

Wisdom with Conflict

A new beginning happens best with wisdom. And if there's anything we should want in times of confusion, it should be wisdom. Other than Jesus, the wisest man ever on earth was Solomon, who offers exactly what we need. Let's revisit the Bible's old wisdom in a new way to give light to a wise path forward.



INTRODUCTION

Conflict is inevitable, but is it unavoidable? Followers of Jesus Christ have a secret weapon to cultivate harmony within and to extend harmony outward as we experience unity together.

STARTER QUESTION

- 1) 2020 was a year of conflict due to the disruption of normal life from the Covid 19 pandemic to politics and social injustice. Share some of the stresses that may have caused conflict in your own life. How were they resolved? Are there on-going conflicts that you have a better idea on how to handle now?

INTO THE WORD

- 2) Pastor David explained eight warning signs for conflict that Solomon gave us in Proverbs 25:16-28. In what ways do you or will you incorporate these warnings in your life? Do any of these verses have a profound impact on you? If so, why? Can you think of any bible verses that offer help in times of conflict? Refer to John 14:27, John 16:33, and Proverbs 12:18 for ideas.
- 3) Read Romans 12 and note especially verses 20-21. Why do you suppose Paul is preaching such a message to the early Church? Note the similarity to Proverbs 25:21-22. What message is he teaching to the people of his day? What if anything is different about the lessons we need to learn today? How does showing kindness to your enemy cause them to look at their own lives?
- 4) Read Psalm 144:1-2, Psalm 91:1-2, Ephesians 6:10-20, and Romans 12:18. The Bible speaks a lot about battles. There are physical battles and spiritual battles. Pastor David said we are not to back away from all battles, but we should not despise or disrespect the person with whom we are in conflict. How do we draw that distinction? How do we love those with whom we disagree?

APPLICATION

- 5) Becoming aware of our emotions seems to be beneficial to better manage conflict. What things can we do to be mindful of emotions when we are experiencing some kind of conflict? How can we apply those things to our own relationships?
- 6) Read 2 Corinthians 2:11 and 2 Timothy 2:23. One of the reasons conflicts usually happens is because of careless comments. If we were to develop a plan to become more aware and mindful of our comments, what would it be? How can we apply that plan in our day-to-day lives and relationships?
- 7) How would you apply these lessons to the greater community, outside of home, family, and close friends? Can Christ-centered conflict resolution be applied and successful in business and politics?

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, there is so much conflict in the world today. Please show us your love and how to show your love to everyone we meet. Remind us that we are to be known by our love for one another, and that the world needs to see you in us. Thank you for giving us peace in the midst of the chaos. Amen.

SUGGESTED ANSWER GUIDE / MORE FOOD FOR THOUGHT FOR SELECTED QUESTIONS:

- 1) Most American households had to adapt to the “new normal” of the pandemic, which may have included working from home, guiding children in on-line learning, and even suffering the loss of employment and income. These disruptions can cause a lot of conflict. That is perhaps why in Philippians 2:1-5, Paul encouraged the church to have the same attitude as Jesus had.
- 2) After today’s message, Proverbs 25:16-28 may take on a bigger message that Christ followers need to incorporate into our lives. We are to be called “peace makers,” but we are only enabled to diffuse conflict and extend peace because of the power of Jesus in our lives. Other biblical references include: 2 Thessalonians 3:3-5, 2 Thessalonians 3:16, Matthew 5:9, and Colossians 3:15.
- 3) When there is conflict between people, pride can hinder any potential for resolution, let alone de-escalate the conflict. Pastor David explained that believers need to react differently than the world around us, otherwise we give way to the world. It also requires self-control on part of the believer, which is one of the fruits of the Spirit. Pastor David said self-control is the bag that holds all the other causes of conflict.
- 4) In Romans 13:8, Paul tells us to pay our debts, but one debt we can never finish paying is the debt of love we owe each other. If we believe and live as taught - that every commandment can be summed up as love your neighbor as you love yourself and love never does anything that is harmful to a neighbor - then we will be empowered by the Holy Spirit to engage in “battle,” not to prove ourselves, but to prove Jesus Christ.
- 5) As Pastor David suggested, first and foremost, listen more. When we listen so we can understand the other person, rather than listening to argue, we build stronger relationships. Also, listening gives us the chance to process our emotions before we speak so we can filter anything that could potentially escalate the conflict. Refer to Proverbs 18:13, “If one gives an answer before he hears, it is his folly and shame.” Second, pay attention to body language. Paying attention to someone’s body language gives us a better opportunity to understand the emotions they are experiencing. Refer to 1 Corinthians 6:20, “For you were bought with a price. So, glorify God in your body.” Third, own your emotions. It is very easy to get hurt or angry. You cannot deny your emotions, but you must own how you react to them and how you respond to those emotions. Refer to Psalm 77:2, “During the day when I’m in trouble I look for my Lord. At night my hands are still outstretched and don’t grow numb; my whole being refuses to be comforted.”
- 6) To become more aware of our comments, pay attention to any form of feedback from others. Write down any comment said that might have been hurtful or inappropriate and change it with a loving and kind one. Work on assertiveness and emotional intelligence by reading a book a blog or any other form of educational content. Most of all, recognize emotions and own them. We have the right to feel what we feel but not to speak with the intention to cause pain. Remember: a) A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger; b) The tongue of the wise commends knowledge, but the mouths of fools pour out folly; c) The eyes of the Lord are in every place, keeping watch on the evil and the good; d) A gentle tongue is a tree of life, but perverseness in it breaks the spirit.
- 7) Efforts at conflict resolution, particularly in business, have taken many forms over the years. Business Ethics, taught in management training programs, were intended to filter down to all the employees. These days, however, it seems most major conflicts are resolved in the courts of law. As believers, we have an obligation to demonstrate the life of Christ from the church door to the workplace and everywhere in between. While the secular society as a whole may reject Christian based ethics and conflict resolution, the life of Christ in each of us can and should carry that “peace that passes all understanding” into all aspects of society, thus pointing unbelievers to Christ.