

CONFLICT:

- a fight, battle, or **struggle, esp. a prolonged one**; strife
- to be contradictory, at variance, or in opposition; **clash**;
disagree
- **a state of opposition** between ideas, interests, etc.;
disagreement or controversy
- a state of **disharmony** between incompatible persons,
ideas, or interests
- **a disagreement through which the parties involved
perceive a threat to their needs, interests or concerns**

An expressed reaction is at the core of conflict.

TWO TYPES OF CONFLICTS:

- **Misunderstanding:** a failure to understand or interpret correctly
- **Issue:** a matter that is in dispute between two or more parties: a point of debate or controversy

A comical example of a 'misunderstanding':

The story is told about a small, country church where the pastor called a special meeting of the congregation to approve the purchase of a brand new chandelier. After some discussion pro and con, an old farmer stood up and said, "Buying a new chandelier may seem like a good idea to you, but I'm against it for three reasons. First of all, it's too expensive and we can't afford one. Second, there isn't anybody around here who knows how to play one. And third, what we really need in this church is a new light fixture.

A comical example of an 'issue':

Preacher vs. Worship Leader:

One week, the preacher preached on commitment, and how we should move forward into doing service for others. After this sermon, the song leader led the congregation in singing "I Shall Not Be Moved." The next Sunday, the preacher preached on giving and how we should gladly give to the work of the Lord. The song leader then led the song, "Jesus Paid It All." The next Sunday, the preacher preached on gossiping and how we should watch our tongues. The hymn was "I Love To Tell The Story." The preacher became disgusted over the situation and, the next Sunday, he told the congregation he was considering resigning. The congregation then sang "Oh, Why Not Tonight." When the preacher resigned the next week, he told the church that Jesus had led him there and Jesus was taking him away. The song leader then sang "What a Friend We Have in Jesus."

CONFLICTS aren't always a negative thing.

Many times conflict occurs because there may be an unspoken **misunderstanding or issue** between two parties that needs to be brought up and **discussed for the purpose of resolution (closure) and possible reconciliation.**

RESOLUTION: something that is **settled, resolved**, made clear or understandable which can bring **closure** to the situation.

CLOSURE: A **feeling of finality or resolution**, especially after a traumatic experience.

RECONCILIATION: the reestablishing or restoration of cordial or friendly relations, **being brought into agreement or harmony.**

People of **passion** (*strong emotion or enthusiasm*) and **conviction** (*strong belief or opinion*) will experience conflict when it pertains to matters that are important to them.

Acts 15:1-2,6/The Message

It wasn't long before some Jews showed up from Judea insisting that everyone be circumcised: "If you're not circumcised in the Mosaic fashion, you can't be saved." **Paul and Barnabas were up on their feet at once in fierce protest. The church decided to resolve the matter** by sending Paul, Barnabas, and a few others to put it before the apostles and leaders in Jerusalem.

The apostles and leaders **called a special meeting to consider the matter. The arguments went on and on, back and forth, getting more and more heated.**

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Acts 15:30-31/The Voice

So the men were sent to Antioch. When they arrived, they gathered the community together and read the letter. **The community rejoiced at the resolution to the controversy.**

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In conflict **there may be a resolution** to the situation but there **may not always be a reconciliation** between the parties involved.

Acts 15:36b-39a/(VOICE)

36 ..Paul: Let's return and visit the believers in each city where we preached the Lord's message last time to see how they're doing. Barnabas agreed and wanted to bring John Mark along, but Paul felt that was a mistake since John Mark had abandoned them in Pamphylia and hadn't finished the previous mission. **Their difference of opinion was so heated that they decided not to work together anymore...**

Acts 15:39/Expanded Version

Paul and Barnabas had such a **serious argument** [sharp disagreement] about this that **they separated and went different ways** [parted company; separated from one another].

The contention was so sharp between them - "a violent altercation" that resulted in their separation for a time, and in their engaging in different spheres of labor.

There was **division** between Paul and Barnabas. They could not violate their conscience or forsake their conviction. **They each had their own vision about what their priority was. The only resolution was for them to go their separate ways.**

Amos 3:3/KJV

Can two walk together, except they be agreed?

Can These Bones Live?

Dry Bones, Listen!

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In 57 A.D. (7 years later), Paul and Barnabas are reunited.

I Corinthians 9:6

In 61 A.D., Paul refers to John Mark as a comfort.

Colossians 4:10-12

In 67 A.D. Paul refers to John Mark as profitable to him.

2 Timothy 4:11

Barnabas is like a big brother to John Mark. Peter refers to Marcus [John Mark] as his son and John Mark matures at the hands of Barnabas and Peter.

I Peter 5:13

HOW TO TURN A DISAGREEMENT INTO A FEUD:

1. Be sure to develop and maintain a healthy fear of conflict, **letting your own feelings build up so you are in an explosive frame of mind.**
2. If you must state your concerns, **be as vague and general as possible.** Then the other person cannot do anything practical to change the situation.
3. **Assume you know all the facts and you are totally right.** The use of a clinching Bible verse is helpful. Speak prophetically for truth and justice; **do most of the talking.**
4. **With a touch of defiance, announce your willingness to talk** with anyone who wishes to discuss the problem with you. But **do not take steps to initiate** such conversation.

HOW TO TURN A DISAGREEMENT INTO A FEUD:

5. Latch tenaciously onto whatever evidence you can find that shows the other person is merely jealous of you.

6. **Judge the motivation of the other party** on any previous experience that showed failure or unkindness. **Keep track of any angry words.**

7. If the discussion should, alas, become serious, view the issue as a win/lose struggle. **Avoid possible solutions** and go for total victory and unconditional surrender. Don't get too many options on the table.

8. **Pass the buck!** If you are about to get cornered into a solution, indicate you are without power to settle; you need your partner, spouse, bank, whatever.

Ron Kraybill, Tell it to the Church,

Lynn Buzzard, David C. Cook, 1982, p. 23.

A GODLY RESPONSE TO CONFLICT:

- **CONSULT the heart of God in the matter**

Invite God into the situation and embrace His heart of compassion.

James 1:5 - (NLT)

If you need wisdom, ask our generous God, and he will give it to you. He will not rebuke you for asking.

- **COUNSEL with leaders and/or pastors for advisement**

You don't know everything; be accountable and glean a fresh perspective.

Proverbs 11:14b/KJV

...in the multitude of counsellors there is safety.

- **CHECK your heart**

Be brutally honest with how you feel.

Psalms 139:23 & 24a/Jerusalem & Amplified

God, examine me and know my heart, probe me and know my thoughts. And see if there is any wicked or hurtful way in me...

A GODLY RESPONSE TO CONFLICT:

- **COMMUNICATE** the issue clearly to the other party
Open up the lines of communication with no ‘digs’, blame or ego and stick to the issue.
Ephesians 4:15a/Amplified
Rather, let our lives lovingly express truth [in all things, speaking truly, dealing truly, living truly..
- **CONSIDER** the heart of the other person involved
Genuinely listen and try to understand the other person’s point of view instead of trying to convince them that you are right! Die to ego!
Ephesians 4:32/Message
Make a clean break with all cutting, backbiting, profane talk. Be gentle with one another, sensitive. Forgive one another as quickly and thoroughly as God in Christ forgave you.

A GODLY RESPONSE TO CONFLICT:

- **CONCEDE** where you missed it

Ask for forgiveness where you missed it, you hurt the other person or how you may have said or done something that hurt them. Be vulnerable and transparent.

James 5:16/Amplified Bible

Confess to one another therefore your faults (your slips, your false steps, your offenses...) and pray [also] for one another, that you may be healed *and* restored [to a spiritual tone of mind and heart].

A GODLY RESPONSE TO CONFLICT:

- **CONTINUE in the ways of God regardless of the outcome**

If there isn't a total reconciliation, don't allow yourself to become discouraged or vow never to share your heart again.

Colossians 1:23a/Amplified

Continue to stay with and in the faith (in Christ), well-grounded and settled and steadfast....

Colossians 1:23a/Amplified

You stay grounded and steady in that bond of trust, constantly tuned in to the Message, careful not to be distracted or diverted.

There are people who like to fight and burn bridges in their relationships.

Don't allow yourself to become cynical of people and closed off because of the actions of some.

Our responsibility is to forgive and loose them but we are not responsible for their response nor can we force them to reconcile with us.

When we forgive we free up our own heart and create an atmosphere where healing and restoration can occur, but ultimately it's the other person's choice.

**Those whom you don't forgive are holding you as a
hostage.**

Kent Crockett

**We base our forgiveness on what God has done for us,
not on what another person has done to us.**

Kent Crockett, *The 911 Handbook*, Peabody,
MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2003, 43

Romans 12:18/Living Translation

Do all that you can to live in peace with everyone.

Hebrews 12:14a/NIV

Make every effort to live in peace with everyone...

TO BE IN RIGHT RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD, WE MUST WALK IN FORGIVENESS WITH EACH OTHER. FORGIVENESS IS NOT AN OPTION; IT'S A NECESSITY.

Mark 11:25-26/Amplified

And whenever you stand praying, **if you have anything against anyone, forgive him and let it drop (leave it, let it go)**, in order that your Father Who is in heaven may also forgive you your [own] failing and shortcomings and let them drop. **But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your failings and shortcomings.**

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**WE ARE TO WALK IN A DAILY LIFESTYLE OF
CONSISTENTLY FORGIVING OTHERS.**

Matthew 18:21-22/Amplified

Then Peter came up to Him and said, Lord, **how many times may my brother sin against me and I forgive him and let it go? [As many as] up to seven times?** Jesus answered him, I tell you, **not up to seven times, but seventy times seven!**

Review:

- **Conflicts aren't always a negative thing.**

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