

A Biblical View of Conflict and Its Resolution

Week 11

Opinions on the merits, more or less conflicting

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: Log Removal
- Week 10: Concerning Resolution
 - ▶ Matthew 18 in context: specific & general framework
 - ▶ General principles of dealing with sin in others
 - ▶ An example

Your Assignment was ...

- 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

Results Thus Far

■ Previous

- ▶ Shoplifting at Walmart
- ▶ Bringing up family problems in Sunday School without permission
- ▶ Bad-mouthing a friend
- ▶ Relationship between conflict and friendship

■ New this week

- ▶ A dispute over injury compensation
- ▶ A controversy over a son's friend
- ▶ Family conflict about betraying a confidence

Resolving Responses

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

- Getting help from others
 - ▶ Mediation
 - ▶ Arbitration

Miscellanies

- Not all disagreements result in conflicts that need to be resolved
 - ▶ Aesthetic judgements
 - ▶ Favorite authors, teams, schools, foods, ...
- A properly resolved conflict may result in different relationships among the people involved
 - ▶ The conflict may reveal previously unknown differences, which undermine the basis for an existing friendship
 - ▶ The conflict may reveal previously unknown similarities, which establish a basis for a new friendship
- A change in a relationship does not necessarily mean that there is an unresolved conflict that needs to be addressed

Disclaimer

The scenarios that follow are presented for instructional purposes only.

Any similarity to real people or events is strictly coincidental.

Any similarity to fictitious people is probably not coincidental

Scenario 1

George and Steve are both members of the same church. One Saturday morning, George sees Steve shoplifting steaks from Wal-Mart.

What should George do?

- * Seek out a manager to tell about the attempted theft
- * Confront Steve immediately
- * Call an elder as soon as he gets home and tell him
- * Pray that God will punish Steve severely, perhaps with a bad case of food poisoning
- * Ignore the situation
- * ...

Scenario 1b

George and Steve are both members of the same church. One Saturday morning, George sees Steve pull a gun on a bank teller, and demand all the money she has.

What should George do?

- * Run out of the bank, yelling, “Help, help, help!”
- * Attack Steve, trying to get the gun from him
- * Call an elder on his cell phone
- * Call the police on his cell phone
- * Take pictures to sell to the local newspaper
- * Pull out his own gun and shoot Steve
- * Ignore the situation
- * ...

Scenario 2

Heath & Heather Hutson have been friends with Patrick & Pamela Patterson for several years. Both couples have two children, who attend the neighborhood public school. Heath & Heather no longer believe that public school is appropriate for their children, so they have decided to withdraw their children from the school at the end of the school year and teach them at home. They know that Patrick and Pamela will not be happy with their decision.

What should Heath & Heather do?

- * Nothing, and hope Patrick & Pamela don't notice
- * Tell Patrick & Pamela about their decision,
 - + without going into detail about their reasons for it, unless asked
 - + without going into their reasons, even if asked
 - + giving all the details about their reasons
 - + telling P&P they should leave, too
- * Give Pat & Pam books about the evils of public schools
- * ...

Scenario 2: Part 2

Heath & Heather Hutson have been friends with Patrick & Pamela Patterson for several years. Both couples have two children, who attend the neighborhood public school. Heath & Heather no longer believe that public school is appropriate for their children, so they have decided to withdraw their children from the school at the end of the school year and teach them at home. They know that Patrick and Pamela will not be happy with their decision.

How should Patrick & Pamela react?

- * Immediately end their friendship with Heath & Heather
- * Try to explain to Heath & Heather why homeschooling is a poor decision for them to make
- * Accuse Heath & Heather of becoming patriachs
- * Accept the decision and continue the friendship
- * ...

Scenario 3

Wally and Winston work together in the same organization. When Winston was appointed as the leader of a new project, he asked Wally to join the project team. Wally waffled for a while, but eventually agreed. At first, all went wonderfully, but over time, Winston began to wonder if Wally's interest in the project was waning, because the quality of his work was worsening. When Winston went to talk to Wally about his concerns, Wally walked away, whispering to himself.

What should Winston do?

- * Run after Wally and whack him on the head
- * Yell, "Wait, Wally, we have to talk about this!"
- * Report Wally to their boss immediately
- * Write an e-mail message to Wally
- * Try to go talk with Wally later on
- * Ignore what happened, hoping Wally's work will improve
- * ...

Scenario 4

Nyssa is a passenger in a car being driven by Tegan. Nyssa's cell phone rings, loudly and with an annoying ring tone. Tegan is startled by the phone. She runs off the side of the road and hits the guard rail, damaging her vehicle. Almost immediately, she yells at Nyssa, "Since this was your fault, with that stupid phone of yours, I expect you to pay for the damages!"

What should Nyssa do?

- * Use her cell phone to call for the Doctor
- * Tell Tegan that she will not get one red cent, since the accident was entirely her own fault
- * Offer to pay for half of the expenses
- * Remind Tegan that state law requires that they report the accident to the police
- * Suggest that they should get someone they both trust to decide who should pay what
- * ...

Scenario 5

Steve and Stephanie have a son, Samuel, who is an excellent baseball player. Samuel was selected for the all-star team. At the first meeting of the team, the manager, Sarge, told everyone that the team would be practicing for 2-3 hours every day of the week, including Sunday, and that some of their games would be on Sunday. He said that anyone who could not commit to this schedule would have to quit the team.

What should Steve & Stephanie do?

- * Yell, “You heathen,” at Sarge and stomp out of the meeting
- * Recognize that Samuel may never be on another all-star team and abide by the team rules
- * Quit the team quietly, without discussion
- * Talk to Sarge calmly after the meeting, explaining why Samuel cannot practice or play on Sunday
- * Sue the league for religious discrimination
- * ...

Scenario 6

Jack believes that the elders of his church are too narrow in their choice of speakers for special meetings, focusing only on men with uniform views on non-essential issues. He has expressed his opinion to the elders several times, but nothing has changed.

What should Jack do?

- * Find a new church with broader elders
- * Boycott all the special meetings
- * Ask others in the congregation what they think
- * Attend the meetings, but frown a lot, and refuse to speak to anyone
- * Ask lots of questions of the speakers, particularly about areas in which he knows they disagree with him
- * Give the elders a list of speakers he wants considered, and then leave the church if none of them are chosen
- * ...

Scenario 7

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?

- * Ask others why Samantha hates Angie so much
- * Ask Angie why Samantha hates her so much
- * Tell Samantha to shut up, or they can't be friends
- * Try to steer the conversation unto other topics
- * Encourage Samantha to reconcile with Angie
- * Slowly, over time, reduce her contact with Samantha
- * Invite both Samantha and Angie to dinner, without telling the other, and force them to talk to one another
- * ...

Items Discussed Today

- Some miscellaneous things
- Various scenarios

For Next Week

- Homework —
 - (1) Think about our examples some more
 - (2) Send to **conflict@logicteacher.com** short descriptions of specific, fictitious conflicts that you'd like for us to discuss how to resolve
- Lesson — “Far from abandoning the conflict”

Note: Lesson title comes Charles Dickens, *Bleak House*, Chapter 40:
There are various opinions on the merits, more or less conflicting with Volumnia's.