



# Life Blueprints

Overcoming Conflict  
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# I. Introduction

Ephesians 4:15 NASV

But speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him, who is the head, even Christ,

Ephesians 4:25-32 NASV

Therefore, laying aside falsehood, SPEAK TRUTH, EACH ONE of you, WITH HIS NEIGHBOR, for we are members of one another. [26] BE ANGRY, AND yet DO NOT SIN; do not let the sun go down on your anger, [27] and do not give the devil an opportunity. [28] Let him who steals steal no longer; but rather let him labor, performing with his own hands what is good, in order that he may have something to share with him who has need. [29] Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the oment, that it may give grace to those who hear.

[30] And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. [31] Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. [32] And be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.

Let dogs delight to bark and bite, For God hath made them so: Let bears and lions growl and fight, For 'tis their nature too... But children you should never let Such angry passions rise, Your little hands were never made To tear each other's eyes.<sup>1</sup>

Weary of discord, Mark Twain said, "So I built a cage, and in it I put a dog and a cat. After a little training I got the dog and the cat to the point where they lived peaceably together. Then I introduced a pig, a goat, a kangaroo, some birds and a monkey. And after a few adjustments, they learned to live in harmony together. So encouraged was I by such successes that I added an Irish Catholic, a Presbyterian, a Jew, a Muslim from Turkestan, and a Buddhist from China, along with a Baptist missionary that I captured on the same trip. And in a very short while there wasn't a single living thing left in the cage!"<sup>2</sup>

Three burly fellows on huge motorcycles pulled up to a highway café where a truck driver, just a little guy, was perched on a stool quietly eating his lunch. As the three fellows came in, they spotted him, grabbed his food away from him and laughed in his face. The truck driver said nothing. He got up, paid for his food and walked out.

One of the three cyclists, unhappy that they hadn't succeeded in provoking the little man into a fight, commented to the waitress: "Boy, he sure wasn't much of a man, was he?" The waitress replied, "Well, I guess not." Then looking out the window, she added, "I guess he's not much of a truck driver, either. He just ran over three motorcycles."

Upon one occasion, Winston Churchill so angered Lady Astor that she said, "If I were your wife, I would give you arsenic to drink." Churchill angered her even more with his reply, "And if I were your husband, I would gladly drink it."<sup>3</sup>

Conflict is going to happen, you simply can't avoid it. The issue is how will you respond to it. It happens in marriages and families. It happens at work. It happens in churches. It can happen anywhere and anytime with anyone.

## **A. Definition**

Conflict – Strife or quarrel

Webster: fight, battle, war; antagonistic state or action (as of divergent ideas, interests, or persons; mental struggle resulting from incompatible or opposing needs, drives, wishes, or external or internal demands.

## **B. Causes**

### **1. Selfishness**

Wanting to have it your way. (If it works at Burger King it's gotta work at home.) "I want what I want when I want it and that's right now." Not thinking of anyone else but yourself.

James 4:1-3 NASV

What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? [3] You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures.

### **2. Lust**

Desiring something outside of the will of God. Lust for money, power, material possessions. Use the credit card. Financial problems. Conflict.

James 4:2 NASV

You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. And you are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask.

Jealousy if someone else has it and you don't

### **3. Not Having a Consistent Daily Time with God**

James 4:2b NASV

You do not have because you do not ask.

Turning to other things to meet your needs. Your attitude gets bad when you leave God out.

### **4. Pride**

"I'm right no matter what, okay?" Unwilling to admit when you're wrong. It's Edging God Out. The "I did it my way" mentality.

James 4:6 NASV

But He gives a greater grace. Therefore it says, "GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE."

It's seeing things your way only.

### **5. Misunderstandings**

You think someone has said something or done something that hurts you or makes you mad. It may not have happened, but it looks that way to you.

A woman called the fire department in agitation one day. "Come as quickly as you can," she cried. "My house is on fire." "OK, lady," said the dispatcher, calmly, "tell us how to get there." "Oh," she paused for a moment, "don't you have your little red truck anymore?"<sup>4</sup>

An executive who had recently hired an English secretary had to go on a business trip to London. While he was away, a salesman who had never spoken to the new secretary made one of his periodic telephone calls to the executive's office. The secretary responded to the call by saying, "Mr. Allen is in the United Kingdom."

The salesman was shocked and replied, "I'm terribly sorry. Is it too late to send flowers?"<sup>5</sup>

A young mother had been too busy to visit her elderly neighbor, who was ill. She said to her small son, "Johnny, run over and see how 'old Mrs. Smith' is." Within a few minutes, the boy was back. "She says it's none of your business how old she is."<sup>6</sup>

Now let's consider briefly 10 principles for dealing with conflict.

## **II. K – Kick The Problem, Not The Person**

You're not attacking a person, you're attacking a problem. Kicking the person won't solve the problem. Two people can agree that there is a problem and you can deal with it together.

Ephesians 5:25b NASV

For we are members one of another...

Whether it's your husband or wife, your son or daughter, mom or dad, or a fellow Christian, to hurt that person means to hurt yourself. We need each other. Don't burn your bridges here. It's savable. It's solvable. You're not there to destroy a relationship, but to deal with a problem.

You've gotta get beyond "who is right" and determine "what is right." It's not "I'm going to win this argument". Instead, it's "let's deal with this and get beyond it so we can get on with what God wants us to do."

### **III. N – Name What It Is That Is Bothering You**

Seek to discover what the problem is. Why the conflict? Why this feeling?

Ephesians 5:25 NASV

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her;

Be honest about how you feel. Don't run from it. Don't deny it simply because it's uncomfortable or painful. Share the truth about how you feel.

John 8:32 NASV

"And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

The truth shared destroys Satan's plans for coming between you and dividing you. Don't lie. Don't flatter. Don't say, "It's okay" if it's not okay.

Be specific. Don't assume that the other person knows what the problem is or how you feel. "What's wrong?" "You know good and well what's wrong." Lay it out. Begin with, "Here's how I feel."

Ephesians 4:15 NASV

But speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him, who is the head, even Christ,

That's the balance: Tell it like it is, but do it in love. Make that person feel your love as you share with him the truth. Truthfulness and tactfulness are compatible not contradictory.

Share the facts, not just your opinion. Avoid saying words like "you always" or "you never." Don't exaggerate.

## IV. O – Order Your Anger

In dealing with conflict emotions run high. You can easily say things you will forever regret. It's easy to break a relationship, to do irreparable damage in one moment. Does that wouldn't get angry with the problem? No way! Notice:

mean you sh Ephesians 4:26 NASV

BE ANGRY, AND yet DO NOT SIN; do not let the sun go down on your anger,

“Don't lose your temper.” Allow Christ to control your anger. Pray before you say. Count to a billion if you have to first.

In your anger, you could hurt someone you love. Remember, “Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me?” Can you say, ‘baloney’? You can crush someone while you're angry.

Proverbs 18:14 NASV

The spirit of a man can endure his sickness, But a broken spirit who can bear?

Proverbs 18:19 NASV

A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city, And contentions are like the bars of a castle.

Words spoken in anger become weapons that wound.

It's okay to be angry at the problem, the situation or even the person if, if, if, you constructively confront, and lovingly, firmly express it.

## **V. C – Close The Door To Bitterness And Underground Anger**

If a conflict is left unresolved, it goes underground and a root of bitterness and resentment results.

Ephesians 4:26-27 NASV

Do not let the sun go down on your anger, [27] and do not give the devil an opportunity.

Unresolved conflicts put out a Welcome Mat for the devil. It sends him a personal invitation to get involved.

There are people right now who no longer speak, no longer want to be around each other, avoid each other because somehow, some way, somewhere a problem arose and it never got resolved. Marriages can live in utter unhappiness and end in divorce because of it.

Ephesians 4:31 NASV

Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice.

Let go of these six things. Close the door to them.

(1) Bitterness – smoldering resentment, a grudge-filled attitude.

(2) Wrath – rage

(3) Anger – internal smoldering.

(4) Clamor – loss of control, shouting, outcry.

(5) Slander – an ongoing spirit of evil speaking of someone.

(6) Malice – ill will toward someone. That's what will happen if you don't close the door.

## **VI. K – Kindness Is The Rule**

Ephesians 4:32 NASV

And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.

The word kindness means “courteous, considerate, appreciative, thoughtful of others.” (Paxson) It’s creating an atmosphere of graciousness. That means you don’t interrupt or but in. You listen, as well as speak. Drop being defensive and graciously attempt to solve the conflict. The heart needs to be softer than the head. “A lot of people mean well, but their meanness is greater than their wellness.” Leave your grouch outside.

“Kindness is more than deeds. It is an attitude, an expression, a look, a touch. IT is anything that lifts another person.”<sup>7</sup>

“Tender hearted” – compassionate. It’s hurting with someone, feeling the pain, empathetic. You don’t’ enjoy the conflict or the confrontation.

## **VII. D – Drop What It Is That Is Creating The Conflict**

I didn't say deny it or not deal with it, but drop it once it's dealt with. Don't keep  
Don't keep revisiting it.

hanging onto it. Notice the principle found in:

Ephesians 4:28 NASV

Let him who steals steal no longer; but rather let him labor, performing with his own hands what is good, in order that he may have something to share with him who has need.

Whatever is creating the conflict must be dropped. Paul say, "If you are stealing, quit it!" Replace what you are doing wrong with doing something right. Replace the negative with the positive. Take a weakness and turn it into a strength. Concentrate on meeting the needs of the other person.

Now let me apply this verse to marriage. Stealing is taking what doesn't belong to you. But in marriage you can be a taker. "Meet my needs." "Me first." Start being a giver. "What can I do to make you happy?" Your husband has needs. Your wife has needs. Meet them!

## VIII. O – Opportunity

It's important that you look for the right opportunity to deal with the conflict.

Proverbs 15:23 NASV

A man has joy in an apt answer, And how delightful is a timely word!

Proverbs 15:23 TLB

Everyone enjoys giving good advice, and how wonderful it is to be able to say the right thing at the right time!

The right time is when you will be uninterrupted and have the time to deal with the conflict. Not when you're rushed, tired, getting ready to walk out the door or when you're sitting down to eat. The right place is when it's just the two of you. Never in public.

Pray for that right time and place. Set it up. Set the boundaries and get it SOLVED.

## IX. W – Watch Your Words

Not only what you say, but how you say it.

Ephesians 4:29 NASV

Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, that it may give grace to those who hear.

“Unwholesome” means corrupt, foul, rotten. No foul language. No rotten words. No words that burn bridges. No putting another person down. “You idiot.” “What were you thinking?” “That was dumb.” Watch your tone. Don’t talk down to the person. Don’t be sarcastic or cutting.

The children in a prominent family decided to give their father a book of the family’s history for a birthday present. They commissioned a professional biographer to do the work, carefully warning him of the family’s “black sheep” problem: Uncle George had been executed in the electric chair for murder. The biographer assured the children, “I can handle that situation so that there will be no embarrassment. I’ll merely say that Uncle George occupied a chair of applied electronics at an important government institution. He was attached to his position by the strongest of ties and his death came as a real shock.”<sup>8</sup>

Instead, use your words to build up, to help, to heal, to express your heart.

Proverbs 12:18 TLB

Some people like to make cutting remarks, but the words of the wise soothe and heal.

Use some four-letter words: Love, Hope, Good, Feel, Heal, Care, Work, Pray, Live, Seek. The twelve words that can turn everything around: “I love you. I am sorry. Please forgive me. I was wrong.”

## **X. N–Now!**

Try to resolve it now. Don't give Satan the opportunity to work.

Ephesians 4:27 NASV

And do not give the devil an opportunity.

As much as I dislike confrontation, one thing the Lord has shown me is to deal with it ASAP.

Now, when you deal with the conflict, when you have made your point don't keep hanging on to it. But there's something else. When you're wrong, when you're beaten, give up. Surrender. Be a gracious loser. Apologize. "You were right. I was wrong. I'm a ding and a dong."

## **XI. S – Sieze The Moment To Forgive**

Be ready to forgive.

Ephesians 4:32 NASV

Just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.

“Forgiving...” Choose to forgive. It’s not a feeling. It’s not an admission that you’re all wrong. It’s simply choosing not to allow this conflict to place you in an emotional and spiritual prison. But what if the other person won’t respond, won’t change, won’t budge, won’t try to make it right? If you do all you can, FIDO!

Now there’s a difference between forgiveness and trust. Forgiveness is a choice you make now. Trust must be restored and earned.

In an old monastery in Germany may be seen two pairs of antlers interlocked, said to be found in that position many years ago. The deer had been fighting when their antlers got jammed together and could not be separated. They died with locked horns.<sup>9</sup>

Don’t let it happen to you!

## Endnotes

1. Quote: Sweeting
2. Quote: Hodgkin
3. Quote: Hodgkin
4. Quote: Hodgkin
5. Quote: Hodgkin
6. Quote: Hodgkin
7. Quote: Strait
8. Quote: Hodgkin (p. 119; #282)
9. Illustration: Zuck (p. 84)