

Handling Conflict in God's Grace

Peacekeepers don't always use the same strategy to accomplish their goal of self-protection or to pursue their commitment to avoid conflict. The path can be more passive or more aggressive. Sometimes we "peacekeep" in a more passive way by being retreaters: avoiding, denying, covering up, etc. Other times, we do it more aggressively by being subduers: controlling, fixing, attacking, squelching, etc. I may run and hide from problems with a friend, or I may steam-roll over them, but in neither case is my concern chiefly a love for God or that person. I just want to feel at peace myself, not make a real peace or pursue genuine reconciliation.

A. Identify a relationship where you have been peacekeeping: _____

 Describe the conflict you have had, or perhaps need to have, but have avoided.

 Have you been more of a retreator or subduer? How so?

B. Applying the Peacekeeping chart, describe how the following have been evident in this conflict.

 Goal: Self-protection —

 Commitment: Avoid holy conflict —

 Direction: Fights against people (Peacekeeping murders people in our hearts, whether by essentially starving them out through retreat or suffocating them by subduing them. Cf. Romans 8:6) —

 Feel: Save/less painful —

 Source: Spirit of fear and timidity—

 Result: Destructive/alienating—

C. Write a prayer of confession and repentance. Include any pride, unbelief or selfishness you are seeing.

D. The speaker defines the glory of God as the difference between what you would do naturally and what you do by His grace. What might a vision for the glory of God look like in this relationship? Include specifics about the practical things that would be changed, the intimacy that would replace the alienation, and how God would deserve the credit.

E. What might the Father want to do with and for this other person? In other words, what would a vision of what God wants to make this person look like. How might the God of peace want to

sanctify them through and through, and keep their whole spirit, soul and body blameless (I Thessalonians 5:23)?

 How might He want you to partner with Him in this cause? What might it mean to love them toward this end?

 Truth without grace is harsh and legalistic; grace without truth is anemic and impotent. How do you need to model Jesus' love "who came from the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14)? Where have you gotten off track?

F. Comment on one or more of the following aspects of constructive conflict mentioned by the speaker. How has this been missing? What needs to happen?

CONSTRUCTIVE CONFLICT:

_____ Is more interested in winning the person than the argument, or establishing how right you are for the benefit of your own ego.

_____ Humbly deals with differences without judging (condemning) attitudes.

_____ Deals with issues, not personalities.

_____ Asks questions rather than accusing.

_____ Is approachable and teachable, and listens well; expecting God to use people to expose needed areas of healing.

_____ Rejects gossip, and deals directly to the person(s) involved (Matthew 18:15).

_____ Prays for wisdom, avoiding presumption about knowing what's best or right.

_____ Acknowledges self-deception and looks for own logs before hunting specks.

_____ Looks for how strong convictions are often intertwined with sinful attitudes.

_____ Is committed to building mutual understanding.

Which of these have you been blessed to see already happening? God is at work! This is an item for praise and thanks.

G. Preach the gospel to yourself. Note the lie you've tended to believe in this conflict and the opposing truth of the gospel for each area.

 This other person.

Lie (e.g., they're a bigger sinner, it's up to you to fix them; God can't change them; they don't deserve compassion; they are your enemy, etc.):

Truth:

 Your relationship.

Lie (e.g., it is beyond healing; you must change it; you must keep peace at all costs; division is the ultimate reality; it is better to let sleeping dogs lie; etc.):

Truth:

 Yourself.

Lie (e.g., just do better, try harder, be more loveable; you can't love; you're God's hopeless case; you must protect yourself at all costs; etc.):

Truth:

Commit yourself to praying for such truths of the gospel to become deeply rooted in your heart, and for the courage to live and act out their reality.

H. Pray for wisdom. What might be the first steps of a "love offensive"? How might God want you to move unselfishly toward this person with a vision for God's glory and for what He can make them?