

Jacob's Well



Lesson Title: Conflict—Remaining Christian in Conflict



Key Concept: Conflict is inevitable, but as disciples of Jesus we are called to handle it differently. We may feel justified in our behavior when upset, but we must still behave as Jesus has instructed us.



Scriptures:

²⁵ So stop telling lies. Let us tell our neighbors the truth, for we are all parts of the same body. ²⁶ And “don’t sin by letting anger control you.” Don’t let the sun go down while you are still angry, ²⁷ for anger gives a foothold to the devil.
(Ephesians 5:25–27 *New Living Translation*)

²² But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things!
(Galatians 5:22–23 *New Living Translation*)

Context Scriptures: Matthew 18:15–20; Ephesians 4



Lesson Thoughts:

Jesus instructed us in Matthew 18 to deal with conflict directly. As broken humans who still live in a broken world, dealing with conflict directly is always messy. Sometimes, we take that messiness as permission to be less than Jesus called us to. If we are confused, frustrated, or even angry, this is justification for “telling it how it is,” even if it hurts the other person. We’re “just being honest,” right?

It's understandable why our first instinct is to act this way, as emotions run hot when we are upset with somebody, or even when somebody else is upset with us. But while it is understandable, it is not Christian. Jesus said to deal with conflict directly, not to throw our Christian character out the window when we encounter conflict. We are still supposed to love one another as we love

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ourselves, even if another has hurt us or done wrong by us. We can be absolutely correct in our intent to resolve conflict, but at the same time be completely out of line in our attitude and behavior.

Paul's writings shed some light on how we can guard ourselves against sinning in the middle of conflict. He reminded the Ephesians that we are all part of one body, all working together for the glory of God. And since body parts are supposed to work together, not against each other, we should be honest, but not let anger control us (Ephesians 4). Anger is a real emotion, but not a justification for sinning against each other. Instead, we should exemplify the fruit of the Spirit, showing "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control" (Galatians 5:22–23) as we navigate conflict with our brothers and sisters. As hard as it may be, Jesus' instructions for how we should behave as Christians do not change just because we are frustrated, or because somebody else has done us wrong.

When we deal with conflict, it is emotionally difficult and complex, but this difficulty does not excuse us from being the body of Christ. The body is still supposed to "[grow and build] itself up in love," (Ephesians 4:16) even when it's hard and messy.

**Discussion Questions:**

- 1) Has anybody ever said or done something that hurt you in the middle of conflict? What happened? How did you respond?
- 2) Have you ever said or done something that hurt somebody else in the middle of conflict? What happened? How did you make it right with them?
- 3) What are some things that make it hard for you to maintain your Christian character in the middle of conflict?
- 4) Share a time when God helped you maintain your Christian character in the middle of a conflict. What was the outcome?
- 5) How can each of the fruits of the Spirit be present in conflict?

Next Lesson: Do It Right

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Notes and Reflections

- 1) As cheesy as the saying may be, “What would Jesus do?” can be a very helpful guide in times of frustration. When engaging in conflict, remember that we are striving to model his behavior, his patience, and his love.
- 2) Before conflict, remember that you can pray to God and ask him to help you maintain a right spirit.
- 3) Think back on past conflicts you’ve navigated. If you’ve ever sinned or hurt somebody in the middle of conflict, repent, accept God’s forgiveness, and ask him to help you make it right with that person.

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Notes and Reflections, cont.