

Where are we going?

1. Character and Christianity
2. Character and the image of God
3. Character and the Body of Christ
4. Challenges that shape and show character.
 1. Vision - direction & expectations
 2. Fear - faith
 3. Relationships - community
 4. **Conflict - differences**
 5. Change - growth
 6. Success & Failure - stress
 7. Private life - the heart

challenge #4



Godly character makes for peace.

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.”

Matthew 5:9



A person of Godly character is a peacemaker who manages conflict:



- by being stirred but not shaken.
- by recognizing the hidden values of conflict.

Persons of Godly character know how to care and not to care.

- They are deeply stirred by the burdens of others because of their love and compassion.
- They can be untouched by the hysteria of life because of their vision and faith.



Persons of Godly character stay cool in avoiding three common mistakes.

- They are not surprised by conflict.
- They are not afraid of conflict.
- They are not fomenters of conflict.



They are not easily shaken

Philippians 4

"4 Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice! 5 Let your forbearing spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near. 6 **Be anxious for nothing**, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. 7 And **the peace of God**, which surpasses all comprehension, shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. . . . 12 I know **how to get along** with humble means, and I also know **how to live** in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned **the secret** of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. 13 **I can do all things** through Him who strengthens me."

Paul was not easily shaken and exhorts others to follow him.

- ✓ **He is writing from prison, with a frustrated mission, and few friends.**
- ✓ **God's peace cannot be touched by the world's circumstances.**
- ✓ **He had learned and knows how to rejoice with stress, conflict, & pain.**
- ✓ **He was confident that he could handle whatever came his way.**

2 Peter 4:12

"Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you;"

- ✓ **The Biblical writers saw conflict as inevitable in a broken world.**
- ✓ **All Biblical characters experienced conflict.**
- ✓ **The church was never exempt from conflict.**
- ✓ **The peace of the Gospel is sought because of conflict.**

Persons of Godly character not only expect conflict

but also understand that God can use it for good.

1. Conflict awakens spiritual insights.

Matthew 10:34

"I came not to bring peace but, a sword."

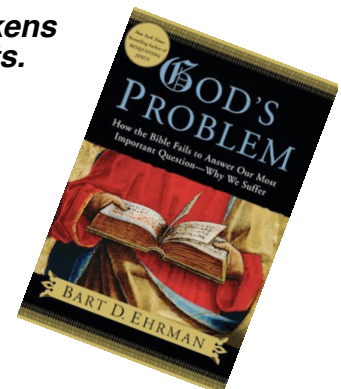
Jesus may unsettle our hearts and our relationships so that we embrace his grace and welcome his appearing.

1. Conflict awakens spiritual insights.

Illustration:



Bart Ehrman



"Why the Bible Fails to Answer our Most Important Question - Why we Suffer?"

The Biblical narrative freely acknowledges:

1. The suffering of humanity.
2. The conflicted nature of human existence.
3. The gospel story addresses the problem of justice and suffering.
4. The need to wait for a promised deliverance.

Romans 8:18

“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.”

Philippians 3:10

“that I may know him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings, being conformed to his death;”

“Why the Bible Fails to Answer our Most Important Question - Why we Suffer?”

The more important questions behind the question:

1. **The problem of good** - From where do we DERIVE a sense of justice (good and evil)?
2. **The problem of evil** - How do we explain the EXTENT of human injustice to others?
3. **The problem of despair** - Where is there HOPE in a broken world of suffering?

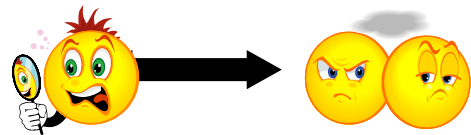
2. Social conflict often exposes inner, unresolved, personal conflicts.

James 4:1

“What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? **Is not the source your pleasures that wage war on your members?**”

Personal Dissonance

Public Conflict



Troublemakers are troubled individuals who do not need self-discipline so much as the grace of God in their lives.

You will have trouble being a peacemaker if you are not at peace yourself.

If you are not at peace yourself don't be surprised if you are a troublemaker.

3. Conflict is a sign that the image of God is alive in us.

People have feelings about values.



People want their values to be shared.



People have conflicting inner values.



Peacemakers appeal to the image of God in each of us by:

1. Empathizing not only with the victims of suffering but also with passions of conflicted people who cause the suffering.
2. Offering hope in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Romans 8

“¹⁸ For I consider that the **sufferings of this present time** are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us. . . . ²² For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. ²³ And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even **we ourselves groan within ourselves,**”

Peacemakers see the suffering and hear the groaning.

Romans 8

²³ . . . **waiting eagerly** for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body. ²⁴ For in **hope** we have been saved, but **hope** that is seen is not **hope**; for why does one also **hope** for what he sees? ²⁵ But if we **hope** for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait **eagerly for it.**”

Peacemakers offer hope and call for patience and perseverance in waiting for it.

4. Conflict is an invitation to respond with wisdom and grace.

1 Corinthians 13

“⁴ Love is patient, love is kind, and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, ⁵ does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, ⁶ does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; ⁷ bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.”

James 3

“¹³ Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show by his good behavior his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom. ¹⁴ But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth. ¹⁵ This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic. ¹⁶ For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing. ¹⁷ But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy. ¹⁸ **And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.**”

What can I do?

- ✓ **Commit yourself to being a peacemaker.**
- ✓ **Study to see the value in conflict.**
- ✓ **Let social conflict reveal your inner conflicts.**
- ✓ **Empathize with both the victims and with the troubled victimizers.**
- ✓ **Renew your confidence in the Gospel of grace in the Cross of Christ.**