

Constructive vs. Destructive Conflict 10

Learning to fight like Christians so that God wins

Seduced by false teachers, the Galatian churches quickly moved away from grace into a law-based approach to the Christian life. The result? doctrinal error and "The Piranha Syndrome". So Paul wrote:

"You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love. The entire law is summed up in a single command: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' If you keep on biting and

devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other. So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature...."

"Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other." — Gal.5:13-16; 24-26

Question: Has anyone here had a painful disagreement with someone in the past year? Month? Week? Then rejoice, because peace can be dangerous to your spiritual health. Peace, dangerous? How is that possible?

The notion that all conflict is bad and all peace is good is an error we willingly embrace in the hope of protecting ourselves from the pain of conflict. We confuse peacekeeping with peacemaking and pay the terrible price. Too many Christian families, churches and ministries that appear to be at peace have a river of poison running just beneath the surface. Having been summoned halfway round the world a half-dozen times to help ministry teams in conflict, we know whereof we speak. How tragic when relationships are broken, resignations submitted, and organisations destroyed without anyone hearing a shot fired—without any sign of godly, healthy, aboveboard conflict.

Let's learn how to face our differences with the help of the Holy Spirit so that genuine, loving relationships can be formed—relationships from which the deadly poison has been expelled.

There are two kinds of conflict—destructive and constructive. Destructive conflicts are one of Satan's deadliest weapons, but constructive conflicts can be one of God's most powerfully sanctifying tools. So, let's learn what constructive conflict is, who is qualified to do it, how to prepare our hearts for it, and how to go about it.

Let's learn to fight like Christians so that God wins!

Note: In this lesson we will not be focusing on the sort of conflicts that thrust us into church and civil courts. Our greater need is to learn how to enter into godly conflict in the ordinary situations we face everyday. Such as?

Think of the arguments you've had: with your spouse about how to spend money or how to discipline the children—or with your children about bad marks or a messy room—or your roommate over the rent—or with your parents about how seldom you visit—or with your neighbor about his noisy dog that poos in your front garden—or with the members of a Church committee over use of the building—or your ministry team over philosophy of ministry, or...

The list is endless because our homes, neighbourhoods, churches and ministries are breeding grounds for the inevitable offenses and resulting conflicts that will occur in the lives of sinful people living in a sinful world.

Conflict is inevitable. The only question is, when we struggle, will we, a. "bite and devour" one another like the Galatians, or b. initiate a healthy conflict?

Wonderfully, as we learn to "work the Gospel" in the midst of our conflicts, the answer will be... b.

— JWJ —

I. THOUGHTS ON CONFLICT

A. con·flict (kon'-flikt) - noun.
Latin, *conflictus*, to strike together

1. a fight, clash, contention.

2. sharp disagreement or opposition regarding interests, ideas, etc.; mutual interference of incompatible forces or wills.

OUR THESIS: *We will have conflicts, and each one will be either Destructive or CONstructive.*

Destructive conflicts, warns the letter of James, are fueled by selfish ambition and bitter envy, and are set on fire by misuse of the tongue.

CONstructive conflicts are fueled by wisdom and the humility it produces. These are possible when we are approachable and open to correction, and, when we are able to gently approach others without

a judgmental attitude or tone—easier said than done for proud people like us.

READ these two key conflict passages:

1. In Luke 6:39-42, Jesus encourages us to see clearly. He uses a pair of sight analogies—the blind leading the blind, and specks and beams in eyes. He concludes with a promise for beam removers: *"Then you will see clearly."* What will happen if we chose to major on the sins of others rather than suffer the pain of self-examination?

2. James compares the relative effects of true and false wisdom (3:13-18). True wisdom, he says, leads to humility and peace. False "wisdom" leads to *"disorder and every evil practise."*

Before we talk about the how of constructive conflict, let's have a look at the various *combat styles* psychologists have identified in people.

B. CONFLICT STYLES: Five ways people fight (Ref. Fairfield 1977, pp.10-46.)

Try to identify your preferred style. † (Saying "My spouse is mean as a snake" is a no-no.)

1. WITHDRAW — *"I can't win, so I'll withdraw."* Withdrawers may physically leave the room, house, school, ministry, etc., or, withdraw emotionally by avoiding the issues, emotionally charged situations or the difficult people involved in the conflict. **[Turtle]**



Weakness: Withdrawal resolves no issues; it merely postpones the inevitable. It's a strategy of self-love and self-protection that robs all involved of the possibility of facing up to and repenting of the problems that led to the conflict.

2. WIN — The idea of losing threatens winners' self-esteem, so they fight to win no matter the damage to the relationships or the organisation. There is only one unthinkable outcome in every controversy—losing. **[Badger]** (Viz. the phrase "to badger" someone)



Weakness: Winners have an unshakable confidence that they are always right. Blinded to the fact that they are sometimes wrong, their life path is littered with wounded people.

3. YIELD — Yielders are more interested in getting along and protecting relationships than winning, so, they neither withdraw from people—nor fight to win. They give up to get along. **[Puppy]**



† **Cultural cautions:** Turtle/human references are very insulting to the Chinese. To Muslims, dogs are unclean, and in Indian culture, the owl is symbolic of foolishness or even death. Modify the animal symbols above to suit your culture.

Weakness - Yielders operate out of fear, not love. They fear losing friends, status or being rejected. Their agreeable nature is a cover-up for a paralysing self-love, so they accomplish little.

4. COMPROMISE — Compromisers know how to manage themselves during a conflict in order to win in the long run. They know the art of giving up a little now in order to win more later. **[Fox]** (Viz. "clever as a fox.")



Weakness: Compromisers may appear nearer the ideal than 1, 2 or 3, but their strategy is not loving. They are cunning tacticians who know how to outwit the opposition. They will compromise during conflicts they don't care much about to earn the right to exert force in future battles that do matter. They appear gracious but plot to gain the long-term advantage. "I gave in to you on that issue; now you must give me this."

5. RESOLVE — Resolution is our aim. The Pharisees brought Jesus a woman caught in adultery (Jn.8:1ff). Their attitude was "win!" Jesus didn't withdraw ("This is nor my concern."); try to win ("You can't do this!"); yield ("Do what you will with her."); or compromise ("Free her and you can stone the next one you catch."). He forced them to face the deeper issue—the state of their own hearts. Paul's letter to **Philemon** is a model of constructive conflict.



Read vs. 4-22. Notice how he uses the Gospel to exhort Philemon to love and forgive his runaway slave Onesiphorus. **Who won in these conflicts?** God did; God was glorified. **[Owl]** (Viz. "wise as an owl")

Weakness: None, but, resolution is the most difficult result to achieve.

QUESTION: Might there be special situations in which we should adopt one of the first four methods? Definitely. **Withdraw:** Matt. 12:15; 16:4b; Jn.6:15. **Win:** Gal.3:11-21; 1Pet. 3:15. **Yield:** Mk.14:61; 15:5; Rom.14:21. **Compromise:** Acts 15:19ff; 21:23ff; Gal.5:2,3 but Acts 16:3.

II. THE GOAL OF CONSTRUCTIVE CONFLICT

A. Our goal for entering into conflict must be the G ____ Y of God.

Paul wrote: "So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God" (1Cor.10:31). Everything? Yes, especially our conflicts! Conflicts can be done in a God-glorifying way *when* we refocus the intense emotional energy they produce toward seeking *his* glory.

If we don't get this right, it is certain that the conflict will not end well. Consider...

B. The “Spiritual Maths” of constructive conflict. Here’s a novel thought: We can actually *quantify* the amount of glory God can potentially get from a conflict—“The Glory Gap.” Really?

Calculating the “Glory Gap”: Think about a conflict you’ve had in the recent past when you blew it. Think of the difference between...

the way you would have reacted had you been led by the SPIRIT, and...

< THE GLORY GAP >

the way you actually reacted because you succumbed to your FLESH.

The difference is the amount of glory God could have gained from the situation. Got it?

Revisit *The Cruelty of Apartheid and the Wonder of Amazing Grace* (page 9-5). That dear old widow had a choice. Would she see two sinners in the courtroom in need of God’s forgiveness, or just one—the murderer of her husband and son?

Her story touches us so deeply because she made the conflict *constructive*. She let the Holy Spirit control her, and in so doing, preached the Gospel to the killer, the courtroom and to us! Every conflict will give us an opportunity to magnify Jesus as the Gospel does its surprising work in us.



Whooo
me?

III. GETTING OUR HEARTS READY for constructive conflict

A. Calculating how much responsibility you bear for the conflict.

My rule of thumb is to assume I am only 10% of the problem—at most. Surely he/she is 90% to blame. (What are *your* percentages?) But, even in the unlikely event that the other person is 90% to blame, the fact remains that I am 100% to blame for my 10%.

We cannot change the other person.

And, unless we own our part of the problem, we will not be able to turn the situation into a constructive experience of learning and growth.

No, we are not implying that if we act rightly, every conflict will have a happy ending. But, for certain, if we don’t face our part in it, nothing but an unhappy ending is possible. *Our part is to do our part God’s way.*

B. Requirements for constructive conflict

James 3:13-18 reveals 4 needed qualities:

1. WISDOM To the ancient Greeks, wisdom (*sophia*) was knowledge. Biblical wisdom is more. It involves *seeing* a situation from God’s perspective, *knowing* what the godly course of action is, and *taking* it. It is both knowing that God will give wisdom to those who ask, and asking! (Jas.1:5)

2. HUMILITY “...the humility that comes from wisdom.” Humility is born as we see the inner workings of our hearts through God’s eyes. Yes, this can be painful, but, as we will fix our eyes on Jesus our Great High Priest, we can enter into conflicts without demanding that we always come out of them smelling like the proverbial rose.

3. PATIENCE Humility produces patience with other sinners. And, when our patience wears thin (as it will) it’s time to remember how our Father maintains his patience with us. He looks at Jesus. So, how can we maintain our patience with others? By looking at Jesus. When we fix our eyes on him, the Spirit produces his fruit of patience in us. (viz. Lesson 4 - *How2Change*)

4. APPROACHABILITY When we have the integrity to face our sins and weaknesses squarely, we will not need to wield the shield of defensiveness. People will not fear coming to us with a criticism. Humbled by the truth about ourselves, we can say to the other person, “*Actually, you don’t know the half of it; I’m much worse than you think!*”

The Cross of Christ was our ultimate criticism. Compared to what the Cross says about what colossal messes we are, an additional bit of human criticism should pale into insignificance!

IV. CONSTRUCTIVE CONFLICT: How do we do it?

A. First (warning, this is hard), begin a love-offensive with the person. Radical? Of course. What else would we expect from a Jesus who turned the world upside down!

Jesus told us: “*You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven.*” [like our Dad!] “*He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And, if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.*” – Matt.5:43-48

And, add to these our verses from Lesson 9, “*Be imitators (mimics) of God as dear children, and walk in love. . .*” – Eph.5:1,2

The book, *Come Back, Barbara!* is co-authored by Jack Miller and his once wayward daughter. A model of constructive conflict, it records the eight-year battle between a rebellious girl and her pastor father. Jack, the

self-righteous father, had to be broken before he could begin a love-offensive with his child. Their final battle began: "Barbara, it seems sad to me that when I go to heaven, I will only take you along as a beautiful memory." In the end, repentance and healing came to both through the power of the Gospel. Highly recommended: *Come Back, Barbara!* by C. John Miller & Barbara Miller Juliani, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 1997.

B. Understand the importance of I.R.F. - Information, Repentance and Forgiveness.

Before we can fight in such a way that God wins, we must seek the truth, i.e., *his view* of the situation, and his view of what is going on in our hearts. An I.R.F. check can help get us there.

“I” Is there **INFORMATION** we need to gather? Is there something lurking beneath the surface—a previous history of hurt, perhaps some old sins that are colouring the relationship? Are there racial, cultural or personality issues that underlie the more obvious concerns? What is *really* being fought over? Don't make accusations, ask questions. If we want to know "why" they think something, have done something, or how they feel about something, we should ask them—not supply our own version of the truth.

Dr. Timothy Irwin is the psychiatric consultant for a missionary organization with over 700 overseas staff. Tim has counselled thousands of people in conflict. He reports that in 99% of the cases, the surface issue (the "presentation problem") isn't the *real* problem at all. The real problem is the way in which one or more of the parties is holding their position.

“R” Is there a **step of REPENTANCE** we need to take? Are we entering into the conflict with a self-righteous attitude? Are we willing to accept that we may be at least partly to blame for the conflict—that we may have knowingly or unknowingly offended the other person? Are we clothed in our "being right," or in Jesus' righteousness? (A review of Lesson 8 might be helpful: Repentance as a Way of Life.)

“F” Is there **FORGIVENESS** we need to extend? Is there bitterness or resentment in our hearts that is preventing us from loving and perhaps agreeing with the other person involved? (Review Lesson 9, Forgiveness as a Way of Life.) **Try to imagine** how this conflict would look if fought according to the flesh (Gal.5:19-21), and then according to the Spirit (5:22,23).

Now, when we have done our best to gather **Information** and have taken any needed steps of **Repentance** and **Forgiveness**, the Holy Spirit will have some solid material to work with.

C. Work on your APPROACHABILITY.

The key here is to keep yourself in the sinner's place so that people will not be *afraid* to tell you the truth. When you in the sinner's place, you will not fear the truth about yourself.

What if you need to go on the offensive to correct someone? Paul says, "Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted." — Gal.6:1. And, "...the fruit of the Spirit is...gentleness." — Gal.5:23.

D. Ask the other person what *you* need to do to resolve the issue. As you focus on Jesus as your righteousness (or this will be impossible), ask:

1. What is it you want me to do?"

2. What is it you want me to stop doing?"

You may or may not be able to agree or comply with what they ask, but you will definitely have their attention, perhaps their respect, and will understand their point of view. Then, as you think over what they have said, you may realize you share some of the blame for the conflict. This will give you a good opportunity for repentance—something that will glorify God, honor the Gospel, and *perhaps* open the door for their repentance.

V. LOOKING BACK: When it all goes pear-shaped. A post-mortem on conflicts gone bad will usually reveal one or more of these:

A. IMPATIENCE WITH OTHERS— touchiness—"self set on hair-trigger." Pray against it. Impatience is rooted in self-righteousness and is not static. It will move rapidly into bitterness, malice, and sins of the tongue.

And what is behind our touchiness? Pride, our desire to always be right and look good; unbelief in Jesus as our only righteousness; thirst for self-vindication; self-righteousness, and self-protection. This is unworthy, ugly stuff.

B. MISUSE OF THE TONGUE (bitter words, gossip ¹ and slander ²) When we are in a conflict, the temptation is to enlist an army in support of our position. This is often in the form of a "prayer request." Aren't we clever! But in our hearts we know the difference between a legitimate cry for help, prayer or counsel, and gossip. If we don't honour that difference, James says our tongues will be "full of deadly poison" that "set whole forests ablaze!" and are themselves "set on fire by hell." (3:5,6). Now *that* is scary.

"Jesus, set a watch over my lips!"

¹Gossip is reporting *truth* about someone—"confessing someone else's sins." ²Slander is *untruth*—telling lies or reporting unproven judgments about their motives or actions.

C. UNEXAMINED CHARACTER FLAWS

(ours, not theirs) James mentions two: selfish ambition and bitter envy (3:14). If there is ever a time we need to enter into deep self-examination, it is when we are in conflict. Conflict has a way of blinding us to our own faults and magnifying the faults of others. We are easily dazzled by our own rightness and will find ourselves praying, "Search them, O God, and know their faults."

VI. SUMMING UP...

A. Seek *more* conflict!

Jesus sometimes went out of his way to get into conflict with people! Most of us probably need to be *more involved* in lovingly and gently reproving and rebuking one another. Why? Because of the blinding nature of sin. We need to rely on one another's eyes. (Note: If you are known to have a critical spirit, please disregard what you just read and repent!)

But, when we do our reproving, we must always go to the other person as a fellow sinner—repenting all the way.

B. Pray for the Spirit's wisdom. (But realise you will still make mistakes!)

If you do your best and still make a mess of things, repent and ask for forgiveness, from God and the other person.

C. Submit your resignation as the other person's Holy Spirit right now! You cannot change people, only the Gospel can. Furthermore, some people will remain stiff-necked and will never change. Get over it.

D. Avoid the marks of dishonest relationships: silent judgmentalism or hypocritical flattery. **Neither of these is loving.** If you find you are relating to someone in either of these ways, it is highly likely that you need to enter into constructive conflict with them.

E. REMEMBER that for conflict to be constructive rather than destructive, God's glory—not winning your way or punishing difficult people—must be your goal.

F. LASTLY, BE ENCOURAGED! When God's glory and the good of others is motivating you, God will be delighted to guide you because he will get all the glory and his sons and daughters will grow to be more like him.

And... that is a win-win, is it not?



GRACE ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read THE LETTERS from Linka and Ty – Christian workers in the old Soviet Union (page 10-7). Answer the questions and take notes to help fuel our discussions.

These letters come out of sticky real-life situations in which Christian workers have had to face their own sins and those of others in a team context. "Get into their skins" and try to imagine yourself as a member of their team. Hopefully, as you see how they fleshed-out the principles of constructive conflict, it will embolden you to try them in your own situation.

2. Use the "Conflict Workshop" worksheet (page 10-9) to help you sort out a conflict you have recently had, are in now, or, see looming on the horizon.

Finally, remember...



Constructive Conflict Checklist

HOW will believing the Gospel give me the ability to initiate constructive conflict—or to respond graciously when someone initiates it with me? How will failing to believe the Gospel virtually force me into the negative thoughts and reactions below? (Think of believing the Gospel as “consciously clothing” yourself in Jesus’ righteousness.)

When you find yourself in conflict with someone, ask yourself:

- 1. Am I more interested in** winning the person or winning the argument?
- 2. Can I deal humbly with** the differences we have without judging and without condemning attitudes?
- 3. Am I dealing with** the real issues or reacting to personalities?
- 4. Am I asking questions** or making accusations?
- 5. Am I approachable** and teachable?
- 6. Am I listening?**
- 7. Do I really desire** the other person’s good?
- 8. Have I given up trying** to prove how right I am and how wrong they are?
- 9. Am I trusting the Holy Spirit** to change the other person or am I demanding that they change?
- 10. Have I rejected gossip** so that I’m dealing directly with the person involved?
- 11. Have I asked for wisdom,** or am I just assuming I know what is right?
- 12. Have I considered that** I might have deceived myself? (Have I looked in the mirror for the log in my eye before embarking on a speck-hunt in others’ eyes?)
- 13. Do I realise that** my strong convictions can be infected with sinful attitudes?
- 14. Am I fighting redemptively,** inviting people to something better? Do I have a vision for what people and relationships can become when the Gospel invades?
- 15. Do I desire that God’s glory** be seen in the lives of all the people involved?
- 16. Am I committed to ongoing forgiveness** in all my future conversations and relationships?

BECOMING nothing

A pair of tell-all missionary prayer letters from Novosibirsk, Siberia

YOUR attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness...

— Philippians 2:5-7

This first letter is from Linka Wyrich who was a World Harvest missionary on our Siberia team in the mid-1990s, and is used with her consent. As you read it, ask yourself, what Linka must have *believed* about Jesus that gave her the courage to write so honestly to her donors and prayer partners—people who surely had great expectations for her holiness of life and fruitfulness in ministry?

LINKA WRITES

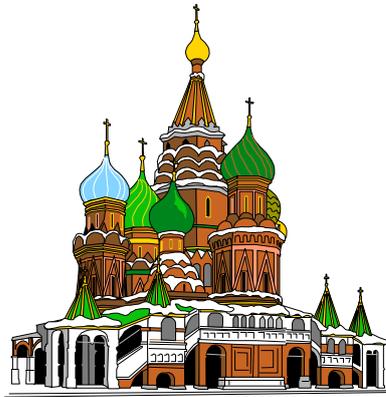
GOD has been impressing on me the necessity of being nothing, because I am so often fighting for something. There is very little that I do not have an opinion about—and usually it is a strong one.

Here are a few words that people have used to describe me: ***"harsh, quarrelsome, strong-headed, independent, aggressive, someone who wants to win, competitive, angry, sharp and abrasive."***

Now these words did not all come from one person, but from different people who know me in different contexts and to different degrees. I would have to be dead stupid to not realise God is seeking to say something to me. In these past few weeks, God has brought into focus these detrimental and sinful aspects of my character, through relationships on my

team. I found myself so often in debates during our team time and began *hating* these times. As these conflicts heated up and my anger grew I began asking some questions of myself, as well as being asked some questions by others.

I wondered, *"Why are these ideas so important to me, and why am I fighting so hard to defend myself and prove my point of view?"* Of course the smoke screen was that they were Biblical issues and I



St. Basil's Basilica - Moscow - 1561

thought the Bible taught something else. I asked God to show me what the problem was. First He brought people into my life who, while showing me much grace, lovingly and honestly confronted me.

They then began to ask me questions like, *"What are you afraid of? What is there for you to lose? What are your limits? What 'rights' are in jeopardy? Who are you?"*

I began to see that I really didn't trust that God could bring about what is best for me, and that I needed to protect myself. It really came down to the fact that I wasn't sure God loved me and would give me what I needed. Now this brings me to the second part of it. I realised I had put

conditions on my service to Him, and as these things were being threatened, I fought back. It's as though I felt I had bargaining power with God. I'll go and do this, if you do this. In fact my conditions seemed quite reasonable. I realised that I felt somehow that I deserved certain things because I had "given up" certain things. God has been reminding me that I was bought at a price, a very high price, the blood of Jesus, and that I am no longer my own. I belong to God without condition, he gets to make the decisions about what I need or don't need.

Actually I have many rights and many privileges, beginning with the right to be called a child of God. This is what gives me the confidence to trust even when things look like they may get a bit uncomfortable. I have so much more than I will ever need. My Father is so rich and loves me so much. All that He has is mine. All I need to do is ask and believe. I listened to a tape the other day and the speaker said there are so many unhappy missionaries because they have limits and conditions on what they'll do. Usually these things can seem quite reasonable. Here are some of the things I realise I have been "fighting for." These might help you pray for me and maybe even look at your own life.

- 1) I want** an apartment that I can call my own, a "home".
- 2) I want** some friends, that I would pick—people that understand me.
- 3) I want** to minister according to my gifts and abilities.
- 4) I want** to be settled.
- 5) I want** to be recognised, appreciated and understood.
- 6) I don't want** to have to travel a lot.

Now I'm not asking you to pray that I get all of these, but that I become nothing, yielding all sense of "rights," trusting in God's love and sufficiency for whatever situation he calls me to or allows me to be in!

There is much freedom, and joy in this. I want to live like this, with great expectation and confidence in the Spirit who lives in me to be all I need and my great joy.

So you see, missionaries are real people with real sins and real struggles against the desires of the flesh, the temptations of Satan and the world. Teams are a primary place of attack. Please continually pray for team unity and for love among us!

**In His Love,
Linka**

THIS SECOND LETTER is from Ty Busbice, one of Linka's teammates. Here Ty makes reference to the same conflict, but without specifically naming Linka.

TY WRITES

ABOUT a month and a half ago, when our team got together to discuss our budget, some problems began to surface. Several people began to question the direction the team was taking. Some felt that they had little or no place in the work of the team.

As with all conflicts, the problems were only partly about the policies of the team. Just beneath the surface were the problems of unforgiveness and resentment. However, over the last two weeks, the Spirit of God has begun resolving these conflicts, bringing us together as individuals and as a group to discuss our problems.

We got together and discussed the team's strategies, confronted one another with sin, and asked one another for forgiveness. I think the hardest part was actually getting the problems out and dealing with them. It seemed so easy to just push things under the carpet.

But God has blessed us with the courage to really work through things, and the grace to forgive one another. I believe we are now better able to love one another and work together.

PRAISE GOD. PRAISE GOD
for the work of His Spirit!

In Him, Ty

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

"God creates out of nothing. Therefore, until a man is nothing, God can make nothing out of him." - Martin Luther

1. WHAT do you think Ty meant by "As with all conflicts, the problems were only partly about the policies of the team. Just beneath the surface..."
Refer to Dr. Tim Irwin's observation: 10-4 item B.

2. WHAT were the SURFACE issues? Counsellors often call these "presentation problems." There are *three* in the first paragraph. Can you find them?

3. WHAT were the REAL issues, the root issues from which any number of audible and visual fruits had grown? Ty mentions "*unforgiveness and resentment,*" but **go deeper.** What did Linka identify as the *root* of her unforgiveness and resentment?

4. HOW did "believing the Gospel" (being conscious of the imputed righteousness of

Christ) provide the courage and power for this team to enter into conflict and see the issues resolved to the glory of God and the joy of all?

a. Where do you see the team believing the Gospel?

b. Where do you see Linka believing the Gospel?

5. WHEN the Holy Spirit began leading this team to resolve their problems, what did he have to do in their hearts to get them ready?

What was the most difficult hurdle they had to clear before healing could begin?

6. What do you think might have happened to this team had they *not* followed the leading of the Holy Spirit and shown the courage to enter into a period of **constructive conflict?**

“Love makes war!”

As a Point of Interest

That this team survived their conflict was no accident.

Just after the struggle began, they went through the *Sonship* course (being developed as *Grace4Life* in the UK) as a team. This provided them with the spiritual tools they needed to not only survive the conflict, but grow in grace because of it.

Sometimes **"Love Makes War!"** and when it does, the Holy Spirit wants to be there, superintending the battle by applying the Gospel to hurting hearts so that Satan loses, God wins, the work of the Kingdom goes forward in power, and great glory goes to Jesus. **Amen?**

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London UK
www.grace4life.org

The Conflict Project

Get down & dirty - invite Jesus into one of your conflicts

THE CHALLENGE: Use the principles in the lesson to plan a God-honouring response to a conflict you are presently in, or to prepare for one you suspect may be just round the corner. This may be an open disagreement, or some hurtful current under the surface the other person is unaware of.

Or, think of something *you* may have done to wound or anger another person, something you feel you need to make right. (If you need more space, feel free to use a separate sheet of paper.)

YOUR ASSIGNMENT

1. Describe the conflict. Be specific. To In either case, you need divine help, so take it to Jesus; ask for wisdom to see the situation as *he* sees it.

2. Can you identify the *conflict style* of each of the "players" involved? (Use initials only.) When you think you know their style, circle it, and give the "Why?" for your choice.

Your initials _____ **Your conflict style:** Withdraw - Win - Yield - Compromise - Resolve
Why?

1st PERSON _____ **Conflict style:** Withdraw - Win - Yield - Compromise - Resolve
Why?

2nd PERSON _____ **Conflict style:** Withdraw - Win - Yield - Compromise - Resolve
Why?

3rd PERSON _____ **Conflict style:** Withdraw - Win - Yield - Compromise - Resolve
Why?

3. What makes each of these people *easy* or *difficult* to love? Circle which one and state why.

1st Person - *easy* or *difficult* to love? Why?

2nd Person - *easy* or *difficult* to love? Why?

3rd Person - *easy* or *difficult* to love? Why?

We know you are a paragon of virtue like unto Jesus himself, but, just for the sake of argument, are *you* easy or difficult to love, and why? (Invite Jesus to help you frame your response.)

4. If your *Grace4Life* group interviewed the other party/parties involved in the conflict and asked them if *you* are easy or difficult to love and why, what do *you think* they'd say? (Oops!)

If you haven't a clue what they would say, here's an idea. Pray for courage; fix your eyes on Jesus and *go to the person* and tell them about this project. **Tell them *the Maniacal Lunatic*** leading this course has told you to ask them: "*Where have I hurt, displeased or disappointed you, and how might I be able to better serve you in love?*" "*What are two things about me that make me hard to love?*" Yes, this is hard. But, if we are *really* more interested in becoming more like Jesus than protecting ourselves...

5. In what way do you share the same ROOT SINS (roots, not necessarily fruits) as the other person/people in this conflict? **Revisit** the "Our Christian Life: A Fruit Tree" diagram in Lesson 1.

1st Person - I share the following root sin/s with him/her:

2nd Person - I share the following root sin/s with him/her:

3rd Person - I share the following root sin/s with him/her:

6. Have you been proud, rude or selfish so that the conflict has become worse? If so, what did you say or do?

7. Has your talking too much or too little about the conflict made it worse? Think of the times when you were quiet—or refused to be quiet.

8. What are some specific ways you can "go alongside" this person as their friend, helper and intercessor—instead of being their king, judge or lawgiver?

9. How can "believing the Gospel" give you a different view of the conflict with this person or group?

10. Explain how Galatians 6:1 and I Peter 4:8 impact your situation. Be specific.

"Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted." – Gal.6:1

"Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins." – 1Pet.4:8

11. And lastly, is there a relationship where you *should* be in conflict right now, but aren't?

Briefly describe it and sketch out a course of action. Remember, there will be times when **"LOVE MAKES WAR!"** (holy war).

