

e-concepts

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Resolving Conflicts with Vertical Thinking

Every character group in the Bible who resolved their conflicts by leaving God out saw their situation as a conflict between themselves and some other person (or group). They, therefore, usually attempted to resolve the problem with some win-lose or win-win system. But the men and women of God never did that. Godly people, when acting consistent with the will of God, saw the situation in a completely different way.

Godly people saw conflict situations primarily as a conflict with God, not as a conflict with people. They saw it vertically, not horizontally.

Let's look at Cain and Abel (Genesis 4:1-8) as one example. The apostle John wrote, *Cain, who was of the evil one, and slew his brother. And for what reason did he slay him? Because his deeds were evil, and his brothers were righteous* (1 John 3:12). Cain saw God's rejection of his sacrifice as a conflict with Abel. John tells us the reason was because his own deeds were evil. God defined the problem, as a conflict between Cain and God, but Cain didn't see it that way. He saw his problem as a competition with his brother and resolved it with win-lose. But John tells us that is because Cain's own deeds were evil. In other words, Cain's problem was a conflict between himself and God.

You can count on it. If you hate someone, it is because your own deeds are evil. You have looked at the conflict as one between you and some other person instead of between you and God.

The world will always define conflicts horizontally, between ourselves and someone else or between our people and theirs, such as conservatives vs. liberals, our nation vs. their nation, husbands vs. wives, children vs. parents, Arabs vs. Jews, Protestants vs. Catholics. But godly people never see it that way. Godly people see all conflicts as not with the other person at all but between their own sin nature and the will of God. If I have a conflict, it is between me and God. So if I hate someone, I have a conflict, but my conflict is with God. If he hates me, then he has a conflict. If I don't hate him, then only he has the conflict, but his conflict is with God.

Understanding that the real conflict is between ourselves and God, we can now face the other person in an entirely different way and with an entirely different set of principles, to accomplish an entirely different objective. Now our principles do not come from our own independently established value system (or self-actualization) but from the written Word of God. Now our objective is not to win but to bring glory to God. We still have to deal with the other person, of course, but now that will be done as a function of our obedience to God. Our actions toward the other person will be directed by God, with the objective of pleasing God. We will seek the best good for ourselves and the other person, but now that "best good" is defined not by what either of us want but what God says is the best good.

For more information see study book **Conflict Resolution** at relationalconcepts.org
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