

Biblical Conflict Resolution, Part 4 I prepare your retaliation

I. Your conflict is with sin, not people.

- Ephesians 6:12
- Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but it is against the Flesh.
- When the Bible talks about “flesh” it’s describing either the human body or this thing we know as the sin nature—that part of us inherited from Adam that causes us to be a sinner by state, disposition, and choice.
- The Flesh is the focus of our discussion today because it’s the temptation of the Flesh that leads your children to disobey or to spouses selfishly and arrogantly arguing with each other.

II. Your weapon is truth.

- II Corinthians 10:3-6
- In times of conflict we should not be rehearsing all of the things we’re going to say that will make the other person sad or mad or afraid or even “sorry” for what they did. We need to craft a discussion that’s going to target the lofty thoughts that lead them to ultimately rebel against God and subsequently sin against you.
- These weapons are the truth of God’s Word under which we are to bring every thought captive, resulting in obedience. The fortresses we’re trying to destroy are not people or relationships or wills, we’re trying to destroy the lies we believe. We’re trying to decimate the speculations that arrogantly act like our way is better than God’s. We need to decapitate the thoughts that are delusional enough to conclude that we should do what’s right in our own eyes.
- And though we will be using words, those words need to be motivated by spiritual goals not personal desires. Those words need to target the sinful spirit, not the individual before us. That means that our words need to be overflowing with God’s truth.
- Retaliating against sin with truth is aggressive. It’s powerful, zealous, forceful, and sharp . . . but all of those words describe biblical tactics that are not sinful. It’s never right to be aggressive and unloving.

III. Your weapon is love.

- Luke 6:27-36
 - The weapon you wield against the greatest enemy of sin is truth. The weapon you wield against the individual—the lesser enemy—is love. The most loving thing we can do in a person’s life is help destroy the fortress of delusional, sinful thinking.
 - The most loving thing we can do is speak the truth in love so that another person can be built up in Christ.
- I John 3:1-4:21
 - You will never be able to resolve conflict in a Christ-honoring way if you’re not a born again child of God.
 - When we pursue biblical conflict resolution, we’re fulfilling the purposes of God. Sin is of the devil, and since we’re targeting sin in our retaliation—and not the person—we’re targeting the purposes of the devil in this world.
 - Retaliating against a person in word or deed is always the result of sin. We haven’t done a good job of checking our focus by looking to our own hearts for any sin that may be creeping there, and now we’re sinning against them and multiplying the conflict in the situation. Sin is why Cain targeted his brother, and sin is why we target our family members and they target us.

- Our retaliation needs to be in truth. But it shouldn't just be what we say, it needs to be in how we live. It will never work to sound like we're saying all the right things while we desire our own way. We must love with word and deed in truth.
- There's a perpetual dichotomy in the Scriptures between the strategies of the world and of the children of God, and the strategies of God's people are clearly defined as a coupling of truth and love.

IV. Conclusion

- Please remember that this is still the preparation step. If you're allowing words to spill out of your mouth without first carefully preparing your worldview, your reaction, your focus, and your retaliation so that they all agree with God and are offered on the altar for His glory . . . then you are in sin and just as much a problem in this conflict as the other people are.
- This is the preparation step. As you prepared your worldview, you were remembering that disagreement is not wrong, but sin is. As you prepared your reaction, you tuned your heart to be thankful for what God wants to accomplish in your life during this conflict. As you prepared your focus, you begged God to help you search your own heart for any lurking sin that might multiply the current conflict. And as you're preparing your retaliation, you're not so much formulating a script as you are reminding yourself that the other person is not the enemy. You are going to need biblical truth to decimate the greater enemy, and you're going to need love to handle the lesser enemy.
- But we're not talking yet. It would be foolish to try to resolve conflict when we're arrogantly incapable of accepting disagreement, we're not thankful for the situation, we're not even remotely interested to consider that we may be sinning, and we're compiling our script to take our opponent off at the knees.
- These steps are helping you address the biggest problem in the situation . . . your own sinful heart. Only when we have torn down the fortresses of sinful thinking in our own lives can we help destroy those same fortresses in another's life . . . and those are Jesus' words.
- **What do you need to change in order to target the sin in the conflict instead of the person?**
 - Memorize and regularly recite Ephesians 6:12 and II Corinthians 10:3-6. We must intentionally and premeditatedly rewire our thinking, and that is going to take purposeful meditation on God's Word.
 - And if you really struggle with this, do not speak a word in times of conflict until you have looked at the other person and said, "I don't want to fight you. I want to fight with you to target the real enemy in this situation, and that's my sin and your sin. Will you help me do that?"
 - Perhaps it will help all of your focus on what's most important.