**Biblical Conflict Resolution**

Resolving Everyday Conflict - A Biblical View of Peacemaking

**THIS HANDOUT IS A SUPPLEMENT TO THE AUDIO RECORDING AND DOES NOT CORRESPOND WITH THE AUDIO PRESENTATION. HOWEVER, THE AUDIO AND HANDOUT SHOULD BE REVIEWED AND A CLASS SUMMARY PROVIDED.**

**The Nature of Conflict**

* Conflict happens when you are at odds with another person over what you think, want or do.
* Conflict begins when you don’t get what you want.
* “My wants, my wishes, my desires and my needs are much more important than anything you value.”
* “I have the right to whatever I want. I have the right to have it my way. I deserve it.” If this idea sinks in—the idea that I deserve whatever I want, whenever I want it—I’m going to get mad when I don’t get it.

**The Source of Conflict**

What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? You lust and do not have, so you murder. You are envious and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures. James 4:1–3

**Causes of Conflict**

* While many conflicts bring disastrous results, conflict isn’t always bad. (Acts 6)
* The Bible teaches that conflicts come from God-given diversity. Many of our differences aren’t about right or wrong; they are simply the result of these God-designed personal preferences. (1 Cor. 12:12-31).
* Other conflicts result from simple misunderstandings.
* Many conflicts are the result of sinful attitudes and desires that lead to sinful words and actions.
* The sinful root of conflict is really idolatry!

**The Hope of the Gospel**

* “By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another” (John 13:35). He prayed, “May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me” (John 17:23). Our unity will even help reveal that Jesus is God (John 17:21).
* Just knowing the right thing to do never brings peace. We all know we should love. We all know we should lay down our rights. But it seems so far out of reach.
* Our problem isn’t knowing the right thing to do, but having the power to do it!
* The gospel is God’s power for peacemaking. And apart from understanding the gospel, we can’t access God’s power.
* We miss God’s great plans for us if we think of the gospel only as the key to eternal life. God intends for the gospel to completely transform every area of our daily life.
* God’s approach begins with us understanding how graciously he treats us through the gospel of Jesus Christ (Rom 2:4).

So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; **just as the Lord forgave you**, so also should you. Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful (Colossians 3:12–15).

**God’s Living Power**

* We also need to encounter the living power of the gospel, Christ living in us.
* I pray that … Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith [so] that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. (Ephesians 3:16–19)
* All change comes from deepening your understanding of the salvation of Christ and living out of the changes that understanding creates in your heart. Faith in the gospel restructures our motivations, our self-understanding, our identity, our view of the world.

**A Biblical Response to Peacemaking**

* Peacemakers see conflict as an opportunity to solve problems in a way that not only benefits everyone involved but also honors God.

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**Escape Response**

* People use escape responses when they are more interested in avoiding a conflict than in resolving it.
  + Denial – pretending it doesn’t exist.
  + Flight – Running away from it.
  + Peacefaking - happens when I care more about the appearance of peace than the reality of peace.

**Attack Response**

* People use attack responses when they are more interested in winning a conflict than in preserving a relationship.
  + Assault – Most frequent are verbal assaults, including insults and other vicious words, sometimes veiled in humor or sarcasm.
  + Litigation – 1 Cor. 6:1-8

**A Better Way (Response)**

* While our natural human reaction to conflict is to escape or attack, only peacemaking actually resolves conflicts.
* Peacemaking response, I shift my focus from me or you to \_\_\_\_.
* The Bible teaches a better way of responding to conflict.
* Peacemakers are people who breathe grace. They draw continually on the goodness and power of Jesus Christ, and then they bring his love, mercy, forgiveness, strength, and wisdom to the conflicts of daily life.
* Peacemaking principles can be expressed in the follow “Four G’s.”
  + Glorify God [Go Higher].
  + Get the log out of your eye [Get Real].
  + Gently restore [Gently Engage].
  + Go and be reconciled [Get Together].

**G1: Go Higher**

* First question to ask: How could I glorify God in this situation.
* As long as we leave God out of our situation, we can expect to stay stuck in conflict.
* Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God (1 Corinthians 10:31)
* “Glory” is a biblical word for the essence of God. To live for “the glory of God” means you bring attention to, display, and reveal his greatness.
* Your best way to keep living for God is to continually ask yourself questions that bring your focus back to him.

**Three Ways You Can Glorify God**

1. You can trust Him – Proverbs 3:5-7
2. You can obey God – John 14:15
3. You can imitate God – Ephesians 5:1-2

Glorifying God brings him praise and honor by showing who he is, what he is like, and what he is doing in you. And glorifying God benefits you as well, especially in a conflict.

**Ask: Is This Worth Fighting Over?**

* One great way to glorify God is by asking, “Is this worth fighting over?” Overlooking is highly recommended throughout Scripture.
  + “A man’s wisdom gives him patience; it is to his glory to overlook an offense” (Proverbs 19:11)
  + “Starting a quarrel is like breaching a dam; so drop the matter before a dispute breaks out” (Proverbs 17:14).
  + “Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins” (1 Peter 4:8).
  + “Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love” (Ephesians 4:2).
* Overlooking is an active choice. Overlooking isn’t peacefaking—avoiding confrontation, staying silent for the moment but filing away the offense to use against someone later. That’s actually a form of denial, which usually leads to a bitterness that eventually explodes in anger. When you overlook another person’s faults, you deliberately decide not to brood over an offense.
* Overlooking means you choose to fully forgive a person without any further discussion or action.
* Overlooking is a strong choice (Luke 6:36)
* Overlooking is a practical choice. Constantly correcting others likely causes damage, while overlooking helps relationships. Instead of calling each other to account for every fault, we can overlook smaller offenses.

**When You Should—and Shouldn’t—Let It Go**

* Yet overlooking clearly isn’t the right choice when a wrong…
  + is damaging your relationship with a person;
  + is hurting other people;
  + is hurting the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_;
  + is significantly dishonoring God.

If we pause and think objectively about the issues we face in life, we realize most of our conflicts simply aren’t worth a fight.

**G2: Get Real**

* In conflict we naturally focus on what the other person did to us. But that won’t solve the problem.
* The log and the speck principle is to be done FIRST.

“Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? “Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ and behold, the log is in your own eye? “You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother’s eye. Matthew 7:3–5

* You might read Jesus’ words and conclude you should never talk to others about their failings. The principle is what comes first.
* Jesus doesn’t mean that our own sins are necessarily bigger or worse than others’.

**Owning Your Part of a Conflict**

* Once we have begun to understand our part of a conflict, our job is to take real responsibility for what we have done wrong.
* Few of us have developed a habit of identifying and owning up to our wrongs. But there are helpful ways to start. You can ask God to help you see your sin. Pray the words of Psalm 139:23–24: “Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”
* Hebrews 4:12 tells us that the Bible can help us to see ourselves more clearly.
* A spiritually mature friend to help you spot your failings. Proverbs 19:20
* If we’re quick to focus on the faults of others, how can we ever discover our own part of a conflict? “Even if I’m only 2 percent responsible for a conflict, I’m 100 percent responsible for my 2 percent.”
* Taking responsibility for your part of a conflict is a crucial step toward peacemaking.
* There’s a problem with most of our confessions. We naturally make weak and evasive apologies.
* Many people never learn to admit their wrongs honestly and absolutely.
* Ken Sande addresses the seven A’s of a good confession.

**The Seven A’s of a Good Confession**

1. Address everyone involved.
2. Avoid “if,” “but,” and “maybe.”
3. Admit specifically.
4. Acknowledge the hurt.
5. Accept the consequences
6. Alter your behavior
7. Ask for forgiveness (and allow time).

**G3: Gently Engage**

* The Bible clearly teaches there are times when you need to address others’ shortcomings. Gal. 6:1 – “If someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently.”
* “If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you” (Matthew 18:15).
* “Whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save him from death and cover over a multitude of sins” (James 5:20).
* You are NOT to be TOO eager, but many feel reluctant to confront others’ sin under any circumstances. While we don’t have a right to force our personal opinions on others, we do have a responsibility to encourage fellow believers to be faithful to God’s commands, living in ways that reflect the gospel, doing for others as God has done for us.
* When someone has something against you, God wants you to take the first step in seeking peace—even if you believe you haven’t done anything wrong.
* There are several reasons you should initiate reconciliation even if you don’t think you’re at fault. Most important, Jesus commands you to go (Matthew 5:23-24).
* God calls you to go and talk to others if their sins are serious.
  + I need to go when a conflict damages my relationship with someone.
  + I need to go when a conflict is hurting others.
  + I need to go when a conflict is hurting the offender.
  + I need to go when a conflict is significantly dishonoring God.
* Getting face to face is the best way to go to others. In Matthew 18 Jesus gives us a process for interacting with someone caught in sin, and it begins with going in person.
* Good listening is particularly important as you go (James 1:19).
* Before you go, carefully plan what you want to say.
* Restoring others is more than simply confronting them with their wrongs, it calls us to use a wide spectrum of activities to minister to others, including confessing, teaching, instructing, reasoning with, showing, encouraging, correcting, or warning.

**G3: Gently Engage – Going with Others**

* The principle taught in Matthew 18 is that we should try to keep the circle of people involved in a conflict as small as possible for as long as possible.
* If going with others doesn’t resolve a conflict, there are still options remaining. After Jesus said, “But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that ‘every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses,’ ” he continued, “If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church (Matthew 18:16-17)
* Whenever you try to show someone his fault, there are limits to what you can accomplish. You can raise concerns, suggest solutions, encourage reasonable thinking, and pray for the person, but only God can move others to change.

**G4: Get Together**

* Forgiveness is a powerful act that opens up the possibility of a relationship being fully healed from the pain of conflict.
* As Christians, we can’t afford to overlook the direct relationship between God’s forgiveness and our forgiveness. The Bible says, “Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you” (Ephesians 4:32) and “Forgive as the Lord forgave you” (Colossians 3:13).
* Christians are the most forgiven people in the world. Therefore, we should be the most forgiving people in the world (Matthew 6:12).
* To understand what forgiveness is, it helps to see what it isn’t. First, forgiveness isn’t a feeling. It’s an act of the will.
* Second, forgiveness isn’t forgetting. Forgetting is a passive process, letting a matter fade from memory merely with the passing of time. Forgiving is an active process involving a conscious choice and a deliberate course of action. To put it another way, when God says that he “remembers your sins no more” (Isaiah 43:25), he doesn’t mean he can’t remember our sins.
* Forgiveness isn’t excusing.

**What Forgiveness Is**

* Forgiveness is a radical decision not to hold an offense against the offender.
* Forgiveness can be costly.
* Your other choice is to make payments on the other person’s debt, releasing others from penalties they deserve to pay.
* We don’t have the means to make those payments out of our own human reserves. But Christ already has made them for us.
* It’s the same penalty that God releases us from when he forgives. Isaiah 59:2 says, “But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear.”

**The Four Promises of Forgiveness**

* When we forgive as the Lord forgives us, we release an offender from the penalty of being separated from us.
  + “I promise I won’t dwell on this incident.”
  + “I promise I won’t bring up this incident and use it against you.”
  + “I promise I won’t talk to others about this incident.”
  + “I promise I won’t allow this incident to stand between us or hinder our personal relationship.”
* These four promises show us what forgiveness looks like in real life.
* As you seek to live out the fourth G of peacemaking, “Get Together,” remember above all else that true forgiveness depends on God’s grace.

**Pressing On with Deliberate Love**

* Peacemaking doesn’t always turn out the way we want it to.
* When we can’t resolve conflict, we face an enormous temptation to take matters into our own hands.
* When we stall in our attempts to resolve a conflict, the first thing we can do is to pray again.
* As conflict lingers, it’s crucial to guard our hearts. (Rom 12:14; Prov 4:23)
* The state of your heart is usually reflected in the words coming from your mouth (1 Peter 3:9).
* Because it’s so difficult to battle evil alone, we need support from people who encourage us and give us biblically sound counsel (Prov 13:20)

**The Power of Our Weapons**

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ (2 Corinthians 10:3–5).

**Keep Doing Right**

* The Bible emphasizes the importance of continuing to do right even when it seems that an opponent will never cooperate. Romans 12:17 says, “Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody.” (see also 1 Peter 2:12).
* As you deal with difficult people, it’s crucial to recognize your limits (Rom 12:18).
* It’s easier to accept your limits if you have a biblical view of success. Most people define success in terms of what someone possesses, controls, or accomplishes. But God defines success in terms of faithful obedience to his commands (Ecclesiastes 12:13).
* Part of recognizing your limits is rejecting the temptation to take revenge on someone who continues to do wrong (Prov 20:22).

**The Ultimate Weapon – Deliberate, Focused Love**

* When conflict rages on, there is a final tactic to pursue that many think is crazy. We can continue to love our enemy. We use the same weapon God used to win over our hearts. Love. (Romans 12:20-21)
* Deliberate, focused love is the ultimate weapon.
* Deliberate, focused love has an irresistible power. Ancient armies often used burning coals to fend off attackers (see Psalm 120:4). No soldier could resist this weapon for long. It eventually overcame even the most determined attacker. Love has the same overwhelming power.

Questions?

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Class Summary:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_