

Closing thoughts. We all face conflicts and struggles in our lives. Things can be perfectly fine one morning, and all topsy-turvy the next. If we are breathing, then we will face conflicts. Don't sit around waiting for them, but be prepared when they show up. I've had my share of troubles lately, but I know God is still on His throne. He never slumbers nor sleeps. He's still the Creator, the Alpha and Omega, the bright Morning Star, and the Ruler of the Universe. God will come again one day and restore perfect peace and harmony. I can hardly wait. Until then, it's up to us to control our strife and conflicts. We must learn to be good listeners and forgive those who may have wronged us. That's what Christ expects of us. We don't want to disappoint Him. Plus, it makes life a whole lot easier if we learn the secret of *self-control*—giving Christ control of every area of our lives.



Treating Muscle Tension

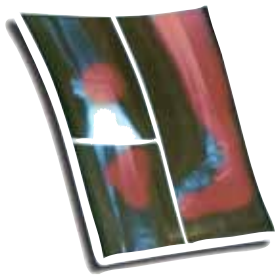
RESOLVING CONFLICT WITHIN THE BODY OF CHRIST

Study by Jacqueline Rasar, Ph.D. Guide by Carolyn Michael

Beginning thoughts. My husband speaks to students in different schools for an organization called “American Character Builders.” People ask him most often to speak on “Anger Management” and “Bullying.” Both of these areas involve conflicts. Getting upset, being angry, having disputes, trying to get the best of someone else is so prevalent in our society and especially in our schools today. Just over a year ago, a 14-year-old middle school student shot and killed a 14-year-old student in a school not far from where we live. How sad that conflict between these boys ended in such a violent outcome.

Why is it hard for the human race to inhabit this earth in peace and harmony? The answer lies in our sinful nature. When Adam ate of the fruit in the garden, we lost the opportunity to live in a perfect world. No longer could everything be done without sin. Yet, God in His infinite wisdom and mercy had a plan, a redemption plan. This plan involved His most precious possession, His only begotten Son. Jesus' death on the cross provided a way of return to that place of unity and peace.

When we accept Jesus as Savior and Lord, He becomes our advocate to help us with daily strifes, conflicts, and problems that can interfere with the peaceful balance in our lives. Our dilemmas become easier to handle, our battles less intense, our struggles not as impossible. We have a faith and character that can help ease tensions and make life more calm and beautiful. Jesus is the real peacemaker and strength of the Christian people. Let Him guide your path into still waters.



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DETERMINE CAUSES OF CONFLICT

BODY FITNESS GOAL: Realize conflict is a part of life, but resolution is possible. Identifying causes of conflicts will help in evaluating personal conflict style.

CORE DEVELOPMENT: *“From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts” (James 4:1-3).*

- Write the Core Development verse on a 3x5 card or in a journal.
- Go over the questions and answers on p. 13, *Treasure*. (You may want to skip the “Personal Experiences” with the entire group.)
- What were Rebekah’s twins’ names? (*Jacob and Esau—Genesis 25:25-26*).
- Which was the stronger child? Which one grabbed the other’s heel? (*Jacob grabbed Esau’s heel.*)
- Did these boys ever resolve their conflicts? (*Genesis 33:1-5, 14-15*)
- Why are conflicts among siblings fairly common? (*Sometimes, conflict arises from a contentious spirit—Proverbs 15:18, 17:19; Psalm 120:7.*)
- What about you and your brothers/sisters? Do you get along or fuss/fight?
- Which do you think is more prone to conflicts—small families or large families?
- What (or who) is the true source of all conflict? (*Satan—Ephesians 6:12; 1 Peter 5:8*)
- Do you take the *high road* or *low road* in most of your conflicts? Meaning, are you a peacemaker or trouble maker?
- How does Jesus feel about peacemakers? (*Matthew 5:9*)
- What role should Christians play during conflicts? (*Peacemakers.*)
- What should be the Christian’s attitude toward world peace? Will we ever achieve world peace?

COOL DOWN: Use the ideas to dismiss in prayer. Pray especially for spiritual growth as a result of personal conflicts.



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PICK AND CHOOSE YOUR BATTLES

BODY FITNESS GOAL: Seek God’s guidance in determining which conflicts require our focus and attention.

CORE DEVELOPMENT: *“But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes” (2 Timothy 2:23).*

- Write the Core Development verse on a 3x5 card or in your journal. Review it often this month.
- Go over the questions and answers on p.15, *Treasure*.
- Were Joseph’s brothers justified in their anger toward him?
- Do you feel the need to resolve every disagreement or conflict in your life?
- What does the Bible say are the causes of strife? (***Hatred***—Proverbs 10:12; ***Pride***—Proverbs 13:10; ***Contentious spirit***—Proverbs 26:21; ***Anger***—Proverbs 29:22; and ***Foolish questions***—1 Timothy 6:4.)
- Besides the trouble in Jacob’s family, can you think of other examples of family strife found in Scripture? (***Sarah and Hagar***—Genesis 16:3-6; ***David and his wife***—2 Samuel 6:16; ***Ahasuerus and Vashti***—Esther 1:12; and ***Moses, Aaron and Miriam***—Numbers 12:1)
- When children cause strife in the household, what are they doing? (*Dishonoring their parents—Micah 7:6; Psalm 15:20, 30:11.*)
- Have you ever had to step back from a family situation and let an objective person intervene?
- How did you feel about that?
- Do you live by the following Scripture? (*Romans 12:18; 14:19*)
- Read Proverbs 12:20. Which would you rather experience, evil or joy?
- Do you believe words can stir up or settle conflicts? (Proverbs 25:11)
- What does James 3:5-6 tell us? (If any man can control the tongue he can handle the rest of his life without difficulty.)

COOL DOWN: Pray for guidance in dealing with strife and conflict in your life.

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TALK AND LISTEN

BODY FITNESS GOAL: Recognize value in both talking and listening; work to improve these essential resolution skills.

CORE DEVELOPMENT: "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers" (Ephesians 4:29).



- Write the Core Development verse on a 3x5 card or your journal.
- Go over the questions and answers for p. 17, *Treasure*.
- How are we instructed to deal with people? (*Peacefully—Hebrews 12:14; Romans 12:18*)
- Are you a good listener? Or would you rather carry the conversation?
- What is "corrupt communication" that Paul speaks of in Ephesians 4:29? (*It covers a wide range of things, but means in Greek, "rotten words that are corrupt, that smell, that have become decayed."*)
- Do we face rotten words today?
- Name somewhere we might hear rottenness. (*Movies, TV, radio, on the street, sports events, anywhere we find people. And we see it written in books, emails and newspapers and on Facebook pages.*)
- How does the world view this type of filthy speech? (*They see this as a freedom and a source of no restrictions. This blinds them to the Truth.*)
- Do you agree? Does it hurt your heart, mind and soul when you see or hear these rotten words?
- How should Christians react? (*They should shun anything corrupt because it's part of the old life—2 Corinthians 5:17. One cannot put on Christ and take part in filthy speech, rotten words, corrupt conversation, obscenity, vulgarity, and gossip—Ephesians 5:4-5.*)
- On the other hand, how can beautiful, peaceful, encouraging words make you feel?
- Have you ever heard the word, *Shalom*? (*It means "Peace."*)

LEADER'S NOTE: When Jews meet each other a common greeting is "Shalom" or "Peace". In Greek, the word for "peace" is "eirene", which means tranquility and evokes the picture of sailing on a calm sea. Gentle words can give you that sense of tranquility and peacefulness to calm our inner soul. We all need these types of words in our daily lives.

COOL DOWN: Dismiss in prayer with the suggestions given.



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FORGIVE

BODY FITNESS GOAL: Realize forgiveness forges the path to peace and unity.

CORE DEVELOPMENT: "For his anger endureth but a moment; in his favour is life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning" (Psalm 30:5).

- Write the Core Development verse on a 3X5 card or journal. Try to memorize.
- Read and answer the questions on p. 19, *Treasure*.
- Are you a forgiving person? Is it hard for you to forgive?
- Who forgave us? (*Jesus—1 John 1:9; Ephesians 1:7*)
- Shouldn't we also extend forgiveness to others as He forgave us? (*Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 3:13; Matthew 6:14*)
- When you do forgive, do you also forget? (*I can just hear your answers now. This just means that as your memory goes back to the offense, don't allow it to seize hold of your heart and make you angry all over again. Put it aside, don't dwell on it.*)
- Read Paul's words in 2 Corinthians 2:10. (*Paul, who had committed terrible offences, was forgiven.*)
- What were some of the things he had done? (**Present at stoning of Stephen—Acts 7:58-59; Persecuted Christians—Acts 8:3; Made threats against the disciples—Acts 9:1**)
- Did Christ hold those things over his head? (*No, He cast them as far as the East is from the West—Psalm 103:12*)
- Does that make you feel better about believing God does forgive and forget sins? (*Micah 7:18-19; Isaiah 43:25*)
- Can we forgive and forget in our own power? (*No, we have to rely on the strength Jesus gives. He reminded His disciples of this the night before His crucifixion—Matthew 26:31-32.*)
- Are conflicts in the church more important than what Christ did for us on the cross? (*No, we should always strive for unity. 2 Corinthians 13:11; Ephesians 4:3; 1 Corinthians 1:10*)

COOL DOWN: Close in prayer and ask God to keep your mind in tune with Him to be able to handle conflicts.