

Building Strong Family Ties:

Part 2: How To Restore Harmony In Your Home

Conflict seems an inevitable part of life.

Mark 3:25 [Living Bible] *“A house filled with strife and division destroys itself.”*

Mark 3:25 [Good News Bible] *“If a family divides itself into groups which fight each other that family will fall apart.”*

Conflict is inevitable because every person is unique. We have different desires, tastes, interests, talents, abilities, temperaments and so on, therefore we are going to clash. We look at life differently.

The reasons for conflict

The Bible is very blunt on this giving only one reason for conflict.

James 4:1-2 [NIV] *“What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don’t they come from your desires that battle within you? You want something but don’t get it.”*

Competing desires; I want what I want, and you want what you want.

How do we react to conflict?

Normally one of five ways.

- a) **My way** – I assert my will until you give in.
- b) **No way** – I withdraw; I back away from the conflict; I ignore the problems.
- c) **Your way** – I give in, roll over and play dead.
- d) **Half way** – We compromise, I give in a little and you give in a little.
- e) **Our way** – Is when we work out mutual goals together, **where we not only care about the problem but also the relationship, and about each other.**

Now I want to look at the Bible and see eight steps on how to resolve a conflict “our way”.

You will find this very practical, and something you can share with others.

Become a Christian; a believer

This is the starting point. **You cannot have peace with other people until you have peace with God. When I’m in conflict with God then that conflict spills out in my relationship with other people.**

Ephesians 2:16 [Living Bible] *“As parts of the same body, our anger against each other has disappeared, for both of us have been reconciled to God and so the feud ended at last at the cross.”*

What is Paul saying? When Jesus Christ in spirit is living in me and in you, then Jesus is not going to fight with Jesus.

Talk to God about the conflict

Before you talk to the person you are upset with talk to God about the conflict; admit it to Him. You may end up solving the problem there and then.

James 4:2 [Good News Bible] *“You strongly desire things, but you cannot get them, so you quarrel and fight. You do not have what you want because you do not ask God for it.”*

Many conflicts start when we expect other people to meet needs that God Himself expects to meet.

You will never find a human being who will meet all of your needs – they can't.

When we look for other people to meet all our needs then the outcome will be conflict, and anger when they don't.

You are asking someone else to be God and that is unfair on them.

Analyse the problem

Ask yourself, *‘how much of this is my fault?’* **before you start to accuse and blame others, check your own self out.** *‘Am I the cause of the problem?’ ‘Do I have a blind spot?’*

Matthew 7:3 [Good News Bible] *“Why, then, do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, and pay no attention to the log in your own eye? Take the log out of your own eye, and then you will be able to see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.”*

There is no such thing as a one person problem.

1 John 1:8 [Living Bible] *“If we say that we have no sin [cause offence – by missing the goal aimed for], we are only fooling ourselves, and refusing to accept the truth.”*

None of us are perfect, we all do and say dumb things at times, opening our mouths before we put our mind into gear, acting before we consider the consequences of our action.

Arrange a peace conference

A sit down face-to-face to confront the issues. A conference where we can deal with what is the problem. **Conflict is seldom resolved accidentally, it is resolved intentionally.**

Matthew 5:23-24 [Good News Bible] *“If you are about to offer your gift to God at the altar and there you remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift in front of the altar, go at once and make peace with your brother, and then come back and offer your gift to God.”*

Don't ignore conflicts. We cannot worship Our Maker with unresolved conflicts with our brothers.

1 Peter 3:7 [Amplified Bible] *“... you married men should live considerately with your wives, with an intelligent recognition of the marriage relationship, honouring the woman as physically the*

weaker, but realising that you are joint heirs of the grace of life, God's unmerited favour, in order that your prayers may not be hindered and cut off, otherwise you cannot pray effectively."

If we are not living peacefully with our mates, our prayers will be ineffective. **If we are not receiving answers to our prayers, unresolved conflict with our partners could be the reason.**

Practical hints for this peace conference

- a) **Choose the right time** – timing is everything in conflict resolving.
Find a time that is best for both of us, that's the best time to deal with an issue, when both are comfortable and relaxed.
- b) **Chose the right place** – a neutral place away from the children and without any chance of interruptions.
- c) **Each of you pray before you have this meeting** – so you come to this meeting in a spirit of reconciliation, and a spirit of forgiveness ready to attack the problem – not each other.

Establish ground rules prior to the fight

Rules for fighting in marriage

Never compare

"Why can't you be like so and so?"

Never condemn

Don't use words like *"you always"* or *"you never"* or *"you ought to"*.

Don't start statements with "you" for that is a judgemental statement. Start statements with "I". "I need this from you" – "I feel this". Such statements are much less threatening and condemning.

Never command

Don't try to end an argument by force *"I demand that you do what I say"*.

Never challenge

Don't make threats *"just try that and see what happens"*.

The three most common threats in marriage are: a) sex; b) money; c) threat of divorce. Rule these out as deadly weapons.

Never condescend – treat the other person as less than they really are.

Don't belittle your mate; don't put them down; don't ridicule them for their feelings or logic.

Never contradict – interrupt in the middle of a sentence.

Wait your turn to talk when you are in a conflict. Treat each other with consideration.

Never confuse – when you bring up unrelated issues in the middle of the argument.

What we are saying in a *"nut shell"* is **attack the issue not the person.**

Proverbs 11:29 [Living Bible] *"The fool who provokes his family to anger and resentment will finally have nothing worthwhile left."*

The Bible is saying it is dumb to intentionally push people's *"hot buttons"* to make them mad, so establish some ground rules on how to fight fair.

Switch your focus – move the attention away from self to the other person, from selfishness to unselfishness.

Philippians 2:4-5 [NIV] *“Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:”*

What was the attitude of Jesus Christ? An attitude of **not** looking after number one, but looking after other people.

Anger is the end result of looking only to our own needs, our hurts, our expectations that haven't been met.

If you want a magical sentence that clears up so many conflicts, often right there and then, it is this sentence: “I'm sorry, I was only thinking of myself.”

Ask for advice

If we are not making any progress after having several peace conferences, **one is not normally enough**, we need to seek qualified help and advice.

It takes courage to get counselling; it takes real love for your family and maturity.

Proverbs 15:12 [Good News Bible] *“Conceited people do not like to be corrected; they never ask for advice from those who are wiser.”*

Proverbs 15:32 [Good News Bible] *“If you refuse to learn, you are hurting yourself. If you accept correction, you will become wiser.”*

Don't give up – don't walk out; stick with it. Conflict resolution is never easy – it's tough.

There are three stages of conflict resolution

- a) **Recognition** – we have a problem!
- b) **Reaction** – this problem is worse than I thought it was.
This is the painful stage when emotions come out and voices may be raised.
- c) **Resolution** – what are we going to do about this situation?

It is more rewarding to resolve a conflict than to dissolve a relationship.

As a church pastor I am dedicated to building strong relationships and I plead with you to make a commitment right now to do whatever it takes to resolve any conflicts you may have and **not** walk away from them.

Galatians 6:9 [Living Bible] *“And let us not get tired of doing what is right, for after a while we will reap a harvest of blessing if we don't get discouraged and give up.”*

I know that this message has been painful for some of you, but I feel God has led you to read this. These eight steps will work for you and resolve any conflict you may be in if you only faithfully and prayerfully apply them. **But you must start at step one and become a believer**, to open your life to Jesus Christ and offer Him the good and the bad in your life, the ugly, the past, the present and the future, the hurts and the fears, the resentment and the guilt. Offer your life to Christ and let Him drain the pain, insecurity, anger and frustration from your life, and fill it with peace and security.

Ephesians 2:16 [Living Bible] *“As parts of the same body, our anger against each other has disappeared for both of us have been reconciled to God. And so the feud ended at last at the cross.”*

Accepting Jesus Christ as your Saviour is the only logical starting place to resolve any conflicts in your life.