

...as He leads...

A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict

A BIBLICAL GUIDE TO RESOLVING PERSONAL CONFLICT

Notes adapted from Ken Sande, *The Peacemaker: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict*, Baker Books, Grand Rapids, 1982.

To protect ourselves from spiritual, relational, and emotional harm, Scripture calls Believers to resolve conflict and pursue unity with intentional diligence (*Rom 12:18, Eph 4:26-32, Heb 12:14*).

However, when conflict is left unresolved, it not only injures us personally but also disrupts the unity of the Body of Christ and diminishes our ministry impact.

Jesus taught that the unity of His people is a testimony. It is a sign to the world that He is real, alive, and sent by the Father (*Jn 17:20-23*). Hence, **unity is not optional, nor simply beneficial; it is missional**. The oneness of Believers reveals Jesus Christ to the world. Division weakens our collective witness and reduces our effectiveness in the world. **So we must ensure any personal conflict we have with others is addressed if our outreach and ministry to others is to be powerful and fruitful.**

Because of this, the issue is not whether conflict is good or bad - it is in fact an inevitable part of living in a sinful world. What matters is how we choose to respond to conflict when it arises.

Our response to conflict will either honour God or dishonour Him, and it will either lead us towards righteousness or draw us into sin.

It is important to note that **not every conflict calls for confrontation** since love can overlook minor or unintentional offenses (*Prov 19:11*). However, when an issue is festering within you and affecting your relationship negatively, addressing it directly becomes necessary.

In these situations, whether you have offended someone or are the one who has been offended, **the Bible calls you to take the initiative and make the first move to reconcile** (*Mtt 5:23-24, 18:15*).

The following Biblical steps outline how you can move toward restoring peace in the relationships where you are experiencing conflict.

STEP 1: GLORIFY GOD

View conflict as an opportunity to glorify God, serve others, and to grow in Christlikeness.

This is what Paul told the Christians in Corinth when religious, legal and dietary disputes threatened to divide their church: “...*whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. Do not cause anyone to stumble... even as I try to please everybody in every way...Follow my example*” (1 Cor 10:31-11: 1).

Key question: *How can I honour God in this conflict?*

STEP 2: HONEST SELF-REFLECTION

This part of conflict resolution is often the most difficult.

A distinctly Christian approach to conflict begins with self-examination and acknowledging any part you have played within the conflict.

Scripture teaches that many conflicts arise from our own sinful attitudes and behaviours. Quarrels arise from desires at war within us. We want something we don't have, and this leads to conflict (Jam 4:1-2).

Many of us find it incredibly difficult to admit when we've done something wrong. Our pride often gets in the way (Rom 12:3, Prov 11:2).

We can easily spot the 'speck' in someone else's eye, yet we resist acknowledging the size and impact of the 'plank' in our own (Mtt 7:3-5).

Then, even when we reach the point of being willing to confess, we often struggle with how to apologise.

We tend to weaken our apologies with excuses and justifications that undo the very confession we're trying to make.

Instead of offering honest, unguarded repentance, we slip into vague or self-protective statements that lack detail, sincere sorrow, or any real willingness to change.

And when we do ask for forgiveness, we often do it with an unspoken expectation of an immediate response, as though our apology should automatically reset everything. What we rarely acknowledge is the depth of the hurt we've caused and that genuine forgiveness may take time.

Our request for forgiveness should be offered with patience and deep honour. For example:

*"I know I've hurt you and I'm sorry for _____ (state what you did wrong).
In your own time, would you please forgive me?"*

Meaningful apologies, especially for significant offences, often require prayerful and thoughtful preparation.

Writing them out beforehand can be helpful.

Our relationships grow stronger and healthier when we learn to make honest confession a normal part of our lives within our families, friendships and amongst our work colleagues.

Key question: *Is there a part I have played in causing conflict that I need to take responsibility for, confess to, repent of and ask forgiveness for?*

STEP 3: GO PRIVATELY AND GENTLY RESTORE

When someone hurts us, our most common reactions are to either:

- a) Avoid confrontation e.g. pretend everything is fine when it isn't.
- b) Hurt them back e.g. argue and fight with them, give them the cold shoulder or back-bite, gossip and/or slander them.

Yet these responses only escalate the conflict and work to destroy the relationship even more.

Being able to own your wrongdoing is vital. And you should always begin with your own confession if there is a part you played in causing the conflict.

But we are also called to lovingly raise with another the things they have done which have been hurtful and/or sinful to us i.e. their contribution to the conflict.

Note, **Jesus taught us to first go privately** to our brother or sister when they have sinned against us (*Mtt 18:15*).

The intention is not that we go so we might simply point out their fault, rather we go with the aim for the relationship to be restored.

You are to ensure that you raise the concerns you have about the other person's part in the conflict with grace and kindness, not with harshness and accusations. We are to speak the truth in love (*Eph 4:15*).

Using '*I statements*' are helpful as they avoid blaming the other person:

I feel _____ (*state your emotion - hurt, embarrassed, rejected etc*)
when you _____ (*state what they did that you couldn't overlook in love*)
because _____ (*explain why you feel that way / the impact it had on you*).
I need / would prefer _____ (*explain what would help going forward*)

Key question: *How can I lovingly help the other person face their part?*

STEP 4: FORGIVE & WORK TO MAINTAIN PEACEFUL RELATIONS

The Bible calls us to forgive each other as Christ has forgiven us (*Col 3:13, Eph 4:32*).

This breaks the cycle of resentment and restores peaceful, harmonious relations.

However, it is also important for both parties to work to ensure the issue is not repeated in the future so as to avoid causing further conflict.

Key questions: *How can I show God's forgiveness?*

Is there anything I/we can put in place to prevent further conflict in this area?

BIBLICAL PROCEDURES IF PRIVATE MEETING FAILS

Should a direct, private conversation not resolve the conflict (*Mtt 18:15*), the Bible outlines a further, more formal and public process to ensure fairness and restoration of the relationship:

i. *Take one or two others along with you*

If the one you are in conflict with refuses to listen to you, bring one or two others to establish facts and aid in mediation. Mediation is for support and to help bring clarity, accountability, and peace (*Mtt 18:16*).

ii. *Tell it to the Church*

If taking others along fails, involve church leadership to help mediate and in cases of unrepentant sin, to apply church discipline (*Mtt 18:17*).

iii. *Treat them as a pagan or tax-collector*

When church leaders have confronted an unrepentant Believer and restoration still does not occur, Scripture instructs us to withdraw fellowship and treat them as an outsider. At that point, the whole community appeals to the offender with earnest concern (*2 Cor 2:6*).

Discipline shifts from personal appeal to relational separation (*Titus 3:10–11*).

This step serves to protect the purity of the church and is always carried out with the goal of restoration and winning the person back, never with cruelty or permanent abandonment. Jesus did not hate pagans or tax-collectors, He called them to repentance and to show love.

NOTE: At all times, Christians are advised to resolve disputes within the church rather than taking them to secular courts *(1 Cor 6:1-8)*.

About Us

Mission Statement:

...as He leads... are ambassadors of Christ who through the leading and power of the Holy Spirit exist to glorify God, edify His saints and make disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ in Fremantle.

Vision Statement:

To see every person in Fremantle repent of their sins, believe in Jesus Christ, confess Him as Lord, and dedicate their lives to walking in His ways.

Statement of Faith:

We believe the Bible is the inspired Word of God. It is entirely inerrant in its original manuscripts (2 *Tim* 3:16, 2 *Pet* 1:20-21) and is the unfailing final authority on all matters relating to faith and Christian living (*Ps* 12:6, *Prov*. 30:5). It is completely sufficient, containing everything necessary for salvation, spiritual growth, and equipping Believers for every good work (*Ps* 19:7-8, 2 *Tim* 3:17, 2 *Pet* 1:3).

We affirm the Biblical teaching contained in the historic Apostles Creed:

I believe in God the Father Almighty
Creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
and born of the Virgin Mary.

He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died and was buried.

He descended into hell.

The third day He rose again from the dead.

He ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.

From there He will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen.

Further information

phone: 0450 918 747
0473 626 382

web page: www.asheleads.com.au

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