

CONFLICT

Among the Sheep

Our God is called the God of peace. Jesus is the Prince of peace. Through our Lord Jesus Christ we have peace with God. Peacemakers shall be called the children of God. Jesus said He would leave His peace with His disciples. It is good and pleasant for brethren to dwell together in unity. We are to endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Peace is part of the fruit of the Spirit. As much as possible, we are to live peaceably with all men. The wisdom that is from above is peaceable. Paul often opened or closed his letters with a blessing of “grace and peace”. We are to pray for all in authority that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life. It is plain that God wants us to resolve conflict well.

Causes of Conflict

Our Enemy Satan is the accuser of the brethren and delights to sow discord among the brethren. He wants to use us against each other.

Pride: failing to be objective and thinking of ourselves more highly than we ought to think
Only by pride cometh contention: but with the well advised is wisdom. – Prov. 13:10
And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest.
– Luke 22:24

Difference of opinion: believing our way is the only way

We can disagree agreeably. Differences are not things to leave a church over. We have different perspectives as unique members of the body. However, we are all subject to the head, and can act as one. God requires unity, not uniformity. We have a common cause and a common enemy. Leaving because the vote did not go our way somewhat defeats the purpose of the vote. What if every time the one you wanted as president of the country was not elected you left the country? Doctrinal error, uncorrected moral impropriety, and dishonest financial dealings are things that precipitate leaving a church. Leaving a church is a very big deal, like amputation, and should not be done lightly.

Focusing on non-essentials: placing more importance on an issue than God does

Gossip: discussing edgy situations with no intent to edify or solve problems

Improper judgment: incorrectly assessing a situation because of bias or lack of information

Nosiness: being comfortably concerned with others’ problems rather than our own

Our children: blindly supporting our offspring regardless of the facts or the motives of others

Over-sensitivity: prematurely attributing bad motives to others and carefully defending our imagined rights

Partisanship: giving loyalty that belongs to Christ to an institution [college, camp, fellowship, mission board] or individual.

Personality clash: discrediting a person's content because of his delivery

Selfishness: seeking the best for ourselves

Thoughtlessness: not considering the perspective and feelings of others

Lust: an inordinate desire for something not lawfully ours

From whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? – James 4:1

Bitterness: desiring revenge on one who has hurt us

Greed: desiring excess material (money) or immaterial (power) things for ourselves

Hatred: desiring evil for another

Insubordination: desiring others to submit to us but not submitting myself to others

Jealousy: desiring what God has given to another

Prevention of Conflict

Spirit-controlled living

This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. – Gal. 5:16

The Holy Spirit will not lead us to attack others whom He indwells.

Loving Humility

Remember that neither you nor the other persons involved are perfect and desire the best for others. Realize that there is almost certainly at least a grain of truth in every criticism or accusation. Learn from everyone. Do not excuse your sin with how small it may seem or how big others' sin may seem. You are responsible for yourself.

Fulfill ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.

Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. – Phil. 2:2-4

Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honor preferring one another;

– Rom. 12:10

For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another. – Gal. 5:13-15

Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; Beareth all things, believeth all

things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. – I Cor. 13 :4-7

A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another. – John 13:34, 35

Contentment

Be satisfied with the spiritual riches you have in Christ and do not seek what God has lovingly withheld from you.

But godliness with contentment is great gain – I Tim. 6:6

Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. – Heb. 13:5

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. – I John 2:15

Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do? Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou me. – John 21:21, 22

Resolution of Conflict

We should seek to glorify God in the way we handle conflict. Do not glorify another person by being afraid of them (Prov. 29:25). Do not glorify yourself by insisting on your own way (Jn. 5:30; 8:29). Glorify God by trusting Him and obeying Him regardless of the immediate outcome.

Internal

Choose to overlook someone's fault by completely forgiving him without mentioning it to anyone else.

Hatred stirreth up strifes: but love covereth all sins. – Prov. 10:12

He that covereth a transgression seeketh love; but he that repeateth a matter separateth very friends. – Prov. 17:9

And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins. – I Pet. 4:8

Personal

Tactfully, humbly, sincerely, discreetly approach the person who has hurt you or whom you have hurt for the purpose of restoring damaged fellowship without being defensive.

Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him. – Luke 17:3, 4

Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought

against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift. – Matt. 5:23, 24

Corporal

If internal and personal methods do not result in restoration, prayerfully seek the help of others in a continued, sincere effort to restore fellowship.

Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican. – Matt. 18: 15-17

Approach your deacon and fill out a conflict resolution form.

Your deacon will work with the other member's deacon to bring restoration. If necessary, your deacon will bring the matter to the pastor and possibly to the church body.

Forgiveness of Conflict

Forgiveness is an act of the will accepting the consequences of a person's behavior without desiring or requiring their punishment. It lets the other person out of your heart's prison.

Forgiveness is not denying the problem or running away from it. This baggage will encumber us and inhibit future usefulness.

And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour. – Eph 4:32-5:2

For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. – Matt. 6:14, 15

Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven. – Matt. 18:21, 22

And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses. – Matt. 18:34, 35

Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do... – Luke 23 :34

RECOMMENDED READING: *The Peacemaker* by Ken Sande