

Flint Hills Bible Church
Biblical Soul Care Sunday School
Resolving Conflict Chapter 13: Have We Gone Too Far?

I. Introduction

As we have been working through these lessons over the past months, we have been seeing how complex and difficult it can be to work through conflicts. The following questions are designed to remind us of certain truths regarding conflict resolution.

1. Do good conflicts exist or is it sinful whenever Christians are in conflict?
2. Do we have to resolve conflicts? Why or why not?
3. What is the goal of biblical conflict resolution?
4. What are acceptable outcomes of any conflict?
5. What can your opponent do to prevent one of these outcomes? (What unbiblical responses might they show?)

In this chapter Lou Priolo seeks to answer the question - At what point does a conflict become a lost cause? Is there a point in a given conflict where we should cut our losses and move on?

Objectives:

We will consider how to bring a brother or sister in Christ “back to the table” in a conflict so that we can resolve it biblically.

We will examine the truths that can help us be **humble**, gentle, patient and show loving forbearance when conflicts go wrong.

“Now the thing that most people don’t realize (and the most important point I want to make in this little chapter) is that most conflicts that go south are quite recoverable--even if the participants have been battling it out in the most unbiblical fashion for thirty minutes or longer. Let me say it again: humility begets humility...” pg 273-274

Priolo goes on to say that there are 4 basic steps to doing this:

- a. Recognizing our sinful contributions
- b. Confessing them (specifically)
- c. Seeking forgiveness (specifically)
- d. Recommitting to biblical communication and conflict resolution going forward

6. How is humility the key to each step of this process?

7. What if humility doesn't work?

II. The Angry Arguer

The first broad category in the chapter is the angry opponent who blows up in some way.

8. What happens to conflict resolution when someone has an outburst of anger?

9. What are some natural responses to someone who has an outburst of anger in a conflict?

Our biblical mandate to keep the unity of the church compels us to call the angry brother or sister back to the conflict so that a biblical resolution can take place. Here are a few questions Priolo provides on pages 271-272 to call this person to re-engage in conversation:

- "I think I know why you are upset. I shouldn't have said that. It was (Insert sinful behavior/words here). Will you please forgive me and allow me to try making my point a different way?"
- You seem quite upset. If I have sinned somehow, please tell me and I will ask your forgiveness. But please, let's not end our conversation this way."
- "Please come back to the table. May I pray for us? And then can we try to get this conflict resolved in a God-honoring way?"
- The Bible tells us to try to get our differences resolved quickly. Can we please try a little longer to get on the same page?
- We may not be able to get this conflict resolved today, but can we at least try to get our relationship resolved before the sun goes down?
- The Bible says, 'Be angry and do not sin, I realize that you're upset, but the way you are trying to solve this conflict is sinful. I think the best thing you can do right now is seek my forgiveness for (identify sinful words/behavior) and to continue having this discussion with me according to biblical principles.

- Could you repeat that in a different way? (or “would you repeat that please?”)

Proverbs 15:1, 18

**1 A soft answer turns away wrath,
but a harsh word stirs up anger.**

**18 A hot-tempered man stirs up strife,
but he who is slow to anger quiets contention.**

Summary:

Because God calls us to maintain unity and to be at peace with one another, we must seek to be reconciled with brothers and sisters in Christ - as much as it depends on us. This of course includes those who become sinfully angry in a conflict. The key is to be humble, and persist in the humble speech and actions. We may need assistance from another believer to walk through the conflict if we are “stuck.”

III. The Cold Shoulder

The second broad category of conflict responses has to do with single handedly shutting down the conflict resolution process by refusing to communicate.

10. If one party purposely refuses to talk and engage with you, what happens to the conflict resolution process?
11. Why would someone choose this reaction?

Priolo gives the following statements on pages 272-273 that could help bring someone back to the conflict resolution process.

- “I think I know why you are troubled (or other biblical descriptor). I shouldn’t have said that. It was (insert my sin here)Will you please forgive me and allow me to try making my point a different way
- “You seem to be rather frustrated with me. If I have sinned somehow, please tell me and I will be happy to ask your forgiveness. But please, let’s not stop trying to resolve this issue.”
- “Please don’t stop now. Can we pray and ask the Lord to help us to get through this in a way that pleases Him?”
- “May we please keep trying to resolve this issue? If you would like to take a little break, perhaps we can do that. But we must make every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. So I would like to keep trying to resolve this.”
- “Please tell me, exactly, what is it you see that I’m doing or saying that is tempting you to withdraw from this conversation, so that we may continue.”

- “This issue is very important to me. I am willing to do whatever is biblically necessary to get things between us resolved quickly, effectively, and with a minimum amount of sin. What can I do to make it easier for you to continue?”
- “How about we simply take a fifteen-minute break, spend a little time in private prayer, and then come back to the table for one more round of talks. I think we will both do better if we have some time to compose our thoughts.”

Our responsibility to pursue unity and the good of others in our conflicts also extends to those situations where our opponent is sinfully silent. In humility and prayer, we must seek to re-engage them.

IV. Practice

Fred and Greg are having a disagreement in the way they should proceed in the men’s ministry at church. Fred believes that the focus of the ministry should be on bible study and regular accountability. Greg believes that the men should be spending more of their time on evangelism around town. They have been debating with one another for the last 15 minutes and neither one is giving up his stance.

“The men need to be working on personal holiness before we focus on the community! The whole town will think we are a bunch of hypocrites if we start evangelism right now!” (Fred)

“The Great Commission is to go out into the world and make disciples, Fred, not join your Christian buddies in a holy huddle until Jesus comes back. If I didn’t know any better, I’d say you were scared.” (Greg)

“Well I think you’re trying to hide something that accountability would reveal! What could that be?” (Fred)

12. What would a humble response look like from Fred? From Greg?

- e. Recognizing our sinful contributions
- f. Confessing them (specifically)
- g. Seeking forgiveness (specifically)
- h. Recommitting to biblical communication and conflict resolution going forward

13. What are the real issues at the root of this conflict? Who is right?