

e-concepts

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Personal Conflict

Personal conflict is a state of opposition between persons which leads to enmity, that is, (1) hatred of another person or (2) seeing the other person as an enemy.

To have conflict is to begin down the road which leads to hatred and the creation of enemies. It may not be full-blown yet, but if left unchecked, unresolved, it will lead to hatred or seeing the other person as an enemy. This paper is just about personal conflict, not inner psychological conflict or conflict over things or businesses. Not all conflicts are personal and not all conflicts are conflicts, but all personal conflicts need resolution.

Paul gives us a list that is a part of the “deeds of the flesh” in Galatians 5:19-21 which have to do with personal relationships. *Now the deeds of the flesh are evident which are... enmity, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying.*

I suggest that you use this eight-item list to determine if your situation is a personal conflict and therefore needs resolution. Be honest with yourself and God as you think about your situation and ask other mature believers if they think this has developed into a personal conflict.

I suspect conflict is caused by the existence of more than one autonomous being when those beings compete for autonomy. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are autonomous beings but being without sin, they do not compete. If we were all in harmony with the autonomy of God, then we would not have a conflict with God or each other. Since there are no limits to divine resources, there is no need to compete for them. Personal conflict is framed in a context of competing for temporary limited earthly resources.

Every person or group in the Bible who resolved their conflicts leaving God out, saw their situation as a conflict between themselves and some other person, therefore they attempted to resolve the problem with some win-lose or win-win system. Godly people saw conflict situations primarily as a conflict with God, not as a conflict with people. They saw it vertically, not horizontally. You can count on it, if you hate someone, it's because your own deeds are evil. You've looked at the conflict as one between you and some other person instead of between you and God.

Godly people will 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 with God. If someone hates me, then he has a conflict with God. If I don't hate him, then only he has a conflict.

If we understand that the real conflict is between ourselves and God, and we know that our principles do not come from our own independently established value system but from the written Word of God, now our objective is not to win the conflict but to bring glory to God. We deal with the other person as a function of our obedience to God, with the objective of pleasing God. We will seek the best good for ourselves and the other person defined not by what either of us want but what God says is the best good.