

# Solving Marriage Conflict

## DEFINITIONS

### A. What Is a Conflict?

- A [conflict](#) is a disagreement, struggle or battle over opposing issues or principles.<sup>1</sup>
- The Latin word **conflictus** means an "act of striking together or clashing with."<sup>2</sup>

### B. What Are Some Facts about Conflict?<sup>3</sup>

- [Conflict](#) cannot be avoided.<sup>4</sup>

[John 16:33](#)

- [Conflict](#) is not bad.

[Prov 27:17](#)

- [Conflict](#) requires action toward peace.

[Rom 14:19](#)

### C. What Are Some Types of Conflict?<sup>5</sup>

- **Intrapersonal conflict**
  - a struggle **within oneself** to decide between two or more choices

**Biblical example:**

Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane— [Luke 22:42-44](#)

- **Interpersonal conflict**
  - a clash of ideas or interests **between two or more people**

**Biblical example:** Jacob and Esau— [Gen 27:41](#)

## D. What Is the Difference between Resolution and Reconciliation?

- **Resolution and reconciliation are different.**
  - **Resolution** means "finding the answer."<sup>6</sup>
  - Reconciliation means "restoring to harmony."<sup>7</sup>

Some differences may never be resolved, but you can still be reconciled to those with whom you differ. God requires only that, as far as it is possible, you seek to be at peace with everyone. Rom 12:18

## CHARACTERISTIC WAYS OF HANDLING CONFLICT

### A. Attackers

- The **Shark**
  - judgmental
  - close-minded
  - critical
  - uses power plays

**Message:** "Give in to me or I'll attack!" **Goal:** To win and always maintain control

- The **Snake**
  - bites when you're not looking
  - uses criticism and "put-downs"
  - starts false rumors
  - pretends to have done nothing wrong
  - gathers allies

**Message:** "Don't tangle with me or you will regret it later."

**Goal:** To make myself look good in the eyes of others by tearing someone else down

- The **Woodpecker**
  - repetitive complaints
  - makes negative statements about everything
  - blames others
  - pulls others into disagreements
  - delights in misery

**Message:** "Don't get on my bad side or I'll talk about you!"

**Goal:** To gain sympathy and attention

## B. Avoiders

- The **Turtle**
  - plays dumb
  - gives one word answers
  - withdraws
  - is secretive
  - makes you feel guilty for asking questions

**Message:** "Don't confront me because it won't do any good."

**Goal:** To maintain power through silence

[Prov 14:25](#)

- The **Chameleon**<sup>14</sup>—alias **Obligator**
  - indecisive
  - acts innocent
  - super nice and agreeable
  - noncommittal

— downplays differences

**Message:** "I'm nice to you; you owe it to me to be nice back."

**Goal:** To avoid disfavor or [criticism](#)

[Prov 29:25](#)

- The **Weasel**<sup>15</sup>—alias **Twister**
  - cleverly defensive
  - sidesteps the issue
  - twists and bends the truth
  - blames others
  - avoids "I" statements

**Message:** "I'm not going to get pinned down."

**Goal :** To avoid responsibility and [accountability](#)

## Root Cause of Negative Conflict

The reason we all experience [conflict](#) is rooted in a system of wrong beliefs. We assume that what we want is what we need and that it is up to us to defeat those who oppose us. After all, if we don't protect our interests, who will? This [fear](#) based thinking causes us to selfishly respond by either attacking or avoiding people or situations we perceive to be threatening.<sup>18</sup>

## STEPS TO SOLUTION

### B. Key Passage to Read and Reread

[Philem 1-21](#)

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

## Seven Principles for Facing Conflict

#1. Humility—Don't take advantage of a higher position. Philem 8-9

#2. Integrity—Be absolutely honest about the problems. Philem 10-11

#3. Vulnerability—Share your heart feelings. Philem 12-13

#4. Submission—Don't force an action not under your control. Philem 14

#5. Optimism—Expect the best of another. Philem 14

#6. Faith—Remember the sovereign hand of God.19—Philem 15-16

#7. Exhortation—Choose your words carefully. Philem 21

*When faced with [conflict](#), passivity is not the real path to peace.*

*Resolution rests in confronting wrong, but with a right heart.*

### [Prov 16:21](#)

- Propose a time to talk face to face.<sup>27</sup>
  - "I care about our [relationship](#). Is it possible for us to have some time to talk?"
  - "I feel there are some unresolved issues that need to be dealt with positively." [Eph 4:3](#)
- Provide a private place.<sup>28</sup>

- Away from people
- Away from distractions [Matt 18:15](#)
- Purpose to be honest.<sup>29</sup>
  - Take responsibility for your actions.
  - See the other person's viewpoint.<sup>30</sup> [Prov 12:17](#)
- Permit total forgiveness.<sup>31</sup>
  - Choose to forgive any hurts.
  - Don't mentally rehearse the faults of the other.
  - Allow God to reestablish a bond of [love](#). [Col 3:13-14](#)
- Perceive a future harvest.<sup>32</sup>
  - You are sowing seeds that may not take root until later.
  - Change is a process.
  - What you sow, you reap! [Gal 6:9](#)