

Conflict
by
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In my life time I have been involved a great many conflict situations. Many of them were of my own making and some were of others. My friend Les Stroh has a saying that fits this situation, "Conflict is inevitable, enemies are optional." Jesus says it even better, "Things that cause people to sin are bound to come, but woe to that person through whom they come" (Luke 17:1). Conflict is a gigantic problem. It tears apart regions of the world, countries, organizations and the most vital fabric of society, families. What follows are some of the things I have learned about conflict.

Conflict is caused by sin. The devil is originator of sin and continues to cause it. *"The one who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work"* (1 John 3:8). Conflict is Satan's finest hour. No one is happier than the devil and his angels when there is conflict in this world. Their level of celebration rises to a higher level when conflict happens among Christians.

Scripture encourages a quick resolution to conflict. *"In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry"* (Ephesians 4:26). This passage has been a vital part of my life from childhood. My parents could get into arguments and they wouldn't talk to each other for weeks. It just tore me up. It is not an accident that the next verse is: "and do not give the devil a foothold" (Ephesians 4:27). We may very well be tempted to put reconciliation off for a variety of reasons. That is lie the devil again would like us to believe. See what Jesus says about the devil and lies in John 8:44: "You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies."

Jesus says, *"Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still together on the way, or your adversary may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison"* (Matthew 5:25). Jesus' point is clear enough. Do not neglect your relationships with fellow disciples. Be reconciled; give up your anger and seek forgiveness. Just as the sin of murder is damnable before God, so is the sin of anger and bitterness. Before him all sinners are alike in their need for mercy, which he provides in Jesus. If you still don't think keeping a grudge is not dangerous then read the following:

1. Pray for the situation. "The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective." (James 5:16) (We are righteous because of our faith.)
2. The next passage is the front part of James 5:16 says: "Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed."
 - a. I have found that if I confess in a conflict situation (even if I done little of no wrong), it helps the healing process. (This does not always work with some people.)
 - b. You can never see another person the same way when you pray for him/her.
3. Principle of life: Do you want to be right or have at least some sense of peace? In virtually every conflict situation there is enough wrong to go around. Rather than insist on your rights it may be better to come some mutual place of how to learn from the situation and how to go from here.
4. Principle of life: Never (or almost never) write in a conflict situation.
5. Be as cool and self-assured as possible when you go into a potentially difficult situation.
6. Use "I" messages whenever possible and don't use "you" messages if you can at all help it. It's okay to state your needs and reasons for something in an "I" message.
7. When I have a problem with a situation, I often let it go and find a way to approach it in the future in a manner to prevent a future problem.
8. The fifth petition of the Lord's Prayer states: Forgive Us Our Trespases as Forgive those who Trespass Against Us. What that means follows: We pray in this petition that our Father in heaven would not look upon our sins, but graciously forgive us for we are worthy of none of the things we pray for and deserve nothing but punishment, for Christ's sake forgive them. In response we will heartily forgive, and readily do good to, to those who sin against us.
9. Time is a good healer, especially with the wound has been cleaned out.