

HANDLING CONFLICT

We all read the same Bible verses. How come we have such different responses to the same principles? Because you read those verses through the lens of your own experience, your own personality, and your own presuppositions. Your personal lenses distort reality.

CONFLICT STYLES - Dr. Neil Anderson's writings are very helpful in resolving conflict. Are you people-oriented or task-oriented? Are you more likely to like being around other people, or being left alone to do your job? He notes that people with a high regard for relationships tend to be more people-oriented. Those with a high drive to achieve tend to be more task-oriented.

If you tend to yield to others or withdraw from others, you may be at the mercy of people who must win and tend to manipulate others. People have different tendencies toward resolving differences, and unfortunately those who manipulate others try to win without understanding the conflict with the same perspective as those they seek to control. It's not healthy for anyone.

COMMUNICATION STYLES - Likewise, some people are more prone to exploring information and viewpoints, while others are more likely to be accommodating to those more expressive. Some people are better at informing and persuading. Others won't do much homework and don't bring much information to the table. Others prefer to be compliant and go along to get along.

Others are driven to dominate. Those who must win at any cost will exact a high price from others. And they pay a high price in their own lives, with unhealthy and ruined relationships.

Where you fit on the scale from "flight to fight" makes a lot of difference in how you've adapted over your life to get along with others. Your own personality plus how you were brought up plus how you've learned to cope puts you where you are. But you can change, by God's power.

COLLUSION STYLES - Some people approach conflict by talking to other people, but not the one they have the problem with. This is called triangulation. Person A has an issue with Person B, but talks to person D about person B. It's a real problem if person D becomes a meddler.

Person A needs to talk with person B. Both of them need to talk first with Person C (Christ), then talk with each other. Ignorance of one another put together with ignorance of the real issues can be a recipe for disaster when it comes to conflict resolution. Scripture says a lot about this, because conflict is not an accident in life, but an opportunity to put God's truth into action.

GLORIFY GOD - Go to higher ground as soon as you encounter conflict. This is step one in "the four G's of peacemaking" by Ken Sande of Peacemaker Ministries. "*Whatever you do, do all to the glory of God*" (1Corinthians 10:31). Instead of focusing on your own desires or dwelling on what others may do, depend on God's wisdom and love. Obey His scriptures by His power within, as you seek to maintain loving, merciful, forgiving attitudes and relationships.

GET REAL - Get the log out of your own eye before pawing at the speck in someone else's. Instead of blaming others or resisting correction, trust God's mercy. Take responsibility for your own contribution to conflicts. Confess to those you have wronged (Proverbs 28:13-14). Trust God to help change attitudes and habits that lead to conflict. Repair any harm you have caused. "*For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you*" (Luke 6:38).

GENTLY ENGAGE - Maybe you pretend a conflict doesn't exist, or talk about others behind their backs. Scripture says to overlook minor offenses. For major issues, talk with the other party personally and graciously, seeking to restore rather than condemn, in a spirit of gentleness (Galatians 6:1-5). As much as possible, keep your conversations private (Matthew 18:15-20).

GO & BE RECONCILED - Get together on lasting solutions. Instead of accepting premature compromise or allowing relationships to wither, actively pursue genuine peace and reconciliation. Forgive others as Christ has forgiven you (Colossians 4:32) and come to terms (Matthew 5:25). Seek just and mutually beneficial solutions to your differences, by God's grace.

Golden rule or blame game? Don't assume. Don't condemn someone just because they sin differently than you. How Christ treats you changes how you will treat others. Bear the fruit of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:16-25). "*If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all*" (Romans 12:18). Will you be peace-breaking? Peace-faking? Or peace-making? □