

Lesson 4 – Resolving Conflict at Bible Way

Introduction

Being part of a Bible-believing church does not mean the absence of conflict. As humans, we experience misunderstandings and differences in values. The Bible acknowledges that conflict is not inherently bad, but our responses can make it harmful. Christ's work on the cross shapes how we should handle conflict—through grace, truth, and a commitment to reconciliation.

I. Honoring God in Conflict

1 Corinthians 10:31 (KJV)

³¹Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.

2 Corinthians 5:9 (NET)

⁹So then whether we are alive or away, we make it our ambition to please him.

Romans 12:18 (KJV)

¹⁸If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.

The primary question in any conflict should be: "How can I glorify God in this situation?" While some conflicts may be resolved and peace restored, others may not. The apostle Paul acknowledges that peace is not always possible but emphasizes that success lies in *obedience to biblical truth* rather than in the outcome.

Personal Responsibility

- Ask: "Have I contributed to this conflict?"

- **Matthew 7:5 (KJV)**

⁵Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.

- Sin blinds us to our own faults

- **James 4:1-2 (NET)**

¹Where do the conflicts and where do the quarrels among you come from? Is it not from this, from your passions that battle inside you? ²You desire and you do not have; you murder and envy and you cannot obtain; you quarrel and fight...

- If we are in the wrong, we must seek forgiveness

II. Taking Responsibility for Resolution

The Bible places the responsibility of conflict resolution on us.

When Offended: Follow Matthew 18:15-17

1. **Go Alone** – The first step is to approach the offender privately. Many make the mistake of venting to friends for sympathy, which leads to gossip rather than resolution. The goal is to *win a brother or sister*, not an argument. Approach with humility and love, listening before speaking.
 - "Between thee and him alone"

- **James 1:19 (KJV)**

¹⁹Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath:

- **Proverbs 18:13 (KJV)**

¹³He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him.

2. **Go with Another** – If the offender does not listen, bring a neutral mediator. This ensures fairness and expands possibilities for resolution.

- "Take with thee one or two more"

- **Galatians 6:1 (KJV)**

¹Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault (i.e., *caught in some transgression*), ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.

3. **Take It to the Assembly** – If the conflict remains unresolved, the assembly in some way ought to get involved. The goal remains reconciliation, not punishment.

- "Tell it to the assembly"

- **1 Corinthians 5:5 (NET)**

⁵hand this man over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord.

When We Have Offended: Follow Matthew 5:23-24

1. **Reconciliation is a Prerequisite for Worship**

- Worship is not merely about external acts but requires a heart at peace with others.
- Unresolved conflict can hinder our relationship with God.

- **Isaiah 1:15-17 (NET)**

¹⁵When you spread out your hands in prayer, I look the other way; when you offer your many prayers, I do not listen, because your hands are covered with blood. ¹⁶Wash! Cleanse yourselves! Remove your sinful deeds from my sight. Stop sinning. ¹⁷Learn to do what is right. Promote justice. Give the oppressed reason to celebrate. Take up the cause of the orphan. Defend the rights of the widow.

- **1 John 4:20 (KJV)**

²⁰If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?

2. **The Urgency of Reconciliation**

- Jesus commands immediate action—your worship rituals mean nothing to God until you have sought peace with your brother.
- "Be reconciled" is both imperative and passive
- Intensification of the law (vv. 21–22)
- Just as sacrifices in the Old Testament required purity, our spiritual offerings must come from a heart that seeks purity.

- **Psalms 24:3-4 (KJV)**

³Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? or who shall stand in his holy place? ⁴He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully.

3. **Taking Initiative in Conflict Resolution**

- Unlike Matthew 18:15-17, which instructs the offended party to initiate, Matthew 5:23-24 calls the offender to act first.
- This proactive approach aligns with Christ's ministry—God took the initiative to reconcile us through Christ.
 - **2 Corinthians 5:18-19 (NET)**
¹⁸And all these things are from God who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and who has given us the ministry of reconciliation. ¹⁹In other words, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting people's trespasses against them, and he has given us the message of reconciliation.
- The pursuit of peace is not optional. It is a very reflection of the gospel message, and is a vital expression of Christ-like love and obedience to His commands.

4. Biblical Steps to Seeking Reconciliation

- **Recognize the offense:** Acknowledge wrongdoing and avoid justification.
 - **Proverbs 28:13 (KJV)**
¹³He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.
- **Go directly to the person:** Address the matter privately before involving others.
 - **Proverbs 25:9 (KJV)**
⁹Debate thy cause with thy neighbour himself; and discover not a secret to another:
- **Confess with sincerity:** Follow biblical principles of confession.
 - **James 5:16 (KJV)**
¹⁶Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

5. The Role of Humility and Sincerity

- A contrite heart is essential.
 - **Psalms 51:17 (KJV)**
¹⁷The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.
- True reconciliation is not about proving a point but restoring unity in Christ.
 - **Colossians 3:12-15 (NET)**
¹²Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with a heart of mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, ¹³bearing with one another and forgiving one another, if someone happens to have a complaint against anyone else. Just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also forgive others. ¹⁴And to all these virtues add love, which is the perfect bond. ¹⁵Let the peace of Christ be in control in your heart (for you were in fact called as one body to this peace), and be thankful.
- The goal is not mere conflict resolution but a demonstration of gospel-centered love and obedience to Christ's command.
 - **John 13:34-35 (KJV)**
³⁴A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. ³⁵By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.

III. Practicing Forgiveness

³² And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

Ephesians 4:32 - KJV

Forgiveness is not a feeling or excusing wrongdoing; it is a decision based on God's example. Peter asked Jesus how often he should forgive—Jesus' response (70x7) emphasized limitless forgiveness.

The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant (Matthew 18:21-35)

- A servant forgiven an unpayable debt refused to forgive a small, payable one.
- Jesus illustrates that *unforgiveness imprisons the heart*, making the offender miserable.
- Refusing to forgive calls our own salvation into question (Matthew 6:14-15).

Conclusion

Unresolved conflict robs God of His glory, hinders ministry, and weakens the church. True biblical reconciliation involves:

- Seeking peace as far as it depends on us (Romans 12:18)
- Following Christ's model of forgiveness
- Upholding truth while pursuing restoration

Handling conflict biblically transforms not only relationships but also reflects the gospel's power in our lives. Let us commit to being peacemakers who breathe grace, rather than peace-fakers or peace-breakers.