



**GFA Family Conference 2024**  
**An Overview and Application of Lou Priolo’s *Resolving Conflict***  
**Marsh Fant**

I. Overview of *Resolving Conflict: How to Make, Disturb, and Keep Peace* by Lou Priolo (P&R Publishing, 2016)

A. Key passage

“Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, with all **humility and gentleness**, with **patience, showing tolerance for one another in love** [loving forbearance], being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. (Ephesians 4:1–3, NASB)

B. Discussion of conflict

Definition: “. . . two people being able to passionately disagree with each other without either one of them necessarily resorting to sin. . . . From a biblical perspective, to have a conflict with someone (or even to start one) is not *necessarily* a sin.” (p. 13)

“Knowing what kind of conflict you are dealing with is essential to resolving it.” (p. 142)

Three categories of conflict (Chapter 5):

Category	Verses (a sampling)	Basic Solution	Pages
Of Differences	Acts 15:39; Philippians 4:2	Forbearance	117-120
Of Sinfulness	1 Peter 4:8; Matthew 18:15-18; Luke 17:3; Galatians 6:1	Repentance	120-129
Of Righteousness	James 1:5; Proverbs 2:4-5	Bible Study	130-142

C. Discussion of forgiveness

“When we ask for forgiveness (rather than simply apologizing) and are granted it, we secure for ourselves those three aforementioned promises of forgiveness:

(1) ‘I promise not to bring up the offense again to you.’

(2) ‘I promise not to bring up the offense again to anyone else.’

(3) ‘I promise not to bring up the offense again to myself (not to dwell on it in my heart).’” (p. 184)

One approach when seeking forgiveness: (pp. 184-185)

First, acknowledge that you have sinned.

Second, identify your specific sin by its biblical name.

Third, acknowledge the harm that your offense caused.

Fourth, identify an alternative, biblical behavior to demonstrate repentance.

Fifth, ask forgiveness.

D. Discussion of terms commonly used in conflict (pp. 311-315)

“But this book is for Christians, and as Christians we ought to use the most precise biblical language we know in our attempts to resolve conflicts with other Christians—especially conflicts that involve sin.” (p. 311)

## II. Helpful resources in resolving conflict:

### A. *The Conference Table* by Jay Adams.

Source: <https://graceky.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/The-Conference-Table.pdf>  
(accessed 5.17.24)

Few persons who come for counseling have been in the habit of solving interpersonal problems daily. That is one reason why they are having difficulty (*Competent to Counsel*, 231). The conference table is a regular family meeting designed to improve the family's communication and to help them avoid or resolve conflict daily. It provides a practical, structured, daily means for dealing with grievances. The fact that it is practical and structured gives hope. Something orderly and coherent is being done to address the problem. The fact that it is daily keeps bitterness and resentment from building up (Ephesians 4:26–27).

#### Conference Table Rules:

- 1) The head of the home must lead.  
As head of the home the husband/father calls and leads the conference. He should open and close in prayer. The conference should be held at the same table each day. Just the habit of sitting down there at the same time every day will help family members assume the right attitudes for a God-honoring discussion.
- 2) Everyone must observe rules of communication.  
The husband/father should review a few basic biblical rules of communication. This must be done especially if previous conferences have been shipwrecked by wrong attitudes or hurtful words. Gentle words and tones of voice must be used (Proverbs 15:1). Gentle questions should be used to replace angry accusations (Proverbs 18:13). Interrupting is not allowed.
- 3) Work through one issue at a time.  
Discussion begins with a list of items the participants believe need to be discussed. The husband/father must determine the order in which the items are to be discussed (considering others more important than himself). Each issue must be handled separately. Mixing issues always hinders problem-solving.
- 4) Begin with what you did wrong.  
Discussion regarding a conflict situation must always begin with each participant acknowledging how he responded wrongly in that situation or what he could have done differently to keep the problem from occurring. Starting with these admissions and a request for forgiveness means that the conversation begins with humble words, rather than angry accusations.
- 5) Follow this procedure when the rules are broken.  
Sometimes during the course of a discussion, rules regarding attitude, voice inflection, and dealing with one issue at a time will be violated. If this occurs, any of the participants in the conference table have the right to stand up. This is the signal that indicates that he or she believes biblical communication is no longer taking place. This signal allows matters to be brought under control before tempers flare. When this is done, the person sits down, and the conversation continues. Arguing over whether a rule was violated is not allowed. The person who broke the rule must revise his words or attitudes (even if he believes he was misinterpreted). He does so because he understands his inability (or unwillingness) to see his own sin and considers the other person's analysis of the situation above his own.

Additional personal notes by Dr. Fant:

1. As the mediator of the conflict, you as the pastor or the counselor must lead and stay in charge of the discussion. You should lead in love and humility demonstrating the heart of an undershepherd.
2. Prayer
  - a. I recommend a “season of prayer” that precedes the date of the meeting. Each participant should commit to pray for 15 minutes each day for the Lord to prepare hearts.
  - b. I recommend opening the meeting in prayer with each participant praying out loud to ask God for humility and wisdom.
3. Confession
  - a. Key passage for you to read to start the meeting:  
 “Do not judge so that you will not be judged. For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you. Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ and behold, the log is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother’s eye” (Matthew 7:1–5, NASB).
  - b. You should go around the table and ask each person to confess how he or she contributed to the conflict – “first take the log out of your own eye” (Matt 7:5). You could send all participants a brief agenda before the meeting, so they are ready to participate in the confession. Each person should participate.

### Apologizing vs. Asking Forgiveness

<b>APOLOGIZING</b>	<b>ASKING FORGIVENESS</b>
Apologize - defense, justification. From latin <i>apologia</i> , <i>gk. apologia: a speech in defense, to speak in one’s defense.</i> (etymonline.com)	Forgiveness - release from the guilt or penalty of an offense. (merriam-webster.com/thesaurus)
“I’m _____.”	“I sinned against God and you; will you please _____?”
Can be _____.	Yields _____ to a defense. Avoid “but”; “I guess I should have . . .”
Does not ask for anything _____.	Asks forgiveness for a _____. Not, “I’m sorry if . . .”
No commitment; no _____.	Commitment from both parties; issue is _____. Person #1 - asks forgiveness. Person #2 - grants forgiveness <b>Isaiah 43:25, Psalm 103:12, Micah 7:19, Jeremiah 31:34</b>

Adapted from Jay Adams, *From Forgiven to Forgiving* and Ken Sande, *The Peacemaker*, 10/19 GKF/IOP

#### Additional elements to include when asking forgiveness:

1. Express \_\_\_\_\_ for the hurt you have caused.  
*You must have been very embarrassed when I said that in front of everyone. I’m very sorry I did that to you. I can see why you were upset when I didn’t show up. I’m sorry I failed to keep my commitment to you.*

2. Do not \_\_\_\_\_ consequences. **Luke 15:18-19, 21**  
*I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants. (v. 19)*

**Psalm 51:4** (David's response when Nathan the prophet confronted him with his sin)  
*Against you, and you alone, have I sinned; I have done what is evil in your sight. You will be proven right in what you say, and your judgment against me is just (i.e., anything you decide to do to me is just).*

3. Commit to make \_\_\_\_\_ and repair any damage you have caused.  
*I will immediately call everyone I talked to about you and let them know that what I said was false.*
4. Tell the offended party how you plan to change your attitude and/or behavior in the future. *In the future, I will (by God's grace) do \_\_\_\_\_.*

**Six questions to ask before bringing up a problem:**

1. Do I have the facts right? **Proverbs 18:13**
2. Should love hide it? Is it sinful? Is it hindering growth? **1 Peter 4:8**
3. Is my timing right? **Proverbs 15:23b**
4. Is my attitude right? Am I trying to help the other person? **Galatians 6:1b**
5. Are my words loving? **Ephesians 4:15**
6. Have I asked for God's help? **Proverbs 3:5b**