

"HARMONY IN THE HOME"

Ephesians 4:25-5:2

Conflict in our families can be devastating. A self-centered spouse, a disrespectful child, a rebellious teenager, an abusive dad, or an adult son or daughter whose life is spiraling out of control can unleash a tidal wave of misery and mayhem in any family.

A man and his wife got into a heated argument. She snapped at him, "You don't seem to like any member of my family." He quickly replied, "That's not true. I love your mother-in-law."

I'm not sure that making a joke is a great way to handle conflict. Neither is the win at all cost approach, or the tendency to give in to avoid conflict strategy, or the silent treatment. Today, I want to share with you a strategy to resolve the conflicts in your family so that relationships will

be strengthened, not weakened. Open your Bible to Ephesians 4. **[Read 4:17-24]**

Have you repented of your sin? Have you received Jesus as your Savior and Lord? Every Christ follower is fully equipped to resolve conflict in the family, in the church, and in the workplace. You are a new person in Christ. ***You must choose to live in a way that is consistent with your new nature.** I want you to embrace this fundamental fact. . .

HARMONY IN THE HOME IS GOD'S WILL!

This morning I'm going to lift 6 conflict-resolving principles out of our text. Here's the first principle. . .

1. TELL THE TRUTH

Ephesians 4:25 . . . Therefore, laying aside falsehood, SPEAK TRUTH EACH ONE *of you* WITH HIS NEIGHBOR, for we are members of one another.

"Speak truth" emphasizes that. . .

Relationships are built on trust and trust is built on truth.

Speaking truth in the midst of a conflict is a must. However, we must be careful how we speak the truth. The Bible insists that we must speak the truth *in love* (**Eph. 4:15**).

You can resolve your conflicts in a way that honors the Lord Jesus Christ, strengthens your relationships, and preserves harmony in the home. Principle #1 is simple—Tell the truth. Here's the second one...

2. KEEP YOUR COOL

Ephesians 4:26–27—BE ANGRY, AND yet DO NOT SIN; do not let the sun go down on your anger, 27 and do not give the devil an opportunity.

There are two kinds of anger—*righteous and unrighteous*. It's perfectly reasonable for a believer to be angry when sin rears its ugly head in our most cherished relationships. Sin breeds conflict. John Stott wrote...

We human beings compromise with sin in a way in which God never does. In the face of blatant evil we should be indignant not tolerant, angry not apathetic. If God hates sin, his people should hate it too. [Ephesians, The Bible Speaks Today, p. 186]

Notice the restraint that Paul inserts here. We are to be angry and yet do not sin. Furthermore, we must not let the sun go down on our anger. This is a totally different Greek word, and it refers to anger that is mingled with irritation and resentment.

We must not make a shrine out of our anger because it will give the devil an opportunity to rip apart our most cherished relationships.

Appropriate expression of anger never causes fear, never belittles or intimidates, and never shuts another person down. (Chuck Swindoll, Marriage: From Surviving To Thriving, p. 89)

Here are the first two principles He has inserted into His Word for your benefit—tell the truth and keep your cool. This third one is important...

3. PUT OTHERS FIRST

Ephesians 4:28—He who steals must steal no longer; but rather he must labor, performing with his own hands what is good, so that he will have *something* to share with one who has need.

Have you stolen things from your family that could be blessing to them? It could be. . .

- the selfish use of money
- breaking a confidence
- an improper use of time
- a blatant act of disobedience
- an obsession with social media
- an unbalanced focus on your career
- an improper emotional attachment

Have these unmet expectations created friction in your family? Are you selfish or do you put others first?

Philippians 2:3–4—Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; **4** do not *merely* look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.

Selfishness is the root cause of most family conflicts. We must be considerate of others! Here's the essence of our text. . .

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Don't you want to resolve your conflicts in a healthy way? You must tell the truth, keep your cool, and put others first. Here's the fourth principle...

4. GUARD YOUR TONGUE

Ephesians 4:29–30—Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such *a word* as is good for edification according to the need *of the moment*, so that it will give grace to those who hear. 30 Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

An “unwholesome word” is one that is rotten and worthless.¹ It is a word that injures or causes dissension. As followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, we must seek to please Him and that includes *what we say* and *how we say it*.

In a 2011 *Leadership Journal* article, Gordon MacDonald shared a moving story about his friends Dr. Paul and Edith Rees. When the Rees's were in their 90s, MacDonald asked if they still fought after 60-plus years of marriage.

¹Kenneth S. Wuest, *Wuest's Word Studies from the Greek New Testament : For the English Reader* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997, c1984), Eph 4:29.

"O, sure we do," Dr. Rees responded. "Yesterday morning was a case in point. Edith and I were in our car, and she was driving. She failed to stop at a stop sign, and it scared me half to death."

"So what did you do?" MacDonald asked.

"Well, I've loved Edith for all these years, and I have learned how to say hard things to her. But I must be careful because, when Edith was a little girl, her father always spoke to her harshly. And today when she hears a manly voice speak in anger—even my voice—she is deeply, deeply hurt."

"But, Paul," MacDonald said, "Edith is 90-years-old. Are you telling me that she remembers a harsh voice from that many years ago?"

"She remembers that voice more than ever," Rees said.

MacDonald asked, "So how did you handle that driving situation from the other day?"

"Ah," he said, "I simply said, 'Edith, darling, after we've had our nap this afternoon, I want to discuss a thought I have for you. And when the

nap was over I did. I was calm; she was ready to listen, and we solved our little problem."

MacDonald concluded: "These are the words of a man who has learned that conflict is necessary, can be productive, but must be managed with wisdom and grace." *Gordon MacDonald, "When Bad Things Happen to Good Relationships," Leadership Journal (Winter, 2011)*

Here's something you should remember. . .

Proverbs 12:18—There is one who speaks rashly like the thrusts of a sword, But the tongue of the wise brings healing.

Attack the problem that is causing the conflict; don't attack the person you are having the conflict with.

When you use evil or rotten words in the heat of a conflict, it grieves the Holy Spirit. Turn to Jesus for help when conflict arises. Never forget this truth. . .

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Pray for His wisdom and His strength before you say a word. We have looked at four biblical, Christ-centered principles that will help you—tell the truth, keep your cool, put others first, and guard your tongue. Here's the fifth one...

5. WATCH YOUR HEART

Conflict exposes the weakness in your own spiritual life. Ask the Holy Spirit to search your heart for any sin of word, deed, or thought that is grieving Him. Confess your sin to the Lord and forsake it. This will put you in a position to work toward a solution. Jesus said...

Matthew 7:3–5—“Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?
4 “Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ and behold, the log is in your own eye? **5** “You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother’s eye.

It's amazing how much *relational poison* can collect in our own hearts. Paul speaks to this...

Ephesians 4:31—Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice.

- Bitterness—long-standing resentment
- Wrath—a passionate rage
- Anger—a sullen hostility
- Clamor—shouting and screaming
- Slander—speaking evil of others
- Malice—plotting evil against others

Do you have any poison in your heart? Remember, as a believer, you have committed yourself to Jesus. None of this stuff can be tolerated. Ask the Lord to change your heart by draining the poison! Paul went on to list some great stuff the Lord wants to put in our hearts...

Ephesians 4:32—Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.

Hey, make sure your heart is filled to the rim with these three relational game changers...

- **Kindness—graciousness instead of harshness**
- **Tender-hearted—this is compassion**
- **Forgiveness—treating others with grace**

This is not pie-in-the-sky stuff. Here's the final principle and it's a biggie!

6. LOVE LIKE JESUS

Ephesians 5:1–2—Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; 2 and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.

When conflict breaks out in your family, you must forgive the other person like God forgave you. Forgiveness is a promise to not...

- **keep using the offense as a weapon**
- **keep dwelling on the cause of conflict**
- **talk to other people about what he/she did**

■ let it hinder your relationship

You must love that person with a sacrificial, unconditional, grace-filled love that mirrors Jesus' love. You might be thinking, *"Pastor, I can't love somebody like this."* I want you to know that you can. Jesus has made you a new person, with new priorities, new power, and a new purpose.

CONCLUSION

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Why would I point to Jesus as the key to resolving conflict? It's because He has resolved the greatest of all conflicts and that would be the conflict between us and God. The Bible emphatically states that every person is a sinner against God and that sin separates us from Him. That should terrify us.

Matthew 10:28— "Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul;

but rather fear Him who is able to destroy
both soul and body in hell."

Over 2000 years ago Jesus, the Son of God, entered the human race to resolve the conflict between us and God. He offered Himself as a sacrifice for our sins on the cross to reconcile us and He rose from the dead to justify us. Do you want to see your conflict with God resolved? You must repent and place your faith in Him as your Lord and Savior. Turn to Him today!

Many of you have trusted Jesus and He has resolved your conflict with God. But, you are facing conflict in your family and it stings. Will you come to this altar and ask Jesus to help you...

- 1. TELL THE TRUTH**
- 2. KEEP YOUR COOL**
- 3. PUT OTHERS FIRST**
- 4. GUARD YOUR TONGUE**
- 5. CHANGE YOUR HEART**
- 6. LOVE LIKE JESUS**

May the Lord bless you and keep you. May He bring harmony to your home!

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Mark your calendar for September 14th. That's the day we've scheduled a marriage conference featuring Steve and Debbie Wilson. They will be tackling the issue of "Communication" between the husband and the wife.

Session #1—9:15

Session #2—3:00

Session #3—4:00

Childcare will be provided for preschoolers and children. Decide right now that you will make an investment in your marriage and family!

August 31, 2025
CFBC... "Family Talk"