



Interpersonal Conflict ***Why Can't We All Just Get Along?***

Among the more notable instances of interpersonal conflict recorded in the Bible are the hostilities between Cain and Abel (Gen. 4:1-16), Abram and Lot (Gen. 13:8-18), Jacob and Esau (Gen 25-27; 32-33), Jacob and Laban (Gen.29-31), Saul and David (1 Sam.18-31), Mary and Martha (Luke 10:38-42), Jesus' disciples (Mk. 9:33-37; Luke 22:24-27), Paul and Barnabas (Acts 15:36-41), and the Corinthian believers (1 Cor. 1:10-12; 3:2-4; 11:18).

Paul tells us the root cause of interpersonal conflict is sin (Gal.5:19-20) **"The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like."**

James explains that fighting is the result of uncontrolled passions and desires (James 4:1-3) **"What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures."**

Adam and Eve had conflict in their marriage as soon as they yielded to Satan's deception in the Garden. Each one blamed someone else for the reason they sinned. The Bible is silent on this but one could imagine the conflict that arose every so often at the evening meal -- after a hard day of tilling the land, Adam walks by the Garden on the way home and remembers the perfect days in that Garden and the walks he used to have with God in the cool of the evening. And he says to Eve, *"You know, if you just hadn't listened to that snake, things would be a whole lot better now!"*

In marriage, it's common for both individuals to react to conflict in different ways. Four of the most common are: 1) Fight to win (I'm right, you're wrong), 2) Withdraw (silent treatment), 3) Yield (avoid confrontation), and 4) Lovingly resolve (the relationship is top priority). With three of these styles, you actually create as many problems as you solve. Fighting to win, withdrawing or yielding may allow you to escape temporarily, from the conflict at hand, but you haven't really dealt with the emotions the conflict sparked – the hurt, the resentment and the anger. Only when you seek to confront each other in a loving way will you resolve a conflict. **"And be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you"** (Ephesians 4:32).

The Bible places great value on the ability to live at peace with one another (Rom.14:19; Heb. 12:14). At the same time, the Bible declares unequivocally that such peace is given only by God (John 14:27; 16:33; 2 Cor.13:11; 2 Thess.3:16) and lived out only as believers pattern their lifestyles after that of Jesus (Philippians 2:3-8).

The miracle of the Christian life is that we can heal our relationships with others in the same way Christ healed our relationship with Him – through forgiveness.