

A Biblical View of Conflict and Its Resolution

Week 7

Those dreadful enemies of mankind
called words

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.

Some material is based on *The Peace Maker*, by Ken Sande.

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 —

(1) Identify any conflicts that you are currently trying to escape

(2) Identify any offenses that you have denied, rather than overlooked.

The Class So Far ...

- Week 1: Introduction & Overview
- Week 2: Internal conflict
- Week 3: Reasons for conflict
- Week 4: Conflicts in history (led by Sam)
- Week 5: Conflict as opportunity
- Week 6: Response to conflict: Escape
 - ▶ 3 main categories: Escape, Escalate, Resolve
 - ▶ Particular manifestations of the escape response
 - ▶ Difference between overlooking and denying

Responses to Conflict

- Three main categories of responses:
 - ▶ Attempting to **escape** the conflict Last Week
 - ▶ Attempting to **escalate** the conflict Today, 1/22
 - ▶ Attempting to **resolve** the conflict Jan 29, Feb
- Ken Sande refers to these as
 - ▶ Peace·faking
 - ▶ Peace·breaking
 - ▶ Peace·making

Escalating

- Verbal Escalation

- ▶ Direct: put downs, yelling, obscenities
- ▶ Indirect: gossip, slander

- Extra-Verbal Escalation

- ▶ Physical: slapping, hitting, fighting, murder
- ▶ Getting others onto your side
- ▶ Litigation

Sande calls these **attack responses**, and has three types: assault, litigation, and murder

Some Basics

- The Bible teaches that
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Pro 20:19 He who goes about as a slanderer reveals secrets, Therefore do not associate with a gossip.

Rom 1:28-32 And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper, (29) being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; *they are* gossips, (30) slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, (31) without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful; (32) and although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them.

Col 4:6 Let your speech always be with grace, *as though* seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person.

Eph 4:29 Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such *a word* as is good for edification according to the need *of the moment*, so that it will give grace to those who hear.

Eph 4:15 but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all *aspects* into Him who is the head, *even* Christ

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Example: Ignorant

Denotation: lacking education or knowledge

Connotation: stupid, having a low IQ

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- Words have both
 - ▶ Denotation: defined meaning
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- Shared meaning is essential to good communication
 - ▶ Many conflicts are initiated and escalated by people using words differently
 - ▶ Be sure you **understand** before deciding that you **disagree**

A Case Study

Claire and Kate are neighbors. Their daughters, Lucy and Susan, are good friends. Several nights ago, Lucy and Susan were supposed to study together for an algebra test at Susan's house. They ended up watching a tape of the BBC version of *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, and a new episode of *Lost* instead.

Their algebra teacher returned the graded tests today. Lucy got a 68 and Susan a 70, which is quite a bit lower than their usual grades. As soon as Claire saw Lucy's grade, she marched over to Kate's house to have a talk with her.

Watch & listen to the results.

Questions to Consider

- Did verbal escalation of conflict occur?
 - ▶ By whom?
 - ▶ What words contributed?
- How might Kate have responded differently to Claire's words?
- How could Claire have spoken differently?
- Have you ever done something like this?

To Avoid Verbal Escalation

■ When you speak

- ▶ Do not just *assume* you have been understood; be sure that you have
- ▶ Avoid unnecessarily offensive words
- ▶ Minimize your use of adjectives and adverbs

■ When you listen

- ▶ Do not presume that all words are being used in the same way that you use them; seek clarification
- ▶ Try to overlook offensive words; alternatively, address them immediately
- ▶ Concentrate on the nouns and verbs being spoken

Items Discussed Today

- Two categories of escalation responses
 - ▶ Verbal escalation
 - ▶ Extra-verbal escalation
- Basics about verbal escalation
- Some suggestions for avoiding escalating a conflict by our words

For Next Week

- Homework — (1) Think about whether the words that you use during conflicts tend to escalate the conflicts; (2) Evaluate your propensity for adjective/adverb use.
- Lesson — “Some murderous conflict may well come to pass”

Note: Lesson title comes from Jonathan Edwards, "Miscellanies #4":
O, how is the world darkened, clouded, distracted, and torn to pieces by those dreadful enemies of mankind called words.