

# A Biblical View of Conflict and Its Resolution

---

Week 3

The consequence is numberless  
disputes and conflicts

Led by Michael Holloway

<http://www.calvaryrpc.org/SundaySchool/>  
<http://www.logicteacher.com/conflict/>

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from the updated New American Standard Bible

# Class Goals

---

- To understand what the Bible says (both explicitly and by implication) about conflict
- To learn how to distinguish between necessary and unnecessary conflict
- To learn practical, biblically-acceptable methods for resolving conflict

# Your Assignment was ...

---

- Homework — Think about some conflict that you've had in the past. What were the reasons for this conflict?

# The Class So Far ...

---

- Week 1: Introduction & Overview
- Week 2: Internal conflict
  - ▶ Response to internal conflict shapes how we are likely to respond to conflict with others
  - ▶ Internal conflicts often involve
    - Sin
    - Choices
    - Desires
    - History
  - ▶ Scripture provides guidance on how to resolve these internal conflicts

# Possible Initiators

---

- Misunderstandings
  - ▶ Failure to communicate properly
  - ▶ Ignorance
- Relevant differences
  - ▶ Personality, interests, opinions
  - ▶ Priorities, goals, expectations
- Competition for limited resources
  - ▶ Particularly causal in organizational conflicts
- Sinful attitudes & actions

# Origin of Conflict

---

- The root of conflict is “unmet desires”
- These desires may be bad in themselves
  - ▶ **James 4:1-3** What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? (2) You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask. (3) You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend *it* on your pleasures.
  - ▶ **Matthew 15:19** For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders.
- Or they may be fine in themselves
  - ▶ A loving spouse
  - ▶ Obedient children
  - ▶ People to keep promises
  - ▶ ...

# Descent into Conflict

---

## ■ Desire → Demand

A few questions to consider:

Am I so preoccupied with something that it is the first thing on my mind the morning, and last thing at night?

When a certain desire is not met, do I feel frustrated, anxious, resentful, bitter, angry, or depressed?

Is there something that I desire so much that I am willing to disappoint or hurt others in order to have it?

How would I answer the question: “If only \_\_\_\_\_, then I’d be happy and content”?

# Descent into Conflict

---

- **Desire → Demand → Judge**

Sinful judging “is characterized by a feeling of superiority, indignation, condemnation, bitterness, or resentment. Sinful judging often involves speculating on others’ motives. Most of all, it reveals the absence of a genuine love and concern toward them.”

“The closer we are to others, the more we expect of them, and the more likely we are to judge them when they fail to meet our expectations.”

# Descent into Conflict

---

- **Desire → Demand → Judge → Punish**

“Whether deliberately or unconsciously, we will find ways to hurt or punish people so that they will give in to our desires.”

Hurtful words  
Destroying reputations  
Physical violence  
Withdrawing from a relationship  
...

# Theological Conflicts

---

- For theological conflicts, I think another way of looking at the cause of conflicts may be more appropriate
- Ideas are not fully developed, but
  - ▶ They may provide useful insight into how some unnecessary theological conflicts occur
  - ▶ They also may help us avoid sinful pride in our theological knowledge

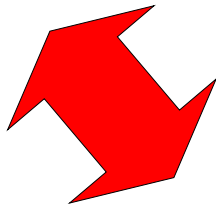
# Correct Understanding

---

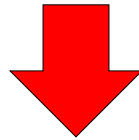
God's Word is  
infallible and inerrant



That which disagrees  
with God's Word is  
erroneous



Believing erroneous  
ideas is sinful



I should seek to  
correct those with  
sinful ideas

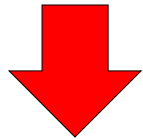
# A Subtle Transformation

---

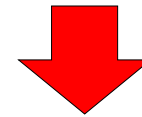
God's Word is  
infallible and inerrant



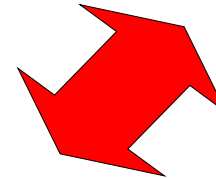
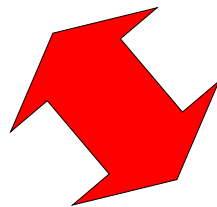
**My understanding of**  
God's Word is infallible  
and inerrant



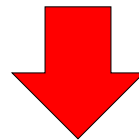
That which disagrees  
with God's Word is  
erroneous



That which disagrees with  
**my understanding of**  
God's Word is erroneous



Believing erroneous  
ideas is sinful



I should seek to  
correct those with  
sinful ideas

# Results

---



**COMPROMISE**

LET'S AGREE TO RESPECT EACH OTHER'S VIEWS,  
NO MATTER HOW WRONG YOURS MAY BE.

[www.despair.com](http://www.despair.com)

# Some Reasons This Happens

---

- Thinking every question must have *one and only one* correct answer
- Not recognizing how uncertainty builds up in long chains of inferences
  - ▶  $90\% \times 90\% \times 90\% \times 90\% \times 90\% \times 90\% \times 90\% = 47.8\%$
- Not even recognizing that there is some uncertainty in our inferences
  - ▶ Conclusions once reached become “the only possible” conclusion
  - ▶ Tendency to attribute the same level of confidence to every conclusion we reach, or belief we hold

# How confident are you that ...

---

- Jesus is the only way of salvation
- The Presbyterian system of church government is the only Biblically correct one
- Theonomy is an incorrect understanding of the Old Testament law
- Schaefferian apologetics is the best approach
- Contemporary music is not as worshipful as old music
- Infants of believers should be baptized
- Women should not serve as deacons
- The Bible is the ultimate authority for all matters of faith and practice

# Levels of Confidence

---

- Perhaps being aware of the appropriate level of confidence for our various beliefs may be helpful
- One approach is to consider the standards of proof in our legal system
  - ▶ Beyond a reasonable doubt
  - ▶ By clear and convincing evidence
  - ▶ By a preponderance of the evidence
- Suggest adding one more
  - ▶ Absolutely necessary

# Items Discussed Today

---

- Possible initiators of conflict
- Unmet desires as root of much conflict
  - ▶ Desire → demand → judge → punish
  - ▶ Questions to help determine desires that might lead to conflict for us
- Some thoughts on theological conflicts
  - ▶ Appropriating inerrancy for ourselves
  - ▶ Not recognizing differing levels of confidence
  - ▶ Proposal for thinking about confidence levels

# For Next Week

---

- Homework — (1) If you have a copy of *The Peace Maker*, read chapter 5; (2) Think about specific theological conflicts you have with others in the terms we discussed today
- Lesson — “Continually coming into conflict”, led by Sam Derr

Note: Lesson title comes from Washington Irving, *The Adventures of Captain Bonneville*, Chapter 2  
The consequence is numberless disputes and conflicts between them and the bee hunters: and often a party of the latter, returning, laden with rich spoil, from one of their forays, are apt to be waylaid by the native lords of the soil; their honey to be seized, their harness cut to pieces, and themselves left to find their way home the best way they can, happy to escape with no greater personal harm than a sound rib-roasting.