

## What is conflict?

A difference of opinion or thought between two or more people. A disagreement.

Conflict is not always bad. We see examples of it in the scriptures, as well as instructions to enter into it.

### Rebuke

- "I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching." (2 Tim. 4:1-2)
- "Better is open rebuke than hidden love." Proverbs 27:5
- Jesus rebuking Peter in Matthew 16

### Admonish

- Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God." Collosians 3:16
- Paul in the entire book of 1 Corinthians

### Resist or oppose

- Paul opposed Peter when he was out of step with the gospel in refusing to eat with Gentiles.
- Jesus opposed the moneychangers in the temple

### Contend

- "Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints." Jude 3

## What tools do you need?

"I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all *humility* and *gentleness*, with *patience*, *bearing with one another in love*, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." Ephesians 4:1-3 (emphasis added)

### 1. Humility

The enemy of humility is pride

- Pride is self-perpetuating.
- Pride prevents us from listening, from trying to understand.

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction." Proverbs 1:7

"Do not reprove a scoffer, or he will hate you; reprove a wise man, and he will love you." Proverbs 9:8

"Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but he who hates reproof is stupid."  
Proverbs 12:1

"What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet 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 wrongly, to spend it on your passions." James 4:1-3

What is Humility?

- Humility is recognizing there is much room for misunderstanding, so my initial thoughts or conclusions about this situation could be wrong.
- Humility is believing that God is good, and He is working things together for my good and for his glory, so I don't need to fight for myself.

- Humility is remembering that my identity is in Christ, and He has overcome the world.

“Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”

Philippians 2:3-8

## 2. Gentleness

The enemy of gentleness is pride, often displayed as anger.

Righteous anger vs. sinful anger

- Righteous anger is anger that is directed toward God’s will being violated
- Sinful anger is directed toward MY will being violated
  - Sinful anger shows us that we covet something to the point of idolatry
  - Sinful anger results in either explosive behavior or reclusive behavior

What is gentleness?

- Gentleness is resisting this temptation toward sinful anger, and keeping silent when injured.

“When words are many, transgression is not lacking, but whoever restrains his lips is prudent.” Proverbs 10:19

“Whoever is slow to anger has great understanding, but he who has a hasty temper exalts folly.” Proverbs 14:29

“A hot-tempered man stirs up strife, but he who is slow to anger quiets contention.” Proverbs 15:18

“The beginning of strife is like letting out water, so quit before the quarrel breaks out.” Proverbs 17:14

“Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God.” James 1:19-20

“Good sense makes one slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook an offense.” Proverbs 19:11

- Gentleness is remembering that each person God created is different, and there is room for differences.
- Gentleness is remembering that God’s justice is perfect and ultimate.

### 3. Patience

The enemy of patience is pride.

- Patience is trusting God in a difficult situation, not accusing him or giving him a deadline
  - Our impatience looks like:
    - Asking “how long do I have to put up with this?”
    - Jumping to conclusions without taking the time to listen and understand
    - Interrupting
      - “If one gives an answer before he hears, it is his folly and shame.”  
Proverbs 18:13
    - Searching for relief instead of genuine understanding and resolution
  - Patience is a result of trusting in God’s use of trials for your good
    - “Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, 3 for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. 4 And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.” James 1:2-4

### 4. Bearing with one another in love

Bearing with = to put up with or tolerate

This means:

- Recognizing the difference between that which is sin and that which is not

- Outdoing one another in honor  
 "Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor." Romans 12:10
  
- Making charitable judgements  
 "Love believes all things" 1 Cor. 13:7  
  
 "If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all."  
 Romans 12:18
  
- Seeking to understand by:
  - Asking questions
  - Verifying your conclusions
  - Leaving room for nuance and complexity
  
- Praying for the other person

## How do you deal with it?

### 4 general causes of conflict:

1. Misunderstandings (poor communication)
  
2. Differences in values, goals, gifts, priorities, expectations, interests, or opinion
  
3. Competition over limited resources
  
4. Sinful attitudes and habits that lead to sinful words and actions

### 3 ways to respond to conflict:

Escape, Attack, or be a Peacemaker

- Escape (focus on "me")
  - Deny
  - Physically Escape
  - Verbally / Emotionally Escape
  - Permanently Escape (Suicide)
- Attack (focus on "you")
  - Communication
  - Litigation
  - Physical Attack
  - Murder
- Peacemaking - (focus on the relationships)
  - Non-sinful conflict
    - Negotiation - taking into account all of the tools we talked about in the beginning
    - If negotiation doesn't produce any fruit, then arbitration might be necessary.
      - That help should involve hearing from both parties, while also allowing them to interact with one another.

"The one who states his case first seems right, until the other comes and examines him." Proverbs 18:17
- Sinful Conflict
  - If there is genuine sin, this requires the process of Matthew 18.

“If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.”  
Matthew 18:15-17

- Forgiveness

- Forgiveness is not a feeling you wait to have.

- Forgiveness is NOT dependent on repentance.

“Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful.” Col. 3:12-15

- Forgiveness is NOT forgetting, NOT excusing.

- Forgiveness is the clearing of a debt.

- Forgiveness is entrusting someone to God's justice, and not seeking it for ourselves.

“Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil. Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need. Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the

occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.”  
Ephesians 4:17-32

- Unforgiveness is sin.
  - Matthew 18:21-25 the unforgiving debtor.
  
- Repentance
  - Repentance is not just a feeling, it is also action.
  
  - Repentance is seeing your sin, being convicted that it's objectively abhorrent, confessing your sin to God and those who are affected by it, and then endeavoring not to repeat it.
  
  - This requires that you walk by the Spirit, not allow your conscience to be seared by your emotions or the false scale of comparison.
  
  - Repentance should not wait until you are confronted. If you know you have sinned, repent as soon as possible.
    - “So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.” Matt. 5:23-24
  
  - Confession should fit the context.
    - All sins must be confessed to God



- Private sins can be confessed in private, public sins should be confessed in public
  
- Forgiveness is similar in this way.

So we said that peacemaking is seeking to resolve conflict with reconciliation as the goal. But what does reconciliation mean?

- Reconciliation means to remove the hostility in a conflict, to bring peace.
  - “But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility.” Ephesians 2:14-17
  
  - “For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, 20 and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.” Collosians 1:19-20
  
  - “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. 18 All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; 19 that is, in Christ God was reconciling[c] the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.” 2 Cor. 5:17-19
  
  - “Be at peace among yourselves. And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all. See that no one repays anyone evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to everyone. Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. ” 1 Thess. 5:13a-18
  
  - “May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you

may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God." Rom 15:5-7

Reconciliation does NOT mean:

- You're now obligated to trust each other
- That you're obligated to return to things just the way they were before the conflict.

In relationship with God, reconciliation means that the relationship is restored, and we are adopted into his family. But this is because a holy God is able to completely restore that broken relationship. In relationships between people, reconciliation COULD mean that the relationship is restored, and it COULD mean that trust is reestablished over time, but that's not how the scriptures describe it.

What if I don't see the charge that is leveled against me? What if accusations against me have no merit or proof?

- Remember your tools: humility, gentleness, patience, and bearing with one another in love
- Seek other counsel to help you see clearly

Trusting in the sovereignty of God

- This means believing that He will not necessarily do what you want (or what makes you feel good), but instead believing that He will do everything that He knows is good. Even if you don't understand, agree, or enjoy it.

A few questions to ask yourself:

- Have I really been sinned against, or do I just not like this?
  - Am I being charitable?
  - Am I assigning sinful motive where there may be none?
- Do I really understand the other person?
  - Do I truly understand what they think?
  - Do I truly understand how they feel?
- How am I communicating? (Verbal & Nonverbal)
  - Do I demonstrate care with my words/tone/body language?
  - Do I demonstrate an eagerness to end hostility and bring peace?