



From Conflict to Reconciliation

P_{review}

Who likes conflict? What makes conflict difficult for you—or easy for you? Do you have a plan for handling conflict? There are three outcomes to conflict: (1) reconciliation or restoration of the friendship, (2) estrangement or distance between two people who were once friends but now are more like enemies, and (3) showing politeness and cordiality as you would to a mere acquaintance; keeping someone at arm's length.

P_{raise}

Jesus is the greatest friend we can have. He is quick to forgive when we repent of our sins and ask for forgiveness. He loves us unconditionally no matter what. Read **Colossians 1:20**. Jesus gave His life to heal the broken human/divine relationship. Does anyone have a praise of how good a friend Jesus has been to you?

P_{arable}

The story is found in **Genesis 25-33**, but today we'll focus on one aspect of the story. Jacob and Esau were twin brothers, but surprisingly they didn't have a lot in common. I'm sure they had plenty of fights growing up, but they were still brothers, and most brothers love each other beneath the sibling rivalry.

As Jacob and Esau grew up, the distance between them widened. One day Jacob did something unforgivable. As their aged father Isaac was growing feeble, Jacob impersonated his older brother Esau and stole his blessing and birthright. Today that treachery would equate to one man stealing his brother's entire inheritance. It was a *big deal*.

Esau was so angry he threatened to kill Jacob. Jacob ran away to live with their uncle and hide from Esau. For 20 or more years Jacob had no communication with Esau and the conflict remained unresolved.

Finally the day came when Jacob was ready to return home to face his brother Esau. No matter how many years had passed Jacob was still full of guilt and fear; guilt for how he had wronged his brother and fear that Esau still wanted to kill him. Yet he gathered his family and headed home.



Esau heard the news and started traveling in order to meet Jacob, not to kill him but to welcome him home. When he saw Jacob in the distance he ran to meet him, embraced him, and they wept tears of joy and relief.

Present

It is said that time heals all wounds. In the case of Jacob and Esau, they both needed time to process their emotions, come to grips with reality, and choose to forgive each other. Time isn't what makes the wounds go away, but the work we do with God to receive healing for our wounds and to navigate through the pain until we arrive at forgiveness and reconciliation.

What conflict are you dealing with right now? Did you have a fight with your best friend, or your brother or sister? Are you in conflict with a teacher or a parent or another authority figure? Maybe you're in conflict with yourself because you're having a hard time accepting a difficult life situation that has caused you loss, grief, and pain.

Ppractice

Read **II Corinthians 5:18**. Because we have received forgiveness and reconciliation from God, He calls us to be ministers of reconciliation to others.

Almost all of us have experienced conflict in a relationship that hurts or destroys the relationship. Conflict isn't fun, whether you are the one that hurts others or the one who is being hurt. Sometimes the best thing we can do is give ourselves and the other person time and space to work through the pain caused by conflict.

It is said that timing is everything. I have to agree. The right words spoken at the wrong time can do just as much damage as saying the wrong words. In the heat of the moment we should think about the prudence of what we want to say before we actually say it, especially if we're angry or hurt. Give yourself time and space to process your emotions, and pray for God to give you wisdom on what to do and when to do it to restore the relationship.

Pray

Lord Jesus, thank You for giving your life to remit sin. You loved us and restored our broken relationship with You. Thank you for the work of reconciliation. We ask that You would help us to be ministers of reconciliation so that we can restore friendships after conflict has



occurred. Please give us wisdom to say the right words at the right time.

Plus

Whether you are the one who has been wronged, or the one who has done wrong, take the initiative to offer either an apology or forgiveness. Realize that God has called you to be a minister of reconciliation. Follow Jesus, our example of what it means to be reconciled.