

**WHERE'S YOUR HEART?**

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CONFLICT: A serious disagreement that leads to disharmony.

We live in a fallen world and one of the consequences of sin is conflict.

The entire Bible is a story of conflict and conflict resolution → REDEMPTION.

Outline:

1. First conflict before the beginning of time
2. Root of conflict
3. Example of a conflict in the Bible
4. What God's Word says about conflict
5. Tools to use for conflict resolution

**I. First Conflict:** Ezekiel 28:13-14, Isaiah 14:12-14, Rev. 12:7-9, Luke 10:18.

**II. Root of first conflict:** Pride, Entitlement, Sense of Injustice

The greatest commandment says...

*Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength.*

The greatest commandment is to deny yourself and love God with your entire being. It's a conflict between our flesh and our spirit.

A battle between two dogs.

**III. Conflict in the Bible.**

- Abram and Lot
- Sarah and Hagar
- Jacob's wives – Rachel and Leah
- Aaron and Miriam with Moses
- King Saul and David
- Disagreements between disciples
- Jesus and Judas
- Jewish and Greek believers
- Peter with Ananias and Sapphira
- Paul and Peter
- Saul and Barnabus

Acts 13:2-3,13; Acts15:36-40 (ESV)

*<sup>36</sup>Some time later Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us go back and visit the believers in all the towns where we preached the word of the Lord and see how they are doing." <sup>37</sup>Barnabas wanted to take John, also called Mark, with them, <sup>38</sup>but Paul did not think it wise to take him, because he had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not continued with them in the work. <sup>39</sup>They had such a **sharp disagreement** (conflict) that they parted company. Barnabas took Mark and sailed for Cyprus, <sup>40</sup>but Paul chose Silas and left, commended by the believers to the grace of the Lord.*

**IV. What God's Word says about Conflict:**

Rom. 12:18 (NKJ)

*<sup>18</sup> If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.*

1 Corinthians 4:5 (NLT)

*So don't make judgments about anyone ahead of time—before the Lord returns. For he will bring our darkest secrets to light and will reveal our private motives. Then God will give to each one whatever praise is due.*

Eph. 4:31-32 (NLT)

*<sup>31</sup> Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of evil behavior. <sup>32</sup> Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you.*

Col. 3:13-14 (NLT)

*<sup>13</sup> Make allowance for each other's faults and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others. <sup>14</sup> Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds us all together in perfect harmony.*

Gal. 2:20 (NLT)

*<sup>20</sup> My old self has been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So, I live in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*

SUMMARIZE: How God uses CONFLICT to transform us:

1. Strive to live peaceably with all people
1. Don't judge others
2. Get rid of bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words and evil behaviors
3. Forgive those who hurt and offend you
  - a. Unforgiveness is like drinking poison and expecting the other person to die.
4. Allow others to make mistakes and extend grace
5. Partner with Christ to crucify the flesh, (black dog) and feed your spirit (white dog)

**V. TOOLS for Conflict Resolution:**

When you find yourself in conflict with another person:

***From the Spiritual Side:***

1. Examine your heart and motives. Where's your heart?
  - a. Look for pride, entitlement and a sense of injustice

- b. Ask yourself, "Is this a hill I'm willing to die on? Am I willing to sacrifice this relationship over this issue?"
2. Allow God to speak to your heart and for Him to be the Judge
3. Post some of these scriptures on your mirror and practice them.

***From a Practical Side:***

1. Communication, communication, communication!!!
  - a. Direct communication with the person is much more effective than sending a text, banging on the wall, throwing a rock, or complaining to everyone else.
  - b. Use "I" statements to avoid blaming
    - i. I feel hurt when we argue. My heart hurts. I want to work things out.
    - ii. Tell me how you see the issue between us.
  - c. Use reflective listening\*\*
    - i. What I hear you saying is...
    - ii. Is that right?
  - d. Don't use generalizations
    - i. You ALWAYS, you NEVER!
2. Listen to HEAR and not to respond
  - a. This means zip your lip and truly hear what they have to say
  - b. It also means showing empathy and putting yourself in their shoes and trying to see things from their perspective
  - c. Ask yourself, "What do I want them to hear?"
    - i. Does what you're saying say the thing you want them to hear?
    - ii. Be clear and ask for understanding.
3. Choose a good time
  - a. Not exhausted or hungry
  - b. Find a quiet, private place where you both are comfortable and undisturbed.
4. Plan ahead
  - a. Think about what you are going to say. Explain what the problem is and how it affects you.  
-Use "I" statements instead of "You."
5. Work on a solution together
  - a. Compromise – find middle ground where you both feel heard and satisfied with the outcome – even if it's not the perfect solution.
    - i. Sometimes you have to agree to disagree
  - b. Collaborate to find a mutually beneficial outcome – look for a win-win solution.

**RESOURCES:**

- Crucial Conversations by Kerry Patterson, Joseph Grenny, Ron McMillian, Al Switzler
- Emotionally Healthy Spirituality by Peter Scarzzero
- <https://faithinthedivine.com/biblical-conflict-resolution-steps/>

**\*\*How to Use Reflective Listening to Improve Relationships**

When people allow each other to talk without interruption, they encourage each other to express themselves more fully and on a deeper level. When both are allowed to deeply express themselves, then they will feel a greater sense of emotional connection.

It is hard to be mad at someone when you are having a positive emotional connection with him or her.

**When to Use It**

Try to use it before an argument escalates. A rule might be... when either of us raises our voice to each other, feels like leaving, or shuts a door, we'll use reflective listening.

**Basic Rules**

1. One person talks without interruption for a short time, usually around 5 minutes or less.
2. The listener repeats back the main points and then asks if the summary missed anything or got any information wrong. When repeating, don't try to interpret, just state back what the other person actually said. When finished, the listener asks, "Did I get that right?"
3. If needed, the speaker clarifies any incorrect or missed items; however, at this step he or she does not get to add on things that were missed or that the speaker wished he or she had said.
4. Then, the listener again repeats back for clarification.
5. After accurately repeating, the listener becomes the speaker and the process continues, with the partners swapping roles in turn, until reaching a conclusion.
6. Allow as much time as needed, often up to an hour. It will usually come to an end naturally.

The process is often successful when the argument becomes less important, because ultimately the true problem is not about what the argument originally surfaced about. It's not about who has more junk in the garage or whether we should go willingly go to the in-laws for Christmas. **But it is about: Do you understand me? Do you care about what I say and feel?**

When you both feel understood and cared for, you'll both feel part of the same team and will be able to work together to find a solution to the garage or the in-law Christmas dilemma.

**Suggestions:**

Do not do this while multitasking.

**Both be seated.**

In deciding how long a speaker should hold the floor, they agree ahead of time that the listener will suggest an end time when they feel that the person has said as much as can be remembered and repeated. In order for this not to feel like an interruption agree on a hand signal such as a "t" time out signal.

Some people will do better to have a pencil and paper to jot down words that will help them remember the main points of what the speaker is saying.

**Change is hard.**

It can feel awkward to use Reflective Listening. It takes practice not only to get skilled at using it as a tool, but also to get the courage to actually stop an argument in mid flare up and give it a try. People often discover that they have not previously been listening in order to understand, but in order to rebut.

**Here's a structured approach to handling conflict when the other person is unwilling or abusive:****1. Seek God's Guidance First**

- Pray for discernment and strength (James 1:5).
- Ask God to reveal the best course of action for your safety and well-being.
- Meditate on scriptures that emphasize peace and wisdom (Proverbs 3:5-6).

**2. Establish Boundaries Rooted in Biblical Truth**

- Jesus set boundaries, even walking away from hostile situations (Luke 4:28-30).
- Clearly define what behavior is unacceptable while maintaining a spirit of love.
- If necessary, limit engagement with the person to protect your emotional and spiritual health.

**3. Avoid Escalation While Standing Firm**

- Respond with grace but do not tolerate abuse (Ephesians 4:29).
- If the conversation turns hostile, disengage peacefully.
- Use firm yet loving statements like, "I am willing to talk when we can do so respectfully."

**4. Seek Wise Counsel and Support**

- Confide in a trusted pastor, mentor, or Christian counselor (Proverbs 11:14).
- If the relationship is abusive, seek guidance from church leaders or professionals.
- Document incidents if needed for accountability and protection.

**5. Decide on Next Steps with Biblical Wisdom**

- If reconciliation is impossible, consider whether continuing the relationship is healthy (2 Corinthians 6:14).
- If necessary, create an exit strategy to remove yourself from toxic dynamics.
- Focus on healing through prayer, scripture, and Christian community.

Conflict resolution in abusive situations is not about compromise—it's about ensuring safety and honoring God's call to live in peace.

Here is a website with more information and tools from a Christian perspective:

**<https://faithinthedivine.com/biblical-conflict-resolution-steps/>**