Biblical Principles for Conflict Resolution

A. Understanding the Inner Workings of Human Relationships

1. Relationships in the world are based on "leverage." (leverage = influence, power, force, or control) Relationships in the Kingdom of God are based on "love." (love = willing the best for another) 1 Cor 13:4-8

2. The person who cares the most about the relationship has the least power. 2 Cor 12:11-18 (no one buys from a desperate salesman - never beg!)

3. Your words are rarely neutral - they either build up or tear down. Eph 4:29-31 (you communicate with things other than words ie. intonation, facial expressions, and body language)

4. "When alone, watch what you think; when with others watch what you say." 1 Thess 5:21-22

5. We "get well" only when we want to get well. "No one comes to Christ until he comes to the end of himself." Oswald Chambers in My Utmost for His Highest James 4:7

6. Few people flourish in an environment where they are always being evaluated. 1 Thess 5:15

7. Healthy relationships are built on "kind words and shared experiences." 1 Thess 2:8

8. Self-centeredness and happiness are mutually exclusive. Phil 2:3

9. "Shaming" another is a terrible and ungodly way to accomplish one's objective. 1 Cor 4:14

10. The only real tragedy in life is to die outside of Christ. 2 Thess 2:8-9
"Hell is God's great compliment to the reality of human freedom and the dignity of human choice." G.K. Chesterton

B. How to Stay Out of Conflict

1. Take a tip from the world's great leaders and "over-communicate" with the key people in your life. "and the truth will set you free" Jesus in John 8:32

2. Use E-mails and letters for communicating information and encouraging words, but be as personal as possible when communicating the "hard stuff." Matt 10:16

3. Let "agape" (God-like, unconditional self-sacrificing) love be your primary motivation in life. (always speak the truth in love) Eph 4:15

4. Become a "safe person" for the important people in your life. 1 Cor 13:1-8 (a "safe person" promises that, when approached with the truth, they will not run, hide, or become angry)

5. Don't be the Holy Spirit in another's life. Rom 14:13-14; Gal 6:1 "When a person's level of desperation exceeds his level of embarrassment, then and only then, will he seek the help of others."

6. Learn how to take criticism appropriately - embrace what is true; discard what is not. (become unoffendable - remember you are "dead" to this world) Gal 2:20
7. Remember that Satan's formula for life is: \textit{performance + the opinions of others = self-worth}. 1 Pet 4:4

Robert McGee in \textit{Search for Significance}

8. "In your anger do not sin." Eph 4:26; James 1:19-20

Generally we become angry for one of three reasons: 1) someone hurt our feelings, 2) someone violated our rights, 3) someone interrupted our schedule.

\textit{Godly anger} is controlled, directed at sinful behaviors, and always has as its purpose the restoration of the person to fellowship with God and others. The anger of man (ungodly anger) is unrestrained, directed at other people, and is always for the purpose of hurting another.

9. Relationships are more important than things, but \textit{integrity} (doing what is right in the eyes of the Lord) is more important than a relationship. Matt 22:16

10. Only two things have ever changed mankind - \textit{sin} and \textit{grace}. Eph 2:1-10

C. Instructions for Resolving Conflict

1. Don't be petty; look at the "big picture." (give things the 30 day test) Titus 3:9

2. For a believer pleasing God is their only ambition. 2 Cor. 5:9 Our behavior is a lesson for the heavenly host. Eph 3:10

3. Always think "win - win" --- look to the interests of others as well as your own. Phil 2:3-4

4. In every situation be dignified, and always take the "high road." 2 Tim 2:24
"Be more interested in your character than in your reputation." John Wooden/UCLA Coach

5. Look for and eliminate the sin in your own life. Matt 7:3-5
"I notice that Christ-centered couples tend to reveal ways in which they individually contribute to the condition of their relationship rather than pointing the finger across the table toward their mate. I can't help but be reminded of Dr. Gottman's research regarding the words a couple uses during moments of disagreement or tension. The more critical a couple (or individual) becomes when stress increases, the higher predictability that the couple won't be together in the future -- say, 3-5 years." Eric Hutch 3/11

6. Make obedience to God your #1 priority & do not let the other person's behavior be an issue. 2 Cor 5:9
("Never forget that life is not about you! You exist for God's purposes, not vice versa.")

Rick Warren in \textit{The Purpose Driven Life}

7. Look for solutions not for opportunities to take "your pound of flesh" from the one who injured you.

Luke 6:27-31; 2 Cor 5:18-21

8. Understand the difference between forgiveness and trust. Eph 4:30-32; Mic 7:5-7
(forgiveness must be immediate; trust must be rebuilt over time)

(if you deserve to be vindicated, God will vindicate you) Rom 12:17-21

10. "The single belief most toxic to a relationship is the belief that the other person cannot change."

2 Cor 5:17

"The role of all true counseling is to free people to better worship and serve God by helping them become more like Christ. In a word the goal is maturity. Happiness must be seen as a by-product not a goal." Dr. Larry Crabb in \textit{Effective Biblical Counseling}