

In heaven, there will be no conflict. Because sin will no longer be an issue, we will not have disagreements, hurt feelings, anger, bitterness or division. We will live in perfect love and unity with every single person in heaven with us. I look forward to that very much.

Because, in what must be the largest understatement in the history of the world, this is not heaven! Here on earth, we are affected by sin and so are our relationships with other people. There are disagreements, hurt feelings, wrongdoing to another, anger and bitterness, and a lot of conflict which leads to division.

These conflicts are seen among neighbors, co-workers, even friends and family. And while this is not yet the perfect unity of heaven, Christians know that it ought not be this way. That even here and now, we should seek for peace with all men and do what we can to bind together with the love of God.

And so, as students of the word, we must be diligent to learn a much needed skill: **Conflict Resolution**.

The commonly accepted steps for conflict resolution just aren't working:

- 1) *Put all the fault on someone else*
- 2) *Lash out in anger over their conduct*
- 3) *Talk about them to all who will listen*
- 4) *Ignore them completely to shame them.*

But these aren't about resolution at all, are they? They're about personal satisfaction.

These concrete division in place and build a new normal around division. And God hates it.

Jesus wouldn't have us behave this way with our worst enemy: **Luke 6:27-38**

But folks have pursued this course with people who are brethren, friends and loved ones.

Do you want to learn a better way? God's way? He can teach us how to stop hurting and start healing.

There are many ways this is taught to us, but in particular tonight I want to show you a CASE STUDY in Conflict Resolution. Let's observe the right way in action and follow in kind.

I'm thinking of a story about 2 Brothers, from the book of Genesis. Their relationship was always a bit rocky, even from the day they both were born, just a few seconds apart.

Once grown men, they had such a sharp disagreement that one of them fled his brother and was gone from home for 20 years. But God sent him back, and he was frightened of his brother.

But it was in that moment, when so much had gone wrong and things seemed so dire, that this brother laid out a good, kind and wise resolution plan to hopefully make things right with his brother.

*What story am I referencing tonight: **Jacob and Esau***

Now their story will not match up exactly with conflicts you might be facing, and I can't justify every choice, but 1) you can't argue with the results of a godly man's choices 2) we can do this!

Genesis 31:3 – Our lesson starts here, with God's instruction to go home and make things right.

But our story starts long before doesn't it?

Genesis 25:23-34 – Wow, a pretty twisted family, huh?

Prophecy of one brother serving another

Partiality of father to son, and mother to the other son

Problems related to a sold birthright and anguish over that

Genesis 27:15-19, 30, 41-43 – It really came to a head here and this is how Jacob left.

Before we see how he sought to mend this, I want you to see why Assigning Blame is not the best way to make things better between people. Let me ask, who's fault was all this mess? Depends who you ask!

Jacob would say: It is all Esau's fault! He sold the birthright and now it is mine to take.

Esau would say: It is all Jacob's fault! He tricked me and now he has lied to our father.

Or maybe they'd both say: It is our parents fault! They showed partiality to our detriment.

And I think everyone is probably right and yet none of that matters. (**Genesis 31:3**)

God says, "Go home." It is not about blame but doing what it takes to make things right!

1) "This is God's Camp" – **Genesis 32:1-2**

- a. The largest mistake people make is treating each other as if God is not right there with them. Jacob knows he is not alone. He sees the angels. God is with him. God is watching.

- b. This is God's Camp! What a great way to enter into every resolutions. No matter how you are going to try and make things right, start by saying, "This is God's Camp." I'm not saying I'm all right and you are all wrong. What I'm saying is, God is with us and I will behave as if He is in my life, in my home, and in this room!
"Mahanaim" – Two Camps: mine and His!
 - i. Some behave as if God is not watching. Not listening on the line. Looking over your shoulder as you type. In your home as you talk to your family.
 - ii. This is God's camp. He built this and me and you and He is here!

2) "Then Jacob Sent Messengers" – Genesis 32:3-5

- a. Jacob didn't go in cold. He sent messengers to tell his brother that he is doing well, and that he wants nothing more than to find favor in his sight.
- b. This is some great practical advice on conflict resolutions. Maybe the person you want to fix things with is not talking to you, or you not to them. Maybe all previous interactions have gone poorly. Find someone you trust. A mediator. A messenger. Send them in first.
- c. There is a lot of wisdom in a forerunner. Someone to prepare the situation objectively.
 - i. A family member who loves you and the other person and wants to help.
 - ii. A friend who can be objective and unemotional and set up a meeting.
 - iii. An elder of the church who wants nothing more than to see unity come out of it.
- d. **32:6** – The response was ambiguous and didn't comfort Jacob much, but at least Esau knew he was coming and that his intentions are pure.

3) Jacob said, "O God of my father Abraham" – Genesis 32:9-12

- a. He prayed, and I mean spiritual, constructive, courage building prayer
 - i. He spoke of God's promises to him, throughout
 - ii. He spoke humbly of how much God had done for him
 - iii. He asked for deliverance from his brother Esau, by name
- b. These relationships we wish were better. Where we don't know what to do
 - i. Won't you pray? – Remind yourself that God is with you
 - ii. That He has gotten you through things so much harder than this
 - iii. That His promises of peace in Christ are yours no matter what happens
 - iv. And then, by name ask for deliverance! (from whatever intentions Satan has)

4) "I will appease him with the present that goes before me" – Genesis 32:13-16, 19-21

- a. Okay, if I get a banana pudding from anyone here this week: I'll know what is coming next!
- b. Now remember, Jacob thinks Esau is going to kill him. And these presents were a way of proving that he wanted peace and wanted to move on, a gesture of good faith to moving above and beyond.
- c. What better way to show you aren't looking for a fight but with a gift! Or more than one!
- d. Maybe we should try this. It was not an apology. It was not taking all the blame; it was just a message: I want us to be close again, friends again. Let's move on.
- e. Perhaps COOKIES, or a CARD, or take 'EM to COFFEE, or a B-DAY gift. They may think it is a gimmick or a ploy, so... a couple weeks later, give 'em another one! Peace offerings send the right message.

5) "He...bowed down to the ground seven times" – Genesis 33:1-3

- a. 400 men approaching. What was their intention? He didn't know. But his best shot was HUMILITY. No chip on his shoulder. No expectation of humility from the other, just an attitude that could trigger compassion.
- b. How important is this? You go talk to them. You've set it up with prayer, a forerunner, maybe a gift card ... only way to blow it would be to shake their hand with prideful expectation, a chip on your shoulder, expectation for them to kiss your feet!
- c. Be humble, take a humble posture, humble tone, trigger compassion!
- d. This may mean you are admitting wrongdoing, but not necessarily. Just that you want to make things right, and you aren't coming in to receive but to give fruit of the Spirit.

Well, how did this all work out? In a sense, that isn't the point. Behaving properly is the point. Jacob did that. But in this case, as with so many: **Genesis 33:4-11** – the response was great and the conflict was resolved!

Just like God told Jacob to "GO" and that He would be with him.

Jesus has told us the same: **Matthew 5:21-25**. This is what Christians do. Jacob has shown us how.

Who will you be talking to, catching up with, encouraging and helping to get to heaven tomorrow because of a conflict resolution that is way overdue.

And maybe it will work out well or maybe the other person will reject you:

But doing right and treating others with kindness is about the PROCESS, not the RESULTS. Trust God.

Want some practice? Start with God! He promises to receive you and make the relationship whole.