

## Resolving Conflicts

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Someone once said that when two or three are gathered together in His name, you can count on one of them starting an argument. Wherever there are people, there will also be conflicts.

All throughout the Bible we find people who couldn't get along. Abram's and Lot's herdsmen squabbled over territory (Gen. 13:7). Jacob and Laban had continual conflicts in their dealings with each other (Gen. 29-31). The disciples got into an argument over which one was the greatest (Luke 22:24). That argument is still going on today in many circles. Even the apostles Paul and Barnabas had a sharp disagreement which caused them to separate (Acts 15:38-39).

A conflict is a disagreement that produces friction and strained relationships between individuals. Friction comes from rubbing people the wrong way. If you put two blocks of wood together and move them in different directions, it will cause friction. But if you can get them going in the same direction, the friction stops. To stop the friction in a relationship, both parties must stop fighting about their differences and agree to disagree.

The Bible calls conflict "strife." The Hebrew word means "to wrangle, to quarrel, to cause discord." Clashing personalities, not listening, hot tempers, miscommunication, broken trust, and selfishness are guaranteed to create tension between individuals. All these things, if not resolved, will produce damaging consequences—divorces, church splits, and hurt feelings. Here are **6 Steps to Resolving Conflicts**.

### Step #1: You must make the first move

Romans 12:18 says, "If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men" Notice 3 things:

- "If possible" This implies that the other person may not want to be reconciled. But it also means that resolving the conflict might be possible.
- "So far as it depends on you" This puts the burden of peace-making on you. It will require humility on your part because pride wants the other person to come to you. Quit waiting for the other person to make the first move. You take the initiative and start the process.
- "Be at peace with all men" Conflict creates friction, but reconciliation brings peace.

Jesus said if you are giving an offering God and remember you have an unresolved conflict with someone, to leave your offering at the altar and try to work it out (Matt. 5:23-24). If you will make the first move, you'll find that God will also make a move by blessing you. He will always bless the one who takes the initiative in peacemaking

### Step #2: Don't delay in taking action

Jesus said, "*Make friends quickly* with your opponent at law while you are with him on the way, so that your opponent may not hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the officer, and you be thrown into prison." (Matt. 5:25). He said to make friends with your opponent, and you must do it quickly. Don't delay! It's easiest to put out a fire when it is small. You have a window of time to create a positive relationship with your enemy.

### Step #3 Give a gift to the other person

Jesus told us, "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you" (Luke 6:26-27). When Jacob cheated Esau out of his birthright, Esau "bore a grudge" against him and planned to kill him after their father died (Gen. 27:41). Jacob fled away, knowing he wasn't safe around Esau. Years later, Jacob decided to reconcile with his brother. He used wisdom by sending him multiple gifts (Read Gen. 32:13 to 33:11). When Esau saw Jacob's willingness to be reconciled by his willingness to give him so many gifts, Esau's hate turned into compassion and their relationship was healed.

### Step #4 Find common ground

Have you ever thought about the fact that a common ground can make people forget their differences? You will find liberal democrats and conservative republicans hugging each other and giving high fives—if they are pulling for the same football team that scores a touchdown! Every Saturday and Sunday during football season, literally millions of people with opposing political views are seated together in football stadiums, pulling for the same team. As long as they are focused on a common interest, they aren't thinking about their differences.

**Step #5 Communicate in a non-threatening way**

The way you communicate with your opponent will either make matters better or worse. Proverbs 15:1 says, "A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger." Notice that it's not the words that create the different responses, but the tone of voice and the manner in which the words are delivered. You can soften a person's heart by speaking words of kindness, not rude words.

**Step #6 Compromise where you can**

Compromise minimizes your differences. Making compromises doesn't mean that you give up your convictions about God, but that you lay down your "right" to be right. It means you sit down with the other person and negotiate your differences so you can come to an agreement. In marriage, compromising means you meet halfway to settle your differences. Husband and wife both give a little so that they can get along rather than constantly fight over the same issues.

If you will put these six steps into practice, you will be able to resolve most conflicts. And if the other person doesn't want to make peace, at least you have done your part. Leave the rest in God's hands.

(For more on this topic, read Chapter 4, "Resolving Conflicts" from [\*10 Secrets to Life's Biggest Challenges\*](#) by Peter Lord and Kent Crockett, Chosen Books 2012).