**Intentional Relationships:** *1 of 4 Steps Towards Conflict Resolution*

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*(Excerpt from Chapter 8 of Intentional Relationships for Singles 12-week Bible Study.)*

Conflict in relationships happens to us all. However, handling conflict can make the difference in growing your relationship or seeing it crumble. In the study “Intentional Relationships for Singles,” we have written an entire chapter on being “Confident in Conflict.” Below is one of four steps towards resolving conflict.

**Acknowledge the problem.**

Problems, disappointments, and hurts happen throughout your life. Some are minor issues like people being late, not following through, or kids not cleaning their rooms when you ask. However, some are significant issues like betrayal, communication breakdowns, or disrespect. These kinds of issues create divisions in relationships that need to be addressed. As a part of acknowledging the problem, be sure you do the following:

**•  Pray.** The first step in addressing any issue is to go to God. It’s also something you do throughout the process. He knows all the facts better than anyone. He will provide wisdom, direction, and peace as you go through the conflict-resolution process. He has a lot of experience. There is no scenario where God says, “Wow, I never saw that coming.” This may also be when you get wisdom from a trusted friend or counselor.

**• Assess it.** Do you need a confrontation? Does the difference need resolving? If the conflict is a personality issue, the solution may be to agree, disagree, and bite your tongue. We may also realize we are at fault and need to let it go. If the conflict is due to the other person having mental issues, special needs, or being elderly, they may not be capable of understanding their responsibility or working through it. If you plan on confronting someone, have you prayed and thought about what you would say to the person? Have you sought input from others you trust who have the wisdom to guide you? Remember, seeking wisdom from one or two trusted people is wise. Seeking advice from twenty friends can lead to gossip.

**•  Address it.** If you decide you need to address the issue, it is important to confront the person involved to repair the relationship. If you are the one at fault, you may need to go and ask forgiveness.

**• Manage your emotions.** One of the ways to listen is to ensure your emotions are not controlling you. Emotions in conflict make your issues seem bigger and inhibit your ability to be rational. To help you with your emotions, take the time to settle your nerves.

**• Plan to talk.** Avoid emails or texting to discuss the conflict, as they don’t clearly communicate the truth or your heart and often lead to additional conflict. Meeting in person is ideal, but a phone or video call is better if this can’t be done. Be sure you and the other person are in the right frame of mind to discuss. Set a date and time that works for you both.

**• Find neutral ground.** Find a place that will be comfortable for both of you to meet. Avoid noisy restaurants where you are easily distracted or could run into someone you know.

**• Meet one-on-one.** The Bible instructs us to go directly to the person involved in the conflict and seek to resolve it. If you initially approach someone with others, it can appear as if you are ganging up on them, and they may feel attacked. This can put them on the defense and damage the outcome. Put yourself in their shoes. How would you feel in the same situation? If you can make concessions while still honoring Christ, do so if this will settle the issue. In kindness, seek to correct them. Come alongside to disciple them. Encourage and affirm good behavior. Do this all in a loving way. Some conflict resolution is for the closure of a relationship, to continue the relationship, or to start over, rebuilding a relationship.

**• Meet with others.** If the person won’t listen, accept responsibility, change, or acknowledge their responsibility, or you feel you are making no progress, only then should you set a time to meet with a third party. Remember, the goal is resolution, not “winning.” Jesus discusses this approach to confrontation.

*“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 18:15-1 (NIV)*

**• Don’t judge.** Unless they tell us, we don’t know someone’s motives or intentions for whatever they said and did. In 1 Samuel 16:7 (NIV), the Bible says that “man looks on the outward appearance, but God sees the heart.”  Judging a person’s motives puts a wall between both of you and makes resolution more difficult. Try to find something positive in how they look at things differently than you do.

*“Do not judge, or you too will be judged.” – Matthew 7:1 (NIV)*

**• Don’t assume.** Try to avoid making assumptions. In addressing the issue with someone, you will need their perspective to resolve it entirely. That can only happen when you take the time to sit down and listen to each other. It is wise to keep the proverb below in mind.

*“The first to plead his case seems right, Until another comes and examines him.”*

*– Proverbs 18:17 (NASB)*

**• Don’t blame.** Someone will need to take responsibility at some point, but that should not happen until you have all the information you need. Adam failed to do this when confronted by God and blamed both Eve and God! That was a major “oops,” and one I’m sure he regretted afterward. It did not bring him closer to Eve or God. Eve didn’t do much better. Blaming is an equal-opportunity sport.

*“The man said, ‘The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.’  Then the Lord God said to the woman, ‘What is this you have done?’  The woman said, ‘The serpent deceived me, and I ate.” – Genesis 3:12-13 (NIV)*

Remember, the confrontation isn’t only about you but also about repairing your relationship.

“Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but humbly count others more significant than yourselves.

*Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.” – Philippians 2:3-4 (ESV)*

As we mentioned, when you acknowledge the problem to someone else, speak the truth in love. When you do, you will obey Christ and honor the other person.

Order your copy of [Intentional Relationships for Single's 12-week Bible study](https://www.amazon.com/Intentional-Relationships-Singles-Kris-Swiatocho/dp/B08VCKKDQ3/ref%3Dsr_1_1?crid=3CA0PI6W0OKWH&keywords=kris+swiatocho&qid=1675291128&sprefix=swiatocho%2Caps%2C80&sr=8-1) to learn more. This study covers topics on why our relationships fail, identity, gender differences, boundaries, conflict, blind spots, friendship (in all our relationships—family, work, church, neighbors, friends) but also intentional friendship, including red, yellow, and green flags, intentional dating, and engagement.