

Open Hands: Stewardship with Kingdom Vision

The Hard Conversations: Stewarding Conflict with Grace

I am giving this message to help believers understand how to approach difficult conversations and resolve conflicts with the heart of grace, following Biblical principles and examples. James is writing to Jewish believers scattered outside Jerusalem. These are Christians under pressure—socially, economically, spiritually. The word passions mean *hēdonōn* is where we get hedonism. It is a self-centered desire that is comfort, control, validation, power. James does not blame circumstances, personalities, or difficult people. He points to disordered desires inside the human heart. Unchecked desire leads to resentment, hostility, relational violence. Conflict becomes a substitute for prayer. Sometimes our fights are evidence of prayerlessness, not righteousness. Prayer becomes another way to feed the ego. God resists being used as a means to our desires. God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. James teaches us to examine your desire, confront your heart and speak to God. Grace-filled conflict starts with self-examination, not accusation. Sin is rebellion.

“for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”-Romans 3:23

Conflict is natural because we are all imperfect. Paul is writing to a mixed church in Rome. Jewish and Gentile believers navigating unity, identity, and righteousness. Humanity suppresses the truth. Sin is not ignorance. Judgment is based on truth, not heritage or knowledge. Sin is not just moral failure. It is a glorious failure. Paul is dismantling moral superiority, religious pride and ethnic confidence.

“Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift.”-Matthew 5:23-24

Jesus teaches that reconciliation should be prioritized over religious duty when conflict arises.

“If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that ‘every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses. If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector.”-Matthew 18:15-17

Jesus provides a clear process for resolving conflict within the church, including one-on-one confrontation, bringing in witnesses, and involving the church if needed. Jesus is teaching His disciples about life together in the Kingdom. He speaks about humility. The scripture talks about the danger of causing others to stumble. The scripture talks about God’s heart for the lost sheep. Church discipline is meant to save relationships, not win arguments. God’s heart for the **lost sheep**.

“Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.”-Ephesians 4:29-32

Our speech should be filled with grace. Let no corrupting talk come out of our mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up. Be kind and tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave

us. Ephesians 4 marks the shift from who we are in Christ to how we live as a unified body. Paul is addressing in the scripture and talking about unity, maturity and putting off the old self to putting on the new self. Bitterness is not just an emotion. Bitterness is a spiritual toxin. Grace in conflict is not optional. Grace is identity driven.

Key Principles for Stewarding Conflict

1. Seek Understanding Over Winning
2. Approach with Humility
3. Speak the Truth in Love
4. Practice Forgiveness and Compassion

“Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.”-Colossians 3:13

Paul has reminded believers that they are chosen, holy and beloved. Forgiveness flows from identity, not effort. Forgiveness is a pattern after Christ’s forgiveness.

How to Have a Hard Conversation with others and family?

1. Pray for wisdom and humility
2. Address the Issue, not the person
3. Listen Actively
4. speak with Grace and truth
5. Focus on Reconciliation, not winning

As a Christians and disciples, we need to ask God for wisdom with heavenly wisdom, not earthly wisdom. We need to stop making our life decisions by earthly wisdom. Tell the person next to you and say make all your decisions with God and heavenly wisdom. We need to start making decisions by God's wisdom and heavenly wisdom. Pastor Johnson in Houston in 2023 by stopping making decisions too fast and quickly by leaning on my own understanding. When you do pray to God that we must have patience. For example, I always receive a breakthrough from God to the present because I always have patience in God. I am praying to God right now to guide me to move me to the East Memphis neighborhood near the church operations in Memphis. God has blessed me in the past while I had difficult conversations with people on social media, friends and family on my conservative and political values. Prayer prepares the heart to speak with grace and listen with patience. We must keep the focus on the problem, not the person’s character. We must use “I” statements, not “you” statements. We can reflect back to what the other person said to ensure understanding while listening to others. We must use our words to build people up, not tear people down. We need to start acknowledging other people's feelings while being truthful about our own feelings. Our goal needs to be restoration of relationships and it will help repair and improve broken relationships. As Christians and disciples, we need to allow people to grow including sinners and gain the fruit of the spirit. Ask the person next to you: are you growing with the fruit of spirit?

When we read John and Matthew in the New Testament, it explains to us about the model of conflict resolution. I wish my mom was alive today for her to read and hear this message because my mom always had issues and conflicts with my aunts and uncles on her side of the family. It is like my mom was falling further apart from my aunts, uncles, stepfather and stepmother side of the family. I will remember

the date November 18, 2025 when my mom died from a stroke and heart failure. I still blame the conflicts on her passing and cause her to have so much stress from her side of the family, stepfather and stepfather side of the family. I believe God called her home on November 18, 2025. In John 4, it talks about the Samaritan woman at the well. In John 4, Jesus engages in a difficult conversation with the woman, offering both truth and grace. Jesus does not ignore her sin, but he approaches her with a heart of compassion and a desire for reconciliation. In Matthew 18: 21-22, Jesus teaches radical forgiveness. Jesus did not hold grudges and modeled how to offer grace even when it's difficult. The ultimate act of reconciliation was Jesus on the cross, reconciling humanity to God. This is the ultimate model of grace in the midst of conflict. Our aim is not to avoid conflict, but to navigate it in a way that honors God and reflects his love.

1. Have you ever experienced a difficult conversation where you responded with grace? How did it impact the outcome?
2. What does it look like to "speak the truth in love" in a challenging situation?
3. How can we forgive others in the same way that Christ forgave us, especially in the context of unresolved conflicts?
4. Is there a current conflict in your life where you could apply the Biblical principles of conflict resolution? What steps could you take today?

Proverbs 18:13 is wisdom for daily and relational life. This scripture confronts impulsivity, defensiveness and half-heard narratives. When we speak before listening to people it is foolish and dishonoring. Wisdom requires patience, curiosity, and restraint. Humility is not thinking less of yourself. Humility is thinking of yourself less often. Truth without love causes wounds, divides and stunts growth. Love without truth causes enables, avoids and immatures. Truth and love are not competing virtues. Jesus is teaching his disciples about temptation, responsibility and mercy in Luke 17:3-4.

I need you to take notes about this because it is a biblical framework on how to deal with conflicts that deal with conflict resolution. We need to go to God first by examining our motives, and confess our own sins. We need to ask for humility, clarity, and love. The second thing we need to do is reach out to the person by avoiding public confrontation and seek understanding. We must be calm, curious and compassionate. The third thing we must do is speak honestly without weaponizing words by addressing the issue. The fourth thing is choosing forgiveness and unity. Forgiveness is releasing vengeance, commitment to grace and act of obedience. When we forgive people in our life, we must avoid denial and excusing sin. We must establish our faithful steps to God in our life daily, such as clarifying our expectations, seeking Godly counsel. We must understand that reconciliation takes time. That's why it takes me so long to forgive people in my life and may pray about it daily about how the person may have done or did me wrong. I end up forgiving people later in my life to cleanse my heart for the kingdom. I may have restored some relationships with people in my life or some friendships I could not. I continue to pray for those people that I and other people never forgave each other in the past. Forgiveness helps us clear our boundaries, and have accountability and peace.

Heavenly Father,

You see every relationship in our lives that brings us joy.

Help us deal with tension, hurt, and unfinished conversations.

You know our hearts better than we do.

I ask you to show us where pride, anger, or fear has taken root.

Forgive us for the ways we have spoken too quickly, listened poorly and loved conditionally.

We confess that some of these wounds are deep.

I ask you to forgive us for our sins in the past and present.

I ask you to forgive us to keep our hearts humble to your kingdom.

Help us to speak truth without cruelty and love without avoidance.

Teach us to listen before we respond

Help give us wisdom to walk in the kingdom forever.

Guard our hearts from bitterness.

Help free from resentment from family and friends in our past and present.

We trust you as our personal savior and walk in your kingdom while on earth.

In Jesus name,

Amen.