

# “Conflict Resolution: It’s Personal”

It’s Personal Sermon Series | Week Three | Newbreak Church

October 30th, 2022

Newbreak’s Sermon Study Guide is an in-house resource that serves sermon-based Life Groups and/or individuals who want to reflect further on how the message contributes to our spiritual formation.

In this week’s study, we talk about how to navigate conflict in our relationships in a way that honors God and each other, while actually bringing healthy reconciliation! Whether it be a big issue or a small one, the steps laid out in Scripture are typically the same. Here we will see what Jesus teaches us about how to make it personal and do our part to resolve conflict.

## Icebreakers for Life Groups

- What show can you watch and rewatch over and over again?
- How did you see conflict being handled growing up? Was it healthy? Or was it either on one of the extremes of being either aggressive or passive-aggressive?

## Going Deeper Into the Message

**Conflict is a tool that will either make or break our relationships.** And honestly, that should cause some angst in us. Not that we should become anxious or fearful, but that we should have reverence for how serious conflict is. It’s sad how often a friendship of many years can be undone by a petty disagreement that spiraled out of control because the conflict was not handled in a healthy way.

On the other hand—and here is the good news—conflict, when handled properly, can actually strengthen the bond of relationships. Be encouraged by this: **The closer the relationship, the more inevitable conflict is.** That is why we typically have more conflicts with those who are closest to us. However, whether someone is close as family or completely anonymous, Jesus teaches us how to navigate conflict.

*How do I navigate conflict in a godly way?*

**Read Matthew 5:9**

## Point 1 – Understand that I am called to be a peacemaker.

Blessed are the **peacemakers**, for they will be called children of God (Matthew 5:9, NIV).

The key is to be *peacemakers*, not *peacekeepers*... A *peacemaker* is someone who actively seeks to reconcile people to God and to one another.

Here's what peacemaking is not:

- **Absence of conflict.** We live in a broken world, and conflict is inevitable.
- **Avoidance of conflict.** We're never instructed to run from conflict, or put our head in the sand, hoping that the conflict will end. Peacekeeping focuses on maintaining peace by avoiding conflict. Sometimes, peacekeepers get upset by peacemakers because they hope the drama will go away if people will just stop talking about it.
- **Appeasing all parties.** In fact, it's almost impossible to make everyone happy all the time.

So our goal is not to counter punch when we are punched. We have to do everything in our ability to bring peace into our relationships. You can't control how others respond, but you control how you respond to conflict.

The apostle Paul would piggy back off of Jesus' teaching and tell us that we shouldn't repay evil for evil. He says...

If it is possible, **as far as it depends on you**, live at peace with everyone (Romans 12:18, NIV).

This passage makes two points...

- 1) "As far as it depends on you" – You can't control whether they resolve the conflict or not! It takes both parties. So don't force it and don't carry the pressure/guilt that it's all on you to resolve it. Sometimes they just won't.
- 2) "As far as it depends on you" – Have I done everything within my power to try to resolve this? (The answer is almost always "no") What more steps do I need to take? What have I not done yet that God is calling me to do in this?

When we see our role as "peacemakers," we do not strive to create conflict, nor do we run away from it—we seek to resolve the conflict, something we will discuss more practically in point 2.

## Questions for Group Discussion or Personal Reflection

- How is being a “peacemaker” different from being a “peacekeeper”? Which one are you naturally?
- How have you handled conflict in the past? How can you work on doing your part to be a “peacemaker” in the future?
- What is Paul expressing in Romans 12:18 when he says, “If it is possible, as far as it depends on you”? Is this part of the verse freeing? Why or why not?

*How do I navigate conflict in a godly way?*

### Read Matthew 18:15–20

#### Point 2 – Pursue reconciliation as the primary goal.

Reconciliation is the goal. If we lose sight of that, we lose the ability to navigate conflict in a healthy way.

*If the other person listens and confesses it, you have won that person back (Matthew 18:15b, NLT).*

See, it is not about **winning an argument**; it’s about **winning the person** back and reconciling the relationship.

What comes before and after this passage is really important too! Just before sharing this advice on conflict Jesus shares his heart on going after the one lost sheep. And then after the Matthew 18 principle is a parable about an unforgiving person who refuses to forgive someone a small debt although he has been forgiven an innumerable debts. The point? The context paints the picture that this principle is all about having a process toward reconciliation.

This has become known as the “Matthew 18 principle.” But before going any further... it’s vital we keep a proper attitude in these steps. We need to be prayerful and open to the fact that we may have a part in the conflict where we need to be humble and ask for forgiveness. Not always, but often conflict involves the fault of two people, at least to some degree. With that, the steps in Matthew 18 are sequential and meant to be an end as long as that step resolves the conflict, if not, move on to the next one.

→ **Step 1** – Keep the conflict between you and the other person.

Matthew 18:15a (NLT) says: “If another believer sins against you, go privately and point out the offense.”

Usually, our first response isn't to go to the person directly. We like to go to other people and tell them about the person we are frustrated with. That's called gossip. (We go from venting to complaining to conspiring.)

There is no need to bring others into the mix and cause more conflict and even drama!

→ **Step 2** – Have wise and godly peers to bring perspective.

Godly mediators see the perspective of all parties involved; they're not there to prove you're right.

Matthew 18:16 (NLT) says: ‘But if you are unsuccessful, take one or two others with you and go back again, so that everything you say may be confirmed by two or three witnesses.’

So, the conversation regarding the conflict did not go as planned? Don't give up! There is still a way for this to be handled in a godly way. At this time it is appropriate and acceptable to bring in wise counsel, preferably fellow believers who are not interested in escalating the conflict but are helpful in bringing about a resolution. In other words, choose carefully who you bring into the mix!

It is important to not just bring in counsel who will automatically agree with you.

Conflict is usually two-sided. At the very least, there are two sides to every story and no matter how right or justified one side feels, there is always another perspective. Even more, there may be something on your part that needs to be conceded to have true reconciliation. It's amazing how much more perspective we are able to have when we have godly people providing wisdom to a situation of conflict.

→ **Step 3** – Invite godly mentors to mediate.

Matthew 18:17a (NLT) says: “If the person still refuses to listen, take your case to the church.”

Is this giving us permission to tell everyone we know just how badly we were wronged? No. Remember the context. Jesus is talking about conflicts in the church and here, is referencing the leaders of the church body like pastors, elders, or deacons. In the workplace, this is where you might bring the boss in. In a family dynamic, this is where parents together discuss a way to resolve an issue. Again, the goal is resolving the conflict, not proving one person is right and the other is wrong. Consider your workplace: maybe this is when you bring your supervisor in to help with a conflict with a co-worker.

So elevating an unresolved conflict to this higher level is intended to do just that — facilitate a resolution. But what if this isn't enough? Is there a next step despite going to the person directly, bringing in a mediator, or even elevating the conflict to an authority?

→ **Step 4 – Create healthy boundaries.**

You may be thinking that this does not sound very kind or ideal. It is not ideal, but it is actually the healthiest response for the situation. Jesus does not need to rethink his instruction, we need to reflect on its meaning. Again, in the context of the church, Jesus is saying this person no longer enjoys the connection of close community. Take note: we are not allowed to dishonor the other person, according to Jesus. He is not saying that we are allowed to hate them. We are not allowed to tarnish their reputation or pray against them or do anything that promotes ill-will (Romans 12:18). What Jesus is communicating is something we refer to as “setting boundaries.”

Someone might be the common denominator of many conflicts. If Bill has a conflict with Sue... and Bill then had a conflict with Doug... and Bill then had a conflict with David... clearly Bill is causing havoc in the community! (If you want to read more on the role of boundaries in relation to this passage, read [this blog we wrote](#) where we discuss it more.)

Remember, **forgiveness is not the same as trust** (something we have written about in this [blog post HERE](#))

### Questions for Group Discussion or Personal Reflection

- How are Jesus' steps for resolving conflict different than what we see modeled in the surrounding culture?

- Which one of the above steps would be hardest for you? Which one would be easiest? Have you ever resolved conflict this way? How did it work out?
- In light of this section, are there any healthy boundaries you need to set? Would you like prayer for this?

**Memory Verse:** Romans 12:18 (NIV) If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.

### —FINAL CHALLENGE QUESTIONS—

How are you going to think or live differently in light of what you have read, heard, and discussed this week?

How does this week's message shape or nurture your relationship with God?

**BONUS:** For those of you with kids or around kids: What is one truth from this message that you can share with your kids in a way that they would relate to or understand?