

Bible Studies for Life Series for May 6: Honor God in conflict

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Honor God in conflict

- Philippians 2:1-11; 4:2-9

[By David Harp](#)

First Baptist Church, Stanton

Reader's Digest told a story a year ago about a flight canceled due to bad weather. One solitary agent was trying to rebook all of the travelers whose schedules had become messed up. One passenger became impatient, pushed his way to the front and slammed his ticket down on the counter. He said, "I have to be on this flight, and it has to be first class."

The agent politely said, "I'm sorry, sir. I'll help as soon as I can, but I have to take care of these other people first."

The man became angry and shouted, "Do you have any idea who I am?"

Without hesitating, the agent picked up the loud speaker microphone and said to the hundreds of people in the terminal, "May I have your attention, please? We have a passenger here at the gate who does not know who he is. If anyone can help him find his identity, please come to the gate." The man backed off, and the crowd of people burst into applause.



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Why such a response from the crowd of people? Did they respond because they liked the way the agent handled the conflict situation? How do we respond to conflict? Do we view conflict as an opportunity to please God and honor him? How is the believer to respond to conflict?

Imitate Christ (Philippians 2:1-8)

This passage deals with the self-emptying of Jesus. Jesus was royalty and came from heaven. He could have come as our champion but came, instead, as our servant.

Last year, we received a Christmas card portraying various world conquerors from human history on the cover. Julius Caesar, Genghis Kahn, Ivan the terrible, Napoleon, Hitler and Stalin were included. On the front of the card was this caption: “History is filled with men that would be God.” Then you open the Christmas card to see a picture of Mary holding a baby in her arms—Jesus Christ—and the caption reads, “But only one God who would be man.”

Jesus modeled true humility by becoming one of us. Philippians 2 reminds us we are to imitate Christ. Imitating Christ is to live a life of right attitudes and actions. Our attitudes so often determine our daily walk with Christ: “Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus” (v. 5). Paul explains Christ’s attitude was selfless service to God and to people.

Agree in the Lord (Philippians 4:2-3)

Two women believers in the church at Philippi were in conflict, and Paul urged them to come to an agreement. Paul reminded other church members about the Lord's work and sought their help to bring about reconciliation between the two opposing believers. At one time, these two women worked together for the cause of Christ. For whatever reason, they were involved in a confrontation affecting the entire body of Christ. Paul's "urging" toward these women is that they "live in harmony."

We can all be encouraged to know we do not have to see eye-to-eye on every issue in order to walk arm-in-arm together to proclaim the good news of Christ. When we keep our eyes off of each other and place our focus on Christ, we can stand together.

Trust in God (Philippians 4:4-7)

Paul's strong encouragement continues as he focuses on the subject of our joy. Joy is the theme of the book of Philippians. With joy in our hearts, anxiety is reduced. With prayer on our lips, God's peace is promised and given.

God's peace can be demonstrated in the life of a believer when conflict arises. Through support of family, friends and church members holding one another before our Father in prayer, it is possible to point to Christ in the most extreme and hateful situations.

Pursue excellence (Philippians 4:8-9)

A final word of challenge is before us. We need to imitate Christ. We are challenged to seek peace and try to live it and pray for it. We also need to refocus our minds. We need to put it all into practice! The Christians at Philippi needed to see some living sermons on the life of Christ. The same is true today.

Surely someone reading these words has seen a shrugging-shouldered, bored-out-of-his-mind teenager quip to a parent in exasperation, “whatever.” Did you know that God has his own version of “whatever”? I highly recommend it to you.

“Whatever” is:

- *True*
- *Noble*
- *Right*
- *Pure*
- *Lovely*
- *Admirable.*

Jim Elliot felt called by God to take the gospel of peace and joy to Indians living in Ecuador. Eventually, God led him and a small group of missionaries to the Auca Indians. This would eventually cost Jim Elliot his life. He was 28 when he was killed by the people he came to serve.

His life of love for the Lord has been kept alive and written of by his wife, Elizabeth, for many years. Jim Elliot is most known for saying, “He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose.”

Discussion questions

- How can we best imitate the servant leader Jesus Christ?
- How is Jesus related to your choice of actions and activities?
- How can we come to know God (Philippians 2:8)?
- Which do you most gravitate toward—worry or peace?
- What are some antidotes to anxiety?
- Can you share a time when you faced a conflict and God helped you to stand strong?