

## Xenos Christian Fellowship

### Christian Leadership 2

#### Pastoral Counseling

#### Week 4 - Understanding & Managing Conflict

### Introduction

**God's Priority on unity:** God says that peace/unity between his people is one of his highest priorities for the church. **See Ps. 133:1-3; Rom 12:18\*, Rom. 14:19; 2 Cor. 13:11; Eph. 4:3\*; Col. 3:15; 1 Thess. 5:13; 2 Tim. 2:24-26; Heb. 12:14; Jas. 3:18.** Peace and unity between God's people demonstrates his character and validates our witness to the lost (**Jn. 13:34,35; 17:21,23**).

**Unity and home group ministry:** The main threat to unity between Christians is, of course, division--and division is usually the result of poorly managed conflict. Especially since home group ministry utilizes team leadership and emphasizes close community, conflict presents us with some of our most frequent and serious trials.

At Xenos, we have found that improperly managed conflict is the leading cause of home group failure. Satan has little more work to do once he gets a leadership team in conflict. Workers must therefore take seriously Paul's commands to be effective peacemakers. Unless we understand conflict, learn how to resolve conflict with our fellow workers, and teach others how to do this, our home groups will likely fail in their mission of effective evangelism and discipleship.

Illust. Like a great song – the music and lyrics are both important.

### General observations on conflict

**Definition: Conflict is a difference in opinion or purpose that frustrates someone's goals or desires.**

**Conflict is unavoidable**, especially since Christianity is ABOUT community. In a fallen world, the only way to avoid conflict is to avoid interaction with other people! It is both unbiblical and naïve to be shocked by conflict in the church.

**Conflict can be a sign of health. It can also be a catalyst for health. Consider the following reasons why this is the case.**

- **Acts 15:36-40** - Conflict over how to best achieve our mission demonstrates spiritual commitment and vitality. Groups that have no conflict over this issue are apathetic.
- **Acts 6:1-7; 15:1-31** - Conflict is important in creating the tension necessary for creative problem-solving and accelerated learning. God often uses the pressure of conflict to further his purposes.
- **Col. 4:10** - When we work through conflict successfully, our relationships are usually deepened and strengthened. Conversely, relationships that avoid conflict remain superficial at best, ripe for division at worst.
- **1 Cor. 11:18,19** - Conflict can expose sinful attitudes that require firm discipline. God sometimes uses conflict to cleanse the church of ungodly people.

## Distinguishing healthy vs. unhealthy conflict:

- **Healthy Conflict: Issues-oriented & Cooperative**
- **Unhealthy Conflict: Sin-Driven & Competitive**

The root issue that distinguishes healthy conflict from unhealthy conflict is our heart attitude and motivation.

Unhealthy: Jas. 3:13-4:2 says that unhealthy conflict is the result of sinful lusts, including bitterness, selfish ambition, and envy/jealousy.

Healthy: Conversely, healthy conflict is motivated by a humble desire to glorify God and serve others (see Mk. 10:40-45; Lk. 14:6-11; 1 Pet. 5:2-6). In light of this fact, the following contrasts are helpful in distinguishing healthy conflict from unhealthy conflict.

*Issues-oriented vs. sin-driven:* An issues-oriented conflict focuses on the problem at hand and how to solve it redemptively. A sin-driven conflict is rooted in hurt feelings or unrighteous ambitions. These two kinds of conflict are often inter-related.

Conflict over issues may give rise to sin-driven conflict. I may allow my pride to be pricked because I didn't get my way. I may choose to harbor bitterness over real or perceived harshness in how others disagreed with me. I may choose to be threatened because others disagreed with my decision. I may give way to suspicion or bitterness because my leaders did not nominate me for Servant Team.

But sin-driven conflicts often disguise themselves as issue-oriented conflicts. Rather than admit that I am embittered or rivalrous, I may continue to bring up criticisms over the quality of the teaching, the character weakness of a leader, etc. The tip-off that this is actually a sin-driven conflict is that as fast as one issue is resolved, another one pops up.

*Cooperative vs. competitive:* In cooperative linkage, I can only attain my goals if you succeed in attaining yours (e.g., team sports). In a competitive linkage, I can only attain my goals if you fail to attain yours (e.g., individual sports).

Cooperation encourages perception of similarity of attitudes, which leads to the tendency to avoid coercion and use persuasion. Competition encourages an approach to conflict which seeks to win, and is willing (consciously or by omission) to see the other parties suffer loss in the process.

How would you identify a competitive linkage?

- Accusing leaders of holding you back.
- Judging others motives
- Accusing peers
- Provincialism

Home group leaders and workers should be involved in cooperative linkage. Unfortunately, we sometimes discover that a competitive attitude has taken hold, thereby bringing in a different dynamic in conflict. For example, workers may have conflict over who should follow up a new person in the home group. In a cooperative linkage, the keys to resolve this conflict may include what will be best for the new person, where the new person wants to go, which ministry spheres need

bolstered, etc. In a competitive linkage, the desire to build one's own kingdom is the bottom line.

**Let's check our understanding of this area by discussing the following questions:**

***According to Luke 14:6-11, would it be wrong for me to suggest that I should teach more in home group?*** (It would depend on things like whether you were seeking recognition and praise vs. seeking to utilize a God-given gift to build up the group, whether the present need is to have the best teachers vs. training new teachers, etc.)

***Would it be wrong to suggest that I deserve to be recognized as a leader (or senior leader) more than another brother or sister?*** (I can't imagine a situation in which this wouldn't be wrong. In what way is your service being limited by not being a leader? You may be rightly assessing that you have more leadership ability than another person does. However, we should turn to God and let him put us in the position when he is ready. Don't go on strike with God because you have not got the recognition. Continue looking for opportunities to serve.)

***What is my typical attitude toward a fellow-leader or worker who is more gifted at leadership and teaching?*** (Remember that these are gifts rather than areas of ministry uniformity. Turn away from all accusation or envy/jealousy. Continue serving thankfully at your post. Be grateful for the opportunity to serve/learn from this person. Encourage him for his good work and help him get better where possible. Speak highly of his ministry to others.)

***What is my typical response when another leader is asked to serve in a "higher" post (i.e. elder etc.)?*** (Judge all fleshly envy/jealousy. Pray for his protection and the resources he needs at this greater level of responsibility. Continue serving thankfully at your post.)

***What are my feelings when a brother or sister is being recognized for doing good work?*** (happy for them and for God being glorified through their work, or resentful that you weren't noticed for your contributions)

If you claim you don't wrestle with issues like this, you are a liar or self-deceived. Not spiritual, and certainly not humble.

### **Styles of conflict management**

People intuitively tend to respond to conflict in different ways. Each style is appropriate for certain kinds of conflict, but inappropriate for other kinds.

<b>Style</b>	<b>When Appropriate</b>	<b>When Inappropriate</b>
<b>Avoid - Denying there is conflict or simply ignoring it, or giving into the wishes of the other person in order to preserve the relationship.</b>	<b>For relatively minor matters, or a very important relationship, or a very important stage in the relationship.</b>  Example: Addressing fine-tuning sin-issues in a new Christian. Confronting idiosyncrasies in a friendship or marriage.	<b>For important issues. In these conflicts, avoiding stems from self-protection or laziness.</b>  Example: Self-protection – don't want to spend the emotional energy or experience the consequences of taking someone to task.
<b>Attack - Imposing my own</b>	<b>When defending important</b>	<b>When one of the other styles</b>

<p><b>solution, which may require aggressiveness, threats, unwillingness to cooperate.</b></p>	<p><b>moral principles or spiritual/theological priorities.</b></p> <p>Example: sexual immorality, grace vs. works, violence in the home other major moral issues, faction in your leadership that says outreach is not important.</p>	<p><b>would serve better, or when used in an unloving way. Remember: This style may promote hostility and damages relationships.</b></p> <p>Example: Often produces unsatisfactory solutions – because it is based on power and our ability to argue, may not be the right opinion.</p>
<p><b>Collaborate - Developing mutually satisfactory solutions to problems, which may include compromise (meeting someone halfway).</b></p>	<p><b>When there are shared goals (e.g., marriage, home group leadership, etc.). When there is no sin or evil intent involved, or when it's difficult to find a clear-cut solution, or when a stand-off would mean greater harm than splitting the difference.</b></p> <p>Examples: Allowing for different outreach strategies.</p> <p>Example: Appropriate in marriage, group leadership where there are shared common goals. In a good leaders meeting/marriage this will be the common method of decision making.</p>	<p><b>When God's goals are ignored in favor of the goals of the people, or when it fails to deal with the underlying causes for the conflict. Can cause incomplete solutions and leave the door open to further controversy. When it may lead to manipulation, halfhearted commitments, inadequate solutions, and recurring controversies.</b></p> <p>Example: Negotiating planting as the goal of home group.</p>

**Which style(s) do you commonly employ? Which style(s) do you need to develop?**

## **Resolving conflict biblically: PREPARATION**

### **1. Do you need to change your perspective toward this conflict?**

**When you enter a conflict situation, what do you focus on?** "How could this happen to me? He expects something from me that I think is unfair, I'm being falsely blamed, he is disrespecting me, etc. My life could be destroyed through this!" You ruminate on the conflict from this perspective for hours, days, or weeks at a time depending on the severity of the conflict. This is a *horizontal* perspective that is carnal because it doesn't "factor God into the equation" in certain crucial ways that promote godly resolution.

"When you are involved in conflict, you, too, must decide whether or not you will trust God. If you do not trust God, you will inevitably place your trust in yourself or someone else, which ultimately leads to grief. On the other hand, if you believe that God is sovereign and that he will never let anything into your life unless it can be used for good (Rom. 8:28), you will see conflicts not as *accidents*, but as *assignments*. This kind of trust glorifies God and inspires the faithfulness needed for effective peacemaking." 54,55

Instead, we need to pull our focus off of the conflict itself and develop God's view. **We should focus on two key biblical perspectives:**

- **God's Sovereignty** : First, God has sovereignly permitted this conflict for good (**Rom. 8:28**). It is not an accident beyond God's control. I may be surprised by it, but God is not. The Lord could have prevented it from happening, but he allowed it to happen. Therefore, this conflict is a God-permitted opportunity to glorify him (to demonstrate his power and goodness in a unique way), to serve others and to sanctify us.

Think of how Joseph adopted this perspective in his conflict with his brothers, and note his words to them in **Gen. 50:20!**

**Affirm to God:** You will need to get alone before God and explicitly agree with him that no matter how personally painful this conflict is, he is in control and is pursuing good purposes through it.

- **Your Stewardship:** Second, I am God's steward, and he wants me to steward/manage this conflict in a way that brings glory to him.

Notice how Paul has this perspective in **1 Corinthians. 4:2-4**. Paul is speaking of personal conflict, in this case between himself and the Corinthian church. Paul is being falsely accused by people. As God's steward, he's not worried about winning the argument or vindicating himself. He just wants to be faithful to God, because God is the One to whom he answers.

**Ask God:** "How can I glorify you through this conflict? How can I serve others through this conflict?" I can show others that God is wise, powerful and loving through my behavior and words. It is an opportunity to serve others (loving enemies in conflict). Often by our demeanor in a conflict situation, we can powerfully affect others (Christian and non-Christians) who are used to an ego-centric approach to conflict.

If God were to evaluate this conflict later (and he will!), how would you like him to complete these sentences: "I am pleased that you . . ." "I am pleased that you did not . . ."?

**This is why Ken Sande says that in conflict situations, "We either show that we have a big God, or we show that we have a big ego and big problems."**

## **2. Do you need to remove a log from your own eye?**

See **Matthew 7:1-5**. Jesus is not saying that we can't render judgments about the other person. Verse 5b specifically says that we may need to do this. But he is saying that there is a proper order here.

**What is the "log?"** The "log" here refers to whatever ways I have sinfully contributed to this conflict. This is something we must be willing to ask God to show us!

- Did I precipitate this conflict by an offense--either commissive or omissive?
- Have I been over-sensitive to his offenses, have I exaggerated them, etc. Was it even an offense (e.g., leaving the toothpaste cap off).
- Have I contributed sinfully to this conflict by my sinful reaction to his offense, by my history with the person, etc.?

**Why is this so important?**

- It is self-righteous hypocrisy not to do this. You are being critical of the other person, but not critical of yourself. You ask them to submit to criticism but you won't submit to theirs or others or God's.
- It will prevent you from seeing properly to help the other person. Sin has a distorting impact that causes us to perceive things differently than they really are. An uninvolved observer often doesn't see or hear what you did in that situation, because your sinful attitudes are distorting your perspective. You may be imagining words and motives that were never part of the situation.
- It will set the right tone and make resolution more likely if I remove my log first! Nothing will put things on a better footing than for me to show up with my log removed.

**Remember:** Again, we are not suggesting there isn't a moral problem with the other person, but *the other person's wrong never excuses me from responding in a godly way*. This is what God says, even if it is 90% his problem and only 10% mine.

### **How do we do this?**

- Go before God and ask: "How have I contributed to this conflict/made it worse?"  
Pray **Ps. 139:23,24** for this situation.
- You may want to discuss and pray this with a Christian friend. God will often answer: "You said this with this tone; you denied everything; you accused right back at them, etc."
- When appropriate resolve to acknowledge this to the other person (see below).

### **3. Should you simply drop this matter?**

For lesser matters, it may be best to simply forgive and forbear without even talking about the issue. "This conflict is not big enough to pursue, so I just choose based on God's forgiveness of me to let him off the hook." Consider these passages:

**Proverbs 19:11** says "A man's wisdom gives him patience; it is to his glory to overlook an offense." This says it is to your glory to overlook!

**Proverbs 12:16** says "A fool shows his annoyance at once, but a prudent man overlooks an insult." Fools are difficult to please, take everything personally. Learn to be secure enough in the Lord to not do this.

**Proverbs 17:14** says "The beginning of strife is like letting out water, so abandon the quarrel before it breaks out." Once you start to urinate, it's difficult to stop! Sometimes the potential benefit of pursuing an issue is just not worth the upset and damage that may result.

**Philippians 4:5** says "Let your forbearing spirit be known to all." Don't be unduly rigorous with people. Become known as one that people don't have to walk on eggs around!

Sometimes, however, the issue is too serious for this though. In these cases, you will probably need to talk with the person. Know your tendency to avoid conflict or push to hard in conflict, and lean against it. But before you do so, you'll need to take one or both of the following steps . . .

### **4. Do you need to forgive the other person?**

Since conflicts often involve painful offenses, forgiveness is a crucial ingredient for resolution of many conflicts.

**DEFINITION: To forgive in the biblical sense means "to agree before God to lay down the right to take retribution for the offense, accepting the effects of that offense--and to take up the responsibility to act redemptively toward the offender."** The two New Testament words for "forgive" emphasize both of these aspects of forgiveness:

*Aphiemi* means "to let go" or "to release" or "to remit." It was often used to refer to debts that had been canceled in full, which meant that the forgiver had to absorb the liability of the debt (see **Matt. 18:27**).

*Charizomai* derives from *charis* ("grace"), and means to bestow favor freely or unconditionally (see **Col. 3:13**).

Of course, **the foundational motivation** for Christians to forgive others is that God has forgiven us (**Eph. 4:32; Col. 3:13**). There is no greater hypocrisy for Christians, who constantly offend a holy God, to relate to him on the basis of grace--while insisting that we have the right to take retribution on our offenders (Matt. 18:21-35). Because God forgives us in spite of the magnitude of our sins against him, *no sin against us ever justifies the refusal to forgive*. When we are reluctant to forgive our offender, we need to ask the Lord to open our eyes afresh to our own sins and the magnitude of his forgiveness.

Christians often practice denial in this area. Most Christians know that it is wrong to be embittered, so they may holdback from obvious forms of retribution (e.g., physical violence, raging, etc.) and deceive themselves into believing that they have forgiven.

But all the while, the more subtle **symptoms of unforgiveness** (e.g., ruminating over the offense, fantasies of vengeance, avoiding the offender, passive-aggressive behavior, subtle negative statements to or about the offender, etc.) remain to prevent godly resolution and poison our own spiritual lives. We may need to be pressed by other Christian friends to admit our unforgiveness in order to deal with it.

Some Christians refuse to forgive because they are confused about what biblical forgiveness entails. **Consider the following distinctions:**

FORGIVENESS IS NOT	FORGIVENESS IS
<p>...<b>denying the offense, the offender's responsibility, or the painful effects of the offense.</b> Some people take on the responsibility for the offense. Others try to repress the issue by minimizing its effects. This is not God's way because it denies the truth.</p>	<p>Biblical forgiveness acknowledges all of the above, including feeling the emotional pain of the offense. But it also acknowledges other truths concerning the offense/offender. Instead of totally villainizing the offender, it <b>empathizes with him where appropriate. It also considers the possibility of how you have exaggerated the offense, and of how you have offended your offender.</b></p>
<p>...<b>primarily a feeling.</b> If you wait until you are overwhelmed with feelings of compassion, pity, etc. to conclude that you can or have forgiven, you may wait forever.</p>	<p><b>A decision that may be preceded or followed by redemptive feelings.</b> Biblical forgiveness ultimately involves feelings, but it is primarily a crisis of the will--choice to lay down the right to pay your offender back and reassume the responsibility to serve him. And this choice is based on the biblically-informed conviction that this is the only consistent response to God's</p>

	forgiveness of us.
... <b>a once-for-all event, after which the offense is forgotten.</b> If you believe that "to forgive is to forget," you may be unwilling to try to forgive, or you may wrongly conclude that you have not forgiven.	forgiveness begins with an event/ <b>choice, but (especially with serious offenses) it may involve an ongoing affirmation of this choice.</b> It doesn't mean that you eradicate the offense from your memory, but that you refuse to focus on the offense, or to use it against the offender by reminding him of it or gossiping about it.
... <b>passively tolerating future injury, or naively agreeing to trust an untrustworthy offender.</b> You don't prove your forgiveness of a child molester by entrusting your children to him. You don't prove your forgiveness of your chronically lying teenager by choosing to believe him. You don't prove your forgiveness of violent person by continuing to let him beat you or your children. You prove your own foolishness, and maybe your lack of love for them. Forgiveness is something we extend freely for the above reasons. Trust is something that is earned; that's why we speak of some people being "trustworthy."	... accepts the injury of past offenses, trusting that God will sovereignly work through them in your life for good (JOSEPH). It also <b>applies disciplinary or protective measures for redemptive rather than retaliatory reasons. And it is willing to let the offender rebuild responsible trust when appropriate.</b>
... <b>passive and negative only.</b> Of the few secular authors who prescribe forgiveness, it is usually for solely selfish reasons: "Let them off your hook so you can get on with your life."	While the Bible recognizes the personal benefit of forgiveness, this is not primary. The primary reasons are to <b>represent God accurately and to redeem the other person if possible.</b> That's why biblical forgiveness is active and positive (read Rom. 12:14,20,21)--even if all you can do is pray for the other person.
... <b>the same as reconciliation.</b> Read this quote to the class: One author defines authentic forgiveness as "the mutual recognition that repentance is genuine and right relationships are achieved." <sup>1</sup> This confuses two related but distinct things. Forgiveness is the unilateral decision to lay down the right to pay back and reassume the responsibility to love. Reconciliation is the bilateral agreement of both parties to come together again. You must truly forgive someone to be reconciled, but you can forgive someone and remain unreconciled if they refuse to repent.	... <b>willing to work toward appropriate reconciliation</b> if the offender repents. This is the ultimate goal of forgiveness, and it is beautiful to experience and behold.

### 5. *Have you clarified the issues?*

Every authority, secular and Christian, says we must *prepare before* we speak with the person. When we simply react, or when we fail to separate issues, we are much less likely to achieve genuine resolution.

Conflict sometimes remains only on the presenting issue. However, it often goes deeper than the issue alone and it is helpful to recognize 3 layers in which conflict might occur.

<sup>1</sup> David W. Augsberger, *The Freedom of Forgiveness* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1988), p. 28.

Layer	Tip-Off	Response
<b>Issue(s)</b> - Material issue(s) – objective, material	“It...” “This...”	Listen closely & understand their view & rationale of the issue(s) until you can communicate their view as well as them.
<b>Feelings</b> - Personal issue(s) – relational history, how they have made us feel in the past, our thoughts about them and vice versa	“You”	Draw these feelings out; stop talking about the issue and ask about this area and ask why. Be willing to take “accusations” and try to understand them.
<b>Identity</b> - Personal issues(s) – identity issues or past damage; they are hitting identity buttons in us where we don’t take our identity from God. Or past family/personal issues are being pressed that we are reacting to – or they are reacting to.	“I”	Similar to above, but also be willing to gently remind them (ourselves) of God’s perspective of their identity in that area.

Whenever you believe that the conflict involves both kinds of issues, plan to **address the personal issues before attempting to resolve the material issues.**

- Identify your feelings and the other person's as clearly as possible.

You may feel abandoned, discounted, ignored, like this person doesn’t care. For many of us, it may take time and prayerful reflection to pin down our feelings. After identifying your feelings, you may conclude that you imagined this offense. If so, drop it. You may be unsure if the offense was deliberate. If so, ask the other person, don't accuse of ill intent.

Clarify the other person’s feelings. This is usually more difficult because we lack empathy. Research shows that resolution is much more likely when we can articulate how we affected the other person's feelings. Conversely, most people discount input when they can tell the other person doesn't know how they feel. Being able to articulate how you hurt the other person's feelings and humbly apologizing for this will often result in the other person reciprocating, which resolves the personal dimension of the conflict.

- With regard to material issues, you need to clarify what you actually want. Even after resolving the personal issues, if you don’t know what you want with regard to the material issues, full resolution is unlikely.

In most cases, you should also be able to name alternative solutions. "I really want this over here, but I would settle for this." If you go into the discussion ready

and willing to resolve with less than what you originally wanted, the prospects are great for resolution.

- What style of conflict resolution do we plan to use?

## **Resolving conflict biblically: MEET WITH THE PERSON**

Having gotten before God in preparation (see above), you may need to meet with the other person. Some or all of the steps below may be necessary for godly resolution to the conflict.

### **1. *Acknowledge and apologize for your sinful part in the conflict if necessary (the log)***

You should consider whether you were wrong in either your view of the issue itself AND/OR the manner in which you approached your view.

Admit your fault first in an honest, unqualified and unconditional way. "God has convicted me . . . I want to apologize before we go any farther . . ." Choleric point...

- *Honest*: Admit to the wrong you truly believe you did. Don't do this to manipulate. And don't admit to things you didn't do!
- *Unqualified*: Qualified apologies try to decrease our personal guilt and subtly make the other person responsible for our sinful part in the conflict. They are the step-child of our personal pride. "I was wrong . . . but so were you . . . considering how you came at me . . . I was having a bad day before that . . . I'm sorry if you thought I was being offensive."
- *Unconditional*: This means that we apologize without insisting that the other person apologize for his part. If before the Lord I see where I was wrong, what does it matter if he sees his wrong? That's between him and the Lord.

This may be all that is needed. Or there may be additional wrongs that the other person brings up that you may need to apologize or. Or this may prompt the other person to reciprocate in a way that that resolves the conflict. Many of our conflicts would end if we admit our sin. Or this may set the stage for further necessary steps . . .

NOTE: step one is not always needed. You might not have been wrong in either your view of the issue, nor in the manner in which you pursued it.

### **2. *Raise / reprove their sinful part in the conflict.***

Once you have adopted God's perspective on the conflict and dealt with your sinful part in it, you may need to speak a word of correction to the other person (maybe this is a separate conversation).

For important biblical principles on this step, see **CHRISTIAN MINISTRY CLASS "ENCOURAGEMENT & ADMONITION"**

If the other person's offense is serious and he refuses to acknowledge it or repent, you may need to take further steps of church discipline. For important biblical principles on this step, see **CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP 1 – ECCLESIOLOGY 2 - CHURCH DISCIPLINE**

### **3. *Move toward collaboration (if appropriate)***

Many conflicts require working together for a solution. Consider the following elements of effective collaboration:

- Communicate the other person's good points (material &/or personal). If you can't do this, you'll come in so riveted on the negative that you will sink this ship before it leaves the dock. You are helping to preempt their taking your advice personally (EG. "Because you are a key player I need to bring this to your attention.").
- Identify areas of agreement with the other person. In conflicts with other Christians, we usually have substantial common ground. You may need to communicate some of these areas. You may need to communicate the other person's importance to you and to the ministry.
- Identify the areas hurt and/or disagreement that you see as the bone of contention. There is a positive anchor to the relationship, but also a present problem that is menacing and needs to be dealt with. This needs to be explained in simple terms to the other person. Ask if the other person agrees with your assessment, and invite him to identify additional issues.
- Propose an agenda at this point. "Why don't you talk about how you think we can resolve this, and then let me do the same thing?"
- Practice active listening as he gives his solution to the conflict (see SERVANTHOOD #2, WEEK #5, "THE ROLE OF LISTENING"). If you do this, he will usually do the same as you give your solution.

#### **4. *Leaving room for God!***

It is often unwise to force a resolution immediately. It might come to that, but first you need to do your part and then give God time to work with the other person.

People usually change their minds and heart-attitudes gradually. Some say, "Why bother doing all this? People don't change." This is false; people (especially Christians) can change in profound ways. We see it all the time, but the changes are seldom sudden. And even after people change their minds and attitudes, working these changes out in action is usually gradual.

As Christians, we should be willing to exercise this kind of patience--both because God and others have been patient with us, and because we believe in the power of prayer, God's Word, and the Holy Spirit to penetrate hearts.

If you do your part and the other person rejects it, you can leave knowing that you handled the conflict as God calls you to, as a faithful steward. You will have the peace of God because of this, and God will use it for good in your life. Are you content with this?

You should also be willing pray and return later. Let him know that you will check back with him soon to see if his thinking has changed.

#### **5. *You may need to get help from others***

See **Philippians 4:2,3**. Sometimes we need the objectivity and wisdom of another mature Christian in order to help resolve our conflicts. We've seen stalemated parties break down in humility and tears and get reconciled when they have been willing to get this kind of help. Are you reluctant to do this because it will involve airing your dirty laundry?

**REMINDER:** Servant team members are required to seek arbitration when they reach an impasse over conflicts that threaten the home group. There is a grievance board available if necessary.

## **RESOLUTION!**

“Resolution” means that both parties walk away saying (genuinely) they were enriched and blessed by this situation. This is possible far more often than we think, and God is glorified by it!

### **Conclusion**

If you follow these steps in your conflicts, you won't be trouble-free, but will see powerful results. A God-centered, grace-centered approach to conflict resolution will bring his power to bear on changing peoples' lives and bringing his peace, replacing conflict.

This ability, to work through conflict, is a crucial element not only in YOUR life, but in your ability to do Christian work and lead others. You must learn how to help others work through issues – not only telling them “the answer” but teaching them how to work through the process in this same way.

### **Assignment Due Next Week**

Read Jay Adams, *Competent to Counsel* (handout), "What's Wrong with the Mentally Ill?" Write a paragraph: “Do you agree with Adam's conclusion about mental illness? If not, what biblical basis is there for mental illness?”

### **Memory Verses**

**Rom 12:18\***

**Matt. 7:3-5\***

**Eph 4:3\***

### **Key Points to Know for Exam**

1. Be able to explain the difference between issues-oriented conflict and sin-driven conflict.
2. Be able to explain the five steps of preparing for resolving a conflict.
3. Be able to explain the five steps you may need to take when meeting with a person to resolve the conflict.