

How To Handle Family Conflicts

By

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CONTENTS

The Scope Of Conflict	- - - - -1
The Cause Of Conflict	- - - - -2
The Solution Of Conflict	- - - - -4
The Resolving Of Conflict	- - - - 6
The Termination Of Conflict	- - 7

The Scope Of Conflict

We live in a world which is marked by trouble. The ancient patriarch Job testified, "*Man that is born of woman is of few days, and full of trouble*" (Job 14: 1). "*Man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward*" (Job 5:7). Jesus agreed with that fact and bore witness, "*In the world ye shall have tribulation*" (John 16:33). "*It is impossible but that offences will come*" (Luke 17: 1). No one should expect to pass through this life without experiencing his share of conflict.

Conflicts must be faced in every relationship of life. We experience personal conflict in our own inner spirit. We experience conflicts in business, in government, in schools, in sports. Even the home is not exempt. We need some Biblical guidelines on how to handle conflicts.

I haven chosen to share with you a series of studies on the theme, "How to Handle Family Conflicts." It seems most appropriate to deal with the issue in the area of the

home since the home is the basic institution in human society and is under particular attack at the present time. In these studies we will examine the scope of conflict, the causes of conflict, examine some Biblical illustrations of conflict and how it was solved, investigate how to resolve our conflicts, and lay out specific steps to follow in dealing with conflicts. For greatest benefit, please share each study with us.

How wide spread is the problem of conflicts? I say again that conflict is a basic part of our human history. It all began in the Garden of Eden, concerning which you can read in Gen. 3. All was peaceful until man fell out of fellowship with God. The first conflict in human history came when man made a god of himself by purposeful rejection of the law of God and flagrant violation of the command of God. The first conflict became man versus God. Though it came through the instrumentality of Satan, who used a serpent to entice Adam and Eve to sin, man was responsible for his fall.

The fall of man, resulting in his exclusion from the Garden of Eden, was passed on to all his posterity. "In Adam all die" (I Cor. 15:22). Conflict began between man and God, but it did not stop there. When men are out of fellowship with God, they are out of fellowship with one another. So the conflict turned to man against man (when Cain killed his brother Abel as recorded in Gen. 4). It did not stop with the first generation of mankind, nor with the second generation, nor with the third, nor fourth. Every generation of human history has witnessed its share of conflict.

Man has always wanted to take the mote out of his brother's eye without recognizing the beam in his own (Matt. 7:1-5). Almost every church has an Euodias and Syntyche, by whatever name they may be called, who must be admonished to "be of the same mind in the Lord" (Phil. 4:2). Becoming a Christian does not mean all possible conflict ceases. Even Christians must "endeavor" (put forth earnest effort and give constant diligence) to "keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3).

The principle applies in the home the same as in all other areas of human relationships. That is why the Bible admonishes husbands to love their wives and not be bitter against them (Col. 3:19). That is why the Bible commands wives to be submissive to their husbands in love (Eph. 5:22, 33). That is why parents are warned against such hardness toward their children that the spirit of the child is broken (Eph. 6:4). That is why children are told to honor their parents in attitude and action (Eph. 6:1-3). Yes, the home is threatened by conflicts just as are other areas of life.

Let us be advised, however, that conflict itself is not an evil thing. It has an element to it which enables us to grow. When a husband and wife have a conflict and work through it as mature Christians, they grow in compassion, in communication, and in understanding. That profits them both greatly. Thank God that even conflicts can be worked out for good to His children.

"But," someone protests, "my wife was unfair to me. She knowingly violated my rights. She purposefully opposed me. She does not deserve to be dealt with kindly

and lovingly and graciously."

Ah, what an opportunity that affords the Christian husband. Your gracious response can be a witness to her and to other members of the household of the grace of God in His dealings with us. The husband can understand how God must have felt in dealing with man in his sin. The wife can understand how much her husband loves her and how he is walking with the Lord when he returns good for bad in the spirit of Christian obedience. Every member of the household can grow as a result of the conflict.

It is important that Christians follow Bible principles in working out conflicts which arise between them. (1) Seek to settle the problem privately, with no other persons involved (Matt. 18:15). There is no need to spread a problem which can be solved without others knowing. (2) Seek counsel of mature Christians, if the problem cannot be worked out privately (Matt. 18:16). At that point, someone is sure to say, "But I don't want people to know we are having trouble." To which I respond, "Which is best, to solve the problem or to protect your pride?" The problem will often remain and become worse and worse unless counsel is sought and it is reconciled. Go to your pastor, or some mature Christian in whom you have utmost confidence, and ask for help, (3) Only after all possible efforts in counsel have failed, should the issue be made at all public. Then it should be shared with the church for her help. Matt. 18:17. Those Bible principles will effect reconciliation in the vast majority of cases where conflict has risen in a home.

Family conflict should be reconciled immediately. "*Let not the sun go down upon your wrath: neither give place to the devil*" (Eph. 4:26, 27). For the sake of the marital relationship, and for the peace of the home, settle all conflict immediately. Conflict in the home does more than cause mere discomfort due to emotional tension. It effects the family members in their spiritual life. The Bible admonishes the wife to be subject to her husband, and the husband to honor his wife, for this reason: "*that your prayers be not hindered.*" (See I Pet. 3:1-7). Conflict in the home so mars the spiritual life of those involved that it hinders their prayers.

The Bible admonishes Christians to eschew evil, and do good ... seek peace, and ensue it" (I Peter 3: 11). It is to that end that this study on "How to Handle Family Conflicts" is dedicated.

Here is the Bible principle: "*Recompense to no man evil for evil as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath ... be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good*" (Rom. 12:17-21).

The Cause Of Conflict

The news media reported a strange, unexplainable thing that was happening in one of the major metropolitan centers of our nation. A crowd of people were attending a convention when some became ill. One after another became sick; some died. There

was near panic. Medical experts were called in. Researchers from the Center for Disease Control were summoned in haste. All the knowledge, personnel, and equipment in the field of medicine was made available to help diagnose the disease and find effective treatment. That event in the field of physical health teaches us a lesson in the area of family relationships.

It is fruitless to treat the symptoms of a problem unless the root cause of the problem is discovered and remedied. It is not enough to take an aspirin to lower one's temperature; one must know what causes the temperature to arise in the first place. It is not enough for a husband and wife, or parent and child, to try to settle a fuss. The real question is what lies back of the irritable spirit, the sharp words, the quick temper. Discover and remedy the cause and the symptoms will take care of themselves.

We are all aware that family conflict is very prevalent today. There are family counselors in every city of our nation who do nothing but work with family members who are having problems. Some churches now have a counselor on their staff, as they have music directors and educational workers, to work with members in the area of family conflicts. What are the causes of so much conflict among family members today?

A. The pressure of living in human society might be given as a cause of conflict. I do not think that is the cause so much as the occasion for conflict to arise.

Here is a man who wishes to lift a heavy load. He uses a chain and a wench to lift it. The wench turns and the weight of the load rests upon the chain. Suddenly a link breaks and the load drops. What happened? Did the weight make weak that link in the chain? No, the weight simply revealed the weak link which was already in the chain.

We may say money problems causes conflict between husband and wife. We may say it was differences of opinion on the discipline of the children. We may blame it on working conditions at the place of employment. None of those excuses are correct. Pressure reveals where weakness is, but it does not cause the weakness.

There is something much deeper than external pressure which causes family conflict. Trouble will bring together two people who have unity of spirit while it will drive apart two people who have not that unity.

B. Conflict is produced by the deceit and wickedness of the human heart. Jeremiah 17:9 reads, "*The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?*"

The depraved state of fallen mankind produces the seedbed for all conflict. Each one has a streak of selfishness in his human spirit. Each one has a desire for personal comfort. Each one has a sense of self-importance which makes his comforts more important than that of any other. That is not a description of natural man at his worse; that is natural man at his best. The sense of self-importance and the desire for self-satisfaction lies at the root for all demands for attention and satisfaction of

desires. That was the same spirit which prompted Eve to eat of the forbidden fruit, Cain to kill Abel, and every other human transgression against another person or against the holy law of God.

Not one of us is exempt from the effects of a deceitful and wicked heart. The only remedy is forgiveness in Jesus Christ, when the law of God is Written in the heart and mind, and submission to the Spirit of God who guides believers.

C. The tendency to blame others is a root cause of conflict. Each one thinks that he is right. He is the "innocent" party. It is what one has called „the human blame game." Which is worse in a conflict, action or reaction? Both are wrong. It is impossible for a person to offend me unless I am willing to be offended. To give an offense is wrong; to take offense is equally wrong.

Jesus set the example for us. When He was reviled, He did not return hard nor abusive words. When He was made to suffer, He did not threaten Vengeance, He simply committed himself to God who would bring it all out at the end and see that right prevailed. What an example for us!

Most fusses start when a sharp word, a wrong attitude, an improper act, is met with an equally sharp word, or wrong attitude, or improper act. If the wrong action is met with the wrong reaction, trouble comes. If the wrong action is met with the right reaction, peace continues.

Wrong reaction is a way of saying, "You cannot talk that way to me." "You dared to do something contrary to the preferences of someone as important as I am." "Your attitude irritates me and I am too important to be irritated by one such as you." The words are not stated that way but the spirit is present when a wrong reaction is given to a real or imagined wrong. Let a person surrender his inflated pride and most conflicts will never arise.

D. Pride lies at the very heart of all conflict. That was the sin which moved Lucifer to resolve, "I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God I will be like the most High" Isa. 14:13, 14). That is the sin which has motivated conflict against God or against men through all of human history.

The sin of pride lies at the root of family conflict. Proverbs 13:10 declares, "*Only by pride cometh contention.*" That is to say, only when pride is present will contention (conflict, problem) raise its head and manifest its presence.

Let us ask the question once again, "According to the Bible, what produces conflict between man and God or man and man?" The answer is threefold. (1) Conflict arises from the depravity of the human spirit which is manifest by deceit and wickedness in the human heart. (2) Conflict arises from the attitude which places blame upon the other person for failures and faults in one's self the old "human blame game." (3) Conflict arises when a person is moved by pride rather than humility. Not one of us is fully innocent. "All we like sheep have gone astray" (Isa. 53:6). We have sinned against heaven and against one another. But praise God there is reconciliation offered through Jesus Christ. He who trusts Jesus as personal Savior finds the warfare

ended with God. He also finds the spiritual power to live at peace with people. "Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace: thereby good shall come unto thee" (Job 22:21).

The Solution Of Conflict

Thank God for those conflicts which arise in life! If that statement seems strange to you, remember the old saying: "All sunshine in nature or in man makes a desert." That means it is through dealing successfully with the problems in life that we grow. It is possible to turn trouble into triumph. It is possible, that is, if the trouble is dealt with in the right way. God does not leave us without guidance. The Bible tells us by precept and by example how to handle trouble.

What is the first step to be taken in finding the solution to conflict with man or God? The first principle is, "Deal with your own attitude first." All the world seems to be wrong when one's own attitude is wrong. It is possible that God is saying something to you by permitting the problem to arise. Take God into consideration immediately. Ask Him, "Lord, what are you saying to me in this matter? What response should I give? How can I grow personally and help the other person involved in this issue?" That is the first essential step to be taken.

In other words, see the hand of God in your circumstances. If you are a child of God through faith in Jesus Christ, things do not happen to you by mere chance. A sovereign and divine Providence watches over you and our circumstances. A right response will bring the Divine purpose to light in due time. In the mean while follow God whether you see any possible good in the situation or not.

Remember the conflict which arose between Joseph and his brothers. (Gen. 37:50). The young lad named Joseph seems to have provoked the conflict by telling his brothers of his dreams, even though he should have known it would displease them. They grew to hate him because of the partiality shown to him by their father and because of his dreams. Finally, they sold him into slavery to go into Egypt. They were sure they would never see him again.

You remember the rest of the story of Joseph. After years in Egypt, which included a false accusation against him and a long term in prison, he was exalted of God to a place of highest honor in that kingdom. When famine struck that part of the world, Joseph's brothers had to come to Egypt to buy grain to eat. There they met Joseph again.

Joseph's brothers were overcome by dismay when they learned their hated brother, whom they had treated so shamefully, was in a position of power where he could execute dreadful vengeance upon them. They begged for mercy.

Listen to the gracious words of Joseph to those guilty brothers: "Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So now it was

not you that sent me hither, but God" (Gen. 45:5, 7, 8). They were satisfied temporarily. When their father died a few years later, the brothers were sure Joseph would wreck vengeance on them then. They came to him begging for mercy. He replied, "*Fear not: for am I in the place of God? But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive. Now therefore fear ye not: I will nourish you, and your little ones*" (Gen. 50:19-21). Those words from the ancient patriarch have an application today.

Let us list some principles to be found in that incident. They will help us in times of conflict.

A. A spirit of jealousy and sense of personal inferiority must not inspire an attack on another person. The brothers did not have the kind of relationship with their father which Joseph had. They were jealous of him; they felt inferior to him. Instead of going to their father to remedy the problem, however, they attacked the one whom they felt was superior to them. Self-worth is established by solving problems and resolving conflicts

not by increasing the conflict by attitude or action.

B. It is easier to attack persons than to deal with issues, but it never brings an end to conflict. We must learn to deal with issues, not personalities. I remember the admonition given by my pastor when I started in the Gospel ministry, "You will never build any thing permanent on the rubble of what you have destroyed." Joseph's brothers should have gone to their father with a request for counsel, not attacked the young man in expression of their anger.

C. Conflict must move us to seek reconciliation, not drive us apart. I realize it is easier to stay away from a person with whom we differ than it is to confront him and deal with the cause of separation. But a problem does not go away just because it is ignored. On the contrary, it often grows and one must face it in magnified proportions later on (as did the brothers of Joseph when they met him in Egypt). The New Testament principle is, "If you realize your brother has aught against you, or you against him, make it the order of first priority to settle that difference" (Matt. 5:23, 24; 18: 15). To run from a conflict is to invite greater problems.

D. Accept personal responsibility for your part in the problem. It is in no wise inferred from the Biblical record that the brothers of Joseph ever thought that they might have contributed to the problem in their family. Why were they somewhat distant from their father's affection? Why did they have such strong feelings of animosity toward their younger brother? What could they do to remedy that problem? Those questions remained unanswered in their minds. They assumed the whole problem lay with Joseph. No wonder there was no reconciliation between them. Has someone offended you? Then you both are in error: he for being an offense and you for taking an offence. There is no truly "innocent" party when conflicts arise. Each must assume personal responsibility for his part of the problem and

humbly seek reconciliation.

E. Seek God's help in settling the conflict. Observe that no reference is made to God in the record of the conflict between Joseph and his brothers. They were acting totally in terms of the flesh, unthinking toward God. Therefore the matter grew increasingly serious, even to the discussion of murder, and God was not considered. How many times have I seen a couple wait until divorce proceedings had been instituted before seeking a Christian counselor concerning marital problems. What a tragedy. God is the answer to every problem. Will you learn these lessons? Will you apply them to conflicts which you experience day by day? Refraining from attack on another, subduing the spirit of jealousy or self-importance, drawing toward rather than away from the person with whom conflict has arisen, accepting personal responsibility for part of the blame, and looking to God for guidance will result in the successful reconciliation of any conflict.

"And now, Lord, what wait I for? my hope is in thee" (Psa. 39:7).

The Resolving Of Conflict

"My brothers, whenever you have to face trials of many kinds, count yourselves supremely happy, in the knowledge that such testing of your faith breeds fortitude, and if you give fortitude full play you will go on to complete a balanced character that will fall short in nothing" (James 1:24, New English Bible Version).

Do you catch the significance of that statement? There is good which comes out of trouble. There can be victory gained from conflict. There can be growth when trials are handled properly. The Bible says so!

If all such good is possible, why have we suffered such ignominious defeats in times past? If potential good is there, why does there seem to be so much evil present? The Bible answers that every occasion of trouble has potential victory or potential defeat. Whether we experience the victory or suffer the defeat depends on how we handle the situation. Therefore, we will look into the Bible to find principles to guide us in resolving conflicts so they work out to good and not to evil.

Consider the Bible account of the temptation and fall of mankind as recorded in Gen. 3. God had created the original humans pure and innocent of sin, but with the power of choice as to whether they would remain that way. He placed them in the beautiful Garden of Eden where they had every thing necessary for fullness of life food, water, companionship, worship, productive labor. He placed only one restriction upon them: they must not eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. That one restriction was placed to give them the opportunity to choose whether to love and obey Him or rebel and disobey Him.

Satan had already rebelled against God by the spirit of a proud heart (Isa. 14:12-14). He came into the Garden of Eden, using the instrumentality of a serpent, to entice Adam and Eve to do the same.

What were the steps in the temptation of the first humans? (1) Satan raised a question concerning the word of God: "*Yes, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?*" He emphasized the one restriction rather than the multiple permissions. "Did you understand God correctly? Was that really what He said?" (2) Satan denied the clear word of God: "*Ye shall not surely die.*" (3) Satan impugned the motives of God: "*God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.*" (4) Satan appealed to the three areas in which a human being is subject to fall: (a) the lust of the flesh, "*the tree was good for food*"; (b) the lust of the eyes, "*it was pleasant to the eyes*"; (c) the lust of pride, "*it was to be desired to make one wise.*" That temptation resulted in both the man and the woman (whom we name Adam and Eve) breaking God's expressed command and eating of the forbidden fruit.

Sin by those first humans brought conflict. They experienced immediate hostility and separation between the two of them and between them and God. Their separation between one another was manifest in their making fig leaf clothing in an attempt to hide their bodies from each other. The separation between them and God was manifest in their hiding from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden.

God came walking in the garden in the cool of the day. Adam and Eve did not come gladly to meet Him as before. God called, "Adam, where you?" Adam answered from his hiding place, "*I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid.*" God asked, "*Have you eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded you that you should not eat?*" Adam replied, "*The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.*" God asked the woman, "*What is this that thou hast done?*" The woman replied, "*The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.*" At last, the issue is revealed and the conflict is evident,

Now, let us look for principles which apply today. What can a husband and wife do when they are in conflict? What can parent and child do when an issue arises between them? The answer has been revealed from the beginning of human history.

A. Always accept personal responsibility for your part in any conflict. That was the point at which Adam and Eve failed most seriously after their fall. God did not ask all those questions of them in order to get information. He knows all things. He knew what Adam and Eve had done. He asked those questions to give them opportunity to confess and assume responsibility.

Neither Adam nor Eve was willing to accept personal responsibility. Adam blamed Eve, "*The woman whom thou gavest to be with me,*" or perhaps even God, "*The woman whom thou gavest to be with me.*" Whomever Adam blamed, he was unwilling to blame himself. Eve blamed the serpent who "beguiled" her so that she ate. There is no resolving conflict until parties involved accept personal responsibility.

B. Always move toward the person with whom you differ. Adam and Eve moved away from each other (by making the fig leaf clothing) and away from God (by hiding

among the trees of the Garden).

Is that the way you do? Does an invisible non-verbal curtain fall between you and the one with whom you differ? There can be no reconciliation until that is removed by moving toward the other person.

C. Always take the risk of confrontation, even though it makes you vulnerable. Adam and Eve drew back from each other and from God because each realized he had done wrong. As Adam confessed, "*I was afraid.*" How like we humans. We find it much easier to blame than to admit blame. Adam blamed Eve and Eve blamed the serpent, but neither accepted responsibility for the tragedy which had befallen them. You must not hide. You must make the first move toward the person with whom you differ to effect reconciliation.

D. Always seek reconciliation, never accepting separation as the final answer. Adam and Eve were both willing to endure separation from each other and from God rather than to admit personal blame and seek forgiving reconciliation. How many other times has that happened? A husband and wife live together for days, weeks, and even years, with their spirits estranged because neither will take the risk of seeking reconciliation. It does not have to be that way,

Accepting personal responsibility, moving toward the other person rather than away from him, taking the risk of confrontation even though it may reveal personal failures, and honestly seeking reconciliation will bring the end to conflict between human and human or between a human and God. Try it. It works!

The Termination of Conflict

Here is a great Bible principle which every Christian must follow: "*Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus: that ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God*" (Rom. 15:5-7). That is a Biblical call to end of conflict and unity in Christ.

Why is such admonition necessary? Why do Christians have problems with disunity, conflict, and trouble? More importantly, how can Christians respond to such problems in such a way as to end them? That is the theme of our study: How to Terminate Conflict.

A. Take the initiative in seeking reconciliation with the people with whom you suffer conflict. The Bible principle is, "It is always my move first." One might say, "I will forgive him if he will come and ask me to." The Bible says, "You go and seek his forgiveness and be reconciled by your own effort."

If you were offended, go and seek reconciliation with the offender. That is the clear teaching of Matt. 18:15. If you were the offender, go and seek reconciliation with the person you offended. That is the clear teaching of Matt. 5:23, 24. Both of those

scripture passages are quotations of the very words of Jesus himself.

Reconciliation is so important it takes precedence over worship, according to Matt. 5:23, 24. Refusal to be reconciled is so serious it could result in a person being excluded from the fellowship of the church, according to Matt. 5:23, 24. Imagine how that applies to a married couple, or to parents and their children, No wonder the Bible admonishes each person involved to take the initiative in seeking reconciliation.

B. Understand what reconciliation means. There is a difference between reconciliation of persons and the resolution of issues. Someone has said, "A husband and wife must think together, but they do not have to think alike." You can be reconciled to a person without agreeing with his opinions on a particular subject. In fact, other persons must be given room to differ. We smother any relationship when we insist that the other person believe exactly like we believe. There must be room of persons to differ, but no room for impulsive and hurtful statements nor harsh and bitter attitudes. Reconciliation simply means "to restore to friendship and fellowship after an estrangement." For two persons to be reconciled means they share friendly relations not that they agree on the issue which separated them.

C. Confess your personal faults which resulted in the conflict. That is not easy. It is not easy to confess to God. It is not easy to confess to your husband or wife. It is not easy for you to confess to your children, or for a child to confess to his parents. It is not easy to confess to a friend, and even harder to confess to an enemy. It is not easy to say, "I was wrong. I am sorry. " It is not easy, but it is absolutely essential. Someone might object, "But I was not in the wrong." Yes you were. There is never a time of conflict where each person was absolutely innocent. "He" may have erred in being the offender, but "I" erred in being offended. "He" could not have offended me if "I" had not been willing to take the offence. That is why the Apostle James admonished, "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed" (James 5:16).

Confession is a purging of the emotions. Man was not made to carry a load of guilt. It eats away at him inside, even when he does not wish to Confess its presence. Confession is the only way to be free. Hear this promise of I John 1: 9, "*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness*" (I John 1:9).

D. Forgive every wrong, real or imagined, involved in the occasion of conflict. Jesus taught us to forgive. He said to forgive seven times in one day, if the occasion warrants it (Luke 17:3-6).

Someone might object, "But I don't feel like forgiving him." Remember that forgiveness is an act of the will. It is not a matter of how you feel; it is a matter of what you are willing to do about the wrong involved.

Another might object, "Well, I can forgive but I cannot forget." Then don't worry about forgetting. You can no more forget a wrong done that you can forget any other

event in your life. Scars remain. That is not the issue. You might not be able to forget, but you can make a choice not to hold that offense against the offender ever again.

Forgiveness is the commitment not to raise an issue against a person again. We sometimes refer to reconciliation as "burying the hatchet." Some wit advised, "When you bury the hatchet, be sure you do not leave the handle sticking out." That is to say, settle each issue permanently and do not bring it up again. That is what forgiveness truly means. When God forgives our sins He buries them in the depths of the sea (Mic. 7:19), forgets them (Jer. 31:34), places them behind His back (Isa. 38:17), removes them from us as far as the east is from the west (Psa. 103:12), and holds them against us no more forever (Jer. 31:34). That is what we must do when we forgive another of his wrongs against us.

E. Enter a new relationship with the other person in the bond of the grace of Jesus Christ. The Biblical admonition is, "*Be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you*" (Eph. 4:32). The Christian is to "*grow in grace*" as well as the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (II Pet. 3:18). To "*grow in grace*" means to grow in being gracious. It means we do not merely receive the grace of God, but we manifest the grace of God in our dealings with others. His grace was "exceeding abundant with faith and love" (I Tim. 1: 14). So may our grace be.

Now let us look back over the route which we have traced in these five studies. We have sought guidelines on how to deal with conflict, guidelines which are applicable to conflicts within the family or any other social relationship. (1) We have seen that conflict is a part of life in view of the kind of world in which we live. (2) We have seen that the cause of conflict is related to our fallen human nature which seeks to satisfy self, deny personal guilt, and blame others for every fault. (3) We have seen that the solution of conflict lies in attacking issues, not persons, and seeking God's help in working out differences. (4) We have seen the resolution of conflict comes when one accepts personal responsibility and moves toward the person with whom he has problems, not willing to accept separation as the final answer. (5) We have seen that the termination of conflict lies in confession of personal faults and forgiveness of the faults of others in the grace of Jesus Christ.

Please take these principles and apply them to your home, your church, your business, and every other area of life where conflicts might arise.

And, be at peace!