



DEFINING CONFLICT

Conflict is often a healthy response to a grievance or serious disagreement.

Conflict can also cause damage unless resolved. Avoiding conflict starves our relationships.

IMPACT VS. INTENT

Most people in conflict want to explain their intent: "But I didn't mean to." We need to invite people to a deeper level of understanding that goes beyond themselves to appreciate the impact of their actions despite their intentions. See 2 Sam 12.

FORGIVENESS

When speaking of forgiveness, Jesus uses the image of debts to describe the nature of sins. Anyone who has been wronged feels a compulsion to make the other person pay down that debt. We do that by hurting them, yelling at them, making them feel bad in some way, or just waiting and watching and hoping that something bad happens to them. Only after we see them suffer in some commensurate way do we sense that the debt has been paid and the sense of obligation is gone.

Forgiveness means giving up the right to seek repayment from the one who harmed you. But it must be recognized that forgiveness is a form of voluntary suffering.

ABUSE

This document is not a tool for navigating an abusive relationship. Contact a pastor or counselor to be directed to more suitable help.

Describe the impact.

Write out the grievance/problem and the impact on you. You can use the space below.

Reflect on your motives.

1. What hopes, if any, do you have for the other person/people in this situation? How does that square with what you know about God's hopes for you and the other person/people in this situation?
2. Before approaching others regarding their faults and shortcomings, prayerfully face up to your own. Write down some specific examples. Be prepared to confess ways you might have contributed to the problem.
3. In situations where forgiveness is especially difficult, consider a time when grace and forgiveness was extended to you. How does Jesus' life and work on your behalf help you pray as He taught us: "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors"?

Set up a meeting with the other person/people directly involved.

1. Affirm the relationship. Then clearly define the problem. For example, "Our relationship is important to me. But when you don't return my calls, I feel rejected and unimportant." Avoid blaming the other person and saying, "You make me feel..." Instead, say, "When you do 'A', I feel 'B'." This puts the focus on their impact and instead of assuming intentions.
2. Listen carefully. Once you've honestly shared your feelings, listen to the other person's perspective. One of the most powerful communication techniques is to listen well. Reflect back to the person what you believe you have heard. For example, "I heard you say that you feel expectations from me. Is that correct?"
3. Extend honest forgiveness. Forgiveness is both an event and a process. For example you can say, "I will not hold this against you in the future, and if new layers of harm become problematic, I will address them with you."
4. Propose a way forward that is realistic and patient about each other's process. How can you show you value the relationship more than the issue?

Exodus 34:6-7

6 And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, “The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, 7 maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished.”

1 John 1:7-9

7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. 8 If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

Matthew 6:18, 18:21-35

6:18 And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

18:21 Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, “Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?”

22 Jesus answered, “I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.

23 “Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. 24 As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand bags of gold was brought to him. 25 Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt.

26 “At this the servant fell on his knees before him. ‘Be patient with me,’ he begged, ‘and I will pay back everything.’ 27 The servant’s master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go.

28 “But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred silver coins. He grabbed him and began to choke him. ‘Pay back what you owe me!’ he demanded.

29 “His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, ‘Be patient with me, and I will pay it back.’

30 “But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt.

31 When the other servants saw what had happened, they were outraged and went and told their master everything that had happened.

32 “Then the master called the servant in. ‘You wicked servant,’ he said, ‘I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. 33 Shouldn’t you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?’

34 In anger his master handed him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed.

35 “This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart.”