

A Biblical View of Conflict – Part 2

Introduction:

1. Very few people enjoy conflict, yet it is an inevitable part of our journey through this life.
2. Most people have developed habitual responses when conflict is encountered with another person. Here are a few of those responses:
 - **Avoiding** – You either deny that there is a conflict, or simply refuse to deal with it. No solutions are ever developed. This approach produces frustration and leads to more complicated problems.
 - **Accommodating** – You are hoping to preserve a relationship at all costs. This is when you automatically give in to the wishes of other people. Sometimes this is okay, but it may not be appropriate if they are clearly wrong and violating Scripture. Continually being a doormat can cause internal bitterness.
 - **Compromising** – You meet others halfway. You give and take. Again, this may be appropriate where no sin or evil is involved.
 - **Competing** – You only know two outcomes to conflict: winning and losing. So, you impose your will and your solutions on others. This type of person can typically be aggressive, domineering, and uncooperative.
3. Any time we leave God out of the picture and disregard His commands to deal with the underlying causes of conflict, it will be more difficult to resolve disputes and restore genuine peace.
4. Therefore, we must look at conflict biblically. The Bible explains why conflicts occur, and how we should deal with them. Let's examine some basic Bible principles in regards to conflict.

Some conflict involves issues that are neutral and beneficial.

1. All conflict does not occur over clear issues of right and wrong.
 - **Biblical Example:** Paul and Barnabas in Acts 15:36-40
2. God created us as unique individuals. Because of this, we all possess different opinions, convictions, preferences, and perspectives. Vanilla or chocolate? Chevy or Ford? Gators or Seminoles? Starbucks or Dunkin'? Neither is right nor wrong.
3. When handled properly, disagreements in gray areas can stimulate productive dialogue, encourage creativity, promote helpful change, and generally make life more interesting.
4. We should seek **unity** in our relationships, but not **uniformity**. Romans 12:3-8
5. We should rejoice in our God-given diversity and learn to accept and work with people who simply see things differently than we do. Romans 14:1-13
6. Opinionated and strong-willed people have a problem with this. They don't see the benefit in diversity. They allow these areas of preference to cause conflict in their relationships with others. If this is you, admit it, pray about it, and decide to change.

Conflict is caused by sinful behavior or attitudes.

1. While conflict is not always the result of clear, biblical right and wrong issues, conflict **is** the result of sinful attitudes and carnal pride by one or both parties. Proverbs 13:10; James 4:1
2. There was serious conflict in the church at Corinth, and the apostle Paul made it clear that it was the result of sinful carnality. 1 Corinthians 3:1-3
3. When a conflict is the result of sinful desires or actions that are too serious to be overlooked, we need to deal with them in a straightforward manner. Galatians 6:1; 2 Thessalonians 3:14-15
4. Loving confrontation is often the key to repentance, which can remove the root causes of conflict and open the way for genuine peace.

Conflict is an opportunity to demonstrate the presence and power of God.

1. How do you view conflict? Do you view it as an inconvenience or a contest? We should view it as an opportunity to reveal God and who He is.
2. The church at Corinth was an internal mess. Religious, legal, and dietary disputes threatened to divide their church. Yet notice Paul's admonition to them. 1 Corinthians 10:31-11:1
3. According to this passage, conflict provides us an opportunity to:

Glorify God (10:31)

- You can show Him honor and bring Him praise as you demonstrate to others that God is loving, wise, powerful, and faithful.
- You can do this by trusting God and depending on His Word, not taking matters into your own hands.
- As we obey God's principles in regards to conflict, it brings great glory to Him, and demonstrates our love for the Lord. John 14:15
- Every time we encounter a conflict, we have an opportunity to show what we really think of God.
- One of the best ways to keep your focus on the Lord is to continually ask yourself this question: "How can I please God and honor God in this situation?"
- When pleasing God is more important than pleasing yourself, it becomes increasingly natural to trust, acknowledge, and obey Him. This attitude and behavior brings glory to God, and sets the stage for a constructive approach to conflict.

Serve others (10:32-33)

- This sounds absurd to the world, yet notice the words of Christ in Luke 6:27-28.
- God may give you opportunity to provide for your opponent's spiritual, emotional, or material needs.
- God may use you to help others learn where they have been wrong and need to change.

Become more Christ-like (11:1)

- God's ultimate goal in our lives is to mold and shape us so that we reflect Christ to others. Conflict is one of the many tools that God can use to help us develop Christ-like character. Romans 5:3-5
- Conflict can remind us of our weaknesses and encourage us to depend more on Him. It can also uncover sinful attitudes and habits in our lives, reveal stubborn pride, or a bitter and unforgiving spirit. It can bring to the surface the problem of a critical tongue.
- Conflict squeezes us, and presses us, and brings these things to the surface, so that we can admit their existence and ask God for help in overcoming them.
- God can use conflict to instill new, righteous habits and responses in us, as well as stretch and develop us in Christian character.
- As we worry less about going through conflict and focus more on growing through conflict, we will enhance that process and experience the incomparable blessing of being conformed into the image of Christ.