

How to Handle Conflict and Confrontation

Introduction:

1. The Bible says that the tongue is full of deadly poison. The tongue is like a sword. It can cut and slice apart its victims. **Proverbs 21:23** states, "*Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue keepeth his soul from troubles.*"
2. We learned from God's Word that our mouths are to be protected by the guardrails of truth and grace.
3. But this does **not** negate the need for sometimes having to confront others over matters of conduct or conflict. We are to speak truth with our mouths and as the saying goes, "Sometimes the truth hurts." **Proverbs 27:5-6**
4. But there is a right way and a wrong way to confront a person and handle conflict. In this message we will explore this issue and gain insight from God's Word.
Galatians 6:1

First, establish that there truly is a need for confrontation.

1. **Galatians 6:1** states, "*...if a man be overtaken in a fault...*" This gives the idea that there is no doubt about the situation. You have firsthand knowledge.
2. We all battle sin, and many times our sin has a negative impact on others and on the cause of Christ. This is when we **need** a brother or sister in Christ to confront us.
3. There are some things in life that we can simply overlook, apply God's grace, and move on. But there are other times when confrontation is right and necessary. How do we know when something is serious enough that confrontation is necessary?
Ask yourself:
 - Are their actions dishonoring God? Are their actions damaging our relationship? Are their actions hurting others? Are their actions hurting or jeopardizing them?
 - If the answer is "yes" to any of these questions, then you need to confront the person.
 - If they just rubbed you the wrong way or you have a difference of opinion or you simply don't agree with some of their decisions, you can make a decision to overlook it, apply God's grace, and love them unconditionally despite annoyances.
4. **Galatians 6:1** is not a license to be a busybody. We should not be eagerly looking for opportunities to point out problems or failures in others.

Second, examine your own heart carefully.

1. This is against nature, but, oh, how important. We tend to conceal, deny, or rationalize **our** wrongs. We love to maximize other's failures, but minimize our own sin. Or we love to shift the blame, and claim that others made us act the way we did.
2. When confrontation is necessary, the first thing we should do is examine our own heart and see if our heart is right with God. Paul said, "*...ye which are spiritual...*" This means that we are controlled by God's Holy Spirit and not by the old flesh.
3. If we aren't allowing our **own** actions and attitudes to be controlled by God's Spirit, then we are in no shape to confront others about **their** actions. **Matthew 7:3-5**

4. This is one of the keys to resolving conflict in life. Search your own heart for any actions or attitudes that may have contributed to the conflict and get those right.
 - **Illustration:** In 22 years of marriage, I can't think of one conflict where I was entirely innocent of any wrong-doing. I either caused the conflict or I made it worse through sinful words, actions, and responses.
5. When involved in conflict there are two things you can do to help in examining your own heart:
 - Ask God to show you where you have been wrong. **Psalm 139:23-24**
 - Ask a spiritually mature friend for his or her candid thoughts and advice (somebody who will tell you what you **need** to hear, not **want** to hear). **Proverbs 27:5-6**
6. Paul said, "...*considering thyself...*"
 - "Consider" means "to take aim at (spy)."
 - When another person is in sin or has offended you, legalism says, "I need to take aim at **them**," but grace says, "I need to take aim at **me** first." You allow the Holy Spirit to search **your** heart for attitudes of pride, arrogance, bitterness, anger, etc.
 - Have you contributed to the problem, either directly or indirectly?

Third, speak words of truth tempered with grace.

1. Paul said that confrontation should take place with a spirit of meekness. This simply means that you approach them with a spirit of humility and grace.
2. When involved in a conflict, ask yourself, "Have I uttered hasty words (**Proverbs 29:20**), negative words (**Philippians 2:14**), lying words (**Ephesians 4:25**), gossiping words (**Proverbs 11:13, 17:9**)?"
3. Sinful tongues contribute greatly to conflict. Apply the **Ephesians 4:29** test to your tongue.
4. When the time comes for you to confront this person, you must speak the truth, but do it in love. **Ephesians 4:15**
5. Speaking the truth means that you may have to say some things that the other person may not want to hear, but you do it with a broken heart of love and grace.

Fourth, remember the goal - restoration.

1. When you are involved in a conflict, the goal is not to humiliate the other person or be declared the "winner." Paul said the goal is to "...*restore such an one...*"
 - The word "restore" carries the idea of mending a net or setting a broken bone.
2. Your goal is to see that person restored back to fellowship with God (if it is a sin issue in their life) or with you (if the issue is conflict between you and the person).
3. A word that is similar to this concept is the word "reconciliation." To be reconciled means to replace hostility and separation with peace and friendship.
 - This is what God has done for us in our relationship with Him.
4. When you confront another person, always keep the goal in mind.

One final word of caution:

1. You can go through all of these biblical steps with a right heart and spirit, and the other person may still choose to respond in a negative or fleshly way.

2. Some people have a contentious spirit and do not want peace. Or some people will agree with you to your face and make no change whatsoever.
3. At this point, you cannot get bitter and angry. You must leave it with the Lord. **Romans 12:18** states, *"If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men."*
4. There are examples of men in Scripture that Paul could not live at peace with and there may very possibly be people like this in your life. **1 Timothy 1:20;**
2 Timothy 4:14-15