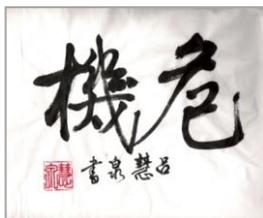




# Conflict is Inevitable

LifeCare Memos® Messages of Compassion

Conflict is inevitable in a fallen world. When people live or work in close proximity, conflict is often unavoidable. However, it need not be viewed



negatively. The Chinese symbol for conflict is two superimposed characters—one for danger and the other denotes opportunity for growth. We tend to negate the latter and often simply want to run away from conflict. Perhaps even as you read this you are in the midst of a conflict with family members.

Often even good-willed, well-intentioned people have very different views about life. End of life issues can be a hotbed of debate and hostility when they pertain to one's parents or even one's spouse. Other conflicts arise after someone's death relative to the distribution of assets. Some family members have found themselves in an "undeclared war" regarding the equity of monetary decisions, even resulting in emotional cutoff.

Fortunately, the Bible has a lot to say about conflict. The Bible doesn't gloss over the fact that conflict is a normal part of life on this earth. Conflict actually began prior to creation, as Lucifer rebelled against the Most High **GOD** and was cast out of heaven along with one third of the angels (Isaiah 14:12). It continued with the first family as Cain murdered his brother Abel (Genesis 4:8). Both Old and New Testaments record biblical confrontations on both global scales (wars) and personal issues.

Conflict, although dangerous, also provides us with great opportunities for spiritual growth and formation. In his book, *The Peacemaker*, Ken Sande challenges our negative view of conflict by proposing that the number one reason to learn to deal with conflict is to glorify **GOD**.

## ***Called to Peace***

**GOD** is a **GOD** of peace. It is His intrinsic nature and when we chose to seek peace we are taking on the character of our Heavenly Father. Romans 8:29 states we are to be

*"Conformed to the likeness of His Son."*

In other words, we are to let the beauty and character of Jesus be seen in us!

In addition to glorifying **GOD** as peacemakers, it enables us to serve others. In the Bible's classic negotiation story found in I Samuel 25, Abigail intuitively employed several principles essential in the peace-making process:

- She was proactive. When she learned about the potential crisis her husband, Nabal, had initiated, she wasted no time.
- She validated David and affirmed his integrity before **GOD** and reminded him of his role in **GOD's** divine plan.
- Her act of humility spared disgrace upon, not only David, but **GOD's** people.

### ***A Slippery Slope***

Conflict can be a slippery slope. Peacemaker Ministries identifies three primary ways in which we attempt to deal with conflict:

- **Escape**—which is *peace faking*. We either deny it completely, we run from it which is called flight, or we take our lives in suicide which is the ultimate escape from the conflict we are facing in life.
- **Attack**—this other extreme is *peace breaking* and we see it raise its ugly head in litigation, assaulting another individual or the ultimate attack response of murder as in the story of Cain and Abel. Neither of these strategies glorifies **GOD** or serves mankind.
- **Peace-making**—truly honors **GOD**. It involves seeking reconciliation. There is a volitional, intentional desire to see the conflict resolved.

The slippery slope includes a wide variety of infractions. Some conflicts are relatively minor and may simply be overlooked, choosing to give the offender the benefit of the doubt (Proverbs 19:11). Others, however, require deliberate, quick intervention.

The optimal response is, of course, to address each issue before it escalates. We live in a fallen world and at a frenetic pace. All too often we are emotionally and spiritually depleted and consequently our emotional bank accounts are in "ready credit." We desperately need **GOD's** assistance as we navigate the slippery slope of conflict. We need to take responsibility for the things that are within our control.

Here are some strategic steps to be better prepared to face conflict wisely: First and foremost, focus on **GOD's** character and His reputation. Ask yourself, "How can I honor **GOD** in this situation?"

Next follow the admonition of Matthew 7:5 and "*Get the log out of your own eye.*"

Ask God to help you see *your* sin clearly and deal with it. David invites **GOD** to "*Search his heart to see if there was any offensive way in it.*" (Psalm 139: 23-24).

Invite the counsel of spiritually mature believers who will speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15). James exhorts us to "*Put on the heart of humility*" (James 4:6-10).

A humble heart diffuses defensiveness.

Chip Ingram, President of Life on the Edge radio program, offers this practical tool to deal with conflict:

- **D - Define** the problem on your own
- **I - Initiate** a time to talk, don't just assume it will go away
- **F - Focus** on the "perceived problem" not the person
- **F - Feel** the pain as though it were your own, attempt to walk in the other person's shoes, seek to be empathetic
- **U - Uncover** the "root" problem, which may or may not be the initial complaint or issue that is presented!
- **S - Set** things right between you and the other person as much as possible; be willing to compromise; don't expect to be 100% satisfied
- **E - Establish** a specific action plan that addresses the issue and write it down. Each person commits to contribute to the action plan by doing specific things. Then evaluate in a specified time.

#### ***Promises of Forgiveness:***

- 1) I will not dwell on this incident
- 2) I will not bring it up and use it against you
- 3) I will not talk to others about it
- 4) I will not allow it to hinder our personal relationship.

#### ***Peacemaker's Pledge:***

As people reconciled to **GOD** by the death and resurrection of the **LORD** Jesus Christ, we believe that we are called to respond to conflict in a way that is remarkably different from the way the world deals with conflict.

We also believe that conflict provides opportunities to glorify **GOD**, serve others and grow to become more like Jesus!

Billie Sue Ellingson 260211

---

### ***LifeCare Memos®***

When experiencing the stresses of life, people need support. The Psalmist needed that support and found it when he turned to **GOD**. He said, "*Look to my right and see; no one is concerned for me. I have no refuge; no one cares for my life. I cry to You, O **LORD**; I say, 'You are my refuge, my portion in the land of the living'*" (Psalm 142:4-5).

**LifeCare Memos** are designed as messages of compassion that integrate biblical guidelines for emotional and spiritual well-being. Topics focus on various life-care issues and address them from the perspective of Scripture.