



## Responding to Conflict in Light of Easter

### COVID-19 Notice: We are now conducting our services solely via Zoom Conferencing

#### What is Happening at Conflict to Peace?

Things have changed dramatically in the last few weeks. In an effort to decrease the spread of COVID-19, the government has recommended “social distancing,” that people limit going out in public, such as to restaurants and shopping, and limit discretionary travel, to the extent that they are able to do so. Almost all schools and many workplaces have now sent their students or workers home for the next few weeks or months. Conflict to Peace has responded to the COVID-19 pandemic by quickly moving to online sessions, through Zoom videoconferencing. We held a training session for our conciliators on the use of Zoom on March 31st, and have now been conducting our sessions remotely. With the recent reports about concerns with the security of Zoom videoconferencing, we are implementing all available security features to ensure the security of our clients’ information, as well as the health and safety of all concerned.

#### Why Is Forgiveness Important When We Are In Conflict: A Reflection of Holy Week

Article by Lucy Nichols

Let’s Start with what Season we are currently in as Christians. This is Holy Week.

*It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, for the sun stopped shining. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two. Jesus called out with a loud voice, ‘Father into your hands I commit my spirit.’ When he has said this, he breathed his last.*

**Luke 23:44-46**

This particular Holy Week has felt different in so many ways due to COVID-19.

How strange it has been to walk outside and see the light pink blooms of the Dogwood, hear the early morning melody of the song birds and feel the warmth of the sun on my face after a long night of rain, all while anxiety and fear, profound sadness and daily death of so many so closely surround us. One blessing that stands out when time stands still is that during this particular Holy Week, we are afforded the opportunity to immerse ourselves in the word of God, walking those final days and hours of our Savior’s life on earth leading up to his crucifixion.

As I read about the moments leading up to the crucifixion of Jesus, the soldiers who led Jesus away and the women who mourned and wailed for him, I have wept. This year Holy Week has been even more transformative.

*Two other men, both criminals, were also led out with him to be executed. When they came to the place called the Skull, they crucified him there, along with the criminals –one on his right, the other on his left. Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.” And they divided up his clothes by casting lots.*

**Luke 23:32-34**

As we approach Easter Sunday, can we imagine a greater gift than our Heavenly Father’s forgiveness of our sins and the sacrifice of God’s only son who paid the very steep ransom for our sins. Jesus was innocent and was without sin and yet he was humiliated, flogged, mocked, and was crucified, suffering an unimaginably painful death so that we might be saved. When we confess our sins, truly repent and ask for God’s forgiveness, we are forgiven. We are cleansed. We are made new. We have the promise of eternal life with our Heavenly Father.

*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.*

**1 John 1:9**

Just as God forgives us of our sins and the many ways in which we wrong others, God commands us to forgive one another. God did not only die for our sins, but also for the sins of those who have wronged us. Unfortunately, it is far too easy in our own personal conflicts to forget the dear price Jesus Christ paid on the Cross for us. The more natural responses are anger, bitterness, resentment and retaliation. These responses harden our hearts and prevent forgiveness. Only God can open our hearts to forgive the person who has wronged us and to see our role in the conflict. Only God can truly transform those experiencing conflict.

*Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.*

**Colossians 3:12-13**

If you are in conflict with another, whether it is your spouse, your child, your co-worker, your friend, turn to the Lord in prayer and be reminded of the sacrifice that was made for you and that was made for the person who wronged you. The Bible tells us how to handle the conflict that is inevitable in our relationships and at the heart of how we are instructed to respond to conflict is with forgiveness.

If you are struggling with how to forgive someone, write out a prayer to God and pray daily asking for God's intervention in this matter. Your prayer may include asking God to soften and ready your heart and the other party's heart for forgiveness. Your prayer may include asking God to help you hear and really understand the other person's feelings and how he or she has been impacted by the conflict. Your prayer may include asking God to reveal your role and any wrongdoing on your part in the conflict. Your prayer may

include your seeking the other party's forgiveness and God's forgiveness. Your prayer may also include communicating to the other party how you feel wronged by his or her actions and how the conflict has impacted you and that you forgive that person. Pray for patience too. To truly repent and to seek forgiveness is not an overnight process and it most certainly does not happen without God. Never forget the sacrifice that Jesus made on the Cross for all of us.

*Blessed is the one whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the one whose sin the Lord does not count against them and in whose spirit is no deceit.*

**Psalm 32:1-2**

**Responding to Inevitable Conflict in these Troubled Times**

*Article by Ron Zabel and Mary Lyons*

With more time at home with our loved ones, limited outlets for outside social interaction, or even time away at work, there is bound to be more opportunity for conflict among those who are living together 24/7. So, many of us may be asking ourselves, "How does Christ call us to respond to conflict?"

Conflict is an inevitable part of life. How we deal with it makes all the difference. Conflict can provide an opportunity for maturing in faith and strengthening relationships, but becomes unhealthy when handled in ways that do not honor God. Unfortunately, the most common responses are either "flight or fight," usually in that order. Responding in an adversarial manner or not dealing with conflict can wound people, damage relationships, impede ministry, and fragment families. Such responses also take a toll on our own physical and spiritual well being.

Scripture directs us to take a different approach to conflict. There are four principles that can be helpful in responding to conflict in a God-honoring way, sometimes referred to by Christian peacemakers as the "4 G's." (See Peacemaking Principles – Responding to Conflict Biblically, a brochure published by Peacemaker Ministries, available at:

<https://store.peacemaker.training/collections/legacy-content> Some of the following is adapted from material in that brochure.

The first “G” is to glorify God. In approaching a conflict, we are to, above all else, seek to glorify God – as we should in all we do. Instead of focusing on our own desires, we can rejoice in the Lord and bring Him praise by focusing on His forgiveness, wisdom, power, and love. With His attributes in mind, we can then seek to obey His commands and maintain a loving relationship with the other person.

We need to look at conflict as not necessarily a bad thing, but as an opportunity to serve others and grow in Christ – to Trust Him, Acknowledge Him, Imitate Him, and Obey Him. Whatever happens, our goal should be to conduct ourselves in a manner worthy of the Gospel of Christ.

The second “G” is to get the log out of your own eye! Facing conflict rarely occurs without dialogue unless an offense is truly so small we can overlook it. In preparing to participate in dialogue, we need to examine ourselves first. We need to beware of any presumption that we might be completely right, and that the other party is all wrong. What do we want, and why? (James 4:1-3). We need to consider our motives. Are they focused on getting what we want or achieving resolution and a restored relationship? Has what we want become an idol? In other words, has a desire that we have (even if it is a desire for something good and honorable) become a demand that has led us to judge another person, or even punish them, because it was not met? We should also consider whether the other party’s actions could be a response to our actions.

If (or, more likely, when) we conclude that even a small part of the conflict is our fault, it is important to take responsibility for our contribution to the conflict, make a meaningful confession to those we have wronged, and ask God to help us change any attitudes that lead to conflict, as well as seeking to repair any harm we have caused.

The third “G” is to gently seek to restore the other person, rather than criticize them. If an offense is too serious to overlook, address it

gently and constructively. Speak to the other person with love and humility, with only charitable judgments.

Rather than listing the actions of the other person that have offended you, use “I messages” to describe the impact of the other’s behavior on you, such as “I felt hurt when...”. Be prepared to listen, seek to understand, then speak the truth in love. By handling conflict in this way, God may lead the other person to repentance and accountability to God.

The fourth “G” is to go and be reconciled to the other person. Christ clearly calls us to seek reconciliation. (Matthew 5:23-4). As dialogue begins, seek to understand the interests of the other person so that the search for a resolution can focus on serving the interests of all involved, including Christ, not just our own desires. Instead of accepting superficial peace or allowing the relationship to wither, we should actively pursue genuine peace and reconciliation, forgiving the other person as God, for Christ’s sake, has forgiven us.

Conflict can be approached with joy rather than dread, if we keep Christ’s interests at the center of our focus. (James 1:2-4,12)

### **Looking for Outreach Opportunities**

We have appreciated the opportunity to give presentations of these principles to church and ministry groups. We continue to look for new opportunities to share these as widely as possible. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss how we could be of value you, your church, ministry group, school, or business. Let us know how you are led to help us, whether it be through prayer support, introducing our ministry to others, referrals, or a gift. If you are led to bless us with a gift today, you may do so through this link:

<https://www.conflicttopeace.org/support.html>

**May you experience the Joy of Easter in all your relationships.**