



# CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Solving Your People Problems

June Hunt



HOPE  
*for the Heart*

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# CONTENTS

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Aspire Press, a division of Rose Publishing, Inc.

4733 Torrance Blvd., #259

Torrance, California 90503 USA

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Printed in the United States of America  
011212DP

<b>Definitions</b> .....	8
What Is a Conflict?.....	9
What Is the Difference between Resolution and Reconciliation? .....	11
What Are Types of Conflict? .....	13
What Is God’s Heart on Conflict Resolution?.....	16
Who Creates Conflict and Who Keeps It Going? .....	19

<b>Characteristics of Dysfunctional Conflict</b> .....	25
What Are Common Statements Used in Conflict? .....	26
What Do Attackers and Avoiders Look Like?.....	28

<b>Causes of Conflict</b> .....	38
Why Are Some People Attackers and Others Avoiders? .....	39
What Are the Unmet Needs That Drive Attackers and Avoiders? .....	42
What Causes the Worst Conflict? .....	46
Root Cause of Negative Conflict .....	50

<b>Steps to Solution</b> .....	52
How to Respond When Others Are Critical of You .....	56
The What, Why, and How of Boundaries.....	59
Recipe for Conflict Resolution .....	63

How to Respond to Difficult Personalities .....	67
The Road to Resolution.....	71
Why Should I Forgive When the Conflict Is Not Resolved? .....	76
How Do You Keep Forgiving Following a Major Conflict?.....	78
What Will Protect Your Heart from Bitterness? .....	81

Dear Friend,

Are you afraid of conflict? In your vocabulary, does the word “conflict” spell—t-r-o-u-b-l-e?

When you hear the word “conflict,” what do you picture? A fighting family? A feuding friendship?

I’ll have to admit, when I hear the word “conflict,” my natural tendency is to do *anything to avoid it!* Yet as I think about the serious conflicts I’ve had in my life—my most difficult relationships—I see times of *greater personal growth* than if the conflicts had not existed.

And because of these difficult relationships, I became aware of lessons I needed to learn, not only about others, but more importantly, about needed changes in my own attitudes and actions. Had everything been peaceful, I honestly do not believe I would have stretched my ways of thinking or changed as I needed to change.

Years ago I heard this insightful statement, “Never to be angry, never to disagree at all seems to most of us a sign not of love but of indifference.”

We, obviously, live in a world of differences. You are not identical to anyone. Your background, even within your family, will be different from a brother or a sister because you are in a different birth order.

Even if you were an identical twin, you would have been born with a different temperament;

people would be interacting with you differently. Inevitably, you would have *differences of opinion*.


And, of course, these differing opinions are the breeding ground for conflict. Be aware, if you are an “avoider” of conflict (like I have been), that will also bring on conflict. So if we can’t avoid conflict, what are we to do?

The answer is not to be an avoider—a “peace at any price” person—to let people have their way. (I’ve changed from this ... I really, really have!) Neither is the answer to be an “attacker,” to have it “my way.” The solution is not *retreating* or *reacting* but *responding* to conflict appropriately.

And why is this important? So that you can live with right priorities, experience personal growth, and display that deepest peace—the peace that passes all understanding.

My prayer is that, through these pages, you will not only learn different ways of dealing with conflicts, but that, most of all, you will become the person God created you to be.

Yours in the Lord’s hope,



June Hunt

*“I have never yet known the spirit of God to work where the Lord’s people were divided.”*

—D.L. Moody

# CONFLICT RESOLUTION

## Solving Your People Problems

Living in obscurity as a Jewish orphan, she seemed the least likely candidate to be the mediator—the only mediator—to possibly save her people from sure destruction. However, the Lord knew her heart, and He knew she would face the most severe conflict of her life with complete humility.

The entire conflict arose because of conniving Haman, a royal official in the king’s court, who devised a plot to murder every Jewish person in the empire. His fury had been flamed by a man who refused to bow down to him—namely, Esther’s cousin Mordecai, who had raised her. Little did Esther know that she would carry the fate of the Jewish people on her shoulders as she faced a conflict of epic proportions. Yet Mordecai aptly posed ...

**“Who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?”**  
(Esther 4:14 ESV)

# DEFINITIONS

Just how does Esther, this unknown young woman, become queen? After days of feasting, King Ahasuerus (King Xerxes) is “merry with wine” and wants to show off the beauty of his wife before the people and nobles. He summons seven attendants to send for her. However, Queen Vashti refuses to come. The king becomes enraged.

At the advice of his closest counselors, the king issues a royal decree: Queen Vashti can never again enter into the king’s presence, and she will be replaced! (Esther 1:19). With this new edict, the outward conflict between the king and queen appears to be “resolved.” But the resolution of one conflict sometimes gives rise to another—now the king has no queen. And because of the queen’s haughtiness, the king’s advisors felt they had to take action or else throughout the land.

**“There will be no end of disrespect and discord.”**

**(Esther 1:18)**

In order to avoid discord and conflict among the people, a major search ensues. All the beautiful young virgins in the land are rounded up so that “*the girl who pleases the king*” would be selected as queen (Esther 2:4). Esther, described as a young woman who “*was lovely to look at,*” quickly gains favor. At cousin Mordecai’s instruction, she does not reveal her heritage. After a full year, Esther is finally taken to the king and he, “*loved Esther more than all the women ... and made her queen instead of Vashti*” (Esther 2:17 ESV).

The plan for alleviating the loneliness of the king puts Esther on the path of God’s divine purpose—but also on a collision course with a conflict of colossal proportions.

- ▶ **Conflicts** are disagreements, struggles, or battles over opposing issues or principles.<sup>1</sup>
- ▶ **Conflictus**, the Latin word, means an “act of striking together or clashing with.”<sup>2</sup>
- ▶ **Conflict**, in Greek, is often the word *agon*,<sup>3</sup> from which the English word “agony” is derived. Originally meaning a “place of conflict,” this word came to mean the actual conflict itself and later any kind of conflict, struggle, or strife. The apostle Paul said, “*I want you to know how much I am struggling for you and for those at Laodicea, and for all who have not met me personally.*” (Colossians 2:1)

Now a personal power struggle begins when corrupt Haman, the top royal official, becomes infuriated with Mordecai, who day after day refuses to bow down to him.

Meanwhile, wise Mordecai uncovers a plot that ultimately saves the king's life. Haman is so outraged that, when he discovers Mordecai is a Jew, he manipulates getting a royal decree from the king mandating the massacre of all the Jews—every man, woman, and child. Haman has won the conflict. He will get his homage, but at a very high—and *horrific cost*.

**“When Haman saw that Mordecai would not kneel down or pay him honor, he was enraged. Yet having learned who Mordecai’s people were, he scorned the idea of killing only Mordecai. Instead Haman looked for a way to destroy all Mordecai’s people, the Jews, throughout the whole kingdom of Xerxes.”**  
(Esther 3:5–6)

## **WHAT IS** the Difference between Resolution and Reconciliation?

At this point, no positive resolution is possible. The king's decree has sounded. However, Mordecai appeals to Esther for help. She can't believe what Mordecai is asking her to do. He knows the law: *“Any man or woman who approaches the king in the inner court without being summoned the king has but one law: that he be put to death.”* (Esther 4:11)

Since she has not been summoned by the king for 30 days, how can she go to the king to plead on behalf of her people? What if the king becomes displeased with her? She needs to be reconciled to the king. Clearly, going to the king will mean putting her life on the line. To which Mordecai responds that her life is on the line either way!

**“Do not think that because you are in the king’s house you alone of all the Jews will escape. ... And who knows but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this?”** (Esther 4:13–14)

## **Resolution vs. Reconciliation**

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Resolution and reconciliation are different.

► **Resolution** means “finding the answer,” derived from the Latin *resolutionem*, “the process of reducing things into simpler form” or “to lessen.”<sup>4</sup>

► **Reconciliation** means “100% restoration to harmony”; “to bring together again.”<sup>5</sup>

Some differences may never be resolved, but you can still be reconciled to those with whom you differ. At other times, resolution may be possible, but reconciliation inappropriate—such as in the case of adultery or cult entrapment—God requires only that, as far as it is possible, you seek to be at peace with everyone.

**“Aim for perfection ... be of one mind, live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you.”  
(2 Corinthians 13:11)**

**QUESTION:** “Is forgiveness the same as reconciliation?”

**ANSWER:** No. Forgiveness is not the same as reconciliation. Forgiveness focuses on the offense, whereas reconciliation focuses on the relationship. Forgiveness requires no relationship, while reconciliation requires nurturing a relationship—a time of coming together in which two people, in agreement, are walking together toward the same goal. The Bible says,

**“Do two walk together unless they have agreed to do so?”  
(Amos 3:3)**

## WHAT ARE Types of Conflict?<sup>6</sup>

All of a sudden, Esther is facing an *inner conflict* just as heavy, just as grave, just as deadly as the *outer conflict* caused by Haman.

On multiple levels, Esther is a conflicted soul. Where will she find the strength, the courage, to do what must be done?

### 1. Intrapersonal Conflict

- A struggle **within oneself** to decide between two or more choices.
- In the book of Esther, does Esther approach the king in an attempt to save the Jewish people from extinction—which could earn her a death sentence—or does she remain silent and live? Esther said,

*“All the king’s officials and the people of the royal provinces know that for any man or woman who approaches the king in the inner court without being summoned the king has but one law: that he be put to death. The only exception to this is for the king to extend the gold scepter to him and spare his life. But thirty days have passed since I was called to go to the king.” (Esther 4:11)*

### 2. Interpersonal Conflict

- A clash of ideas or interests **between two or more people**.



- In the book of Esther, malicious Haman plots to have Mordecai murdered only because Mordecai refuses to bow down to him.

*“When Haman saw that Mordecai would not kneel down or pay him honor, he was enraged.”*  
(Esther 3:5)

### 3. *Intraorganizational Conflict*

- A competitive or opposing action **within a group** (a family, department, church, political party, state, or nation).
- In the book of Esther, the king learns about the plot which was crafted—not by the enemy on the outside—but by Haman, his top official on the inside. The king becomes enraged after realizing Haman has manipulated him into issuing a death sentence to murder all the Jewish people.

*“The king got up in a rage, left his wine and went out into the palace garden. ... So they hanged Haman on the gallows he had prepared for Mordecai. Then the king’s fury subsided.”*  
(Esther 7:7, 10)

### 4. *Interorganizational Conflict*

- A battle or opposing action **between two or more groups** (families, companies, religions, or countries).

- In the book of Esther, because of Haman’s surreptitious plot, the Persian nation threatens to annihilate the entire Jewish population—men, women, and children.

*“Dispatches were sent by couriers to all the king’s provinces with the order to destroy, kill and annihilate all the Jews—young and old, women and little children—on a single day, the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, the month of Adar, and to plunder their goods.”*  
(Esther 3:13)

Conflict abounds in the book of Esther, just as conflict fills the pages of our lives. The “should I” or “shouldn’t I’s,” disharmony in the home, wars in the workplace, all try us and ought to lead us to the One to whom Esther will turn for the strength, courage, and resolution she needs. His name isn’t even mentioned in the entire book of Esther, but His sovereignty spreads itself like a shadow over every chapter.