

new issues into the discussion. When conflicts arise, stop and look for the root issue.

*Deal with conflict BEFORE things reach the boiling point.* When we “blow up” we lose all control and cannot manage the situation rationally. Explosive anger discharges deadly shrapnel—unfair insults, accusations, profanity, threats, and “unwholesome speech”! Learn the early warning signals of your anger and deal with conflict before enough pressure has built and you “blow your top”!

*Open up and talk about the potential conflict.* Do not wait until the conflict happens. Be fair and tell your spouse, child, parent, friend what irritates you. This will inform them, and they will know what to expect and what to avoid. We live in a world that cannot verbalize. Verbal expressions regarding personal opinions, tastes, gripes, positions, beliefs, etc. help reduce conflict. People cannot read your mind. Silence is at times viewed as support or at best ambiguous approval.

*Do not exaggerate.* We think that exaggerating our position will give us more leverage to resolve conflicts in our favor. The exaggerated statement is a weakening of our position. It is ineffective and untrue (a lie). Remember the old truism, “What proves too much, proves too little!”

*No cheap shots.* The more you know someone, the more you know about them. This provides ammunition to target a vulnerable point. Targeting another’s weakness is a common way of gaining leverage! Conflict resolution is not for crushing the one in disagreement. It should provide strength and encouragement (Proverbs 27:17). Our part in conflict resolution is to make another “better” not worse!

### **Speaking from the heart resolving conflicts**

Once a young man came to the great philosopher Socrates to be instructed in oratory. The instant the young man was introduced he began to talk. Incessantly he talked. It was a flood of words with seldom any pauses. When Socrates finally could get a word in, he said, “Young man, I will have to charge you double the fee.” “A double fee! Why?” The sage replied, “I will have to teach you two lessons. First, how to hold your tongue and, second, how to use your tongue.”

Do you recall the truism that asks: “*Do you know why God gave us two ears and one tongue?*” Because He wants us to listen twice as much as we talk!

When it comes to personal conflicts and resolution of these volatile issues, we have instructions that far exceed Socrates. We MUST do what God says so we are known as speaking from the heart!



## **Lesson Nine: “When we don’t agree!”**

### **Dalraida Church of Christ**

**John L. Kachelman, Jr.**

“So speak, and so act, as those who are to be judged by the law of freedom. For judgment will be merciless to one who has shown no mercy” (James 2:12, 13).

Conflict communication exposes worldly attitudes (Mt 12:36-37). Conflict uses words that “do not work.” Conflict communication is doomed when it has these characteristics:

Quit listening  
Pride dominates  
Eyes of vengeance

No positive movement  
Rehearses “Trophy Hurts”  
Find no “satisfaction”!

### **Living in a world of conflict**

Life has inevitable conflicts. We look at the world with different viewpoints. My needs are not the same as yours. Pride prods conflicts (Philippians 2:3-4).

Pride controls conflicts. Some never apologize or admit wrong; never show humility; but, expect other(s) involved in conflict to bow the knee to them! These never think they do wrong. They are quick to list mistakes done TO them but not BY them!

Some conflicts are humorous at the beginning, but can metastasize into disaster. How often do we hear of “irreconcilable differences”? (James 3:2-6).

### **Conflict—the Meaning**

The word means “to strike together; fight; battle; struggle; or sharp disagreements.” It is a collision between interests. Often these are neither right nor wrong, moral or immoral, legal or illegal!

This lesson asks, “How do you respond to conflict? What words do you use to communicate? Are they words of reconciliation, recrimination, or retaliation?”

### **The ORIGIN of conflict**

James analyzes destructive conflict’s origin (James 4:1-3). Destructive conflicts share in common, “I want my way! I will do whatever it takes to get my way.”

Destructive conflicts begin with our “pleasures.” The Greek word is translated into English by “hedonism.” This is a philosophy devoted wholly to the pursuit of self’s pleasures—“I will do what I want so I will be pleased and happy.”

It is “YOUR way verses MY way!” And there are no winners in this conflict. Many remain in a “frozen conflict.” It is never resolved but always just under the relationship’s surface (1 Kings 21; James 1:14-16).

### **The MOTIVE of conflict**

Destructive conflicts arise because people think the universe revolves around them. The only correct way is THEIR WAY! “I want what I want and ONLY what I want—I do not want any differences!”

Destructive conflicts are fueled by a spirit of covetousness—“I covet MY way” (Colossians 3:5). “I am not interested in God’s way or your way; I want it MY way.”

### **The RESOLUTION of conflict**

Resolution begins with ME. “Is my pride, fear, anger, poor habits, family background, etc. the real fault?”

*I resolve not to be quarrelsome.* This one is disagreeable. There are many “excuses” for being disagreeable, but these do not justify a sour, bitter attitude. Why are some “sweet” while others are “sour”? It is a choice! Such are hypocrites (Matthew 23:28; 1 Peter 2:1). The tap root feeding the quarrelsome person’s conflict is pride (Proverbs 13:10; 17:19).

*I resolve to accept MY responsibility in the conflict.* This requires admission, “I was wrong. I am sorry.” (James 5:16). A revealing question asks, “Am I more focused on MY PRIDE or on MY LOVE?” (1 Corinthians 6:7).

*I resolve to accept you.* This requires us to accept that MY WAY is not the only way. It means you will not resent the differences and not express sarcastic and bitter words describing the differences of others. “Why can’t you see it MY way?” Simply because each is different! They cannot see it YOUR way because they see it THEIR way!” (Romans 15:7).

It is not right to accept and tolerate illegal, ungodly, immoral, unscriptural and unjust behavior. Scripture stresses that teaching/believing false doctrines and supporting ungodly lifestyles are wrong and need rebuked. But we must accept another’s individuality in matters not biblically bound (Romans 15:7).

Inspiration communicates that our individual differences are to be applauded and used to make the Church grow (1 Corinthians 12). Individualism makes the Church grow!

*I resolve to forgive you.* I will demonstrate God’s attitude toward me. This opens the door to conflict resolution (Matthew 5:23-25). Conflict resolution is not optional. If we are not seeking to reconcile and are unwilling to confess our part and ask for forgiveness, then we are hard hearted (Hebrews 3:13).

### **Conflicts in the New Testament**

*Jesus and the Pharisees (Mark 3:1-6)*

Conflict—The Jewish tradition limited compassion.

Resolution—Jesus ignited the conflict in this situation. They were putting man’s doctrines above the directives of the Lord God Almighty (Mark 2:27).

*Jesus and the Sanhedrin (John 11:45-54)*

Conflict—The popularity of Christ posed a threat to the prestige, power and position of the religious establishment.

Resolution—Christ chose a “strategic withdrawal.” By avoiding the conflict at that time, Christ was able to complete His ministry successfully.

*Jewish and Gentile Church Leaders (Acts 15:1-35)*

Conflict—The Jewish leaders insisted the Gentile converts follow Moses.

Resolution—The way to resolution is to apply the universally binding principles of God’s Revelation (1 Peter 4:11).

*Paul and Barnabas (Acts 15:36-41)*

Conflict—A personal opinion ruptured the relationship.

Resolution—Paul and Barnabas agreed to disagree and parted company for a time (2 Timothy 4:11). The number one priority is God’s mission (Philip 1:18).

### **Dealing with Conflict in Your Life**

#1—MY WAY. A refusal to give-in and apologize. “I’m right, he’s wrong—WHY should I apologize?” “MY way is the only way.” No concern about others’ feelings; covetousness rules seeking selfish goals; hedonism satisfies Self.

#2—NO WAY. The is buried. Self is showing little concern and hindering resolution. When confronted with such an attitude follow Romans 12:19.

#3—YOUR WAY. I yield to you because I do not want to lose our relationship. Some decide on this option but are passive aggressive.

#4—HALF WAY. This is the spirit of compromise (Acts 15). I give a little and you give a little and we “meet half way in the middle”!

#5—OUR WAY. This resolves conflict from a commitment to the Scriptures. The resolution seeks neither my way nor your way but Christ’s way!

### **Communication Rules for Resolution**

*Focus on one issue at a time.* Resolution is impossible if one keeps injecting