



Freedom

Fellowship Church

Question: "How does one handle conflict in a marriage (or any relationship for that matter)?"

Answer: Because of the fallen nature of man, conflicts in relationships are a fact of life, even for believers in Christ. Loving communication doesn't come naturally or easily to anyone. For unbelievers, remedy for conflicts is difficult because without Christ humans do not have the capacity for unselfish love ([Ephesians 4:22-32](#)). Christians, however, have the Bible for instructions in relationships. Applying biblical principles to relationships will enable us to handle conflict most effectively.

The first and most important principle in resolving conflict in relationships, especially in marriage, is to love one another as Christ has loved us ([John 13:34](#)) and gave Himself for us. [Ephesians 5:21-30](#) describes relationships within families: we are to submit to one another in love and put the needs of others ahead of our own. This is especially true in marriage where the husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the church and care for her as he cares for his own body. In turn, a wife is to submit to her husband and respect him ([Ephesians 5:22, 30](#)).

This would seem to be a fairly simple directive except for the natural tendency of humans to be reactive in relationships, rather than proactive. Wives are usually eager to submit to husbands who love them as Christ loved the church, and husbands are usually more than willing to love wives who respect and submit to them. Therein lies the problem. Each is waiting for the other to make the first move. But God's commands for husbands and wives are not conditional. Submission is not contingent upon love, and love is not contingent upon respect. Taking the first step in obedience, regardless of the actions of the other, goes a long way to breaking down the conflict and establishing new patterns of behavior.

With that in mind, when conflict arises the first step is self-examination ([2 Corinthians 13:5](#)). After we have brought our concerns to the Lord and been honest with ourselves about our own failures or selfish desires, then we can approach others with our concerns. Furthermore, God designed believers to meet each other's needs peacefully ([Colossians 3:15](#)). We all need grace for our own mistakes and we must have grace for others when communicating our needs and concerns ([Colossians 4:6](#)).

Communicating truth in love is the key to being heard because only when we communicate to others their value in our eyes will they be able to accept hard truths ([Ephesians 4:15](#)). People who feel attacked and criticized will only become defensive and at that point, communication inevitably breaks down. Conversely, people who feel we care about them and want good things for them will trust us to communicate with them in love and concern for their welfare. So speaking the truth in love is absolutely essential for conflict resolution. This is particularly true in marriage, where continuous close contact with a spouse who has disappointed us often brings out the worst in us. Hurt feelings produce harsh words which, in turn, produce more hurt feelings. Practicing the discipline of thinking carefully and praying before we speak can break this vicious cycle. Godly communication can be put in simple terms by remembering to treat others the way we want to be treated ([Luke 6:31](#)). God said



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blessed are the peacemakers, and that is always the goal for Christians ([Matthew 5:9](#)).

There are many aspects to relationships, conflict, and communication, and the Bible is full of wisdom for godly living. Here are specific scriptural commands of how we ought to treat one another:

To solve marriage conflict, we must:

Be at peace with one another - [Mark 9:50](#)

Love one another - [John 13:34](#); [Romans 12:10](#); [1 Peter 4:8](#); [1 John 3:11](#), [23](#); [4:7](#), [11](#), [12](#)

Build up one another - [Romans 14:19](#); [Ephesians 4:12](#); [1 Thessalonians 5:11](#)

Be of the same mind toward one another - [Romans 12:16](#)

Give preference to one another - [Romans 12:10](#)

Greet one another - [Romans 16:16](#)

Esteem others as better than yourself - [Philippians 2:3](#)

Serve one another - [Galatians 5:13](#)

Receive one another - [Romans 15:7](#)

Be devoted to one another - [Romans 12:10](#)

Rejoice or weep with one another - [Romans 12:15](#)

Admonish one another - [Romans 15:14](#); [Colossians 3:16](#)

Care for one another - [1 Corinthians 12:25](#)

Show tolerance toward one another - [Romans 15:1-5](#); [Ephesians 4:2](#); [Colossians 3:13](#)

Be kind and forgiving to one another - [Ephesians 4:32](#); [Colossians 3:13](#)

Submit to one another - [Romans 12:10](#); [Ephesians 5:21](#); [1 Peter 5:5](#)

Comfort one another - [1 Thessalonians 4:18](#)

Encourage one another - [1 Thessalonians 5:11](#); [Hebrews 3:13](#)

Be compassionate with one another - [1 Peter 3:8](#)

Pray for one another - [James 5:16](#)

Confess your faults to one another - [James 5:16](#)

Accept one another - [Romans 14:1](#); [15:7](#)

To solve marriage conflict, we must not:

Be proud against each other - [1 Corinthians 4:6](#)

Judge one another - [Romans 12:16](#)

Lie to one another - [Colossians 3:9](#)

Be partial with one another - [1 Timothy 5:21](#)

Provoke or envy one another - [Galatians 5:26](#)

Lust after one another - [Romans 1:27](#)

Hate one another - [Titus 3:3](#)

Take one another to court - [1 Corinthians 6:1-7](#)

Use each other - [Galatians 5:15](#)