



## Can Biblical Strategies Resolve Serious Conflicts? (Part II)

**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. This is not necessarily a bad thing, as proper conflict management at every phase of our lives provides some of life’s most fertile growth experiences. The problem is we are not taught how to manage our conflicts. In Part I of this two-part series, we listed and discussed the Five Degenerating Stages of Conflict. We saw plain evidence that we generally approach our conflicts with personal opinions, preferences, passion and a desire to win. What tends to get overlooked are the solid, emotionless principles of truth and righteousness. If we look at the social and political conflicts in our world, we will see the sad and chaotic results of such an approach. How do we turn the tables? As Christians, how do we rise above the fray and manage the conflicts before us with godliness and grace while firmly standing for what is right? The answers are straightforward, sound and scriptural.

On our last conflict episode, #1144, we talked a lot about conflict but less about resolution. On this podcast we will get into the practical side of resolving conflicts in a God-honoring way.

We will look again at the Five Degenerating Stages of Conflict through the lens of James 4:7-10. James gives true Christians remedies for things to avoid.

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

Within those Scriptures lie the answers to all of our degenerating stages of conflict.

**#1  
THE  
REMEDY  
STAGE**

**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**

We want to be in this stage when we have conflict.

To be focused on the remedy is to be prepared to communicate and act based on principle. While this is obviously the best way to manage any conflict, it is also EASIEST when we decide to BEGIN here.



**Principles do NOT need a lot of emotion behind them;  
they simply need room to be recognized.**

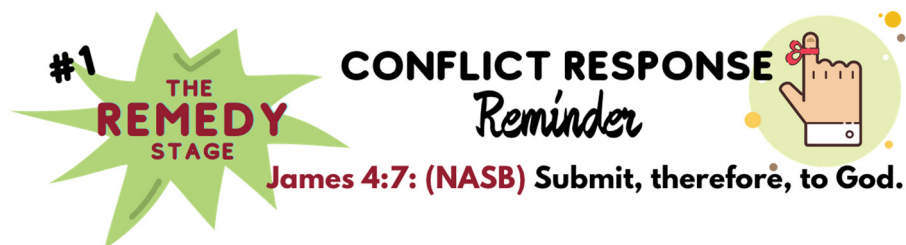


This TED Talk explained how to disagree and engage in productive debates.

 **We all disagree, *How to Disagree Productively and Find Common Ground*, Julia Dhar, TED Talk**

- *Some days it feels like the only thing we can agree on is that we can't agree on anything. Public discourse is broken, and we feel that everywhere. Panelists on TV are screaming at each other. We go online to find community and connection and we end up leaving feeling angry and alienated. In everyday life, probably because everyone else is yelling, we're so scared to get into an argument that we're willing not to engage at all. Contempt has replaced conversation.*

We are going to focus on how to resolve conflicts in a scriptural way. We will give a *conflict response reminder* each time we come across one of these degenerating stages of conflict.



To submit is to subordinate - to obey another. The only way for a Christian to resolve any conflict before them with godliness is to be in complete subordination to God's will.

How is this submission to God reflected?



One practical way our submission is shown is to not raise our voices and keep calm. Let me give you an example: for me, I think the only reason you do not agree with me is because you must not have physically HEARD me. So, I am going to say it VERY loudly and will keep getting LOUDER to get my point across. I have to remember that this intensifies the argument. If we are shouting, we are also not really listening, so we are not understanding the other position.

Jonathan: Interrupting someone when they are talking is rude. We may feel what we have to say is more important. Unfortunately, I have to work on that myself because my wife often reminds me when I interrupt.

Raising our voice and interrupting are two common, everyday responses to conflict. These do not help us with conflict resolution.

The *conflict response reminder* says to submit to God. Let's look at the *Response Point* to help us know how to do that.



Ephesians 4:15-16: (NASB) <sup>15</sup>but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into him who is the head, even Christ, <sup>16</sup>from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.



Submitting to God is taking our place as a member of the body; not being the one who has the right answer.

That word *love* here is the Greek word *agape* - the unconditional, sacrificial love that God has.

One of the Bible commentators gave a quote from Howard Moody Morgan, a minister who was in a discussion with his brothers about which Bible translation is best. He said “Well, the translation I like best is Mother’s translation.” What he meant by that was his mother’s Christian life. He believed she translated biblical truths into Christian living, which is an illustration of what the Apostle Paul said about speaking the truth in love.

The living example of godliness is the best translation of Scripture. Preach the gospel - and use words if necessary.

***Peace may not come by achieving agreement but by gaining respect for each other’s reasons for holding their position. – Carl Hagensick***



What if you are NOT met with a godly response by those with whom you have conflict?

**To manage this lack of reciprocation in conflict let’s look at Romans 12:9-21 for all the stages of conflict:**

Romans 12:9: (NASB) *Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good.*

We want to be the person we promised God and Jesus we would be. Be that person! If we are being yelled at or demeaned, this normally gives us permission from a human standpoint to yell back, only louder. But this is not a godly response; it is a human response. Do not move off of who you are supposed to be.

## CONFLICT RESPONSE

*Remedy*



**I HAVE POWERFUL INFLUENCE OVER  
HOW MY CONFLICTS ARE HANDLED.**

**Therefore, I will continually submit to God’s will and way  
as I communicate with love and understanding.**

We have a choice to make - we can either use the conflict as a tool and a growth experience, or not. “It is always up to me. My influence in this conflict is how I represent godliness OR my own human frailty.” Those are the only two choices.

As we deal with such a tough issue, the idea of having powerful influence for good is a breath of fresh air.



## How do we keep our heads and hearts right when we feel the need to point the finger of blame?

Pointing fingers is where several battles to achieve a godly approach to conflict management begin. Even though many conflicts can still be resolved with the “blame thing” on the table, we need to stave off the downward momentum that blame brings. This is not an easy task.



Lesson from childhood: When we point our finger at someone, we have three fingers pointing back at us.

### #2 THE REPOSITIONING STAGE

50% of conflicts can be solved in this stage

#### Looking for who caused the problem

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

Only about half of all conflicts that get to this stage can be resolved. It is easy to slip from the idealism of resolution into the compromise of repositioning. Resolution is hard and selfless work. It is selfless because it is not about our opinion; it is about godly principles.



**Principles do NOT need a lot of emotion behind them; they simply need room to be recognized.**

 Shared reality, *How to Disagree Productively and Find Common Ground*, Julia Dhar, TED Talk

- *People who disagree most productively start by finding common ground. No matter how narrow it is they identify the thing that we can all agree on and go from there. What they're doing is inviting us into what psychologists call shared reality and shared reality is the antidote to alternative facts. The conflict, of course, is still there. That's why it's a debate. Shared reality just gives us a platform to start to talk about it.*

The goal of peace is unity, not necessarily uniformity.

*In essentials unity, in non-essentials liberty, in all things charity.*  
— Peter Meiderlin (1582-1651), an irenic Lutheran theologian

**Merriam-Webster:**

Irenic: adjective

meaning favoring, conducive to, or operating toward peace, moderation, or conciliation

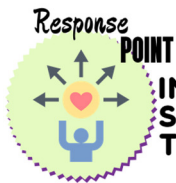
The name “Irene” is derived from this word. We want to be irenic, to pursue peace and moderation and look for common ground.

#2 THE REPOSITIONING STAGE CONFLICT RESPONSE Reminder  
James 4:7: (NASB) ...resist the devil and he will flee from you.

Just because we begin with an attitude that is submissive to God does not mean we are safe. James is telling us we also need to *resist the devil*, to stand against and oppose him. This keeps our conflict management attentive to resolution and NOT to fault-finding and gaining the upper hand.

How is this resistance to Satan reflected?

Let's look at two response points to help us remember how this is practically applied.



**INSTEAD OF BLAMING, SEEK TO UNDERSTAND THE OTHER'S POINT OF VIEW.**

Here we need to examine our attitude. Are we interested in peace or in proving ourselves right and others wrong?

1 Corinthians 8:4,7-8: (NASB) <sup>4</sup>Therefore concerning the eating of things sacrificed to idols, we know that there is no such thing as an idol in the world, and that there is no God but one. <sup>7</sup>However not all men have this knowledge; but some, being accustomed to the idol until now, eat food as if it were sacrificed to an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled. <sup>8</sup>But food will not commend us to God; we are neither the worse if we do not eat, nor the better if we do eat.

There is a conflict between two perspectives - not principles. The point is to understand the others' point of view.

We resist Satan when we go to the next level to understand those with whom we have conflict.



**INSTEAD OF BLAMING, SEEK COMMON GROUND.**

*Try to find a method of expression to which both parties can agree, noting that substance is more important than words. – Carl Hagensick*

1 Corinthians 1:11-13: (NASB) <sup>11</sup>For I have been informed concerning you, my brethren, by Chloe's people, that there are quarrels among you. <sup>12</sup>Now I mean this that each one of you is saying, I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I of Christ. <sup>13</sup>Has Christ been divided? Paul was not crucified for you, was he? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?

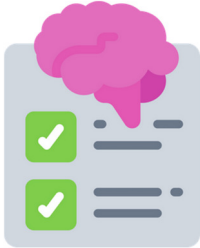
They were all supposed to be of Christ. They were giving the *right answer* with the *wrong attitude* in a divisive way.

If we pay attention to what the other person is saying and really listen, we can find a way to be unified, even if we do not agree. Principle is central when we seek our highest common ground. Reaching out focuses on principle.



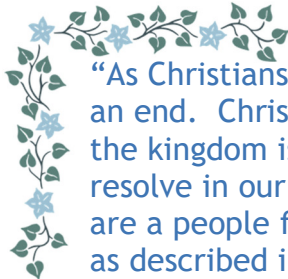
**What if we are met with an ungodly “repositioning response” by those with whom we have conflict:**

**Romans 12:10-11:** (NASB) *<sup>10</sup>Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor; <sup>11</sup>not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord;*



When we know we will be in a situation where we need to discuss a conflict, it helps to mentally rehearse the discussion without emotion. Imagine the conversation and how we want to respond to the other person and how our words make us feel. It may help to practice so our response will be godly. Visualize our reaction to possible points of contention and fight the temptation to overreact to our “hot buttons,” words, gestures or motions that can provoke us.

The following paragraph was written by our friend, Larry McClellan. He states things so beautifully about the role of the faithful Christian in God’s future kingdom, after mankind has been resurrected and will be rehabilitated.



“As Christians, we are a royal priesthood under development as a means to an end. Christ and his church are the ‘means,’ whereas restored humanity in the kingdom is the ‘end product.’ Will we not have a few human conflicts to resolve in our kingdom position if faithful? How about billions of conflicts? We are a people for a purpose. God has given to us the ministry of reconciliation as described in 2 Corinthians 5:18. Consequently, we will be, and are even now, in the personality business. Doesn’t God want to see an effort on our part to apply our training for this position? Yes, there are many qualifications for our future position of service, but this component of our heavenly report card may have greater value than we perceive. How do we use the many lessons of ‘the wisdom from above’ (James 3:17) and the principles of righteousness to make sound choices of conflict resolution in our relationships? Knowledge exercised in wisdom empowers proper choices. And is not most of our life about the choices we make, along with their cause-and-effect relationship?”

We do not have to reconcile anything unless there is a conflict. Our entire ministry is about solving conflict. The world will be resurrected out of harmony with God but with the potential to be in harmony.

**CONFLICT RESPONSE**

*Remedy*



**I HAVE POWERFUL INFLUENCE OVER HOW MY CONFLICTS ARE HANDLED.**

**Therefore, I will - based on godly principles - continually be understanding and patient as I seek the highest level of common ground with whom I am in conflict.**

We need to repeat the right things, the powerful things, the uplifting things so we do not let anger creep in, which would make Satan happy.

As we explore the diffusing of conflict, the picture of being like Jesus comes more and more into focus.

**The easier steps are now in place.**  
**How do we deal with strong, judgmental and angry emotions?**

Getting our heads and hearts right to appropriately deal with conflict is SO much easier if we do not let ourselves get out of hand. As we now get ready to deal with the harder stuff, we will see that the effort to rise up and respond with Christlike grace is going to be significantly more challenging.



**Check out our CQ Kids videos:**  
**HOW CAN WE BE MORE LIKE JESUS? (PARTS I AND II)**  
christianquestions.com/youtube



**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

*15-20% of conflicts can be solved in this stage*



**Principles do NOT need a lot of emotion behind them; they simply need room to be recognized.**

Once comfortable with placing blame in the previous stage of conflict, it is not too difficult to degrade into the black and white approach of "I'm right! You're wrong!" Opinion feeds emotion and it is now about ME.



**Humanizing, How to Disagree Productively and Find Common Ground, Julia Dhar, TED Talk**

- *But the trick of debate is that you end up doing it directly, face to face across the table, and research backs up what really matters. Professor Juliana Schroeder at UC Berkeley and her colleagues have research that suggests that listening to someone's voice as they make a controversial argument is literally humanizing. It makes it easier to engage with what that person has to say. So, step away from the keyboards; start conversing.*

Listening to a voice humanizes the situation. Sometimes when texting or emailing, words can be taken the wrong way. We cannot see the expressions on someone's face or hear the inflections or tone of their voice. That is why in person or hearing a voice on the phone is so important. Whenever someone does not understand what you say in a text or an email, pick up the phone or get in the car and go have a face-to-face discussion to avoid conflict.



**CONFLICT RESPONSE**  
*Reminder*

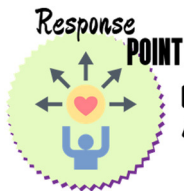
**James 4:8: (NASB) Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.**





Principled response in conflict is not easy or natural. We draw near to God by way of **prayer**, following **scriptural teaching** and **accessing His spirit**. In so doing, we consciously move off of our self-centered approach and on to a clear God-centered approach where His wisdom can shine through us.

How is this personal closeness to God reflected in our conflict management?



**MAKE YOUR DESIRES AND EXPECTATIONS CLEAR.**

1 Corinthians 2:1-2, 5: (NASB) <sup>1</sup>And when I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God. <sup>2</sup>For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified. <sup>5</sup>so that your faith would not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God.

The Apostle Paul’s focus was all on Jesus. Can those with whom I have conflict see me as solely representing the power of God through the example of Jesus as I lay out my expectations? They should see our principles, not our preferences. We want to stand higher than the “I’m right/You’re wrong!” fight.



**What if you are met with an ungodly “rights stance” by those with whom you have conflict:**

Romans 12:12-16: (NASB) <sup>12</sup>rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer, <sup>13</sup>contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality. <sup>14</sup>Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. <sup>15</sup>Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. <sup>16</sup>Be of the same mind toward one another; do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation.

**Jesus warned his followers they would be treated unjustly:**

Matthew 10:22: (NASB) *You will be hated by all because of my name, but it is the one who has endured to the end who will be saved.*

*A soft answer turns away wrath...*  
Proverbs 15:1

Matthew 24:9: (NASB) *Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations because of my name.*

We are not always going to have the other side wanting to negotiate righteously with principles. There should be no surprise that we end up in degrading conflicts. The surprise should be when we decide to stand above it all. Do not waiver and meet sarcasm or emotionalism with a similar response. Persevere in humility.

**CONFLICT RESPONSE**

*Remedy*




**I HAVE POWERFUL INFLUENCE OVER HOW MY CONFLICTS ARE HANDLED.**

**Therefore, I will - based on godly principles - patently reject looking to assign blame in a conflict and instead be clear and factual as I pursue godly resolution.**



We have power and a voice. Will we use our voice to reflect Jesus?



**#4 THE REMOVAL STAGE**

**Get rid of those people!**

- The Goal:
  - Divorce
  - Argumentative disunity
  - Resentful disassociation
- There is no solution – Get rid of them...!
- Communication? Ha!
- There is **NO TRUST** to base it on

*1% at best of conflicts can be solved in this stage*

We know there are some scriptural reasons to separate, as described in [Romans 16:17-18](#) and [Titus 3:10](#) and other places, but that is not what we are talking about here. This stage is when the conflict has degraded so much that we cannot even stand the look of that other person and want to get rid of them.

Because “I’m right/You’re wrong!” it is easy to rationalize the removing of the opposition as a viable remedy to the conflict at hand. We have now ceased reaching for truth and just want to win. How sad!



**Principles do NOT need a lot of emotion behind them; they simply need room to be recognized.**



*Ideas vs. Identity, How to Disagree Productively and Find Common Ground, Julia Dhar, TED Talk*

- *Once we're inside this shared reality, debate also requires that we separate ideas from the identity of the person discussing them. So, in formal debate nothing is a topic unless it is controversial, that we should raise the voting age, outlaw gambling. But the debaters don't choose their sides... Attacking the identity of the person making the argument is irrelevant because they didn't choose it. Your only winning strategy is to engage with the best, clearest, least personal version of the idea.*

Stating principles is the least personal version of the idea. The conflict should not be about how we feel; it should be what is right and wrong. Focus on the issue, not the person, to make progress.



**#4 THE REMOVAL STAGE**

**CONFLICT RESPONSE**

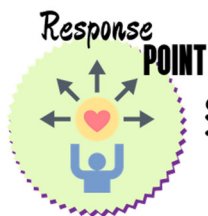
*Reminder*

**James 4:8: (NASB) ...Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.**



*Cleanse your hands...purify your hearts* - we need to do these things when drawing near to God. We must keep both what we do and what we are passionate about clean and pure. Be passionate in a principled manner that is completely righteous from God's standards, not our own. Failure in these things results in double-mindedness. This serves Satan, NOT God.

Two response points tell us how this attention to purity is reflected in our conflict management.

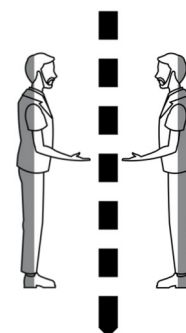


**STAY FOCUSED ON THE ISSUE AT HAND.**

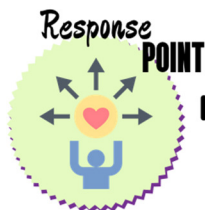
Stay focused on the issue, not the person or how you feel about them. Keep it without malice or disrespect.

**Galatians 2:11-14:** (NASB) *<sup>11</sup>But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. <sup>12</sup>For prior to the coming of certain men from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he began to withdraw and hold himself aloof, fearing the party of the circumcision. <sup>13</sup>The rest of the Jews joined him in hypocrisy, with the result that even Barnabas was carried away by their hypocrisy. <sup>14</sup>But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in the presence of all, If you, being a Jew, live like the Gentiles and not like the Jews, how is it that you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?*

There is a lot in these verses. Peter (Cephas) lost sight of a very important issue - the vision he had been given about the Jewish rituals no longer being applicable to Christianity. He had been living according to that vision, *eating and associating with the Gentiles*. But when certain important Jews (who believed that Gentile believers should be circumcised) came from James, he wavered, presenting an inconsistent perspective. As a result, he was influencing those around him, like Barnabas, making them hypocrites, too. The Apostle Paul saw what was happening and called Peter out in public, stating that Peter could not stand on both sides of this issue. He had to find the backbone to stand on the vision God had given him. Paul did not attack Peter's character as much as his actions. He told him this is what he was doing, and it had to stop because Peter, of all people, knew the righteous thing to do.



Presenting God's truth must be our unwavering top priority, contrasted with the fleshly desire to minimize and remove the problem (or remove ourselves from the problem). Focusing on what is most important is the **ONLY** way to do this.



**MAINTAIN DIRECT COMMUNICATION - NO THIRD PARTIES.**

**Matthew 18:15-16:** (NASB) *<sup>15</sup>If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother. <sup>16</sup>But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every fact may be confirmed.*

This is talking about sins - not disagreements, preferences or small problems - but the principle of dealing personally with the issue is the same.



This part of **Matthew 18** is about the three levels of correcting your brother. The first level is private - you talk to the person one-on-one. If that does not resolve the problem, you go to him with a small group, only one or two others. Eventually, if the first two steps do not bring out the recognition of and repentance from the sin, the third level is to bring it up publicly to the congregation.

### Matthew 18:15-18

Each level is designed to engage the holy spirit to facilitate communication and accountability, each with an incremental increase in power and the potential for all involved to face the realities of the offense in question.

The first two levels or steps were in the verses above. These will prevent a lot of evil surmising and evil speaking. Before we begin this process, we have to look internally at our motivation. Are we seeking to glorify God by bringing a brother to repentance, or are we seeking our own satisfaction? While it is easy and tempting to listen to hearsay and gossip, they NEVER help resolve conflicts. Listening to hearsay and gossip is not *fleeing from the devil* or *clinging to God*. It is not *cleansing your hands* or *purifying your heart*. It is exactly the opposite.

Always respectfully deal with the source. We must go directly to the person with whom we have the conflict. This is hard but so worthwhile.



**What if you are met with an ungodly “removal stance” by those with whom you have conflict:**

**Romans 12:17-18:** (NASB) <sup>17</sup>Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men. <sup>18</sup>If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.

It is amazing how James 4 and Romans 12 fit into these degenerating stages of conflict. They show us exactly what to do at every single spot we get into. All we have to do is listen, apply and have the courage to stand for something bigger than ourselves.

Remember how Stephen, the first Christian martyr, responded to his angry opponents with Scripture and history? The result was his faithfulness to God, while his opponents descended into a murderous act. We will touch on Stephen in the next segment.

## CONFLICT RESPONSE

*Remedy*



**I HAVE POWERFUL INFLUENCE OVER  
HOW MY CONFLICTS ARE HANDLED.**

**Therefore, I will - based on godly principles -  
not fear the irrationality of others.**

**I will stand above such reactions  
and never waiver from standing for principle!**



Notice the power of the statement. This does not say, I am going to try; the statement says, I will. We make this so firm because it is the ideal. We need to strive for the ideal, not for just doing the best we can. We strive for the perfection of the response, and if we fall, it is okay. We get up and try again. The further we go with this, the harder and more important it becomes to stand for pure godly principles.

### One stage of degenerating conflict left to conquer! What are our most powerful take-home lessons?

Before summing up, we absolutely need to observe the vile and senseless potential results of mismanaging our conflicts. God's plan gives humanity the opportunity to see sin unfold in all of its ugliness as a lesson for eternity. We all have mismanaged conflict in our lives. Let's look at the lessons from this so we can learn not to go there again.

Remember, we are being trained to be "ministers of reconciliation" for resurrected humanity! Our job in God's future kingdom will be to reconcile people who have a conflict with each other. We need to start practicing how to do this in our lives now.

This next stage of conflict is where no Christian belongs:



### 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

Look around us at the social world, the political world - do we not see a lot of revenge mindsets? This is how we are taught to deal with conflict. Can we see the folly in this? Can we see the damage it does to all of our relationships?



The moment we give into getting rid of those with whom we have conflict (the previous stage), this stage of revenge appears logical and important. We trade away their value to us in exchange for the elevation of our own ego. That is a sick trade! Our opinions, preferences and passions have made a mockery of the godly principles we once aspired to uphold.

The scribes and Pharisees were threatened by the words of Jesus and his influence over the people. They schemed to get rid of him. This definitely fits into the revenge stage - what a sad testimony.

Have we gotten to the point where we have lost our grip on principles and have gone down this horrible path?



**Principles do NOT need a lot of emotion behind them;  
they simply need room to be recognized.**

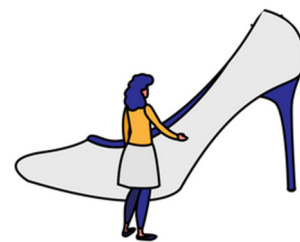


Living our principles can have a positive effect on the conflicts we face.

The next audio clip discusses formal debating. Although we are talking about something different, Ms. Dhar's principles directly resonate with everything that we are talking about in reducing conflict.

 **The humility of uncertainty, *How to Disagree Productively and Find Common Ground*, Julia Dhar, TED Talk**

- *And then the thing that debate allows us to do as human beings is open ourselves - really open ourselves up - to the possibility that we might be wrong. The humility of uncertainty. One of the reasons it is so hard to disagree productively is because we become attached to our ideas. We start to believe that we own them and that by extension they own us, but eventually if you debate long enough you will switch sides. You'll argue for and against the expansion of the welfare state; for and against compulsory voting. And that exercise flips a kind of cognitive switch. The suspicions that you hold about people who espouse beliefs that you don't have, start to evaporate because you can imagine yourself stepping into those shoes. As you are stepping into those, you're embracing the humility of uncertainty - the possibility of being wrong.*



The possibility of being wrong is very scary for many people because it seems to indicate that they are inadequate, not good enough.

When we are going through a conflict, we are not methodically thinking about all five of these stages - we are more like an elevator that just zooms straight to the boiler room! The purpose of this podcast is to learn how to force ourselves to “stop at every floor,” to slow our elevators down so that we do not plummet downwards into the latter stages of conflict. It is too easy to go down the slide and end up at the bottom and be hateful, resentful, angry and ruinous to the relationships we once had. We have to rise above and be better.



Sometimes there is a clear-cut right and wrong. We are not saying we should give in to wrong to make all the parties in the conflict “feel better.” Here we are talking about standing for principle in a godly, righteous way.

Most people start their conflict resolution in Stage 3 - the Rights Stage, skipping the first two of Remedy and Repositioning. They start at 3 and zoom down to 4 and 5. At that point, it is over. We have not fled from the devil, we have not turned to God, we have not done any of the steps that could have diffused the situation and our anger.



If we have gone down that rabbit hole and are now so angry with others, James is saying we should be miserable. We should mourn and weep. We should *never* have joy in the destruction of others. If we slip away from principled conflict resolution into selfish thinking and actions, we need to deeply repent for misrepresenting the cause of Christ.

**When Jesus was mourning over Israel and her leaders, he said:**

Matthew 23:37: (NASB): *Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling.*

Jesus was feeling compassion over those that were against him. Think about that! Not only if we are in the wrong should we be miserable and weep, but even when wrong is being done *to us*, we should feel that depth of compassion Jesus felt for those that were seeking to kill him. They murdered him, and yet he had that kind of compassion. This is being a “minister of reconciliation”! Jesus showed us how, and we need to follow those steps.

How is this repentant, God-centered attitude reflected in our conflict management?



**LISTEN AND  
DO NOT  
RESPOND DEFENSIVELY.**

If we have a combative personality, it might be hard to not respond defensively. But if we practice self-control and meekness, we will not *render evil for evil*. Being defensive may cause us to lash out physically, or with verbal attacks, gossip, slander, or even trying to ruin someone professionally or financially. If our focus is on all of these retaliatory actions, it is not on God. We will have lost everything. We need to work on listening and not being defensive.

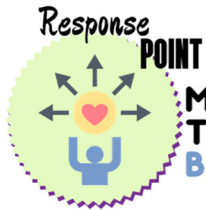
**Let’s listen to the context of the stoning of Stephen and how he responded to certain death:**

Acts 6:11-12: (NASB) <sup>11</sup>*Then they secretly induced men to say, We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and against God. <sup>12</sup>And they stirred up the people, the elders and the scribes, and they came up to him and dragged him away and brought him before the Council.*

Acts 7:1-2: (NASB) <sup>1</sup>*The high priest said, Are these things so? <sup>2</sup>And he said, Hear me, brethren and fathers! The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham...*



Stephen went on to preach the gospel. He showed them their own history, and in a kind and loving way showed how it all led to Jesus. It was a beautiful testimony. Stephen's response to the vengeful treatment he was receiving was only focused on God's plan. He stood when others stooped down literally to get stones. Stephen stood for principal while kneeling in prayer. He died and God gave him glory because he sought to resolve the conflict by doing all the right things. He paid the ultimate price and was an amazing example to us.



### MAKE A COMMITMENT TO WHAT IS IN EVERYONE'S BEST INTEREST.

**2 Corinthians 11:2-3:** (NASB) <sup>2</sup>*For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; for I betrothed you to one husband, so that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin.* <sup>3</sup>*But I am afraid that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ.*

Those of us who profess to walk in Christ's footsteps should be the MOST polished, MOST refined, MOST polite, MOST generous and the MOST kind of all the people in the world. These characteristics should spring from inside our hearts, a true gentleness and kindness coming from our appreciation of God's spirit of love. We profess to love God and follow Jesus, and we must not be deflected from our goal to be Christlike.

Gentleness and kindness are *not* weaknesses. Too often it is looked at that way. In reality, if our gentleness and kindness are Christlike, there is a powerful truth principle behind it. We are to stand for that principle no matter the cost. It is not weak to be kind. That kindness should be driven by the fact that we stand for a principle that is above us and beyond us. It comes to us through Christ from God's word.



### What if you're met with an ungodly "revenge response" by those with whom you have conflict:

**Romans 12:19-21:** (NASB) <sup>19</sup>*Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.* <sup>20</sup>*But if your enemy is hungry, feed him, and if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap burning coals on his head.* <sup>21</sup>*Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.*



*Heap burning coals on his head* refers to a time when keeping one's hearth fire alive was a lifesaving necessity. If someone could not keep their fire going, then he would go around the town carrying some sort of container on his head asking for hot coals to rekindle his fire. Putting coals in this container on his head would *benefit* him, fulfilling his need and helping him.

Paul is saying to pay kindness to your enemies instead of trying to hurt them. This does not sound like vengeance! If someone is treating us badly, we should turn around and treat them with kindness and godliness. We are to stand for the principles of Jesus.

## CONFLICT RESPONSE

*Remedy*



**I HAVE POWERFUL INFLUENCE OVER  
HOW MY CONFLICTS ARE HANDLED.**

**Therefore, I will - based on godly principles -  
stand in the midst of conflict for godliness  
and the appropriate treatment of others  
no matter what they may seek to do to me!  
(That is what Jesus did!)**

This is another powerful, clear statement of godly intention. Is this easy to do? No, but it is something we are contracted to do because that is what Jesus did. This is how we want to model ourselves to avoid this revenge stage of conflict. Be not afraid - God's providence will guide us through. It may not turn out well for us in this present time, but our focus is on eternity.

## CONFLICT RESPONSE

*Reminder*

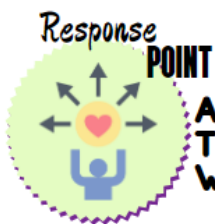


**James 4:10: (NASB) Humble yourselves in the  
presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.**

**IT ALWAYS COMES DOWN  
TO BEING A HUMBLE FOLLOWER OF JESUS.**

It always comes down to us being a humble follower of Jesus. It is not about winning the conflict; it is about humbly wanting to express our concern. When it is all over and done, pause and consider the experience.

Self-correction rather than pride is the goal. We need to be ready to apologize for our own actions, as hard as that might be and (gulp!) admit where we were wrong.



**ALWAYS REFLECT  
TO DISCOVER AND APPLY  
WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNED.**

Ephesians 4:31,32: (NIV) <sup>31</sup>Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. <sup>32</sup>Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

This idea of reflection on our experiences and applying what we have learned gives new depth to our understanding of Romans 8:28.

**It is quoted by many Christians but is life-changing when applied:**

Romans 8:28: (NASB) *And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.*

*God causes all things (especially the hard things) to work together for our good because we are called for His purpose. We are being trained to be “ministers*



of reconciliation” - we will be working in the kingdom to resolve and manage conflict in a godly way.

## CONFLICT RESOLUTION

### Conclusion



**I HAVE POWERFUL INFLUENCE OVER HOW MY CONFLICTS ARE HANDLED.**

**By standing in principle and standing for Christ, I will strive to be the light of the world no matter how much pressure I feel.**

Jesus said we are *the light of the world*. We must not hide that light under a bushel, we *must* let it shine. When conflict comes, that light needs to be a part of who we are, and it must shine brightly.

When we are dealing with conflict and apply these principles, it should be obvious what we stand for because we are selflessly presenting godliness. This is difficult. It takes time, effort, practice and failure. We all have conflicts and need to work at putting ourselves in a Christlike position so we can resolve the conflict in a godly way. It is imperative that we give people a witness of what godliness looks like in a world that has lost all semblance of God.

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



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Join us next week for our podcast on October 12, 2020  
Ep. 1146: Do I Have Other Gods and Idols in My Life?

### Bonus Material and Study Questions

**Whenever you're in conflict with someone, there is one factor that can make the difference between damaging your relationship and deepening it. That factor is attitude.**  
— William James



## The James and Romans “solution Scriptures” all together:

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

**Romans 12:9-21:** (NASB) <sup>9</sup>Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good. <sup>10</sup>Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor; <sup>11</sup>not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; <sup>12</sup>rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer, <sup>13</sup>contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality. <sup>14</sup>Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. <sup>15</sup>Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. <sup>16</sup>Be of the same mind toward one another; do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation. <sup>17</sup>Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men. <sup>18</sup>If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men. <sup>19</sup>Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord. <sup>20</sup>But if your enemy is hungry, feed him, and if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap burning coals on his head. <sup>21</sup>Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

## Our conflict management experiences can clearly define who we really are:

**Matthew 5:1-16:** (NASB) <sup>1</sup>When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. <sup>2</sup>He opened his mouth and began to teach them, saying, <sup>3</sup>Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. <sup>4</sup>Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. <sup>5</sup>Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth. <sup>6</sup>Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. <sup>7</sup>Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. <sup>8</sup>Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. <sup>9</sup>Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. <sup>10</sup>Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. <sup>11</sup>Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. <sup>12</sup>Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you. <sup>13</sup>You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men. <sup>14</sup>You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; <sup>15</sup>nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. <sup>16</sup>Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.



## Some final words from Peter to help us focus on what to do, how to do it and why:

**2 Peter 1:3-11:** (NASB) <sup>3</sup>seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. <sup>4</sup>For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust. <sup>5</sup>Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge, <sup>6</sup>and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness, <sup>7</sup>and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love. <sup>8</sup>For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>9</sup>For he who lacks these qualities is blind or short-sighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins. <sup>10</sup>Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble; <sup>11</sup>for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you.

# Study QUESTIONS

## Ep. 1146: Can Biblical Strategies Resolve Serious Conflicts? (Part II)

<https://christianquestions.com/character/1146-conflict-resolution-2/>



### Stage #1 - The Remedy Stage: The desire is to fix the problem.

1. What are the three characteristics of this stage? What should be our response to conflict at this point? (See James 4:7) How should we NOT respond at this early stage of conflict? How can we avoid escalating the conflict? (See Ephesians 4:15-16, Romans 12:9)
2. What is the definition of *agape* love? How does that apply to all the stages of conflict?

### Stage #2 - The Repositioning Stage: Looking for who caused the problem. Placing blame!

3. What are the three characteristics of this stage? How are they different from the first stage? What should be our response to conflict at this point? (See James 4:7) What should we DO; what should we NOT do?
4. What are two ways we can respond during this stage? (See 1 Corinthians 8:4,7-8, 1:11-13)
5. Why is it a good idea to remember these references if we continue to be met with an ungodly response? (See Romans 12:10-11, 2 Corinthians 5:18, James 3:17)

### Stage #3 - The Rights Stage: I'm right! You're wrong!

6. What are the four characteristics of this stage? How is each stage escalating? What should our response to conflict be now? (See James 4:7)
7. What is Paul saying in 1 Corinthians 2:1,2,5? How does this frame our approach at this stage? (See Romans 12:12-16)
8. Should we be surprised if we meet an ungodly "rights stance"? How should we respond? (See Matthew 10:22, 24:9)

### Stage #4 - The Removal Stage: Get rid of those people!

9. What has happened to the characteristics in this stage?
10. Is there ever a reason for conflicting parties to separate for the common good? (See Romans 16:17-18, Titus 3:10)
11. According to James 4:8, a way to respond to conflict is to "*cleanse our hands... purify our hearts.*" How do we do this? (See Galatians 2:11-14, Matthew 18:15-18)
12. What should our response be if our godly approach is met with ungodly and untruthful statements? (See Romans 12:17-18)

### Stage #5 - The Revenge Stage: Make someone pay! (The sorry result of godless thinking.)

13. If we have descended into this stage and come to realize it, what should our response be? (See James 4:9)
14. How should we react if we are on the *receiving end* of the revenge stage? (See Romans 12:17-21, Matthew 23:37, James 4:10) What example did Stephen provide and what can we learn from it? (See Acts 6:8-15, 7:1-60)
15. Why is it important to humbly reflect on our responses to conflict? (See Ephesians 4:31,32, Romans 8:28, Matthew 5:1-16, Colossians 1:27, 2 Peter 1:3-11)