

# Conflict Resolution

QUICK REFERENCE COUNSELING KEYS Excerpt

## A Textbook for Relationships . . .

When you move from reading the Bible for historical accuracy to seeking answers for personal living, you soon realize that the Bible is a relational textbook. Turn the pages through panoramas of Old Testament family life or tour the battlefields of a nation's struggle with oppression. Share in intimate, inner conflicts poignantly expressed in the Psalms, and seek ultimate truth as Jesus reveals God's heart through parables and the very way He lived His life. You will never be able to plumb the depths of wisdom revealed in Scripture, but you will learn that conflict is a natural part of living. . . . God has a great deal to say about the necessity of seeking resolution.

*"If you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift."  
(Matthew 5:23–24)*

## Q: "What Are Some Facts about Conflict?"<sup>1</sup>

**Conflict cannot be avoided.**

*"In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."  
(John 16:33)*

**Conflict is not bad.**

*"Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another."  
(Proverbs 27:17)*

**Conflict requires action toward peace.**

*"Let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding."  
(Romans 14:19)*

## Q: "What Is the Difference between Resolution and Reconciliation?"<sup>2</sup>

Resolution and reconciliation are different.

- **Resolution** means "finding the answer."
- **Reconciliation** means "restoring to harmony."

Some differences may never be resolved, but you can still be reconciled to those with whom you differ. God requires only that, as far as it is possible, you seek to be at peace with everyone.

*"If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all."  
(Romans 12:18)*

## Ways of Handling Conflict<sup>3</sup>

Some people resemble various creatures in the way they handle conflict.

### The Shark . . . alias Dictator

**Message:** “Give in to me or I’ll attack!”

### The Snake . . . alias Backbiter

**Message:** “Don’t tangle with me or you will regret it later.”

### The Woodpecker . . . alias Faultfinder

**Message:** “Don’t get on my bad side or I’ll talk about you!”

### The Turtle . . . alias Retreater

**Message:** “Don’t confront me because it won’t do any good.”

### The Chameleon . . . alias Obligator

**Message:** “I’m nice to you; you owe it to me to be nice back.”

### The Weasel . . . alias Twister

**Message:** “I’m not going to get pinned down.”

*“See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no ‘root of bitterness’ springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled.”*  
(Hebrews 12:15)

## Responding to Difficult Personalities<sup>4</sup>

### The Shark

- Let them have their say without interrupting.
- Hold your ground.
- Avoid arguments.

### The Snake

- Expect them to deny what they have done.
- Don’t let them get away with an attack.

### The Woodpecker

- Learn to cut off negative conversation.
- Respond only to what is important.

### The Turtle

- Ask questions that can’t be answered with yes or no.
- Hang in there until you get a response.

### The Chameleon

- Learn their hidden fears.
- Reinforce their decisions.

### The Weasel

- Avoid accusations.
- Don’t get drawn into arguments.

*“Have nothing to do with foolish, ignorant controversies; you know that they breed quarrels.”*  
(2 Timothy 2:23)

## Key Verse to Memorize

*“Let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding.”*  
(Romans 14:19)

## Key Passage to Read and Reread

Philemon verses 1–25

## The Road to Resolution<sup>5</sup>

Pledge your commitment. (Romans 12:18)

Pray for yourself. (Psalm 139:23–24)

Prepare before you ask for a meeting. (Proverbs 16:21)

Propose a time to talk face-to-face. (Ephesians 4:3)

Provide a private place. (Matthew 18:15)

Purpose to be honest. (Proverbs 12:17)

Permit total forgiveness. (Colossians 3:13–14)

Perceive a future harvest. (Galatians 6:9)

*“[Be] eager to maintain the unity of  
the Spirit in the bond of peace.”  
(Ephesians 4:3)*

## Turning Foes into Friends

**F**ind ways to compliment your enemies.  
(Romans 12:14)

**R**epay evil with good toward your enemies.  
(Romans 12:17)

**I**ntercede in prayer for your enemies. (Matthew 5:44)

**E**mpathize with your enemies. (Romans 12:15)

**N**urture a forgiving heart toward your enemies.  
(Romans 12:19, 21)

**D**ecide to love your enemies. (Romans 13:8)

**S**eek to fill the needs of your enemies.  
(Romans 12:20)

*“If your enemy is hungry, feed him;  
if he is thirsty, give him something to drink;  
for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head.”  
(Romans 12:20)*

### Related Topics . . .

- Communication:  
*The Heart of the Matter*
- Guilt:  
*Living Guilt Free*
- Pride & Humility:  
*The Prescription for “I” Strain*
- Reconciliation:  
*Restoring Broken Relationships*
- Rejection:  
*Healing a Wounded Heart*

1. The material of this section is based on G. Brian Jones and Linda Phillips-Jones, *A Fight to the Better End* (Wheaton, IL: Victor, 1989), 16–17; also Don Baker, *Restoring Broken Relationships* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1989), 131.

2. For this section, see *New Oxford Dictionary of English* (electronic ed.) (Oxford University Press, 1998); *Merriam-Webster Collegiate Dictionary*. On the differences between resolution and reconciliation see also L. Randolph Lowry and Richard W. Meyers, *Conflict Management and Counseling*, Resources for Christian Counseling, ed. Gary R. Collins, vol. 29 (Waco, TX: Word, 1991), 26–29.

3. For this section, see Will Cunningham, *How to Enjoy a Family Fight* (Phoenix, AR: Questar, 1988), 151–80; Robert M. Bramson, *Coping with Difficult People* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1981), 13, 26–29, 44–52, 70–73, 85–90.

4. For this section, see Bramson, *Coping*, 14–25, 29–34, 52–64, 74–84, 90–97; H. Norman Wright, *How to Get Along with Almost Anyone: A Complete Guide to Building Positive Relationships with Family, Friends, Co-workers* (Dallas: Word, 1989), 140–43, 136–37.

5. See Jones and Phillips-Jones, *A Fight to the Better End*, 50–54, 60–61; Josh McDowell, *Resolving Conflict* (Pomona, CA: Focus on the Family, 1989), 8, 11; Cunningham, *How to Enjoy a Family Fight*, 123–25, 127–31, 191.

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