

Summary and Application

There are many conflicts that require a lot of time and effort to resolve. But there are far more that can be resolved simply by overlooking minor offenses or relinquishing rights for the sake of God's kingdom. Therefore, before focusing on your rights, take a careful look at your responsibilities. Before you go to remove the speck from your brother's eye, ask yourself, "Is this really worth fighting over?"

If you are presently involved in a conflict, these questions will help you to apply the principles presented in this chapter.

1. Define the material issues in this conflict.
2. Define the personal issues in this conflict.
3. Which personal issues are having the greatest influence on you? On your opponent?
4. What has the other person done that has offended you?
5. Check your attitude:
 - a. What can you rejoice in the Lord about in this situation?
 - b. Have you been gentle or irritable and rude toward others? From this point on, how could you make the gentleness of Christ more evident to others?
 - c. What have you been worried or anxious about? How has God shown himself to be loving, powerful, and faithful to you in previous conflicts or difficulties? What would you like him to do for you or accomplish through this conflict?
 - d. What is good about the person with whom you are in conflict? What is right

about his or her concerns? Do you have any good memories of your relationship? How has God helped you through that person?

- e. What principles taught in Scripture are most difficult for you to put into practice in this situation? Will you apply those principles? How?
6. What effect is this dispute having or likely to have on
- a. Your witness for Christ
 - b. Your family life
 - c. Your occupation
 - d. Your finances or property
 - e. Your friendships
 - f. Your relationship with God
 - g. Your service to your church and community
7. Consider your rights:
- a. What legal rights could you exercise in this situation? Would it be morally right to do so?
 - b. What other rights could you exercise? How might *exercising* these rights glorify God, advance his kingdom, benefit others, and benefit you? How might *laying*

down these rights glorify God, advance his kingdom, benefit others, and benefit you?

8. Which of the offenses described in answer to question 4 can you simply overlook? How might overlooking them please and honor God?
9. Which of the material issues described in answer to question 1 can you simply give in on?
10. Go on record with the Lord by writing a prayer based on the principles taught in this chapter.

Summary and Application

[James 4:1-3](#) provides a key principle for understanding and resolving conflict. Whenever we have a serious dispute with others, we should always look carefully at our own hearts to see whether we are being controlled by unmet desires that we have turned into idols. These desires love to disguise themselves as things we need or deserve, or even as things that would advance God's kingdom. But no matter how good or legitimate a desire may look on the surface, if we have gotten to the point where we cannot be content, fulfilled, or secure unless we have it, that desire has evolved into an idol that has diverted our love and trust from God. Fortunately, God delights to deliver us from our slavery to idols and enable us to find true freedom, fulfillment, and security in his love and provision. And as we break free from the desires that have fueled our conflicts, we can resolve seemingly hopeless disputes and become more effective peacemakers.

If you are presently involved in a conflict, these questions will help you apply the principles presented in this chapter to your situation:

1. Work backwards through the progression of an idol to identify the desires that are controlling your heart. Ask yourself these questions:
 - a. How am I punishing others?
 - b. How am I judging others?
 - c. What am I demanding to have?
 - d. What is the root desire of that demand?
2. What makes you think that you need or deserve to have any of these desires satisfied?
3. In order to more clearly identify your idols (desires turned into demands), ask

yourself these questions:

- a. What am I preoccupied with? (What is the first thing on my mind in the morning and/or the last thing at night?)
 - b. How would I fill in this blank?: "If only _____, then I would be happy, fulfilled, and secure."
 - c. What do I want to preserve or avoid at any cost?
 - d. Where do I put my trust?
 - e. What do I fear?
 - f. When a certain desire is not met, do I feel frustration, anxiety, resentment, bitterness, anger, or depression?
 - g. Is there something I desire so much that I am willing to disappoint or hurt others in order to have it?
4. How are your expectations of others magnifying your demands on them and your disappointment in their failure to meet your desires?
 5. How are you judging those who do not meet your desires? Are you feeling indignation, condemnation, bitterness, resentment, or anger?
 6. How are you punishing those who do not meet your desires?

7. What has God done to deliver you from your idols? What can you do to receive this deliverance?
8. How can you cultivate a more passionate love for and worship of God?
9. Go on record with the Lord by writing a prayer based on the principles taught in this chapter.

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To be a peacemaker, you need to deal honestly with your contribution to a conflict. As Paul told Timothy, “If a man cleanses himself from [sin], he will be an instrument for noble purposes, made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work” (2 Tim. 2:21). This cleansing process is inspired by Jesus’ promise that he has forgiven our sins and wants to purify us from the idols and habits that cause conflict (1 John 1:9). He calls us to cooperate in this process of repentance, self-examination, confession, and personal change. The more faithfully you draw on his grace and pursue these steps, the more useful you will be to him in making peace. At the same time, after you get the log out of your own eye, you will be better prepared to gently restore others.

If you are presently involved in a conflict, these questions will help you apply the principles presented in this chapter.

1. As you look back at the way you have handled this conflict, do you see a need for repentance and confession? Why?

2. As you have talked to and about others in this situation, have you used your tongue as a weapon in any of the following kinds of speech? If so, describe what you said.

- Reckless words

- Grumbling and complaining

- Falsehood

- Gossip

- Slander

- Worthless talk that does not benefit or build others up

3. Have you tried to control others in this situation? Why and how?

4. Are you guilty of any of the following sins in this situation? If so, describe what you did or failed to do.

- Uncontrolled anger

- Bitterness

Vengeance
Evil or malicious thoughts
Sexual immorality
Substance abuse
Laziness
Defensiveness
Self-justification
Stubbornness
Resistance to godly advice
Greed
Deficient work
Withholding mercy and forgiveness
Improper concessions
Compulsive behavior
Breaking your word
Misusing authority
Rebelling against authority
Failing to treat others as you want to be treated

5. Have any of the following idols influenced your behavior in this situation? How?

Lusts of the flesh
Pride
Love of money
Fear of others (or excessive concern about what others think of you)
Good things you want too much (desires elevated to demands)

6. How have your sins contributed to this conflict?

7. Write an outline for your confession.

a. Address everyone involved. To whom do you need to confess?

- b. Avoid *if*, *but*, and *maybe*. What excuses or blaming do you need to avoid?
 - c. Admit specifically. What desires have you allowed to rule you, and what sins have you committed? What biblical principles have you violated?
 - d. Acknowledge the hurt. How might others feel as a result of your sin?
 - e. Accept the consequences. What consequences do you need to accept? How can you reverse the damage you have caused?
 - f. Alter your behavior. What changes do you intend to make, with God's help, in the way you think, speak, and behave in the future?
 - g. Ask for forgiveness. What might make the person you have wronged reluctant to forgive you? What can you do to make it easier for him or her to forgive you?
8. How do you want to change as a result of this conflict? Pick one character quality you wish to change. Specifically, what steps can you take to practice that quality?
9. Go on record with the Lord by writing a prayer based on the principles taught in this chapter.