

# Christ-like Conflict

(Part 5 of a 5-part series)

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In the last 4 articles we dealt with the 4 highly ineffective attitudes most people take when they're in a conflict situation – blaming, pleasing, law-keeping, and escaping. Each one seems to have a bit of usefulness to it, but each is ultimately selfish in its purpose.

How then can a child of God engage in conflict, and at the same time do so with selflessness and Godliness?

Let's take a look at how Jesus handled conflict during His ministry. Jesus didn't bury His feelings, and feel He did. Besides the joy that He alluded to many times, He knew anger (Matthew 21:12-22, Mark 11:12-25). He knew sadness (Luke 19:41-44, John 11:28-37). He knew fear (Luke 22:39-46). So since Jesus was without sin (Hebrews 7:26, 27), then there is no sin in recognizing and allowing our feelings to flow.

Jesus didn't blame. If there were a single person who ever walked the earth with a right to blame others for His own misery, Jesus was that person: a sinless man paying for the sins of all other men with the ultimate suffering – rejected by men and rejected by God in their place. Blaming no one for His misery, He knew how to take both friends and enemies to task (Matthew 16:23, 23:13-36), and He directed His anger at behaviours rather than at people. Even at the cross, how did He respond at the peak of His suffering? "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." (Luke 23:34)

Jesus didn't please men to satiate them. When He had something to say, He said it. (Matthew 23:13-36) When He did fully martyr Himself, at the whim of a godless people and the direction of godless authorities, He wasn't doing it to save Himself from trouble. He was submitting His life to the Will of His Father for our sake. (John 17)

Jesus didn't preach lawkeeping like the Pharisees. He didn't disconnect from his feelings and get "preachy", but stayed emotionally present with others and engaged in the conversation. He dined with tax collectors and sinners to spread His gospel. (Matthew 9:9-12) And when the Pharisees – the real preachers of lawkeeping – brought Him the woman caught in adultery, what did He tell her? "...go, and from now on sin no more." (John 8:1-11) Whenever Jesus quoted the

Old Testament laws, He didn't do so for His own ego boost; He did so for His hearers to find healing and accept His gift of righteousness.

Jesus certainly didn't try to escape conflict by changing the subject; he confronted hard questions head-on. He was the best teacher, who could turn a question around on the asker for his self-reflection, and understood how to reframe complex theological answers with parables sometimes followed up with an explanation.

How shall we engage in conflict using Jesus' example?

As far as it depends on us, we are to live peaceably. (Romans 12:18). We must take responsibility for our own actions (Galatians 6:4), while not bowing down to the whims of others (Galatians 6:5). Sometimes what can be more difficult is to remain emotionally present in relationships without preaching, and avoiding the urge to escape. Using Jesus' example, conflict well done is possible!

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