

## Jacob's Well



### Lesson Title: Conflict—Do it Right



**Key Concept:** Conflict is inevitable, but as disciples of Jesus we are called to handle it differently. Jesus' model of conflict may feel at odds with our instincts, but it is what leads to true restoration of relationship.



### Scriptures:

If another believer sins against you, go privately and point out the offense. If the other person listens and confesses it, you have won that person back.  
(Matthew 18:15 *New Living Translation*)

**Context Scriptures:** Matthew 18; Ephesians 4:15; James 5:16



### Lesson Thoughts:

Conflict is a reality in any meaningful relationship, even among believers. Fortunately, Jesus gives us clear direction for how to handle conflict. Successful conflict, regardless of which side of the conflict you are on, should reflect the steps given in Matthew 18:15.

Jesus begins by laying out the conditions of the situation: "If another believer sins against you." This immediately tells us that Jesus expected us to have conflict with each other. It should not be surprising or taboo; rather, it should be a normalized process we engage in as we try to serve in the kingdom with one another. It also tells us that Jesus is addressing those who have been hurt or offended. As unnatural as it may feel, if we have been offended, the responsibility of addressing unresolved conflict lies with us.

Jesus then instructs, "go privately." This step is also counterintuitive to what we may feel like doing when we are hurt or offended by someone. Our natural instinct might be to share with others, call someone out publicly, or withdraw. None of these are appropriate. Jesus calls us to instead go directly to the person. This protects their dignity and keeps our attitude and spirit right.

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Next, Jesus says, “point out the offense.” This means honestly explaining the wrong that has been done. It does not, however, mean attacking or condemning the other person. Paul, an apostle who did not shy away from conflict, instructed us to speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15). This requires an attitude and approach that is committed to truth and restoration, not revenge.

If we are the one that has done wrong, our response should be to listen and confess. Listening to your faults requires humility, and confession is a sign of accountability. This is the appropriate way to respond when someone communicates that you have hurt or offended them. James 5:16 records, “Confess your sins to each other...that you may be healed.” When we acknowledge our wrong, we begin to heal relationships.

When the person who has done wrong responds the way they should, “you have won that person back.” This is the goal of conflict resolution: not winning an argument, but restoring relationship. There will be times when we have hurt others, and there will be times when others have hurt us. No matter what side of the conflict we may fall on, Jesus outlines clear instructions on what to do. When we, on both sides of the conflict, obey Matthew 18:15, we aren’t just solving a problem, we are restoring and building relationship with one another.

**Discussion Questions:**

- 1) How does Jesus’ model of dealing with conflict compare to the world’s?
- 2) Our instincts when dealing with conflict are very different than Jesus’ instructions. Share a time when you did not handle conflict well.
- 3) How do we approach conflict when we struggle to find the words to explain the offense?
- 4) The goal of conflict should be restoration of relationship. How does that affect your perspective when dealing with conflict?
- 5) There may be times when you would rather suffer the hurt than deal with the conflict. Why is it important that we not avoid conflict?

**Next Lesson:** Call in the Body

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- 1) Listening and confessing to your faults and shortcomings can be really hard. How can we prepare ourselves to respond appropriately to someone who has been hurt by our failings? Pro tip: "I am sorry" is usually a good start.
- 2) Listening and confessing to your faults can be difficult when you don't agree with what is being said. You still must respond appropriately. The goal is restoration, not being "right." Take responsibility for causing hurt for the other person, then consider having a follow-up discussion when the time is right.
- 3) Jesus expected that we believers would have conflict, but so often we struggle in how we do it, if we do it at all. Reflect on your own assumptions about or past experiences with conflict, and how that may affect your personal approach to conflict. If you have struggles, bring them to God and pray about them. Successful conflict resolution is a blessing, not a burden.

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**Notes and Reflections, cont.**