

I. A Biblical Perspective of Conflict

A. Conflict is to be _____.

1. Conflict is the result of sin.

a. The first sin led to conflict.

i. Genesis 3:10

ii. Genesis 3:12

b. Lusts/desires wage war in our members (James 4:1-2).

c. Evil still dwells within us even when we want to do good (Romans 7:21).

2. Conflict can be _____.

a. Conflict can be a trial that helps us grow in spiritual maturity and endurance (James 1:2-5)

i. Helps make us aware of our own sinfulness

ii. Causes us to search the Scriptures—"It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I may learn Your statutes" Psalm 119:71.

iii. Stimulates us to turn to God in prayer

iv. Helps us to learn to communicate more effectively.

v. Provides _____:

A) To glorify God (1 Corinthians 10:31).

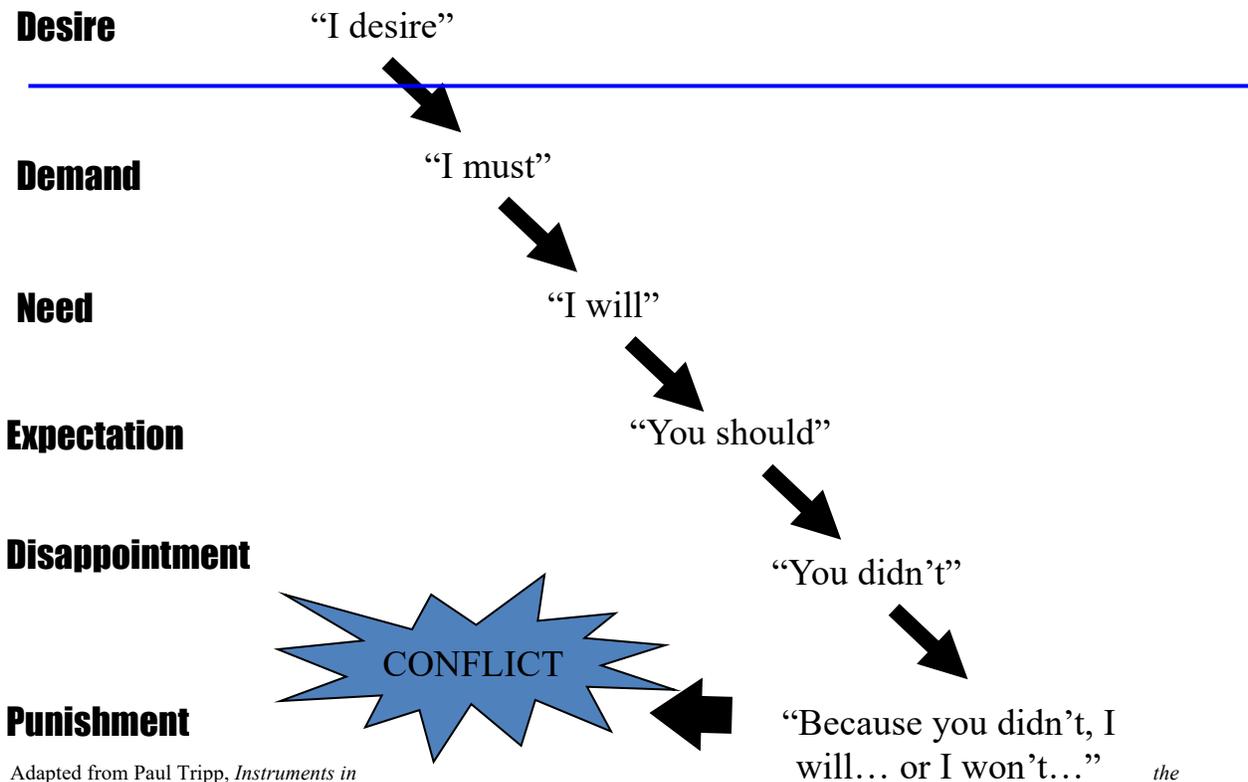
B) To serve others (Philippians 2:3-4).

C) To bear witness to a watching world—“Do all things without grumbling or disputing that you may prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and depraved generation among whom you appear as lights in the world.” Philippians 2:14-15.

B. Causes of Conflict

1. Definition: Conflict is a _____ in opinion or purpose that frustrates someone else’s goals or desires.
2. Godly desires becoming demands
 - a. Demands can result in sin when they’re not fulfilled
 - b. Demands can result in sin to get them fulfilled

The Progression of Sin



Adapted from Paul Tripp, *Instruments in Redeemer’s Hands*, 86-88

II. Conflict Resolution is _____

A. Pursue Peace

1. Peacemakers are blessed as image-bearers —“Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called sons of God” Matthew 5:9.
2. Peacemaking helps us grow in Christlikeness—“Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord” Hebrews 12:14.
3. We are to pursue peacemaking like the striving of a gladiator—“Make every effort to pursue the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace” Ephesians 4:3.

B. Three Dimensions of Peace

1. Peace WITH God - _____

- a. Without Christ we are under wrath, alienated from God, and hostile in mind toward Him (Colossians 1:21).
- b. Romans 5:1—“Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

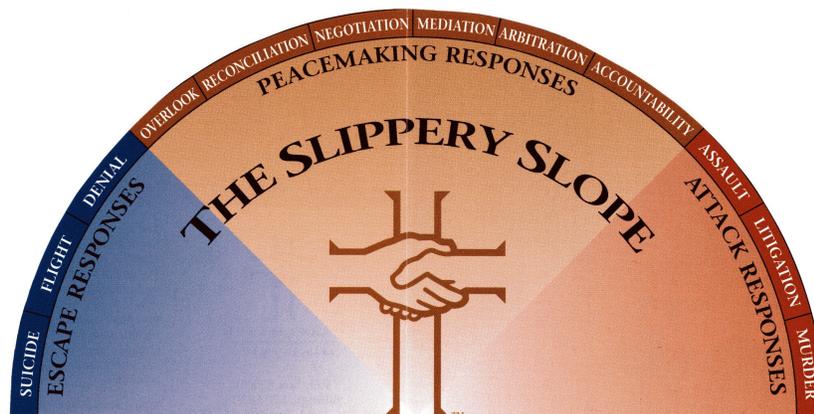
2. Peace OF God - _____

- a. “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” Philippians 4:6-7.
- b. “And let the peace of God rule in your hearts...” Colossians 3:15.

3. Peace AMONG THE PEOPLE of God - _____

- a. Among unbelievers
 - i. “If possible, so far as it depends upon you, be at peace with all men” Romans 12:18.
- b. Among believers
 - i. Ephesians 4:3—“Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”

C. Possible _____ to Conflict



Used by permission: Peacemaker Ministries

1. Everyone is going to worship something in response to conflict: God or something/someone else.
2. Escape Responses—The Left Side of the Slippery Slope
 - a. Directed at getting away from the conflict situation rather than resolving it.
 - b. Always wrong responses to conflict.
 - c. Typically people who have a strong heart issue of loving comfort and pleasure.
 - d. Three Escape Responses:
 - i. Denial
 - ii. Flight
 - iii. Suicide
3. Attack Responses—The Right side of the Slippery Slope
 - a. Directed at bringing as much pressure to bear on opponents as necessary to defeat their claims and eliminate their opposition.

- b. Always a wrong response to conflict.
 - c. Typically people who are lovers of control, success, or money/things.
 - d. Three Attack Responses
 - i. Litigation - A matter is taken before the civil authorities for a decision.
 - A) At times this may be a legitimate response.
 - B) Should be pursued only after exhausting biblical peacemaking options.
 - ii. _____ - Use of force or intimidation to compel an opponent to give into your demands.
 - A) Physical
 - B) Verbal
 - C) Financial
 - iii. Murder
 - A) “Emotional Murder”
 - B) Physical Murder
4. Conciliation Responses
- a. The six responses found on the top portion of the curve.
 - b. Two categories of conciliation responses:
 - i. Personal—involves only the two parties
 - A) _____ an offense
 - B) Reconciliation

C) Negotiation

ii. Assisted—involves others

A) Mediation

B) Arbitration

C) _____

III. Four Principles of Peacemaking

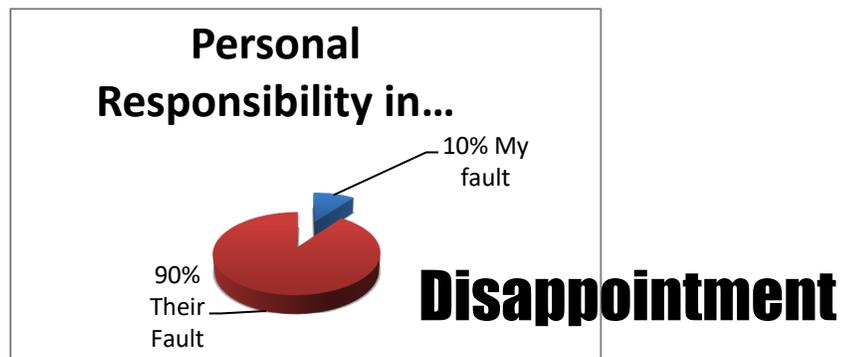
A. Glorify God

1. Asks the question: “How can I please and honor the Lord in this situation?”
2. Seeks to emulate Christ’s model as the perfect peacemaker
 - a. Romans 5:8
 - b. 1 Peter 2:23
 - c. John 4:1-26
 - d. Luke 23:34
3. Sees conflict as an opportunity to serve others
 - a. Galatians 6:2
 - b. Galatians 6:1
 - c. 1 Timothy 4:12

4. See conflict as a stewardship issue.

B. Get the Log Out of your Own Eye

1. Jesus commands us to—“You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother’s eye” Matthew 7:5.



- a. Reminds us that we have big issues ourselves and God has not treated us as our sins deserve (Matthew 18:21-35).
2. _____ Yourself
 - a. Repent of any sinful part you have played in the conflict
 - i. How much of this conflict is your fault?
 - ii. You are 100% responsible for that part
 - b. Wrong motives for confessing
 - i. To get a burden off your shoulders
 - ii. To gain comfort for yourself
 - iii. To minimize the consequences of your sin.
 - c. Right goal of confession:
 - i. Glorify God
 - ii. Minister (bring healing and comfort) to the person you have wronged

d. Seven A's of Confession—Confess your part and ask for forgiveness

i. Address everyone involved

ii. Avoid “if”, “but”, or “maybe”

iii. Admit

iv. _____ the hurt

A) Express sincere sorrow for the way you affected that person.

B) Acknowledge any hurt your actions or attitudes may have caused.

v. _____ the consequences

A) “What do I need to do to show you that I am sincerely repentant?”

B) Be understanding if they are upset with you.

vi. Alter your behavior (Ephesians 4:22-32, put off and put on)

vii. Ask for forgiveness

A) Not “I’m sorry,” but “Will you forgive me?”

C. Gently Restore

“If your brother sins against you, go and show your brother his fault” Matthew 18:15.

1. The one who _____ is the one who _____.

2. Excuses not to confront

a. “Do not judge...” We are called to be fruit inspectors

b. “It’s God’s job to convict others...”

i. “Means of Grace” in sanctification: The Spirit, the Word, the Church

ii. Nathan and David (2 Samuel 12)

3. Purpose of confrontation

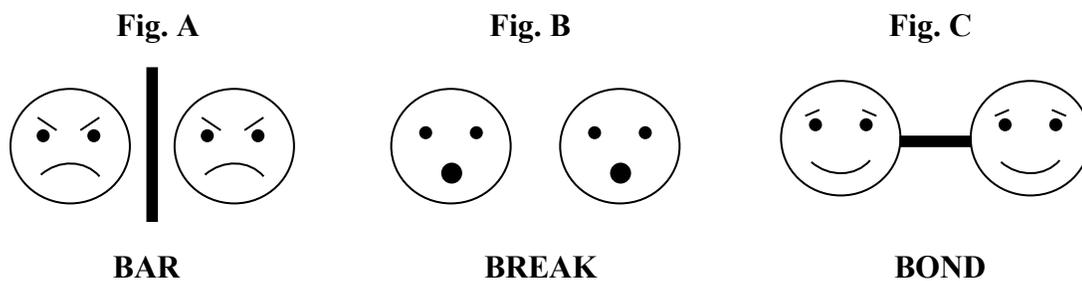
a. Someone is “caught” in a sin (Galatians 6:1).

- b. The goal of the confrontation is restoration of the offender to usefulness to God.
 - c. Your responsibility and God's responsibility (Proverbs 21:11).
 - i. You are to speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15).
 - A) Truth without love is _____.
 - B) Love without truth is _____.
4. When should you confront someone?
- a. When someone has something against you (Matthew 5:21-24)
 - i. You may be able to clarify a misunderstanding.
 - ii. You may learn that you were wrong.
 - b. When someone's sins are too serious to overlook (Luke 17:3).
 - c. Go to the individual
5. Involve other people if the offender refuses to listen
- a. You can continue with going to your brother as long as the offender keeps listening to you.
 - b. If he is no longer willing to listen, you must pursue the reconciliation outlined in Matthew 18:15-17:
 - i. Take others to act as witnesses/conciliators (Matthew 18:16)
 - A) To encourage self-control and courtesy
 - B) To ask questions and clarify facts
 - C) To counsel and admonish through God's Word

- c. If he refuses to repent, tell it to the church/ elders (Matthew 18:17).
- d. If he refuses to listen to the church/elders, he is to be treated as an unbeliever.
 - i. Three purposes of church discipline
 - A) To protect the honor of Christ (1 Peter 1:14-16).
 - B) To preserve the purity of the church so that others are not led into sin by the offender (1 Corinthians 5:6-7).
 - C) To restore the offender, leading him to repentance, faith, and usefulness to God (Galatians 6:1).

D. Go and Be Reconciled

- 1. Forgiveness is not an end in itself, it is a means to a new and better relationship.



Illustrations from *From Forgiven to Forgiving* by Jay Adams

- 2. Forgive as God forgave you

Ephesians 4:32—“Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.”

- a. Not a feeling, or forgetting, or excusing
- b. Forgiveness is a decision
 - i. It is an act of the will
 - ii. It is grounded in God’s forgiveness of us

- A) Sin causes separation—“Your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden His face from you so that He will not hear”
Isaiah 59:2
 - B) Forgiveness restores this separation—“But now in Christ Jesus you who were once far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ”
Ephesians 2:13.
- c. Forgiveness makes four promises
- i. #1 “I promise that I will not dwell on this incident.”
 - iii. #2 “I promise that I will not bring this incident up and use it against you.”
 - iv. #3 “I promise that I will not talk to others about this incident.”
 - v. #4 “I promise that I will not allow this incident to stand between us or hinder our personal relationship.
3. Ideal biblical response to others’ sin
- a. Making Promise #1
 - i. Unconditional—This is a commitment out of obedience to God.
 - ii. Immediate—No dwelling or brooding, root of bitterness (Proverbs 10:12).
 - b. Making Promises #2-4 are conditional upon repentance
 - i. Conditional upon the offender’s confession and repentance.
 - ii. Minor offenses may be covered (1 Peter 4:8).
 - iii. Major offenses with no repentance leave you in a “position” of forgiveness.
4. Helpful Resources:
- a. Booklet: “Communication and Conflict Resolution” by Dr. Stuart Scott
 - b. Book: *From Forgiven to Forgiving* by Jay Adams
 - c. Book: *The Peacemaker* by Ken Sande
 - d. Sermon Series*: “God’s Design for Marriage” by John Marc Wiemann
 - e. Sermon Series* “The Meaning of Marriage” by Dr. John Street

*Sermons found at www.cornerstoneca.org

CONFLICT PREVENTION AND RESOLUTION INVENTORY

Wayne A. Mack

1. How have you been doing in terms of looking at disagreements from a biblical perspective?
 - a. Do you understand that disagreements are inevitable?
Always = 4: often = 3: Sometimes = 2: Seldom = 1: Never = 0
 - b. Do you really believe that disagreements don't need to turn into conflicts?
Always = 4: often = 3: Sometimes = 2: Seldom = 1: Never = 0
 - c. Do you really believe that disagreements can be beneficial?
Always = 4: often = 3: Sometimes = 2: Seldom = 1: Never = 0
 - d. Are you convinced that conflicts may be resolved if you respond to them God's way?
Always = 4: often = 3: Sometimes = 2: Seldom = 1: Never = 0
2. Do you recognize that most of your conflicts develop because of sinful selfishness?
 - a. Do you think about the things you would like to have, things you want or strongly desire, things that would bring you pleasure that involve other people?
Always = 4: often = 3: Sometimes = 2: Seldom = 1: Never = 0
 - b. Do you think there are things you deserve to have from others, things that are your right to receive?
Always = 4: often = 3: Sometimes = 2: Seldom = 1: Never = 0
 - c. Do you think there are things others should do for or give to you, things you should have from others if you are to be satisfied?
Always = 4: often = 3: Sometimes = 2: Seldom = 1: Never = 0
 - d. Do you think there are things you must have from others if you are to be happy?
Always = 4: often = 3: Sometimes = 2: Seldom = 1: Never = 0
3. Is the practical Lordship of Christ a reality in you and your relationship?
 - a. Do you look to Jesus Christ for your standard of right and wrong and are you committed to doing what He says?
Always = 4: often = 3: Sometimes = 2: Seldom = 1: Never = 0
 - b. Are you committed to handling your disagreements His way?
Always = 4: often = 3: Sometimes = 2: Seldom = 1: Never = 0
 - c. Are you committed to fulfilling and furthering His purposes above everything else?
Always = 4: often = 3: Sometimes = 2: Seldom = 1: Never = 0

- d. Do you recognize and function as if you are complete in Christ and therefore you can be content regardless of what others do or how they treat you?
Always = 4: often = 3: Sometimes = 2: Seldom = 1: Never = 0
4. Do you foster an atmosphere in which conflicts are prevented or resolved by manifesting the qualities of diligence, humility, gentleness, patience and forbearance?
- a. Are you diligent in putting off the things that foster conflicts and putting on the things that prevent and resolve conflicts?
Always = 4: often = 3: Sometimes = 2: Seldom = 1: Never = 0
 - b. Is your life characterized by humility?
Always = 4: often = 3: Sometimes = 2: Seldom = 1: Never = 0
 - c. Is your life characterized by gentleness?
Always = 4: often = 3: Sometimes = 2: Seldom = 1: Never = 0
 - d. Is your life characterized by patience?
Always = 4: often = 3: Sometimes = 2: Seldom = 1: Never = 0
 - e. Is your life characterized by forbearance?
Always = 4: often = 3: Sometimes = 2: Seldom = 1: Never = 0

INSTRUCTIONS: Now add up your score to determine your conflict prevention and resolution quotient. Fill in the information requested on the following lines. To verify your evaluation, ask a close friend (perhaps your mate or mate to be) who will be honest with you to fill this inventory out for you and about you. Once you have filled in the information requested on the following lines, identify any items on which you scored 2 or lower and ask God for forgiveness and help; then pray, think and make plans to improve in these areas.

Total Score: _____;
 Number of 4's: _____; Number of 3's: _____; Number of 2's: _____;
 Number of 1's: _____; Number of 0's: _____

Specific items on which you answered 2 or less:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

The Peacemaker's Pledge



The 4 G's of Peacemaking

Glorify God

Instead of focusing on our own desires or dwelling on what others may do, we will rejoice in the Lord and bring him praise by depending on his forgiveness, wisdom, power, and love, as we seek to faithfully obey his commands and maintain a loving, merciful, and forgiving attitude (*Ps. 37:1-6; Mark 11:25; John 14:15; Rom. 12:17-21; 1 Cor. 10:31; Phil. 4:2-9; Col. 3:1-4; James 3:17-18; 4:1-3; 1 Peter 2:12*).

Get the Log Out of Your Eye

Instead of blaming others for a conflict or resisting correction, we will trust in God's mercy and take responsibility for our own contribution to conflicts—confessing our sins to those we have wronged, asking God to help us change any attitudes and habits that lead to conflict, and seeking to repair any harm we have caused (*Prov. 28:13; Matt. 7:3-5; Luke 19:8; Col. 3:5-14; 1 John 1:8-9*).

Gently Restore

Instead of pretending that conflict doesn't exist or talking about others behind their backs, we will overlook minor offenses or we will talk personally and graciously with those whose offenses seem too serious to overlook, seeking to restore them rather than condemn them. When a conflict with a Christian brother or sister cannot be resolved in private, we will ask others in the body of Christ to help us settle the matter in a biblical manner (*Prov. 19:11; Matt. 18:15-20; 1 Cor. 6:1-8; Gal. 6:1-2; Eph. 4:29; 2 Tim. 2:24-26; James 5:9*).

Go and Be Reconciled

Instead of accepting premature compromise or allowing relationships to wither, we will actively pursue genuine peace and reconciliation—forgiving others as God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven us, and seeking just and mutually beneficial solutions to our differences (*Matt. 5:23-24; 6:12; 7:12; Eph. 4:1-3, 32; Phil. 2:3-4*).

A Commitment to Biblical Conflict Resolution

As people reconciled to God by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we believe that we are called to respond to conflict in a way that is remarkably different from the way the world deals with conflict (*Matt. 5:9; Luke 6:27-36; Gal. 5:19-26*). We also believe that conflict provides opportunities to glorify God, serve other people, and grow to be like Christ (*Rom. 8:28-29; 1 Cor. 10:31-11:1; James 1:2-4*). Therefore, in response to God's love and in reliance on his grace, we commit ourselves to responding to conflict according to the following principles.

By God's grace, we will apply these principles as a matter of stewardship, realizing that conflict is an opportunity, not an accident. We will remember that success in God's eyes is not a matter of specific results, but of faithful, dependent obedience. And we will pray that our service as peacemakers will bring praise to our Lord and lead others to know his infinite love (*Matt. 25:14-21; John 13:34-35; Rom. 12:18; 1 Peter 2:19; 4:19*).

The Seven A's of Confession

Matt. 7:3-5; 1 John 1:8-9; Prov. 28:13

- A**DDRESS everyone involved
- A**VOID if, but, and maybe
- A**DMIT specifically
- A**CKNOWLEDGE the hurt
- A**CCEPT the consequences
- A**LTER your behavior
- A**SK for forgiveness

The Four Promises of Forgiveness

Matt. 6:12; 1 Cor. 13:5; Eph. 4:32

- I will not dwell on this incident.
- I will not bring this incident up and use it against you.
- I will not talk to others about this incident.
- I will not allow this incident to stand between us or hinder our personal relationship.

The PAUSE Principle of Negotiating

Phil. 2:3-4; Matt. 7:12

- P**repare
- A**ffirm relationships
- U**nderstand interests
- S**earch for creative solutions
- E**valuate options objectively and reasonably

Building a Culture of Peace in Your Church

Acts 2:42-47; Phil. 1:27; 1 Pet. 5:2-3; Deut. 1:9-18

- Passion for the gospel
- Pastoral leadership
- Peacemaking theology
- Practical assistance

Peacemaking Principles



Responding to Conflict Biblically



**PEACEMAKER
MINISTRIES**

**P.O. Box 81130
Billings, MT 59108**

**406-256-1583 fax 406-256-0001
mail@Peacemaker.net
www.Peacemaker.net**

Our mission is to equip and assist Christians and their churches to respond to conflict biblically. Throughout the world, we provide educational resources, seminars, and training to help churches, seminaries, and parachurch ministries to transform the way their people deal with conflict and build a "culture of peace." We also train and certify conciliators to provide conflict coaching, mediation, and arbitration services to help resolve family conflicts, business disputes, church divisions, and lawsuits in a way that restores relationships and brings glory to God.

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1 UNMET DESIRES AND THE SLIPPERY SLOPE OF Conflict

Harmful conflict is usually triggered by unmet desires. *“What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don’t they come from your desires that battle within you? You want something but don’t get it”* (James 4:1-2). Even good desires can evolve into controlling demands or idols that lead us to judge others and then avoid or punish them until we get what we want (see Luke 10:38-42). This progression often starts with minor differences, but before we know it we’re sliding down a slippery slope of conflict that can drop off in two directions.

2 Escape Responses

People tend to use escape responses when they are more interested in avoiding unpleasant people or situations than in resolving differences.

DENIAL—One way to escape from a conflict is to pretend that a problem does not exist. Another way is to refuse to do what should be done to resolve a conflict properly. These responses bring only temporary relief and usually make matters worse (see 1 Sam. 2:22-25).

FLIGHT—Another way to escape from a conflict is to run away. This may take the form of pulling away from a relationship, quitting a job, filing for divorce, or changing churches. Flight may be legitimate in extreme circumstances (see 1 Sam. 19:9-10), but in most cases it only postpones a proper solution to a problem.

SUICIDE—When people lose all hope of resolving a conflict, they may seek to escape from the situation (or make a desperate cry for help) by attempting to take their own lives (see 1 Sam. 31:4). Suicide is never a right way to deal with conflict.

Peacemaking Responses

Peacemakers are people who breathe grace. Inspired by the gospel, they draw continually on the goodness and power of Jesus Christ, and then breathe out his love, mercy, forgiveness, and wisdom to dissipate anger, improve understanding, promote justice, and model repentance and reconciliation.

PERSONAL PEACEMAKING

There are three biblical ways to resolve conflicts personally and privately, just between you and the other party.

OVERLOOK AN OFFENSE—Many disputes are so insignificant that they should be resolved by quietly overlooking an offense. *“A man’s wisdom gives him patience; it is to his glory to overlook an offense”* (Prov. 19:11). Overlooking an offense is a form of forgiveness, and involves a deliberate decision not to talk about it, dwell on it, or let it grow into pent-up bitterness or anger.

RECONCILIATION—If an offense is too serious to overlook or has damaged our relationship, we need to resolve personal or relational issues through confession, loving correction, and forgiveness. *“[If] your brother has something against you... go and be reconciled”* (Matt. 5:23-24). *“Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently”* (Gal. 6:1; see Matt. 18:15). *“Forgive as the Lord forgave you”* (Col. 3:13).

NEGOTIATION—Even if we successfully resolve relational issues, we may still need to work through material issues related to money, property, or other rights. This should be done through a cooperative bargaining process in which you and the other person seek to reach a settlement that satisfies the legitimate needs of each side. *“Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others”* (Phil. 2:4).

ASSISTED PEACEMAKING

When a dispute cannot be resolved personally, God calls us to seek assistance from other believers.

MEDIATION—If two people cannot reach an agreement in private, they should ask one or more objective outside people to meet with them to help them communicate more effectively and explore possible solutions. *“If he will not listen [to you], take one or two others along”* (Matt. 18:16). The mediators may ask questions and give advice, but the parties retain the responsibility of making the final decision on how to resolve their differences.

ARBITRATION—When you and an opponent cannot come to a voluntary agreement on a material issue, you may appoint one or more arbitrators to listen to your arguments and render a binding decision to settle the issue. *“If you have disputes about such matters, appoint as judges even men of little account in the church”* (1 Cor. 6:4).

ACCOUNTABILITY—If a person who professes to be a Christian wanders from the Lord by refusing to be reconciled and do what is right, Jesus commands church leaders to lovingly intervene to hold him or her accountable to Scripture and to promote repentance, justice, and forgiveness. *“If a man owns a hundred sheep, and one of them wanders away, will he not... go to look for the one that wandered off?... If he refuses to listen... tell it to the church”* (Matt. 18:12,17).

4 THE Gospel—THE KEY TO PEACE

The key to changing the way we deal with conflict is the gospel, the good news that God made peace with us and between us by sending his Son to die for our sins and give us new life through his resurrection (Col. 1:19-20; Eph. 2:14-16). When we believe in Jesus, we receive forgiveness and are united with Christ and one another (Acts 10:43; Phil. 2:1-2). God then begins to transform us into the likeness of his Son, enabling us to break free from sinful escaping and attacking habits and mature into peacemakers who reflect the glory of God’s reconciling love in the midst of conflict (2 Cor. 3:17-18; Col. 3:12-15).

3 Attack Responses

People tend to use attack responses when they are more interested in controlling others and getting their way than in preserving a relationship.

ASSAULT—Some people try to overcome an opponent by using various forms of force or intimidation, such as verbal attacks (including gossip and slander), physical violence, or efforts to damage a person financially or professionally (see Acts 6:8-15). Such conduct always makes conflict worse.

LITIGATION—Although some conflicts may legitimately be taken before a civil judge (see Acts 24:1-26:32; Rom. 13:1-5), lawsuits usually damage relationships, diminish our Christian witness, and often fail to achieve complete justice. This is why Christians are commanded to make every effort to settle their differences within the church rather than in the civil courts (see 1 Cor. 6:1-8; Matt. 5:25-26).

MURDER—In extreme cases, people may be so desperate to win a dispute that they will try to kill those who oppose them (see Acts 7:54-58). While most people would not actually kill someone, we still stand guilty of murder in God’s eyes when we harbor anger or contempt in our hearts toward others (see 1 John 3:15; Matt. 5:21-22).

