



Handling Conflicts and Challenges in the Biblical Family

Pastor Jesse Curney III



INTRODUCTION

Conflict is an inevitable part of family life.

- Whether it's between spouses, siblings, or parents and children, challenges will arise.
- However, it is essential to address these issues Biblically to maintain unity and love within the family.
- The Bible provides us with wisdom and guidance on how to handle conflicts and challenges in a way that honors God and strengthens family bonds.



We must acknowledge that conflicts and challenges are part of family life.: Every family faces conflicts due to differences in personalities, perspectives, and expectations. The Bible acknowledges that even in Christian households, disputes will arise, but the way these are handled can either strengthen or harm relationships.

It is important to address conflicts Biblically.: The Bible provides guidelines for resolving conflicts that prioritize love, unity, and restoration. It encourages believers to approach disagreements with humility and a willingness to forgive, seeking to maintain peace and harmony in the family.



EXAMPLES OF FAMILY CONFLICTS

- Disagreements between siblings over chores
- Conflict between parents a teenager about curfew or chores
- Misunderstanding between spouses about financial decisions

In these conflicts, we are to practice Biblical principles of conflict resolution, forgiveness, and communication.



1. Forgiveness and Patience are necessary when dealing with conflict in the Biblical family.

Colossians 3:12–14 (NKJV)

¹² Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering;

¹³ bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.

¹⁴ But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection.



In family life, forgiveness and patience are crucial.

The text encourages us to clothe ourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience.

These virtues are essential for navigating family challenges. When conflicts arise, it's important to remember that forgiveness should be a cornerstone of our relationships.

Just as Christ forgave us, we are called to forgive each other, fostering a spirit of love that binds us together in perfect unity.



There are at least eight
character traits we
should model as we
deal with family conflict.



1. Compassion (Tender Mercies)

Compassion is the deep awareness of and sympathy for another's suffering. It involves responding with empathy and care when others are hurting or in need.

Application in Conflict Resolution:

In family conflicts, compassion allows us to recognize the emotions and struggles of other family members. Instead of reacting harshly, showing compassion helps us approach others with understanding, seeing things from their perspective and easing tensions by responding with care.



2. Kindness

Kindness refers to being considerate, generous, and friendly. It involves treating others with gentleness and concern for their well-being.

Application in Conflict Resolution:

In moments of disagreement, showing kindness softens the interaction. Speaking kindly and avoiding harsh words can calm an argument and promote reconciliation. A kind response can prevent conflicts from escalating.



3. Humility

Humility is the quality of having a modest view of one's own importance. It involves putting the needs and perspectives of others before your own pride or ego.

Application in Conflict Resolution:

Humility helps us to listen without defensiveness and admit when we are wrong. In family conflicts, it enables us to seek reconciliation rather than insisting on being right. Humble people are more willing to compromise and work towards peace.



4. Gentleness (Meekness)

Gentleness, or meekness, is strength under control. It involves responding to others with softness, even when we have the power or right to act more forcefully.

Application in Conflict Resolution:

When tensions rise, a gentle approach can de-escalate the situation. Responding calmly instead of with aggression creates a safe space for open dialogue. Gentleness disarms defensiveness and invites cooperation in resolving issues.



5. Patience (Longsuffering)

Patience is the ability to endure difficult situations or people without becoming angry or upset. It involves being slow to anger and willing to give others time to change or improve.

Application in Conflict Resolution:

Patience allows us to tolerate frustrations and avoid impulsive reactions during conflicts. In family life, it means giving loved ones time to work through their issues, extending grace as they grow and change. This prevents conflicts from escalating into long-term bitterness.



6. Bearing with One Another

Bearing with one another means putting up with others' faults, imperfections, and weaknesses. It involves showing tolerance and extending grace to those who may annoy or frustrate us.

Application in Conflict Resolution:

In family dynamics, bearing with one another allows us to accept the quirks and shortcomings of others without letting them become sources of conflict. It helps us overlook minor offenses and keeps us from being easily provoked, thus reducing the frequency of arguments.



7. Forgiveness

Forgiveness is the act of pardoning someone for their mistakes or wrongs, letting go of resentment, and not holding a grudge against them.

Application in Conflict Resolution:

Forgiveness is vital in family conflicts. Without it, offenses can pile up, leading to deep-rooted bitterness. When we forgive, we release the right to retaliate, allowing relationships to heal. Paul emphasizes that we must forgive as Christ forgave us, which helps us to show mercy even when we feel wronged.



8. Love

Love is the greatest of all virtues and serves as the foundation for all the others. It is selfless, unconditional care and concern for the well-being of others.

Application in Conflict Resolution:

Paul describes love as "the bond of perfection" (Colossians 3:14). In family conflicts, love compels us to seek the best for others, even when it's difficult. Love is what drives us to resolve conflicts rather than allow them to fracture relationships. It motivates patience, kindness, forgiveness, and all other virtues.



2. Biblical Conflict Resolution in Our Families

Matthew 18:15–17 (NKJV)

¹⁵ "Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother.

¹⁶ But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that 'by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.'

¹⁷ And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector.



PRIVATE CONFRONTATION

Matthew 18:15

“Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother.”

“If your brother sins against you”,....: This implies that conflict arises when one person has been wronged or offended by another. The focus here is on a personal sin, which can also be understood in a broader sense to include misunderstandings or disagreements that cause harm.



PRIVATELY CONFRONT A FAMILY MEMBER

- **“Go and tell him his fault between you and him alone”.**: The first step in resolving a conflict is direct communication. This means that the issue should be discussed privately, not in front of others. This prevents gossip or unnecessary exposure of the problem and allows both parties to maintain dignity.
- **“If he hears you, you have gained your brother.”**: The goal of confrontation is reconciliation, not condemnation. When the person listens and understands the issue, reconciliation is achieved, and the relationship is restored.



BRING IN OTHERS IF NEEDED

Matthew 18:16

“But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that 'by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.’”

“If he will not hear,”: Not all conflicts are resolved in the first attempt. Sometimes the other party may refuse to listen or acknowledge the issue.



IF PRIVATE CONFRONTATION FAILS

- **“Take with you one or two more,”**: The next step is to involve a small number of neutral individuals. These individuals serve as witnesses, ensuring that the conversation remains fair and respectful. Their presence may also encourage the person to take the issue more seriously.
- **“By the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.”**: This is based on Old Testament principles (Deuteronomy 19:15), ensuring that the matter is not handled in secrecy or subjectivity. The witnesses help confirm the facts and keep the situation accountable.



IF PRIVATE CONFRONTATION FAILS

- If a private conversation doesn't resolve the issue, involve one or two trusted family members or friends who can mediate the discussion. These individuals should be neutral and focused on helping both parties reach reconciliation.
- The role of the witnesses is not to take sides but to ensure that communication remains respectful, and that the issue is dealt with truthfully and fairly.



RECONCILIATION & RESTORATION ARE OUR GOALS

- If attempts at reconciliation fail, escalate the issue to respected family elders or leaders, such as parents or trusted figures who can help bring resolution.
- If the person remains unresponsive even after the involvement of family authorities, it may be necessary to set boundaries. However, as followers of Christ, the ultimate goal should still be reconciliation, and efforts to restore the relationship should continue, even if the person is temporarily distanced.



Matthew 18:17

Escalation May Be Necessary

“And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector.”

- **“If he refuses to hear them,”**: Sometimes, even mediation with a small group fails to bring resolution. When this happens, the issue can be escalated.
- **“Tell it to the church.”**: In a broader community context, the “church” represents the collective body of believers, such as the elders or leaders who can offer guidance and discipline. Within the family, this could symbolize seeking the input of respected elders or other family authorities who hold the family together spiritually and relationally.



Matthew 18:17

Escalation May Be Necessary

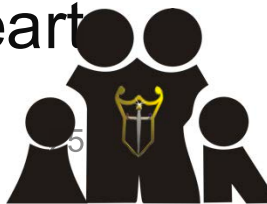
"And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector."

- **"Let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector.":** This suggests distancing yourself from the individual if all attempts at reconciliation fail. However, note that Jesus' own approach to tax collectors and sinners was not one of harsh rejection but rather an open invitation to repentance. The point is not to cut the person off, but to recognize that they are choosing to distance themselves from the family or the relationship.



PRACTICAL FAMILY APPLICATION

- 1. Direct, Private Conversations:** In families, conflicts should be addressed one-on-one in private. This prevents the problem from becoming a public issue or creating embarrassment, which can worsen the situation.
- 2. Mediation with Others:** If the issue isn't resolved, involve other family members who can serve as neutral mediators. Their role is to help clarify the problem and encourage honest communication.
- 3. Involvement of Elders:** If conflict persists, respected elders in the family—parents, grandparents, or spiritual leaders—can be brought in to provide wisdom and guidance.
- 4. Grace and Patience:** Even when reconciliation seems impossible, the goal should always be restoration. If a family member is unrepentant or unresponsive, setting boundaries might be necessary, but the heart should remain open to future reconciliation.



Matthew 18:15–17 provides a practical and compassionate framework for resolving conflicts within families.

By following this Biblical model, families can address disputes with love, patience, and humility, focusing on reconciliation and the restoration of relationships.

The key is to approach conflict with a spirit of forgiveness and a desire to "gain your brother" or sister, always seeking peace within the family unit.



3. In the Biblical family, Communication and Understanding are needed.

Ephesians 4:31–32 (NKJV)

³¹ Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice.

³² And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.



Ephesians 4:31 (NKJV)

³¹ Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice.

- **Bitterness** refers to a deep-rooted resentment that poisons relationships. When unresolved issues or offenses are allowed to linger, they produce bitterness, making reconciliation more difficult.
- **Wrath and anger** describe both explosive outbursts and sustained hostility. Wrath refers to sudden, violent anger, while anger can be an ongoing, internal state of frustration or resentment.



- **Clamor** means loud quarreling or yelling, often resulting from uncontrolled anger. It is a sign of escalating conflict, where emotions override reason and communication becomes hostile.
- **Evil speaking (or slander)** refers to speaking ill of others, often behind their back, damaging reputations and sowing discord.
- **Malice** is the desire to harm someone, either emotionally or physically. It is the most extreme form of conflict, where a person actively seeks to cause pain or damage to another.



Paul is calling for the complete removal of these destructive attitudes and behaviors. These emotions and actions only serve to deepen conflicts, alienate loved ones, and make resolution more difficult. The family unit cannot thrive when communication is tainted by bitterness, anger, or slander.

- **“Be put away from you”**: The phrase "put away" implies an intentional and decisive act of removal. These negative attitudes and behaviors are not to be tolerated or excused but rather completely removed from our interactions, especially within the family. This requires self-awareness and a commitment to personal growth in Christlike character.



COMMUNICATE & EXPRESS UNDERSTANDING

- In family conflicts, these destructive emotions—bitterness, anger, shouting, and slander—must be recognized and removed. When communication is filled with these elements, it breaks down any hope of understanding and reconciliation.
- Family members must learn to control their emotions, avoid speaking hurtful words, and refrain from gossip or slander. A family environment where negativity is removed fosters open, honest, and respectful communication, allowing issues to be addressed in a constructive manner.



Ephesians 4:32

Embracing Christlike Virtues

“And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.”

“Be kind to one another”: Kindness refers to showing goodness, consideration, and respect in all interactions. It involves treating others as you would want to be treated and seeking to uplift rather than tear down.

In family communication, kindness can transform a tense or potentially hostile conversation into one marked by gentleness and care. Instead of reacting harshly, choosing kindness opens the door to understanding and promotes peace within the home.



Ephesians 4:32

Embracing Christlike Virtues

“And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.”

“Tenderhearted”: Tenderheartedness refers to being compassionate, empathetic, and emotionally responsive to the needs and feelings of others. It means having a soft heart that is sensitive to the struggles and emotions of family members.

A tender heart in the midst of conflict means being willing to listen and understand the other person's pain or perspective. Instead of hardening our hearts or becoming defensive, we open ourselves to feel what others are going through, promoting deeper connection and empathy.



“Forgiving one another”: Forgiveness is the act of letting go of resentment, bitterness, and the desire for revenge.

It involves releasing the offense and refusing to hold it against the person who caused it.

In family conflicts, forgiveness is crucial for healing. Without it, conflicts linger, and relationships remain strained. Forgiving one another as Christ forgave us reminds us that we have been given grace, and we must extend that same grace to others.

True understanding and reconciliation in families come when forgiveness is granted freely, even when it is undeserved.



“Even as God in Christ forgave you”: This phrase sets the standard for forgiveness. Just as God has forgiven us through Christ's sacrifice on the cross, we are called to forgive others.

This means that our forgiveness should be generous, unconditional, and motivated by love.

Remembering how much we have been forgiven helps us to let go of grudges and choose to forgive family members, even in situations where we feel deeply wronged. This kind of forgiveness fosters reconciliation and restores broken relationships, allowing families to move forward in love and unity.



APPLYING COMMUNICATION & UNDERSTANDING

By embodying these Christlike virtues, families can communicate more effectively and resolve conflicts in a way that reflects the love and grace of Christ.

When kindness, compassion, and forgiveness are at the forefront of family interactions, conflicts are less likely to escalate, and understanding becomes easier to achieve.

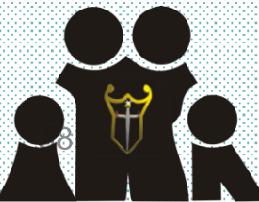


CONCLUSION

- **Remove destructive behaviors:** Bitterness, anger, yelling, and slander should be completely removed from family communication. These attitudes only fuel conflict and create deeper wounds.
- **Embrace Christlike virtues:** Kindness, compassion, and forgiveness are essential for resolving conflicts in a way that honors God. These virtues help create an atmosphere of respect, empathy, and love, where family members can communicate openly and find common ground.
- **Forgiveness is key:** Just as God forgave us through Christ, we must forgive one another. Forgiveness breaks the cycle of conflict and allows relationships to heal and grow stronger.



By applying these principles,
families can foster healthier
communication, resolve
conflicts more peacefully, and
build deeper understanding
and stronger bonds.





Handling Conflicts and Challenges in the Biblical Family

