

What Is a Conflict

Conflicts are disagreements, struggles, or battles over opposing issues or principles.

Resolution vs. Reconciliation

Resolution and reconciliation are different. ...

- **Resolution** means finding the answer or analyzing a complex notion into simpler ideas.
- **Reconciliation** means 100% restoration to harmony ... to bring together again.

Some differences may never be resolved, but you can still be reconciled to those with whom you differ. At other times, resolution of differences may be possible, but reconciliation may be inappropriate, such as in the case of adultery or cult entrapment. God requires only that, as far as it is possible, you seek to be at peace with everyone. ...

*“Make every effort to live in peace
with everyone and to be holy;
without holiness no one will see the Lord.”*
(Hebrews 12:14)

Different Types of Conflict

- **Intrapersonal Conflict:** A struggle within a person to decide between two or more choices. (Esther 4:11)
- **Interpersonal Conflict:** A clash of ideas or interests between two or more people. (Esther 3:5)
- **Intraorganizational Conflict:** A competitive or opposing action within a group (a family, department, church, political party, state, or nation). (Esther 7:7)
- **Interorganizational Conflict:** A battle or opposing action between two or more groups (families, companies, religions, or countries). (Esther 3:13)

Aggressive Attackers and Passive Avoiders

3 Aggressive Attackers

1. **Wolves:** Known to be “wolves in sheep’s clothing,” they cloak their harmful intentions behind a harmless facade. They are known to be forward, direct, and zealous in the seduction of women. (Ezekiel 22:27)
2. **Snakes/Serpents/Vipers:** Known to be dangerous and treacherous, injecting injurious venom into people or groups by poisoning their minds, hearts, or reputation. They are known to act silently, secretly, and slanderously to inflict injury on others. (Psalm 140:3)
3. **Hornets:** Known to be excessively angry or “mad as a hornet,” they gather others to “swarm” a person or place, thus creating havoc or harm with “stings” (for example, accusations, threats, attacks, etc.). (Joshua 24:12)

3 Passive Avoiders

1. **Tortoises:** Known for being slow or for being stragglers, they tend to “withdraw into a shell” when threatened. They are also known for dawdling or shirking responsibility. (Leviticus 11:29)
2. **Chameleons:** Known to change their minds or even their character, but only superficially ... merely to be expedient, or to “fit in.” They blend in with diverse groups by reflecting each group’s look, behavior, and belief when with the group. (Leviticus 11:29–30)
3. **Weasels:** Known to act deviously, unscrupulously, and underhandedly, they use “weasel words” in order to be evasive or insincere. They will often evade or escape from a situation by “weaseling out” of it. (Leviticus 11:29)

Attackers and Avoiders

8 Faulty Accusations of Attackers

- “You’ll never change.”
- “You challenge me, and I’ll pin you to the wall.”

- “You don’t have what it takes to succeed in this life.”
- “You’re so stupid that you don’t have enough sense to get out of the rain.”
- “You failed again—you’re just a failure.”
- “You’re at fault if our relationship fails.”
- “You can’t even do the simplest things correctly.”
- “You’re hopeless—there’s no hope for you.”

Instead of focusing on the faults of others (out of pride), the Bible tells us to bear the burdens of others (out of humility). (Galatians 6:2–3)

8 Faulty Expectations of Avoiders

- “You should never create conflict in our relationship.”
- “You should never get angry with me because I can’t handle it.”
- “You should always see things my way if you care about my feelings.”
- “You should always do things my way if you care about my happiness.”
- “You should always trust my judgment if you respect me.”
- “You should always depend on me to make you secure.”
- “You should always overlook my mistakes if you truly accept me.”
- “You should always seek to meet my needs if you want us to have a good relationship.”

However, the Bible says we should look to the Lord as our Need-Meeter. (Philippians 4:19)

5 Ws and an H

Before attempting to resolve a conflict, first answer the following six questions, five of which start with a *W* and one with an *H*.

- **Who?** Who is involved in the conflict? Name those presently involved in the conflict. List those who could be involved to bring about a resolution.
- **What?** What is your goal? Put into writing what you want to accomplish. Be clear. Is this a onetime goal or a long-term goal?
- **Why?** Why do you want to do it? List the reasons for taking action. List what will happen if you do not take action.
- **Where?** Where will it happen? Assess a place where you think the conflict could possibly be resolved. Evaluate whether there is another suitable location where resolution could occur.

- **When?** When do you want it finished? Establish a timeline from beginning to end. List short-term, measurable goals.
- **How?** How do you want it to be done? List the policies and procedures that need to be put in place. List the guidelines needed to accomplish the goal.

*“The heart of the discerning acquires knowledge,
for the ears of the wise seek it out.”*
(Proverbs 18:15)

Key Verse to Memorize

*“Let us therefore make every effort
to do what leads to peace
and to mutual edification.”*
(Romans 14:19)

Key Passage to Read

Book of Philemon verses 1–25

The Road to Resolution

As I prepare to walk the road to resolution of a conflict, I will remember to ...

- **Pledge** my commitment. (Romans 12:18)
- **Pray** for the two of us. (“Lord, please show us the true issue. Reveal any personal errors we need to face. Prepare both my heart and the heart of [name] to be open.”) (Psalm 139:23–24)
- **Prepare** before I ask for a meeting. (Lamentations 3:40)
- **Propose** a time to talk face-to-face. (Ephesians 4:3)
- **Provide** a private place away from people and distractions. (Matthew 18:15)
- **Purpose** to be honest. (Proverbs 12:17)
- **Permit** total forgiveness. (Colossians 3:13–14)
- **Perceive** a future harvest. (Galatians 6:9)
- **Present** the present conflict. (1 Corinthians 13:5)
- **Promote** fairness and objectivity. (Leviticus 19:15)
- **Protect** your privacy. Don’t involve outsiders. (Proverbs 11:13)
- **Preserve** individuality. Don’t demand “like-thinking.” (Job 32:17)

- **Project** openness and optimism. (1 Thessalonians 5:11)
- **Practice** love. (Proverbs 17:17)

*“I appeal to you ... that all of you
agree with one another.”*
(1 Corinthians 1:10)

How to Respond When Others Are Critical of You

- **Be discerning** regarding the accuracy of the critical words of others. (Proverbs 16:21)
- **Be open** to the slightest kernel of truth when you are criticized. (Proverbs 17:10)
- **Be willing** to consider the criticism. If it is true, this person is God’s megaphone to get your attention. (Proverbs 12:15)
- **Be able** to receive criticism without being defensive. Admit to any truth in the criticism—agreeing when you are in error and then asking for further correction. (Proverbs 15:12)
- **Be determined** to speak well of your critic. (Romans 12:14)
- **Be dependent** on the Lord’s perspective, not on the opinion of others, to determine your worth and value. (Galatians 1:10)

*“Do not be overcome by evil,
but overcome evil with good.”*
(Romans 12:21)

How to Turn Foes into Friends

- F**ind ways to compliment your opposer. (Psalm 37:30)
- R**epay your opposer’s evil with good. (Romans 12:17)
- I**ntercede in prayer for your opposer. (1 Samuel 12:23)
- E**mpathize with your opposer. (1 Peter 3:8)
- N**urture a forgiving heart toward your opposer. (Mark 11:25)
- D**ecide to love your opposer. (Romans 13:8)
- S**eek to meet the needs of your opposer. (Romans 12:20)

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