



NAC-USA
DEVELOPMENT
INSTITUTE

**Responding
to Conflict**

**Glorify God
and Get the
Log Out of
Your Eye**

**Gently
Restore and
Go and Be
Reconciled**

MIDWEEK SCRIPT

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July

Session 1 – Responding to conflict

Interacting in the Spirit of Christ. What does that phrase mean to you? We interact with people every day of our lives. Often times those interactions could, and sometimes do, lead to conflict. Conflict is inevitable. But if we are to interact in the Spirit of Christ, how should we handle this conflict? Jesus said during His Sermon on the Mount, “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.”

You may recall hearing about a Peacemakers Program in the past. Peacemaking uses four steps—known as the “4 Gs”—to help us restore relationships and resolve conflict:

1. Glorify God
2. Get the log out of your eye
3. Gently Restore and finally...
4. Go and be reconciled

This month we are going to take a look at conflict, through some biblical examples, and discuss how we can use them in our lives to deal with our everyday conflicts.

Before we start talking about how to deal with conflict, we first have to understand how we, individually, **respond** to conflict. Let’s take a look at one of the first conflicts ever recorded: Cain and Abel.

In the very beginning of the fourth chapter of Genesis we are introduced to two brothers, Cain and Abel. Cain worked the land and Abel took care of the sheep. Both brought an offering of their labors to God. Cain brought some fruit and Abel brought fat from a firstborn of his flock. God looked favorably on Abel, but not on Cain, and this made Cain very angry. God actually addressed Cain, warning him that sin wants to have him, but that he must rule over it. In verse 8, we find the first response to conflict, “Now Cain said to his brother Abel, ‘Let’s go out to the field.’ While they were in the field, Cain **attacked** his brother Abel and killed him.”

In the extreme, an attack response to conflict could lead to murder, but most often is displayed in less violent ways. When we try to use force or intimidation, whether physical, verbal, or financial, to make an opponent give in to our demands, we are responding to conflict with **assault**. An even more deceptive attack response is **blame**, when we try and shift responsibility away from ourselves by blaming the conflict on another person. Blame can quickly turn to gossip when we talk **about** others rather than speaking to them directly. We try and “win” others to our cause by talking to more and more people.

In summary, **attack responses** seek to place as much pressure as possible on your neighbor in order to win.

Going back to the story of Cain and Abel, we can also observe the opposite response to conflict. Let’s pick up where we left off. In verse 9 we read, “Then the Lord said to Cain, ‘Where is your brother Abel?’

‘I don’t know,’ he replied. ‘Am I my brother’s keeper?’”

Here, Cain responds with an **escape response: denial**. We respond to conflict with denial when we try and pretend that the conflict does not exist. The next step in the escape response is **flight**. Have you ever tried to avoid a person you had a conflict with? This is an escape response, avoiding the conflict and running away from the person, and any possible solution.

In summary, **escape responses**, denial and flight, focus on getting away from the conflict rather than resolving it.

Each of us responds to conflict in a different way. While you go through the questions with your group, think about which side you usually gravitate towards when facing conflict: attack or escape.

There is one response to conflict that helps us avoid it completely: **overlooking minor offenses**. In Proverbs 19:11 we read that “a person’s wisdom yields patience; it is to one’s glory to overlook an offense” (NIV). When someone has

offended you, the first question to ask is, “Can I overlook this?” Many conflicts can be quickly resolved if we are willing to overlook. It is an act of love to extinguish a fire before it ever starts.

When we understand how we personally respond to conflict, we can start to focus on choosing a different way, a Christ-like way, to deal with the conflict that arises in our lives. Over the next two sessions we’ll look at the “4 Gs” of Peacemaking and learn how we can apply them to our own circumstances. Remember as we go through them, that these four steps center around reconciling our relationships, rather than only resolving our issues.

Join us next time to discuss how to “Glorify God” in a conflict and discover how to “Get the log out of your eye.”

Session 2 – Glorify God and Get the Log Out of Your Eye

Welcome back! Last week we began our month of learning about resolving conflict and being people who seek peace in their relationships with others. In today’s session we will learn how to glorify God and seek to accept our own responsibility, which are the first two steps of Peacemaking.

The Bible provides a model we can learn from in the story of a conflict that arose between Paul and Barnabas. In Acts 15, Luke reports that Paul and Barnabas stayed in Antioch together for some time, “teaching and preaching the word of the Lord.” As their time there came to an end, Paul invited Barnabas to join him on a return visit to the places they contacted during their previous journey. It is at this point where we see a divide come between Paul and Barnabas. Let’s read together Acts 15:37-41:

Now Barnabas was determined to take with them John called Mark. But Paul insisted that they should not take with them the one who had departed from them in Pamphylia, and had not gone with them to the work. Then the contention became so sharp that they parted from one another. And so Barnabas took Mark and sailed to Cyprus; but Paul chose Silas and departed... And he went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.

We learn from these verses that on their first missionary journey, John Mark had left the group. Luke does not provide the reason why he left, but there is no doubt that his leaving caused Paul to look upon him negatively and see him as not being fit to be their companion for this upcoming journey. Barnabas on the other hand, perhaps because he was his cousin, was unwavering in his desire to forget John Mark’s past performance and wanted to provide him a second chance. This disagreement over John Mark caused a sharp divide to come between the two missionaries and they ultimately decided to part ways and embark on two separate missions. Barnabas took John Mark and set off for Cyprus, never again to be a companion with Paul on a journey. Paul teamed up with Silas and went out on his second missionary trip through Syria and Cilicia.

Can you recall a personal experience where a disagreement between yourself and a friend caused you to separate from one another? Let’s face it, we don’t always see eye to eye and agree on everything – even with those we are closest to. Within our congregations there will always be differences of opinion, which may lead to disagreements. These disagreements create challenges and sometimes it seems that the best solution is to work separately. However, just as that solution would not work for a family, it also cannot be the long-term solution in our congregations. As Christians, our desire should be to reconcile with one another so that we can work together to the best of our abilities to fulfill the work God has called us to. This is when we can employ the “4 Gs” of Peacemaking.

Step 1: Glorify God

We start on the path of reconciliation by firstly seeking to glorify God in all that we do. To state it simply, we glorify God by placing His will before our own and working to encourage and help others to grow in their Christian lives. We do this by engaging with the Holy Spirit to see others with Godly eyes. We glorify God when we look at others with love and have the desire to share Jesus with them through our words and actions. If we are self-serving in our actions and are in

constant pursuit of human accolades, then we are only seeking to glorify ourselves. Seeking to glorify God, we follow Jesus' example by loving others, showing mercy, laying down our own will, forgiving, and loving sacrificially. Then we can start to see those we are in conflict with in a new way. Every time we pray the Lord's Prayer, we ask that God's will be done, which not only means that we lay our will down, but that we begin to see things in a new way, in the way that God sees them.

Step 2: Get the log out of your eye

In addition to seeking to glorify God in all we do, we should also seek to identify the role we played in the creation of the conflict. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught the following (Matthew 7:3-5): "And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me remove the speck from your eye'; and look, a plank is in your own eye? Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye."

In every conflict, we need to own our responsibility for it. Even if we are only responsible for 2% of the conflict, we're 100% responsible for our 2%. To accomplish this, we need to take the time for introspection. Recognize and take note of the things we have personally contributed to the formation of the conflict, and take ownership of those things. Then when a similar situation arises in the future, we can remember to Glorify God, rather than responding in our old way. We can read how Paul sought to reconcile with himself in Romans 7:15-25. He confesses that even though he has the intention to do good, he still does evil things. He is honest with himself about his ongoing internal battle with his sinful nature. In the end, he finds his hope in God, who has provided the pathway to change through Jesus Christ. Let's follow the direction provided by Jesus to take ownership of the part we played in the creation of the conflict and follow Paul's lead in confessing our ongoing, internal battle to overcome our evil nature and place our hope for the power to change in Jesus.

Paul's letters to the Colossians and to Timothy give us evidence that later on, John Mark was reconciled to Paul and was able to once again help him in ministry. Due to our differences, we will never be able to completely avoid the occasional disagreement, but just as with Paul and Barnabas, we cannot allow our disagreements to stop us from doing the work God has called us to do. When disagreements occur, seek the heart of God and strive to glorify Him in all things, be honest with yourself, and find your hope and strength in Jesus Christ to reconcile.

Session 3 – Gently restore and Go and be reconciled

Today we're going to conclude our discussion of Peacemaking by looking at the last two steps of the "4 Gs": "Gently restore" and "Go and be reconciled." The relationship that Jesus had with Peter is a window through which we can look at these steps in action.

Step 3: Gently restore

There are quite a few times when Peter often said or did the wrong thing, usually because of a misunderstanding. For example, when Jesus predicted His death, Peter declared that it could not happen. Jesus replied, "Get behind me Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns" (Matthew 16:23).

Then when Jesus washed the feet of the disciples during their Passover meal, Peter again disputes with Jesus saying, "You shall never wash my feet" (John 13:8). Again, Jesus immediately explains to Peter why He wants to wash his feet. Peter, through these instances, could have distanced himself from Jesus. However, each time Jesus took the opportunity to address Peter's misconceptions. This is what it means to gently restore: taking the time to talk to someone about how their words and actions have impacted you, with the purpose of restoring your relationship.

Before His crucifixion, Jesus tells Peter that he will deny Him three times. Even though Peter protested against this prediction, we read that he did in fact deny knowing Jesus three times (Matthew 26:31-35, John 18:15-18, 25-27). In Matthew 26:75, we read of the moment when Peter realized what he had done: "And Peter remembered the word of Jesus who had said to him, 'Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times.' So he went out and wept bitterly."

This remorse shows us that Peter felt his relationship with Jesus was broken. Because of Jesus' death, Peter was not able to reconcile this relationship right away.

After Jesus resurrects from the dead, He seeks out Peter by the lake and approaches Peter with a heart of love (John 21:15-19). Jesus keeps this restoration gentle by not speaking about Peter's denial. Jesus' purpose has nothing to do with anger or vengeance, but only to restore His relationship with Peter.

In the conversation that happens by the lake, Peter realizes how deeply Jesus loves him, and he is aware of how many times Jesus could have given up on him. He experiences firsthand the type of love that Jesus is calling him to.

Step 4: Go and be reconciled

The final step of the "4 Gs" – "Go and be reconciled" – signifies a lasting resolution to the conflict. This is only possible through a combination of the resolution of the issue and the reconciliation of the relationship, which comes through forgiveness. Looking again to Jesus and Peter, we believe that their relationship was reconciled after their encounter by the lake. We know that Jesus forgave Peter for denying to know Him during His trial and crucifixion, and we do not read that Jesus ever talked of the denial again. He truly let it go!

Jesus is the ultimate Peacemaker. He is love and forgiveness. How could we ever embody these traits in times of conflict? It seems impossible! The only way we can engage in each step of Peacemaking is through the power of the Holy Spirit. However, these steps cannot become a checklist that we go through when we encounter conflict, but rather they should change the way that we view our relationships. This will be a constant struggle because all of these steps go against our natural human response.

Only through the power of the Holy Spirit can we "Glorify God" in all circumstances, take full responsibility for our actions by "Getting the log out of our eye," be able to approach others in love by "Gently restoring," and "Go and be reconciled" to others through forgiveness. This is an aspect of walking in the Spirit. The Holy Spirit becomes active in us through the rebirth of water and Spirit and is strengthened each time we celebrate Holy Communion. As we allow the Holy Spirit to grow within us, the characteristics of Jesus also grow within us.

Each time we celebrate Holy Communion we can grow to be more loving and more forgiving. But for this to happen it takes thorough preparation on our part. Each week we need to take time to examine ourselves, repent, confess our sins to God through prayer, and seek reconciliation with others. In the Lord's Prayer we say, "forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors." In order for us to be forgiven, we also have to forgive. If we believe that God sees who we truly are, forgives us, and wants to forgive all the sins of every person, how can we not forgive each other?

It is difficult, if not impossible, to restore relationships if we cannot readily forgive. As we grow stronger in our relationship with God the Father, His Son, and the Holy Spirit, our love will become stronger and we will be able to forgive more freely. Just as Jesus instructed His disciples to love one another as He loved them (John 13:34), we must also love others with the love of Jesus. As we practice loving in this way, forgiveness will become more natural for us.

Each of the "4 Gs" of the Peacemaking process helps us to further love and forgive those around us, and we need the Holy Spirit's power in order to do this. Jesus' life is the ultimate example of Peacemaking, and we want to continue learning about how He responded to conflict, so that our responses become more like His.