

Can Biblical Strategies Resolve Serious Conflicts? (Part I)

James 4:1: (NASB) *What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members?*



Conflict is everywhere. Small children need to be guided through conflict when they learn about sharing and they scream, “But that’s MINE!” Adolescents could use some serious education through conflict when they begin to believe their parents are ignorant and rebelliously demand their own way. Adults (especially spouses) need practical coaching when they clash with one another’s viewpoints on important issues. When it comes to social issues and politics, most of us - whether we know it or not - are desperate for direction in our deep conflicts.

Without direction we will destroy one another. The point is obvious; conflicts abound at every stage of life and in almost every circumstance in life. What can we do? How do we not just cope, but overcome all of this conflict? Fortunately, the Bible is full of conflicts and therefore, full of solutions.

As Christians we do not all see eye-to-eye doctrinally or even agree on a Christlike lifestyle. We can either grow or become disabled by conflict, so we are looking forward to using the Bible as a touchstone for how we should be resolving conflicts.

Some of the basis for today’s discussion is taken from a conference called *Reality Leadership* presented by Dr. John C. Maxwell, a well-known leadership author and teacher.

Where does conflict come from? First, let’s examine conflict that is “MY fault” - things that “I” do that can cause conflict. Our focus should be to look inwardly.



*Conflict that is
my fault!*

Conflict may come when we do not get what we want.

Our first example is Satan. His desires were bigger than his being:

Isaiah 14:13-14: (NASB) ¹³*But you said in your heart, I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God, and I will sit on the mount of assembly in the recesses of the north. ¹⁴I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.*

Pride is often central in conflict.

Conflict may come when we put our impulses above our sense:

Eve made an impulsive choice in the moment rather than relying on plainly stated truth:

Genesis 3:6: (NASB) *When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.*



Impulsive actions feed conflict.

Conflict may come from resentment.

Cain was given a solution to his unacceptable sacrifice, but instead he acted out of jealous resentment:

Genesis 4:5,8-9: (NASB) ⁵but for Cain and for his offering He had no regard. So Cain became very angry and his countenance fell. ⁸Cain told Abel his brother. And it came about when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him. ⁹Then the LORD said to Cain, Where is Abel your brother? And he said, I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper?

Resentment magnifies conflict.

Conflict may come when our choice of words is not clearly understood.

Example: You are concerned about someone and ask, "What's wrong with you?" rather than, "What's troubling you?" We need to frame the meaning behind our words.

Jesus was misunderstood often, even by his followers:

John 21:21-23: (NASB) ²¹So Peter seeing (John) said to Jesus, Lord, and what about this man? ²²Jesus said to him, if I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow me! ²³Therefore this saying went out among the brethren that that disciple would not die; yet Jesus did not say to him that he would not die, but only, If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you?

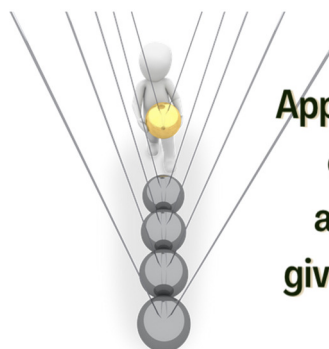
Even though he was misunderstood, there was a prophetic meaning to what Jesus said. **Please see the Bonus Material for an explanation of this Scripture.**

We all come from different perspectives and often unintentionally either say it wrong or interpret what others say incorrectly and take offense.

There are several ways we can contribute to conflict:



- ✎ We do not get what we want
- ✎ We put our impulses over good sense
- ✎ Resentment
- ✎ Our choice of words



Applying another's words or having our words applied out of context gives conflict momentum.

Next, let's examine conflict that has "circumstantial fault." There are several ways such conflict can arise. It may not necessarily come from us but from others or from circumstances.



Conflict that has circumstantial fault!

Conflict may come when there are issues with more than one potential solution:

Defining faithfulness in imperfect Christians can have a lot of variation.

What is required of me may not be required of you:

Romans 14:2-3: (NASB) ²*One person has faith that he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats vegetables only.* ³*The one who eats is not to regard with contempt the one who does not eat, and the one who does not eat is not to judge the one who eats, for God has accepted him.*

Oversimplifying another's experience breeds conflict.

One example would be whether or not you meet for church on Saturday or Sunday. Is it wrong for us to judge if someone is following their conscience and will only meet on Saturday, which is the Jewish Sabbath? That should be respected.

What about issues of morality? The highest level of morality is required with every Christian in every part of their lives - no exceptions.

Conflict may come from change:

Jewish Christians had serious and honest challenges with their newfound freedom in Christ:

Acts 15:1-2: (NASB) ¹*Some men came down from Judea and began teaching the brethren, Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.* ²*And when Paul and Barnabas had great dissension and debate with them, the brethren determined that Paul and Barnabas and some others of them should go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders concerning this issue.*

Circumcision was an important issue in the early church. They met together to discuss and solve the conflict.

Conflict is natural when something stable and good is suddenly undone. At that point, the Law was stable and good but needed to be undone.

Conflict may come when we have legitimately different perspectives:

Paul and Barnabas parted ways over a conflict. When Paul and Barnabas left Antioch, they took John Mark as a helper, but halfway through the journey, John Mark left.



Acts 13:13: (NASB) *Now Paul and his companions put out to sea from Paphos and came to Perga in Pamphylia; but John left them and returned to Jerusalem.*

We are not told why he left and there are a lot of theories, but it obviously took Paul by surprise and he did not want to give John Mark another chance.

Acts 15:36-40: (NASB) ³⁶*After some days Paul said to Barnabas, Let us return and visit the brethren in every city in which we proclaimed the word of the Lord, and see how they are.* ³⁷*Barnabas wanted to take John, called Mark, along with them also.* ³⁸*But Paul kept insisting that they should not take him along who had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the work.* ³⁹*And there occurred such a sharp disagreement that they separated from one another, and Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus.* ⁴⁰*But Paul chose Silas and left...*

We think Paul looked at the circumstance and thought the situation was too difficult for John Mark. He was not ready. Barnabas felt John Mark could handle it. They were both right from their own perspectives. They could not agree, so they split. As a result of going in different directions, the gospel was spread even farther. It is also worth noting that in the end, years later when Paul was in prison, he described John Mark in **Colossians 4:10-11** as a comfort to himself and a *fellow worker unto the kingdom of God*. Their differences had been resolved.

Some legitimate differences cannot help but create conflict.

Conflict often thrives on what we say, which reflects how we feel:

James 3:2,10-12: (NASB) ²*For we all stumble in many ways. If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body as well.* ¹⁰*from the same mouth come both blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be this way.* ¹¹*Does a fountain send out from the same opening both fresh and bitter water?* ¹²*Can a fig tree, my brethren, produce olives, or a vine produce figs? Nor can salt water produce fresh.*

OUT OF THE SAME MOUTH COMES...



Conflict can come to us through ourselves or external circumstances.



CONFLICT CLARITY:

Conflict thrives because we are conflicted beings. Whether we cause it, contribute to it or have it come to us, we MUST learn to manage it in a God-glorifying way!

Conflict happens. It does not matter if we are outspoken or spend our time hiding - conflict will always find us.



Conflict is here to stay in this life! When we face conflict, how do we keep it from overwhelming us?

The big thing about managing conflict is facing it. Sometimes we wish it would just go away. Other times we think if we ignore it, we will not have to deal with it. Now, we all know these approaches will not work, so let's focus ourselves on recognizing the degenerating stages of conflict.

We will look at the relationship between Jesus and the Pharisees, how it degenerated as time went on. It did not degenerate because of what Jesus did or taught, but because of what the Pharisees did as they continued to close their hearts and eyes to the truth before them.

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Tony H. from Wisconsin emailed us: I just wanted to comment based on the title of tonight's episode that conflicts can be resolved via having a Christlike attitude and mind. My thinking and temperament have been transformed by applying the beatitudes in my life. I've learned to quickly apply a percentage value to how much any given thing matters, and if it doesn't matter, I can let it go...

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Polarization's dark side, *The Dangers of Tribalism*, Kevin deLaplante

- *Now, there's an obvious dark side to polarization (a sharp division, as of a population or a group, into opposing factions). It's not hard to see how increasing polarization in our travel psychology can lead to serious social and political problems and a distorted perception of the world. Here are two groups that are intermixed. They live and work together. I've drawn one as lighter green and the other as darker green. Let's assume that they disagree on some fundamental principles. They could be Liberals and Conservatives, Protestants and Catholics, vegetarians and non-vegetarians, doesn't really matter. What matters is the character of the disagreement. How disagreement is interpreted and managed.*



We will be presenting the "Five Degenerating Stages of Conflict." The first is the best type and the last one is the worst. As we introduce each stage, we will also present a "Conflict Management Reality" statement. If we are going to deal with conflict, we need to accept these into our own hearts. We will end each of these statements with a "Conflict Clarity Question."



Conflict Management Reality: Every personal opinion, preference, passion or principle that I hold can become the center of conflicts in my life. I must always remember that as I have these opinions, preferences, passions and principles, so I must recognize that others will have them as well.

The Five Degenerating Stages of Conflict:



The desire is to fix the problem

- Commitment to fix the problem
- Belief that it can be solved
- Honest communication

80-85% of conflicts can be solved in this stage

A lot of people are so uncomfortable with any kind of conflict that they avoid it at all costs. But that is when things fester, and we can become irritated, passive-aggressive or resentful when it could have been remedied. We are not saying to avoid all conflict. Conflict is necessary to learn and grow.

The Pharisees ask a simple and what potentially could be a very honest question:

Mark 2:15-17: (NASB) ¹⁵And it happened that he was reclining at the table in his house, and many tax collectors and sinners were dining with Jesus and his disciples; for there were many of them, and they were following him. ¹⁶When the scribes of the Pharisees saw that he was eating with the sinners and tax collectors, they said to his disciples, Why is he eating and drinking with tax collectors and sinners? ¹⁷And hearing this, Jesus said to them, It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick; I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners.

Did you notice what just happened here? Jesus is within earshot because he hears them, but instead of asking Jesus the question, “Hey, why are you eating with sinners,” they ask the disciples instead of the source. They did not want the answer; they just wanted to judge. If this were an honest question it would have stimulated thought and discussion, but that was not their intent.

CONFLICT CLARITY:

When I see something that conflicts with my personal opinions,



preferences, passions or principles, what questions do I ask and how do I ask them?

That is how to remedy conflict. Stimulate honest responses by asking honest questions. What is in our minds and hearts when asking questions?

 **Lower levels of polarization, *The Dangers of Tribalism*, Kevin deLaplante**

- *With lower levels of polarization, all other things being equal, there's more tolerance for disagreement. We recognize that in spite of our differences, there's still a great deal of common ground between us, and we can use that common ground as a basis for constructing a social space where we can live and work together peacefully. Our differences don't prevent us from being respectful and even friendly to one another. I see you as holding different views from me on some issues, and I may disagree with your reasons, but I never question your capacity to reason or your entitlement to be treated like a human being worthy of respect and dignity.*



The conflict is noticed, but the capacity to reason is not questioned.

Wow, THAT is not happening with American politics right now! It is getting darker and scarier by the day. As Christians, we should not get involved in such things. We need to rise above with the principles of righteousness.



Conflicts progress in the following way:

Conflict Management Reality: Because my personal opinions, preferences and passions are so ingrained in me, I am liable to EASILY elevate any of them to the status of a principle.

Opinions are changeable, passions are negotiable, and preferences are movable or swayed. **PRINCIPLES ARE IMMUTABLE.** A big mistake is to elevate opinions, passions and preferences to principles.

#2

THE

REPOSITIONING

STAGE

Looking for who caused the problem

- People are nervous, defensive and protective
- A lower trust level reigns
- Communication is cautious

50% of conflicts
can be solved
in this stage

The more time we spend with someone, the more likely conflicts will arise. The ability to resolve these conflicts is important. We need to watch out in this “blame game” stage with family members and spouses because it is a slippery slope to the next stages. We have a choice here; we can invite dialogue with our questions or condemn with our questions. The tone of our voice can also show if we are dialoguing or condemning.



The Pharisees now point a finger of accusation after the disciples were seen picking grain from the fields on the Sabbath:

Mark 2:24-26: (NASB) ²⁴The Pharisees were saying to him, Look, why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath? ²⁵And he said to them, Have you never read what David did when he was in need and he and his companions became hungry; ²⁶how he entered the house of God in the time of Abiathar the high priest, and ate the consecrated bread, which is not lawful for anyone to eat except the priests, and he also gave it to those who were with him?

Their tone is conclusive - judgmental - they were looking to accuse Jesus of being an illegitimate leader by asking that question.

The Pharisees asked a question based on a predetermined answer which displayed defensiveness and a lack of trust:

James 3:8-10: (NASB) ⁸But no one can tame the tongue; it is a restless evil and full of deadly poison. ⁹With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God; ¹⁰from the same mouth come both blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be this way.



This is not about winning or losing. We are not trying to win an argument; we are trying to understand the other person's perspective. This can be hard for competitive people.

Only two stages and already there is a massive difference in the ability to solve conflict - this is scary.

**It sounds like a slippery slope is ahead.
What does it look like and how can we stay off of it?**

These are not called **The Five Degenerating Stages of Conflict** for nothing! Not only do these stages descend into chaos, they unfortunately look all too familiar. Politics, social issues and moral dilemmas all seem to live in the last three stages. This shows us how desperate we are as a society for godliness. We are so far off that we completely miss godliness when we have conflict in our society.

Increasing polarization, *The Dangers of Tribalism*, Kevin deLaplante

- Now as we ratchet up the polarization, it becomes increasingly difficult to manage these disagreements. With increasing polarization, we end up disagreeing on more things, and we disagree more strongly. We care more about the issues on which we disagree. It becomes harder to accept disagreement as something we should just expect among reasonable people.



It becomes harder for me to accept that your disagreement isn't a sign of a deeper flaw in your moral character or a deeper flaw in your capacity to see reality for what it is. As polarization increases, common ground decreases.



Conflict Management Reality: Once I have elevated my personal opinion, preference or passion to the status of a principle, I will begin to address conflict through judgment. Now the only validation I seek is to verify what I have judged to be true. The story is over because I have decided on the conclusion.



**I'm right!
You're wrong!**

- People take sides and are labeled
- In a Christian environment, the other side is "too worldly" or deceived
- You are in a mode to "win"
- Communication is distorted and overstated



Sarcasm is a big part of this stage. An example is how our media today reports things in the news, creating a hateful atmosphere. Sarcasm is one of the greatest tools of destruction. Unfortunately, sarcasm has become a norm in communication.

More than two people can be affected by unresolved differences. The collateral damage is worse when others get caught up in our bitterness. Families and brethren in the same congregation can be affected and driven away from each other. We need to consider how our differences affect others. Are we making others uncomfortable or even worse, leading them to gossip or other forms of sinning?

We need to ask ourselves where WE err in conflict situations.

By design, we are not spending a lot of time on solutions in this episode. We will present solutions in Part II.

The Pharisees had no more need for questions - they simply looked for reasons to accuse him:

Mark 3:1-2,6: (NASB) ¹He entered again into a synagogue; and a man was there whose hand was withered. ²They were watching him to see if he would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse him.

The motive of the Pharisees was to try to justify their point that Jesus was not from God. In their sight, he was breaking the Law.

Jesus knows their heart, challenges their thinking and then heals the man:

⁶The Pharisees went out and immediately began conspiring with the Herodians against him, as to how they might destroy him.

When we are so stuck in our position of being right, we become blind to potential evidence that can lead us to truth:

James 3:14-16: (NASB) ¹⁴But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth. ¹⁵This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic. ¹⁶For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing.

We have a great responsibility to stand up for truth.

CONFLICT CLARITY:

Once I have, unfortunately,
decided to address
conflict through my
predetermined perspective,



do I now look to entrap
those whom I have judged in
their actions to prove my point?

We need to be brave enough to ask that question of ourselves. As a Christian, this should never be our motivation. That does not bring glory to God.



Feel a need to separate, *The Dangers of Tribalism*, Kevin deLaplante

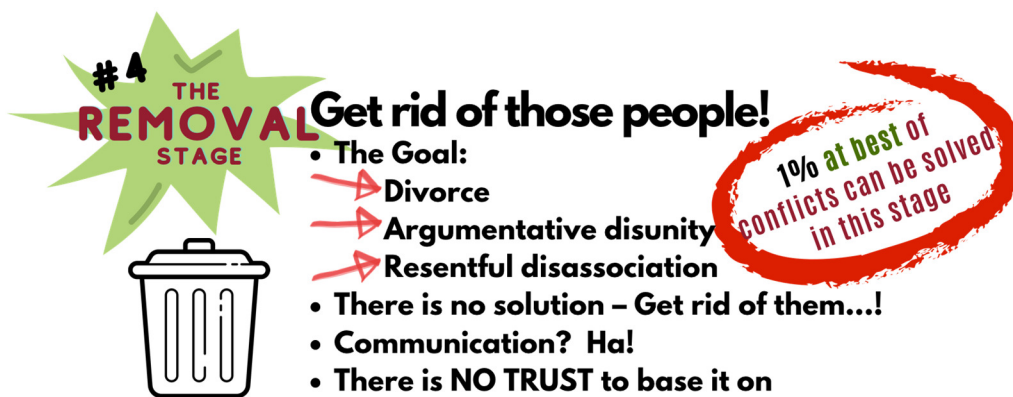
- ...and then we hit a point where we feel the urge to separate. Peaceful coexistence between us seems impossible, and our instinct is to adapt by segregating. Carving out social and political spaces where we don't have to interact with the other group. Where we can enjoy the comforts of social interaction with our own kind, and the very real psychological benefits of unity and solidarity and the feeling of being a part of a collective identity. When this happens, polarization within each group drops back down to lower levels. Now, this may not sound so bad, but unfortunately, what often happens is that these very real psychological benefits are bought at a cost to our relationships with other groups. Ingroup solidarity tends to go up when the outgroup, the group outside of us, is perceived in a negative light, as a dangerous "other," as a threat to the unity and stability of our group.

Unity is good, but are we achieving it in a Christlike way?

Conflict
Management
Reality:



Conflict Management Reality: Having prejudged without scriptural process and mercy, all that is left is to remove those with whom we have conflict. One who acts based upon the application of godly principles could NOT be here without thorough, openminded, merciful and prayerful dialogue which seeks to give the benefit of the doubt.



- “Argumentative disunity” is polarization and fighting within the group and mentally leaving.
- “Resentful disassociation” is giving up and physically leaving.



Neither one of these is Christlike.

But isn't removal appropriate in some cases?

The Apostle Paul tells us to avoid divisive people:

Romans 16:17-18: (NASB) *¹⁷Now I urge you, brethren, keep your eye on those who cause dissensions and hindrances contrary to the teaching which you learned, and **turn away from them.** ¹⁸For such men are slaves, not of our Lord Christ but of their own appetites; and by their smooth and flattering speech they deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting.*

Here is really blunt advice:

Titus 3:10: (NIV) *Warn a divisive person once, and then warn them a second time. After that, have nothing to do with them.*

The Removal stage, though difficult, can sometimes be appropriate and important. We have preferences, opinions and our own passions which many times are not principles. **THE APOSTLE PAUL IS SPEAKING ABOUT MAKING DECISIONS BASED ON PRINCIPLE.**



We all had a mutual Christian friend and role model, Carl, who is now deceased. His life was wholly devoted to God. With doctrinal conflict, one piece of advice he had was to admit the validity of the other's arguments. Our goal, he said, should be to search for truth, not defend our position. He and his brother-in-law, Jim, also a completely devoted Christian, were taking a trip from Chicago to California. They both held a diametrically opposed scriptural interpretation. They spent the car ride so thoroughly listening and reviewing each other's position that by the time they reached California, they flipped 180 degrees and now each held the other person's original understanding! It was an enjoyable and profitable trip because they had such great respect for each other and for the words of the Lord. They never did see eye-to-eye on the issue, but they still had unity and peace and thoroughly understood the arguments on both sides.

Remember, only **ONE PERCENT** of conflicts can be solved in the Removal stage. It is almost impossible.



Moving on to another account, the Pharisees now seek Jesus' removal, as he is just too much trouble:

Mark 12:12-14: (NASB) ¹²And they were seeking to seize him, and yet they feared the people, for they understood that he spoke the parable against them. And so they left him and went away. ¹³Then they sent some of the Pharisees and Herodians to him in order to trap him in a statement. ¹⁴They came and said to him, Teacher, we know that you are truthful and defer to no one; for you are not partial to any, but teach the way of God in truth. Is it lawful to pay a poll tax to Caesar, or not?

Jesus calls out their hypocrisy and gives a powerful and unexpected answer. The Pharisees acting in this manner reveal the enormous flaw of being driven by emotion and pride while ignoring any clarity of truth.



In the removal stage where we said there is no solution - get rid of them, I was thinking of a personal experience with a family member. In my case, we cannot associate with them due to their mental illness and verbal and physically violent tendencies. In some cases, it is appropriate not to have someone be part of your life, though it is heartbreaking. If proper steps were taken by them, we would be willing to dialogue again. We would like to see professional psychiatric therapy, prescribed medication and asking forgiveness for harm caused to family members. But that is a tall order, we may have to wait for Christ's kingdom.

It is here when we want to pray for "strength to endure what we cannot cure." Some conflicts cannot be resolved at this time. We need to accept it with grace.

James 4:1-3: (NASB) ¹What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? ²You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask. ³You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures.

If those Christians were that far off, imagine how we can be now. We have to decide, are we going to be a Christian standing for righteous principles or our own passions, preferences or opinions?

CONFLICT CLARITY:



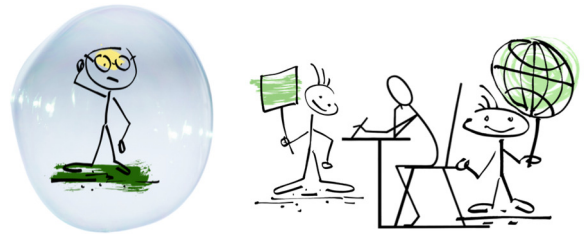
Do I even recognize it when I am here in this miserable and dark state of satanic thinking and behavior? When I am in this condition and I look for "Christ in me" what will I find?

How can it get any worse than this? What else can be possibly added to conflict's tragic results?

The only thing left for this fifth degenerating stage of conflict is to throw away any last shred of reason and become vengeful. As harsh and over the top as this might sound, we would ask you to look around at the world right here in our present day. Are we not becoming angry, vile and vengeful? Somehow this has even become common and acceptable. As Christians, this is *not* acceptable! We need to stand on higher ground.

Unmoored from reality, *The Dangers of Tribalism*, Kevin deLaplante

- *And another casualty of extreme polarization is epistemic, when we cut ourselves off from other points of view and only look to our tribe for guidance on what to believe and who to trust. We run the risk of erecting a system of beliefs that is increasingly unmoored from reality. The moral and political bubble that we have built for ourselves is also an epistemic bubble. Everyone outside the bubble is biased or lying or irrational or otherwise untrustworthy. And this is obviously a disaster for critical thinking. I think it's also obvious that our public culture is drifting in this direction, and in some areas like our public political discourse, it has become toxic.*



Ephesians 4:14 warns against being *carried about with every wind of doctrine*. Don't we, in some ways, want to cut ourselves off from other points of view? We do not need to spend a year studying Greek mythology to know that it is not scriptural. How do we protect "truth" if we keep letting in everything else? How can we be a critical thinker yet not get swayed by every new theory or biblical interpretation we find on the internet?

Ephesians 4:14: (Weymouth) *So we shall no longer be babes nor shall we resemble mariners tossed on the waves and carried about with every changing wind of doctrine according to men's cleverness and unscrupulous cunning, making use of every shifting device to mislead.*

This is a legitimate concern. We do not suggest living in a bubble, ignoring others' viewpoints because everyone else "out there" is a liar and cheater. There are many different perspectives in this world, and we need to be able to understand and respect them as such. However, as Christians, we need to choose the things on which we spend our time. Where is the source for these profitable things? God's word.

There are so many distractions in the world. Especially with those young in the faith, it is good to spend time with someone who has the spiritual maturity to help navigate through those distractions. When something comes up, it is important to ask questions, to not be afraid to approach someone who has been a Christian for a while with spiritual wisdom and experience.



We are not saying ignore everything, but we need to choose carefully. We need to make sure our mind, our heart and our conscience are being fed by those things that will uplift us towards God and not toward fleshly thinking and desires. We need to choose carefully what we spend our time, effort, and emotion on.

1 Thessalonians 5:21: (KJV) *Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.*



Conflict Management Reality: Once I have abandoned righteous and biblical principles in exchange for the evil of accusation without listening, judgment without justice and condemnation without mercy, I must realize that it is “I” who goes before the judgment seat of God through Christ. I have written my own ticket to be judged.



Make someone pay!

The sorry result of godless thinking

- People are fanatics – they fight a religious war
- It now becomes immoral to stop the fighting



**Episode 971:
How Sweet is Revenge?**

How sweet is revenge? Not very! We need to understand that when we are out to make someone pay, we have taken God’s judgment into our hands. God’s judgment belongs in His hands ever and always, NEVER in ours.

This next incident is after the raising of Lazarus, which was a dramatic statement of the power that God gave Jesus. The Pharisees had enough:

John 11:47-50,53: (NASB) ⁴⁷Therefore the chief priests and the Pharisees convened a council, and were saying, What are we doing? For this man is performing many signs. ⁴⁸If we let him go on like this, all men will believe in him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation.

Jesus was causing so much trouble that they felt they needed to stop him. It was all about them - *our place, our nation*. They were afraid all would be taken away from them. They did not even consider that Jesus was God’s representative. They forgot or did not accept that the son of God was right there.

⁴⁹But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, You know nothing at all, ⁵⁰nor do you take into account that it is expedient for you that one man die for the people, and that the whole nation not perish. ⁵³So from that day on they planned together to kill him.

Caiaphas was saying they needed to be rid of Jesus to save the people. This was their “magnanimous effort” to save the Jews. In reality, Caiaphas is afraid that power will be taken away from him and the other Pharisees.



Jesus did die for the people, but for a much bigger, better and godly reason than they could ever imagine.

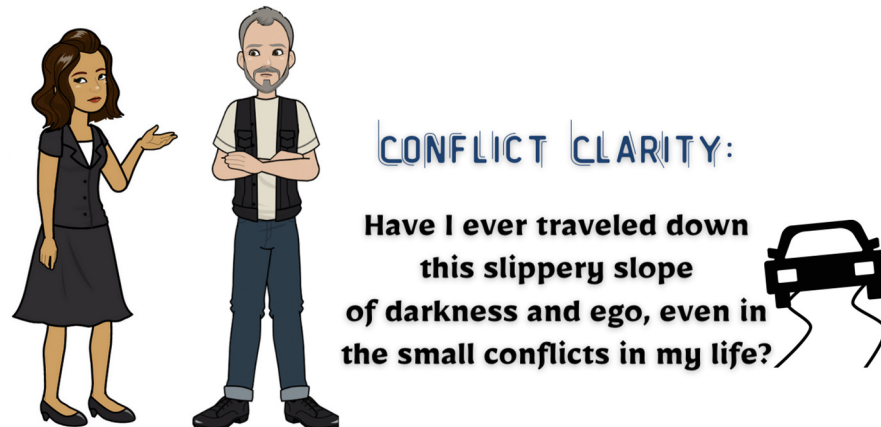
At this point, the Scriptures tell us, *they planned together to kill him*. This was now not just a discussion, but a deliberate plan. This is a classic example of that Revenge stage - *make someone pay!*

A pattern of mishandling conflict can shockingly and easily bring *us* to personally becoming a human weapon of mass destruction. That is what the Pharisees became. When we mishandle conflict, this is what we can also become. By trying to make others pay, we are not doing anything that remotely resembles Christlikeness.

James talks about following the world's way of dealing with conflict:

James 4:4: (NASB) *You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.*

This reminds us of the evil in our history that created *scapegoats* - blaming others for the wrongdoings, mistakes, or faults of others. In the Dark Ages, Catholicism would harm anyone who did not believe as they did. During the Holocaust, the Germans blamed everything on the Jews and did the worst atrocities to fellow human beings in our history. And in our day, politics is doing the same thing. Each side blames the other party for the condition of the world. We should *never forget* that Jesus died for everyone, even those "others" who think differently than us. If we take the attitude of *make them pay*, we forget that Jesus paid for them and our attitude is undoing the beauty of the gift of life that Jesus presented in the ransom.



Let's be honest - have we ever gone down to the point where we just want to be rid of someone because of our hatred for them, or what they stand for is overwhelming? Is this Christlikeness? We need to be so much better than this! When conflict is allowed to degenerate, the results are tragic. If we find that we *have* allowed this process to progress, let us follow what James tells us to do. These verses lay out the remedies for each of these degenerating stages.



James laid out the remedies for each of these five stages. Keep these Scriptures in mind, as they will be the basis of Part II of this discussion:

James 4:7-10: (NASB) ⁷*Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. ⁸Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. ⁹Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom. ¹⁰Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.*

We must ALWAYS remember who we are, what our privilege is and especially what is expected of us when faced with conflicts in our lives:

Colossians 3:12-14: (NASB) ¹²*So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; ¹³bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. ¹⁴Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity.*

We need to ask ourselves, *am I different from those around me?* Do we stand for something that is higher, more wholesome, more valuable, more spiritual and more mature than the average person when it comes to the many conflicts of life? Social media is *rife* with conflict because it is mostly emotional. When our emotions become our principles, it leads us to conflict.

Because conflict is primarily founded on our words, verbal as well as on social media, which lead to actions, its resolution is also primarily founded on our words. Conflict can only be resolved with genuine and serious communication. Part II will be focused on understanding how to be actual peacemakers and not just peacekeepers. We gravitate towards those in our own tribe and we look down on those on the outside because it makes us feel good on the inside. This is wrong! Jesus never did that, nor is it in his teachings. When we walk down that road, *we are walking away from our Lord...* We are Christians, do we want to walk towards Jesus or away from him?

Joshua 24:15: (KJV) *...choose you this day whom you will serve...*

Will we serve our emotions, or our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, when we deal with conflict?

***So, can biblical strategies resolve conflicts?
For Jonathan and Rick (and Julie) and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!***



**Join us next week for our podcast on September 28, 2020
Ep. 1145: Is Your Covid-19 Christianity Still Being Tested?**



Bonus Material and Study Questions

Man must evolve for all human conflict a method which rejects revenge, aggression and retaliation. The foundation of such a method is love.

— *Martin Luther King, Jr.*

A quick look at the ways we look at life - some ways add to conflict while other ways can solve conflict:

1. Passion versus Principle

This is the battle between the emotion we feel on an issue and the principle behind the issue. Most of the time it is easier to follow emotion. Often, we can mistake our passion for a principle.

This text portrays living by our passions:

James 3:2-12: (NIV) ²We all stumble in many ways. If anyone is never at fault in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to keep his whole body in check. ³When we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can turn the whole animal. ⁴Or take ships as an example. Although they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are steered by a very small rudder wherever the pilot wants to go. ⁵Likewise the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. ⁶The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell. ⁷All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and creatures of the sea are being tamed and have been tamed by man, ⁸but no man can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. ⁹With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God's likeness. ¹⁰Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be. ¹¹Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring? ¹²My brothers, can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water.

Galatians 5:14-18: (NRSV) ¹⁴For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment, You shall love your neighbor as yourself. ¹⁵If, however, you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another. ¹⁶Live by the spirit, I say, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh. ¹⁷For what the flesh desires is opposed to the spirit, and what the spirit desires is opposed to the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you want. ¹⁸But if you are led by the spirit, you are not subject to the law.

Once truly motivated by principle, we may then live our principles passionately:

John 15:12-14: (NRSV) ¹²This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. ¹³No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. ¹⁴You are my friends if you do what I command you.

Luke 22:14-15: (NRSV) ¹⁴When the hour came, he took his place at the table, and the apostles with him. ¹⁵He said to them, I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.

2. Comfort versus Godly Conscience

Are we looking for a comfortable answer, or are we in tune with our inner compass?



Living according to comfort:

Romans 2:1-3: (NRSV) ¹Therefore you have no excuse, whoever you are, when you **judge <2919>** others; for in passing **judgment <2919>** on another you **condemn <2632>** yourself, because you, the **judge <2919>**, are doing the very same things. ²You say, We know that God's **judgment <2917>** on those who do such things is in accordance with truth. ³Do you imagine, whoever you are, that when you **judge <2919>** those who do such things and yet do them yourself, you will escape the **judgment <2917>** of God?

Judge: Strong's #2919 *krino*; properly to distinguish, i.e. decide (mentally or judicially); to try, condemn, punish

Condemn: Strong's #2632: *katakrino*; to judge against

Judgment: Strong's #2917 *krima*; a decision (the function or the effect, for or against)

To what is your conscience tuned:

1 Timothy 4:1-2: (NRSV) ¹Now the spirit expressly says that in later times some will renounce the faith by paying attention to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, ²through the hypocrisy of liars whose consciences are seared with a hot iron.

1 Peter 2:19-21: (NRSV) ¹⁹For it is a credit to you if, being aware of God, you endure pain while suffering unjustly. ²⁰If you endure when you are beaten for doing wrong, what credit is that? But if you endure when you do right and suffer for it, you have God's approval. ²¹For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you should follow in his steps.

Living according to conscience can produce comfort:

Philippians 4:4-7: (NRSV) ⁴Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. ⁵Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. ⁶Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Living according to comfort can produce a faulty conscience.

Example: Taking a specific side on an issue because you have “those who know” on that side. You do not REALLY know why - it is just more comfortable.

3. Convenience versus Conviction (personal - not someone else's)

Do we look for an easy way out, or are we driven by a deeply-convicted belief?

Convenience:

Ephesians 4:14-15: (NRSV) ¹⁴We must no longer be children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine, by people's trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming. ¹⁵But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ.

Conviction:

Philippians 4:11-13: (NRSV) ¹¹Not that I am referring to being in need; for I have learned to be content with whatever I have. ¹²I know what it is to have little, and I know what it is to have plenty. In any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of being well-fed and of going hungry, of having plenty and of being in need. ¹³I can do all things through him who strengthens me.



Both compared:

Galatians 2:11-16: (NRSV) ¹¹But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood self-condemned; ¹²for until certain people came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But after they came, he drew back and kept himself separate for fear of the circumcision faction. ¹³And the other Jews joined him in this hypocrisy, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy. ¹⁴But when I saw that they were not acting consistently with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas before them all, If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews? ¹⁵We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners; ¹⁶yet we know that a person is justified not by the works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ. And we have come to believe in Christ Jesus, so that we might be justified by faith in Christ, and not by doing the works of the law, because no one will be justified by the works of the law.

If you were put on trial for Christlikeness - would there be enough evidence to convict you?



Christian Questions Weekly Newsletter

CQ Rewind Show Notes and Study Questions

Text

CQREWIND

to **22828** to get started.



Study QUESTIONS

Ep. 1144: Can Biblical Strategies Resolve Serious Conflicts (Part 1)

<https://christianquestions.com/character/1144-conflict-resolution/>

See:  CQ Rewind
SHOW NOTES

1. What are some things YOU might do that cause conflict? What is something you can do to prevent those kinds of conflicts? What are some conflicts in your own life that may have been a result of personal pride, impulsivity, resentment or a poor choice of words? (See Isaiah 14:13-14, Genesis 3:6, Genesis 4:5,8-9, John 21:21-23)
2. How might conflicts arise as a result of circumstances or from others? How did the Apostle Paul deal with a conflict with Barnabas that was a result of circumstances? What example does this give us? (See Acts 13:3, 15:1-2,36-40, Colossians 4:10-11)
3. How can we keep conflict from overwhelming us? Should we just avoid all conflict? Why or why not?
4. What is the difference between the following: opinion, preference, passion, principle. How does understanding the definitions between these help us to determine what kind of conflict it is, and then how to deal with that conflict appropriately?
5. How can asking a “dishonest” question cause conflict? What example of what not to do did the Pharisees provide in their asking a question about Jesus? (See Mark 2:15-17,24-26, James 3:8-10) When is a time that you may have asked a question not seeking an honest answer? What should you do differently next time?
6. What potential problems arise when we believe that we are on the side of “right” and everyone else is on the side of “wrong”? How did the Pharisees’ assumption that they were standing on principle by accusing Jesus of not being from God eliminate the ability for them to see who Jesus really was? (See Mark 3:1-2,6, James 3:14-16)
7. When is it appropriate to remove ourselves from a relationship with someone we are in conflict with? What reasoning needs to be in place in order for this action to be appropriate? (See Romans 16:17-18, Titus 3:10, Mark 12:12-14, James 4:1-3)
8. If we cannot come to a common ground with someone we are in conflict with, is vengeance ever justified? (See Ephesians 4:14, John 11:47-50,53, James 4:4)
9. Have you ever found yourself seeking revenge against someone you were in conflict with? How did that turn out and what should you do differently next time? (See James 4:7-10, Colossians 3:12-14, Joshua 24:15)
10. What are the reasons for some of the conflicts in your own life? How might you better use the Scriptures to not only understand the source of conflict, but to respond differently as a result?