



Resolving Conflict in the Home

Adapted from “Home Improvement” series by Rod Loy

Where there are more than two persons there will be conflict. This is true even in the home. If you think your home is abnormal because you have conflict in it, be at peace, you are not alone. Your home is natural and normal if there is conflict in it. Read the following story:

Families matter to God. That’s why few things are more painful than unresolved family conflict. Domineering in-laws, wayward teens, or jealous stepchildren can turn any happy home into a war zone. Issues such as whose turn it is to take out the trash and whether your teenage daughter finished her homework before she turned on the computer are bothersome but relatively minor issues that can generally be resolved with minimal disruption to family life.

Other issues present a greater challenge—the son who disowns his Christian upbringing to pursue a homosexual relationship; the mother-in-law whose abuse and manipulation threatens to destroy a woman’s marriage and her health; the father with mental illness who abuses his children. These situations are real; sadly, they occur in Christian families. While some situations are resolved over time, others can go on for months, even years.

Karen and her husband, Paul, a pastor, had just accepted an appointment at a large church in a new community. Things seemed to be going well until Sarah, their 17-year-old daughter, announced she was pregnant out of wedlock. To complicate matters, Sarah had fallen in love with a young man of another race; the baby was biracial. In the eyes of their new church home, biracial dating was off limits.

The pregnancy drove a wedge between Karen and her daughter. As tensions mounted, discussions gave way to intense arguments. Karen insisted Sarah give the baby up for adoption.

After the birth, Sarah turned the baby over to a social worker who placed him in a foster home. As the birth mother, Sarah was given a fifteen-day grace period to surrender her parental rights. During those fifteen days, God spoke to Karen through His Word, convicting her of her prejudice, selfishness, and hypocrisy. “I changed my mind about the adoption,” said Karen. She and Paul spoke and agreed that Sarah’s baby would come home to live with them. “We saw this as God’s perfect will for this precious baby boy and his sweet mother.”

Months of conflict melted away as all three of them rejoiced at the unexpected outcome. God’s grace turned a painful situation into a wonderful blessing.¹

¹ Mary J. Yerkes, “Family Ties: When Conflict Strikes Close to Home,” Focus on the Family, 2008, <http://www.focusonthefamily.com/lifechallenges/relationship-challenges/conflict-resolution/family-tieswhen-conflict-strikes-close-to-home> (accessed July 6, 2017).

COURAGE

C1: Describe how your family growing up handled conflict.

C2: Describe how you and your family handle conflict now.

C3: Read and answer the following.

Mark 3:25 (ESV) And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand.

- What do you glean from this verse about family relationships?

- How do you deal with the natural everyday ordinary conflicts of life?

STRENGTH

S1: Read and answer the following.

James 4:1 (ESV)

- From this verse, what is the reason for conflict?
- Describe a time in your life when you were in conflict with someone over your competing desires.
- Spend thirty days asking the Holy Spirit to reveal to you any unspoken expectations you have placed on your family. Write out a plan to let go of these unspoken expectations.

S2: Read and answer the following.

Psalm 139:23 (ESV)

- According to this verse, what should you do before you respond to conflict.
- On a scale of 1-4, with 1 being very well and 4 being not very well, rate yourself on how well you make sure your thoughts are accurate before you respond to a situation. Write out a plan to improve.

S3: Look at five possible responses to conflict and answer the following.

My Way: I don't care how it affects you, I am going to have my way.

No Way: There is no way I am going to deal with conflict because it is too heavy.

Your Way: You internalize your feelings and emotions and let the other person have their way.

Half Way: We can't satisfy each other so let's just meet in the middle.

Our Way: Let's meet together with Christ in the middle and let the three of us work it out.

- From these five responses which one do you tend to default to when you are in a conflict? Why? What steps can you take to get to the **Our Way** response?

ENDURANCE

E1: How was conflict resolved in your relationships and home when you were growing up? How is conflict resolved in your relationships and home today?

E2: Read and answer the following.

Ephesians 2:16 (ESV)

James 1:5 (ESV)

- From these verses, what are two action steps you can take to resolve conflict in your home?

E3: Read and answer the following.

Philippians 2:3–5 (ESV)

Matthew 7:3–5 (ESV)

- From these verses, what is the action step you need to take to resolve conflict in your home?
- On a scale from 1-4, with 1 being focused on others and 4 being focused on me, rate yourself on where your focus is?

E4: Read and answer the following.

Ephesians 4:31 (ESV)

Matthew 5:23–24 (ESV)

Proverbs 13:10 (ESV)

- From these verses, what are three action steps you need to take to resolve conflict in your home?

- In the next thirty days, sit down with your family and write out rules for resolving conflict in your home.