Biblical Conflict Resolution:
The Biblical Path to Peace

A. Exactly What Is a Conflict?

1. Literally = Strike, fight against

2. A General Definition:

   …not all conflict is bad; instead, it teaches that some differences are natural and beneficial…not all conflict is neutral or beneficial, however. The Bible teaches that many disagreements are the direct result of sinful motives and behavior…the Bible teaches that we should see conflict neither as an inconvenience nor as an occasion for selfish gain, but rather as an opportunity to glorify God, to serve others, and to grow to be like Christ. **(KSande*, The Peacemakers, 19,20*)**

   Conflict is when both parties (usually) sin against one another (in their communication and/or their actions) and are then in opposition to one another. **(SScott,** *usually* **added)**

B. What Does God Think of Conflict?

1. It is grievous (Matt. 5:21-22).

2. He wants His children to have no part in it (unless it's over Guarding the Truth, 1 Cor 11:18-10)).

3. He wants His children to pursue gospel - motivated peace (Rom. 12:18, 14:19; Eph. 4:1,3).

    4. He wants His children to avoid needlessly or sinfully offending someone (1 Cor. 10:31-32).

    5. He wants His children to love, pray for, and do good to those who sin against them (Mt. 5:44-45; Rom. 12:21).

  C. Where Do Conflicts Come From?

    1. Differences (Preferences, wisdom, upbringing, education, etc)

    2. Offenses (Sin, Conscience, etc)

    3. If sinful - Pride and the Flesh (Gal. 5:19-21; Jas. 4:1-3)

Thoughts that lead to conflict:	Thoughts that avoid conflict: because of Jesus
That's ridiculous!	She may have a point.
I *will* have my way!	I don't have to have my way.
How dare she/ he!	I need to pray for her/ him.
I will not be treated this way!	How can I return good to him/ her?

  D. Benefits of Differences and Disagreements

    1. They can encourage us to search the Scriptures (Ps. 119:71-72).

    2. They can help us think carefully about how and what we think or what we believe (Prov. 15:28).

    3. They can help us work harder at communicating effectively (Eph. 4:25).

    4. They can produce maturity and endurance (Jas. 1:2-5).

    5. They can help us sharpen one another (Prov. 27:17).

6. They can strengthen our faith in the truth that God is working all things together for good (Rom. 8:28-29).

7. They give us opportunity to practice servanthood and preferring one another (Phil. 2:2-3).

8. They give us opportunity to love and glorify God (1 Cor. 10:31-32)

E. How Do We Avoid Conflicts?

1. Some Sinful Ways to Avoid Conflict

a. Just keep quiet (cf. Eccl. 3:7b; Eph. 4:29-31; Col. 3:19).

b. Stay away from one another (cf. John 15:12; 1 Pet. 4:8)

c. Change the subject (cf. Prov. 12:22; Prov. 24:28)

d. Hide information, sins, or bitterness (cf. Prov. 24:8).

2. Some God-honoring Ways to Avoid Conflict

a. Seek to know your spouse well, appreciate him/her and understand his/her perspective (1 Peter 3:7).

b. Gather plenty of data before speaking (Proverbs 18:13, 17).

c. Pray, study and think about the issue before speaking, if possible (Proverbs 15:28).

d. Demonstrate and/or communicate your love and care at the time of disagreement (Romans 12:9-10).

e. Listen more than you speak, but do speak.

f. In matters of sin, approach your spouse in love (Ephesians 4:15).

g. In matters of preference, prefer your spouse (Romans 12:10).

h. In matters of wisdom and conscience, suggest searching the Scriptures and getting godly counsel (Proverbs 11:14; 2 Timothy 2:15).

i. Refuse to sin in your communication (Proverbs 8:6-8).

j. Be more interested in God's glory and the other's good, rather than having your own way, or being right (Joshua 22:5; Romans 15:2).

k. Give a gentle and caring answer to their angry words (Proverbs 15:1).

F. Resolving Conflicts

1. Some Sinful Ways to Resolve Conflicts

    a. Let time heal it (cf. Mt. 5:23-24; Eph. 4:26).

    b. Try to bury it.

    c. Pretend it never happened (cf. Phil. 4:8a).

    d. Wait for the other person to initiate the resolution process (cf. Matt. 5:23-24).

    e. Punish the other person until they change and take all the blame (cf. Gal. 6:1; Rom. 12:9-20).

2. A Biblical Way to Resolve Conflict

    a. Confess any sin that you are aware of to God (Ps. 139:23-24; 1 John 1:9-10).

    b. Go to your spouse, ask forgiveness for each thing you did specifically and discuss your plan not to do those things again (Eph. 4:32; James 5:16).

    c. Express a desire to resolve the conflict fully and decide together when the best time to do that would be (Prov. 15:28).

    d. Come together at the appointed time.

e. Pray together for God's wisdom, self-control, and speech (Prov. 16:32; Jas. 1:5).

f. Review God's rules of communication (Eph. 4:15, 26-32).

g. Each one should take a turn to confess any sin that has not been confessed (to God and spouse), and ask forgiveness (Eph. 4:32; Jas. 5:16; 1 Jn. 1:9).

h. Begin discussing the issues that precipitated the conflict.

i. Decide what you can agree upon (each takes a turn).

j. Decide what you do not agree upon (each takes a turn).

k. Decide what kind of issue(s) you are dealing with (each offers input).

    (1) Preference

    (2) Sin

    (3) Conscience

    (4) Wisdom

l. Decide on specific steps to resolve the issue (each offers input).

m. Together, begin carrying out the appropriate steps to resolve the issue.

n. Decide if and when you need to discuss the issue again.

o. End your time together with prayer and an expression of love.
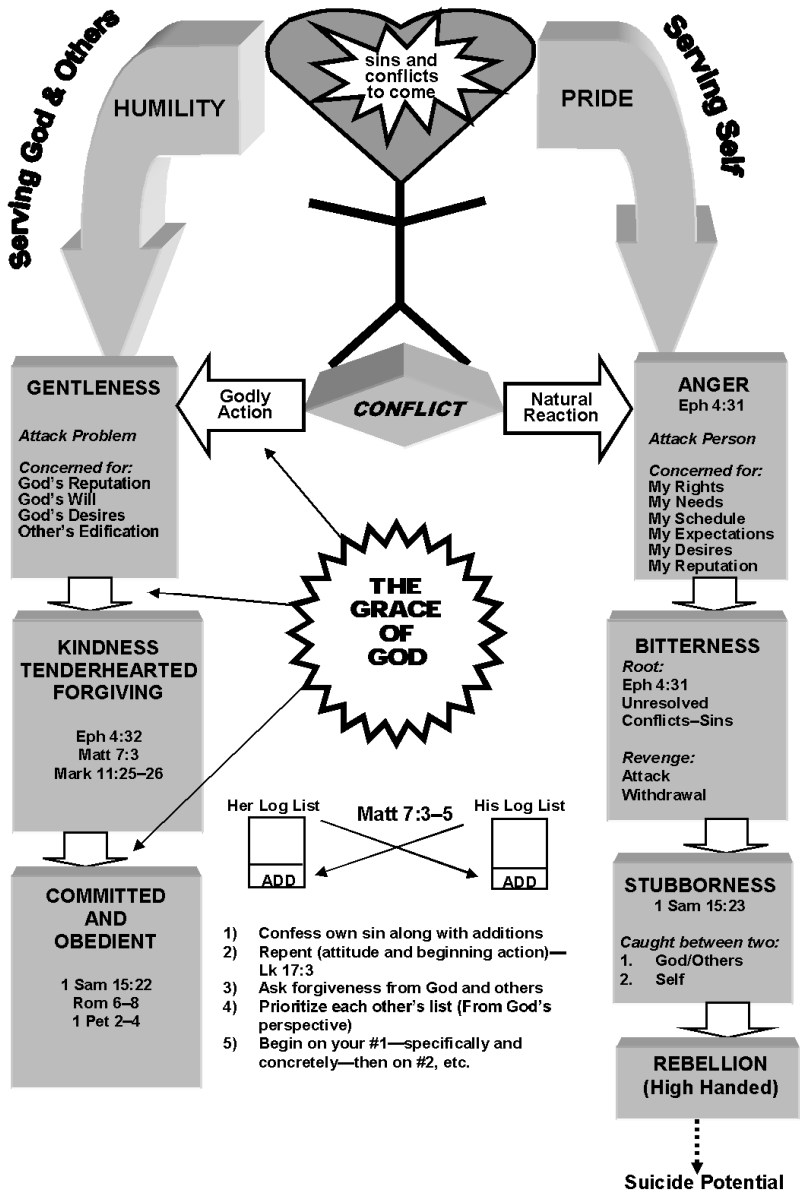
Ken Sande suggests using the **P.A.U.S.E**. principle

P – Prepare

A – Affirm relationships

U – Understand interests

S – Search for creative solutions

E – Evaluate options objectively and reasonably

Serving God & Others

HUMILITY

sins and conflicts to come

PRIDE

Serving Self

GENTLENESS

Attack Problem

Concerned for:
God's Reputation
God's Will
God's Desires
Other's Edification

Godly Action

CONFLICT

Natural Reaction

ANGER
Eph 4:31

Attack Person

Concerned for:
My Rights
My Needs
My Schedule
My Expectations
My Desires
My Reputation

THE GRACE OF GOD

KINDNESS TENDERHEARTED FORGIVING

Eph 4:32
Matt 7:3
Mark 11:25–26

BITTERNESS
Root:
Eph 4:31
Unresolved
Conflicts–Sins

Revenge:
Attack
Withdrawal

Her Log List   Matt 7:3–5   His Log List

ADD   ADD

1) Confess own sin along with additions
2) Repent (attitude and beginning action)— Lk 17:3
3) Ask forgiveness from God and others
4) Prioritize each other's list (From God's perspective)
5) Begin on your #1—specifically and concretely—then on #2, etc.

COMMITTED AND OBEDIENT

1 Sam 15:22
Rom 6–8
1 Pet 2–4

STUBBORNESS
1 Sam 15:23

Caught between two:
1. God/Others
2. Self

REBELLION
(High Handed)

Suicide Potential

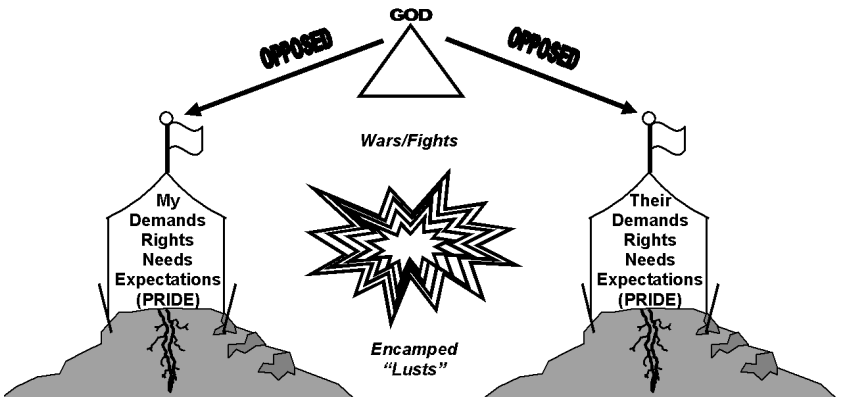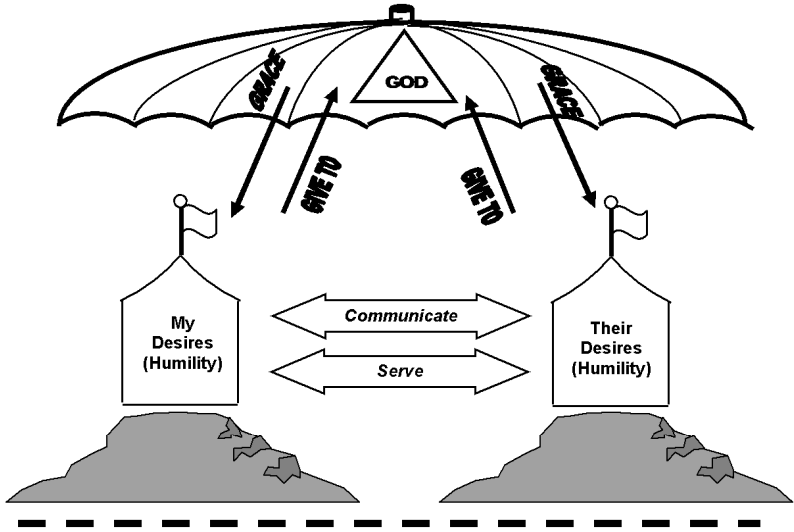**TWO RESPONSES TO CONFLICT**

JAMES 4:1–10

Figure 1—Appreciative of the illustrations from Dr. John Bettler