

METANOIA MINISTRIES PRESENTS

*Engaging*

**CONFLICT**

*Redemptively*

PERSONAL STUDY WORKBOOK

**JIM VAN YPEREN**



*metanoia*

MINISTRIES

[www.flourishseries.org](http://www.flourishseries.org)

603 495-0035

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# Welcome

Welcome to ***Engaging Conflict Redemptively***, a comprehensive video series designed to identify and transform the way you think, feel and act in conflict, so that you may live joyfully and peacefully in a quick-fix, antagonistic world.

## *How to Use This Resource*

***Engaging Conflict Redemptively*** is a series of twelve streaming videos approximately ten-minutes in length. Each video session comes with a separate *Workbook & Discussion Guide* (PDF) for personal reflection and small group dialogue.

The ***Engaging Conflict Redemptively*** materials are designed to be used by individuals and small groups who are committed to thoughtful study and open dialogue focused on the teaching of Jesus.

**How it Works:** Each video addresses a specific topic that is central to the Five Turning Points of Conflict, each video building on the one before. So, we recommend that you watch each video in order--from Session One to Session Twelve. Use this workbook to guide your private, personal study or for discussion in a small group. This workbooks is designed to be used either way. There is plenty of content in each video for multiple viewings, so we encourage you to set aside time for personal reflection and life application following each session. Even if you may are viewing *Engaging Conflict Redemptively* privately, we encourage you to find ways to discuss what you are learning with others, perhaps even use the group exercises and discussions with friends and family.

# *Contents*

SESSION 1: **INTRODUCTION**

SESSION 2: **BACKSTORY**

SESSION 3: **CATALYTIC EVENT**

SESSION 4: **EMOTION**

SESSION 5: **REACTION**

SESSION 6: **DECISION** (PART 1: SEPARATION vs. INTEGRATION)

SESSION 7: **DECISION** (PART 2: CONFESSION)

SESSION 8: **DECISION** (PART 3: CONFRONTATION)

SESSION 9: **JUSTIFICATION** (PART 1: SELF-DECEPTION)

SESSION 10: **JUSTIFICATION** (PART 2: FORGIVENESS)

SESSION 11: **JUSTIFICATION** (PART 3: RESTITUTION)

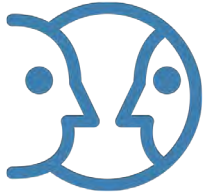
SESSION 12: **FORMATION & CONCLUSION**

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**SESSION #1: INTRODUCTION**



# Personal Reflection

**Preview the Video:** To prepare for your group study, preview the video once alone then complete the Personal Reflection below.

In his letter to Roman Christians, the Apostle Paul echoes and reinforces Jesus' teaching at the Sermon on the Mount. Read Romans 12:1-2, 9-21 and Matthew 5:21-26, 38-48 and answer the questions in the space for notes:

**Questions for Personal Reflection:**

1. Three times Jesus says, "You've heard that it was said to those of old, but I say to you..." How do you hear Jesus' words about anger, retaliation and love in your present world?
2. What is most challenging to you about Jesus' and Paul's teaching to "bless/love those who persecute" you?

## Notes

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“If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.”

ROMANS 12:18

## Scripture & Prayer

**Read** together the key Scripture texts for this session:

- Romans 12:1-2, 9-21
- Matthew 5:21-26, 38-48

**Pray:** Thank God for what He is going to reveal personally and as a group through this session.

## Check-in

Throughout this curriculum, we will emphasize the discipline of *attending to our emotions* and *speaking the truth in love*. To help develop these vital practices, start the meeting by each person identifying and confessing whatever emotion they are feeling now and bringing to the meeting.

Simply complete the sentence, “I am feeling . . .” (mad, sad, glad) with a word or short phrase that identifies your feelings.

## In The Previous Session

Since this is the first video of the series, there is no previous session to review. However, it would be helpful to pause a moment to reflect on what you have previously read, studied or learned about conflict in the past.

Perhaps you've taken a conflict management class. What did you learn? It will be interesting to compare approaches. For example, you will not hear the word "management" connected with conflict in this series. The reason is simple: God calls us to *reconcile* conflict, not *manage* it, and the difference is more than semantics. As a rule, the more you try to manage or control your life, the further you go from faith and the teaching of Jesus.

Consider and discuss together the following questions:

- Is this the first time that you have studied conflict reconciliation? If not, what seminars have you attended? What books have you read?
- What ideas or principles have been especially helpful to you?
- What question would you like to have answered?

## In This Session

In this Introductory session of **Engaging Conflict Redemptively** we will explore together:

- Why most people fear or avoid conflict
- What Jesus says in the Gospels and Paul says to the Romans about living at peace
- How "living peaceably" requires *both* personal responsibility and communal discernment
- What the five *Turning Points in Conflict* are and how each has power to transform your life
- What is your backStory, how it reveals your desire, and why God wants to change your story
- Why your default feelings and reactions to conflict come from your past, are negative and are likely making your conflict worse, not better



# Introduction

Conflict makes visible our personal identity and the collective soul of a community. It reveals our essential nature and opens a window into the deep recesses and hidden corners of our heart where core beliefs reside—about God, others, and self. Observe a person in conflict and you will witness both the character of that person and the culture of his/her community. The way you think, feel, and respond in conflict is who you are, not who you think you are or who you want to be. Unfortunately, our lives and the communities have failed to shape, encourage, and reorder our disordered lives into a people who love and live as one.

Oneness is Jesus' prayer for the church, the primary description he gives for true followers. We are to be one with each other as God is in three Persons: mutually loving, giving, serving, deferring, honoring, glorifying, and submitting—with no competition or conflict. And Jesus tells us why: so the world might see Jesus and believe. Oneness is God's heart for his people. Yet, too often, love and unity are not what Christians are known for. If you stopped a hundred people on the street and asked each one to describe "Christian" in a word, would any person say "love"? Would "oneness" be mentioned once in a thousand, or a million answers?

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### **Conflict is a spiritual barometer of your soul.**

Conflict begins when a sudden, unexpected, catalytic event radically upsets your balance, and prompts you to react in ways that reveal your character. The more pressure you feel, the deeper and truer the revelation of your spiritual condition.

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The choices you make in conflict expose your deep-seated thoughts and feelings that guide your response like a script directs an actor. This is your desire, and if you are like most people your desire is probably in conflict with who God has created and called you to be. When you make choices based upon desire you form your soul. One choice influences the next and sets a course of action that can propel you into more conflict and more perilous spiritual compromise.

Jesus offers another script, a better narrative to follow.

In this first session of **Engaging Conflict Redemptively**, you begin a journey designed to help you see yourself truthfully so you can recognize your desire and the broken parts in your soul that God wants to heal and redeem. There is much you can learn together, if you are willing to open your life with others. Thank you for joining us! May God reveal his pathway for you to live peaceably and with joy as you *engage conflict redemptively*.



## Watch Video

First, play and watch the video alone, then together as a group. Use the space below to note any ideas, key points or principles that stand out to you personally, or what you would like the group to explore more deeply.

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## Group Dialogue

Discuss together your personal and group reactions to the video, using the following questions to prompt dialogue:

- What idea, word or phrase stood out to you when watching the video? How did this strike you and why?
- A **quick-fix world** describes people reacting to conflict in negative, often automatic ways designed to make their discomfort go away fast, not reconciling the conflict. How have you experienced a quick-fix world? How do you respond to such a world?
- An **antagonistic world** describes people reacting to one another with active hostility and opposition, without listening or wanting to learn or reconcile differences. How have you experienced an antagonistic world? How do you respond to such a world?
- What idea or topic are you looking forward to exploring further in future sessions?

## Notes

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## Key Principle(s)

Here are five key principles to remember from this session:

1. Living redemptively requires personal responsibility and communal discernment.
2. Conflict is a spiritual barometer of your soul.
3. There are *Five Dynamic Turning Points* common to every conflict: emotion, reaction, decision, justification and formation.
4. All conflict is history. Your emotions and reactions to conflict reveal the story you are telling yourself about what you desire most.
5. Your response to each turning point sets you on a pathway toward joy and peace or bitterness and antagonism.



## Going Deeper

The following resources will be useful for deeper study throughout the **Engaging Conflict Redemptively** series:

- Jim Van Yperen, *Making Peace: A Guide to Overcoming Church Conflict* (Moody Press, 2002)
- David E. Fitch, *Faithful Presence: Seven Disciplines that Shape the Church for Mission* (IVP Press, 2016)
- James K.A. Smith, *You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit* (Baker Publishing Group, 2016)
- Edwin H. Friedman, *A Failure of Nerve: Leadership In The Age of the Quick Fix* (Seabury Books, 1999)

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# Notes

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## Next Session

In Session two of **Engaging Conflict Redemptively**, we'll explore your backStory.

Your backStory is how you view your life, a narrative you create based upon what you choose to remember or can't forget because of past hurt, or some injustice that you are sensitive to. In a word, your backStory is about your desire--what you want to love and love to want.

Desire may be a noble goal, a search for meaning, or the need for healing. Or, your desire may be less than noble, such as an addiction . . . lust . . . or drive for revenge. Either way, desire, more than any other single factor, provides the emotional drive behind your story.

All this becomes visible when some catalytic event reveals your backStory, exposing your deepest desire. Your backStory shapes how you think, feel, and act in conflict.

Examining the story you are telling yourself, or choosing not to tell, will open a window into your heart for understanding and growth.

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**SESSION #2: BACK STORY**



# Personal Reflection

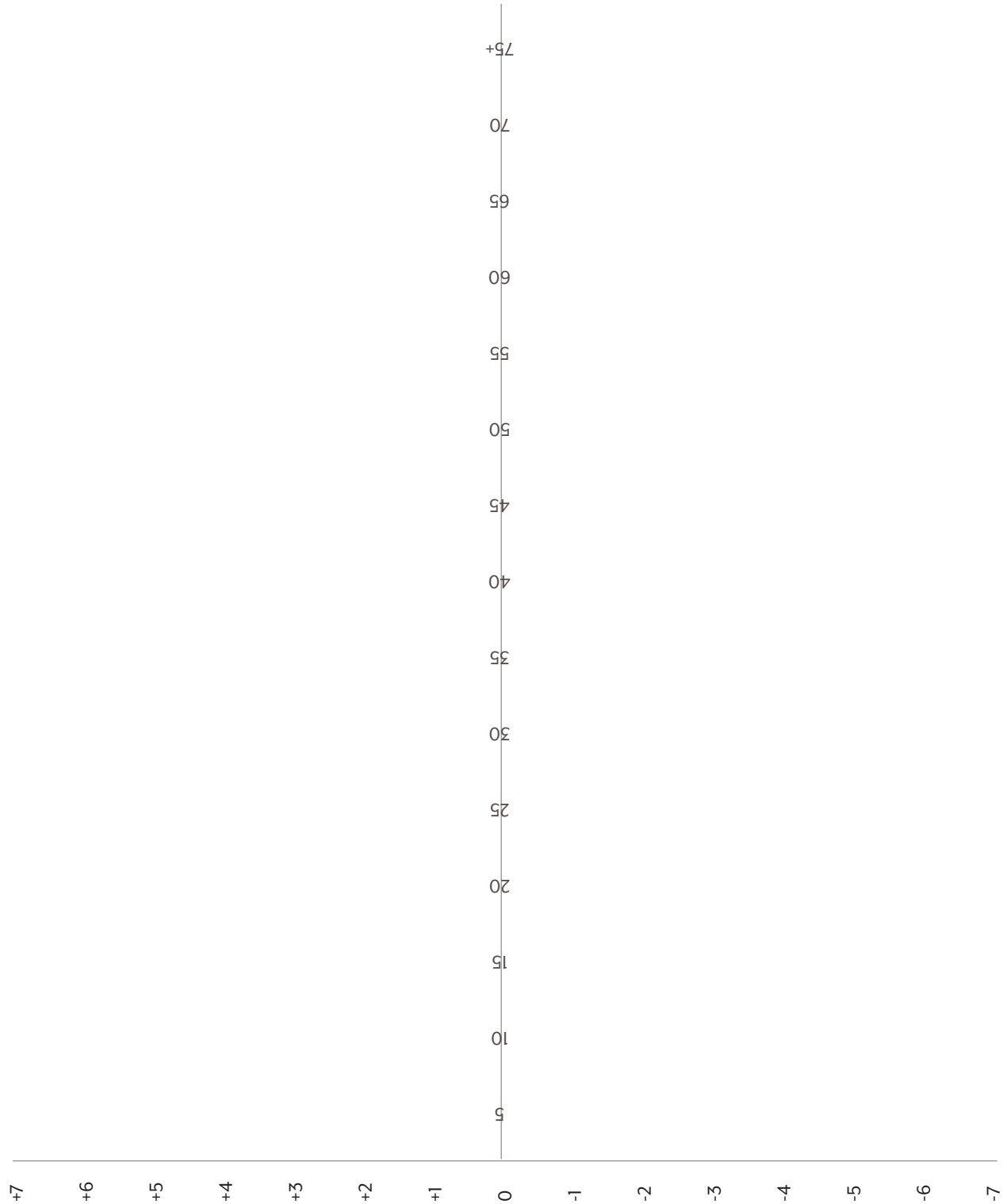
**Preview the Video:** To prepare for your group study, preview the video once alone then complete the Personal Reflection below.

Exercise: Using the LifeLine Graph on the following page, chart a graph of your personal life: the highs and the lows, joys and conflicts, following these directions:

1. Think about the high and low points of your life. (Holding the page horizontally, the vertical line = quality; horizontal line = your age)
2. As you recall certain events, place a dot on the graph. For great times, place a dot up high. For worst times, place a dot down low. (Zero=status quo.)
3. Next to each dot, write a one-word description of the event, such as, "Graduation," or "Surgery"



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*“If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.”*

ROMANS 12:18

## Scripture & Prayer

**Read** together the key Scripture texts for this session:

- Jeremiah 6:16
- Matthew 6:19-21
- Mark 4:35-41
- Hebrews 11

**Pray:** Thank God for what He is going to reveal personally and as a group through this session.

## Check-in

Living peaceably means *attending to our emotions* and *speaking the truth in love*. To help develop these vital practices, start the meeting by each person identifying and confessing whatever emotion they are feeling now and bringing to the meeting.

Simply complete the sentence, “I am feeling . . .” (mad, sad, glad) with a word or short phrase that identifies your feelings.

## In The Previous Session

In our last session, we explored together:

- Why most people fear or avoid conflict
- What Jesus says in the Gospels and Paul says to the Romans about living at peace
- How “living peaceably” requires *both* personal responsibility and communal discernment
- What the five *Turning Points in Conflict* are and how each has power to transform your life

Since we met last . . . what circumstances, thoughts or events have you experienced that caused you to think more about “living peaceably?”

## In This Session

In this session, we will explore together:

- Why all conflict is history--what we will call your backStory.
- How your backStory reveals your desire.
- How your desire seeks to control your circumstances.
- In what ways does your backStory and desire align or compete with the Story revealed in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ?
- What part of your story is leading *toward* the Gospel?
- What part of your story is leading *away* from the Gospel?
- How is God prompting you to change your story?

# Introduction

All conflict is history. That is, conflict has more to do with your past than the present issue. But we don't interpret life this way. We want to blame the conflict for the conflict! In today's session, we will explore how conflict reveals your backStory, the narrative assumptions and expectations that you have constructed for your life, informing what you believe is right and wrong, and how life is supposed to be. Your backStory, more than the conflict event, is what determines what is a conflict and what is not.

Let me give you a common, every day example . . .

Imagine that you send an email to a friend asking advice on a personal issue--something important to you. You want your friend's advice so you check your email often, looking for a response. But no response comes. Days pass without a word. In the past, your friend always replied immediately. So, you start thinking. "Maybe there is something wrong?" You search for answers to what is wrong. Perhaps your email was inappropriate, or too presumptuous. Maybe, you think, your friend is mad at you, tired of hearing about your problems. Then you begin to think, "What kind of friend is that! I've listened to *his* issues. Why can't he listen to mine?" Perhaps your friend is not a friend after all!

All these conflicting thoughts run through your head. Then, you receive an email from your friend saying that his computer died and he was offline until he could get another.

Do you see what happened there?

You created a conflict where there was no conflict. You arranged the facts to fit your feelings by making assumptions and drawing conclusions that gave you some sense of control. But why did you draw *those assumptions* and reach *those conclusions*? The answer: your backStory.

In this session, we will explore how conflict reveals the story you are telling yourself. At the heart of your story is desire--what you love and want the most--the filter through which you process every event in your life. This is true of every life event, regardless of how big or small, whether your conflict is a simple misunderstanding about email, or a crisis like abuse. Desire drives your response. Your backStory arranges "facts" to fit your desire by making assumptions and drawing conclusions that give you some sense of control.



## Watch Video

Play and watch the video together, from start to finish. Note any ideas, key points or principles that stand out to you personally, or what you would like the group to explore more deeply.

### Notes

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## Triad Sharing

### Personal Review:

Looking back over your LifeLine Graph, what observations can you make about your backStory? Do similar events repeat? Circle the events that still impact you today. What wounds are unhealed? What issues are unreconciled?

### Triad Sharing and Prayer:

1. Join with two other people.
2. Take turns to review each LifeLine Graph, adding whatever explanation or description you want for further understanding of the major events of your life.
3. Listen attentively. Ask questions of one another with empathy.
4. Ask how each can pray for the other.
5. Pray together.



## Group Dialogue

Discuss together your personal and group reactions to the video, using the following questions to prompt dialogue:

- What idea, word or phrase stood out when watching the video? How did this strike you and why?
- The video states that, “the act of describing your life involves the construction of a story.” And “Your backStory is primarily an emotional and relational story, not a cognitive story,” so, “Relationship authors your life.” Do you find this difficult or easy to accept? Why?
- How does your backStory open a window into your unhealed wounds and unreconciled relationships?
- What do you need most: Acceptance? Belonging? Safety? Respect? Esteem? Why do you need this?
- What is disordered desire and how can it become idolatry?



## Key Principle(s)

Here are key principles to remember from this session:

1. All conflict is history.
2. Your backStory is the story you are telling yourself (and choosing not to tell yourself) about the world and your place in it.
3. Your backStory reveals your desire--what you love and want the most.
4. Living peaceably starts with you and your desire.
5. Every human heart has misplaced desire. All misplaced desire is a form of idolatry.
6. Your joy, peace and patience requires inviting God to identify, address and redeem your desire.
7. Transformation is God authoring your story, not your story authoring you.



## Going Deeper

The following resources will be useful for deeper study for this session of **Engaging Conflict Redemptively**:

- Scot McKnight, *One Life: Jesus Calls We Follow*, (Zondervan, 2010)
- N.T. Wright, *The Day the Revolution Began: Reconsidering the Meaning of Jesus' Crucifixion*, (HarperCollins Publishers, New York, 2016)
- James K.A. Smith, *You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit* (Baker Publishing Group, 2016)

## Next Session

In Session three of **Engaging Conflict Redemptively**, we'll explore how conflict arises out of a Catalytic Event.

When something happens that upsets your assumptions, disrupts your expectations or threatens your desire, we call it a catalytic event.

The event can be small, like a driver cutting you off in traffic. Or the event can be huge, like a diagnosis of cancer, your son being arrested for selling drugs, or your spouse telling you he wants a divorce.

Similarly, your innocence or failure can become a catalyst to crisis—whether someone accuses you falsely or you are caught in your own guilt. Regardless of the event, the rhythm of your life is suddenly disrupted. Emotions are triggered. Anxiety heightens and accelerates. Dissonance sets in motion a series of default feelings.



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**SESSION #3: CATALYTIC EVENT**



# Personal Reflection

**Preview the Video:** To prepare for your group study, preview the video once alone then complete the Personal Reflection below.

**Personal Exercise:**

1. Think of a recent conflict in your life . . . something that caused you anxiety . . . maybe kept you up late at night worrying. The event could be big or small . . . just something that triggered strong emotions in you.
2. In the space below, write a brief description of the event, summarizing what happened and who was involved.
3. Summarize the event by choosing a word that best describes your *emotion*-- *what you were feeling*.
4. Summarize the event by choosing a word that best describes your *thoughts*-- *what you were thinking*.

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A word to describe what I felt: \_\_\_\_\_

A word to describe what I thought: \_\_\_\_\_

“If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.”

ROMANS 12:18

## Scripture & Prayer

**Read** together the key Scripture texts for this session:

- Genesis 3:1-13
- Genesis 4:1-16
- Matthew 11:25-30

**Pray:** Thank God for what He is going to reveal personally and as a group through this session.

## Check-in

Living peaceably means *attending to our emotions* and *speaking the truth in love*. To help develop these vital practices, start the meeting by each person identifying and confessing whatever emotion they are feeling now and bringing to the meeting.

Simply complete the sentence, “I am feeling . . .” (mad, sad, glad) with a word or short phrase that identifies your feelings.

## *In The Previous Session*

In our last session, we explored together:

- All conflict is history.
- Your backStory is the story you are telling yourself (and choosing not to tell yourself) about the world and your place in it.
- Your backStory reveals your desire--what you love and want the most.
- Living peaceably starts with you and your desire.
- Every human heart has misplaced desire. All misplaced desire is a form of idolatry.
- Your joy, peace and patience requires inviting God to identify, address and redeem your desire.
- Transformation is God authoring your story, not your story authoring you.

Since last meeting . . . what circumstances, thoughts or events have you experienced that opened a window into your backStory--the story you are telling yourself--and, perhaps, revealed your desire--what you love and want the most.

## *In This Session*

In this session of **Engaging Conflict Redemptively**, we will explore together:

- What a catalytic event is and what causes a catalytic event to happen in you.
- How a catalytic event triggers your emotions and increases your anxiety, setting in motion a series of default thoughts, feelings and actions.
- How an ancient story told about two brothers illustrates the genesis and danger of the “sin crouching at your door.”

# Introduction

*“Surely what a man does when he is taken off his guard is the best evidence for what sort of a man he is? Surely what pops out before the man has time to put on a disguise is the truth? If there are rats in a cellar you are most likely to see them if you go in very suddenly. But the suddenness does not create the rats: it only prevents them from hiding. In the same way the suddenness of the provocation does not make me an ill-tempered man: it only shows me what an ill-tempered man I am.”*

C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*

Perhaps you have you had an experience like this . . .

You were using a hammer to strike a nail, missed, and hit your thumb instead. Or, you were trying to concentrate on a detail to complete some long overdue project when your attention was suddenly interrupted. Or, perhaps you were standing in a long line for a show when an obnoxious person cut in front of you to purchase the last seat.

You know the situation. You were going about your busy life when suddenly, quite to your surprise, something upsetting happened. Perhaps you snapped, or said something ugly, or thought harsh thoughts. After the immediate response, you felt a rush of shame, especially if friends or family witnessed your outburst. Your anger doubled, now toward yourself as well as the other. You were overwhelmed with feelings: disappointment, embarrassment, and frustration. At the same time, and just as quickly, excuses began forming in your mind. After all, you were under a lot of pressure. Normally, you are quite even-headed. You rarely yell or get visibly angry. But you were provoked, caught off your guard. You tell yourself, “Anyone would have responded the same.” Can you remember a moment like this?

C. S. Lewis describes this as truth popping out unexpectedly, exposing the “rats in our cellar.” Most people want to put the best face forward, to respond to life in ways that display decorum and maturity. So, when something happens that provokes an angry outburst, dissonance arises in your mind. This is not who you really are. You justify the exception with some excuse. This, Lewis says, is like knowing there are rats in your cellar, but refusing to see them by making noise at the top of the basement stairs before turning on the light. You choose not to see what you know is there. Yet your immediate response has forced you to see, like finding yourself already

in the cellar when the light comes on and you watch the rats scatter.

A catalytic event reveals the “rats in your cellar,” the pride, fear, anger, jealousy, selfishness, and the untold emotional scars from unhealed wounds. Our rats are shadows, the residue of sin, the dark side of desire we do not want anyone else to see, including ourselves. We don’t want these seen, so we have become quite skilled in diversion tactics, in making noise before switching on the light. The problem is that the rats never leave. They scatter, then multiply in darkness.

One message we will come back to time and again throughout this series is this: your spiritual growth requires seeing, accepting and redeeming the truth about the dysfunction in your soul.

Learning how to do this begins with paying attention to how you react to discomfort, especially when surprised. Being attentive involves asking questions, seeking honest answers, and thinking through why, exactly, you respond the way you do. Sounds simple, right? Not really. We think we already know ourselves well. This is the noise before turning on the light. The truth is, we are mostly, even if unintentionally, self-deceived. To see ourselves truthfully, we need others who will come alongside us in love, encouragement and accountability, keeping us honest, and providing wise correction when needed.

## Notes

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## Watch Video

Play and watch the video together, from start to finish. Use the space below to note any ideas, key points or principles that stand out to you personally, or what you would like the group to explore more deeply.

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## Group Dialogue

Discuss together your personal and group reactions to the video, using the following questions to prompt dialogue:

- What idea, word or phrase stood out to you when watching the video? How did this strike you and why?
- Recall an event in your life when your response to what happened was completely different from the response of others. What did you learn from the video that might explain why.
- In the *Personal Reflection Exercise* above, you described an event in your life that struck a nerve, causing you strong feelings and thoughts. In the video, we began a process of exploring, “Who told you to feel your feelings?” And, “Who told you to think your thoughts?” How would you answer? What are some possible sources for your thoughts and feelings?
- The conclusion suggests that, while our thoughts and feelings may have many sources, “In the end, you told yourself what to think and feel!” Do you agree?
- If you are not responsible for your thoughts and feelings, who is?
- What does your response described above reveal about your desire--what you love and want the most?
- C. S. Lewis wrote about the “rats in your cellar.” The story of Cain and Abel uses the vivid imagery of “sin crouching at your door.” These two pictures help us understand more about what might be lurking in our soul. Thinking about your reaction(s) to conflict, how would you describe the “rats” in your cellar? What is the sin crouching at your door?





## Key Principle(s)

Here are five key principles to remember from this session:

1. You react negatively to events when something or someone is threatening your desire.
2. When your desire is threatened, you experience a 'catalytic event.'
3. Your desire determines what a catalytic event is and what it is not.
4. So, the same event may cause conflict for one person but not bother another at all.
5. A catalytic event causes immediate thoughts and feelings which, in the final analysis, you choose to think and to feel.
6. Jesus says, "Come to me you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."



## Going Deeper

The following resources will be useful for deeper study for this session of **Engaging Conflict Redemptively**:

- C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, (Harper Collins, 1952)
- Jim Van Yperen, *Making Peace: A Guide to Overcoming Church Conflict* (Moody Press, 2002)

## Next Session

In Session four of **Engaging Conflict Redemptively**, we'll explore Dynamic Turning Point #1: Emotion.

Emotion is the first turning point because it begins a process that will lead you on a journey to peace and joy, or more conflict and bitterness. Typically, conflict produces one or more of four common emotions: fear, anger, guilt or shame. We will look at each of these common emotions to help you recognize and understand why you respond this way to conflict. We'll explore how to address your default emotions by being attentive to **stop**, **listen** and **discern** what you are feeling and why. You cannot always choose your emotional response, but with the perspective that "Jesus is Lord," you can respond with love.

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**SESSION #4: EMOTION**



# Personal Reflection

**Preview the Video:** To prepare for your group study, preview the video once alone then complete the Personal Reflection below.

Think of a conflict you have in your life right now, or a conflict you have experienced recently. Keeping that specific conflict in mind, answer the questions below:

**Questions for Personal Reflection:**

1. Typically, conflict produces one or more of four common emotions: fear, anger, guilt or shame. Which emotion(s) did you experience in your conflict?
2. Why? What did this conflict remind you of or “awake” in you about some previous experience?
3. What is the “sin crouching at your door?”

## Notes

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“If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.”

ROMANS 12:18

## Scripture & Prayer

**Read** together the key Scripture texts for this session:

- Genesis 4:1-10
- Psalm 23
- Proverbs 3:5-6
- Matthew 6:25-34

**Pray:** Thank God for what He is going to reveal personally and as a group through this session.

## Check-in

Living peaceably means *attending to our emotions* and *speaking the truth in love*. To help develop these vital practices, start the meeting by each person identifying and confessing whatever emotion they are feeling now and bringing to the meeting.

Simply complete the sentence, “I am feeling . . .” (mad, sad, glad) with a word or short phrase that identifies your feelings.

## In The Previous Session

Here are the key principles we covered in the last session:

1. You react negatively to events when something or someone is threatening your desire.
2. When your desire is threatened, you experience a 'catalytic event.'
3. Your desire determines what a catalytic event is and what it is not.
4. So, the same event may cause conflict for one person but not bother another at all.
5. A catalytic event causes immediate thoughts and feelings which, in the final analysis, you choose to think and to feel.
6. Jesus says, "Come to me you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."

## In This Session

In this session of **Engaging Conflict Redemptively**, we will explore together:

- Why Emotion is dynamic Turning Point #1: The first step in a process that will lead to joy and peace or more conflict and bitterness.
- The four default conflict emotions--fear, anger, guilt and shame--what they are and why we feel them.
- Why conflict does not create your emotions, but reveals the fear, anger, guilt or shame that is already there inside you.
- How the emotion inside of you has been formed by your past experience.
- Why transformation begins by being attentive to **Stop, Listen and Discern** your emotion.
- Why we cannot always choose our emotion, but we can choose to love.
- What emotion may reveal about the "sin crouching at your door."

# Introduction

You are what you love.

In the last session, we saw how your backStory-- the story you are telling yourself--is driven by what you love to want, or want to love. We call this, desire. In most cases, noble or not, the desire is misplaced. You are trying to achieve or attain by human strength what only God can provide. So, your health and peace depends largely upon being able to identify, address, and redeem your desire. Transformation is the spiritual process of God authoring your story, not your story authoring you.

To illustrate how your story is guided by desire and how desire shapes your emotions, let's consider one infamous story about two brothers, Cain and Abel, recorded in Genesis. Genesis tells the Hebrew story of beginnings, how Jehovah created the world and established relationship with His creation. Cain and Abel are minor characters who appear only briefly but represent a powerful archetype of human relationship.

Cain was the firstborn son of Adam and Eve. Adam was created first and Eve was formed out of Adam's rib to provide community between the man and woman. Their home was a garden paradise of peace and harmony between the divine and human, human and human, and human with the created world. Adam and Eve live freely and without shame with only one boundary: they must not eat the forbidden fruit from the tree of life. Alas, you know how the story goes. Eve is tempted by the serpent, and Adam joins her in eating the forbidden fruit. Disobedience leads to curses and separation. To Eve, childbearing will come only through painful labor. For Adam, the earth will now produce thorns and thistles and painful toil. Animals are sacrificed for God to clothe Adam and Eve in skins. The man and woman are cast out of the Garden forever.

Cain is born with the DNA of sin. He inherits his parent's desire "to be like God." He heard stories of paradise, about walking and talking with God and living in harmony with all creation. He heard about the tree of life, God's command and subsequent punishment. His thoughts and feelings were formed, perhaps rivalry between Cain and his brother. His parent's choice forfeited Cain's opportunity to enjoy life in the Garden. His brother's sheep were a constant reminder of their shame and the price of sin.

Two sentences in this story, each dripping with description, sum up the spiritual implications of the choice Cain must make: *to do well, or not*. The conflict is set, but the battle is not between Cain and his parents, or Cain and his brother, or even Cain and God. The real conflict is between Cain and his own desire. Desire is “crouching” at Cain’s door, like a wild beast ready to pounce and consume. Will Cain master his desire, by stepping back and taking a non-anxious truthful and loving view of the situation? Or will he open desire’s door? Cain chooses the latter and his choice sets him on a course of separation, judgment, and bitterness.

What’s your story?



## Watch Video

Play and watch the video together, from start to finish. Use the space below to note any ideas, key points or principles that stand out to you personally, or what you would like the group to explore more deeply.

## Notes

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## Group Dialogue

Discuss together your personal and group reactions to the video, using the following questions to prompt dialogue:

- What idea, word or phrase stood out to you when watching the video? How did this strike you and why?
- The video suggests that conflict does not create your emotions. Rather, conflict reveals the fear, anger, guilt or shame *that is already there inside you*. Share together how your emotional reaction to conflict may have been shaped by precious experience?
- Discuss together the difference between guilt and shame. How have you experienced, and perhaps confused, these two emotions?
- Choose a specific conflict from one member of your group. Now, explore together what it might look like to practice being attentive to one's emotions. What, specifically, might one do to Stop, Listen and Discern your emotion?
- What would it look like in your personal conflict to choose to love? What would you think, feel and do?

## Notes

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## Key Principle(s)

Here are five key principles to remember from this session:

- The four default conflict emotions are fear, anger, guilt and shame.
- Conflict does not create your emotions, but reveals fear, anger, guilt or shame.
- The emotion inside of you has been formed by your past experience.
- Transformation takes time, discipline and practice, beginning with being attentive to Stop, Listen and Discern your emotion.
- You cannot always choose your emotion, but you can choose to love.



## Going Deeper

The following resources will be useful for deeper study throughout the **Engaging Conflict Redemptively** series:

- James K.A. Smith, *You Are What You love: The Spiritual Power of Habit* (Baker Publishing Group, 2016)
- Curt Thompson, MD., *The Soul of Shame: Retelling the stories we believe about ourselves*, (InterVarsity Press, 2015)
- Brene Brown, *Daring Greatly: How the Courage to Be Vulnerable Transforms the Way We Live, Love, Parent, and Lead*, (Avery 2012)

# Notes

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## Next Session

In Session Five of **Engaging Conflict Redemptively**, we'll explore Dynamic Turning Point #2: Reaction.

Every person has a default, quick-fix response to conflict that is automatic, learned . . . and usually wrong! Generally, there are two different ways of reasoning that guide your reactions. The first reasoning is guided by subjective feelings, a way of thinking that emphasizes love and relationships. Subjective feelings lead to passive and evasive quick-fix reactions. The second way of thinking is guided by objective facts, reasoning that emphasizes truth and order. Objective facts lead to defensive or aggressive quick-fix reactions. Quick-fix reactions are negative because they only address symptoms of the problem, not the fundamental problem. Quick-fix reactions may “work” for a temporary time but usually makes the conflict worse.

Identifying your quick-fix, conflict style response—and why it is wrong—is a key step for transformation.

**NOTE:** To prepare for the next session, please complete the Conflict Style Assessment.

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**SESSION #5: REACTION**



# Personal Reflection

**Preview the Video:** To prepare for your group study, preview the video once alone then complete the Personal Reflection below.

Please take the Personal Conflict Assessment Survey, and record your results here:

**In conflict, I tend to be:** *(circle quick-fix default reaction)*

Passive

Evasive

Defensive

Aggressive

## Notes

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*“If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.”*

ROMANS 12:18

## Scripture & Prayer

**Read** together the key Scripture texts for this session:

- Luke 5:1-11
- Mark 8:27-33
- Luke 22:24-34
- Luke 22:54-62
- John 21:15-17

**Pray:** Thank God for what He is going to reveal personally and as a group today.

## Check-in

Living peaceably means *attending to our emotions* and *speaking the truth in love*. To help develop these vital practices, start the meeting by each person identifying and confessing whatever emotion they are feeling now and bringing to the meeting.

Simply complete the sentence, “I am feeling . . .” (mad, sad, glad) with a word or short phrase that identifies your feelings.

## In The Previous Session

Here are five key principles to remember from last session:

- The four default conflict emotions are fear, anger, guilt and shame.
- Conflict does not create your emotions, but reveals the fear, anger, guilt or shame
- The emotion inside of you has been formed by your past experience.
- Transformation takes time, discipline and practice, beginning with being attentive to Stop, Listen and Discern your emotion.
- You cannot always choose your emotion, but you *can* choose to love.

## In This Session

In this session of **Engaging Conflict Redemptively**, we will explore together:

- How every person has a default, quick-fix response to conflict that is automatic, learned... and usually wrong!
- There are two different ways of reasoning and four quick-fix reactions that guide your response:
  - Subjective feelings, a way of thinking that emphasizes love and relationships. Subjective feelings lead to passive and evasive quick-fix reactions.
  - Objective facts, a way of thinking that emphasizes truth and order. Objective facts lead to defensive or aggressive quick-fix reactions.
- Quick-fix reactions are negative because they only address symptoms of the problem not the fundamental problem.
- Quick-fix reactions may “work” for a brief time but usually make the conflict worse.
- Your reaction to conflict sets you on a path leading to joy, or bitterness.
- Identifying your quick-fix, conflict style response—and why it is wrong—is a key step for transformation.



# Introduction

Like you and me, Peter was a quick-fix responder. (Thankfully) unlike you and me, Peter's infamous quick-fix responses are recorded forever in history, in the gospels.

This tells us at least two things: First, great disciples fail--in reaction to Jesus, to conflict and to personal failure. Second, Jesus meets us in our failure, offering a pathway to restore our walk with Him-- just like Peter. But learning Jesus' way starts with seeing how far wrong we have strayed. Consider five brief scenes from Peter's life:

*Scene One:* Simon Peter's first encounter with Jesus comes after a long night of failure. Peter was a fisherman. He'd been fishing all night without catching a single fish. Mending nets the next morning, no doubt weary and frustrated, Jesus comes walking along the shore followed by a great crowd. Choosing Peter's boat and putting out a short distance from shore, Jesus sits down to teach. Once finished and without dismissing the crowd, Jesus instructs Peter to put the boat out into deep water and "let down your nets for catch."

"Master, we've worked all night and caught nothing," Peter responds, but does as Jesus asks. He lets down the nets and immediately the nets are full of fish almost to bursting and the boat nearly sinking. Overcome with his own unworthiness, Peter says, "Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man." Peter wanted to flee.

*Scene Two:* Peter has just distinguished himself from the other disciples by declaring, "You are the Christ." But Peter's notion of what this meant was about to be challenged. A turn in Jesus' ministry has begun. Now Jesus begins intentionally teaching and actively setting his sight toward the cross. Peter responds aggressively to correct Jesus. Jesus replies, "Get behind me Satan!" Peter's mind is set on human things, not the things of God.

*Scene Three:* A dispute has arisen between the disciples about who was the greatest. Jesus intervenes with a teaching about greatest being service. Then Jesus singles out Peter, warning him of Peter's pending denials. Peter's reaction? Defense. "Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death!"

"I tell you," Jesus answers, "before the cock crows today you will deny me three times."

*Scene Four:* Peter's worst fears were unfolding before him. Jesus had been arrested, taken to the house of the High Priest. Peter followed the mob from a distance and mingled in the courtyard outside the house, fearing going in; but not wanting to run away; hoping he would

not be recognized. “This man was with him!” “You are one of them!” “Surely this Galilean was one of them!” Three accusations. Three evasive denials, the last with a curse.

*Scene Five:* The worst has happened, but something infinitely better has been inaugurated. Jesus has ushered in a new way of life and being. But Peter is still hurting, full of guilt and shame. Once again, Peter is in a boat, unable to catch fish. A man from the shoreline tells them where to cast the nets. Net immediately fill. Recognizing the Lord, Peter swims to shore. After breakfast, Jesus takes Peter aside. Three questions. Three commissions. Three restorations. The fisher of fish is now ready to be fisher of men. Failure has broken and prepared Peter to lead.

What is failure teaching you?



## Watch Video

Play and watch the video together, from start to finish. Use the space below to note any ideas, key points or principles that stand out to you personally, or what you would like the group to explore more deeply.

## Notes

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## Group Dialogue

Discuss together your personal and group reactions to the video, using the following questions to prompt dialogue:

- How do you tend to think about conflict? Are you . . . guided by:
  - Subjective feelings, a way of thinking that emphasizes love and relationships. Subjective feelings lead to passive and evasive quick-fix reactions, or
  - Objective facts, a way of thinking that emphasizes truth and order. Objective facts lead to defensive or aggressive quick-fix reactions.
- What is your default, quick-fix response to conflict and where or who did you learn it from?
- How have your quick-fix reactions “worked” for you while also making your conflict worse?

## Notes

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## Key Principle(s)

Here are key principles to remember from this session:

- Your passive, evasive, defensive or aggressive conflict style is a learned, self-centered reaction designed to advance or protect your desire.
- Your reaction is usually immediate and automatic . . . sometimes even unconscious.
- Your reaction almost always makes your conflict worse because it fails to reconcile the conflict.
- Love at the expense of truth is not love.
- Truth at the expense of love is not truth.
- The remedy for being passive is not to learn how to be more “aggressive” (or any other opposite.)
- You are not responsible for the reactions of others. You are responsible for being faithful.
- Transformation comes as you focus on Jesus, not your conflict, and respond with practices of peace. The key practice of reconciliation is “speaking the truth in love.”
- Reconciliation is a way of life.



## Going Deeper

The following resources will be useful for deeper study for this session of **Engaging Conflict Redemptively**:

- Jim Van Yperen, *Making Peace: A Guide to Overcoming Church Conflict* (Moody Press, 2002)
- Dominic Smart, *When We Get it Wrong: Peter, Christ and Our Path Through Failure* (Paternost Lifestyle, UK, 2001)
- Edwin H., Friedman, *A Failure of Nerve: Leadership in the age of the Quick Fix*, (Seabury Books, NY 1999)



## Next Session

In Session six of **Engaging Conflict Redemptively**, we'll explore how every conflict presents a fundamental, far-reaching decision that goes to the heart of who you are and how you perceive the world. You'll learn how conflict confronts your false identity and activity by exposing the part of your reality that is broken, missing or disordered. Conflict forces a choice between community or individualism; integration or separation; embrace or exclusion; and submission or coercion. We'll explore how your choices in the past have led you into separation and how, following Jesus, you can embody habits and practices for true transformation.

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**SESSION #6: DECISION (1)**



# Personal Reflection

**Preview the Video:** To prepare for your group study, preview the video once alone then complete the Personal Reflection below.

Have you ever become so overwhelmed by a crisis that you ran away? Have you ever asked God to remove the crisis or take your life? Perhaps you recall a time when you came very close to this kind of prayer. In the space below, describe the crisis you were experiencing--what was happening, how did you feel and what efforts did you take to remove the problem. Briefly explain how this crisis was resolved and what you learned from going through it.

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“If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.”

ROMANS 12:18

## Scripture & Prayer

**Read** together the key Scripture texts for this session:

- 1 Kings 19:1-9
- Jonah 1:1-16
- Jonah 4:1-11
- 2 Corinthians 12:1-10

**Pray:** Thank God for what He is going to reveal personally and as a group through this session.

## Check-in

Living peaceably means *attending to our emotions* and *speaking the truth in love*. To help develop these vital practices, start the meeting by each person identifying and confessing whatever emotion they are feeling now and bringing to the meeting.

Simply complete the sentence, “I am feeling . . .” (mad, sad, glad) with a word or short phrase that identifies your feelings.

## In The Previous Session

Here are key principles to remember from the last session:

- Your passive, evasive, defensive or aggressive conflict style is a learned, self-centered reaction designed to advance or protect your desire.
- Your reaction is usually immediate and automatic . . . sometimes even unconscious.
- Your reaction almost always makes your conflict worse because it fails to reconcile the conflict.
- Love at the expense of truth is not love.
- Truth at the expense of love is not truth.
- The remedy for being passive is not to learn how to be more “aggressive” (or any other opposite.)
- You are not responsible for the reactions of others. You are responsible for being faithful.
- Transformation comes as you focus on Jesus, not your conflict, and respond with practices of peace. The key practice of reconciliation is “speaking the truth in love.”
- Reconciliation is a way of life.

## In This Session

In this session of **Engaging Conflict Redemptively** we will explore together:

- How disordered desire shapes your identity, activity and reality.
- Why every conflict presents a fundamental, far-reaching decision that goes to the heart of who you are and how you perceive the world.
- How conflict confronts your false identity and activity by exposing the part of your reality that is broken, missing or disordered.
- How conflict forces a choice between community or individualism; integration or separation; embrace or exclusion; submission or coercion.
- How Jesus ushers in a new kingdom reality that makes possible a new identity and new activity--a visible, spiritual community where Jesus is present even in the midst of pride, betrayal and conflict.
- How you can embody habits and practices for true transformation.

# Introduction

Sometimes all you want to do is run away and hide. You can feel like running away *between* one major conflict and another, like Elijah. Or, like Jonah, you can try to run away *before* and *after* a conflict. Either way, separation is not the answer and God will seek you out.

Ahab called him the “troubler of Israel.” Elijah stared down Ahab, the 450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of Ashereth on Mount Carmel. Two altars were built but only the One True God answered with fire from heaven. Ahab told Jezebel who then threatened Elijah’s life. Elijah was afraid and fled to the wilderness, wanting to die. Instead, God provided food and drink that sustained Elijah for forty days and nights as he fled to a cave at Mount Horeb. Then God met him, asking Elijah, “What are you doing here?”

Jonah fled twice. God said to Jonah, “Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city and call out against it, for their evil has come up before me.” But Jonah rebelled, fleeing to Tarshish on a boat from Joppa, “away from the presence of the Lord.” You know the story. A great storm threatens the boat. Jonah is thrown overboard, swallowed by a fish, repents and is delivered. He goes to Nineveh. God spares the city when the king of Nineveh repents. But then Jonah complains about God’s mercy and prays, “O Lord, please take my life.” And the Lord says, “Do you do well to be angry?”

So Jonah flees out of the city. The Lord provides a plant for shade then allows it to wither and Jonah wants to die. “You pity the plant, for which you did not labor,” God replies. “And should I not pity Nineveh where 120,000 people do not know their right hand from their left?” The book of Jonah ends here with God’s words. Jonah is confronted by his own ignorance and the sovereignty of God.

The Apostle Paul faces a crisis with his “thorn in the flesh” that he pleads for God to remove. God responds, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Paul concludes, “Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me.”

So, the next time a conflict becomes so overwhelming that you feel like running away and hiding, think about Elijah, Jonah and Paul, and take your feelings as a sign for staying, embracing your weakness and trusting God to be your strength.



## Watch Video

Play and watch the video together, from start to finish. Use the space below to note any ideas, key points or principles that stand out to you personally, or what you would like the group to explore more deeply.

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# Group Dialogue

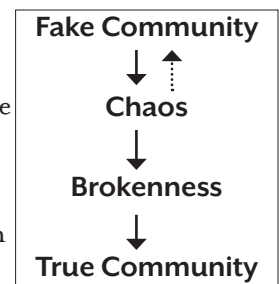
M.Scott Peck writes about the journey people must take from pseudo or fake community to true community. Pseudo-community is conflict avoidance. It is pretend love, acting as if there are no problems or differences, withholding the truth. So, intimacy and honesty are lacking.

Pseudo-community leads to chaos. When individual differences inevitably surface, misguided attempts to heal or coerce are employed. People attack each other and leaders. They want the problem to go away so they can go back to fake community.

This leads to emptiness, what we call brokenness. The way through chaos to true community is through brokenness--living in the emptiness--people sharing their faults and failures without seeking escape, employing quick-fixes or trying to coerce the outcome. True community emerges as the group chooses to embrace their vulnerability and weakness, trusting God for strength through individual and group sacrifice.

Apply these four stages of community to your group. Where are you? Is the community of your group fake? In chaos? In brokenness?

Think of a present or recent conflict in your group. How has this conflict shaped your community? Have you chosen separation--removing yourself from the chaos and emptiness? Or, have you chosen integration and reconciliation--deciding to live in, and work through your crisis? What do you sense God is prompting you to do now?



## Notes

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## Key Principle(s)

Here are key principles to remember from this session:

- Disordered desire shapes your identity, activity and reality.
- Every conflict presents a fundamental, far-reaching decision that goes to the heart of who you are and how you perceive the world.
- Conflict confronts your false identity and activity by exposing the part of your reality that is broken, missing or disordered.
- Conflict forces a choice between community or individualism; integration or separation; embrace or exclusion; submission or coercion.
- Jesus ushers in a new kingdom reality that makes possible a new identity and new activity--a visible, spiritual community where Jesus is present.
- Reconciliation is a way of life.



## Going Deeper

The following resources will be useful for deeper study for this session of **Engaging Conflict Redemptively**:

- Christena Cleveland, *Disunity in Christ: Uncovering the Hidden Forces That Keep Us Apart*, (IVP, 2013)
- Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace, A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness and Reconciliation*, (Abington Press, 1996)
- M.Scott Peck, *A Different Drum: Community Making and Peace*, (Touchstone, New York, 1987)



## Next Session

In the next session of **Engaging Conflict Redemptively**, we'll explore what it looks like for you to follow Jesus *through* your conflict, to face your fears, and to work out reconciliation faithfully. We'll discover how a decision to follow Jesus in conflict means embodying practices of peace that are non-anxious, non-coercive, humble, truth-filled and loving.

We'll introduce two vital practices of peace that can transform your life. The first is humble confession of sin and failure: how to say you are sorry and really mean it. The second is gentle confrontation: how to confront someone who has wronged you or others.

Join us next time, to learn seven vital steps in making a humble confession.



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**SESSION #7: DECISION (2)**



# Personal Reflection

**Preview the Video:** To prepare for your group study, preview the video once alone then complete the Personal Reflection below.

To confess means to “use the same words” that God would use to describe your sin. Think about a real event in your life where you sinned against others. Download the “Examining Your Thoughts, Actions & Speech” form (attached to Session #7) to discern what you may need to confess to God and others. Use the space below to note what sins you have committed and the people you have sinned against.

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*“If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.”*

**ROMANS 12:18**

## Scripture & Prayer

**Read** together the key Scripture texts for this session:

- Nehemiah 1:1-11
- Psalm 32
- John 15: 1-17
- Luke 15
- James 5:13-18

**Pray:** Thank God for what He is going to reveal to us personally and as a group through this session.

## Check-in

Living peaceably means *attending to our emotions* and *speaking the truth in love*. To help develop these vital practices, we start our meeting by asking each person to identify and confess whatever emotion they are feeling now and bringing to the meeting.

Simply complete the sentence, “I am feeling . . .” (mad, sad, glad) with a word or short phrase that identifies your feelings.

## In The Previous Session

In the last session of **Engaging Conflict Redemptively** we discovered:

- How disordered desire shapes your identity, activity and reality.
- Why every conflict presents a fundamental, far-reaching decision that goes to the heart of who you are and how you perceive the world.
- How conflict confronts your false identity and activity by exposing the part of your reality that is broken, missing or disordered.
- How conflict forces a choice: community or individualism; integration or separation; embrace or exclusion; and submission or coercion.
- How Jesus ushers in a new kingdom reality that makes possible a new identity and new activity--a visible, spiritual community where Jesus is present even in the midst of pride, betrayal and conflict.
- Why true community requires brokenness.
- How you can embody habits and practices for true transformation.

## In This Session

In this session of **Engaging Conflict Redemptively** we will explore together:

- How Jesus' life, death and resurrection models a radical disposition of character we are to follow, a comprehensive way of feeling, thinking and behaving in conflict.
- How living in Jesus' presence means practicing habits that are non-anxious, non-coercive, humble, truth-filled and loving.
- Two vital practices of peace that can transform your life: humble confession and gentle confrontation.
- What confession is, and is not; and why most Christians fall far short of what Scripture teaches about genuine confession.
- Why genuine confession must:
  - Be personal.
  - Be Specific and Succinct.
  - Be unconditional & Comprehensive.
  - Express Genuine Remorse and Ask for Forgiveness.
  - Submit to Change.
  - Make Appropriate Restitution.
  - Seek Full Reconciliation.

# Introduction

In our last session, we introduced the concept of brokenness as a key stage in growing authentic community. Brokenness is the process of seeing oneself truthfully, of recognizing the depth of one's pride, self-deception, willfulness and desire. Only as one is fully broken can one become fully whole. Brokenness is the essential requirement, often missing, in confession because the person confessing has not come to grips with the depth of their sin, separation and self-deception.

First, the unbroken person minimizes the rippling repercussions of separation that sin spreads across a community. For example, the sin of pornography is not a "private" sin. It is a violation of every woman (if a man) or every man (if a woman), objectifying sisters and brothers instead of honoring each as a child of God. Sins such as lying, triangulation and gossip slash the very fiber of communal trust that families and churches depend upon. Sin separates-- the sinner from God, from others and even from oneself. There is no sin that does not separate you from others.

Second, sin furthers self-deception. This is what permits an unbroken person to use euphemisms like "mistake," or "bad decisions" instead of naming their sin for what it is, i.e., idolatry, sexual immorality, deceit or dissension. The unbroken person cannot see that even their desire to do right is wrong, as they plot ways to minimize responsibility. After all, "everyone makes mistakes." Sin wants to have us alone, apart from the fellowship of God and unity of the Body. Unbroken pride feeds the desire to be "right" or better than others.

In contrast, brokenness reveals that I am completely and utterly lost: like Jesus' parables of the lost sheep, a lost coin and a lost son. Note that, for the sheep and prodigal son, the first step to being found was the painful and unavoidable recognition of their being lost. This is where authentic confession begins, by acknowledging you are lost and allowing God to find you out.

God knows our heart, our thoughts, our actions. We, like sheep and prodigal child, ought to run to the Shepherd's side asking forgiveness and help to put things right with others. Yet, this rarely happens. We forget that our sin against others is first a rebellion against God. So we live as unbroken people, constantly in hiding or on the dodge, playing a shell game of responsibility.

George MacDonald once wrote, "It is one of the poorest of human weaknesses that a man should be ashamed of saying he has done wrong, instead of so ashamed of having done wrong that he cannot rest till he has said so; for the shame cleaves fast until the confession removes it." Unbrokenness only feels shame for one's reputation. Brokenness opens one's eyes to a much deeper problem: separation from the Father. The difference is everything. Brokenness is the first step for authentic confession.

Do you want to say, "I'm sorry," and really mean it? Start with making a list of every relationship that has been impacted by your sin, every person your words or deeds have erected a barrier between, every trust that has been violated. Be humble and let your brokenness guide your confession.

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## *Watch Video*

Play and watch the video together, from start to finish. Use the space below to note any ideas, key points or principles that stand out to you personally, or what you would like the group to explore more deeply.

## *Notes*

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# Personal Confession

To confess means to “use the same words” that God would use to describe your sin. Think about a real event in your life where you sinned against others. With this event in mind, write a confession, following the outline below, pausing after each step to write from your heart what you believe God would have you say.

## **1. AUTHENTIC CONFESSION IS PERSONAL:**

Address the person(s) offended by name and in person. Begin your confession with a personal opening statement, i.e., “John, I want to talk with you to ask forgiveness for how my attitude/ words/ behavior have sinned against you...”

## **2. AUTHENTIC CONFESSION IS SPECIFIC AND SUCCINCT.**

Name the sin or failure exactly, in plain and easy to understand words that are not ambiguous. Acknowledge that your sin violated an underlying ideal, belief, value or practice of your community --breaking what is generally accepted to be right or good. Your confession should say exactly what you did, when you did it. Do not go into detail or provide a long description of the sin.

## **3. AUTHENTIC CONFESSION IS UNCONDITIONAL AND COMPREHENSIVE.**

Take full responsibility for your sin, regardless of what others might have done or not done. Confess all of the sin, not merely what is known. Do not use “if” or “but.” State what you did wrong. Recognize the consequences of your sin. The confession should NEVER blame others or include any statement or accusation about another person. State that you accept full responsibility for your sin. Now look over what you have written so far. What do you need to include? What do you need to take out because it is blaming or explaining?



**4. AUTHENTIC CONFESSION EXPRESSES GENUINE REMORSE AND ASKS FOR FORGIVENESS.**

Express genuine remorse for the specific harm your words or actions caused. Empathize with the social, emotional, physical, and spiritual harm and suffering resulting from your sin. Recognize your guilt and humbly ask for forgiveness. Write a statement expressing remorse and humbly asking for forgiveness, i.e., “I realize that my sin has caused you and your family a lot of pain . . . that grieves me . . . I ask you to forgive me.”

**5. AUTHENTIC CONFESSION SUBMITS TO CHANGE.**

Commit to change by submitting to an accountability process that will examine your character and change the thoughts, attitudes and actions that led to the sin in the first place. Ask for or commit to seeking help so that you never do the sin again. Write a statement expressing your commitment to change, i.e., “I know that I have been using alcohol as a way to relieve my stress. I’m going to AA, so that I stop drinking and never do this to you or anyone else again . . .”

**6. AUTHENTIC CONFESSION MAKES APPROPRIATE RESTITUTION.**

State your desire and take immediate steps to make just and appropriate restitution for your sin. Restitution means to “pay back” for the harm caused by the sin and to take steps to restore the trust broken. Here, you may ask the person offended what steps you could take to make restitution and begin restoring the relationship. Write what, specifically, you are doing to make restitution, i.e., “I am giving you \$100.00 for you to buy a new rake to replace the one I broke. Will that cover your costs? What else can I do to make this right?”

**7. AUTHENTIC CONFESSION SEEKS FULL RECONCILIATION.**

Take steps to be fully reconciled and restored in your relationship to the person(s) you sinned against. Seek out and make yourself accountable to at least two other people who can help you reestablish trust for a fully restored relationship. State your desire to be fully reconciled, i.e., “I know you cannot trust me now, but I am committed to doing whatever I can to restore our friendship in the future . . .”

**NOW, LOOK OVER WHAT YOU HAVE WRITTEN**

Ask yourself: Is my confession personal? Specific? Unconditional? Remorseful? Submitting to change? Offering restitution? Seeking full restoration? Edit your confession to meet these guidelines then call the person(s) you have sinned against to set up a time when you can meet personally to confess.



## Group Dialogue

1. Discuss together what you thought and felt as you wrote and re-wrote your personal confession. What did you have to change, edit or re-word? What did you learn about yourself?
2. Take time now to discuss how being mindful of Jesus' presence might change the way you think, feel and act toward one another. Consider and discuss together what it would look like to embody in your group the six attributes of Jesus' character. What would we do or stop doing if we truly were:
  - Non-anxious,
  - Non-coercive,
  - Humble,
  - Truth-filled,
  - Loving?

## Notes

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## Key Principle(s)

Here are key principles to remember from this session:

- Jesus' life, death and resurrection models a radical disposition of character we are to follow, a comprehensive way of feeling, thinking and acting in conflict.
- Jesus' presence means practicing habits that are non-anxious, non-coercive, humble, truth-filled and loving.
- Most Christians fall far short of what Scripture teaches about genuine confession, which must:
  - Be personal,
  - Be specific and succinct,
  - Be unconditional and comprehensive,
  - Express genuine remorse and ask for forgiveness,
  - Submit to change,
  - Make appropriate restitution and
  - Seek full reconciliation.



## Going Deeper

The following resources will be useful for deeper study for this session of **Engaging Conflict Redemptively**:

- Jim Van Yperen, *The Good Confession: A Tale of Failure and Forgiveness*, (Wingfold Farm, 2011)
- Marlena Graves, *A Beautiful Disaster: Finding Hope in the Midst of Brokenness*, (Brazos Press, 2014)
- Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together* (Harper San Francisco, 1954)

## Next Session

In Session Eight of **Engaging Conflict Redemptively**, we'll explore the vital practice of speaking gentle confrontation. We'll examine why many people confuse what the bible says about personal judgment and gentle confrontation.

We'll learn together that judgment is the role of the church discerning and acting as a body, not the role of one individual judging another. Personal judgment, on the other hand, has to do with condemnation and punishment . . . about who is right and who is wrong . . . usually by looking down at someone from a position of pride. So, a gentle confrontation must exhibit submission, empathy and restoration, meeting the other humbly as a brother or sister, and gently speaking the truth in love.

With this clarification in mind, we'll explore eight steps for making a gentle confrontation.

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*Redemptively*

**SESSION #8: DECISION (3)**



# Personal Reflection

**Preview the Video:** To prepare for your group study, preview the video once alone then complete the Personal Reflection below.

Think about a real event in your life where you were a first person witness to a sin against you or someone else. With this event in mind, write a confrontation, following the outline below, pausing after each step to write from your heart what you believe God would have you say.

## 1. BEGIN WITH LOVE

Ask God for courage, wisdom and grace as you write. Fill your heart with love for the person. Express compassion for feelings, but differentiate your emotions.

## 2. BE PERSONAL AND HUMBLE

Address the person by name and in person. Speak as one responsible adult to another, not speaking down . . . neither scolding and trying to punish, nor minimizing and trying to protect. Instead, express your desire to speak openly and explore gently a serious and difficult subject. Say, "John,. I want to talk with you about a difficult subject."

## 3. BE SPECIFIC

Speak directly, not evasively.. State specifically what you actually witnessed or experienced. Don't generalize. Talk in terms of who, what, when and where. Frame the subject you want to confront by naming the sin or failure in plain and easy to understand words that are not ambiguous.

## 4. SPEAK FROM PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

Describe how the sin (words, behavior) affected you. State how you believe the sin/failure broke a personal or communal ideal upon which relational trust rests. Illustrate your thoughts by describing what the consequences or implications of your concerns might be. Give a tangible example of why your thoughts or feelings are important. Take responsibility for your feelings, perceptions and conclusions, including the possibility that you may have misunderstood what was done or misinterpreted what was said.

**5. ASK FOR FEEDBACK AND FOLLOW THE FRUIT**

Ask the person, "Are you seeing what I am seeing? Ask the person to understand events from your perspective. If you witnessed me doing to my wife what you said and did to yours, what would you say to me? Exchange views. Ask his perspective. Listen and ask questions for clarification. Look for spiritual fruit . . . humility and repentance. State the fruit you observe and ask for his view.

**6. INVITE CHANGE**

State the hope of the Gospel and invite the other person into a pathway for following Jesus. Say, "I believe Jesus is Lord and He wants to overcome our fears and heal our frustrations. I've experienced this myself. Could you believe this too? Don't make demands. Rather, explore pathways for reconciling differences and addressing need. Suggest steps for asking forgiveness, making restitution, and rebuilding trust.

**7. AGREE UPON NEXT STEPS**

Ask if the person understands and would be willing to confess, and work on rebuilding trust? Agree on a tangible and measurable course of action for reconciliation.

**8. ENCOURAGE FAITHFULNESS**

Encourage the person with the confidence of the Gospel and the power of God to transform.

**NOW, LOOK OVER WHAT YOU HAVE WRITTEN**

Ask yourself: Is my confrontation personal? Specific? Gentle? Humble? Truthful? Encouraging? Inviting restitution? Seeking full restoration? Edit your writing to meet these guidelines then call the person to arrange a time to meet with you.

*“If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.”*

ROMANS 12:18

## Scripture & Prayer

**Read** together the key Scripture texts for this session:

- 2 Samuel 2:1-15
- Matthew 18:15-20
- Mark 8:27-33
- Galatians 6:1-8
- 1 Timothy 5:17-20

**Pray:** Thank God for what He is going to reveal to us personally and as a group through this session.

## Check-in

Living peaceably means *attending to our emotions* and *speaking the truth in love*. To help develop these vital practices, start the meeting by each person identifying and confessing whatever emotion they are feeling now and bringing to the meeting.

Simply complete the sentence, “I am feeling . . .” (mad, sad, glad) with a word or short phrase that identifies your feelings.



## In The Previous Session

In the last session of **Engaging Conflict Redemptively** we discovered:

- Jesus' life, death and resurrection models a radical disposition of character we are to follow, a comprehensive way of feeling, thinking and acting in conflict.
- Jesus' presence means practicing habits that are non-anxious, non-coercive, humble, truth-filled and loving.
- Most Christians fall far short of what Scripture teaches about genuine confession, which must:
  - Be personal,
  - Be specific and succinct,
  - Be unconditional and comprehensive,
  - Express genuine remorse and ask for forgiveness,
  - Submits to change,
  - Makes appropriate restitution and
  - Seeks full reconciliation.

## In This Session

In this session of **Engaging Conflict Redemptively** we will explore together:

- Why judgment is the role of the church to discern and act as a body, not the role of one individual judging another.
- Why a gentle confrontation must exhibit submission, empathy and restoration, meeting the other humbly as a brother or sister, and gently speaking the truth in love.
- Why confrontation must be restorative, not punitive.
- Why a gentle confrontation must:
  - Begin with love.
  - Be personal and humble.
  - Be specific.
  - Speak from personal experience.
  - Ask for feedback and follow the fruit.
  - Encourage hope and invite change.
  - Agree upon next steps.
  - Encourage faithfulness.

# Introduction

“I need advice,” Dave began our conversation. Dave is like many pastors who call Metanoia Ministries for counsel about how to handle conflict in their church. Dave told me about Tom, a founding member and retired businessman in his church. “He acts like he is the boss and I am his employee,” Dave explained, “constantly telling me what I did wrong.”

“Well, how do you respond?” I asked. “I’d like to tell him off,” Dave admitted. “But I’m trying to extend grace. I pulled him aside after service last week and said I’d like to talk to him. I mentioned that his words to me were discouraging. Tom told me he is a ‘straight-shooter.’ He said that I needed more ‘backbone,’ or I would not last long as pastor.

Dave and I talked on the phone awhile longer. I explained how defensive people are good at seeing the fault of others while failing to see their own. When confronted, defensive people will always find ways to disagree. If they cannot win they will feign hurt, blaming you for “judging” their heart.

“Dave,” I counseled, “to confront a defensive person like Tom, you must first understand why he needs to be defensive.” I told Tom to spend some time in prayer asking God for wisdom and insight. We talked about other encounters people had with Tom.

People like Tom put on an outward bravado in order to mask a deep insecurity. They are afraid of close relationships. Being critical and defensive lets them change the conversation away from his own inadequacy to the failure of others. They instinctively set up conversations to protect themselves. I reminded Dave that to be redemptive, a leader must discern, describe and lovingly invite the person into change. A simple rule is this: never confront power with power, confront power with loving truth.

Here are a few principles to keep in mind when confronting a critical or defensive person:

1. **Move toward, not away.** Your first inclination will be to move away from Tom; to ignore or to isolate him. This is wrong. Always move toward a defensive person, not away. Defensive people want to be distant; they want to think in extremes. Moving away provides emotional distance for the person to hide; it confirms this suspicion that you will not listen, that he is right and you are wrong.

2. Engage relationally. Typically, defensive people have great difficulty giving and receiving love, which is why they elevate opinion and loyalty over relationship and reconciliation.
3. Bless and affirm. Jesus said, “bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.” (Luke 6:28) Defensive people only know negative affirmation. Bless and affirm gifts. Recognize that the person believes his cause is right and just.
4. Be direct. While affirming, state truth directly.
5. Find agreement. Arguing with a defensive person always ends up in frustration and confusion. Find facts, methods or events where you agree. When wrong, apologize. Focus on fruit, not facts.



## Watch Video

Play and watch the video together, from start to finish. Use the space below to note any ideas, key points or principles that stand out to you personally, or what you would like the group to explore more deeply.

## Notes

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## Group Dialogue

1. Discuss together what you thought and felt as you wrote out your confrontation. What did you find most difficult to write or say? What did you learn about yourself?
2. Look up, explore and discuss together what can be learned from the following examples of confrontation in Scripture.
  - God confronting Adam and Eve (Genesis 3)
  - God confronting Cain (Genesis 4)
  - Nathan confronting David (2 Samuel 2:1-15)
  - Jesus confronting Peter (Mark 8:27-33)

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## Key Principle(s)

Here are key principles to remember from this session:

- Judgment is the role of the church to discern and act as a body, not the role of one individual judging another.
- A gentle confrontation must exhibit submission, empathy and restoration, meeting the other humbly as a brother or sister, and gently speaking the truth in love.
- Confrontation must be restorative, not punitive.
- A gentle confrontation must:
  - Begin with love.
  - Be personal and humble.
  - Be specific.
  - Speak from personal experience.
  - Ask for feedback and follow the fruit.
  - Encourage hope and invite change.
  - Agree upon next steps.
  - Encourage faithfulness.
- The key practice of reconciliation is “speaking the truth in love.”



## Going Deeper

The following resources will be useful for deeper study for this session of **Engaging Conflict Redemptively**:

- Jim Van Yperen, *The Good Confession: A Tale of Failure and Forgiveness*, (Wingfold Farm, 2011)
- Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together* (Harper San Francisco, 1954)

## Next Session

In the next session of **Engaging Conflict Redemptively**, we'll explore dynamic Turning Point #4: Justification. You will learn how your decision to separate from others inevitably leads to self-deception and self-justification. You'll discover how the dynamic of your conflict changes focus--moving from your head to your heart, and from your conflict with others to the conflict in your soul. You'll discuss why self-justification is one of the greatest barriers to reconciliation because our self-deception blinds us to truth--the truth about ourselves as well as our situation.

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**SESSION #9: JUSTIFICATION (1)**



# Personal Reflection

**Preview the Video:** To prepare for your group study, preview the video once alone then complete the Personal Reflection below.

After viewing the video, what is your understanding now about the difference between judgment and moral reasoning? How would you define each?

Think about a conflict in your life. In the notes section below, provide an example of how you or others practiced moral reasoning or judgment.

## Notes

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“If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.”

ROMANS 12:18

## Scripture & Prayer

**Read** together the key Scripture texts for this session:

- Isaiah 44:9-20
- Jeremiah 17:5-11
- Matthew 7:1-6; 18:15-20
- Romans 1:18-32
- James 1:16-27

**Pray:** Thank God for what He is going to reveal to us personally and as a group through this session.

## Check-in

Living peaceably means *attending to our emotions* and *speaking the truth in love*. To help develop these vital practices, start the meeting by each person identifying and confessing whatever emotion they are feeling now and bringing to the meeting.

Simply complete the sentence, “I am feeling . . .” (mad, sad, glad) with a word or short phrase that identifies your feelings.

## In The Previous Session

Here are key principles to remember from Session #8:

- Judgment is the role of the church to discern and act as a body, not the role of one individual judging another.
- A gentle confrontation must exhibit submission, empathy and restoration, meeting the other humbly as a brother or sister, and gently speaking the truth in love.
- Confrontation must be restorative, not punitive.
- A gentle confrontation must:
  - Begin with love.
  - Be personal and humble.
  - Be specific.
  - Speak from personal experience.
  - Ask for feedback and follow the fruit.
  - Encourage hope and invite change.
  - Agree upon next steps.
  - Encourage faithfulness.
- The key practice of reconciliation is “speaking the truth in love.”

## In This Session

In this session of **Engaging Conflict Redemptively** we will explore together:

- How Christians have forgotten Jesus’ prayer for oneness.
- How the human heart is deceitful when not full of Christ.
- Why every Christian is responsible for using moral reasoning to confront sin and wrong.
- Why self-deception springs from disordered desire which is idolatry.
- Why cognitive dissonance, holding two contradictory thoughts at the same time, often leads to self deception.
- How judgment is the role of the church through a process of binding and loosing.
- Why reconciliation must be restorative, not punitive.
- Why self-deception invites mutual blame, mutual justification and mutual separation.
- How self-justification comes from self-deception, but justification from God comes by faith, that is, trusting and doing what Jesus teaches.

# Introduction

“Saying you’re sorry is taking responsibility for what you did,” Em said, “regardless of what Megan did to you.”

“But that’s not fair.”

“Whether fair or not, I don’t know,” Em replied. “But it is just.”

“Just what?”

“When something is just, it is right with The Good One, even if it doesn’t seem fair to you,” Em explained. “You are responsible for doing what is right before The Good One. You are not responsible for what Megan needs to do. So, let me ask again, are you sorry for hurting Megan?”

Again, Alie was silent. She did feel badly about hurting Meg. But the thought of saying, “I was wrong” was more difficult than anything she had ever done. In fact, she had never apologized for anything before.

“Alie?”

“Well, if I hurt her . . .”

“Stop right there. There are no ‘ifs’ in repentance. You either hurt Megan or you didn’t. Did you hurt Megan?”

“Yes.”

“Okay, are you sorry you hurt her?”

“Yes, but . . .”

“No buts, either!” Em laughed endearingly at Alie’s stubborn persistence. “Repentance is unconditional, Alie. When you say ‘if’ or ‘but’ you minimize what you have done. You’re not apologizing. You’re trying to excuse yourself. True confession takes responsibility for what you did without any qualification. Do you see?”

“I’m trying.”

“Sometimes you can’t see yourself truthfully until you admit where you are wrong. Confession helps you begin to see yourself as The Good One sees you. Saying you are sorry helps you see the world in a different way. You see the world as it really is, not as you thought it was or wanted it to be.”

Em could see Alie was following his words but not fully understanding.

“Let me ask you this, Alie. Did butting Megan make you feel closer or further away from her?”

“Further away.”

“So, this conflict has separated you more?”

“I guess so.”

“And since then. Have you talked to Megan?”

“No.”

“Has she talked to you?”

“She’s avoiding me,” Alie said, and then slowly added, “I guess we’re avoiding each other.”

“Of course you are. So, has silence made you closer or more separated?”

“More separated.”

“You see, Alie? This is what happens when you don’t admit you’re wrong. You begin to separate yourself more and more. And the further apart you go, the more you will rationalize what you did. You tell yourself that it is her fault, not yours. And you end up blaming others in order to excuse yourself. But all the time you know the truth and that knowledge makes you feel miserable.”

Excerpt from: *The Good Confession*, page 52-53



## Watch Video

Play and watch the video together, from start to finish. Use the space below to note any ideas, key points or principles that stand out to you personally, or what you would like the group to explore more deeply.

## Notes

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## Group Dialogue

The English word for “integrity” comes from the word “integer” referring to a “whole number,” a “complete entity,” or something “undivided.” Integrity is much more than keeping one’s word. Integrity is a comprehensive way of feeling, thinking and acting toward others in community.

Read and discuss each of the points below contrasting integrity and self-deception:

1. Integrity is being UNDIVIDED in my relationship with God and others. (*Psalm 86:11*)
2. Integrity requires ONENESS, a collective commitment to “one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.” (*Ephesians 4:1-4*)
3. To be ONE means to be “of one mind,” or “of one accord,” (“being united with Christ in all desires.” Jonathan Edwards) (*John 17:18-26*)
4. Any thought or action that places my own interests above the interests of others breaks my “ONENESS” with Christ, others and self. (*Philippians 2:1-3*)
5. When I break oneness, I SEPARATE myself from God and others and begin to view the world in a way that JUSTIFIES my separation. (*Genesis 3:8-10*)
6. When I see a self-justifying world, my view of reality becomes DISTORTED. (*Romans 1:18-32*)
7. So, when I break oneness, I act selfishly and become SELF-DECEIVED. (*Isaiah 44:9-20; Jeremiah 17:5-11*)
8. Over time, selfishness and self-deception become characteristic of how I THINK and ACT. (*James 3:14-16*)
9. By thinking and acting selfishly and separately, I provoke others to be SEPARATE. (*Luke 16:14-15*)
10. Self-deception invites mutual BLAME, mutual JUSTIFICATION and mutual SEPARATION. (*2 Corinthians 12:20-21*)
11. Repentance, plus intentional steps to consider and act upon the needs and interests of others, begins to break the cycle of my self-deception, allows me to see myself and my sin truthfully so that I can move toward ONENESS with God and others and true integrity. (*Philippians 2:1-12*)

## Notes

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## Key Principle(s)

Here are key principles to remember from this session:

- Jesus prays for all Christians to be one.
- Every Christian is responsible for using moral reasoning to confront sin and wrong.
- Judgment is the role of the church. The church is responsible for “binding and loosing.”
  - To “bind” means to hold a person accountable for wrong.
  - To “loose” means to forgive and release someone from their wrong.
- Reconciliation is restorative, not punitive.
- Cognitive dissonance, holding two contradictory thoughts at the same time, often leads to self deception.
- Self-deception occurs when a person chooses his/her disordered desire and, by doing so, chooses to break oneness with God and others.
- Self-justification comes from self-deception. But justification from God comes by faith, that is, trusting and doing what Jesus teaches.



## Going Deeper

The following resources will be useful for deeper study for this session of **Engaging Conflict Redemptively**:

- John Howard Yoder, *Body Politics: Five Practices of the Christian Community Before the Watching World*, Chapter 1: Binding and Loosing, (Herald Press, 1992)
- Gene Edwards, *A Tale of Three Kings: A Study in Brokenness*, (Tyndale House, 1980)
- Jim Van Yperen, *The Good Confession: A Tale of Failure and Forgiveness*, (Wingfold Farm, 2011)
- *The Arbinger Institute, Leadership and Self-Deception*, (Barrett-Koehler, 2000)



## Next Session

In the next session of **Engaging Conflict Redemptively**, we'll explore the first two disciplines that are vital to unlearning the habits of self-deception and self-justification: unconditional forgiveness and making generous restitution. We'll explore a biblical understanding of justification--how justification is the work of God in you, not something you can earn, accomplish or declare for yourself. We'll explore how a process of being righteous and doing what is right ought to be growing in every person as they follow Jesus; how our justification in Christ ought to motivate our reconciliation with others, beginning with forgiveness.



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**SESSION #10: JUSTIFICATION (2)**



## Personal Reflection

**Preview the Video:** To prepare for your group study, preview the video once alone then complete the Personal Reflection below.

The Greek word for “forgive” literally means “to give graciously, give freely.” Biblical forgiveness cannot be understood outside of God’s grace and love. God invites your participation in His grace through forgiveness. Have you accepted or are you refusing this invitation?

## Scripture & Prayer

**Read** together the key Scripture texts for this session:

- Psalm 32; 103:1-5
- Matthew 6:7-15;
- Matthew 18:21-35; 26:26-29
- Luke 7:36-50
- Colossians 3:12-17

**Pray:** Thank God for what He is going to reveal to us personally and as a group through this session.

## Check-in

Living peaceably means *attending to our emotions* and *speaking the truth in love*. To help develop these vital practices, start the meeting by each person identifying and confessing whatever emotion they are feeling now and bringing to the meeting.

Simply complete the sentence, “I am feeling . . .” (mad, sad, glad) with a word or short phrase that identifies your feelings.

## In The Previous Session

Here are key principles to remember from Session #9:

- Jesus prays for all Christians to be one.
- Every Christian is responsible for using moral reasoning to confront sin and wrong.
- Judgment is the role of the church. The church is responsible for “binding and loos-  
ing.”
  - To “bind” means to hold a person accountable for wrong.
  - To “loose” means to forgive and release someone from their wrong.
- Reconciliation is restorative, not punitive.
- Cognitive dissonance, holding two contradictory thoughts at the same time, often leads to self deception.
- Self-deception occurs when a person chooses his/her disordered desire and, by doing so, chooses to break oneness with God and others.
- Self-justification comes from self-deception. But justification from God comes by faith, that is, trusting and doing what Jesus teaches.

## In This Session

In this session of **Engaging Conflict Redemptively** we will explore together:

- How justification is the judicial act of God credited to a person based on the righteousness of Christ.
- Why your justification in Christ ought to motivate your reconciliation with others.
- Why forgiveness is the start of a reconciliation process, not the end.
- Why your ability to forgive others is directly related to your ability to receive God’s forgiveness of you.
- Why forgiveness — like love — is not a feeling. It is an act of will.
- Why forgiveness does not mean the sin is forgotten.
- How forgiveness frees you from dwelling on your hurt and seeking revenge.
- Why refusing to forgive is an affront to the cross.
- Why forgiveness is not a one-time event but a life-long journey, an embodied way of life.

# Introduction

One day, Jesus accepted an invitation to a banquet in the home of a religious leader. The meal was served and Jesus was reclining at the table, eating. Just then, an uninvited guest known for prostitution in that town, came and knelt behind Jesus at his feet, weeping. Her tears fell on his feet, and she wiped them off with her hair. Then she kept kissing his feet and putting expensive perfume on them.

When the host saw what was happening, he said to himself, “If this man were a prophet, he would know who is touching him and what kind of woman she is—that she is a sinner.”

Jesus turned to him and said, “Simon, I have something to tell you.”

“Tell me, teacher,” the leader responded.

“A man loaned money to two people—five hundred pieces of silver to one and fifty pieces to the other. But neither of them could repay him, so he kindly forgave them both, canceling their debts. Who do you suppose loved him more after that?”

Simon replied, “I suppose the one who had the bigger debt canceled.”

“You have judged correctly,” Jesus said.

Then Jesus turned to the woman and said to Simon, “Look at this woman kneeling here. When I entered your home, you did not offer me water to wash the dust from my feet, but she has washed them with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You did not give me a kiss of greeting, but she has kissed my feet again and again from the time I first came in. You neglected the courtesy of olive oil to anoint my head, but she has anointed my feet with rare perfume. I tell you, her sins—and they are many—have been forgiven, so she has shown me much love. But the person who has been forgiven little loves little.”

Then Jesus said to her, “Your sins are forgiven.”

This caused a commotion. “Who is this who even forgives sins?” The other guests began to say among themselves.

But Jesus spoke to the woman, “Your faith has saved you; go in peace.”

Jesus states that love and forgiveness are connected. Luke unfolds the full drama of the event, highlighting the status of the host and the woman first. Simon is a Pharisee, a man of standing in the community who strictly observes the law and is embraced by his compan-

ions. Simon recognizes Jesus' status too by inviting him to a banquet, and seems open to the idea that Jesus might be a prophet. The woman, in contrast, is a social outcast, an uninvited guest, a known sinner. Her attendance in Simon's home was a threat to ritual purity laws and highly offensive to Simon. Luke narrates how Simon judges Jesus and the woman. Jesus' response turns accepted norms upside-down. Let's look carefully at what Jesus is saying . . .

First, Jesus says that your ability to love others is directly proportional to your capacity to accept God's forgiveness. This was not the woman's first encounter with Jesus. We do not know the details of how or where this happened but her encounter with Jesus left the woman with two unforgettable impressions: that she was a sinner, and that she was forgiven. A broken woman was made whole through God's forgiving love. Her vocation and her sin no longer defined her. Her identity now was as one forgiven and fully accepted. She enters Simon's house as one embraced by forgiveness and, with gratitude, shows great love in return by anointing Jesus' feet.

Second, Jesus says that you give to others in measure of what you have received from God. You cannot give what you have yet to receive. A person who has been forgiven little produces little love. The deep irony of Simon's presumed standing versus the woman's new identity could not be greater. Simon failed to offer Jesus even basic rules of hospitality. In contrast, the woman not only provides these neglected acts of hospitality but does so with extravagance. Simon shows no regard for his own neglect while misinterpreting and judging the woman for her actions. Jesus invites Simon to see how nothing makes one more unloving than unforgiven sin.

Third, Jesus tells a parable of a gracious lender canceling the debt of two people, one owing a great sum and the other small, debts which neither could repay. In Roman antiquity, debt and obligation were a fixture for determining favor and debt. In fact, the guests invited to the banquet were both extended favor by Simon and placed under debt to him, with the expected obligation to reciprocate hospitality at some later date. This hierarchy of power and status governed relationships. Jesus' parable disrupts this way of thinking. Jesus invites Simon to view himself and the woman in a new light, not by social standing or righteous merit but through the eyes of a forgiving and loving God.

Luke ends the story as quickly as it began. We don't know how Simon responded to Jesus. However, we can apply the lesson to your conflict. Every conflict involves at least three relationships: you, your neighbor and Jesus. Your ability to see the other as neighbor, one whom God loves and forgives, depends on how you have received the forgiveness of Jesus.

Are you having trouble forgiving? Jesus invites you to see the deficit of love or forgiveness in your own life first, before judging others.



## Watch Video

Play and watch the video together, from start to finish. Use the space below to note any ideas, key points or principles that stand out to you personally, or what you would like the group to explore more deeply.

## Notes

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## Group Dialogue

*In the face of human sin and evil, God's love moves toward reconciliation by means of costly forgiveness. Human beings are called to become holy by embodying that forgiveness through specific habits and practices that seek to remember the past truthfully, to repair brokenness, to heal divisions, and to reconcile and renew relationships.*

*Forgiveness must be an embodied way of life, a life marked by specific practices that enable us to unlearn patterns of sin, to repent of specific sins, and to foster habits of holy living.*

*The rise of therapy cannot be understood without simultaneously recognizing both the complicity of the church and its failures to embody practices of love, forgiveness and reconciliation.*

L. Gregory Jones, *Embodying Forgiveness*

Recall the Scriptures read at the beginning of this study and dialogue together about the quote above, using these questions as guide:

- How is forgiveness “costly?” (What is the cost and who pays?)
- How is forgiveness related to holiness?

## Notes

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## Key Principle(s)

Here are key principles to remember from this session:

- Justification is a forensic term used for declaring a person just, righteous or free from condemnation. It is the judicial act of God credited to a person based on the righteousness of Christ.
- Your justification in Christ ought to motivate your reconciliation with others.
- Forgiveness is the start of a reconciliation process, not the end.
- Forgiveness is a gift. Your ability to forgive others is directly related to your ability to receive God's forgiveness of you.
- Forgiveness is a choice. Forgiveness — like love — is not a feeling. It is an act of will.
- Forgiveness does not mean the sin is forgotten.
- Forgiveness frees you from dwelling on your hurt and seeking revenge.
- Refusing to forgive is an affront to the cross.
- Forgiveness is not a one-time event but a life-long journey, an embodied way of life.



## Going Deeper

The following resources will be useful for deeper study for this session of **Engaging Conflict Redemptively**:

- Johann Christoph Arnold, *Why Forgive?* (Plough Publishing, 2010)
- L. Gregory Jones & Celestin Musekura, *Forgiving and We've Been Forgiven: Community Practices of Making Peace*, (IVP, 2010)
- L. Gregory Jones, *Embodying Forgiveness, A Theological Analysis*, (Eerdmans, 1995)
- Emmanuel Katongole & Chris Rice, *Reconciling All Things: A Christian Vision of Justice, Peace and Healing*, IVP 2008)





## Next Session

In the next session of **Engaging Conflict Redemptively**, we'll explore the second of two vital practices for justification in Dynamic Turning Point #4, Making Generous Restitution. We will define what restitution is, where it is found in Scripture and why reconciliation cannot be complete without it.

Restitution springs from, and is a sign of, a truly repentant heart. So, we will look at the difference between worldly sorrow, being sorry you got caught, with godly sorrow which motivates the sinner to do anything to make their wrongs right.

Together, we will discover how restitution is the redemptive work all sinners must do for true and lasting reconciliation.

*Engaging*

**CONFLICT**

*Redemptively*

**SESSION #11: JUSTIFICATION (3)**



# Personal Reflection

**Preview the Video:** To prepare for your group study, preview the video once alone then complete the Personal Reflection below.

Think of a time in your childhood when you stole something--a forbidden cookie from the cookie jar or a toy of a friend-- or when you lost or broke something borrowed. What happened when your fault was found out? What did you feel? Was restitution required? In recalling what you were taught as a child, how does your memory and experience affect how you think about restitution today?

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“If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.”

ROMANS 12:18

## Scripture & Prayer

**Read** together the key Scripture texts for this session:

- Exodus 22:1-15
- Leviticus 6:1-7
- Leviticus 24:17-23
- Matthew 5:21-48
- Luke 19:1-10
- Ephesians 4:25-32

**Pray:** Thank God for what He is going to reveal to us personally and as a group through this session.

## Check-in

Living peaceably means *attending to our emotions* and *speaking the truth in love*. To help develop these vital practices, start the meeting by each person identifying and confessing whatever emotion they are feeling now and bringing to the meeting.

Simply complete the sentence, “I am feeling . . .” (mad, sad, glad) with a word or short phrase that identifies your feelings.

## In The Previous Session

Here are key principles to remember from the last session:

- Justification is a forensic term used for declaring a person just, righteous or free from condemnation. It is the judicial act of God credited to a person based on the righteousness of Christ.
- Your justification in Christ ought to motivate your reconciliation with others.
- Forgiveness is the start of a reconciliation process, not the end.
- Forgiveness is a gift. Your ability to forgive others is directly related to your ability to receive God's forgiveness of you.
- Forgiveness is a choice. Forgiveness — like love — is not a feeling. It is an act of will.
- Forgiveness does not mean the sin is forgotten.
- Forgiveness frees you from dwelling on your hurt and seeking revenge.
- Refusing to forgive is an affront to the cross.
- Forgiveness is not a one-time event but a life-long journey, an embodied way of life practices of peace.

## In This Session

In this session of **Engaging Conflict Redemptively** we will explore together:

- How restitution is a biblical process for a sinner to restore something lost or stolen to its proper owner, or recompense for injury or loss--to “pay back” sin.
- How restitution is found in Scripture first as a matter of Torah law, then in the New Testament, as the fruit of a truly repentant heart.
  - How worldly sorrow is being sorry you got caught. The fruit of an unrepentant person is lying, denying, minimizing and making excuses.
  - How godly sorrow is being so alarmed about one's sin that one will do whatever it takes to make it right and see justice done.
- Why restitution is restorative, generous, generative and character changing.
- Why restitution is the redemptive work all sinners must do for true reconciliation and for the reformation of Christian character.

# Introduction

Restitution is the act of making amends; of returning or restoring to a person some thing or right of which he has been unjustly deprived. In Western culture today, the idea of restitution as been largely forgotten, or reserved for an occasional ruling a judge might require of someone found guilty of stealing, for example. But restitution is a thoroughly biblical ideal that needs to be recovered. Scripture refers to making restitution for many sins, including stealing, deception, and swearing falsely as well as commanded for accidents, such as replacing a lost animal or article one borrows from a neighbor.

In Scripture, restitution is always generous. The sinner is commanded to repay or return what has been lost, plus adding something more, up to 100 to 700 times the value. In Torah law, making restitution is considered so important that the offender should consider selling oneself into slavery if that is the only option left to accomplish the restitution.

In the New Testament the term restitution is not used but the concept is implied repeatedly in what Jesus teaches about loving our neighbor. So, Zacchaeus is commended by Jesus for giving half of his possessions to the poor, and paying back anyone he had cheated “four times the amount.” Restitution is a generative process to repay the one sinned against *and* to reconstitute the character of the sinner. By taking responsibility for his actions, the sinner can learn new habits and pay back for the harm he has done, so that, over time he can restore the trust he has broken.

So, for example, Paul says, “Anyone who has been stealing must steal no longer,” But Paul does not stop there, he goes on to say that the thief must work, doing something useful with his hands, that he may have something to share with those in need.” The thief who steals, not only pays back what was stolen but unlearns the habits of stealing by learning to work with his hands, so he can do the opposite of stealing which is to share with people in need!

Making restitution is an important part of God’s formula for reconciling and restoring broken relationships. Yet, restitution is rarely practiced in the church, perhaps because people equate “paying back” with “earning” forgiveness or grace. But the principle of restitution that Jesus and Paul teach is guided by love for their neighbor out of the grace one has received in Christ. In biblical restitution, one does not earn grace by works. Rather, the sinner “works out with fear and trembling” the saving grace of Jesus by taking responsibility for and paying back in love what was lost.



## Watch Video

Play and watch the video together, from start to finish. Use the space below to note any ideas, key points or principles that stand out to you personally, or what you would like the group to explore more deeply.

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## Group Dialogue

Thinking about Paul’s instruction to a thief who steals to, “work with his hands,” discuss together the following questions:

- How does restitution apply to your personal conflict? Share stories of how this principle was applied or could apply to your situation. What effort for restitution was required or offered? What could have been done to help both sinner and one sinned against?
- As with all things, how one applies a principle can vary from ignorance and avoidance to highly legalistic, coercive or even abusive requirements. From your shared experience, how can you ensure that restitution is applied justly and not misused?
- Finally, discuss together how restitution can be used to reconstitute godly attributes of character such as humility, courage, integrity and justice?

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## Key Principle(s)

Here are key principles to remember from this session:

- Restitution is a biblical process for a sinner to restore something lost or stolen to its proper owner, or recompense for injury or loss--to “pay back” sin.
- Restitution is found in Scripture first as a matter of Torah law, then in the New Testament, as the fruit of a truly repentant heart
  - Worldly sorrow is being sorry you got caught. The fruit of an unrepentant person is lying, denying, minimizing and making excuses.
  - Godly sorrow is being so alarmed about one’s sin that one will do whatever it takes to make it right and see justice done.
- Restitution is restorative, generous, generative and character changing.
- Restitution is the redemptive work all sinners must do for true reconciliation and for the reformation of Christian character.



## Going Deeper

The following resources will be useful for deeper study for this session of **Engaging Conflict Redemptively**:

- Jim Van Yperen, *The Good Confession: A Tale of Failure and Forgiveness*, (Wingfold Farm, 2011)
- Emmanuel Katongole & Chris Rice, *Reconciling All Things: A Christian Vision of Justice, Peace and Healing*, (IVP 2008)
- L. Gregory Jones & Celestin Musekura, *Forgiving and We’ve Been Forgiven: Community Practices of Making Peace*, (IVP, 2010)



## Next Session

In the last session of **Engaging Conflict Redemptively**, we'll wrap up all we've learned so far by returning to where we began--our character and the story we are telling ourselves. We'll explore how conflict has revealed and formed your desire, making visible what you've been storing up in your heart. Plus, we'll examine how your conflict and your choices are not only shaping you, they are influencing how others respond to you.

One of the primary goals of this video series has been to help you see yourself truthfully — as God sees you —and be transformed by the power of the Gospel. We'll explore how God has provided all you need for transformation through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. God has inaugurated in Jesus Christ a new way of life — a new creation way of being —that can redeem old habits and heal all the bitterness you've been storing up in your heart.

We'll explore why transformation requires stopping old ways of feeling, thinking and acting while learning and adopting a new set of habits and skills. This process of change starts with being thankful. That is, choosing to believe that Jesus is Lord and to live your life under His Lordship, changes your perspective. But you cannot transform yourself, by yourself. You need the church to be the church, doing what the church is called to be and do.

*Engaging*

**CONFLICT**

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**SESSION #12:  
FORMATION & CONCLUSION**



# Personal Reflection

**Preview the Video:** To prepare for your group study, preview the video once alone then complete the Personal Reflection below.

In Galatians 5:12-26, the Apostle Paul describes two dispositions of character: being in the “flesh” or “living by the Spirit.” To tell the difference, look for the fruit. Read this passage again and the attributes listed for differing fruit. Write down below the attributes that describe your journey through conflict—where you started and where you are now.

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“If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.”

ROMANS 12:18

## Scripture & Prayer

**Read** together the key Scripture texts for this session:

- Deuteronomy 30:15-20
- Hebrews 12:1-11
- 2 Peter 1:1-11
- 1 Corinthians 7:1-13
- Galatians 5:12-26
- 1 Corinthians 13
- Jude 24-25

**Pray:** Thank God for what He is going to reveal to us personally and as a group through this session.

## Check-in

Living peaceably means *attending to our emotions* and *speaking the truth in love*. To help develop these vital practices, start the meeting by each person identifying and confessing whatever emotion they are feeling now and bringing to the meeting.

Simply complete the sentence, “I am feeling . . .” (mad, sad, glad) with a word or short phrase that identifies your feelings.

## *In The Previous Session*

Here are key principles to remember from the last session:

- Restitution is a biblical process for a sinner to restore something lost or stolen to its proper owner, or recompense for injury or loss--to “pay back” sin.
- Restitution is found in Scripture first as a matter of Torah law, then in the New Testament, as the fruit of a truly repentant heart
  - Worldly sorrow is being sorry you got caught. The fruit of an unrepentant person is lying, denying, minimizing and making excuses.
  - Godly sorrow is being so alarmed about one’s sin that one will do whatever it takes to make it right and see justice done.
- Restitution is restorative, generous, generative and character changing.
- Restitution is the redemptive work all sinners must do for true reconciliation and for the reformation of Christian character.

## *In This Session*

In this session of **Engaging Conflict Redemptively** we will explore together:

- How conflict reveals and shapes your character to be more or less like Jesus.
- How conflict makes visible what you’ve been storing up in your heart--either thankfulness leading to joy or bitterness leading to resentment.
- How your conflict choices are not only shaping you, they are influencing how others respond to you.
- How God has provided all you need for transformation through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.
- Why transformation requires stopping old ways of feeling, thinking and acting while learning and adopting a new set of habits and skills.
- How choosing to believe that Jesus is Lord and to live under His Lordship, changes your perspective and your character.
- Why you cannot transform yourself, by yourself. You need the church to be the church, doing what the church is called to be and do.



# Introduction

I always wanted to make maple syrup. So, when we moved to New Hampshire in 1989, I borrowed some old sugaring cans and tree-taps. I studied up on the art and science of sugaring. I learned, for instance, that the ideal time for running sap is a night below, and a day above, freezing. A good season only lasts days -- a few weeks at best -- before an extended warm spell spoils the run. Time is short.

That first March, when the weather broke, I tapped my trees. Every day I checked my pots. No sap. After several days of ideal weather I knew something was wrong. "But what?" I wondered.

I asked a neighbor to check my taps with me. We walked through the ankle deep snow to my maples. He looked at my pots. He looked at the trees. Then he looked at me. "These are ash trees," he said, walking away.

Jesus said, "By their fruit you will recognize them." Good advice for facing a decision or conflict. When something is wrong, but you are not sure what or why, here is a simple rule: follow the fruit.

A person walking with God's Spirit will evidence spiritual fruit. No one decides to steal, gossip or commit adultery overnight. Rather the seed of sin takes root in hundreds of small concessions and wayward steps. For this reason, the Apostle Paul urges all believers to "keep in step with" and "to sow to" the Spirit. In time, the seed sown bears fruit.

All conflict is complex. It always involves three relationships: God, you and others. If you want to know what is wrong with a friendship, marriage, or church: follow the fruit, starting in your own life.

What kind of people are you forming? What kind of fruit is your marriage and your children producing? Jesus told his disciples to, "Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing."

Who, what or where are you abiding?

Remember: you cannot get maple syrup from ash trees.



## Watch Video

Play and watch the video together, from start to finish. Use the space below to note any ideas, key points or principles that stand out to you personally, or what you would like the group to explore more deeply.

## Notes

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## Group Dialogue

The book, *The Shepherd Leader*, outlines four essential virtues for godly leadership, four ways leaders fulfill their call to love God and neighbor. Reading the brief definitions below, share stories and insights about what you have learned about virtue and what God is forming you and your group:

1. **Humility:** Humility (or brokenness) is contrition, a kind of faith in the heart. Brokenness is common to all biblical leaders. Brokenness is the constant awareness, attitude, and life practice that all a leader is, and does, is nothing apart from God's grace. It is the emptying of oneself fully to God's reign and purpose in one's life.
2. **Courage:** Courage marks the opposing balance to brokenness. While brokenness recognizes that the leader can do nothing apart from Christ, courage is a constant awareness, attitude, and life practice that a leader can do all things through Christ's strength. Courage is a boldness of heart and mind which enables a leader to encounter danger and difficulty with confidence and conviction. It is taking faith-filled risk, grounded in a hope and a trust that God is greater than obstacles or circumstances.
3. **Integrity:** Integrity is oneness, a collective commitment to becoming "of one mind," or "of one accord;" to "one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all." Integrity is broken whenever a leader's needs become primary, over the Lordship of Jesus Christ and the needs of others. This is the root of all leadership failure.
4. **Justice:** Justice is the outward work of mercy, compassion and moral rightness to those in need. Justice is the quality of heart and action to serve and honor the well-being of the poor, the weak and disenfranchised. Justice embodies the mission and ministry of Jesus who came to serve the poor, release the captive and set the oppressed free.

## Notes

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## Key Principle(s)

Here are key principles to remember from this session:

- Conflict reveals and shapes your character to be more or less like Jesus.
- Conflict makes visible what you've been storing up in your heart--either thankfulness leading to joy, or bitterness leading to resentment.
- Your conflict choices are not only shaping you, they are influencing how others respond to you.
- God has provided all you need for transformation through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.
- Transformation requires stopping old ways of feeling, thinking and acting while learning and adopting a new set of habits and skills.
- Choosing to believe that Jesus is Lord and to live under His Lordship, changes your perspective and your character.
- You cannot transform yourself, by yourself. You need the church to be the church, doing what the church is called to be and do.



## Going Deeper

The following resources will be useful for deeper study for this session of **Engaging Conflict Redemptively**:

- David E. Fitch, *Faithful Presence: Seven Disciplines that Shape the Church for Mission* (IVP Press, 2016)
- Jim Van Yperen, *Authentic Community: Practicing the One Another Commands*, (ChurchSmart Resources, 2008, 2014)
- Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, (Harper San Francisco, 1954)



# Feedback

We would love to hear from you about how this series has helped you and others in your group.

Please email us at [jim@leaderseries.org](mailto:jim@leaderseries.org). Also, help us spread the word about this series by writing a comment or liking us on Facebook!

And be sure you come back to our website to learn about more videos in our Flourish Leadership Series!

Thank you!

Other resources you might like from Jim Van Yperen:

- Jim Van Yperen, *Authentic Community: Practicing the One Another Commands*, (ChurchSmart Resources, 2008, 2014)
- Jim Van Yperen, *Making Peace: A Guide to Overcoming Church Conflict*, (Moody Press, 2002)
- Jim Van Yperen, *The Good Confession: A Tale of Failure and Forgiveness*, (Wingfold Farm, 2011)
- Jim Van Yperen, *The Shepherd Leader*, (ChurchSmart Resources, 2003)