "thumb war"

"Everyone get a partner, put your thumbs like this. (Give demo of putting your thumb on top.) In the next minute, your goal is to have your thumb on top of the other person's thumb as many times as possible. (a prize for whoever does the most?)

We can't avoid conflict. What are we going to do? (show diagram again) The choices boil down to two basic ways: Jesus' way or the human nature: the natural way or the supernatural way? The natural way is what we find in the world.

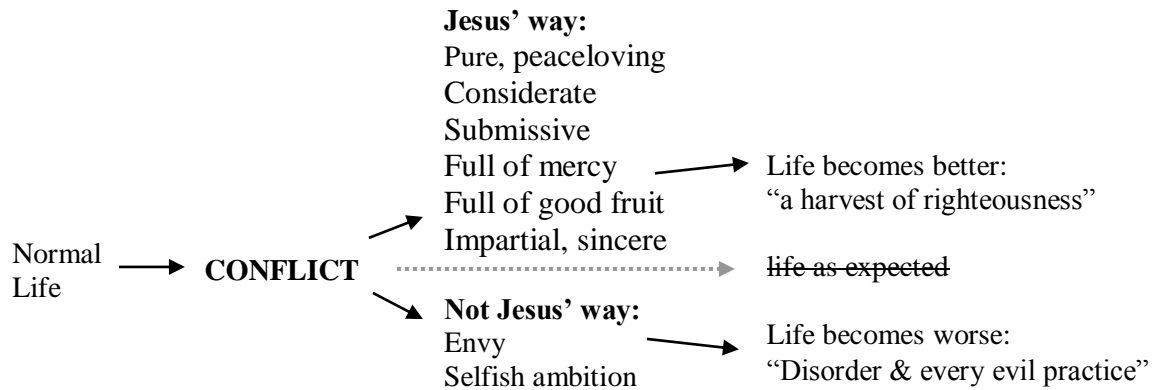
In James 3:13-18, we see described two kinds of "wisdom" (two ways to face conflict)

In your **small group**, fill in the boxes with words describing the two kinds of wisdom. (3 min)

| "Wisdom" from the world, human desires and the evil one | Wisdom from above |
|---|---|
| Envy Selfish ambition Disorder Every evil practice | Pure Peaceloving Considerate Submissive Full of mercy Full of good fruit Impartial Sincere |

If we take the info we get from these 5 verses, and fill in the conflict diagram we saw earlier, we come up with something like this:

PP



Even Christians, if we don't intentionally choose the way of wisdom from above, will tend to do "what comes naturally," that is, the downward path. If we want to respond well to conflict, we need to put our feelings, our reactions, etc. in *second* place, and God's priorities in *first* place.

Personal writing: (5 min) PP

Think of a conflict you've experienced or observed recently. Consider the attitudes, actions and words of those involved.

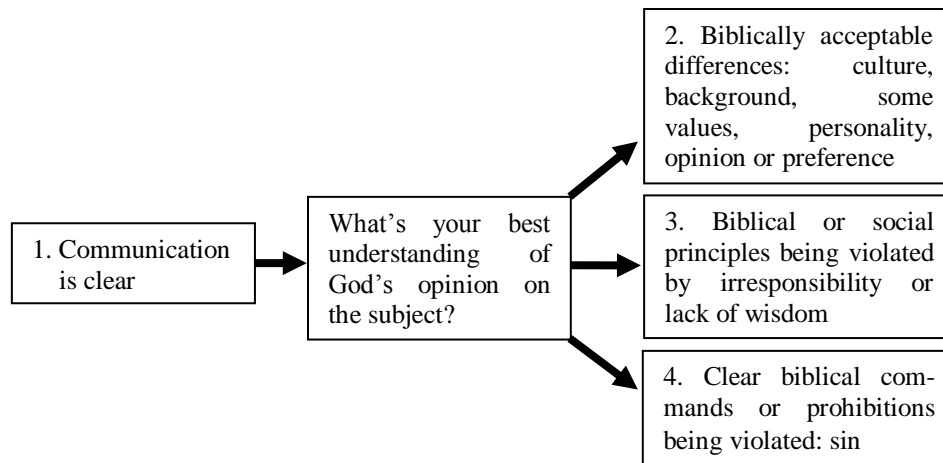
1. In what ways did those attitudes, actions and words reflect the upward path, and in what ways did they reflect the downward path?
2. What would need to change, for the conflict you're thinking of, to be addressed according to the "wisdom from above"?

The Four Most Common Causes of Conflict (5 min)

Introduce the four: **PP**

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

PP How can we tell which of these 4 is causing a particular conflict? Sometimes it's more than one. But here's what you can do: **PP** Check them in this order: 1. Is it communication? If it's a communication problem, that can be the easiest to solve, if you're aware of the dynamics. 2. If that's not the problem, next consider: What kind of issue is at stake? What do you think is God's opinion on which *kind* of problem this is? In the remaining sessions, we'll tell you how to work through those. **PP**



Refer to previous **skit**. Person praying through what went wrong. Working through the 4 common causes.

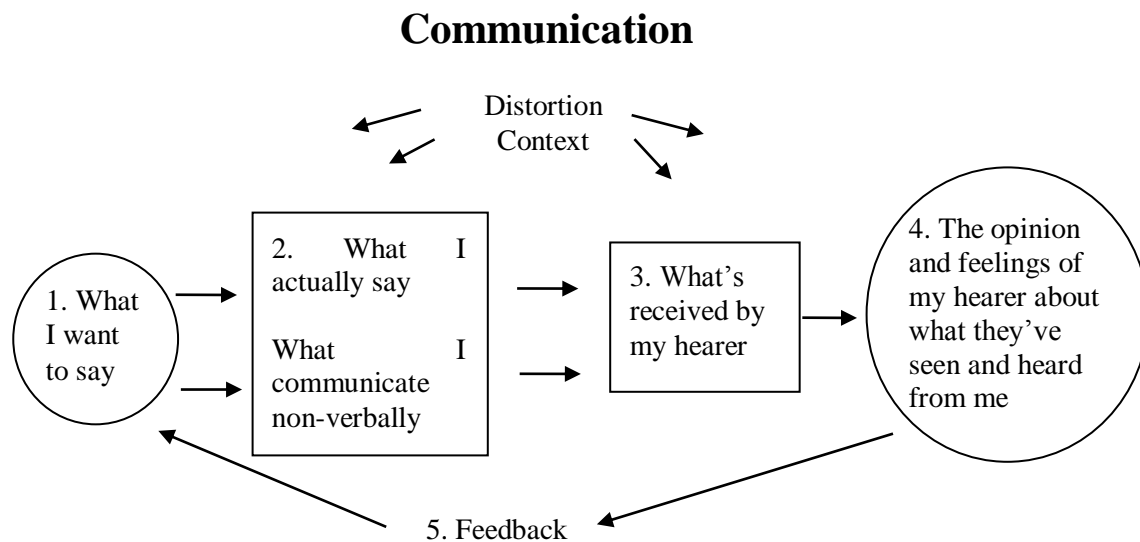
Session 2 The Most Common Causes of Conflict (98 min)

1. Overcoming Conflicts Caused by Miscommunication (10 min talk, 1 min skit; 7 min feedback in pairs)

Most of us communicate based on a false assumption: “What the other person heard is what I intended to say.” The fact is that what they heard is sometimes wildly different than what you meant to say! Why does this happen? Because there are many ways that communication can go wrong.

Example (Skit) I say to my wife, **PP** ”You *don't* need to go to the store on your way home.” And she hears, **PP** ”You need to go to the store on your way home.” So she says, “What do you want me to get?” and I say, “What are you talking about?” She says, ”You said I need to go to the store on my way home.” And I say “No I didn't.” She says, “Yes you did. I just heard you!”

This can start a huge argument, or be easily resolved.



Miscommunication between 1 and 2: Sometimes we misspeak. For example, you're on the phone making an appointment with somebody, and your dryer is buzzing at you. You mean to say, “See you tomorrow for lunch.” But what comes out is “See you tomorrow for *laundry*.” And they say, “Huh?”

Sometimes our body language gives away information we were trying not to say (or is misinterpreted)). (2b). You may be trying to say nice words and be pleasant, but they can tell by looking at your face that you're ticked off.

Words : 7%
Tone of voice : 38%
Body language: 55%

93% of what you communicate is not in the words themselves. That's why, if you want to communicate a message, and it's important to convey the right emotional message, you probably don't want to do it by email. [Example: Say “OK” with various intonations: cheerfulness, suspicion, anger.]

There are a lot of channels of non-verbal communication, including: tone of voice, volume of voice, eyes, (where are they looking, is this a real smile or a fake one), facial expression, hands, arms & legs (folded, turned way, etc), touch and body distance, signs of nervousness.

Miscommunication between 2 & 3 (because of distractions, and because of differences in background and experience).

Miscommunication between 3 & 4 is due to personal interpretation. Two people hear the same thing, but interpret it differently. Example: One person totally agrees with what you're saying, and the other one thinks you're attacking their way of doing things.

With so many ways the message can go wrong, is there any way to check how well it's getting through? Yes. Feedback. One clue that communication has gone wrong is that the response you get is not what you expected. (i.e. you thought it would make them happy, but they're mad).

When the feedback you get isn't what you wanted, the natural response is to be irritated, then respond in a negative way, which can quickly become vicious cycle.

Example: I remember one time early in my marriage, when we had an argument that lasted at least an hour, and we finally figured out that the actual cause that had triggered the argument was a misunderstanding at the very beginning. We could have saved ourselves an hour! We now try to catch those first.

When something seems to be going wrong in an interaction, check to see if there's been a miscommunication. Clarify what you're hearing and see if it's what they're trying to communicate.

Sometimes helpful to say, "I hear you saying 'X'." Is that what you're trying to say?"

Use feedback to work toward understanding each other's ideas, feelings & position (whether or not you agree).

Example (skit):

Wife: Do we have to go to your parents' house this weekend? I get tired out just thinking about it.

Husband: It sounds like you're saying you don't like spending time with my family. Is that it?

Wife: No. It's not that I don't like your family. It's just that lately I've been really worn out, and I feel overwhelmed with everything I have to do to get the kids ready and pack stuff to make the trip to your parents'.

Husband: So you're saying that this week it just looks like too much to do, because you're worn out. Is that it?

Wife: (small tears of relief) Yeh, that's it. Thanks for understanding.

PP In Pairs: (Feedback practice in pairs.) *Handout #2.* (5 min)

PP 1. Choose a partner for this exercise.

PP 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.

PP 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.

PP 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.

PP 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 (10 min talk, 10 min in groups)

PP Our Basic Problem:

PP I AM: **PP** Always right; **PP** 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.

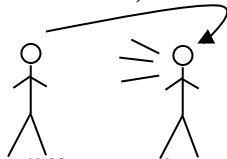
Our main problem is **PP** *we want to be God – to set ourselves up as the standard of what's right in the universe.* This was Satan's original temptation: "You will be like God." It's amazing how much of that temptation still sticks to each of us. But the fact is, **PP** *There's only one "I AM," and you're not it.* Neither am I. Most of us need a bigger dose of humility.

PP We need to really believe and live that it's okay for other people to be different from us in a lot of ways. **PP** Some differences are good and God-given. **PP** Some are just a matter of preference. And **PP** even some differences that are sinful, God has said he will take care of later. **PP** It's not our job to fix everything that's wrong in the world. We need to let *God* take care of being God, and focus our energy on the things he has told us to do – such as being the fragrance of Christ in the midst of a dark world.

PP 1 Cor 5:12,13 The Bible doesn't present tolerance as an absolute virtue, the way the world does. God tells us to deal with serious sin in the church. But the fact is that God is a lot more tolerant than many of us are. We can't stand to have people be wrong or disagree with us, on a thousand different things. But God knows that *you're* wrong, about some of those very things. And He still loves you. And sometimes it's just a difference in the way we were raised, that (for example) makes me feel more comfortable when I'm dressed in old crummy clothes, and maybe makes you more comfortable when you're dressed nicely.

We too often set ourselves up as the standard of these things, use the Bible to defend our preferences, and then get offended when everybody doesn't agree with us. For example, some Christians think it's okay to drink alcohol in moderation; others think it's better never to touch the stuff. Rather than argue about these things, **PP** sometimes it's good to ask, "What makes this important to you?" and then just *listen*. You can learn a lot of important information that way. This means being interested in the other person, because they're a person made in God's image.

PP Phil 2:4 says, "Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also the interests of others." **PP** This involves seeing and trying to *understand* where the other person's coming from. **PP** God sees their point of view (whether he agrees with it or not). How about if we try to be like Him in this way as well?



PP Romans 14:1-23 says it's OK to differ on minor issues. If God says it's OK, why do we argue about them?

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

PP General Steps to Overcome Conflicts Influenced by Differences **PP**

1. Take into account (and view in a positive light) differences in personality and background, between yourself and others involved in the conflict. Sometimes useful to learn about someone's background. (Culture, region of the country, family, etc)

2. Give feedback about what you're catching of their view. (i.e.: "I want to make sure I'm understanding you correctly. Is this what you're saying?" Then share what you understand to be their opinions, desire, goals, etc.)
3. Listen as they correct where you may have gotten it wrong.
4. Accept all kinds of people and differences that God accepts. (Rom 14:1-15:7)

Small group discussion (5 min in groups, 5 min in large group)

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. (flip charts, then share with the whole group.)

3. Overcoming Conflict Caused by Irresponsibility, Lack of Wisdom, or Insensitivity (to others' feelings) (5 min talk, 5 min small group)

For these kinds of problems, **PP** the main issue is: what's the nature of your relationship with this person? Are you in a position of respect and authority to speak into this issue in this person's life? **PP**

1. What authority has God given you? **PP**
2. What authority has society or your position given you? (boss at work?) **PP**
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?

PP It's important HOW we address the issue. Are we speaking to vent our anger or frustration, or **PP** 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.

In any case, pray for God to help them grow.

Lots of conflicts between parents and children land in this category, which could be another whole seminar. For more info on this, see the article, "Raising Godly Children," online at www.freemin.org. (http://www.en.freemin.org/Godly_children.htm)

Need to forgive, but not ignore.

Small group discussion (5 min)

1. List some conflicts that could arise because of these kinds of issues (no names, please), and discuss the best way to handle a couple of them.
2. Discuss a few examples from different kinds of relationships: 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.

4. Overcoming Conflict Caused by Selfishness or Other Sins

(10 min presentation, 5 min Q&A, 10 min activities)

PP James 4:1, "What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you?" Selfishness is not the *only* cause of conflict in the world, but it's certainly the most common. **PP** Lots of conflicts happen because one or both people are being selfish. **PP** The temptation is to see how *other people* are being selfish, and entirely miss the ways that *we ourselves* are being selfish.

Jesus gives clear teaching on how to deal with sin among fellow believers. Matthew 18 is not the only text that's relevant, but it's a key one, and one that, if we follow it, will save us from a lot of unnecessary problems. **PP Mat 18:15-17**

As we look at this text, together with a few others, we can discern *Jesus' Way of Responding to Other Christians' Sins*. **PP**

1. *Admit and deal with our own flaws. (Mat 7:3-5)* Sometimes that will solve the problem. You're irritated that they want their own way, because you want *your* own way!

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)*

4. *Clarify the facts, to make sure you've got them straight (Prov 18:13). Use polite and friendly questions (not accusatory). If you had wrong information, you might need to apologize.*

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.*

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(s) they may have raised, return to the issue with which you started. What's their response to that?*

8. *If they acknowledge their fault, pray with them, and let them know you don't hold anything against them. (Mat 18:15b)*

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 (both in what issues should be addressed, and how the process ends if it goes poorly). We've already looked at 1 Cor 5:12,13. We plan to look at Rom 12:18 in just a few minutes.*

Q&A (5 min)

In Small Group: (Handout #2) What would be an appropriate response to each of these situations?

(Have two people in your group role play the situation, then discuss how it went.) **(10 min)**

1. You are living in an apartment in the village, and your neighbor in the apartment next door is a single Christian (of the same gender as you), who goes to your church. The walls between apartments are somewhat thin, and on more than one evening you hear interaction through the wall that suggests they're in the shower with someone of the opposite sex. What should you do?
2. Your spouse is addicted to something (work, alcohol, food, or drugs). You realize you've been acting in ways that contribute to his/her unhealthy addiction patterns. What should you do?

3. You and your spouse have told your 9 and 11 year old children they are not to go to their friend's house tonight. When you get home that evening, you find your children gone. Your spouse tells you that he/she changed his/her mind and let them go to their friend's house, and gives you no reason for the change in plans. What should you do?
4. Your spouse works full time, and also helps with various ministries for about 15 hours a week. Your marriage relationship is strained and your children are also struggling. What should you do?
5. Your computer is broken, so while it's being repaired, a friend is loaning you their laptop computer. As you're doing some work on the internet, you notice that there are "bookmarks" leading to a number of web sites that appear to be pornographic. What should you do?
6. At 10:00 on a Saturday night, you're walking downtown, and notice a friend from church coming out of a bar with a group of five others. Most members of the group seem clearly drunk, but you can't tell if your friend is or not. What should you do?
7. A friend of yours says "I can't believe what X did..." and begins to tell you a story about a mutual friend, and some inappropriate behavior of hers. What should you say?
8. You're watching two children, and while you're in another room, the younger one comes and tells you that the older one is "being mean, and won't let me join in the game he's playing." What will you say? (role play with 3 people)
9. A friend of yours (who lives in a college dorm) tells you that his/her wallet is missing, and he/she's pretty sure that his/her roommate took it. What should you say?

What to Do When Conflict Resolution Fails (5 min talk)

PP Rom 12:18 - *"If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone."*

PP Notice the command has 2 caveats: "If it is possible"; "as far as it depends on you"

PP Two Implications: it may not always be possible; it sometimes depends not only on you, but also on the response of someone else.

PP But with that understanding of life in a sinful world, we still pursue the goal: "live at peace with everyone." **Give a personalized example.**

What to do? PP

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. (5 min talk, 10 min discussion & role play)

PP These aren't *causes* of conflict, but make it easier for conflict to arise, and harder to deal well with it.

PP Physical factors : Sickness, hunger, thirst, tiredness,

PP Mental factors: stress, worry, feeling oppressed or disempowered. Could be money problems, unemployed, fears, etc. Worrying about something unrelated to the issue at hand makes us more sensitive and likely to react.

Skit:

J: Hi Cutie. I'm SO glad to see you. Our kids had a fight while I was on the phone this morning. I helped them work through it using Matthew 18 principles. It took some time, so now they're finishing up their school work. And...

D (having trouble focusing, wanting to leave the room): Can we talk more later? I had a hard day at work and really need some time to pray about it before I can concentrate on what you're saying.

J (tearing up): Okay... I think I might be coming down with something...

PP *Sometimes when we realize these factors are at work, it's helpful to tell others about it: PP* "Sorry, I'm not at my best today. I only slept 3 hours last night, and I'm feeling pretty wiped out." Or **PP** "Sorry, I'm not mad at you. We've got this mess at work, and I'm still irritated at this customer and kind of worried about how this thing's gonna turn out. I didn't mean to take it out on you."

PP Lots of conflicts can be overcome if we have the humility to realize and admit these factors.

Small group discussion (7 min)

1. According to Jesus (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 (no names, if it might reflect negatively on them)?
3. Role play: (last 2 minutes) 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)

1. Get God's Perspective (& choose God's way) (45 min)

We need to be aware that we're fallible in this, and also that hearing from the other person can be a vital part of getting God's perspective.

PP A. *Realize and acknowledge (at least to yourself) that there's a conflict.* Don't pretend it's not there. "Better is open rebuke than hidden love" (Prov 27:5).

PP B. *Try to determine what cause(s) is/are at work in it.* If there's likelihood of miscommunication, work through that. (See diagram above.)

PP 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.

(Pray a sample prayer, about a recent skit.)

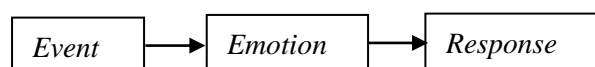
PP D. *Get a better perspective.* The "mind of Christ" (1 Cor 2:16b) = Jesus' perspective on things. Not automatic. There are 3 steps we can take to help us grow in seeing our situation more from Jesus' perspective.

1. Check your own eye. (Mat 7:3-5).

2. Check and **Process your Feelings.** (25 min.)

PP Each time something triggers a negative emotion in us, we have three choices: **PP** we can "stuff" the emotion (pretend it's not there and try to push it out of sight), **PP** respond (automatically) in accordance with the emotion (which often has negative consequences in cross-cultural ministry), or **PP** process the emotion in a way that yields growth for us personally and the fragrance of Christ for those around us.

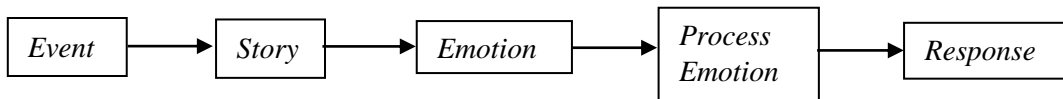
Typically, when something happens that makes us angry or afraid, we react selfishly. Then we regret our reaction; or perhaps worse, sometimes we *don't* regret it. The people who observe our reaction (or were the victims of it) lose respect for us, and thus we weaken our ability to have a Kingdom impact in their lives. We could diagram this **PP** basic pattern as: **PP**



The problem is not that we have emotions, or even that our emotions influence our responses. The problem is that our emotions (and thus our responses to them) are not enough shaped by the truth of Christ, and often running too much on an “automatic pilot” that was learned and developed by our sinful nature.

We know from Galatians 5 that God’s Spirit makes it possible for us to live out emotional responses consistent with his Kingdom, when we walk in the Spirit. But *this process requires ongoing practice and discipline.*

PP Our goal is to insert into the “natural” process two additional elements, namely recognizing the “story” we’re telling ourselves, and processing our feelings - so that the resulting pattern could be diagrammed like this: **PP**



PP The processing of emotions can be broken down into six steps:

PP a) Acknowledge and identify our feelings. A lot of times we’re unaware of the feelings that are running around inside us, pushing us this way and that. The feelings with the most potential to derail our good intentions are those of which we’re unaware. So the first essential step in the process is to recognize the signs that “something’s happening” inside us. The sign might be a sense of something stirring in our chest, or clues that adrenaline has been dumped into our system (dry mouth, faster heartbeat, heavy stomach shaky hands), or just a generally unpleasant feeling. Catching and identifying these feelings (along with the following steps) is a part of what Paul described as taking “captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ” (2 Cor 10:5b), and what David modeled in his questions to himself: “Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me?” (Ps 42:5a,11a; 43:5a). Our first step toward appropriate response is to realize, “I’m feeling frustrated,” or “I’m feeling confused.” or “I’m feeling afraid.” And **PP** 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. (See www.freemin.org for more on this.) A clear identification of our feeling is the first step toward a godly response to it.

PP b) Acknowledge and understand the cause of the feelings, along with the “story” we’ve told ourselves. Once we’ve identified what we’re feeling, the next step is important but usually not difficult. We need to trace the thread of actions or events, along with the “story” that led to the feeling. After an event takes place, we tell ourselves a “story” that makes sense of the facts (the event or words). In order to understand “Why did this happen?” we take the facts and add to them what *motive* was likely behind the actions or words. This happens so quickly we usually don’t realize it, yet our feelings reflect not only the facts of the case, but also our response to the motives we connect with those facts. **Have two people act out (skit 3):** If my neighbor doesn’t greet me when I pass, **does he not like me? Is he mad at me about something? Does he think he’s better than me? Did he not see me?** [Put the 4 options up on **PP**.] The story you choose will determine your emotional response.

Sometimes when we identify the words or situations that inspired our feelings, we don’t understand why these things would trigger such a strong reaction within us. **PP** 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.

PP c) Surrender the cause and the feelings (along with related people and events) to the Lord. As with so many things in our lives, the turning point comes when we forbid our old nature to grab control, and instead give control to the Lord, acknowledging the work of his sovereign hand, and inviting him to show us *his* perspective on the situation. *[6 min]*

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. Our interpretation may *feel* like the only one possible in the situation, but we need to distinguish actual facts from motives and interpretations that we’ve added. We also need the Lord to show us additional information we haven’t noticed - about ourselves, others, and the situation.

[On their own:] Think of a situation where someone irritated you. Apply the first 4 steps. [3 min]

e) Receive the Lord’s perspective and ask for His help. Having asked the Lord to show us his perspective, we need to quiet our hearts and minds, and attune our spiritual ears to listen to what he would convey to us. This will often come in the form of a verse of Scripture, a biblical truth, or an impression consistent with the spirit of Christ and the truth of his Word. As the Lord brings us fresh perspective, we can ask for his help to know how to respond to the event, in a way that will reflect the beauty of Christ and the truths of his Kingdom.

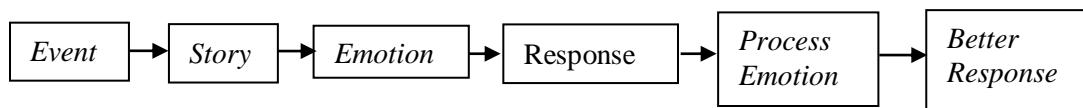
Wholeness Prayer intro (5 min, including an example)

The five main steps involved in wholeness prayer are:

- (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.

f) Consider an appropriate response, consistent with God’s best. Sometimes a right response will become clear in a flash of insight; other times it will take shape through what could best be described as a discussion of the subject with the Lord. Once we determine a response consistent with the Lord’s way, all that remains is to take the step of responding. We may want to add a “wrap-up” prayer: “Lord, help me to do what you’ve just shown me, and to do it well, for your glory.”

These are the basic steps to processing emotions. Sometimes, it may seem we’ve begun the process too late. We’ve already reacted, and only later realize that our frustration has gotten the best of us. **PP** It’s not too late to take redemptive action. In these cases, **PP** we could diagram the process as follows:



In cases like these, one part of the appropriate response might be to go back and apologize (in a culturally appropriate way) or repair damage that has been done. It’s never too late to become more Christlike, and sometimes our humility in acknowledging a fault will be a counter-cultural surprise that will spark people’s attention in a positive way.

It might seem like working through this processing of emotions would take a long time - the kind of time we don’t have to spare in the midst of many situations that inspire anger, fear, and frustration. At first, this process does usually take some time, and can best be done when you’re alone and have some quiet minutes with the Lord to concentrate (like an end-of-the-day debriefing with the Lord, or a substantial quiet time anticipating the challenges of a new day). But as with so many disciplines, the habit that you

start slowly, working through it step by step, eventually becomes a natural pattern that happens quickly and easily.

It's like learning to play an instrument. At first, it seems to take forever, But when the foundation is well laid, the pattern begins to flow almost automatically.

[talking 3 min]

Let's take a couple of questions, before we go to a time for final application.

[5 min]

Take five minutes to **PP** continue the 6 step process, with the situation or person you began to process earlier.

PP Personal Application: Write down the action steps the Lord wants you to take related to processing your emotions.

[3 min]

3. Understand the spiritual warfare dynamics of the conflict. (present in every conflict) **PP**

(5 min teaching + 5 min small group)

a. *Our enemy is not flesh and blood* Efesus 6:12.

Even those who act like our enemies (2 Tim 2:24-26).

Resist the temptation to see Satan as being directly behind the other person/people, especially if they're followers of Christ.

b. *Satan's efforts to divide us* (2 Cor 2:11). Let's work hard to not let him win.

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) Don't store up hurt feelings, bitterness, or suspicion. ("He/She did that because...")

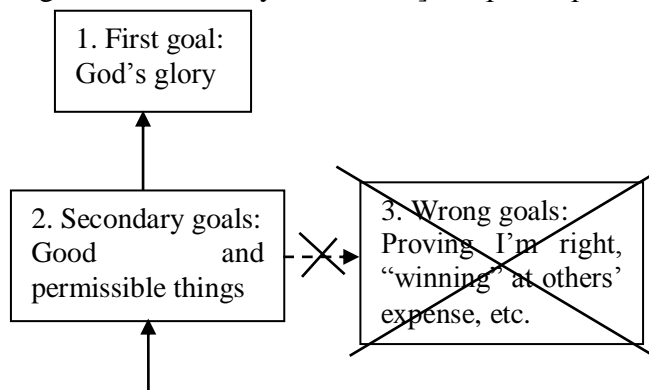
(Put up on PowerPoint - the conflicts people brainstormed in the intro. *(Someone type them into a slide during break or lunch.)*)

Small group discussion: Look at a couple of the types of conflict you brainstormed this morning, and discuss how to apply the action steps in (a) and (b) above. What false accusations might run through someone's head in this situation? What might be some *good* parts or helpful information about the other person's perspective that someone could easily miss in this situation?

E. Choose to act in accordance with God's Word and the way of Jesus. PP

(E,F,G - 5 min & 5 min discuss)

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.* **PP** Too often once a conflict starts, the goal changes. Also, check to make sure that your primary goal is God's glory. Then define your secondary goal: [to get enough sleep, to buy some decent clothes, to get some time to yourself, etc]. Skip the "proving I'm right."



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?

G. Hope for the best and believe the best.

1 Cor 13:7 says love “believes all things and hopes all things”. This doesn’t mean being stupid or naïve. But it means realizing that not everything that looks bad *is* bad. Not everything that sounds stupid *is* stupid. In fact, the stupider it sounds, the more likely it is that you don’t really understand what they meant. Good cue to ask for clarification. The reality might be totally different than what you’re thinking. We’ll talk more about that in the next session.

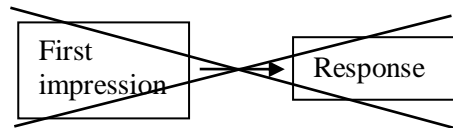
Session 4 The Way Out of Conflict (Steps 2-4)

2. Dialogue God’s Way (20 min - 10 min talk + 10 min in Pairs)

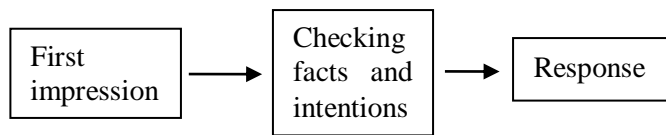
Talk with the person or people involved, with the following purposes:

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

In a polite tone: “Do you mean “ABC?”



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

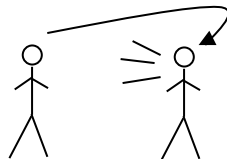


“He who answers before listening – that is his folly and his shame” (Amsal 18:13).

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. 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). (5 min)

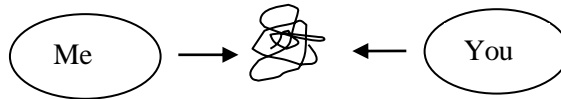


D. Talk through the issues, speaking the truth in love. (Eph 4:15) Try to determine the cause of the conflict, without making accusations.

E. Apologize for any fault, problem, or weakness on your part – however small. (This may not be the wisest course in certain cases, especially cross-culturally or with unbelievers.)

F. Value people as God does. A loving relationship is more important than the problem itself. *Note: if you're dealing with a major sin (needing to be handled according to Matt 18:15-17), relationship could be at stake. But even in correcting sin, our motivation should be love, from beginning end – even when breaking of relationship for the sake of discipline is necessary. ("What's more important – you or getting my way?") This is the big question in a lot of marriages.*

Unhealthy Pattern:
The Problem is Between Us



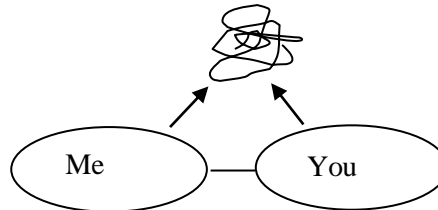
Wife: I don't have enough money for groceries.

Husband: I don't have enough money to pay the phone bill.

Wife: You need to spend less time talking long distance to your mother in Europe.

Husband: No, talking to my mother is really important. You need to stop buying imported European coffee.

Healthy Pattern:
We Work Together to Overcome the Problem



Wife: I don't have enough money for groceries.

Husband: I don't have enough money to pay the phone bill. You know what? It would be pretty easy to get into an argument about this, wouldn't it? Do you know you're more important to me than groceries or phone bills?

Wife: Thanks. You too. How about if we pray about this?

Husband: That sounds great. God, we lift this problem to you. Thank you so much that you provide for us. Please show us any things we could change in our lifestyle to help us live within our paycheck. [Listen quietly for 30 seconds.] We surrender all to you. In Jesus Name, Amen

Wife: God's showing me ways I could cut down on our food bill. For one thing, I don't need to buy imported European coffee all the time. The cheaper brand is really fine. And I've been wanting to cut down on how much coffee I drink anyway.

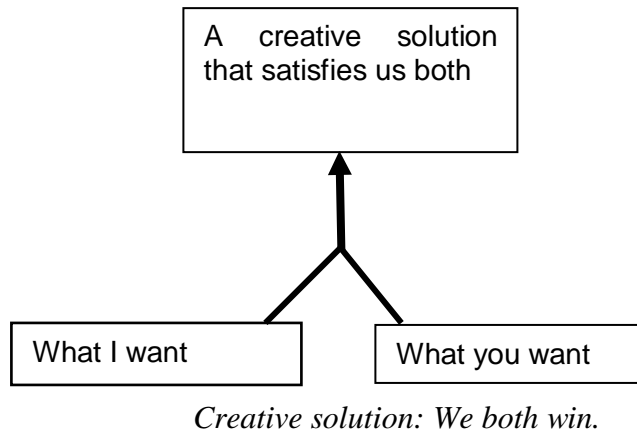
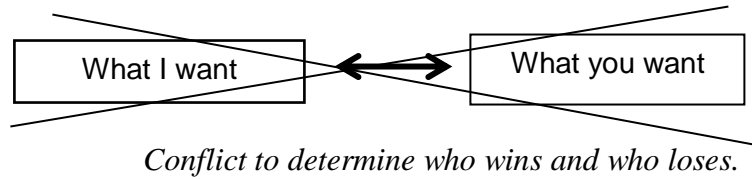
Husband: God's telling me to ask around about less expensive ways to contact my mother in Europe. I do want to keep my commitment to talk to her once a month, but I could go to the library and talk with her for free over the computer. We'd just need to set up a time in advance.

Wife: I'm excited about what God's showing us!

Husband: Me too. Let's thank Him! God we thank you for these ideas. Please continue to speak to us. Your ways are awesome.

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. Avoid "sucker's choices" (win-lose) [*refer to thumb war*].



H. If needed, find a mediator. *When you've made a try without a mediator, and it's not going well. (If it's clearly a sin issue, this is where bringing in others is needed.)*

3. Forgive as God Commands (from the heart) PP

(20 min total: 5 talking, 10 skit, 5 debrief skit & questions)

- 1) We must forgive others from our hearts (Matthew 18:21-35) (*already mentioned*).
 - a) What are indicators that you have fully forgiven someone?
 - i) You have compassion on them.
 - ii) You don't say negative things about them.
 - iii) You can freely bless them.
 - iv) You're free from all bitterness, anger, resentment, hate, and/or rage toward them.
 - v) You don't accuse, blame or judge them.
 - vi) You don't seek repayment or revenge.
 - vii) You let go of the offense.
 - b) What are indicators that you have **not** fully forgiven someone?
 - i) You feel negatively about them.
 - ii) You say negative things about them.
 - iii) You curse them.
 - iv) You feel bitterness, anger, resentment, hate, and/or rage toward them.
 - v) You accuse, blame or judge them.
 - vi) You want repayment or revenge.
 - vii) You hold onto the offense.
- 2) 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) 3 steps related to forgiving someone:
 - a) Bind and cast out evil spirits
 - b) Forgive the sin
 - c) Receive the person.
- 4) Follow-up step: Pray a blessing on the person

Common “rubber bands” (that make it hard to forgive):

- “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

Wholeness prayer skit: (10 min) **Note: It’s a good idea for Sam to pray before acting in the skit, and ask God to protect him from any of the emotions he will be portraying.**

Sam sharing with his accountability partner Mike: I yelled my teammate, Jim, again today. I know I shouldn’t yell at him, but he’s so irresponsible. I remember you shared those bible verses with me last week - Colossians 3:12-14. I memorized them: *“Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.”* And I really tried to apply them. But yesterday Jim got busy with his email and forgot to meet, Yuhei, our national ministry partner again. Yuhei called my cell because he couldn’t get through to Jim’s cell. Yuhei said he feels like Jim doesn’t really care about him or the ministry. When I finally got a hold of Jim I really laid into him.

Mike: That sounds hard. *[shows empathy]* Would you like to pray about this situation together?

Sam: Okay, that sounds good.

Mike: If it’s okay with you, I’d like to pray using wholeness prayer principles. I’ve just been learning about them and I think they might be useful in this situation.

Sam: What’s wholeness prayer?

Mike: There are 5 basic steps:

- (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.

I’d focus on praying out loud - and I’d ask God to speak directly to you. You’d focus on listening, and on whatever’s going on inside of you – including your thoughts and emotions. You can tell me as much as you want to about what He reveals, then I’ll pray again. Does that sound okay?

Sam: Sure.

Mike: God, we thank you that we can come to you with all of our problems and struggles. We come before you now with Sam’s situation with Jim. We ask that you would lead our prayer time, and accomplish all you want to through this time. We ask that you would bring to Sam’s mind anything that you want him to remember, and that you would reveal to him all that you want to. Please fill this place and each of us with yourself, and surround us with your protection. We ask that you would move aside any powers or principalities that would seek to interfere with this prayer time. In the name of Jesus, we bind any evil spirits that would seek to interfere, and command them to stand aside as you work. We thank you for all that you’re going to do. We love you God. Please help us to love you more. Lord, we ask that you would bring to Sam’s mind right now whatever you want him to remember about today’s situation with Jim. *[Wait about 3 seconds.]*

Sam: I’m remembering how angry I felt at Jim.

Mike: God, I pray you’d help Sam to remember how he felt just before he got angry. Please show especially show him if he felt any fear, frustration, shame, or hurt.

Sam: I felt really frustrated because Jim forgot to meet Yuhei. And afraid that Yuhei would leave the ministry.

Mike: God, we thank you for showing Sam that he was feeling frustrated and afraid. I ask that you’d help him to feel his frustration and fear as much as you want him to for a moment, and, as he does, please show him the first time he felt this way.

Sam: Wow, this is weird! I haven’t thought of this in a while! When I was 12 I was working on a project in the backyard. My dad came out to look at it, then took over. He said I never did things right. I felt frustrated and afraid that I could never please him. But I *vowed* that I would if it killed me – and that I would always succeed in anything I do.

Mike: God, we thank you for revealing this memory to Sam. Please show him anything else in the memory that is important for us to know.

Sam: I felt like I had to do things ‘right’ to be loved.

Mike: God, we come to you with all these things. Please help Sam to think and feel as much as you want him to in this memory right now of his fear, his frustration, and his feeling that he had to do things ‘right’ to be loved. *[Wait about 5 seconds.]* As you do, please reveal your perspective in this place. *[Wait about 5 seconds.]*

Sam: God says that he loves me. And that it’s not because I succeed at some project - but all the time, even when I fail. He was there with me when my dad said I never did things right. He says it’s not true. And that I’m not alone. I’ve always felt so alone – like I have to do everything myself. But I can partner with God, my help and my strength. This is what I choose. Phil 4:13 “I can do all things *through Him* who strengthens me.” I can do whatever He wants. It doesn’t have to be defined by what I want. I truly “succeed” when I trust and surrender, not when I push for what I want or think is best.

Mike: God we thank you that you were there, and that you love Sam all the time. And thank you that he’s not alone. Please continue to reveal your perspective.

Sam: I think God wants me to give up the vow I made to always succeed. He wants me to trust Him with the results of what I do, not try to control things myself.

Mike [to Sam]: Would you like to tell God that now?

Sam: Yes. Dear God, I give you the vow I made when I was 12 to always succeed. I choose to trust you with my life, and with the results of what I do. Please help me to learn how to walk in this new way. Amen.

Mike: God, we thank you that Sam has given up this vow. We ask you to show us if there’s anything else you’d like to reveal to Sam regarding this memory.

Sam: I think I need to forgive my dad for this. I’ve worked through forgiving him for lots of things, but I haven’t yet forgiven him for this.

Mike: God, we thank you for revealing this to Sam. Would you please show him if he can release this to you and forgive his dad for this, or if there’s anything to pray through first.

Sam: I feel ready to release it. God, I release this hurt to you. Please forgive my dad for this, and bless him. Please help him to be all you want him to be. Thank you. In Jesus name, amen.

Mike: God we thank you for this. Please show us if there’s anything else you’d like us to pray about now, related to this memory, or to Jim.

Sam: I need to forgive Jim but I feel stuck.

Mike: God, we thank you for showing Sam his need to forgive Jim. Will you please reveal to him now any reservations he has about forgiving Jim?

Sam: I think I feel like Jim will “get away with” hurting Yuhei if I forgive him. But even as I say that, I’m realizing that God can take care of this. So I feel ready to forgive Jim. God, I choose now to release Jim from this offense. Would you please take care of this, and help both Jim and I to grow? And would you please bless and comfort Yuhei, and show me what my part is, if any, for follow-up. [short pause] I think God wants me to ask Jim’s forgiveness for yelling at him. I’ll plan to do that tonight. But I also think God wants me to talk with Jim about the pattern of him forgetting things. But I don’t know how to do that.

Mike [to Sam]: How about we close in prayer, then talk about that?

Sam: Sounds good.

Mike: God we thank you for all you’ve done during this prayer time. We exalt your name and ask that your Kingdom come and your will be done, in our lives as it is in heaven. In the name of Jesus we bind any demonic that was connected to any of these issues, and command that they go now to the place Jesus sends them, and never return. God we ask that you fill every empty place in us with yourself and protect us by your power. Please especially bless the places in Sam that you’ve healed today. Please help Sam to live in the truth that you’ve revealed to him, and apply this truth in his life. Please help Sam to continually catch any negative thoughts, feelings, or actions and pray through any root causes, get your perspective, and apply in his life and to his relationships. Please help him to keep growing in intimacy with you. Thank you that you’ve brought us out of darkness into your marvelous light, that you love to walk with us, and that you transform our minds. Please continue your healing in us. We give you all the praise and honor and glory. In Jesus name, Amen. *[Sam and Mike talk about how Sam can talk with Jim about the pattern of him forgetting things. They role play and pray through potential hindrances.]*

Small Group Discussion (5 minutes)

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

4. Release All into God's Hands (9 min)

A. Release people and situations into God's sovereign hand, and then go on your way rejoicing. (4 min teaching)

Here's an example (SKIT): "You know, I can't believe how often the elders let Fred do the children's sermon. Granted, he's funny, and sometimes he has good things to say. But it always seems like he's showing off, and trying to bring attention to himself. And a lot of times, the point he's making is some really basic thing. It's entertaining, but there's not really any substance to it. Now I may not be the greatest speaker, but at least I try to have something solid when I get up to do the children's sermon. It really ticks me off to see Fred up there week after week. What message is that sending to our kids, when we have somebody up there showing off a

Lord, what do you think about that? What do you mean, who am I to judge another man's servant? Do you mean you *like* the way Fred acts? Oh. You're willing to use imperfect people? And that includes me? OK. Lord, I thank you for the amount of truth there is in Fred's children's sermons. And thank you for making Fred an entertaining communicator. I pray you'll bless him in that ministry and bless our children with all that you want them to learn about you and your ways. I thank you that you are the sovereign Lord of the church. I release all these things and my own feelings into your hands. Move among us, Lord, for your glory.

In the face of people acting from false motives and trying to stir up trouble for him, Paul says, "The important thing is...[looking at bright side]. And because of this I rejoice." Surrender the outcome.

B. Do everything you can do to bring God's blessing to those involved in the conflict. *Do good to them and pray God will bless them.* (1 min teaching + 4 min activities)

Personal Application: Take 2 minutes to pray for people with whom you've had conflict.

Take 2 minutes to ask God what you could do to be a blessing to them. Write down your ideas.

Summary (last 50 min of session 4)

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 of Step 2 above. (3 min)

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. (10 min)

Large Group debrief: Their questions & problems. How it went: what worked? What didn't? (5-10 min)

Small group practice again (switch) (8-10 min)

Personal application: pray & write: (10 min)

highlights of what they've learned

application steps (Reminder of **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.)

remaining questions – to discuss with someone

Questions about the whole seminar (10 min)

Let's take a minute to ask God what things may need to change within ourselves to apply the principles in this seminar. For each of the things that would need to change, let's ask ourselves and God these two questions: **(1-2 min)**

1. **“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? (Yes, maybe, probably not, absolutely!)

2. **“Can I do it?”** With God as my helper, can I grow in these ways? (Phil 4:13 “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”) Do I choose to do this? Who can I ask for help if I get stuck?

[Ask in prayer]

Sign the commitment (if they choose) **(1 min to consider this, read the commitment and decide if they want to sign.)**

Closing prayer of blessing

Prayer of Commitment

Take time to read through this prayer and consider whether its words reflect what you want to say. If this is a commitment you would like to make, sign on the line at the bottom of this page, as a token of commitment between you and the Lord.

Lord, I want to be filled with the wisdom from above, that is pure, peaceloving, considerate submissive, full of mercy and good fruit.

Any conflicts that arise I want to face together with you, in the love and truth of Jesus. Thank you for the teachings of your Word, so that the path to resolving conflict can become clearer in each situation.

I commit myself now: I am willing to obey your Word in addressing any conflicts that arise. I reject carnal ways, worldly short-cuts, and all the devil's schemes – all that is contrary to your good plan. I want to reflect the character of Christ and receive every challenge and conflict as an opportunity to be purified. I surrender my personality and my ministry into your hand. You are able to defend and shape me toward perfection, until I am fully conformed to the person of Jesus and the path of your Word.

May the power of your Spirit, who is present as I make this commitment, give me strength and faith to carry it out in every situation you allow, for the advancement of your glorious kingdom.

Name _____ Date _____

For further reading and growth:

Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking when Stakes are High, by Kerry Patterson, et al. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2002

The Peacemaker: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict, by Ken Sande, 3rd ed.. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2004

Blessed Are the Peacemakers: Finding Peace With God, Yourself and Others, by Neil T. Anderson and Charles Mylander, Regal Books (July 2002)