



Lesson Title: Conflict—Choosing Your Battles



Key Concept: Conflict is inevitable but as disciples of Jesus we are called to handle it differently. We should let biblical principles, rather than our natural inclinations, guide us in whether to engage in conflict or hold our peace.



Scriptures:

⁴Love is patient, love is kind, it is not envious. Love does not brag, it is not puffed up. ⁵It is not rude, it is not self-serving, it is not easily angered or resentful.
(1 Corinthians 13:4–5 *New English Translation*)

Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it.
(Psalm 34:14 *King James Version*)

Context Scriptures: Romans 14; 1 Corinthians 13; Matthew 5:9, 23–25; Proverbs 19:11; Ephesians 4:15



Lesson Thoughts:

Each of us responds to conflict differently based upon our temperament, upbringing, experiences, and context. While some enthusiastically embrace conflict, others avoid it at all costs. But both approaches can have issues. Those of us who are conflict-avoidant may find ourselves frustrated as relationship issues are never addressed. Equally, those of us who are conflict-embracing may be at risk of putting undue strain on our relationships. No matter our inclination, however, we should be thoughtful when deciding to engage in or avoid conflict.

There are many reasons people are inclined to avoid or engage in conflict. Reasons to avoid conflict can be numerous: the conflict may seem unresolvable, emotions may be running high, we may fear the consequences, or the cultural background may be opposed to conflict. For example, collectivist cultures often value social connections highly; therefore, they may avoid conflict to maintain harmony. People may engage in conflict for other reasons, such as stress,

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unhappy relationships, or dislike of unresolved issues. But none of these reasons should be why we make our decisions. Our choice to avoid or engage in conflict should be biblically based and not flow from external circumstances or emotions.

Paul admonishes us in Romans 14 not to argue about differing opinions or judge others for their convictions. It is not appropriate to pass judgment on a fellow Christian, as they stand or fall before their only Master, Jesus Christ. We can enjoy our freedom in Christ, but not at the expense of another believer, and in no way should we cause them to stumble or fall. Quarreling and contending has no place in the body, but mutual edification and building up should be the goal, as our lives are connected in love for one another.

Yet there are times when we must seek conflict resolution in relationships if they are to thrive. Not addressing conflict when we feel hurt, devalued, or humiliated can be very harmful for our relationships. Jesus said in Matthew 5 that if you know someone has something against you, go to them and be reconciled. In the same chapter, he also states “blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God.” Could it be that addressing conflict and not avoiding it can actually be pursuing peace? There is a time to avoid conflict, but often issues and disagreements need to be discussed—prayerfully, speaking the truth in love.

**Discussion Questions:**

- 1) Are you conflict-avoidant or conflict-embracing? Why?
- 2) What could be the negative consequences if we avoid conflict?
- 3) What could be the negative consequences if we engage in conflict?
- 4) What are the types of issues we should or shouldn't engage in conflict over?
- 5) How do we know we have peace? How can conflict achieve peace?

Next Lesson: You Are the Problem

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Notes and Reflections

- 1) How do you decide to avoid or engage in conflict? Is your process based on the Bible, or some other source?
- 2) Do a slow read of Romans 14 and reflect on past experiences when you may have found yourself judging a brother or sister for their convictions (or lack thereof). How can this passage in Romans help change your perspective and future actions?
- 3) Read a Christian-based book on conflict, such as *The Peacemaker: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict* by Ken Sande, or *Boundaries* by Dr. Henry Cloud and Dr. John Townsend.

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Notes and Reflections, cont.