

How Jesus Addressed Conflict

A Ten-Week Wednesday Evening Bible Study

Conflict is part of life. It occurs in families, churches, workplaces, communities, and relationships. Jesus did not avoid conflict, nor did He respond to every conflict in the same way. Sometimes He confronted. Sometimes He questioned. Sometimes He remained silent. Sometimes He withdrew. And sometimes He extended grace.

This ten-week study examines encounters from the Gospels to discover what the responses of Jesus teach us about handling conflict faithfully, wisely, and courageously.

Lesson 1 — When Conflict Comes Looking for You

Scripture: Luke 4:16–30

Jesus returned to His hometown of Nazareth and entered the synagogue among people who knew Him. What began as admiration quickly became hostility when His message challenged their assumptions about God and themselves.

This lesson examines what happens when faithfulness creates conflict we did not seek. Jesus does not manufacture confrontation, but neither does He change His message to preserve acceptance. His experience teaches us that doing what is right does not guarantee that others will understand or approve.

Participants will consider how to distinguish unnecessary conflict from the conflict that sometimes accompanies conviction and faithful obedience.

Lesson 2 — When People Question Your Motives

Scripture: Mark 2:13–17

Jesus' decision to eat with tax collectors and sinners brought criticism from religious leaders. Rather than asking Jesus directly, they questioned His disciples about the company He kept.

Jesus answered by returning attention to His mission: "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick."

This lesson explores how Jesus responded when people misunderstood or questioned His motives. His example challenges us to know why we are doing what we are doing and to resist allowing criticism to redefine a faithful purpose.

Lesson 3 — When Rules Become More Important Than People

Scripture: Mark 3:1–6

Jesus encountered a man with a withered hand in the synagogue while religious leaders watched to see whether He would heal on the Sabbath. Their concern for enforcing their interpretation of the law had become disconnected from compassion for the person standing before them.

Jesus confronted the problem with a question: “Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?”

This lesson considers conflicts in which rules, traditions, policies, or customs can obscure the people those structures were intended to serve. Jesus teaches us to examine whether our convictions reflect the purposes of God or merely protect familiar practices.

Lesson 4 — When Something Wrong Must Be Confronted

Scripture: Mark 11:15–18

Jesus entered the temple and deliberately disrupted what was taking place there. He overturned tables, drove out those buying and selling, and declared God’s intention that His house be a house of prayer for all nations.

This was intentional confrontation with a moral and spiritual purpose.

The lesson examines the difference between righteous confrontation and uncontrolled anger. Jesus’ actions demonstrate that there are circumstances in which faithfulness requires us to address what is wrong. The critical questions become why we are confronting, what we are defending, and whether our response serves the purposes of God.

Lesson 5 — When Someone Tries to Trap You

Scripture: Matthew 22:15–22

The Pharisees attempted to trap Jesus with a politically dangerous question about paying taxes to Caesar. Either answer appeared capable of creating trouble.

Jesus refused to accept the terms of their trap. Instead, He exposed the deeper issue and answered with wisdom: “Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.”

This lesson explores how to respond when conflict is manipulative rather than sincere. Jesus demonstrates that we do not have to answer every question in the form in which it is presented. Wisdom sometimes requires recognizing the agenda behind the question before deciding how to respond.

Lesson 6 — When People Attack You Personally

Scripture: John 8:48–59

During an intense dispute, Jesus' opponents moved beyond disagreement and attacked His character and identity. They insulted Him and accused Him falsely.

Jesus did not allow their insults to determine His response. He remained centered in His relationship with the Father and clear about who He was.

This lesson addresses the difficult moment when disagreement becomes personal. Jesus shows us the importance of refusing to surrender our identity to another person's accusation. Participants will consider how to defend truth without allowing personal attacks to dictate their behavior.

Lesson 7 — When Silence Is the Stronger Response

Scripture: Matthew 27:11–14

Standing before Pilate, Jesus faced accusations that could lead to His death. Yet Scripture records that He refused to answer many of the charges brought against Him.

His silence was neither weakness nor confusion. Jesus understood that there are moments when another argument will accomplish nothing.

This lesson explores the discipline of silence in conflict. We often assume that every accusation deserves an answer and every misunderstanding must be corrected. Jesus demonstrates that maturity includes knowing when to speak and when refusing to participate in an unproductive exchange may be the stronger response.

Lesson 8 — When It Is Time to Walk Away

Scripture: John 10:31–40

There were occasions when opposition to Jesus became dangerous and further engagement would serve no constructive purpose. Rather than remaining unnecessarily in the confrontation, Jesus withdrew.

Walking away did not mean abandoning His mission. It meant refusing to allow His opponents to determine the timing and direction of His ministry.

This lesson considers when disengagement can be an act of wisdom rather than avoidance. Some conflicts should be addressed; others should not be allowed to consume our energy, attention, or purpose. Jesus teaches us that discernment includes knowing when enough has been said.

Lesson 9 — When Someone You Love Hurts You

Scripture: John 21:15–19

Peter denied Jesus three times during one of the most painful moments of Jesus' life. After the resurrection, Jesus met Peter again.

Jesus neither ignored what happened nor humiliated Peter because of it. Through a deeply personal conversation, He addressed Peter, restored him, and entrusted him again with responsibility.

This lesson examines conflict and hurt within important relationships. Reconciliation does not require pretending that nothing happened. Jesus shows that restoration can acknowledge failure while still making room for grace, accountability, and a future.

Lesson 10 — When Conflict Tests Who You Are

Scripture: Luke 23:32–34

The final lesson brings us to the cross, where Jesus faced rejection, humiliation, injustice, violence, and death. In the midst of extraordinary hostility, He prayed, “Father, forgive them.”

The cross does not teach us to tolerate abuse or ignore injustice. It reveals something deeper about Jesus: His enemies could wound Him, but they could not determine who He would become.

Throughout this series, Jesus has confronted, questioned, spoken, remained silent, withdrawn, forgiven, and restored. His responses differed because the circumstances differed. What remained constant was His identity, His relationship with the Father, and His commitment to His mission.

The final challenge of the study is larger than learning techniques for managing disagreement. It asks: **When conflict places pressure on us, will our response still reflect the person we are becoming in Christ?**