



**Sermon Based Small Group
Leader Discussion Guide**

Sermon Title: "Coping with Conflict"

**Sermon by Pastor Tom Harrington
Week of February 13, 2011**

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Session Objectives (Group Leader)	<p>By the end of the session, group members should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Realize the seriousness of contempt and not justify it in themselves; • Take responsibility for taking steps toward reconciling a damaged relationship; • Let retaliation go, since it is better to be reconciled than it is to be right.
Personal Connection (Group Leader)	<p>How does my story connect to the reading? To prepare to lead this Bible study:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Search your heart for attitudes that hold others in very low esteem; • Ask yourself if you are able to let go of offenses done to you. • Pray for each member of your group by name.
Icebreaker	<p>When you were a child or teenager, what triggered conflict between you and your peers? Did the conflicts tend to blow over quickly or smolder? What was your idea of "making nice"? What was the conflict's impact on your relationship?</p>
Big Idea	<p>If we allow God to transform us from the inside-out, we will realize a positive impact on all our relationships and conflicts will greatly diminish.</p>
Sermon Text	<p>Matthew 5:17-26 (New International Version)</p> <p>The Fulfillment of the Law 17 "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not</p>

	<p>come to abolish them but to fulfill them. 18 For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. 19 Therefore anyone who sets aside one of the least of these commands and teaches others accordingly will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. 20 For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.</p> <p>Murder</p> <p>21 “You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘You shall not murder,^[a] and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.’ 22 But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister^[b] will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to a brother or sister, ‘Raca,’ is answerable to the court. And anyone who says, ‘You fool!’ will be in danger of the fire of hell.</p> <p>23 “Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, 24 leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift.</p> <p>25 “Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still together on the way, or your adversary may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison. 26 Truly I tell you, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny.</p> <p>Footnotes:</p> <p>Matthew 5:21 Exodus 20:13</p> <p>Matthew 5:22 The Greek word for <i>brother or sister (adelphos)</i> refers here to a fellow disciple, whether man or woman; also in verse 23.</p>
<p>Digging Deeper</p>	<p>Learning more about the lesson</p> <p>Last week’s sermon began a new sermon series, Religion vs. Spirituality. We started our study of the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) by examining Jesus’ teachings on the source of true well-being and spiritual joy. In last week’s Scripture text, known as The Beatitudes, Jesus corrected the faulty tendency to think that happiness is tied to circumstance. Instead, he taught that true blessedness, unquenchable joy, comes from a singular focus on pursuing the kingdom of God.</p> <p>Throughout the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus addressed the difference between applying a religious code to one’s external conduct, on the one hand, and allowing God’s Word to spiritually transform one from the inside-out, on the other. In Mat. 5:17-20, Jesus called people back to a holistic, complete body, mind, and soul kind of commitment to God’s Law. He validated the Jewish Scriptures, what we call the Old Testament. He did not undermine the Law and the Prophets, nor did he add to them; rather, “Jesus fulfilled the Law in the</p>

sense that he gave it its full meaning” (NIV Study Bible, p. 1445).

Read Matthew 5:17-20

1. In verse 20, Jesus said something that would have shocked his Jewish listeners. He made a statement that they all would have assumed was impossible. If he were speaking to a 21st century western audience, what impossible modern comparisons might he have used to set up a seemingly hopeless scenario?

Leader: Jesus frequently used paradox in his teaching.

Paradox: seeming contradictions to reason or ideological dilemmas.

Verse 20 and the Beatitudes are good examples of paradox. Far from seeking to inspire hopelessness, Jesus calls people to realize that the only hope of entering the kingdom of heaven comes from righteousness rooted in his inward kingship, not in outward obedience. For another example, consider Luke 18:24-27. Only when we throw our hands up in the air and call on him do we finally grasp the reality of salvation’s source.

Read Matthew 5:21-26

In this section Jesus turns to matters of the heart. He focuses on the way that applying God’s Law to our attitudes affects our relationships, first, as relates to conflict and then to reconciliation.

Reread Matthew 5:21-22

2. How does Jesus go beyond the legalistic definition of murder, set forth in Exodus 20:13 (“You shall not murder”)? How does Jesus expand our understanding of what it means to stand guilty of murder?
3. Pastor taught that the first step in coping with conflict is realizing that contempt is a sin. What is the difference between anger and contempt?

Leader: Anger is a strong emotion often rooted in a perceived injustice or wrong doing to oneself or others. Contempt is a strong feeling of dislike or disrespect for someone or something. (Cambridge Dictionaries Online, paraphrased).

Word study:

Raca (Aramaic): term of arrogant contempt, ex., brainless idiot.

Moros (Greek): describes person’s mental abilities (root of Eng. moron) and person’s moral character.

4. What attitude is at the heart of contempt that makes it so abhorrent to God?

Follow-up question: How does Jesus' teaching on contempt relate to the Beatitudes? Leader: An arrogant attitude stands in direct contradiction to the humility needed to experience the true joy that flows from God's blessing in our life. This only comes when we realize who we are in relation to him and to others (no better than others).

Reread Matthew 5:23-26

5. In these verses Jesus offers two illustrations of healthy, holy ways to deal with anger. What does reconciliation involve in the first illustration? Why does seeking forgiveness from the one whom you have offended precede worshipping God?
6. Jesus refers to "someone who has something against you" (not the other way around). What is the significance of this distinction?

Follow-up question: What are some reasons we hesitate to make a move toward reconciliation, even when we suspect that another person has something against us?

Leader: There may be those in your group who have been seriously harmed by others. Matthew 18:15-17 provides guidelines for confronting someone when the circumstances require it.

7. The second illustration uses legal imagery to make its point. Have you witnessed or experienced situations yourself that would cause you to affirm that it is better to be reconciled than it is to be right? Or would you say that the opposite is true?

Follow-up question: How does faith in God's ultimate justice relate to this?

8. Examine the following verses and consider the implications of each:
 - Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God. (Mt. 5:9),
 - If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. (Rom. 12:17)

Taking it Home	<p>How will I live it? Apply it?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Have you ever moved beyond holding someone in contempt? What helped you? Share with the group. 2. If there is someone you struggle to like, refer to the Additional Resource (http://www.christianworkingwoman.org/how_love_people_you_dont) for suggestions on how to love people you don't like. Hint: remember the sermon from a couple weeks ago on 1 Corinthians 13? 3. Pastor taught that applying Jesus' teachings will improve our relationships. In which of these relationships are you in most dire need of strengthening: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your relationship with God? • Your relationship with others? • Your relationship with yourself?
Looking Ahead	<p>How can I prepare for the next Small Group meeting?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invite your group members to attend "Community," 9:00-10:00 Sundays in the fellowship hall. • Next week: Matthew 5:27-30, "Defeating Sin's Stronghold". Theme: God intends for us to have victory over sin. • Two weeks from now: Text: Matthew 5:38-48, "An Alternative to Revenge." Theme: Jesus calls us to grow in love by loving our enemies.
Prayer Focus	<p>How can I connect with God and others through prayer?</p>
Updates	<p>Announcements from:</p> <p>Care Coordinator Outreach Coordinator Social Coordinator</p>