

Redemptive Conflicts  
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3. We'll come back to the specifics of your story throughout the morning. I'm sure, since it includes many helpful illustrations of the points you're making. For now, let's go back to the basics and talk about conflict and what we mean when we use that term.

What is Conflict?

A. Merriam Websters' dictionary defines Conflict(1): 1. Fight, battle, war. 2. Competitive or opposing action of incompatibles. 3. Mental struggle resulting from incompatible or opposing needs, drives, wishes or eternal or internal demands. 4. Opposition of persons or forces that gives rise to the dramatic in drama or fiction.

Bible says about conflict: James 4:1-2 "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."

A "quarrel" is an angry argument or disagreement with friends. One time, I watched an older lady causing conflict in a church meeting because another woman wore a sleeveless shirt while she singing on stage during a worship service.

"Is it not this, that our passions war with in you." "Passions" means lusts. There are 3 types of lusts are mentioned in 1 John 2:16, "For everything in the world-the lust of the flesh, the Lust of the eyes, and the pride of life- comes not from the Father but from the world." Lusts of the flesh means, gluttonous in food, sexual desires, selfish in use of possessions, these are you base wants. Lust of the eyes is wanting what you don't have. Think of "Keeping up with the Joneses". Also, it means status. The Pride of life means "I am adequate, I am superior". So the Pride of Life people will not want to be the Joneses, but they want to exceed them.

"You desire and you do not have, so you murder." I want my kids to be act a certain way in front of my neighbors and if they don't act that way I get angry.

"You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel." Covet means you desire it, you want it. You are invited to yet another friend's wedding, and you have no prospects in the horizon. You desire, you want a husband. So you become jealous, insecure, angry at God for not giving you "the one" yet. Instead of thinking of your friend on her big day, you think of yourself, what you want and don't have.

The Bible is filled with conflict- Adam and Eve vs. Satan, Cain and Abel, Naomi she went back to her home town and asked her friends to be called Mara, which means bitter. Paul and Barnabas were in conflict, as we just heard in James, people in the church were in conflict with each other. But what do all of our conflicts and all the conflicts in the Bible have in common? They are all pointing to Jesus Christ. Every single one of us need Jesus to forgive us, to heal us from pain, to help us forgive, to help us to love and to follow His Word. No one can do this on her own. I like this quote from David Mathis:"Conflict is not something to avoid or ignore. It is an opportunity for Grace."

\*Important: There are some people here today who have been deeply wounded by a person or multiple people and as a result, you have been hiding that pain and not given your pain to God. I want to say when you are ready to give God your hurt, He will heal your hurt and when or if the time comes, He may bring you to the point in your journey, where you have a choice to forgive or not. But for right now, you will hear many things about forgiveness that you may not be ready to handle- and that is okay.

\*Important: I also want to say there may be some people who are in an abusive situation and what you are about to hear is by no means an encouragement for you to put yourself and family in danger. If this is the case, please go to Anne or one of the elder's wife, so you they can help you get to a safe place.

\*Important: I do want to say if you are dealing with someone who has an addiction, you should see a licensed counselor or Psychologist who will help you give boundaries; will help you show love to them without enabling and help give you support.

4. Now that we we have an idea of what conflict is, let's talk about why it is so important to learn how to handle it well. Can you start by talking about the good things that can come as we walk through conflict?

Ron Deal, in his article "Managing the Fires of Conflict in Marriage," states, "The amount of conflict in a marriage only determines the speed at which the marriage is moving toward greatness or toward destruction. If you want to sit still in your marriage, rule out all conflict. If you want your marriage to crash and burn, let the conflict rage but refuse to learn the skills necessary for managing it. Well managed conflict is like a stairway that can lead you to higher and higher levels of marital greatness." But I think this quote can apply to any relationship, whether married or single.

Here are some positive reasons why handling/dealing with conflict is important. God tells us to strive for the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace (Eph 4:3); Job demonstrates that God brings conflict because we need to know God better; James says trials are the path to endurance in our faith, wisdom, etc (James 1).

5. And now could you spend a little time describing the negative effects that can come when we don't persevere well through our conflicts?

If you do not handle conflict well, you are prone to addictions, depression, anger, high levels of stress. First, we need to address when you handle conflict well, you are handling your past/present hurt to God and you are having God help you forgive. I think hurt from conflict and forgiveness are 2 separate things, you can forgive somebody, but still feel hurt from it. Forgiveness and healing from hurt are cycles and can come up again and again and they can be separate cycles. This is a good reason why people who have been abused need to go through the hurt first, before they go through dealing with forgiveness. (I would like to say sexual abuse isn't just rape. It can be words, a look, a touch or making one look at inappropriate things.) And why I am addressing hurt when I talk about forgiveness.

So what happens if you then to your body if you continue not to deal with conflict? Hurt and unforgiveness, bitterness, (unresolved conflict) or conflict in general, your body turns into stress. Too much stress can have a negative effect on your health. My husband and daughter who was a toddler at the time, moved from PA to NC. Aaron got a job at a church. After 4 months, Aaron was let go. I will not give you the details, but Aaron should not have been fired- it was wrong what happened. I don't remember the time frame, but after Aaron was fired, the minister who had his hand in getting my husband fired, took my husband out to Panera bread and told him he is not fit for ministry. It crushed Aaron. I didn't handle it well. I told God I forgave, but deep in my heart I didn't. I was so angry and hurt by what happened. Instead of going to God I chose to take things in my own hands.

How many of you ladies do these to numb or run: Shop when you don't have money? Are you controlling? How many of you keep yourselves busy with good or bad things? Are you boy crazy? Restrict your food? Binge Eat? Read books that are sexual in content or looking at porn?

Drinking alcohol just a little when you usually don't drink or a lot? Illegal drugs? Living in a virtual world? These are just a few your warning signs ladies that could indicate you are angry, depressed, hurt and have unforgiveness, and you are not giving it to God. I do want to mention some of these signs can cause an addiction, which some of them can alter your brain chemicals. Which means, it will become very hard to stop, unless you meet with a good licensed counselor or psychologist to help stop the addiction. Back to my story, I stopped reminding myself in the midst of my hurt, who God is. I used to underline his name and double underline who He was. I thought He was kind to others, but wanted destruction for our family. Ladies, that is when I started taking things into my own hands to numb the pain and to forget what happened. I started watching lots and lots of movies, I became an over the top neat freak, controlling, I would buy little things, even though we didn't have money for it. Because in my mind it was adding a temporary relief. However, the stress from being angry, depressed, hurt and unforgiving began to take a toll on my body and my emotions. Ladies, my unresolved hurt/unforgiveness was causing me to bottle up and I would become angry on the little things. **You see, when we don't follow God's Word, there is always consequences, always.** And though God created our body for some stress to function normally, He did not create it for continual stress. I read an article that research shows stress affects DNA strands making you age early and have a shorter life. Remember in the book of Ruth chapter 1:19, "So the two of them went on until they came to Bethlehem And when they came to Bethlehem, the whole town was stirred because of them. And the women said, "Is this Naomi?" Her family and friends could not recognize her, after the death of her husband and 2 sons, the deep grief took a toll on her. In Dr. Archibald D. Hart's book The Hidden Link between Adrenaline and Stress, is a great book that describes this very thing. When we are in conflict with someone or ourselves, when we are filled with hurt and forgiveness it turns into stress and if it is never resolved, it will become continual stress which then our immune system will turn on itself to attack mode. Our auto-immune system is used to protect us, but with continued stress it begins to attack itself. That's why some people have autoimmune disorders. Our body will start attacking tissue. If our body feels threatened, we physically or psychologically set a chain response. We either will fight, flight or freeze (extreme state of fear or panic). So, when my 2 grandmothers went into the hospital at the same time, Aaron still couldn't find a job, and then we moved all around the same time, I was on fighting mode ladies. My adrenaline was ready to fight all night- I couldn't calm my body down to sleep. I didn't sleep for 3 days one time. My immune system was low that I was sick with something the doctors couldn't figure out- more stress. I was starting to get small panic attacks, Aaron took me to the hospital because I heart was pumping fast. I couldn't rest and I was so tired. I knew what I had to do, but I am stubborn and it took our Sweet God His continual pursuing me and breaking down my pride, to finally get to the point, that I need to stop and give it to Him. When I did that ladies, I was in action. I let myself hurt and remembered in my hurt who God was. Because I for so long was believing the lies I had to work really hard to fight those lies about God. I started listening to Christian Talk radio, reading the Bible (Proverbs 3:5, "Every Word of God is pure; He is a shield to those who put their trust in Him), confessing to God and really telling Him that I have am having a hard time forgiving what the church did and especially that minister that crushed my husband. I stopped watching the news. If I was to watch movies, then I would make sure I was doing it not to numb anything. I started walking and exercising, watching or reading funny things, crying when the pain hurt, all these are natural ways God relieves stress. I didn't want to increase my stress levels, so with God's help, He was helping me make wise decisions to help get my body back to normal. 6 months later, I started feeling better physically and I wasn't getting angry as much either. It took over a year for my body's adrenaline to get back to normal in order for me to sleep through the night. Here are some more symptoms your body is under too much stress:

“muscle tension, chronic headaches, backaches, nervous tics, psychosomatic disorders, Psychological disorders.” However, for some people, they may not show any physical signs of stress. These people's body has adapted to a higher level stress, and this is not a good thing. For example, if you moved to the Sahara Desert, your body will eventually adapt to the climate. Dr. Hart says the same thing happens to stress. Your body can't tell the difference between good and bad stress and evidently your body will have enough. That's why some people who seem healthy for years can have a heart attack, or in my Dad's case, when he was in his early 40s, his brain had had enough and he started showing signs of Bipolar Disorder. He tells me now, it's because he never dealt with his pain, he didn't forgive and He was running away from God. He wanted to run after his lusts to numb the pain. All these turned into stress and with his other stressors added on, his body had enough.

6. One of the most essential aspects of navigating conflict successfully has to do with forgiveness. I know you've thought a lot about forgiveness and have some very helpful insights connected to your studies and your experience. Could you share some of those with us?

Sure. I am going to be talking through 5 Myths of Forgiveness that is common among our culture. According to Dr. Will Meek in Psychology Today there are “6 Myths of Forgiveness”, I am only going to mention 5 of them, because the 6<sup>th</sup> one is not Biblical:

1. **Forgiving means that what happened was ok.** - This is not true. The offender would not be needing forgiveness, if they didn't sin against you or if you are the offender against them. Because you are forgiving, you are acknowledging what the person has done is wrong.
2. **If I forgive, it might happen to me again.** Now I think the myth can be true and false. False, because the Bible says in Matthew 5:39, “But I say to you, Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.” Matthew 18: 21, “Then Peter came up and said to Him, 'Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?' Jesus said to him, 'I do not say to you seven times, but seventy-seven times.

On the other hand, I think this True, because we live in a sinful world and our flesh desires sinful things, people do really destructive things to others. And the consequences of not following God's word can be horrific, messy, or plain hurtful to the victim. Let's not forget the consequence of the offender- Woe to him or her. Romans 14:12 says “So, then, each of us will give an account of himself to God.” Sally Clarkson says this well, “We are called to accept all people as those receiving the grace of Christ, but we are not called to engage our hearts to those who are foolish, unwise, immature or who would engage our hearts to constant conflict.” For example, I have a step grandfather, who did and said inappropriate things to be growing up. I can forgive my step grandfather, but it doesn't mean I am going to hang out with him alone or have my kids alone with him because the Bible tells me to turn the other cheek and forgive. No. Sometimes, the most loving and God honoring thing is to separate ourselves from the offender. And sometimes, we have to call the cops on them too. Tell story of my dad ranting and yelling had to call cops to try to get him help.

3. **I need to forgive and forget,** This is False. I am very passionate about this one. I hear so many Christians say this. I am not talking about circumstances, your kid colors on the wall with a crayon. I am talking about when the offender has done something to you that caused you pain, and you say you have forgiven, but the aftermath demonstrates differently. For example, My mom said she forgiven by dad, Over 16 years, my mom would point out the wrong in my dad. She likes to say she put the mirror on my dad. She brought what he did wrong up, they fought and she nagged him a lot. She didn't forgive my dad. When someone says they forgiven rather

quickly after something happened because it was the “right Christian thing to do”, but as time goes by it still hurts deeply, they don't want to talk about the pain the situation has caused and its influencing their life in negative ways. The lack of freedom that person is experiencing shows that they are carrying the hurt and they are “forgiving” on their own. God promises to bear our burdens. Psalm 55:22 “Cast your burden upon the LORD and He will sustain you; He will never allow the righteous to be shaken.” He wants you to feel your pain, to ask him to heal your pain and then at His timing, He will say, Ok, you have a choice now to forgive this person. When people do this, they can't easily hide from their hurt. They have to face it head to head. Their hurt is there- raw waiting for God, our Comforter, Counselor and Healer to take it. All of a sudden when you give your pain to God, it becomes His, its not about you or your offender anymore. And when He says, okay, you can choose forgiveness or not, He knows your ready to make this decision and the forgiveness becomes about Him-Him giving you the courage and grace to forgive. Back to the story with my mom, in 1998, she got saved a few months after me. She tells me she stopped putting the mirror towards my dad, but put it on her. She then realized what she did wrong. And she really forgave my dad. She stopped nagging, bringing his past wrongs back up. She became gentle and soft toward him no matter how harsh or rude he was to her.

4. **If I forgive, it means I have to reconcile with the person.** False. In the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, one of the definitions of Reconcile(2) means to restore to friendship or harmony. Just because you forgive someone(s) doesn't mean you have to be friends with them. When is it okay not to restore friendship? Romans 16:17, “I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught, avoid them.” Sally Clarkson says, “Many people have had such destructive backgrounds that they manipulate emotionally as the way of life. As we mature, we are called to love all people, to forgive those who have wronged us, BUT WE CANNOT MAKE IMMATURE, DESTRUCTIVE, CONTROLLING OR MANIPULATIVE PEOPLE BEHAVE IN A MATURE WAY.” We can do what we can reconcile, but we can't force the offending party to reconcile. If someone has been abused in anyway, raped, cheated on, abandoned, a Fellow Counselor has said, “More like the offender has a big job to rebuild relationship and offended party has daily job to choose forgiveness and to try again or not.” Proverbs is filled with warnings not to be companions with fools. Proverbs 13:20 “Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm.” So who are the fools? In the Proverbs: An introduction and Commentary by Derek Kinder, the Hebrew language classifies fools in different ways. First the definition of fool in Hebrew is Peti. It means to deceive or seduce. He is the kind of person who is easily led, gullible, silly. Proverbs 14:15, “The simple believes everything, but the prudent gives thought to his steps.” Peti also means empty-headed, senseless. Proverbs, 15: 21, “Folly is a joy to him who lacks sense, but a man of understanding walks straight ahead.” The first classification for folly simple. “. . . aimless, inexperienced, drifting into temptation, almost courting it. . . he is a person who instability could be rectified but prefers not to accept discipline in the school of wisdom. Proverbs 1:22-32, “How long, O simple ones, will you love being simple? How long will scoffers delight in their scoffing and fools hate knowledge? If you turn at my reproof, behold, I will pour out my spirit to you; I will make my words know to you. Because I have called and you refused to listen, have stretched out my hand and no one has heeded, because you have ignored all my counsel and would have none of my reproof, I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when terror strikes you, when terror strikes you like a storm and your calamity comes like a whirlwind, when distress and anguish come up you. They they will call upon me, but I will not answer: they will seek me diligently but will not find me. Because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the LORD, would have none of my counsel and

despised all my reproof, therefore they shall eat the fruit of their way, and have their fill of their own devices. For the simple are keeled by their turning away, and the complacency of fools destroys them. . . “ 2<sup>nd</sup> classifications is Fool, which is the elder brother of Simple. In Hebrew the word for the elder brother fool is Kesil. This means “dull and obstinate”. “He doesn't patiently search for wisdom. He pours out his opinions unreflectingly and pours them out freely.” Proverbs 15:2, “The tongue of the wise commends knowledge, but the mouths of fools pour out folly.” “The root of his folly is Spiritual not mental.” He likes his folly, no reverence for truth. Proverbs 14: 8, “The wisdom of the prudent is to discern his way, but the folly of fools is deceiving.” “In society, a fool is a menace. He wastes your time. You will not find a word of sense in Him. If an idea is in his head nothing will stop him. Its Folly beyond a joke, a quarrel He must pick. Some people cannot disown them like family members, and they bring sorrow and bitterness to their dad and mom.” Proverbs 17: 25, “A foolish son is a grief to his father and bitterness to her who bore him.” The 3<sup>rd</sup> classification for Fool is Ewil in Hebrew. “This word suggests stupidity and stubbornness. . . darker turn used in folly.” Ewil gives himself away as soon as he speaks. Proverbs 10: 14, “The wise lay up knowledge, but the mouth of a fool brings ruin near.” Then the Hebrew word nabal adds boorishness and mind closed to God. Think of Nabal and what his wife said, “. . . he is such a worthless man that one cannot speak to him” (1 Samuel 25: 17c). Finally we have the Scoffer or Scornor, coupled with the foolish. The scoffer doesn't like any correction, he blocks his way toward wisdom, he is a deliberate trouble maker. He is a bad influence, Proverbs 19:29, “Condemnation is ready for scoffers, and beating for the backs of fools.”

Forgiveness does not let the perpetrator of your hurt go free, it leaves justice in God's hands.

5. **After I forgive, I will never feel angry or hurt about it again.** This is not true. I think this is a common misconception for many Christians and Non Christians. If you are angry regarding a conflict, there is still unresolved hurt that needs to be healed from God. Or there is still unforgiveness, whether from the offender, yourself or at God that needs to be taken care of. When you don't give God your hurt and unforgiving you will either implode emotionally, meaning become depressed or explode, become angry. When you give God your hurt, He is healing it and He is giving you the strength and grace to forgive. And it is Him that will take the offender from your mind sometimes immediately, sometimes in layers like an onion, and at other times you will be reminded when you experience a trigger or it comes up out of the blue. Imagine your cycle hurt is shaped like a ball, heading up to the mountain. The goal is to reach the top where you never feel the hurt again. But you find that you are still hurting thinking your cycle was at the top. But in reality, the deeper the hurt, the steeper the mountain. And God is healing parts of your heart that are deep and painful. Sometimes, it is at this time, where you might feel discouraged, because you think I gave God my hurt. Remind yourself, your cycle hasn't gone to the bottom of the mountain, but it has stopped so God can heal it in a deeper way and when God is finished healing it, your cycle is closer to the top than before. Ex. Writing this presentation on conflict, has brought out triggers, leaving me very sensitive toward men in particular. I have such a keen and sweet husband, that he took notice. We talked about it and we realized that God is healing deeper parts of hurt I didn't know was there. I am letting myself hurt before God so He can heal those deep parts. After I go through my hurt cycle, I feel so much closer to our wonderful Counselor, our Sweet God and my strength comes from Him!
6. I do want to bring this up, sometimes when you forgive someone they may never admit what they did wrong. My dad a few years, before his mom past away, called her up one day and told her he forgave her (for leaving him and his brother). She got very angry and said she didn't do anything wrong. Ladies, she never admitted or apologized to my dad or my Uncle what she did

to them.

7. After sorting through issues of forgiving and being forgiven, it is important to consider ways that I contribute to the conflicts that I find myself in. Could you talk through the questions you've created to help us examine our own hearts?

Would love to. I came up with these questions that my mom likes to say, puts the mirror on us. We are going to be standing before God on how we DEAL with our conflict. This is part of Jonathan Edwards Farewell Sermon, after his church kicked him out based on gossip and lies. This excerpt is from Marriage To a Difficult Man, by Elisabeth D. Dodds:

“[Let us] consider of that time when we must meet one another before the chief Shepherd (God). When I must give an account of my stewardship; of the service I have done for and the treatment I have had among the people he sent me to, and you must give an account of your own conduct towards me . . . then it will appear whether . . . I have been influenced from any regard to my own temporal interest, or honor, or any desire to appear wiser than others.”

Do I have unresolved anger? Proverbs 10:12, “Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all offenses.”

Do you have hurt you need to give to God?

Are you scared? Why? What are you afraid will happen? Some people have deep-seated fears from past hurts, embarrassments, etc. that come up during conflicts. I know of someone who always felt inferior to people around him, because he was the smallest and trying to be in better than his older brother. He never dealt with the hurt and shame that came from kids making fun of him, the praise that his parents gave his older brother. He became a people pleaser and a person who runs from conflict, compares himself and others, because if does otherwise, all those unresolved past hurts come up and it scares him and is too painful. So he rather run from it.

Are you afraid of saying no? Are you doing too many “good” things that are affecting your relationships? Are you fearing people, so you refuse to say no? If you are becoming “short” with others, than you are too busy. sometimes that means saying no to the good things as well as the bad things. For example, a person who works 45 hours, volunteers with church for 10 hours, going to classes for 8 hours, but when she is at home, she is short with her family. She doesn't have time for them, because she has homework she needs to start. This lady is too busy.

Do you have forgiveness? Bitterness in your heart? Proverbs 14:10, “The heart knows its own bitterness, and no stranger shares its joy.” Ephesians 4:31-32, “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.” Hebrews 12:14-16, “Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled; that no one is sexually immoral or unholy like Esau, who sold his birthright for a single meal.” Dr. Ed Wheat in Love Life For Every Married Couple says:

“the word bitterness [*gives the*] idea of cutting, pricking, puncturing at the same time, pungent and penetrating. It vividly communicates torture, and this is just what you are doing to yourself

and your loved ones [others] when you refuse to forgive your mate [others]. Charles Swindoll suggests this is like locking yourself in a concentration camp of your own doing.”

Nelson Mandela said, “Resentment is like drinking poison and then hoping it will kill your enemies.”

Are you being proud or humble? Romans 12:14-19, “Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight. Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceable with all.”

Are you stuck in being the victim? In Every Heart Restored by Brenda Stoeker, she says, “But while its okay to be wounded, its not okay to stay wounded.” I know of a lady who was wounded as a child, but she refuses to grow up and take responsibility for herself and children. She lives in this state of I was hurt and everyone owes me something. This is not ok. God wants more for this ladies' life. He wants her to give her hurt to Him, not carry it around like a badge of honor.

Are your hormonal?

Is my body responding to the stress I am under? Ex. If you have neck pain is the pain bad enough that you are having a hard time being kind to others.

What do I really want? Dr. David Powilson in “Getting to the Heart of Conflict, Part 3”, points out that “We fight, because we have desires that battle within us. You want something and don't get it.”

Are you being critical of that person or judging them? For example, Mommy Wars- do I need to say more.

Dr. David Powilson in “Getting to the Heart of Conflict, Part 3” states, “We judge, criticize, nag, etc. . . because we play God. I like to add too that I think some people can do this, because they don't want to look at their wrongs, so its easier for them to point out others. Keeps their minds off of themselves. Matthew 7:1-5 “Judge not, that you be not judged. For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measures you use it will be measured to you. Why do you see 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,; when there is the log 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.”

Am I being judgmental or am I confronting sin? I like how Jonathan Edwards puts it in Charity and its Fruits, if we have evidence then we are not judging. If there is no evidence than we are judging. James 4:12, “There is only one lawgiver and judge, He ho is able to save and to destroy. But who are you to judge your neighbor?

Ken Sande in The Peacemaker has 4 great questions to ask if you are unsure if you should confront someone or not: Is it Dishonoring God? Is it damaging your relationship? Is it hurting others? Is it hurting the offender?

Galatians 6:1, “Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.”

What are you fearing? And how are you reacting to your fears? I will not go too deep or detailed for this example. A woman finds out her husband or boyfriend is looking at porn, she fears she is not good enough. So she reacts by blaming herself, belittling how she looks.



I like this question from RC Sproul: “Am I yielding to the flesh?”

Galatians 5: 19-21

“Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Galatians 5:17, “For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do.”

James 3:14-16, “But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice.”

Are you gossiping? Proverbs 18:21 “Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruits.” 2 Cor. 2:20b, “. . . that perhaps there may be quarreling, jealousy, anger, hostility, slander, gossip, conceit and disorder.

Ray Ortlund in “Why Gossip Destroys” says, “ The lie of gossip is not I'm going to falsify a story about the person, but the unspoken and assumed I have the right to talk about anything I want with whomever I want in whatever way I want.” He also said this: “I have never seen adultery send a whole church into meltdown. Gossip on the contrast, is often perceived as a little sin. But it destroys churches.”

Unfortunately, I won't go into detail, but in high school, my brother and I have been gossiped about from my step grandmother to my real grandmother and her words ruined my family relationships. My mom always told me, “If someone is talking about another person behind their back, they will be talking about you behind your back.”

Are you lying? Ephesians 4:25, “Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members of another.”

What are you saying in this conflict? Derek Kidner in Proverbs: An Introduction and Commentary, says, “Beliefs and convictions are formed by words, wither to destroy or make a man. Proverbs 11:9, “With his mouth the godless man would destroy his neighbor, but by knowledge the righteous are delivered.” What are your words saying about your heart? Matthew 12:34b, “For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.” Proverbs 4:23, “Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life.” Colossians 3:8, “But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth.” Are your words putting down the person? Are you yelling or shouting? In my own life, I have found this Proverb “A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.” helpful, because not only does it work, but I find when I am not angry and saying words to hurt, I have to think about what I say and have to really listen to the other person.

Are you trying to “defend yourself out of revenge, or to injure”? Proverbs 20:22, “Do not say, I will repay evil; wait for the LORD, and he will deliver you.”

Are you allowing God to give the revenge? God made me the type of person that I when I see wrong happening, I want justice- especially if the oppressed are involved, children, any kind of injustice. And I want to be that person to give the what they deserve, but I know I can't. God wants that part, because He does revenge so much better than I would. Romans 12:19-20, “Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, Vengeance is mine, I will repay say the Lord. To the

contrary, if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.” Heaping Coals according to Matthew Henry means God using your kind actions to soften the person's heart toward you. Saul was melted and conquered by David's kind action. 1 Sam. 24. If their heart is not melted, then they will be construed by the fiery wrath of God. For example, I had visitors over a few years ago. They tend to be very hurtful- criticizing me with their words or their “ cold silence”. I was crying out to God one morning when they were gone. They were coming back for lunch. God spoke to my heart and said, “I know, I see.” In my heart, I knew God knew what they were doing was wrong- He saw. I cried more and rejoiced at our God who cares and for His comfort and protection of me. Then I felt God speaking in my heart to make a lunch with all the works. And I did. I also found a gift around the house I knew they would enjoy and I gave it to them. While, I was preparing the meal, finding a gift, I felt God's presence so strongly- I felt such a peace and joy. I needed and need to trust that when I am around these visitors, God will change their heart.

Are you loving this person? 1 Cor. 13:4, “Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful, it does not rejoice at wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Which leads me to my next question, are you loving this person who is an enemy? A fool? A scoffer? Luke 6:27-36, “But I say to you who hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. To one who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also, and from one who takes away your cloak do not withhold your tunic either. Give to everyone who begs from you, and from one who takes away your goods do not demand them back. And as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them. If you love those who love you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. And if you lend to those from who you respect to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to get back the same amount. But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, for He is kind to the ungrateful and the evil.” Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful. In the Strong's Concordance, merciful means compassionate, of tender mercy.

I think one of the most beautiful pictures of Christ is watching someone be kind to those who are mean them. For example, I witnessed my mom's love and actions change my dad's heart- it took years- but he did change. My mom played out 1 Peter 3:1, “Likewise, wives, be subject to your won husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives. I think this is a good principle for siblings, single mothers, Grandparents- anyone. Watching my mom, I started responding to my dad the same way. And a few years ago, I witnessed my dad do the same thing to his mom. He would drive 2 1/2- 3 hours to her house and make sure things were working and she was being taken care of. He would buy her things, take her out to eat, he loved my grandmom and he showed it, no matter if she criticized him or never apologized. And he got the privilege of being there her final days, taking care of her and showing love to her until her last breath.

My final question, Are you trying to fix them? Remember what Sally Clarkson says, “ BUT WE CANNOT MAKE IMMATURE, DESTRUCTIVE, CONTROLLING OR MANIPULATIVE PEOPLE BEHAVE IN A MATURE WAY.” You have to trust God that He will work in His timing on them. I was told this by one of my counseling professors and I saw it so many times as I counseled. I sometimes see it in my kids too and in myself. Its great that you want the best for someone, but you can't be their God. Allow God to work in their weakness, even though you think He should work on the one you want. Just

picture it like an onion, He is peeling layer at a time on His timing. Some people he peels quickly, like my dad. But with me and kids, its a slow one at a time peel.

8. And now, could you give us something like a basic “how-to” for conflict resolution?

- Pray
- By forgiving
- By giving God your hurt and that He will heal it.
- Try to identify core issues? What is that they/you want? What is it that they/you are fearing?
- Take ownership in your part of the Conflict.
- Deal with the conflict in the right way on your end.
- Be patient, sometimes it can take years for the conflict to resolve, esp. if you have been in the wrong and refuse to do anything about it or the other way around.
- Learning to let go what you cannot change with the other person.
- Loving the person
- Walking in the Fruit of the Spirit
- Treating the other person the way you want to be treated. Be kind to them.
- Do not try to fix the person, Trust God to fix them.
- Stand firm in the Word of God, do whats right.
- Work to resolve the conflict as quickly as possible, meaning don't let unnecessary days go by before dealing with it. Ephesians 4:26-27, “Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil.”
- Trust God that He will give the revenge and change their hearts.
- Sometimes seeing a licensed psychologist or counselor who has spent 1000s of hours on specific counseling situations can be a big help to move the conflict forward in a positive way

9. Finally, in closing what are some keys to conflict resolution that you would like us to remember as we go?

- Pray.
- When you don't know what to say or do, pray for wisdom James 1:5, 'If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.' This happens so many times with me, especially if I am dealing with sibling conflict.
- Remember that your relationship with your spouse, friend, child, family member is more important than winning an argument.
- Use kind words
- Use phrases, “I feel this, when you said this. . . “ I felt hurt when you said this. . .”
- Listen to the other person.
- Build the other person up, don't put them down.
- Keep your voice under control
- Be humble. Put yourself in their shoes.
- Look into the other person's eyes.
- Again, Ephesians 4:26-27, “Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil.”
- Avoid always, ifs, buts, maybes, never (you never)

- Admit specifically what you did wrong and apologize. Be suspicious if forgiveness is not specific or if it is lengthy.
- Accept the consequence
- Face to face is the best way to resolve conflict, avoid texting. If the conflict is from someone far away, avoid emailing and call someone.
- Sometimes writing down what you have to say can help
- Take a break 5 minute if you are getting angry and than come back
- Be patient
- Fight for the relationship, not against it

## Summary

So we went over what conflict is: Its starts from your desires within, The Lusts of the Flesh, The Lusts of the eyes and The Pride of Life. These lusts will start fights, murders and wars. Why it is important to deal with Conflict: because if we don't allow God to heal our hurts, we can become angry depressed, we are prone to run toward our lusts, instead of away from them. If we do not forgive, we are allowing bitterness to take root in our heart. It is vital to your physical, emotional and spiritual well being to be in open communication with God, allowing Him and trusting Him that He will heal your hurt and help you forgive. Remember do not be afraid of looking yourself in the mirror and take ownership for your wrongdoings. Be humble. Pray for wisdom. Admit specifically what you did wrong and apologize. Fight for the relationship not against it. Forgiveness can take a long time. Jeremiah 32:27, "Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh. Is anything too hard for me?" This way when conflict arises- daggers are being thrown at you, you can stand firm in the Word of God, praying for wisdom and knowing God is in charge. He sees, and He will fight for you. Ex. 19:14, "The LORD will fight for you, and you have only to be silent."

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