

Addressing Conflict Biblically

OUR COMMITMENT AS LEADERS AND SHEPHERDS OF GOD'S PEOPLE

To be in conflict is to be in opposition to or to fight against another person. Disagreements are inevitable, but sinful conflicts can be avoided. As believers, we want to please the Lord when we disagree and avoid sinning against one another in our communication and actions. Our goal is to experience peace and unity in Christ.

The following 10 statements reflect our commitment to resolve conflict biblically. In many cases, a deeper look at heart issues (motives and desires) which lead to conflict will be necessary to promote God-pleasing change and prevent similar conflicts in the future (Proverbs 4:23, 20:5; James 4:1–6).

As stewards of all that God has entrusted to us, we commit to the following practices as we address interpersonal conflict.

1. Above all, I will seek to glorify God.

- Have I done a prayerful assessment of my own motives and goals? (Psalm 139:23–24)
- Have I asked God for wisdom and an outcome that is pleasing to Him? (Prov. 3:5–6; James 1:5; 2 Cor. 5:9)
- Am I choosing to see the conflict as an opportunity to glorify God, serve others, and grow to be more like Christ?* (1 Cor. 10:31; Phil. 2:3–4; Rom. 8:28–29)

2. I will move toward people in conflict, not away.

- Am I pursuing a God-honoring resolution to the conflict rather than giving in to fleshly desires such as fighting or fleeing? (Matt. 5:23–24; 18:15–16; Gal. 6:1; Heb. 12:14) See also #5d.
- Am I acting in a timely manner to address the conflict, acknowledge my part, confront patterns of sin, and seeking to restore relationships? (Eccl. 8:11; Eph. 4:26–27)
- Am I avoiding or stalling due to the uncomfortable nature of conflict? Is the fear of man holding me back? (Gal. 1:10)

3. I will take responsibility for my contribution to the conflict.

- Have I evaluated and removed my own log through confession, repentance, and seeking forgiveness for any wrongdoing on my part? (Matt. 7:1–5; Prov. 28:13)
- Have I opened the door to hear and address offenses I may have overlooked or perceptions I may not have intended? (Rom. 12:18)

4. I will overlook an offense when possible.

- Does the issue that led to conflict involve actual sin?
- Can I overlook this offense (Prov. 19:11) and allow love to cover it without confronting it? (1 Peter 4:8; Prov. 10:12; 1 Cor. 13:5d)
- Is the matter too serious to overlook? (Does it bring significant and ongoing dishonor to God? Is it a pattern? Is it damaging relationships? Is it hurting others? Is it hurting the offender?*)
- If I am uncertain about whether or not to overlook an offense, have I sought guidance through God's Word, prayer, and if necessary, pastoral counsel while guarding confidences?

* Adapted from *The Peacemaker* by Ken Sande

5. I will pursue resolution privately before speaking to others.

- Have I gone to the other party to address matters face-to-face? (Matt. 5:23–24, 18:15; Gal. 6:1)
- Do I have a biblical understanding of gossip and slander, and am I avoiding these in all forms? (Prov. 10:19; 11:12–13; 17:9; 20:19; Eph. 4:29; Matt. 12:36)
- If I am unclear how to proceed, have I sought guidance from a trusted leader? (Prov. 19:20)
- Am I aware of possible exceptions to private confrontation, e.g., when physical danger, abuse, self-harm, or criminal activity is involved?
- If I have attempted to lovingly seek repentance for a sinful offense, am I willing to take the next steps of accountability and restoration outlined by our Lord in Matthew 18:15–17?

6. I will listen well before I speak.

- Have I been quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to anger? (Prov. 18:15; James 1:19–20)
- Have I been too quick to form an opinion and express my view? (Prov. 18:13)
- Am I hearing both sides of the story? (Prov. 18:17)
- Am I giving preference to my brother or sister, judging charitably and believing the best? (Rom. 12:10; 14:13; 1 Cor. 13:7; Phil. 2:3)
- Are emotions hindering communication? (Prov. 14:29; 16:32)

7. I will speak truth with love.

- Do my words reflect God's truth (His Word) to us? (Psalm 119:105; 2 Tim. 3:16–17)
- Am I speaking boldly in obedience to the Lord rather than to please or pacify men? (Acts 5:29)
- Am I speaking out of love in order to build up and not tear down? (Eph. 4:15, 29)
- Am I confronting sin with a desire to restore? (Gal. 6:1)
- Am I speaking from a spirit of humility and gentleness? (Gal. 6:1–5)

8. I will forgive those who have sinned against me.

- If I have been sinned against, do I see the offender through a heart of forgiveness? (Col. 3:13; Matt. 18:35)
- Am I willing to extend forgiveness even if the offender does not acknowledge any offense or seek it? (Mark 11:25–26)
- Am I willing and eager to extend verbal forgiveness when the offender asks for it?
- Do I understand the promises of forgiveness*? (Luke 17:1–4; Matt. 6:12; 1 Cor. 13:5; Eph. 4:32) I will not dwell on the matter. I will not bring it up to use it against you. I will not speak to others about it. I will not let it stand between us to hinder our growing relationship.

9. I will persevere.

- Am I doing all I can to promote reconciliation, restoration, peace and unity without compromising biblical truth? (Rom. 12:18; Psalm 133:1; Gal. 6:1; 2 Cor. 5:18; Heb. 12:14; Eph. 4:3)

10. I will let go and continue to pray.

- Have I sought counsel to discern when it's time to stop pursuing and release the situation to the Lord—the perfectly righteous judge and ultimate peacemaker? (2 Thess. 3:16; Psa. 7:11)
- Am I persevering in prayer for reconciliation, restoration, peace, and unity? (1 Peter 4:8; Phil. 4:6–7)
- Through the conflict, how have I sought to glorify God, serve others, and grow to be more like Christ?*