

>>> next step >>>

resolving conflict

Our culture will tell you that when conflict arises – passivity is the best option. Simply sweep it under the rug, avoid the situation and move on. Typically ending with gossip, bitter feelings, and broken friendships. However, as believers who have been reconciled to God through Jesus' death on the cross, we are called to deal with and respond to conflict in a way that is completely different than the world. Paul implores us in 1 Corinthians 10:31 to glorify God in all that we do. Therefore, when faced with differences, disputes, and disagreements we want to see them as opportunities to honor the Lord, serve other people, and grow to become more like Christ.

We believe the principles found in scripture are not only helpful when faced with conflict in college, but these principles can be refined and used for the rest of your life.

It is our prayer that you take conflict head on – trusting the Lord that He is a God who is in the business of reconciling and restoring what has been broken.

1. Before you begin, take some time to write out some different conflicts that you've experienced. It could be with a family member, friends, a co-worker, boyfriend/girlfriend, person on your sports team – think through each of them.
 - What was the conflict? How did it begin?
 - How did it end?
 - Was the relationship broken afterward? Is it still broken? Do you still have bitterness?

If people are willing to share, take time for that.

Each situation is going to be different depending on the relationship and the circumstance, but we've put together a guide that will help you navigate conflict in a way that honors the Lord and points others to Jesus.

Scripture says in Matthew 5:9 "Blessed are the peace-makers, for they will be called sons of God."

Take time to pray before you begin.

First, Glorify God

Look at the situations that you stated above and ask yourself: “How can I please and honor the Lord in this situation?” You can glorify God in the midst of conflict by trusting Him, obeying Him and imitating Him (Prov. 3:4-6; John 14:15; Eph. 5:1).

Next, here are seven clear steps that you can walk through when dealing with conflict. Take some time on each one and really have them examine past conflict and whether the situations were handled in a way that honors the Lord.

1. Ask the Lord and others for help with self-awareness (1 John 1:8).

Get the Log out of Your Own Eye

This is one of the most difficult and humbling steps in this process because it requires us to stop and examine ourselves in the situation. Scripture says in Matthew 7:5 “You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye. There are generally two kinds of *logs* you need to look for when seeing your part in the conflict.

- First, you need to consider your own attitudes and biases. Critical, negative or overly sensitive attitudes easily lead to unnecessary conflict.
 - **Have there been times that you might have been overly sensitive or critical in a situation that created unnecessary conflict?**
- The other log you must deal with is actual sinful words and actions. Because we are often blind to our own failures, we must have honest friends who will help us take an objective look at ourselves and face up to our contribution to a conflict.
 - **Are there situations where you might have been harsh with your words and actions that only fueled the tension and frustration?**
- Ask God to show you where you have been guilty of “wrong worship,” which is to say where you have been focusing your attention and love on something other than the Lord and His desires.
 - “Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me and know my anxious thoughts; And see if there be any hurtful way in me; And lead me in the everlasting way” (Ps.139:23-24).
 - Specifically identify the desire contributing to the conflict.
- Deliberately pursue right worship. Fix your heart and mind on God and seek joy in Him alone. Give others permission to speak into your life, and regularly ask them to help you see any “logs” both in attitude and action.

It is good to remember that most of the time conflict is fueled by good desires that you have elevated to a sinful place, such as an unhealthy craving to be understood, loved, respected or vindicated. (1 Peter 2:23)

- Take some time right now to examine your own desires in the situations you stated above.

- Once you've examined and removed the log from your own eye it's time to take action and move forward with peacemaking.
2. **Address everyone involved as soon as possible (Matt. 5:23-24, Prov. 6:1-5).**
 - Reach out and have a conversation with the person you're in conflict with.
 - It's best to do this in person.
 - Ask: What are ways that you've seen this done in the past? A text? Through another friend? Not at all?
 - Why is it best to have this kind of conversation in person?
 3. **Avoid if, but, and maybe. (Don't make excuses; be specific when possible with both attitudes and actions. Luke 15:17-24).**
 - Be specific and own up to the ways that you handled the situation wrongly. Seek humility first – God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.
 4. **Apologize. (Express sorrow for the way you affected someone. Luke 15:21).**
 - Sincerely apologize for the ways that you were at fault.
 - Have there been times in your life when someone has apologized, but you could tell they weren't being sincere about it? How did that make you feel? Did it just make you more angry?
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 5. **Ask for forgiveness (Prov. 28:13).**
 - Be sincere and ask for forgiveness.
 6. **Accept the consequences (Luke 19:1-9).**
 - Sometimes situations take time to heal – be patient and trust the Lord in those times knowing that you did all that He has asked of you.
 - Maybe you've owned up to something that was not right – like cheating on a test. No matter the consequences: apologize, ask for forgiveness, and be willing to accept any consequences knowing that you are being obedient to the Lord and honoring Him through your actions.
 7. **Alter your behavior. (Commit to changing harmful habits. Eph. 4:22-32, John 8:11).**
 - Learn from the situation and avoid the different attitude and actions that might have fueled the conflict.
 - What are some things that you have learned from past conflicts that you do not want to repeat in the future?

Disclaimer: Do not be discouraged if someone has hardened their heart and refuses reconciliation. Remember that God does not measure success in terms of results but in terms of faithful obedience. He knows that you cannot force other people to act in a certain way. Therefore He will not hold you responsible for their actions or for the ultimate outcome of a conflict. All God expects of you is to obey His revealed will as faithfully as possible (see Rom.

12:18). If you do that, no matter how the conflict turns out, you can walk away with a clear conscience before God, knowing that His appraisal is, “Well done, good and faithful servant.”

Conclusion:

- **Really spend some time processing everything.**
- **Are there any relationships that you might need to confront, apologize and ask for forgiveness?**
- **Do you have bitterness in a relationship from unresolved conflict?**
- **Have you done everything that you can to reconcile the relationship or have you taken the easy way out?**

Before entering into a conversation with someone, pray and then pray some more. Ask the Lord to give you wisdom and discernment. Then, talk to your cell group leader or a trusted adult about how you plan to handle the situation – always seek wise counsel and trust that the Lord will give you strength and boldness.

Key Scriptures you can take a look at:

- **Matthew 5:9**
- **Matthew 7:1-14**
- **Matthew 18:15-17**
- **Proverbs 6:16-19**
- **Proverbs 17:14**
- **Proverbs 20:3**
- **Matthew 5:23-24**
- **1 Peter 5:5-7**
- **Ephesians 4:1-3**
- **Proverbs 18:19**