

“YOU MAKE ME CRAZY” 7 Key Steps to Resolving Conflict
Romans 12:14-21 (Adapted from Rick Warren’s Sermon)
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In his article, “*Why Am I Angrier than I Use to Be?*” [*Leadership Journal* (Summer 2000), pg. 79-80] author and church minister Ed Rowell writes:

“When I was young, a neighboring family came down with a devastating illness. Several of the children died, and the rest suffered permanent brain damage. What investigators discovered was that the father had found a truckload of discarded seed corn and fed it to the family hogs. The corn (not intended for animal feed) had been treated with something so bugs wouldn't eat it before it germinated. The hogs ate it, seemingly with no ill effects.

“But when the family hogs became the family breakfast, the family was poisoned. It seems that many substances--pesticides and heavy metals like lead and mercury--do not pass through the digestive system, but remain in the body, always. In tiny doses, the effects are minimal. But over time, the effects are horrible.

“That's what happens to many of us. . . . Every day we ingest minute amounts of conflict and disrespect. No big deal, we think. Just blow it off. But we don't. Instead it gets buried in our liver and 20 years later, we go ballistic over some kid skateboarding in the parking lot and wonder, ‘*Where did that come from?*’”¹

We have conflict all around us; at home, with the family, at school, at work, at the park, at city hall, in the government, between countries...everywhere we look there seems to be conflict. It seems that there’s conflict in every area and every segment of our society today.

Since we have so much conflict all around us, it would seem appropriate for us to be taught how to manage all that stress and conflict before it eats us up and kills us. If we don’t know how to resolve conflict, you will walk around carrying conflict most of your life, which leaves you miserable. You can be wealthy, you can be attractive, you can be successful, you can be talented, and **if your relationships stink** you’re a mess. If your relationships with those around you are a mess, then that conflict will literally suck the life right out of you, and you’ll never be happy. So where do we get that training that will help us deal with conflict and give us an upper hand at dealing with those relationships all around us? It’s not something taught at home, or at school,

¹ (PreachingToday.com, *More Perfect Illustrations*, [Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2003] pg. 20

or at college, or even on the job. So how are we suppose to deal properly with the conflict in our lives if we're not trained to do it right? Well, that's the problem we have today – no one knows how to resolve conflict, so it goes unchecked and unresolved until somebody goes ballistic and everyone else suffers the consequences.

Today I'd like to teach you 7 biblical steps of how to resolve conflict. If you will practice these you will find the stress in your life going down dramatically. And you will find the joy, fulfillment, and satisfaction in life going up significantly.

Whether you are in conflict right now or if you are doing alright, **today** IS the day you want to take notes so that you can learn and apply the steps to resolving the conflict THAT WILL COME into your life. You'll want to have them handy, if not start putting them into practice right away, because conflict WILL come to you at some point in your life.

So what we start out with today are these words of Romans 12:17-18; “Never pay back evil for evil to anyone...As much as possible, as far as it depends on you, live in peace with everyone.” (NLT) God is telling us that we will have people who push our buttons, but when that happens, we ARE NOT to push their buttons back. We're not to attack them back when they come at us with claws bared. But isn't it nice that God didn't leave out the second half? He tells us, “*as much as possible, as far as it depends on you, live in peace with everyone.*”

So what's God telling us? He's saying, “I recognize that some are people you just can't live at peace with. They're the crazy makers; the ones that no matter how hard you try to appease, please, control, support, whatever, they are just impossible to satisfy. Their emotional needs are just so great that nothing you do will ever please them. God recognizes that some people are just very difficult to live at peace with. So Paul tells us, “*As much as possible...*” – sometimes it is possible to live with them. He says, “*As far as it depends on you...*” – meaning that you can't control anyone else's reactions, only your own reactions. “*As much as possible, as far as it depends on you, LIVE AT PEACE WITH EVERYONE!*” (Emphasis mine.) We're to give it our best to live with one another in peace. We don't want conflict! We don't want arguments! So do your best to live in peace with each other.

Unresolved conflict has three devastating reactions in your life. I don't want to spend a whole lot of

time on these because I want to look more at the cure than the cause of conflict. The damage that unresolved conflict does is three things:

I. **It blocks my fellowship with God.** When I'm out of sorts with you, I can't be in harmony with God. When I'm distracted, when I'm in conflict with other people, I cannot have a clear connection with God. **[1 John 4:20]** tells us *"the person who says I love God and hates his neighbor is a liar."* It's real clear that we cannot be at odds with each other and expect a firm connection with God. It's just not possible. We must love one another first! We're told in Matthew 22:37-39 that we are to *"love the Lord with all our heart..."* and *"love your neighbor as yourself."*

So every time I am in conflict with my neighbor, my fellowship with God is blocked, too. That's reason enough to learn conflict management, just so that your relationship with God is not hindered. To stay in fellowship with God demands that we remain in fellowship with each other.

II. **It hinders my prayers.** Conflict with one another prevents answered prayers. Did you know that? Over and over again in the Scripture the Bible says that when I have conflict and when there's sin and when there's disharmony in my life, it blocks my prayers. It hinders my prayers. **[1 Peter 3:7]** is addressed to husbands, but it fits for all of us. It reads, *"Likewise, husbands live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered."* (ESV)

That means that when you're in conflict with your spouse, God doesn't hear your prayer. So you can't have an argument in the car coming to church and come inside and praise the Lord! God says it just isn't happening. If you're in conflict with your spouse, you're in conflict with God. **And** when we're in disharmony and conflict with other people, then we're in disharmony and conflict with God. We can't love God and hate each other! God is love, so we must treat each other in love to be able to love God.

III. **It hinders my happiness.** You cannot be happy and in conflict at the same time. NOPE! It just doesn't work! When conflict comes in the front door, happiness exits the back door. **[Job 18:4]** rightly says, *"You may tear out your hair in anger, but will that destroy the earth? Will it make the rocks tremble?"* (NLT)

So let's look at the seven biblical steps to resolving conflict. Now, the first one is going to take the majority of the time, so please don't get worried about all the time spent on it when there are 6 more to come. We'll make it through on time. This first one is the most important one, so that's why I'll spend most of the time on it. Please write these down because you're going to need it someday. If you're a parent, teach it to your children. It'll save them a lot of heartache.

The first step (#1) in resolving conflict is **TAKE THE INITIATIVE!** That's the starting point in resolving conflict – you take the initiative. Don't wait for them to come to you; you go to them. You be the peacemaker.

Paul is telling us in Romans 12 that we are not to ignore the conflict in our lives, don't deny that there is conflict, don't push the conflict under the carpet, don't pretend that the conflict doesn't exist in your marriage. Deal with it! What are you pretending is not a problem in your marriage? Sex? Money? Trust? In-laws? Family? Children? Communications? Values? Work schedule? What are the problems you are facing but denying are really problems? Take the initiative and address the conflict so that it might be resolved.

You see, conflict is never resolved accidentally. It's got to be intentionally worked out. Some say, "Time heals everything." That's a bunch of bologna. Time heals nothing! If time healed everything you could go to the doctor and just sit in the waiting room and you'd be healed. You wouldn't need to see the doctor. But time heals nothing – rather it makes it worse. When you've got an open wound and you don't deal with it, it festers, or it can become infected and turn into gangrene. It can take your arm, or even your life. Time heals nothing!

When anger turns to resentment it soon turns into bitterness. And when we refuse to resolve conflict that bitterness destroys relationships. It might even be 30, 40 or 50 years after the event, but if you have never resolved that conflict, that bitterness will eat you alive. That infection will destroy you. So YOU take the initiative and make the conflict resolution happen. It's not going to resolve itself – you must intentionally deal with it. You must deal with it!

The only way to resolve conflict is to face it. In order to face it, you'll have to deal with three things. You're going to have to A) deal with your fear of conflict, you're going to have to deal with B) how to set up

the meeting, and you're going to have to deal with C) what to do in that meeting.

A) Now you can't have a problem with someone and then talk to everyone BUT that person about the problem to resolve the problem – you have to talk to that person directly. I know some folks who tell me that they are afraid of conflict, that they're scared. Well, that's human nature! No one likes conflict, except the crazy makers. They like it, but nobody else likes it, but we have to confront the crazy makers to resolve the conflict – otherwise the conflict will continue. It's only normal to be afraid about confrontation.

I know grown men fumble at this issue. I've seen guys – Marines, Navy Seals, Army Rangers – who face incredibly dangerous situations and aren't afraid to lay it on the line, have enormous courage on the battle field, melt and turn into a pool of Jell-O with one phrase from their wife. "Honey, we need to talk." There's no phrase that puts the fear of God into men more than that phrase. We need to talk! Oh no! Just kill me right now!

But the fear of conflict is an age old problem coming straight from Adam and Eve. When they blew it in the Garden of Eden, their relationship with God was broken. Their own relationship was broken. And when God came along, Adam tells God in Genesis 3:10, "*I heard You in the garden; and I was afraid because I was naked, and so I hid.*" Adam was exposed, naked to the presence of God who could see everything about him. He was afraid and so he hid. And we've been hiding from God ever since. And we've been hiding from each other, too. We want to cover up the conflict because there is always fear of being exposed, fear of the emotions that will be shared, and there is fear of being vulnerable to each other. And when we have this fear in our lives we become distant, we become defensive and we become demanding.

Distancing ourselves makes us want to hide, to isolate ourselves from others, to pull back from others thereby causing separation from one another. That ruins any kind of relationship. Defensiveness puts up all kinds of walls to protect ourselves, making excuses for running away, and we even begin attacking others just so we don't feel vulnerable and exposed any more. And we become demanding in order to have the last word; to be in control of the situation.

It's fear that keeps us from deep intimacy with each other in our relationships. As relationships build there seems to be that fear to talk about the deep issues of life and faith that then begins to separate us from each

other, preventing us from really enjoying the relationship. It's not about the fear of the conflict, but rather the fear of the emotions that will come from that conflict. There might be rejection, or misunderstanding, or that your words would be used against you, so you hide from the conflict. And it only builds a greater chasm between you. The reason we're afraid to tell each other who we really are is the fear of being exposed to the very depths of who we are. If you see who I really am, then you might not like me anymore, so we hide ourselves and protect ourselves and we defend ourselves just so that we are not rejected for who we really are.

So we need to ask God for His courage to face conflict and begin to resolve it. It takes courageous people to really work on the conflict in their lives. Cowards never resolve conflict; they walk away.

We see help in 2 Timothy 1:7 *“God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but a spirit of power and love and self-discipline.”* That means when we let God's Spirit fill us, we'll have His power and love and self-discipline, and we're no longer going to be fearful and timid. We'll find His love inside of us casting out fear. And when we have love in us that casts out fear, we'll be able to do much more than we ever thought possible. It's called courage. When you're filled with God's Spirit and God's Spirit is love, when God's Spirit fills you and you're filled with love for that person who is irritating you or that person you're in conflict with, then you're going to have the courage to move ahead. So we need to ask God to fill us with His Spirit.

Now you already know who you need to deal with right now. As I'm talking God is revealing those to you that you need to reconcile conflict with in your life. So ask God to give you love for that person so that you might have the courage to resolve that conflict. Talk to God about that conflict before you talk to that person. But then, when God gives you the courage to talk to them, go straight to THEM and no one else.

B) Once you have the courage to take the initiative to resolve the conflict, you need to deal with the timing of confronting that person. Timing is everything in conflict resolution. You've got to do it at the right time. Now, don't cop out and say, “Ok, when they're ready, they'll come to me and we'll work it out!” NO! NO! NO! You have to take the initiative and God's given you the courage to do it, so just get on with it. It's always MY move to conflict management. God expects you to take the first step to being a peacemaker.

Jesus talks about this in the Sermon on the Mount in [Matthew 5:22-23](#) as He teaches about taking the initiative in conflict resolution. He says, [“If you're standing before the altar in the Temple, giving an offering](#)

to God, and you suddenly remember someone has something against you, leave your offering there beside the

altar; Go at once and first be reconciled to that person. Then come and offer your gift to God.” He’s saying

that even if you are right here at church, worshipping God, and you remember that someone has something against you – there’s a conflict between you and another person – STOP what you’re doing and leave your worship right here and go to that person and solve the problem. Remember that conflict separates you from prayer and worship of God, so before you try to worship the Lord, make sure that you resolve the conflict FIRST and THEN come to worship the Lord.

Some of you shouldn’t be here! Reconciliation takes priority over worship! You like to worship, you like to come and sing, you like to hear God’s Word, you like to learn the principles of life? Good. But God says if you come to worship and you’ve got something out of whack with somebody else, you need to go get that right first and then come back. Leave your offering here, become reconciled with the one you’re in conflict with, and then come back and worship the Lord. It doesn’t matter if you’re the offended or the offender; you need to take the initiative. It’s always your move. And don’t put it off – DO IT NOW! Don’t delay the meeting – don’t postpone it or else it could go for days, or weeks or even years. Plan the meeting TODAY!

Let me give you 4 quick things to setting up that conflict resolution meeting. One, choose the right time. Choose the time when you’re both at your best. Make sure that both of you are ready to receive it. Make sure that both of you are able to give your full attention to the discussion.

Two, choose the right place. Make it a relaxed place where it’s quiet, where you won’t be disturbed by the kids or the dog. Make it a place where you can talk frankly and honestly, where emotion can come out without embarrassment.

Three, pray before the meeting. This is very important, and you say, “God, I’m scared to do this but I need to be filled with Your love and I need You to help me to do this right.” If it’s a deep problem it may take more than one meeting, but still pray before the meeting.

Fourth, come with a positive attitude. You want to work out the problem, not attack the other person. You’re not coming to demean or demand or disable. You’re coming to say, “We’re on the same team here. Let’s try to make this thing work.” And you work on the issues with positive attitudes.

You are the one taking the initiative because Jesus commands it so that your relationships might become strong and grow so deep that nothing will be able to separate you. You want to bridge that chasm that has developed between you so that you can genuine love each other again. Remember you're out of fellowship with God, your prayers aren't heard, and you're not happy until you deal with the issue.

Before we move on to the next 6 issues in resolving conflict, I want to stop for a moment and pray with you. As we bow our heads I want you to think of who you need to have this conversation with. You're out of harmony with them. You haven't talked about it. You haven't brought it up. You haven't dealt with it. Maybe you both know about it – maybe only you know about it. But think of who you need to resolve a conflict with. Then right now say, "God, I'm scared to death, but I'm asking you to give me the courage to resolve this conflict. I don't need it in my life one second more. Help me!"

Father, I look out on all of these people that I love so much, our church family. I ask You to give them the courage and the strength to deal with these issues. I pray that they would live conflict-free lives as much as possible, as far as it depends on them, that they may experience Your joy, Your happiness, and receive the answers to their prayers and all that You have planned for them. This I pray in Jesus' Name. AMEN.

So once you've taken the initiative and set up the meeting with that person you're in conflict with, here are the things you do. **#2 on your sheet – CONFESS MY PART OF THE CONFLICT.**

Once the issue is presented, share your part of the conflict. It's the biblical thing to do. They may be 99.9% wrong and you're only .1% wrong, but you confess your part first. That's called humility. You deal with your part first instead of accusing, attacking or blaming the other person. Be humble.

Now we all have blind spots and Jesus deals with this in **Matthew 7:3. He says, "Why do you notice the little piece of dust [also said of as a splinter] in your friend's eye, but you don't notice the big piece of wood [the telephone pole] in your own eye? First, take the wood [the telephone pole] out of your own eye. Then you will see clearly to take the dust [the splinter] out of your friend's eye."** Start with your part of the conflict first.

What we need to do is this; start by asking **ourselves** "Am I being unrealistic? Am I being ungrateful in this relationship? Am I being insensitive? Am I being oversensitive? Am I being too demanding?" I have to find the answers to these questions first before I can go on with the other person. I have to start with my part of the conflict.

But you know the biggest excuse for divorce is today – the number one reason people are giving for their reason for filing for divorce? They say, “We’re just **incompatible**.” But incompatibility is a myth when it comes to marriage relationships. It’s made up by divorce attorneys to blur the real issue. There’s no such thing as incompatibility. Any two people can get along if they’ll grow up. You see, in our society today so many couples have gotten married, but neither one has grown up to maturity and they are still focused on THEMSELVES. They are self-centered, they’re stubborn, they want it their own way and they don’t take the other person into consideration. We’d have a lot fewer divorces if people had to file – “We’re divorcing because we’re both immature, and we refuse to grow up. We’re self-centered and neither one of us is willing to change (or only one of us is willing to change). That’s the real issue.” People can fall in love with anyone, AND STAY IN LOVE WITH ANYONE, because love is a choice! Each person chooses to either love or not love another.

But unresolved conflict in the marriage relationship causes relational logjams that prevent issues from being worked out, thus causing the marriage problems. And we break the logjams by humbling ourselves first by admitting that we’ve been insensitive, that we’ve been self-centered, and then apologizing for it. We admit our part of the conflict. God gives grace to the humble, but He resists the proud (I Peter 5:5).

#3 on your sheet, the third thing to resolving conflict is **YOU LISTEN FOR THE HURT**. I’ve mentioned this the last two weeks, and I’ll say it again, “Hurt people hurt people.” When there’s hurt in our lives we tend to hurt other people around us. If someone’s hurting you I will guarantee you it’s because someone’s hurt them. You might be the culprit, or someone else may have hurt them, but they’re hurting because they’ve been hurt. So you have to listen to the hurt in the midst of the conflict. It doesn’t matter if it’s marriage or the market place or the middle east, when people feel fearful or they feel robbed of their dignity or they feel afraid, out of that fear comes hurt and out that hurt comes conflict.

So how do we hear their hurt? How do we listen for the hurt of others? **James 1:19 says it precisely,** **“Be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry.”** We have to listen in order to hear the hurt. God has given us two ears and one mouth so that we might hear twice as much as we talk, thus giving us the ability to hear the hurt of the other, if we use our hearing more than our talking. This one verse is a great key to diffusing

a conflict. We've got to listen so that we can understand their background, understand their perspective, and understand their temperament. James 1:9 memorized and utilized in our lives can save you thousands of dollars in counseling expenses. Listening is important to resolving conflict.

As you are listening to the hurt of the other there are two areas that you need to be especially considerate about. Romans 15:2 says, "*We must be considerate about the doubts and fears of others.*" All of us have doubts and fears, so conflict usually comes because a doubt or fear has been hit. Listening to the other person's doubts and fears allows us to hear the hurt.

4 on your sheet is the next thing to do to resolving conflict: **YOU CONSIDER THEIR PERSPECTIVE**. Think about how the other is looking at the situation. Consider their viewpoint. You have this moment when you intentionally shift your focus from your needs, your point, your winning the argument to **THEIR NEEDS**. You try to get their perspective on the issue.

The important thing is to remember to take the initiative in looking for the other person's perspective. If you want to get behind the wall that is between you, it is vital that you hear the story from both sides. Ever hear a friend complaining about something someone did to them? It's their perspective on the situation. But did you ever go and hear it from the other person's perspective? May be completely different because it comes from THAT person's perception of what happened. To get both sides to an argument, we must be willing to listen to **BOTH SIDES** of the argument. Philippians 2:4-5 gives us guidance to seeing another person's perspective:

"Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus." The key word in this verse is to **LOOK** not only to our own personal perspective, but the other person's, too. The Greek word here is "*scopos*," where we get the word scope from. Microscopes help us to see the minute details of life, while telescopes allow us to see the great things of life around us. They both look beyond the self to see from a different perspective. That's the key – look beyond your own perspective to understand the perspective of the other. And in any relationship, especially a marriage relationship, if both individuals are giving their full attention at understanding the perspective of the other, there will be few misunderstandings. You've got to consider the other perspective.

#5 on the back side of your sheet today gives us the fifth step to resolving conflict: **TELL THE**

TRUTH TACTFULLY. In the middle of this peace accord meeting you're having with the other person, you must tell the truth tactfully. We must "*speak the truth in love*" as Paul tells the Ephesians (4:15). It may be the truth, but if you're using it without love, it will be heard like a club alongside the head. It may be the truth, but we're not to use it to beat up other with it. We must present the truth in love, as we would want to have it spoken to us. **Proverbs 12:18** tells us, "*Reckless words pierce like a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.*" It's easy to recklessly speak when we're in arguments, but those words are like the blade of a sword slicing and cutting the other person to shreds. Foolish words hurt, but wise words spoken in love bring healing.

Fact is, however, that we never persuade another person of our perspective by reckless, hurtful words. It never works to be abrasive and cross. Unless you tactfully present the truth (in love) the words will never be heard. Truth without love is resisted. Truth wrapped in love is received. When love is expressed in telling the truth, people respond much quicker to that truth. We must love people before we give them the truth, otherwise they will not trust us with the truth, and our words will be wasted.

Ephesians 4:29 say it well; "*Do not use harmful words, but only helpful words, the kind that build up and provide what is needed.*" So when we're meeting with this crazy maker in our life, we also need to ask ourselves, "Is what I'm about to say going to be helpful for them or is it going to be hurtful for them? Is it going to build them up or is it going to tear them down? Is it persuasive or abrasive?" The trick is to attack the problem rather than the person. Address the issue, and love the person. And that leads us to the next step in resolving conflict.

#6 on your sheet is **FIX THE PROBLEM, NOT THE BLAME.** You only have a certain amount of emotional energy, especially when you're trying to resolve conflict. You can either use that energy to fix the blame on the other, or you can use that energy to fix the problem – but not both. So you have to ask yourself what's more important: to blame the other for the conflict, or work to resolve the conflict? If you have already started by confessing your part of the conflict, and you're listening to the hurt of the other, and then trying to understand their perspective, putting the blame back on them is so counter-productive. Any walls that had begun to come down before immediately go right back up and the person will shut down and that will end the meeting with no resolution to the conflict. So work hard to fix the problem and not the blame.

Please understand that there is a key rule here that, if followed, will help fix the problem and not fix the blame. That rule is to never, Never, NEVER, use weapons of mass destruction in your relationship, especially when you are meeting with the other to resolve the conflict. I talked about this the first week of the series in the discussion of the crazy makers' tactics to make us crazy. It's those buttons that once pushed destroy everything in their vicinity. It's the things we know about that person that we use in the arguments when we're backed into a corner and have no other escape but to completely annihilate the opposition. Even if you're on completely different sides of a perspective, these buttons are never to be pushed **IF YOU WANT TO RESOLVE THE CONFLICT** in your relationship. Weapons of mass destruction always destroy relationships.

What do I mean by WMD? I mean like threatening divorce to make the other person change. I mean like threatening to walk out if the other doesn't do what you want. I mean bringing up somebody's parents or family members in comparison. They are all **last resort** weapons that **must never be used** unless, of course, you want to **destroy** any hope of success in bringing resolution to the conflicts. Don't use them!

Colossians 3:8 lists some of the out-of-bounds weapons of mass destruction. It says, "You must rid yourself of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips." None of these are allowed. Angry rage is intimidating the other with anger. You cannot threaten the other person into doing the right thing. Malicious words are designed to hurt. These are the certain things you can say that will hurt, if not devastate, the other person. They are the words we often use to push the buttons of the other to push them into compliance. Don't do it! Don't push the button

Slander is similar to malice. Slanders are slurs, name calling using dirty names and nasty names. So Paul says, no labeling! No slander. No belittling. Belittling another is about as low as you can go as a human being. Little people belittle people. When you belittle someone you are showing how tiny your heart is. When you use slander to belittle other people, you only show how little you are. It's a WMD that destroys not only those you intend it against, but it destroys you, too. Don't resort to slandering.

Romans 14:13 also warns us, "Let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brother's way." The reason why we fix the problem and not the blame is because blaming is a form of judging and only God has the right to judge. You're not the

judge. You don't know motivation. We can't figure out anybody else's motivation, much less our own most of the time. Only God knows why people do what they do. God is the judge, so don't blame others. After all, if you're in this meeting to resolve conflict, blaming the other will not bring about the result you are after.

Blaming only causes a greater chasm between you because it puts out stumbling blocks and obstacles. Work on closing the gap by humbling yourself and keeping your cool and listening for the other person's perspective.

And that's exactly the point of our last step in resolving conflict. #7 on your sheet is **FOCUS ON**

RECONCILIATION, NOT RESOLUTION. **Reconciliation means reestablishing the relationship.**

Resolution means resolving every issue so that there are no longer disagreements or problems. But resolution will never be possible, because we all disagree with others about different things. So there will never be complete resolution on all your issues. Because all of us are different, we'll always have differences. We'll always have folks who disagree with us, so resolution will never be complete. It's futile to work toward resolution.

Reconciliation is the key that we're looking for – reestablishing the relationship. If you learn to disagree without being disagreeable, that's called wisdom. If you learn that you can have unity without uniformity, that's called wisdom. If you learn to walk hand in hand without having to see eye to eye, that's called wisdom. You don't have to agree on every issue to come to reconciliation.

If we focus on the relationship rather than the issues in that relationship, we'll see that there are some things that just aren't worth fighting over. If we focus on the relationship, some of those things in your wife or husband or parent or child that drive you nuts are just not worth arguing about. They aren't going to change, so you need to let them go. Just focus on the positive and not the negative, because those things just aren't going to change, especially if we're attacking them on it. Work on reestablishing the relationship, building bridges across the divisions in your life and let the little stuff go. Some differences just aren't arguing about.

But there's one more thing I want you to notice in this whole discussion of reconciliation. God has already begun the process for us. As humans, we are all sinners, rebellious of God's will and God's way. We have caused a great chasm between us and Him because of our sin. But God has already begun the process of reconciliation with us by sending Jesus to the Earth so that by trusting in Him and following His teachings and

commandments, we can restore our relationship with God, Himself. As we trust in Jesus, we find new life, eternal life beyond this life, because God initiated the process of reconciliation with us. If God can work with us as His button pushers, then He sets the example for us of how reconciliation can take place in our lives.

He invites us to do the same with those around us. Jesus says it like this in Matthew 5:9: “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called the children of God!” Not peace lovers; peace makers. We are called to be the peace makers in a world flooded with conflict. We’re not to be peace lovers, but rather peace makers, changing the hearts and lives of those around us. That means you take these steps and you use them and you teach them to others, and you become agents of reconciliation.

I Timothy 2: 5 closes out very nicely today. “*There is only one God and one Mediator who can reconcile God and people. He is Jesus Christ.*” He is our starting point. We get peace in our hearts by trusting in the Prince of Peace, and we share Him with all of those around us. Let’s do that.

Pray with me. God, I know You want me to be a peacemaker. I know You desire me to get rid of the conflict in my life. I know You want me to make peace both with You and with others. I want to be Your child, full of grace and peace. Thank You, Jesus, for setting the example of how to reconcile differences. Guide me today to initiate the process of reconciliation, to build bridges rather than walls. Help me to find the right time, and the right place to deal with that crazy maker in my life. Give me the courage to own my part of the problem and to be humble so I won’t stumble. Instead of attacking the person, help me attack the problem. Help me to consider their perspective and listen for their hurt. Help me to speak the truth tactfully, to fix the problem not the blame and to focus on reconciliation, not merely the resolving of all the disagreements. Guide me today, for I pray this in Jesus’ Name. AMEN.