

## The Four G's

**H**onour

- "do [everything] for the glory of God"

**E**xamine

- "take the plank out of your own eye"

**A**dmonish

- "go and point out their fault"

**R**econcile

- "go and be reconciled"

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## A Theology for Conflict Resolution

Conflict is not necessarily bad or destructive. Even when conflict is caused by sin and causes a great deal of stress, God can use it for good (see [Rom. 8:28-29](#)). As the Apostle Paul wrote in [1 Corinthians 10:31-11:1](#), conflict actually provides three significant opportunities. By God's grace, you can use conflict to:

- Glorify God (by trusting, obeying, and imitating him)
- Serve other people (by helping to bear their burdens or by confronting them in love)
- Grow to be like Christ (by confessing sin and turning from attitudes that promote conflict).

These concepts are totally overlooked in most conflicts because people naturally focus on escaping from the situation or overcoming their opponent. Therefore, it is wise to periodically step back from a conflict and ask yourself whether you are doing all that you can to take advantage of these special opportunities.

### 1st G: Glorify God

**Honour**

When the Apostle Paul urged the Corinthians to live "to the glory of God," he was not talking about one hour on Sunday morning. He wanted them to show God honor and bring him praise in day-to-day life, especially by the way that they resolved personal conflicts (see [1 Cor. 10:31](#)).

"How can I please and honor the Lord in this situation?"

As mentioned above, you can glorify God in the midst of conflict by trusting him, obeying him, and imitating him (see [Prov. 3:4-6](#); [John 14:15](#); [Eph. 5:1](#)). One of the best ways to keep these concerns uppermost in your mind is to regularly ask yourself this focusing question: "How can I please and honor the Lord in this situation?"

### 2nd G: Get the Log Out of Your Own Eye

**Examine**

One of the most challenging principles of peacemaking is set forth in [Matthew 7:5](#), where Jesus says, "You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye."

There are generally two kinds of "logs" you need to look for when dealing with conflict. First, you need to ask whether you have had a critical, negative, or overly sensitive attitude that has led to unnecessary conflict. One of the best ways to do this is to spend some time meditating on [Philippians 4:2-9](#), which describes the kind of attitude Christians should have even when they are involved in a conflict.

The second kind of log you must deal with is actual sinful words and actions. Because you

are often blind to your own sins, you may need an honest friend or adviser who will help you to take an objective look at yourself and face up to your contribution to a conflict.

When you identify ways that you have wronged another person, it is important to admit your wrongs honestly and thoroughly. One way to do this is to use the Seven A's of Confession. \* See page 5

"Conflict is often fueled by good desires that you have elevated to sinful demands" The most important aspect of getting the log out of your own eye is to go beyond the confession of wrong behavior and face up to the root cause of that behavior. The Bible teaches that conflict comes from the desires that battle in your heart (James 4:1-3; Matt. 15:18-19). Some of these desires are obviously sinful, such as wanting to conceal the truth, bend others to your will, or have revenge. In many situations, however, conflict is fueled by good desires that you have elevated to sinful demands, such as a craving to be understood, loved, respected, or vindicated.

Any time you become excessively preoccupied with something, even a good thing, and seek to find happiness, security or fulfillment in it rather than in God, you are guilty of idolatry. Idolatry inevitably leads to conflict with God ("You shall have no other gods before me"). It also causes conflict with other people. As James writes, when we want something but don't get it, we kill and covet, quarrel and fight (James 4:1-4).

There are three basic steps you can take to overcome the idolatry that fuels conflict. First, you should ask God to help you see where you have been guilty of wrong worship, that is, where you are focusing your love, attention, and energy on something other than God. Second, you should specifically identify and renounce each of the desires contributing to the conflict. Third, you should deliberately pursue right worship, that is, to fix your heart and mind on God and to seek joy, fulfillment, and satisfaction in him alone.

As God guides and empowers these efforts, you can find freedom from the idols that fuel conflict and be motivated to make choices that will please and honor Christ. This change in heart will usually speed a resolution to a present problem, and at the same time improve your ability to avoid similar conflicts in the future.

### 3rd G: Gently Restore **Admonish**

Another key principle of peacemaking involves an effort to help others understand how they have contributed to a conflict. When Christians think about talking to someone else about a conflict, one of the first verses that comes to mind is Matthew 18:15: "If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you." If this verse is read in isolation, it seems to teach that we must always use direct confrontation to force others to admit they have sinned. If the verse is read in context, however, we see that Jesus had something much more flexible and beneficial in mind than simply standing toe to toe with others and describing their sins.

Just before this passage, we find Jesus' wonderful metaphor of a loving shepherd who goes to look for a wandering sheep and then rejoices when it is found (Matt. 18:12-14). Thus, Matthew 18:15 is introduced with a theme of restoration, not condemnation. Jesus

repeats this theme just after telling us to “go and show him his fault” by adding, “If he listens to you, you have won your brother over.” And then he hits the restoration theme a third time in verses 21–35, where he uses the parable of the unmerciful servant to remind us to be as merciful and forgiving to others as God is to us (Matt. 18:21–35).

Jesus is clearly calling for something much more loving and redemptive than simply confronting others with a list of their wrongs. Similarly, Galatians 6:1 gives us solid counsel on our what our attitude and purpose ought to be when we go to our brother. “Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently.” Our attitude should be one of gentleness rather than anger, and our purpose should be to restore rather than condemn.

Yet even before you go to talk with someone, remember that it is appropriate to overlook minor offenses (see Prov. 19:11). As a general rule, an offense should be overlooked if you can answer “no” to all of the following questions:

- Is the offense seriously dishonoring God?
- Has it permanently damaged a relationship?
- Is it seriously hurting other people? and
- Is it seriously hurting the offender himself?

If you answer “yes” to any of these questions, an offense is too serious to overlook, in which case God commands you to go and talk with the offender privately and lovingly about the situation. As you do so, remember to:

- Pray for humility and wisdom
- Plan your words carefully (think of how you would want to be confronted)
- Anticipate likely reactions and plan appropriate responses (rehearsals can be very helpful)
- Choose the right time and place (talk in person whenever possible)
- Assume the best about the other person until you have facts to prove otherwise (Prov. 11:27)
- Listen carefully (Prov. 18:13)
- Speak only to build others up (Eph. 4:29)
- Ask for feedback from the other person
- Recognize your limits (only God can change people; see Rom. 12:18; 2 Tim. 2:24-26)

If an initial conversation does not resolve a conflict, do not give up. Review what was said and done, and look for ways to make a better approach during a follow up conversation. It may also be wise to ask a spiritually mature friend for advice on how to approach the other person more effectively. Then try again with even stronger prayer support.

If repeated, careful attempts at a private discussion are not fruitful, and if the matter is still too serious to overlook, you should ask one or two other people to meet with you and your opponent and help you to resolve your differences through mediation, arbitration, or accountability (see Matt. 18:16-20; 1 Cor. 6:1-8)

## 4th G: Go and be Reconciled

# Reconcile

One of the most unique features of biblical peacemaking is the pursuit of genuine forgiveness and reconciliation. Even though Christians have experienced the greatest forgiveness in the world, we often fail to show that forgiveness to others. To cover up our disobedience we often use the shallow statement, "I forgive her—I just don't want to have anything to do with her again." Just think, however, how you would feel if God said to you, "I forgive you; I just don't want to have anything to do with you again"?

Praise God that he never says this! Instead, he forgives you totally and opens the way for genuine reconciliation. He calls you to forgive others in exactly the same way: "Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you" (Col. 3:12-14; see also 1 Cor. 13:5; Psalm 103:12; Isa. 43:25). One way to imitate God's forgiveness is to make the Four Promises of Forgiveness\* when you forgive someone.

\* See page 6

Remember that forgiveness is a spiritual process that you cannot fully accomplish on your own. Therefore, as you seek to forgive others, continually ask God for grace to enable you to imitate his wonderful forgiveness toward you.

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# Seven A's of Confession

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## Confession Brings Freedom

Many people have never experienced the freedom of repentance and forgiveness. Why? It's often because they never learned how to make a sincere and believable confession.

Instead, they say things like: "I'm sorry if I hurt you." "Maybe I was wrong." "Let's just forget the past." "I know I shouldn't have yelled at you, but you made me so mad."

These worthless statements seldom trigger genuine forgiveness and reconciliation. If you really want to make peace, ask God to help you breathe grace by humbly and thoroughly admitting your wrongs. One way to do this is to use the **Seven A's of Confession**.

1. **Address** everyone involved (All those whom you affected)
2. **Avoid** if, but, and maybe (Do not try to excuse your wrongs)
3. **Admit** specifically (Both attitudes and actions)
4. **Acknowledge** the hurt (Express sorrow for hurting someone)
5. **Accept** the consequences (Such as making restitution)
6. **Alter** your behavior (Change your attitudes and actions)
7. **Ask** for forgiveness

See [Matthew 7:3-5](#); [1John 1:8-9](#); [Proverbs 28:13](#).

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# Four Promises of Forgiveness

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## Forgive as God Forgave You

Through forgiveness God tears down the walls that our sins have built, and he opens the way for a renewed relationship with him. This is exactly what we can do when we forgive as the Lord forgives us: We release the person who has wronged us from the penalty of being separated from us. We do not hold wrongs against others, do not think about the wrongs, and do not punish others for them. Therefore, forgiveness may be described as a decision to make four promises:

1. "I will not dwell on this incident."
2. "I will not bring up this incident again and use it against you."
3. "I will not talk to others about this incident."
4. "I will not let this incident stand between us or hinder our personal relationship." \*\*

By making and keeping these promises, you can tear down the walls that stand between you and your offender. You promise not to dwell on or brood over the problem or to punish by holding the person at a distance. You clear the way for your relationship to develop unhindered by memories of past wrongs. This is exactly what God does for us, and it is what he calls us to do for others.

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\*\* In cases of abuse, forgiveness can and should include the establishment of safe boundaries for emotional and physical safety. See *The Peacemaker*, pp. 156-7, 284.

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