

God's Blueprint For The Home

Lesson 11: God's Blueprint For Solving Conflict In The Home



Discovering God's Word
Bible Study Series

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Learn how God wants members of the home to respond to conflict

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Discovering God's Word Bible Study Series

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Written by Eric Krieg

About the author: My name is Eric Krieg. I am a disciple of Jesus, a Bible student, a truth seeker, and an evangelist. My interest is in using the Bible as my only guide in my faith. My desire is to help others understand the message of the Bible and pursue true, New Testament Christianity.

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My plea: It is my hope and prayer that you are searching for the truth that is contained in God's word, the Bible. My desire is to help you understand and obey these truths God has revealed in the pages of His word. It is to that end that I write this material. Please observe all of the Scripture references and evaluate whether the conclusions I have drawn are in harmony with God's word. If they are, I ask that you make honest application of those truths to your life and obey God's instructions.

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Lesson 11:

God's Blueprint For Solving Conflict In The Home

Whenever members of the home depart from the blueprint God has given, conflict often follows. The kinds of conflict that can exist in homes can happen in many different areas and between all the various members. Unfortunately, there are many homes that not only have conflict, but that also do not work to solve the conflict God's way.

God really does give us the perfect blueprint for all things pertaining to the home. So, if every member of the home will be committed to following the blueprint, conflict will be avoided. Then, God also gives all the answers to help us solve the conflict that does come up.

Of course, you must recognize that it is Satan, not God, who wants conflict in the home. Satan is the one who is pleased and served by most of the confrontations, arguments, strife, and division that happens in the home. Satan is the one who wants there to be barriers built between all the members of the home. God wants everyone to be unified in following His blueprint.

But, even in homes that work to pattern themselves after God's blueprint most of the time, people still sin and conflict results. So, we must all learn to both apply the pattern God has given so as to avoid the conflict (as we have already been considering) and the pattern God has given us for solving conflict in the home. Therefore, even when you are in the midst of a conflict in the home, you must remember to handle it God's way. Let's consider just a few points that God teaches us about handling conflict (generally) and make application of these points to the kinds of conflict we face in the home.

Determine To Seek Reconciliation

Conflict represents a kind of separation. There is some kind of strife or friction that exists between you and another person. So, whenever you recognize that this is the situation, you have a choice to make. Either you will ignore the conflict or you will determine to seek reconciliation.

Don't ignore conflict

Conflict, by its nature, is uncomfortable. It is not something that most people enjoy. So, there is a great temptation to just ignore the conflict that exists in the home and hope that it goes away on its own. Unfortunately, this especially seems to be a common character trait of men in the home. But, the head of the home should also work to lead his family through the conflict that comes up rather than to ignore problems and allow them to escalate!

Now, let me be perfectly clear, I am *not* talking about petty disagreements that just go away whenever people come to their senses about things. For, there are times for your words to be few and not to respond in haste to something that will not amount to anything. Don't go making a conflict where there is no real conflict!

Instead, I am talking about a real point of strife and division in the home. These things do *not* go away by themselves. Actually, these things have

a way of getting worse with time! So, God says that these things need to be dealt with appropriately.

Listen to Matthew 5:25-26. “Agree with your adversary quickly, while you are on the way with him, lest your adversary deliver you to the judge, the judge hand you over to the officer, and you be thrown into prison. Assuredly, I say to you, you will by no means get out of there till you have paid the last penny.”

While we will discuss verses 23 and 24 in just a few moments, I want you to notice the focus in this verse on agreeing with the one who is your adversary “quickly.” Not only is this true whenever conflict has set you and a neighbor as adversaries, but it is even more important whenever the adversary is in your own home. Although the conflicts in the home often do not involve judicial punishment, there are many serious consequences to these conflicts. Thus, you must not allow conflict to go on in the home without the proper resolution.

Then, listen to Ephesians 4:26-27. “Be angry, and do not sin’: do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil.”

There is a way for the emotion of anger to be experienced in righteous ways. But, this does *not* involve yelling and screaming at the members of the family, acts of violence, profanity, and other destructive words and actions. Then, the real point I want to focus on is the fact that you must not allow the sun to go down on your wrath.

There are many times when conflict happens in the home and the emotions of those involved are stirred up – and nothing is done to resolve the conflict. So, it lingers and festers in the hearts of those involved for hours, days, weeks, months, and even years. And, the longer it goes unresolved, the further it isolates the family members from each other. While it is true that sometimes you will need to step away from a conflict for a moment to make sure that you get your emotions under control (so that you do not make the situation worse), you should do your very best to make sure that every conflict gets resolved as soon as possible – and never allow conflict to be held over to the next day! For, the longer that conflict is allowed to fester in the hearts of those involved, the more place (opportunity) is

given to Satan to cause some real trouble in the home!

If someone has something against you

There are really only two situations that you can be in regarding conflict. One is when another person has sinned against you (which we’ll discuss momentarily). The other is when you know someone else has something against you. God wants you to be diligent in resolving either occasion that has brought about conflict. Actually, in the ideal scenario, both the one who has sinned and the one who has been sinned against will meet each on their way to be reconciled to each other!

So, consider the situation in which you know that someone in your home has something against you. Whether you think you are guilty of something or not, you should do what you can to be reconciled to the other. If you even suspect that someone in your home has something against you, you should be so interested in resolving conflict that you deal with it as quickly as possible!

Listen to Matthew 5:23-24. “Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.”

The picture is someone under the Mosaic system of offering sacrifices bringing a gift before the altar to worship God. Upon arrival, this one remembers that a Jewish brother has something against him/her. Rather than continuing to offer this gift to God, this individual must go to the brother and seek reconciliation. Then, this person can come back and offer the gift to God.

There are a couple of significant points to consider from this text. First, you need to be quick about things whenever you recognize that there is conflict because someone has something against you. Perhaps you have done something to injure another person in some way. Perhaps you have said something that has built a barrier. Regardless of what it is, you must not allow other things to prevent you from seeking reconciliation as quickly as possible. Admit that you could be wrong. And, even if you are

sure you did nothing wrong, you should still do what you can to be reconciled. So, this one was even to leave the gift that he/she brought to offer God and seek reconciliation.

Second, you must recognize that seeking reconciliation is important to your worship and service to God. God cares about how your relationships are whenever you try to worship Him. The same kind of conclusion can be reached from 1 Peter 3:7. In this text, Peter gives instructions to husbands about how they are to treat their wives, implying that their prayers could be hindered if they failed to comply with the instructions. So, in the same way, the gift that you are trying to offer to God may be hindered if you know that someone has something against you and do not do anything to try and correct it!

If someone has sinned against you

Here is the second possible scenario regarding conflict in the home. This time, rather than being the one someone else has something against, you are the one who has been wronged. Still, God wants you to be so focused on reconciliation that you do whatever you can to be reconciled.

Consider Matthew 18:15-17. “Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that ‘by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.’ And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector.”

So, God does not want you to wait on the one who has sinned to realize that he/she has sinned and caused conflict. Instead, whenever you become aware of a wrong that someone in the home has done against you, you have the responsibility to go to such a one and try to convince him/her to repent of the sin that has been committed. Then, in a matter of sin, you must not just leave the situation if you have tried to resolve the matter and the one who is guilty of sin has not repented.

Jesus says that your next step is to take one or two more with you. Go back to that person who has

sinned with them. This time, all of you will be able to hear the situation and know the truth about the matter. Then, if he/she still will not repent of sin, you still must not give up.

The final step that you can take in trying to resolve this issue in conflict is to tell it to the church. Now, the sin has been publicly identified. And, there are consequences for the individual. Whenever both people involved in the conflict are Christians, this means that there will be a withdrawal that must take place (compare with 1 Corinthians 5 and 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15).

While I recognize that this passage is primarily applicable whenever the two people involved are Christians, I believe there are some principles that can help us through all conflict. For instance, whenever anyone in the home has wronged you, you should go directly to that individual. Make sure you understand the situation appropriately. Then, if sin is involved, try to bring that person to repentance. For, the conflict will not be resolved unless there is repentance. Then, if the sinner will still not repent, having some Christian brethren help you confront the problem is an excellent next step in working toward a resolution.

Determine To Do Your Part

Since every conflict has at least two sides, you can only do your part to bring about a positive resolution. You cannot correct the entire situation by yourself. But, you *can* do your part. You can determine to do as much as you can possibly do to be reconciled to another. Consider a few things that you must remember, then, as you try to do your part to resolve a conflict.

Be humble

One thing that is lacking in any conflict is humility. Listen to James 4:1-6. “Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do

not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures. Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, ‘The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously’? But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: ‘God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble.’”

There are many homes that have fights and “wars” that break out in them. So, in order to resolve them, it is helpful to consider where they come from. James says that they come from our own desires for pleasure that are at war in us. Therefore, God is teaching us that the fights and conflicts that happen in the home come from valuing ourselves more than we should. Instead of focusing on the good of the others in the home, our conflicts result from seeking our own desires.

Therefore, if you want to solve the conflict that is in the home, you should do your part to be humble. After all, that is the solution God gives in James 4. To be humble is to have a modest estimation of yourself. Then, you will not think your own desires and pleasures are more important than the good of anyone in your home. So, you will not be conducting yourself in sinful ways that would cause conflict.

Furthermore, humility will demand that you admit whenever you are wrong. Thus, conflict will not continue in the home because you are unwilling to admit whenever you have acted selfishly. Instead, humility will help you to repent of the sin that you have committed and harmed other people with. And, humility will help you do whatever you can possibly do to help the people you have hurt with your sinful behavior.

Then, as another application of humility to the conflict in the home, your humility will help you go to the one who has wronged you. You will not be so prideful as to think, “Well, if he/she wants to make things right and be reconciled, he/she knows where to find me.” Instead, your humble concern for others will help you take the steps in the direction of the one who has wronged you!

Be sacrificial

One of the problems that often happen in the home is that people seek to get even whenever someone does them wrong. However, this will only further escalate the conflict and make it more difficult to resolve. And, it will also put you in sin (or further in sin) by acting in a way that God does not approve.

So, Jesus teaches a sacrificial and loving response even when someone does you harm. Consider Matthew 5:38-42. “You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also. And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two. Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away.”

What Jesus is describing here is certainly not the first reaction that most people would have to such a conflict. But, then again, most people are not interested in following God’s blueprint. And, consequently, most people do not have the kinds of fulfilling relationships God’s blueprint leads us to have.

So, most people will fight for themselves rather than being willing to suffer wrong for the good of another. Even in relationships, many people are in them to get the most that they can from others. Therefore, whenever there is conflict, they approach the conflict from a selfish perspective (as we saw from James 4).

But, those who are Christians and want to handle conflict and relationships God’s way are willing to sacrifice. So, even when someone in the home mistreats you, you should be willing to endure wrongs and sacrifice of yourself in order to do what is in the best interest of the other person. While that does not mean you must always give another person what he/she *wants*, it does mean that you should sacrifice of yourself in order to do/give what the others *need* (even if what is needed is not what is wanted)! Remember, your life is not about getting

what you want on this earth, it is about serving and glorifying God!

Be peaceful

Conflict is not a very peaceful thing, of itself. And, the way that many people respond to conflict only makes more strife between people and breaks relationships. So, as a Christian, you must always do your best to make peace – even when others want to make conflict.

Consider Jesus' simple statement in Matthew 5:9. He said, "Blessed are the peacemakers, For they shall be called sons of God." Notice the positive statements that are made in this verse. Those who are "peacemakers" are blessed (or, happy). Being contentious and unwilling to resolve conflict leads to miserable relationships. But, those who work diligently to do what they can to make peace with others (without compromising the truth of the gospel) are the ones who will have more fulfilling relationships. Then, those who are peacemakers will be called children of God (who is a God of peace and is the author of peace, according to 1 Corinthians 14:33).

Consider the negative implications of this verse. If you do not work diligently to make peace with others, you will not be truly happy and you will not be called a child of God. In fact, listen to Hebrews 12:14. "Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord." So, it is impossible for you to please God in your life if you do not actively pursue peace with "all people" and you *will not* go to Heaven and see God! These instructions are so broad (again, including "all people") that they certainly include those who are members of your home.

Then, consider Romans 12:17-21. "Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, 'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,' says the Lord. Therefore 'If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head.' Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."

Here is the extent of your responsibility in making peace. You must simply do all that you can (short of compromising the truth of the gospel) to make peace with the members of your home. You cannot control whether others seek peace with you. But, you can control whether you work toward peace with them or whether you act in evil ways toward them. Therefore, you must diligently overcome any evil that has happened in the home with a peaceful commitment to doing good!

Be Christ-like

Ultimately, Jesus Christ provides the perfect blueprint for solving conflict that exists in the home. After all, he faced all kinds of people during His life who wanted to make conflict with Him. But, He always handled the situations in the right way. So, we have the record of His life as the perfect example to follow in handling conflict.

1 Corinthians 11:1 simply says (in the context of living peaceably and harmoniously with Christian brothers and sisters), "Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ." So, even the apostles provide a pattern for you to use in living your life and overcoming conflict in the way God would approve (compare with Philippians 3:17). Then, recognize that Paul is not saying that he is perfect. Instead, you should only imitate him as far as he imitates Christ Jesus. Again, Christ is your perfect blueprint in all things. Therefore, you must strive to replicate the kind of life and decisions that Jesus made in your own.

Certainly, this general principle applies specifically to matters of conflict. Listen to 1 Peter 2:21-25. "For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: 'Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth'; who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously; who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed. For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls."

First, recognize that this is what Peter said in response to teaching that Christian slaves must obey their masters in all things (even when they are mistreated). Sometimes people treat others in ways that cause them to suffer unjustly. Yet, even then, you have the responsibility to follow God's blueprint in how you respond! Jesus Christ should be a great encouragement to you in this. For, Jesus suffered the greatest mistreatment of anyone who has ever lived (because He really had done *nothing* wrong)! Instead, He chose to sacrifice Himself for the good of others. Therefore, you should consider, "How would Jesus respond to my conflict" – and then respond accordingly!

In responding to conflict in the home in a Christ-like way, you will show Christ to the members of your home (and, potentially, to others). So, even though members of your home may not be living in the way God would desire them to live, your godly conduct (even in times of conflict) can win them to the Lord. For instance, Peter told Christian women (right after his teaching about slaves and Christ), "Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives, when they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear" (1 Peter 3:1-2).

Determine To Pursue Unity In Truth

One of the many things that conflict does is that it works to divide a household. There are many divided homes as a result. This is sad because of the truth Jesus taught in Luke 11:17. He said, "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and a house divided against a house falls." Division always works to cause ruin. So, you must always work to pursue unity in truth in your home.

Work to maintain the unity of the Spirit

Listen to Ephesians 4:1-6. "I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of

the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."

Now, I want you to notice that unity does not just happen. Instead, recognize that lowliness (humility), gentleness, patience, and bearing with one another are involved. Then, even after you put on all these characteristics, you must work at it diligently. Paul said, "endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

Notice the reason why your household can be united. This passage (though it is talking about the unity in the church) helps us to realize that there is "unity of the Spirit." So, as the Spirit has revealed the word of God to us, He has only revealed one perfectly unified message (notice all of the *ones* in verses 4 through 6). Now, if homes were dependent upon a uniting of all the various opinions man is capable of having, true unity would be an impossible dream. But, since God has revealed a united message that should guide every person and every decision made in the home, unity is quite possible!

Consider some other helpful passages of Scripture that emphasize unity and the reason why a home can be united. 1 Corinthians 1:10 says, "Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." Philippians 1:27 says, "Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel." And, Jude 1:3 says, "Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints."

Since God's word has been "once for all delivered" to us, every member of the home can live

by the same standard. It never changes or gets revised or updated according to the times. Instead, all members of the home should be committed to allowing God's word to solve the conflicts that exist. Whatever God's word says about a matter ought to settle the conflict and everyone should strive together for the faith of the gospel. But, while you cannot control whether everyone else in your family responds to conflict in that kind of a way, you can control whether you look to the word of God and seek unity with the members of your home in the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ!

Seek wise counsel

One passage that gives you an example of how Christians should respond to conflict is Philippians 4:2-3. "I implore Euodia and I implore Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. And I urge you also, true companion, help these women who labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the Book of Life."

Here were two Christian women who had some kind of conflict with each other. Now, I do not know what the nature of this conflict was. But, this passage demonstrates that even two people who are interested in doing what is right and laboring in the gospel can have conflicts. So, as Paul became aware of this matter, he pleaded with them to be united in the Lord (as we have just talked about in the previous point). Then, he encouraged someone to help them be reconciled (no name is mentioned, only the phrase, "true companion").

Yes, sometimes even Christian people need help through conflict. There are many possible explanations as to *why* this is so – not the least of which is that sometimes we just have a difficult time separating our own emotions and being able to see the situation for what it really is. So, sometimes we have difficulty seeing our own faults. Sometimes we have difficulty rightly judging those we are emotionally involved with. Sometimes we are so occupied with our own suffering that we have difficulty responding to the situation correctly and communicating with the one who we are in conflict with.

Consider the situation Paul addressed in 1 Corinthians 6 whenever there was conflict between some in the church at Corinth. Paul condemned the practice of a Christian taking another Christian to court (before a human judge who does not understand the truth of God's word). He said that such activity was shameful and asked, "Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you, not even one, who will be able to judge between his brethren?" (verse 5). Instead of failing by taking a Christian brother/sister to court before an unbeliever, Paul asked, "Why do you not rather accept wrong? Why do you not rather let yourselves be cheated?" (verse 7).

So, the principle is that, as a Christian trying to solve conflict, you should use a wise brother or sister in Christ to help you whenever the conflict does not seem easily resolved by yourself. But, remember that he/she should be a fellow Christian and be wise. For, if you seek out counsel from someone who does not stand for the truth of the gospel, you may be led in the wrong direction! Proverbs 1:5 says, "A wise man will hear and increase learning, And a man of understanding will attain wise counsel." Remember that there is nothing shameful in seeking the right kind of help in resolving conflicts in your home! Then, you must also be committed to acting on the wise counsel that is in harmony with God's word.

Bear with one another's weaknesses

One other necessary requirement for you if you want to seek unity in truth is that you recognize that not all points of conflict are about matters of right versus wrong. For, the Scriptures clearly teach that there are matters of individual liberty. These are matters that are of no consequence in God's sight. He has authorized both the doing of a thing and not doing a thing. So, He does not care what decision a person makes in these areas.

Yet, people often choose to make conflict over matters of individual liberty. So, the apostle Paul penned some instructions to the Christians in Rome to help them in these matters (in Romans 14 and 15). You would do well to consider both of these chapters and all the instructions and applications that are given.

There will be differences in the home in matters of opinion. Some will be stronger in the faith than others. Therefore, some will have a better knowledge of the Scriptures and a better ability to apply the Scriptures appropriately to the various situations that are encountered in life than others. Yet, division must *never* be accepted in this area.

Instead, the apostle Paul gives instructions to both the strong and weak in these two chapters regarding how each is to treat the other. For instance, to the strong, Paul says, “Receive one who is weak in the faith, but not to disputes over doubtful things” (Romans 14:1). “We then who are strong ought to bear with the scruples [weaknesses] of the weak, and not to please ourselves” (Romans 15:1). So, the one who has the greater spiritual knowledge and maturity ought to consider the conscience of the weak member of the home and not cause that individual to stumble and sin. And, the one who is strong is not to be argumentative about the opinions held by the one who is weak in these matters of liberty.

Then, the apostle Paul also addresses the one who is weak. In the specific issue of eating meat (which is a matter of liberty), Paul said, “let not him who does not eat judge him who eats; for God has received him” (Romans 14:3). Therefore, this one must try to recognize that the issue is a matter of liberty and should not pass a condemnatory sentence of judgment on the one who does not share his/her personal convictions. For, God has received such a person.

Conclusion

Not only does following God’s blueprint help people keep from causing conflict, but it also helps people solve conflict. Since every person chooses to sin from time-to-time, it is essential that each member of the home choose to respond to conflict God’s way. For, Satan likes nothing better than to cause conflict and for the members of the home to respond to conflict in a way that further deteriorates the home. But, God has all the answers – if you will simply choose to build according to His blueprint. Thus, as far as you can control, you can always be

building in your home and working toward unity and peace in Jesus Christ!

Study Questions

How does Satan try to use conflict to destroy the home?

1. Determine To Seek Reconciliation

Why should you *not* ignore the conflict that exists?

What should you do if the conflict is because someone has something against you?

What should you do if the conflict is because someone has sinned against you?

2. Determine To Do Your Part

How will being humble help you solve conflict?

How will being sacrificial help you solve conflict?

How will being peaceful help you solve conflict?

How will being Christ-like help you solve conflict?

3. Determine To Pursue Unity In Truth

Why is it important to maintain the unity of the Spirit?

Why is it important to seek wise counsel?

Why is it important to bear with one another's weaknesses?

Why should you train your children to save?

Why should you train your children to live within their means?