

CHRISTIAN CONFRONTATIONS

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SERVANT LEADERS



INTRODUCTION: DO CONFLICTS DIVIDE CHURCHES?

Quick, One-question Quiz:

____ T or F Conflicts divide churches.

Answer: FALSE

The truth is...

1. Poor conflict MANAGEMENT divides churches.
2. Handled properly, conflict can be very HEALTHY for church growth.

Proverbs 27:17

As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.

When iron sharpens iron, sparks fly. There is friction and tension and heat. All of these forces can be used for DESTRUCTION, but in the right environment, they are ESSENTIAL for improvement.

A conflict-free church is a STAGNANT church, because no one is in anyone else's business.

3. It is our DUTY to confront.

Matthew 18:15

"If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother.



I. CONFRONTATION AS AN ACT OF LOVE

Introduction:

Matthew 22:34-40

34 But when the Pharisees heard that He had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together. 35 Then one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, and saying, 36 "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?" 37 Jesus said to him, "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' 38 This is the first and great commandment. 39 And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' 40 On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets."

The commandment to love your neighbor as yourself comes from Leviticus 19:18.

Leviticus 19:18

Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against anyone among your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the Lord.

What's interesting about this verse is that it actually carries three commands: two negative commands and one positive.

(-) Do not SEEK REVENGE.

(-) Do not BEAR a GRUDGE.

(+) But love your neighbor as yourself.

These three commands are rolled together into one grammatical SENTENCE. The positive command is contrasted to the two negative commands by the word, "but." In other words, seeking revenge or bearing a grudge are two ways to show a LACK of love toward your neighbor.

A. 2 Ways to Show a Lack of Love

1. VIOLENCE - "Don't seek revenge."
2. SILENCE - "Don't bear a grudge."

B. What is Violence?

1. Violence can be PHYSICAL.
2. Violence can be VERBAL (emotional).
3. Violence can be SOCIAL (publicly make them look bad)





(It shows up in various forms...)

ATTACKING

INSULTING

LABELING

GOSSIPING

DOMINATING

INTIMIDATING

C. What is Silence?

Silence can be physical, verbal, or social as well.



(It shows up in various forms...)

AVOIDING

IGNORING

WITHDRAWING

WRITING PEOPLE OFF **OVERLOOKING**



II. THE PROBLEM W/ SILENCE & VIOLENCE

A. Violence is like a TORNADO.

Violence, in all it's forms, is intended to TEAR PEOPLE down instead of BUILDING them up. The Scriptures has a lot to say about that!

Romans 14:19

Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another.

Romans 15:1-4

We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves. 2 Each of us should please our neighbors for their good, to build them up. 3 For even Christ did not please himself but, as it is written: "The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me." 4 For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope.

I Thessalonians 5:11

11 Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing.

Ephesians 4:29

Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.

Since the word edify means "to build up," then tearing down is the exact opposite of how we should respond in love. Biblically, tearing someone down equals not loving them.

B. Silence is like an eroding FOUNDATION.

Many people seem to think that reacting in silence is actually GODLY. They pride themselves for holding back their desire to act out in aggression. However, foundational EROSION can destroy a house just as well as a tornado can!

Silence causes relational DIVISIONS. When those relationships crumble, so does everything the church is trying to accomplish. Consider the following verses regarding divisions in the church.

I Corinthians 1:10

10 Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.



Colossians 2:2

...that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, and attaining to all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ...

Matthew 6:12

And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

The Principle of the Watchman (Ezekiel 33:1-6)

The principle here is that when a person sees that a person is doing something wrong or offending God, it is his DUTY to warn them. If he sees and does not warn, then BLOOD is on his own HANDS.

Matthew 18:15

"If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother.



III. THE GOAL OF CONFRONTATION

Genesis 3:11-13

11 And he said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?"

12 The man said, "The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it."

13 Then the Lord God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

A. Our Natural Tendency: CAST BLAME

By nature, we humans have a hard time accepting blame. We saw this in our original ancestors (Adam and Eve), and JESUS pointed it out in the New Testament as well.

Matthew 7:3-5

3 "Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? 4 How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? 5 You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye."

Verse 5 tells us that we need to replace our natural tendency to always blame others, and replace it with an honest SELF-EVALUATION.

Whereas we naturally notice the faults of others and ignore our own, Jesus tells us to examine our own faults BEFORE we attempt to help someone else recognize their faults. That is a radical concept which requires us to adopt an entirely new set of values!

B. Our New Values

1. The Value of UNITY.

Philippians 2:1-4

Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, 2 then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. 3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, 4 not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

So if we are UNITED in Christ, then we should seek a UNITY of spirit with other believers. That means we value OTHERS over self.



2. The Value of COMMON GROUND.

By “common ground,” we mean that each person is willing to value the thoughts and opinion of others. Then each person also has the opportunity to share his ideas, knowing they will be heard, understood, and evaluated with equal value. Consider the following proverb.

Proverbs 15:22

Without counsel, plans go awry, But in the multitude of counselors they are established.

Why a multitude of counselors? Because no one person has a MONOPOLY on wisdom! By nature, we need to have a place of common ground where multiple ideas, thoughts and opinions are shared EQUALLY and exhaustively.

3. The Value of LISTENING.

James 1:19

19 So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath;

Why does the Bible tell us this? Because by nature, we are not good listeners. Have you ever caught yourself thinking about what you were going to say, before the person with whom you were talking had finished speaking? Of course you have! We all have. If we want to handle conflicts well, we will have to fight our sinful natures and actually listen.

C. The Goal: MUTUAL EDIFICATION

Consider the verses we read on page 6 of the notes. Even in our conflicts, our goal ought to be to BUILD UP the person with whom I am having the conflict. When conflicts are handled improperly, it's usually because we have wrong goals.

1. It's not WINNING.

This might come as a shock to some, but the goal of a confrontation isn't to win the ARGUMENT. You can win arguments without winning PEOPLE. Matthew 18:15 makes it clear that the goal is to win the person, not the argument.

Matthew 18:15

“If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother.

2. It isn't REVENGE.

Romans 12:18-21

18 If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. 19 Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: “It is mine to avenge; I will repay,” says the Lord. 20 On the contrary: “If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head.” 21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.



3. It isn't AVOIDANCE of conflict.

Some people just hate conflict, so they avoid it at all cost. A true friend though, is one who will confront when necessary.

Proverbs 27:5-6

5 Open rebuke is better than love carefully concealed. 6 Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.

D. The Process

1. UNDERSTAND the other person.

Every person has their own unique set of opinions, feelings, theories, and experiences. According to James 1:19-20, my first goal should not be to convince someone to agree with my set of values, but rather to understand the values of the OTHER PERSON. When both parties act in this manner, the next step is easy.

2. Find the COMMON GROUND.

As you listen to others, look for ways to genuinely EMPATHIZE with their perspectives, even if you have a different one. Statements like "I can see why that would be important to you, but have you also considered from this other perspective?" seem to carry more weight than, "Who cares about X? I'm talking about Y!"

In the book, Crucial Conversations, they refer to this concept as "The Pool of Shared Meaning." The idea is that as you listen, you will begin to value other people's INSIGHTS and perspectives.

3. Seek Mutual EDIFICATION.

Once you are talking on common ground, you can talk about the differences that are harming the relationship.

Keep in mind that you should never attack the PERSON. Instead, together you attack the PROBLEM that is harming the relationship.

How do you do that? You have to have the right starting point.



IV. START WITH ME

A. Biblical Principles

1. A pure heart will result in GRACIOUS speech.

Proverbs 22:11

He who loves purity of heart and has grace on his lips, the king will be his friend.

2. We should PLAN what we say.

Proverbs 29:20

Do you see someone who speaks in haste? There is more hope for a fool than for them.

3. We should plan what we WON'T say.

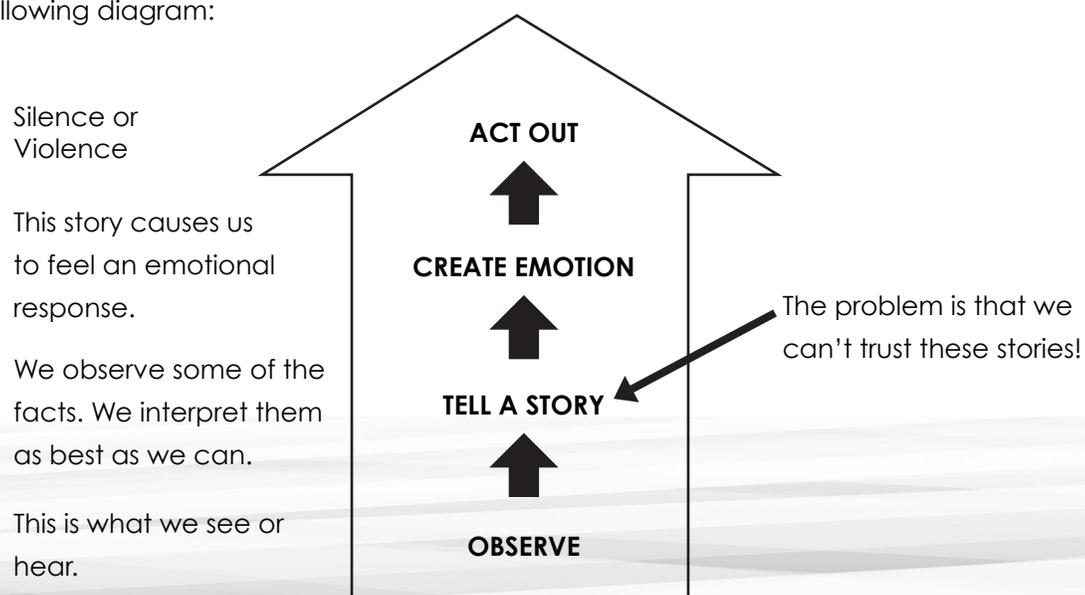
Proverbs 13:3

Those who guard their lips preserve their lives, but those who speak rashly will come to ruin.

B. How Emotions Drive Our Actions

If we are going to be serious about a self-examination, then we have to know how our MINDS work in the event of a conflict. We need to understand that our actions are driven by our emotions. Have you ever responded to someone with silence or violence? Of course you have. Have you ever done so without any emotional stimulus? I doubt it.

Consider the following diagram:



Retracing my steps:

So if I'm going to start with me, I need to retrace my steps to see if I am acting out in silence or violence. So I ask myself a series of questions, walking backwards through the diagram.

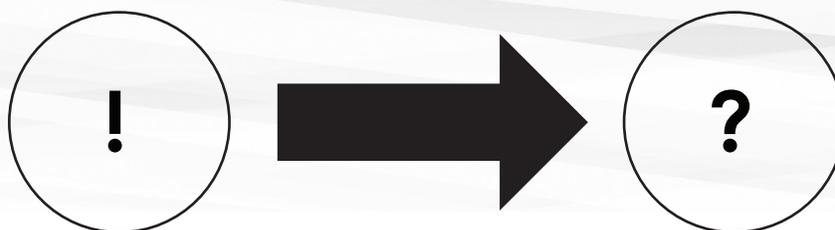
1. Act out: Am I acting out in some sort of silence or violence?
2. Create Emotion: What EMOTIONS are making me act out this way?
3. Tell a Story: What STORY have I told myself that is making me act out this way?
4. Observe: Do the FACTS support this story?



V. TURNING EMOTIONS INTO CURIOSITY

A. Telling Yourself ALTERNATE Stories

The temptation is to let our emotions carry us to a CONCLUSION.



However, we must turn our negative emotions (frustration, anger, fear, etc.) into CURIOSITY.

How? By telling ourselves ALTERNATE stories.

This is called. "giving the BENEFIT of the DOUBT."

Deuteronomy 17:6

6 On the testimony of two or three witnesses a person is to be put to death, but no one is to be put to death on the testimony of only one witness.

Compare God's description of Job versus the description by his so-called "friends" (Job 1:1)

Job 1:1

1 In the land of Uz there lived a man whose name was Job. This man was blameless and upright; he feared God and shunned evil.



B. The O.I.C.A. Method

In order to keep yourself from letting your negative emotions drive you to a premature conclusion about someone else's actions, there is a simple four-step process to remember. It is called, "The O.I.C.A. Method."

O = OBSERVATION

This is what I saw...

I = INTERPRETATION

This is what it looks like to me...

C = CLARIFICATION

Can you help me understand where I could be wrong?

A = ACCUSATION

Then what you did was wrong. How can I help you get back on track?

Examples:

1. Not returning a phone call

O = "You said you would call me, but you never did."

I = It seems to me that you lied... that you never were going to call me.

C = _____

2. Skipping church

O = "You told me you couldn't go to church because you were sick, but here you are in the mall 15 minutes after the service."

I = It seems to me that you made up that excuse... that you actually spent the whole time here in the mall.

C = _____



VI. ACCUSING WITH LOVE

Many times, the confrontation will end at the clarification stage. If the confrontation does get to the accusation stage, that does not give you license to DESTROY the person.

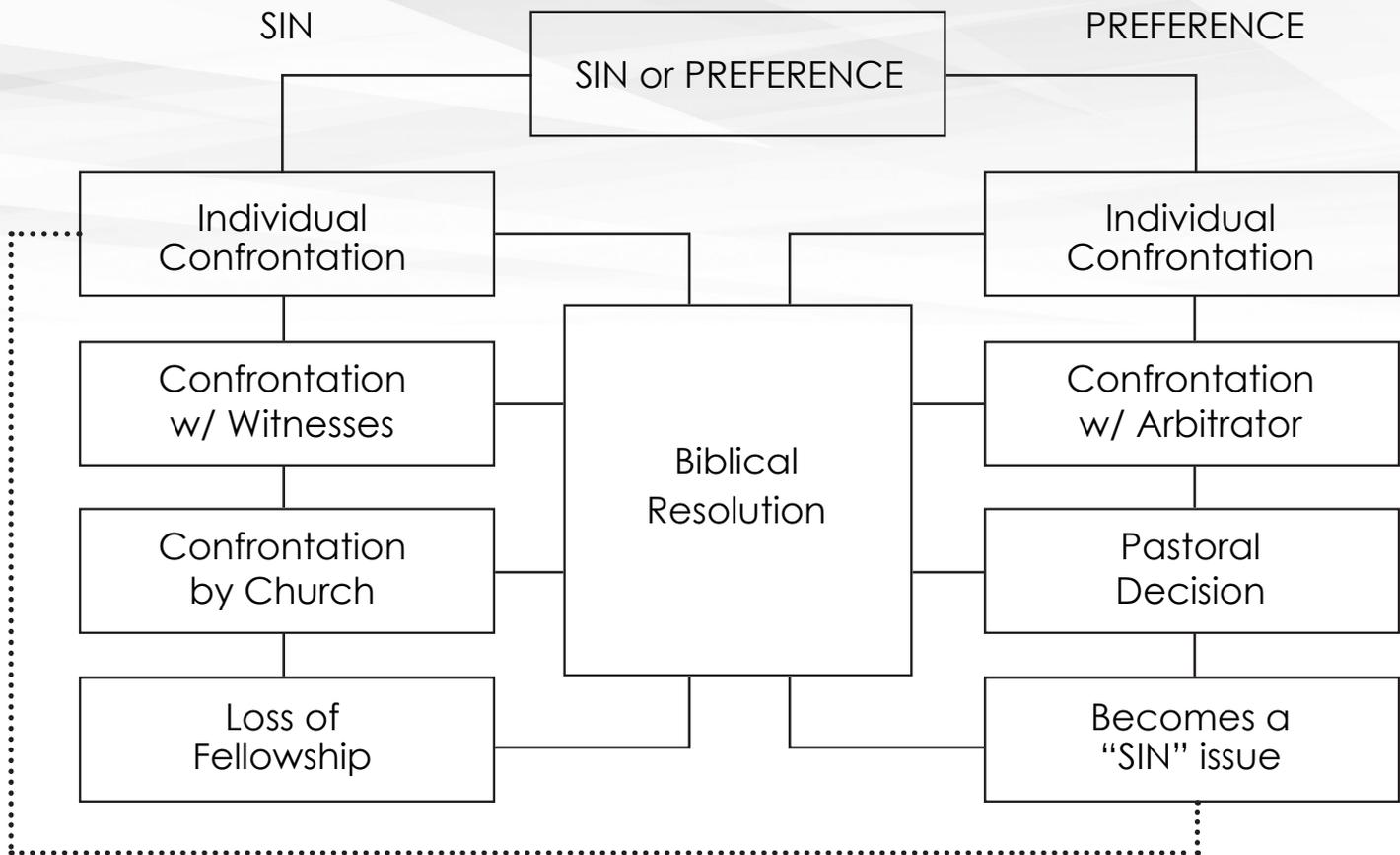
There is a balance we must maintain as we speak the TRUTH in LOVE. In the book, *Crucial Conversations*, they diagram it the following way in a section titled "Sharing Risky Meaning:"



1. The worst at dialogue will either RUDELY speak the truth (Quadrant I) or they will silently bear a GRUDGE (Quadrant II). That is, they vacillate between violence and silence.
2. The good at dialogue will vacillate between speaking the truth somewhat rudely (Quadrant I) and remaining silent (Quadrant III), not wanting to hurt the other person's feelings. That is, they vacillate between speaking and PROTECTING.
3. The best at dialogue will tell the ENTIRE truth, while being RESPECTFUL. They are totally sincere, and totally respectful.



VII. THE BIBLICAL PROCESS OF CORRECTION



Determining the Class of Conflict

Before addressing a conflict with another brother or sister in Christ, one should first determine what class of conflict it is. The biblical response to conflict will be determined by its class. There are two classes of conflicts found in Scripture that may come up in a church life setting. Both can be damaging if not handled biblically.

First, there are conflicts caused by SIN. Matthew 18 addresses this class of conflict directly.

Second, there are also conflicts that are caused by differences of PREFERENCE. That is, there are differences of opinion, desires, expectations, values, philosophies or directions. Paul writes extensively on this subject in 1 Corinthians 12-14. The above diagram is a summary of how we should handle each class of conflict. Please notice how in every case, there is always an option for biblical resolution. All roads lead to biblical resolution if we handle our conflicts biblically.

CLASS 1: Conflicts Caused by SIN

Phase 1: INDIVIDUAL Confrontation

The Bible makes it clear that when we see a brother in sin, we should go directly to him and lovingly show him his error. If he repents, we have won our brother!

The Bible says to go to him ALONE.

There are two important implications here. First, when we involve anyone outside the conflict (those who are not involved either as part of the problem or part of the solution), then we become guilty of gossip. That is very damaging to the unity of the church. Second, if we see the sin and choose not to confront, we are also guilty of disunity. We are not valuing our brother or sister's spiritual state enough to help him or her overcome the sinful behavior.

Remember, it is important to confront the person with the right attitude. To ensure you maintain a spirit of genuine interest in the other person, this is where you will employ the O.I.C.A. Method:

- (1) Observation - State what you have seen, heard or observed.
- (2) Interpretation - Explain how your mind interprets what you observed.
- (3) Clarification - Give the other person a chance to clarify the story.
- (4) Accusation - If necessary, lovingly show the person his or her fault.

Keep in mind that as brother in Christ, we owe each other the benefit of the doubt. If there is doubt, there should be freedom to investigate the situation, but until there is proof of sin, we should extend the grace of the benefit of the doubt.

If the other person repents in phase one, or if he or she clarifies the situation, then there is no need to continue to phase two. We owe it to the church body to drop the matter altogether and maintain a spirit of love and unity.

Phase 2: Confrontation with WITNESSES

One person's testimony is not enough to condemn a person. By adding two or three witnesses to the confrontation, we increase the likelihood of getting at the truth. Notice that this also limits the number of people involved, making it easier for the person in sin to admit his or her mistake without the pressure of thinking that an admission of guilt will make the sin more public than it needs to be.

If the other person repents in phase two, or if he or she better clarifies the situation, then there is no need to continue to phase three. Once again, we owe it to the church body to drop the matter altogether and maintain a spirit of love and unity.

Phase 3: Confrontation by the CHURCH

If it is clear that the brother or sister in question is still in sin, and has not repented, then it is time to involve the church pastoral leadership. The pastoral leadership will determine how much information will be divulged to the congregation, and the congregation will be given a time period in which they will be encouraged to reach out to the accused person.

The hope is that the person will respond in repentance. If so, the brother should be relationally restored, and the pastoral leadership may require some steps of action to edify that brother or sister.



Phase 4: Loss of FELLOWSHIP

If the accused, after having passed through all three phases, refuses to repent, then he or she should be expelled from the church membership.

The Bible clearly says that we should treat that person as an UNSAVED person. What does that mean? Church members should no longer treat him or her as a brother in Christ. We do not talk to them as if they were right with God.

This is not SHUNNING. Shunning is to pretend that the person does not exist. The Bible says that we treat them as unbelievers. So how do we treat unbelievers? We try to reach them! The goal of every conversation is to restore them to a right relationship with God. If we act as if they are already right with God, they are less likely to recognize their sin, so biblical expulsion is actually an act of mercy. The desire is still to see the person repent and be restored.

One important thing to note: The size of the sin (on a human scale) is never a consideration when it comes to relational restoration to the church. It is the willingness to repent when confronted that matters in the process.

CLASS 2: Conflicts Caused by Differences of Preference

Phase 1: INDIVIDUAL Confrontation

In many cases, phase one isn't even necessary. If there is a difference of preference that you can overlook without any negative residual sentiments, there is not a problem with learning to IGNORE the conflict. If however, the conflict is causing any emotional detachment toward a brother or sister in Christ, then it should be addressed.

As in phase one of the other class of conflict, we should go directly to the person with whom we have the conflict and address the issue alone. There is no need to involve other people in the conflict. This too is gossip.

Again it is also important to confront the person with the right attitude, so to ensure you maintain a spirit of genuine interest in the other person, you should follow the following three steps:

(1) IDENTIFY the issue.

Let the other person know that he or she is important to you, and that you do not want any preference issues to come between you in the relationship. Kindly explain what behavior has become an obstacle in the relationship and why?

(2) LISTEN to the other person.

Sometimes, just hearing the heart behind another person's behavior is enough for us to change our perspective on the behavior itself. If not, at least we will know where the other person is coming from.

(3) Seek a MUTUAL agreement.

A mutual agreement is a solution accepted by both parties. After hearing each other's sides, either party may choose to bend for the sake of the other, or there may be an agreeable compromise. In any case, if both parties agree to it, then the matter is solved. If a mutual agreement cannot be obtained, proceed to Phase 2.



Phase 2: Confrontation with an ARBITRATOR

There is no shame in asking for help with a relational issue. The two parties should agree upon asking a mutually trusted person to assist them in the process of seeking a mutual agreement. (If the two parties cannot agree, then skip straight to Phase 3.) The arbitrator will calmly oversee the conversation, helping each side see the issues of the other. He or she will help them find an agreeable solution. If a mutual agreement is still not maintained, then proceed to Phase 3.

Phase 3: PASTORAL Decision

If the conflict is still not resolved, then the parties should seek pastoral oversight of the conflict. The pastor(s) involved will listen, understand and evaluate the opinions of both parties. An agreement will be made by the pastoral leadership and both members should be willing to submit to that decision. If one or both parties are unwilling to submit to pastoral leadership at that point, then that will change the class of the conflict. It is no longer an issue of preference, but an issue of sin.



VIII. WHEN THEY ARE IN THE WRONG

Now, we've talked about what to do if you are reacting with violence or silence, but what should you do if the other person is reacting with violence or silence?

A. How to Recognize Crucial Conversations

1. PHYSICAL SIGNS
2. EMOTIONS
3. BEHAVIORAL CONDUCT

B. Let's Practice

Example #1: First conversation between Pastor Don and Deacon Rick

1. Did Rick respond with silence or violence? How do you know?

2. Did you notice how the pastor got sucked into being defensive?

3. Did you see any clues as to what the root problems of this argument really are? What could they be?

Example #2: Second conversation between Pastor Don and Deacon Rick

1. Did Rick respond with silence or violence? How do you know?



2. Do you think that Rick will be at the next meeting? _____

3. Do you think any of the root issues were resolved? Why or why not?

4. From Rick's perspective, do you see the dangers of silence? _____

5. From Pastor Don's perspective, how should he pull his brother out of silence and into healthy dialogue?

C. The Two Threats (that cause silence or violence)

When a person responds with silence or violence, that means the lines of communication have been damaged. Don't waste your breath continuing the conversation until the lines have been repaired! Here are the two threats that cause silence or violence:

1. Perceived lack of mutual RESPECT.

Some good investigative questions to ask yourself are...

- a. Is he being defensive?
- b. Is he taking things personally?
- c. Is he attacking me personally?

If the answer is yes to any of these questions, there is a good chance that the other person feels threatened by a lack of mutual respect.

2. Perceived lack of mutual GOALS.

Some good investigative questions to ask yourself are...

- a. Does he seem overly emotional?
- b. Is he drawing a line in the sand?
- c. Is he building arguments without listening to your ideas?

If the answer is yes to any of these questions, there is a good chance that the other person feels threatened by a lack of mutual goals.



D. Questions to Help Reach Solutions

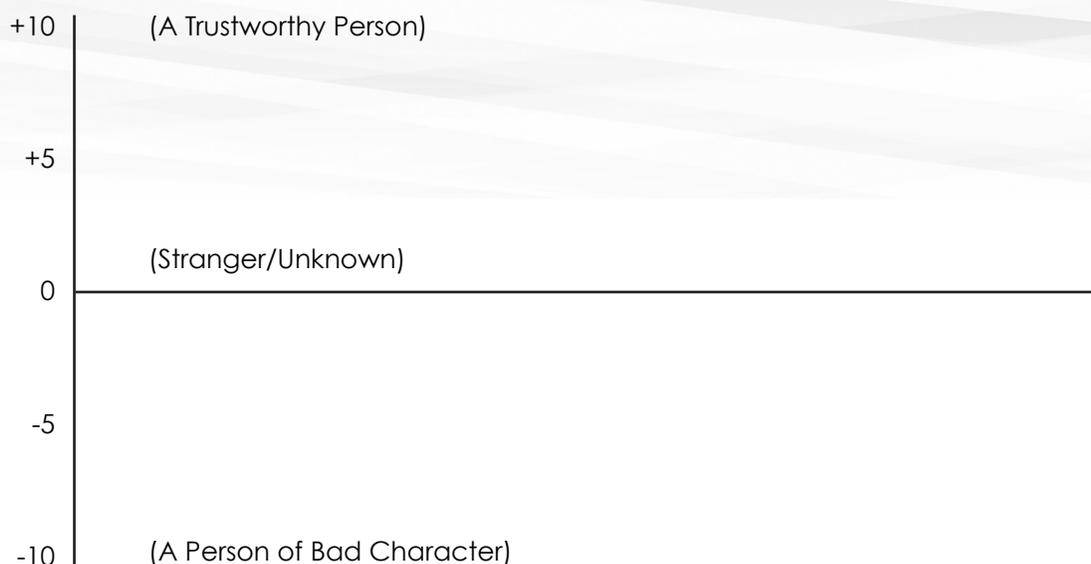
1. Perceived lack of mutual respect.
 - a. Do I respect this person?
 - b. Does this person BELIEVE I respect him?
 - c. How can I SHOW him that I respect him?
2. Perceived lack of mutual goal.
 - a. Do I care about this person's concerns?
 - b. Does he BELIEVE I care?
 - c. How can I SHOW him that I care?



IX. FORGIVENESS & RESTORATION

Level of Trust:

If we were to measure our level of trust using a vertical scale from -10 to +10, with 0 being in the exact middle, then it should look something like this:



The higher the level of trust, the higher the positive number will be. Conversely, the higher the level of distrust, the higher the negative number will be. A "0" then, would be a complete STRANGER - someone you neither trust nor distrust.

As you give small opportunities for someone to show himself trustworthy, he can slowly work his way to being a +10, or "a TRUSTWORTHY person."

Conversely, if a person betrays your trust, with time and repetition, he can reach a -10, or "a person of bad CHARACTER." (At least, in your opinion.)

This is how we evaluate a person's trustworthiness by nature, but is this how we should evaluate people?

Jesus spoke of forgiveness in Matthew 18:21-22.



Matthew 18:21-22

21 Then Peter came to Him and said, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" 22 Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.

So what does this mean? Does that mean that every time a person asks for forgiveness, even if it is a repetitive pattern of untrustworthiness, we should restore them to a perfect +10?

Forgiveness

Read the following verses about forgiveness.

Prov. 27:11-13

Prov. 25:19

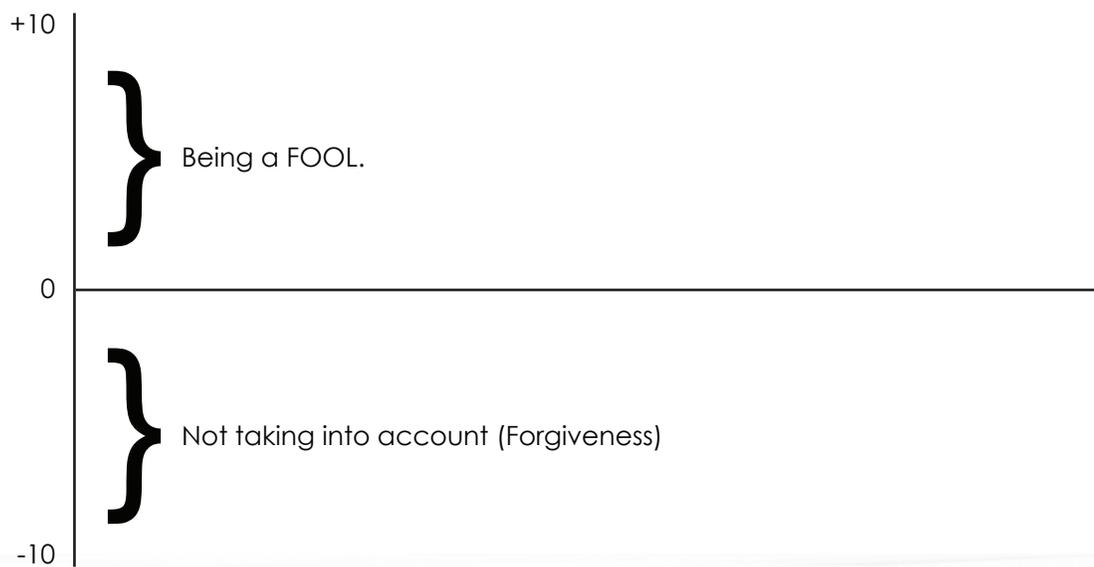
Job 15:15-16

Ps. 40:4

Ps. 118:8-9

Jer. 9:4

1. Forgiveness does not equal BLIND trust.
2. Forgiveness is not taking into account what has been FORGIVEN.
3. It is restoring a person to a "0," giving him another opportunity to WIN your trust.



X. PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

A. I observe an action that BOTHERS me.

1. I ask myself, "Is this a sin issue or a preference issue?"
2. Follow the course of action in The Biblical Process of Correction.

B. I start with ME.

1. I review my heart ATTITUDE.
 - Am I acting out in Silence or Violence?
 - What emotions are making me act out this way?
 - What story have I told myself that is making me feel this way?
 - Do the facts support this story?
3. I review my goals.
 - Do I really want mutual edification?
 - Or do I want to win the argument?
 - Am I seeking revenge?
4. I turn negative emotions into CURIOSITY.
 - I give the benefit of the doubt.
 - I tell myself ALTERNATE stories.

C. I decide to CONFRONT, using O.I.C.A.

1. This is what I OBSERVED.
2. This is how I INTERPRETED it.
3. Could you help me CLARIFY my observations?



The confrontation may end here, but let's assume the other person responds with silence or violence.

D. I repair the lines of COMMUNICATION.

1. I make sure we have a mutual GOAL.

- Do I care about this person's concerns?
- Does he believe I care?
- How can I show him that I care?

2. I make sure we have mutual RESPECT.

- Do I respect this person?
- Does this person believe I respect him?
- How can I show him that I respect him?

E. We come to a mutual AGREEMENT.

1. It can be a RESOLUTION.

2. It can be a PLAN OF ACTION. (Following The Biblical Process of Correction.)

F. We follow the PLAN.

Notice that in God's plan, ALL routes end with a Biblical Resolution! If we stick to God's plan, we will be able to resolve a world of conflicts, and grow through the process!

