

November 21, 2010
The Bridge Bible Fellowship
Pastor Paul S. Brown
Selected Scriptures

“Resolving Conflict, Part Two”

- I. The Perspective
- II. The Problem
- III. The Plan
 - A. Purposes
 - 1. Wrong Purposes
 - a. “Win” at any cost [Right vs. Righteous] > _____
 - b. “Peace” at any cost [Resignation vs. Reconciliation / Restoration] > _____
 - 2. Right Purposes
 - a. Glorify God (1 Cor. 10:31).
 - b. Good _____ (“ours” vs. “His”).
 - c. _____ (Eph. 5:1 “imitators of God”).

Notes from Conference Table – “Self-Confrontation: a manual for in-depth discipleship,” developed by John C. Broger, pp. 261-264. Permission granted to reproduce.

CONFERENCE TABLE PURPOSES:

- 1) To provide people (individuals, couples, families, roommates, co-workers, etc.) a structured environment to communicate biblically (*based on Eph. 4:15-32*).
- 2) To help restore poor relationships and to initiate a pattern of forgiveness and reconciliation between individuals (*based on Mt. 5:23-24; Mk. 11:25-26; Rom. 12:14, 18; 14:13, 19; Eph. 4:32*).
- 3) To provide a method for finding biblical solutions to disagreements and to maintain unity in relationships (*based on Ps. 133:1; 1 Cor. 1:10; Eph. 4:1-3; Phil. 2:1-4; James 1:5*).
- 4) To develop the habit of making daily decisions in a biblical fashion (for example: scheduling time, making financial decisions, determining personal or family responsibilities, developing biblical goals, etc.) (*based on Prov. 16:1, 9; Lk. 14:28-30; Rom. 12:9-13; Eph. 5:15-17*).

B. Prerequisites

- 1. _____ yourself first (*Ps. 139:23-24; Mt. 7:1-5; 1 Cor. 11:31*).
- 2. Ask the other individual(s) who are part of your family (or group) to work with you in developing a method of communicating _____ with one another. Explain your commitment to build up all the others and to learn to speak with them in such a way that focuses on overcoming problems instead of attacking them (*based on Eph. 4:15, 29, 31-32; Col. 4:6; 2 Tim. 2:24-25*).
- 3. _____ other conference table participants in your heart even if they have not asked for forgiveness (*Mk. 11:25*).
- 4. Thoroughly explain to each individual how to conduct a conference table before beginning:
 - a. Review the purposes above.
 - b. Review the following biblical principles for conducting a conference table:
 - 1) Base everything on God’s Word, since Scripture is the authority for all faith and conduct (*Rom. 15:4; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; Heb. 4:12*).
 - 2) Be _____ (*Eph. 4:15, 25*).

- 3) Be _____ and _____ in your speech, avoiding talk that produces quarrels (*Prov. 15:1; Eph. 4:15; 5:4; Col. 4:6; 2 Tim. 2:23-24*).
- 4) Do not use unwholesome words but use only those words that edify (build up) others (*Rom. 14:19; Eph. 4:29*). [avoid sarcasm even if it's funny]
- 5) Do not _____ or be contentious (*II Tim. 2:23-24; Titus 3:9; James 4:1-2*).
- 6) Work on changing yourself, not on changing others (*Ezek. 18:20; Mt. 7:1-5*).
- 7) Be _____ (*Mt. 6:14-15; Eph. 4:32; Col. 3:12-13*);
- 8) Treat others at the conference table just as you desire to be treated (*Mt. 7:12*).

C. Procedures for the first conference table

1. The husband (or in the absence of a husband, one chosen to be the _____) is to conduct the time together (*Eph. 5:21-6:9; 1 Tim. 3:4-5*) and the wife (or another delegated person) is to act as the _____.
 - a. The conference table opens and closes with _____ (*Col. 4:2; 1 Thess. 5:17; James 1:5*).
 - b. The Bible is studied during the conference time in order to discover God's will concerning questions and decisions. All are encouraged to bring their Bibles. For those who do not bring one, have extras on the table for their use (*based on Joshua 1:8; Ps. 19:7-11; Prov. 13:13; 2 Tim. 2:15; 3:16-17; Heb.4:12; 2 Pet. 1:3-4*).
2. Select and agree on the time of day, length of each session, and number of times during the week to conduct the conference table (*Eph. 5:15-16*). The recommended meeting time is one hour or less to avoid fatigue and to encourage everyone to remain focused on the important matters (*based on Prov. 10:19a; 15:23; 25:11-12*).
3. Select a _____ conducive to serious and effective communication, without interruption.
 - a. Choose a room with as few distractions as possible.
 - b. If available, select a table that provides adequate seating and is large enough for open Bibles and note taking. A table serves as a means for joining people together to meet purposefully.
 - c. Walking to the conference table allows cooling of tempers (*based on Prov. 14:17, 29; 15:28*). When one is seated, it is also harder to walk away.
 - d. The conference table will soon become a symbol of hope, as problems are faced and dealt with there on a regular basis and in a biblical manner.
4. Formulate a _____ to deal with unbiblical behavior.
 - a. Select a silent or quiet _____ (such as raising a hand or standing up) to indicate that the behavior of another is unbiblical in the opinion of one or more persons. A silent signal is best because it is less likely to incite anger (*Prov. 15:1; Eccl. 3:7b, 8:17; James 1:19*).
 - b. If the one whose behavior is in question repents, confesses, and begins again to speak and act biblically, the conference table resumes. If not, biblical communication has ended and so has the conference table.
 - c. The conference may resume at another time, either:
 - 1) That day, as soon as the person who has acted unbiblically recognizes and confesses his sin to the Lord (*1 John 1:9*) and to others (*James 5:16*); or
 - 2) At the next designated time for the conference table.
5. If, during the conference table, a person does not control his spirit (*Prov. 25:28*), he should:

- a. Use the preselected signal (raising a hand or standing up) to indicate his need to stop conferring until he has gained control over his spirit; or
 - b. Excuse himself from the conference table until ready to act in a biblical manner.
6. If anyone continues to argue, refuses to speak, or does anything other than communicate biblically at the conference table, others should rise and stand quietly until everyone is ready to behave biblically.
7. The initial session involves specific activities.
- a. At the first conference, read Eph. 4:17-32 and 1 Cor. 13:4-8a.
 - b. If each person has not done so, take time to make as complete a list as possible of sinful words and actions committed against others, especially those who are at the conference table (*Matt. 7:1, 5*).
 - c. The wife (or the designated recorder) keeps a written record of the major points discussed at the conference table (suggestion: keep a separate column for each person's responses, which could be confession of one's own sins, an offer of help to another, quoting of a memory verse, etc.). At the conclusion of the meeting, the recorder reads aloud the decisions and commitments made by the group or individuals in the group. After the meeting record is read, each person is invited to suggest any changes that would help clarify any part of the written record. Appropriate written adjustments are then entered into the record (*Prov. 11:14, 15:22, 16:3; Eccl. 4:9-10; Phil. 2:3-4*).
- In later meetings, the conference table record helps each person recall the results of earlier meetings. The record also serves as a reminder to pray about specific matters and to give thanks to the Lord for the changes He is making in the lives of conference table participants.*
8. Be _____ when confessing sins to one another (*Mt. 5:23-24; James 5:16*).
- a. The husband (or the designated leader) should be the first to confess his sins committed against others present, with the wife confessing next, then the children. (If the conference table participants are non-family members, the order of confessing sins should be decided by mutual agreement).
- NOTE: Confessing sins at the conference table needs to be voluntary. No one should force another to confess his sins since convicting and prompting is the Holy Spirit's responsibility (John 14:26; 16:18). The willingness to deal with his own sins is each person's responsibility (Ezek. 18:20). Since each person is individually responsible for his own sinful behavior (Dt. 24:16), no blame shifting is to be allowed during the conference table (based on Gen. 3:12-13, 19; Rom. 14:12).*
- b. After three or four productive meetings, any member may invite other members to remind him of sins that he may have overlooked (*based on Prov. 27:6; Mt. 7:1-5; 18:15; Gal. 6:1-2; Eph. 4:15, 25*).
- 1) It is especially important that all aspects of biblical love and Christ-honoring communication be maintained by those who are bringing up overlooked sins in another's life (*based on 1 Cor. 13:4-8a; Eph. 4:29; Col. 4:6*).
 - 2) After being reminded of his overlooked sins, each person is provided an opportunity to confess only his own sinful deeds that he has committed against others (*based on Mt. 5:9, 23-24; 7:12; Mk. 11:25-26; Rom. 12:18; 13:8-10; 14:19*).
9. Soon after the first meeting, each person individually should begin to work on his own VICTORY OVER FAILURES WORKSHEET (Supplement 9) one failure at a time, moving across all four columns.

Refer to: *OVERCOMING INTERPERSONAL PROBLEMS (Lesson 13, Pages 19-23).*

- a. Remain faithful in this endeavor to develop Christ-honoring maturity (*based on Gal. 6:9; Eph. 4:1*).
 - b. When asked, the entire family (or group) participating in the conference can help each person locate the biblical “put-offs” and “put-ons” listed in the Scriptures along with the biblical basis for a specific plan to change (Gal. 6:1-2). This will encourage thorough study of the Scriptures and will challenge growth among those participating in the conference table (*based on Prov. 27:17; 2 Tim. 2:15; Heb. 10:24*).
10. Be _____ (*1 Cor. 15:58*).
- a. Recognize that not all problems can be solved in just a few conference tables. For multiple problems, develop an agenda and schedule your work together over a period of time (*Eph. 5:15-16*).
 - b. Work to defeat the problem (*based on 2 Cor. 7:11-12*), not the other person(s) (*Rom. 12:18-19; 14:19*).
11. After the pattern for reconciliation has begun among those at the conference table, the resolution of conflicts, the establishment of goals, and the process of making biblical decisions may continue. The ultimate objective is for the conference table to be used to develop biblical communication with one another as a pattern of life.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Many people have been taught either “Fight” or “Flight” as a means of resolving conflicts. What is wrong with these methods? What negative things can occur if we use these methods?
2. What is “stewardship?” How does realizing I am a “steward” and not an “owner” impact the way I approach people, possessions, and problems? As a steward whose rules do I need to follow?
3. What is “godliness?” How does the Lord use conflicts in our lives to produce godliness? Examples from your own life?
4. What does it mean to judge yourself? What difference would it make in conflicts if we first judged ourselves to see what we did wrong? What attitude(s) might that produce that would help the situation? What attitude(s) might it correct that hinder conflict resolution?
5. What does it mean to forgive others in your heart prior to them actually repenting, confessing their sins, and asking for forgiveness? Why is this so hard? What happens when we don’t do this? What attitude(s) might we have if we don’t do this? What difference can/does it make if we do this? How does understanding God’s forgiveness help (Eph. 5:31-32)?
6. Why is it important to have someone record the actual problems and the agreed upon solutions? What might happen if we don’t do this?
7. What expectations do you have re: conflict resolution? Should all problems be easy to resolve? What happens if you believe that?
8. Is there anyone you need to go to and make things right? Prayerfully pursue being at peace with them using the principles you have learned in this study. Then leave the results in God’s hands.

[Answers to blanks: Fight; Flight; Stewardship; Godliness; Judge; lovingly; Forgive; truthful; loving; kind; argue; forgiving; leader; recorder; prayer; place; plan; signal; specific; steadfast]