

A Biblical View of Conflict and Its Resolution

Week 10

The conflict being thus necessarily terminated

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

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: Bad responses to conflict: Escape
- Weeks 7-8: Bad responses to conflict: Escalation
- Week 9: Towards Resolution
 - ▶ Categories of resolving responses
 - ▶ Getting the log out your own eye
 - ▶ Overlooking an offense

Your Assignment was ...

- Homework —

(1) Examine yourself to see if you have any logs in your eyes relative to current conflicts

(2) Send to **conflict@logicteacher.com** short descriptions of specific, fictitious conflicts that you'd like for us to discuss how to resolve

Results Thus Far

■ Previous

- ▶ What if one CRPC member were to see another CRPC member shoplifting steaks at Walmart? Should that person: A) Tell the manager immediately, B) Confront the person, C) Tell the elders, D) Pray that the person be cursed by God, or E) Fuggetta Boudit?
- ▶ While teaching a Sunday School class, Barry talked about an incident in which his wife and daughter behaved improperly. He did not ask their permission or warn them in advance. His wife, Jill, did not mind, but his daughter, Angie, was offended. What should Barry do?

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■ New this week

- ▶ Jennifer has a close friend, Samantha, who has had a long-standing conflict with a mutual acquaintance, Angie. Almost every time that Samantha and Jennifer talk, Samantha talks about Angie in disparaging terms. What should Jennifer do?
- ▶ Kenneth and Timothy used to be close friends. Now they are not. Does this necessarily mean that there is some unresolved that they should deal with?

Resolving Responses

- Involving just those in the conflict
 - ▶ Overlooking an offense
 - ▶ Reconciliation
 - ▶ Negotiation

- Getting help from others
 - ▶ Mediation
 - ▶ Arbitration

Matthew 18:15-17 (typical view)

At that time the disciples came to Jesus and said, "Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" (2) And He called a child to Himself and set him before them, (3) and said, "Truly I say to you, unless you are converted and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven. (4) Whoever then humbles himself as this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. (5) And whoever receives one such child in My name receives Me; (6) but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him to have a heavy millstone hung around his neck, and to be drowned in the depth of the sea. (7) Woe to the world because of *its* stumbling blocks! For it is inevitable that stumbling blocks come; but woe to that man through whom the stumbling block comes! (8) If your hand or your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it from you; it is better for you to enter life crippled or lame, than to have two hands or two feet and be cast into the eternal fire. (9) If your eye causes you to stumble, pluck it out and throw it from you. It is better for you to enter life with one eye, than to have two eyes and be cast into the fiery hell. (10) See that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that their angels in heaven continually see the face of My Father who is in heaven. (11) [For the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost.] (12) What do you think? If any man has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go and search for the one that is straying? (13) If it turns out that he finds it, truly I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine which have not gone astray. (14) So it is not *the*

will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones perish. **(15) If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother. (16) But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that BY THE MOUTH OF TWO OR THREE WITNESSES EVERY FACT MAY BE CONFIRMED. (17) If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.** (18) Truly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall

have been bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven. (19) Again I say to you, that if two of you agree on earth about anything that they may ask, it shall be done for them by My Father who is in heaven. (20) For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst. (21) Then Peter came and said to Him, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" (22) Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven. (23) For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. (24) When he had begun to settle *them*, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him. (25) But since he did not have *the means* to repay, his lord commanded him to be sold, along with his wife and children and all that he had, and repayment to be made. (26) So the slave fell *to the ground* and prostrated himself before him, saying, 'Have patience with me and I will repay you everything.' (27) And the lord of that slave felt compassion and released him and forgave him the debt. (28) But that slave went out and found one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and he seized him and *began* to choke *him*, saying, 'Pay back what you owe.' (29) So his fellow slave fell *to the ground* and *began* to plead with him, saying, 'Have patience with me and I will repay you.' (30) But he was unwilling and went and threw him in prison until he should pay back what was owed. (31) So when his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were deeply grieved and came and reported to their lord all that had happened. (32) Then summoning him, his lord said to him, 'You wicked slave, I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. (33) 'Should you not also have had mercy on your fellow slave, in the same way that I had mercy on you?' (34) And his lord, moved with anger, handed him over to the torturers until he should repay all that was owed him. (35) My heavenly Father will also do the same to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart."

Matthew 18:1-11

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Matthew 18:12-22

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Matthew 18:23-35

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Matthew 18:15-17 (in context)

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Deuteronomy 19:15-19 A single witness shall not rise up against a man on account of any iniquity or any sin which he has committed; on the evidence of two or three witnesses a matter shall be confirmed. (16) If a malicious witness rises up against a man to accuse him of wrongdoing, (17) then both the men who have the dispute shall stand before the LORD, before the priests and the judges who will be in office in those days. (18) The judges shall investigate thoroughly, and if the witness is a false witness and he has accused his brother falsely, (19) then you shall do to him just as he had intended to do to his brother. Thus you shall purge the evil from among you.

Matthew 18:15-17 (in context)

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- Context is one of lovingly restoring someone who has erred
- And of showing mercy just as mercy has been shown to us
- The emphasis is
 - ▶ not on confrontation
 - ▶ but on restoration

Matthew 18:15-17 (textual issue)

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- A difference exists among the various Greek manuscripts in verse 15
 - ▶ Some manuscripts include the phrase “against you” after “sins”
 - ▶ Modern translations using these manuscripts include NKJV, NIV, and ESV
 - ▶ Some people consider the difference significant, using the “against you” phrase to restrict the situations in which the procedure applies

Questions about the Passage

- Does the presence or absence of “against you” change the meaning of the passage?
- Does the passage set out a rigid, invariant procedure that must be followed exactly in every situation involving sin?
- Does the passage have application only to situations involving sin?
- Does the passage forbid ever seeking advice from others before proceeding?

No.

No.

No.

No.

What Does it Mean?

- It provides a **specific** framework for how to handle sin committed by a fellow believer
 - ▶ Whether the sin is directly against you
 - ▶ Or, you are simply one who becomes aware of the sin
- It provides a **general** framework of a good approach to resolving any conflict with another person
 - ▶ Try to resolve with the person
 - ▶ If that doesn't work, seek non-binding help
 - ▶ If that doesn't work, seek binding help

Exceptions?

- Both the specific and general frameworks have exceptions
 - ▶ We've already talked about some exceptions, and we'll mention more in coming weeks
 - ▶ However, focusing on the exceptions is never a wise idea
- If you think your situation is an exception
 - ▶ Do not simply act as if it is
 - ▶ Seek competent counsel
 - ▶ Remember the necessity of log removal: be sure your motives are godly

Concerning Sin

- Before approaching someone, remember
 - ▶ Making a different choice from you about a liberty issue does not constitute sin
 - ▶ Differing from you on theological issues does not necessarily constitute sin
 - ▶ You are not qualified to judge others' motives
 - ▶ You should judge your own motives

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 - ▶ You are not qualified to judge others' motives
 - ▶ You should judge your own motives
- When approaching someone, remember
 - ▶ Direct confrontation is not always the wisest approach (John 4:1-18; Esther 5-7)
 - ▶ You are to speak in a way that is appropriate for the situation (1 Tim. 5:1-2; 1 Thes. 5:14-15)
 - ▶ You are to "Treat others the same way you want them to treat you." (Luke 6:31)

Concerning Sin

■ Before approaching someone, remember

1Ti 5:1-2 Do not sharply rebuke an older man, but rather appeal to him as a father, to the younger men as brothers, (2) the older women as mothers, and the younger women as sisters, in all purity.

1Th 5:14-15 We urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone. (15) See that no one repays another with evil for evil, but always seek after that which is good for one another and for all people.

▶ You should judge your own motives

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▶ You are to speak in a way that is appropriate for the situation (1 Tim. 5:1-2; 1 Thes. 5:14-15)

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An Example

Alfred sees Bruce taking money out of the collection plate as it is passed during morning worship, and then putting the money into his own pocket.

What should Alfred do?

- * Yell out, “He’s stealing from the plate!”
- * Confront Bruce immediately
- * Wait until the service is over and then talk with Bruce
- * Say nothing to Bruce, but tell a deacon
- * Leave the service, and call the police on his cell phone
- * Nothing this time, but see if it happens again next week
- * Overlook it entirely
- * ...

An Example (continued)

Suppose Alfred talks to Bruce afterwards, and tells him what he saw. Suppose Bruce denies taking any money from the plate.

What should Alfred do?

- * Say, “Now, you’re not only a thief, but a liar, too!”
- * Seek out a deacon to tell what he saw
- * Ask Bruce to empty his pockets
- * Call the police on his cell phone
- * Go home and write about the situation on his blog site
- * Tell his shepherding elder about it at the next visit
- * Seek others to help him watch Bruce next week
- * ...

An Example (altered)

Suppose Alfred talks to Bruce afterwards, and tells him what he saw. Suppose Bruce admits that he took the money, and that this was wrong, and gives the money back.

What should Alfred do?

- * Suggest that he should repay double what he took
- * Tell Bruce that he now needs to confess to an elder
- * Ask Bruce how many times he's done this before
- * Seek others to help him watch Bruce next week
- * ...

Items Discussed Today

- Matthew 18:15-17
 - ▶ Context
 - ▶ Textual issues
 - ▶ Meaning
- Responding to sin in others

For Next Week

- Homework —
 - (1) Think about our example a bit
 - (2) Send to **conflict@logicteacher.com** short descriptions of specific, fictitious conflicts that you'd like for us to discuss how to resolve
- Lesson — “Opinions on the merits, more or less conflicting”

Note: Lesson title comes Charlotte Bronte, *The Professor*, Chapter 10:

At last a servant entered to announce dinner; the conflict being thus necessarily terminated we parted without having gained any advantage on either side: Mdlle. Reuter had not even given me an opportunity of attacking her with feeling, and I had managed to baffle her little schemes of craft.