

*A Sense of Family*  
*Conflict Prevention and Resolution*

by

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Course II – Unit 7, Lesson 4  
(New Life Behavior English Edition)

NewLife   
B E H A V I O R  
Ministries

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*“If any person be in Christ, he is a new creature...”*  
(2 Corinthians 5:17)

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## **Conflict Prevention and Resolution**

As you begin this lesson, please write three or four sentences on “how people in your life usually settle their disagreements.” **Write these thoughts on the enclosed Response Sheet and put it away until you finish the lesson.** Next, we recommend that you read the entire lesson through once without looking up any of the references. Next read the lesson and study the references. Next, answer the ten questions in the response sheet (the answers to the questions are in the text of the lesson). Finally, write your answer to the question, “How I plan to resolve my conflicts in the future.” Be sure to share your response sheet with your instructor.

### **I. Introduction**

Conflict has been with us since the beginning and it will be with us until the end. Our only hope is to learn how to prevent all we can and resolve the rest. Adam, in Genesis 3, used an approach that social scientists have now decided is better than what we have been told for years. We were told that using the technique of “reflective listening” (the act of reflecting back to the speaker what you thought and felt the speaker meant) would save marriages, friendships and parent-adolescent relationships.

Now the social scientists say that the act of the husband agreeing with the wife is a better form of conflict resolution. Evidently Adam believed this. There is no record of Adam putting up any resistance to Eve eating the forbidden fruit nor eating of it himself. His decision to avoid conflict did keep his marriage together, but at a big and painful cost. In fact it very well may have increased the conflict, or at least started it.

Cain, in Genesis 4, tried to resolve his conflict with God by “taking it out” on his brother, Abel. How often, when we are in conflict with a higher authority than ourselves, do we strike out against an equal or lesser power (Kick the dog!)? Cain’s method did *not* bring about the desired results.

From Genesis 27 through 33 we see the famous story of conflict between Jacob and Esau. It is a sad story until chapter 33. Jacob had tricked Esau out of his birthright and blessing. Their mother who took Jacob’s side told him to flee the country to live with her brother Laban. The story ends on a very happy note in Chapter 33. The hero of this story is Esau. He loved his brother more than he loved his birthright and blessing. Therefore, Esau saw life from the paradigm of love and forgiveness. Jacob, because of fear and guilt, did not think in terms of a happy reunion but of a *battle*, and was making preparation for such. It is easy to see that Esau was the better man and came out ahead, even financially.

In the final days of the life of Jesus, we see two men come in conflict with Jesus (Matthew 26 and 27). Peter denies knowing Jesus and Judas betrays him. Peter acts out of fear while Judas acts out of greed. I wonder if we have not been in their shoes at times

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ourselves. Peter, in Acts 10, was asked to teach the gospel to a non-Jew named Cornelius. Knowing the Old Testament way of avoiding Gentiles, Peter had his reservations about going to Cornelius. However, when Peter understood what God wanted, he went and conveyed the gospel and performed the act of baptism on a Gentile and his family. Naturally this brought him in conflict with his Jewish associates who were also followers of Christ. Peter did the right thing by going to his fellow Jews (Acts 11) and explaining to them what had taken place. He did not take offense by their questions but took them as opportunities to teach them the gospel more completely.

In Acts 15 we see another conflict settled by Christians. Paul and Barnabas, about to set out on a missionary trip, disagreed on taking John Mark. Barnabas wanted to take John Mark and Paul did not. They, like all of us, had disagreements, even sharp ones. Yet the work of the Lord was more important than their personal wishes. They resolved the problem by going on separate journeys, allowing Barnabas to take John Mark.

From these examples we can see mistakes and wise decisions. Adam avoided conflict but lost access to the garden. Cain reacted with violence and became a hunted man until God put his “mark” on him. Esau played the bigger man in forgiving his brother, Jacob. In looking at and Judas we see how two men handled their own internal conflicts. Both violated their commitment to Christ. However, Peter took the more difficult but productive steps. He repented and went back to work in the kingdom. Judas took the coward’s way out by committing suicide, thereby avoiding repentance and the shame of facing his fellow apostles. The legacy of Peter is service. The legacy of Judas is shame.

Paul and Barnabas give us an example wherein the only resolution is a separation and going their own ways. We must remember that both men continued to put service to the kingdom first.

## **II. Conflict Prevention**

As you study this lesson, I want to share some ideas on how we can prevent much of the conflict that comes our way. Prevention is so much more pleasant than the stress and pain of working through conflict resolution.

The main factor is to deal with others from a basis of “agape” love. This love is a Christ-like love wherein we treat the other person as an equal if not better than ourselves (Philippians 2:3). Esau treated Jacob with agape love. As we study 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 we will find twelve ways to describe this type of relationship or communication framework. It would serve us well if, when we find ourselves on the verge of conflict, to ask ourselves the following questions:

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1. Am I patient in letting the other person express his thoughts and feelings or am I so anxious that I might hear something that will prove me wrong that I interrupt?
2. Am I modest with my points and kind to the other person or do I resent the other person's ability to express himself better than I can?
3. Am I humble when I win a point or do I boast and say nasty things about the other person?
4. Am I respectful of his point of view, even if I disagree, or am I too proud and insecure to give him any credit on any single point even if he is correct?
5. Am I gracious in giving credit for his positive traits or do I promote myself to draw attention from him to me?
6. Am I able to keep my temper even when I am incorrect or do I lose it if I am wrong?
7. Days after a disagreement am I still nursing hurt feelings?
8. Can I rejoice with the other person when he succeeds or do I only rejoice when he loses?
9. Can I protect him by not sharing his faults with others or do I seek to build up myself by tearing him down?
10. Do I still trust the person with whom I am having a disagreement or do I feel he is trying to discredit me?
11. Do I have hope that we can resolve our problems and continue to be partners or do I give up easily?
12. Am I willing to persevere through the hard times or am I a quitter and quickly move on to someone else who promises to meet my needs?

These twelve points from 1 Corinthians 13 will serve us well as we seek to work with others from a Christ-like behavior.

### **III. Conflict Resolution—Resolving Conflict in Style**

Ken Voges, author of *The Adult DISC Survey*, has developed a system by which one can be more accurate in dealing with conflict. He believes that a person will handle conflict in harmony with his style of personality. He gives four basic styles with the predictable behavior of each style and the recommended response for each style:

1. *The Dominant Driver*: He/she views the world from an unfavorable position. This person sees the problems and knows how to fix them. He is very much task-oriented and will easily vent his negative feelings. Conflict causes the Dominant

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Driver to become demanding and angry. Bible characters who personify these behaviors include Paul, Solomon, Stephen, Peter, Rebekah, Sara and Joshua.

Predictable behavior includes being decisive when comfortable, demanding when tense, and avoiding you when conflict is prolonged. He tends to take charge and over control others, even leaving others with limited freedom and is often without any desire to cooperate. Your best response to the Dominant Driver is to be firm and brief; focus on action and goals; ask “what” type questions; expect disagreement.

2. *The interacting Influencer:* He/she views the world from a favorable position. This person sees the potential and possibilities, even in the problems. He is very much people-oriented, easily vents his positive feelings and makes friends quickly and easily. Conflict causes the Interacting Influencer to attack the other person emotionally. Bible characters that personify these behaviors include David, Miriam, Abigail, Barnabas, Peter, Rebekah, Aaron, and Saul.

Predictable behavior includes being enthusiastic when comfortable, verbally attacking when tense and complying to save the relationship when the conflict is prolonged. Your best response to the Interacting Influencer is to be friendly and flexible; focus on expressing your feelings; ask “who” type questions; and expect him to shift the blame.

#### Figure 7.1 DISC Conflict Overview

3. *The Steady Supporter:* He/she views the world from a favorable position. This person sees basically what his leader sees. He is very agreeable and supportive. He is people-oriented but stuffs his true feelings. Conflict causes the Steady Supporter to retreat into a shell of protection. Bible characters that personify these behaviors include Martha, Nehemiah, Abraham, Hannah, Jacob, Esther, Moses and Isaac.

Predictable behavior includes being supportive when comfortable, complying to maintain peace and harmony, stubbornly attacking when tense and depressed when conflict is prolonged. Your best response is to be affirming and supportive; focus on harmony and stability; and ask “why” questions and expect a request for time to process feelings.

4. *The Cautious Conformer:* He/she views the world from an unfavorable position. This person sees only facts and what can be proven. He avoids conflict when possible. He is very task-oriented and stuffs his feelings. Conflict causes the Cautious Conformer to become very defensive. Bible characters that personify

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these behaviors include David, Miriam, Paul, Luke, Mary, Esther, Moses and Elijah.

Predictable behavior includes being analytical when comfortable, avoiding angry people when tense, and demanding a detail accounting when the conflict is prolonged. Your best response is to be patient and persistent; focus on answering their questions; ask “how” questions and expect a need to validate all information given to him.

#### **IV. Four Rules to Follow When in Conflict:**

1. Understand that there are external and internal forces at work causing the behavior that you see in the other person and in yourself. The external forces include the situations that are socio-economical-political and are mostly beyond the control of the individual. There are relationships that have an impact on the individual. There are expectations that are placed on the individual by those in relationship with this person as well as those self-imposed expectations. Then you add situation, relationship and expectations and you have a strong force that results in certain behaviors, many of which bring on conflicts.

Then there are internal factors that have a bearing on how an individual acts and reacts to conflict and any other behaviors. These factors include genetics, guidelines, thoughts, feelings, needs, and goals. All of these interact with each other and impact how the mind takes in an act of conflict and makes a decision on how to respond to it.

When we are in conflict with someone it is difficult to remember all these factors are at play. Yet we must remember that no act, even an angry one, is a simple act and each has its consequences. The more we can incorporate these factors in our understanding of the other person, the easier and quicker we will reach an equitable solution.

2. Approach others as you would have them approach you. This sounds very much like the golden rule. What is meant here is that each personality wants to be approached much in the same manner in which he approaches others.

This means that since the Dominant Driver tells others how he feels, he wants others to “lay it on the line” with him. In other words, “Don’t beat around the bush. Get on with it!”

Since the Interacting Influencer shows a great deal of interest in other people, he wants others to show an interest in what is making him angry or frustrated. He listens to others and when he is upset he wants the other person to listen to him.

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Since the Steady Supporter “supports” others, he wants others to support him when he is having problems. He is dependent on others for confirmation and this will go a long way in helping to resolve his conflict.

Since the Cautious Conformer tends to explain situations beyond what others want to hear, he is in need of information from you. He will want you to give details and probably several times. The more information he gets the easier it is for him to resolve his conflict.

3. Without “giving away the store” do what you can to meet the basic, personal and value-oriented needs of the other person. Each of us, especially when in conflict, varies the behavioral level from which we operate. When we are operating on from our basic needs level, we tend to be selfish, even to the point of violating the other person’s rights. We can provide this need by not hurting the other person physically or emotionally. Our goal is to resolve the conflict while at the same time making the other person feel secure.

The person who has his personal needs met, but is in need of a relationship, wants and needs a friend. Your role here is to resolve the conflict while maintaining the relationship. The information given above about personality styles will guide you in meeting his person’s relational needs effectively.

The person who has his personal and relational needs met can be reasoned with from a moral values approach. When in conflict with an individual on this level, he will work with you from a base of values. He will not take your concerns and disagreements personally. If you are correct, he will support you. If you are incorrect, you will not gain his support. His goal is not to win but that right will prevail. Errors will be corrected and everyone will get on with the task at hand.

4. If there is a conflict that you just can not prevent and have to confront, the best results will be obtained by building a base of influence with the other person. This base of influence has to be built on a day-by-day basis. The five actions on which you will want to focus are:
  - a. Build a cohesive relationship with the other person.
  - b. Maintain open and positive communications with that person.
  - c. Develop a base of mutual respect between the two of you.
  - d. Spend time together doing nothing in particular.
  - e. Help the other person do things that helps the other person.

#### **V. Dealing with Conflict with Class**

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Don't you just love to see a person handle an angry person with *class*? I admire those people who can do this. Most of us tend to react emotionally and whatever comes out of our mouth just comes out. It reminds me of what Jesus said in Matthew 15:11, "What goes into a man's mouth does not make him unclean but what comes out of his mouth, that is what makes him unclean."

I would like to give you a format to guide your words when someone comes to you to express anger at you or to you about someone else. In fact, it might be a good idea to always react to an angry person *as if they are talking about someone else*. Here is the five-step format to handle angry people with CLASS:

- C** Remain calm, careful, concerned, committed, confident and correct no one in public.
- L** Look on the other person as your equal in terms of importance. Listen for who said what, when, where, how and to whom. Do not ask "why" questions to an angry person.
- A** Agree quickly when the angry person is correct on a point. Admit your mistakes quickly; do it with humility and correct it quickly.
- S** Solutions will not be accepted by angry people. Soft words will turn away angry words. Service is what the angry person wants and your best reaction is to do all you can to provide it.
- S** Some suggestions will be accepted by an angry person. Suggestions go down better when one has been heard and feels respected. Success in the confrontation is more important than getting your way at the expense of the angry person. Success in the relationship is your strongest tool to a satisfactory resolution.

### **VI. Conclusion**

Occasional conflict should be seen as an opportunity to clear the air. It can serve to bring a couple or a group back to their core values and beliefs. It can serve to strengthen the relationship. Do not run from it; embrace it with skill and *CLASS!*

Now, please start over and study the lesson and the related scriptures. **When you finish your in-depth study, return to the enclosed Response Sheet and write your answers to the study questions about this lesson.**