

Living in the Path of Peace

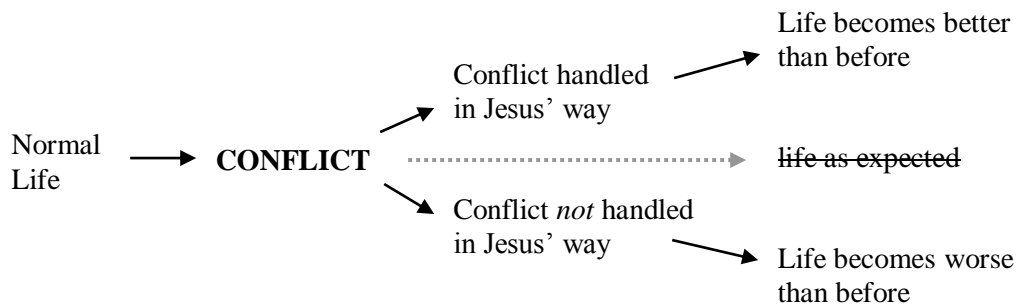
Steps to overcoming conflict Jesus' way

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Session 1

What are some kinds of conflict that often happen in interpersonal relationships or in ministry?

Every Conflict Offers an Opportunity



The pattern from Phil 4:6,7:

1. *Catch* the fact that you're feeling something unpleasant.
2. *Take time to talk about the problem with the Lord*, sharing your feelings and thoughts.
3. *Present your request* to the Lord in prayer.
4. *Give thanks* for a number of things related to the issue and the person involved. (details)
5. *Wait quietly* to hear the Lord's response.

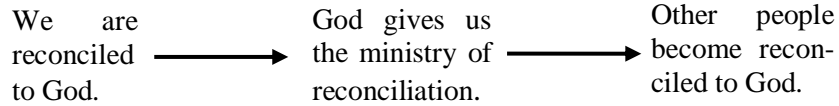
Dangers that Arise if Conflict is Avoided or not Handled Well

1 Samuel 17:11, 26. Some of the results when we avoid God's instructions in dealing with conflict:

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

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

Isaiah 9:5b, 2 Cor 5:18-21



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

Personal Application: On a scale of 1 to 10, how much are you experiencing:

_____ Peace within your self?

_____ Peace with God?

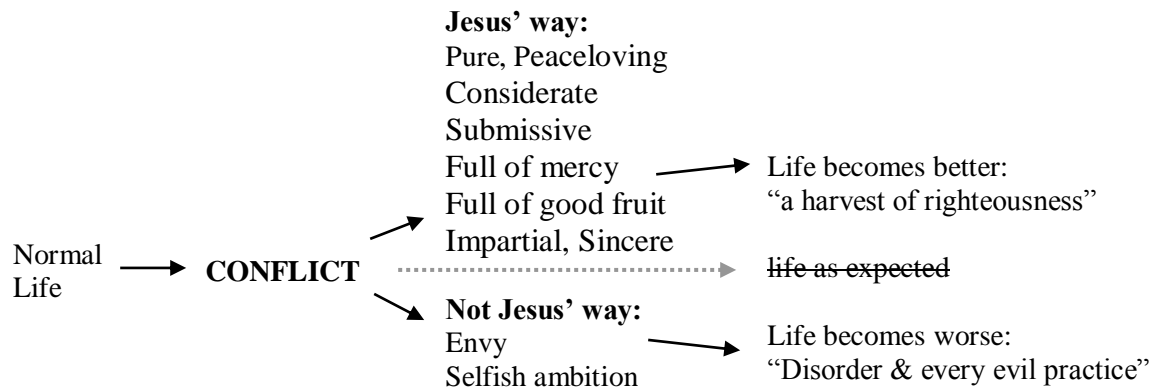
_____ Peace with other people?

Two Ways of Handling Conflict

James 3:13-18

In your small group, fill in the boxes with words describing the two kinds of wisdom.

“Wisdom” from the world, human desires and the evil one	Wisdom from above
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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?

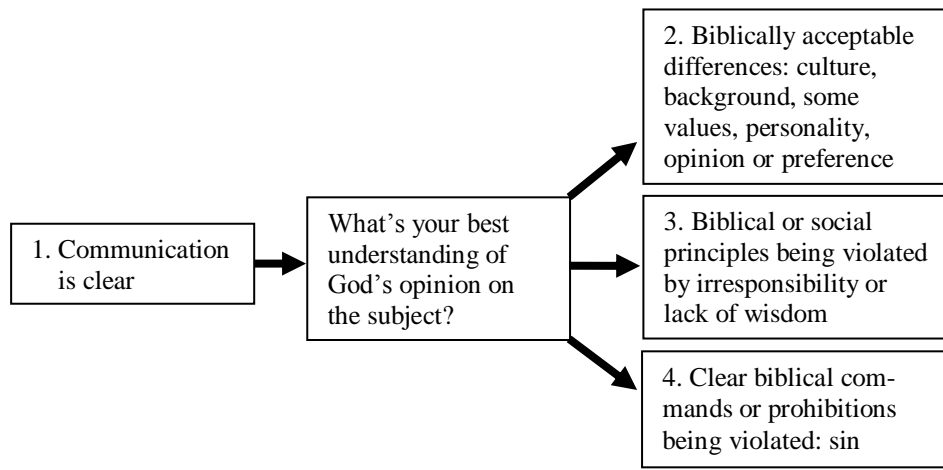
2. What would need to change, for the conflict you're thinking of to be addressed according to the "wisdom from above"?

Session 2

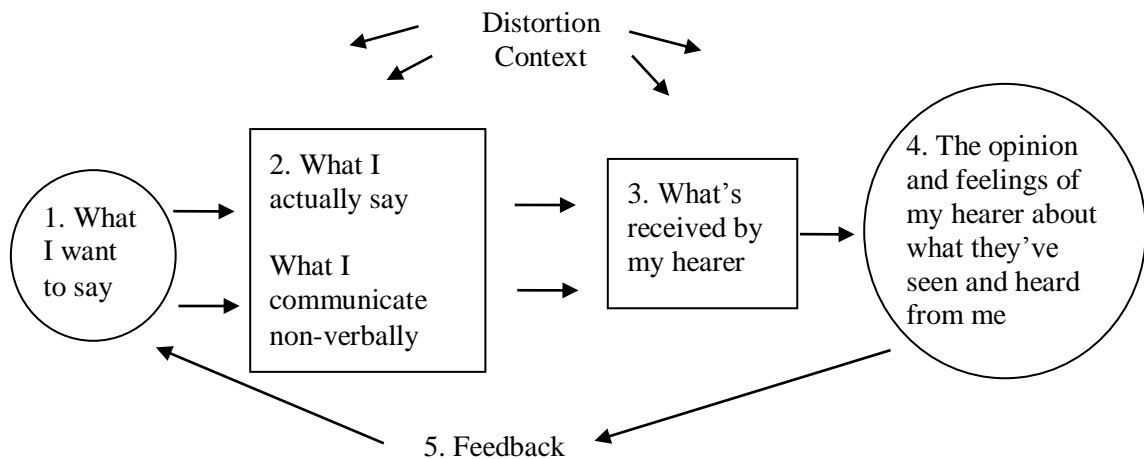
The Most Common Causes of Conflict

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

Finding Causes of Conflict



1. Overcoming Conflicts Caused by Miscommunication



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

93% of what you communicate is not in the words themselves.

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

Our Basic Problem:

We want to be _____ – to set ourselves up as the _____ of what’s right in the universe.

It’s _____ for other people to be different from us in a lot of ways.

Some differences are _____ and God-given.

Some are just a matter of _____.

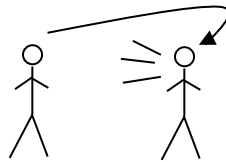
Even some differences that are _____, God has said he will take care of later.

1 Cor 5:12, 13

Sometimes it’s good to ask, “What makes this important to you?” and then just _____.

Phil 2:4

This involves seeing and trying to _____ where the other person’s coming from.



Rom 14:1-23 says it’s _____ to differ on minor issues.

Summary: Rom 15:7

General Steps 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. Sometimes it’s useful to learn about someone’s background. (Culture, family, region of the country, 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)

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

For these kinds of problems, the main issue is

“What’s the nature of your relationship with this person?”

1. What _____ has God given you?
2. What authority has society or your position given you?
3. What amount of _____ 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?

Prov 25:11,12

Invest the time and energy to consider what approach is most likely to bring good fruit.

See booklet: “Raising Godly Children” (available on www.freemin.org)

4. Overcoming Conflict Caused by Selfishness or Other Sins

James 4:1

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

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)
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 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. 1 Cor 5:12,13; Rom 12:18.

What to Do When Conflict Resolution Fails

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

Notice the command has 2 caveats:

"If it is possible"

"as far as it depends on you"

But with that understanding, we still pursue the goal: "live at peace with everyone."

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

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.

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

Session 3

The Way Out of Conflict (Step 1)

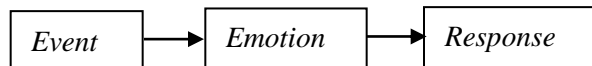
1. Get God's Perspective (and Choose God's Way)

- A. Realize and acknowledge (at least to yourself) that there's a conflict. (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.

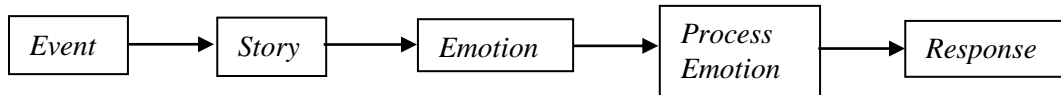
There are 3 steps we can take to help us grow in seeing our situation more from Jesus' perspective.

1. Check your own eye. (Mat 7:3-5)
2. Check and **Process your Feelings.**

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.**
- 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.**

Notes:

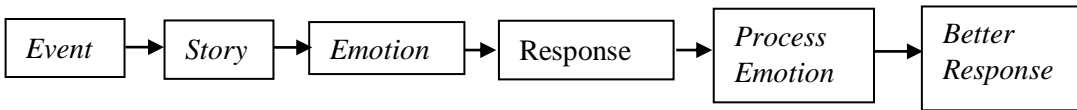
e) Receive the Lord's perspective and ask for His help.

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.

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

When it seems we've begun the process too late, it's still not too late.



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

3. Understand the spiritual warfare dynamics of the conflict.

a. Our enemy is not flesh and blood. (Eph 6:12)

Even for 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 Corinthians 2:11)

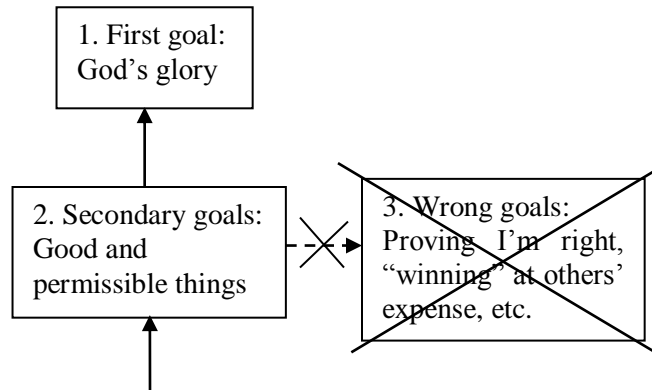
- Reject the false accusations that run through our heads about the other person/people, and take our thoughts captive. (Ex 20:16; 2 Cor 10:5)

E. Choose to 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.



G. Hope for the best and believe the best. 1 Cor 13:7

Session 4

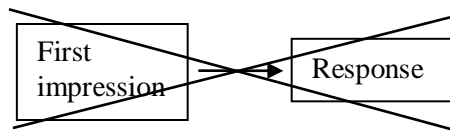
The Way Out of Conflict (Steps 2-4)

2. Dialogue God's Way

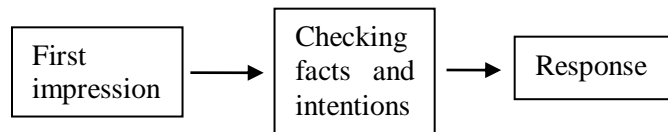
Talk with the person or people involved, with the following purposes:

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

“Do you mean ‘ABC’?”

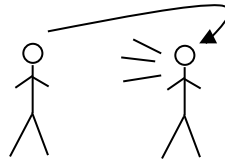


*“A fool shows his annoyance at once..”
(Prov 12:16)*



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

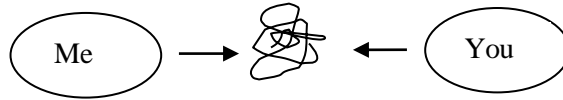
- B. State your commitment to overcome the problem in a way that's consistent with Jesus' love.
- C. Try to see the situation from the other person's perspective: how does it look and feel to them? Listen first, and give feedback to see if you're getting it right.



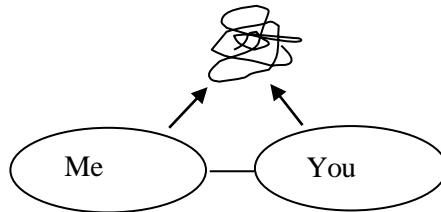
- D. Talk through the issues, speaking the truth in love. (Eph 4:15)
Try to determine the cause of the conflict, without making accusations.
- E. Apologize for any fault, problem, or weakness on your part – however small.

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

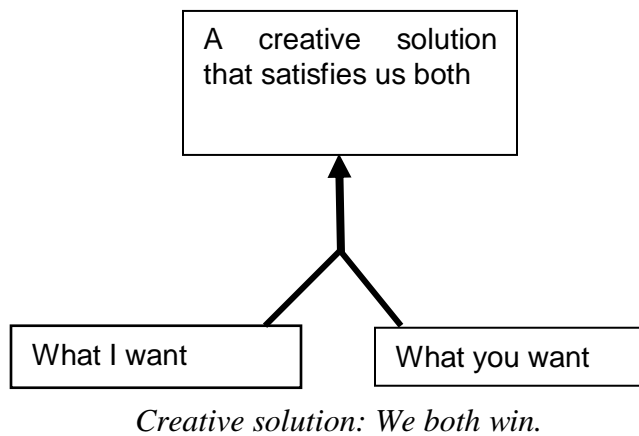
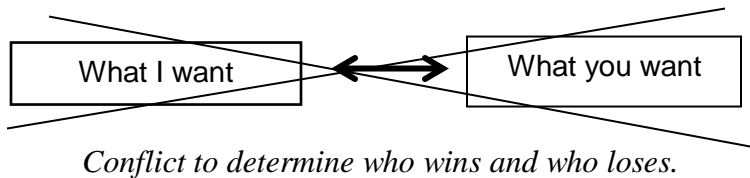
Unhealthy Pattern:
The Problem is Between Us



Healthy Pattern:
We Work Together to Overcome the Problem



G. Look for creative "win-win" solutions. Avoid "sucker's choices" (win-lose).



H. If needed, find a mediator.

3. Forgive as God Commands (from the heart)

- 1) We must forgive others from our hearts (Matthew 18:21-35).
 - 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.
- 5) Common "Rubber bands":
 - a) "If I forgive it means that what happened is okay."
 - b) "If I forgive it means it could happen again." (I won't be protected by my unforgiveness.)
 - c) Desire for revenge
 - d) Desire to punish
 - e) Self-protection.

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 Anderson, Charles Mylander. Ventura: Regal Books, 2002