



## Episode 2 Transcript - Benefits of Conflict Transcript

Welcome to the Relational Impact Podcast. We're here to help you grow in your relationship with the Lord and in your relationship with others

**Elaine:**

I'm Elaine Russo and I'm here with my husband Tim and we're going to be talking about the benefits of conflict in relationships.

**Tim:**

What do you mean when you suggest that there are benefits to conflict?

**Elaine:** Those of you who choose to persevere through conflict will receive the reward on the other side of it. Someone said it like this: "Conflict paves the pathway to intimacy." Conflict is inevitable. And, the way we respond to it will determine whether we benefit from it or not.

Some of us view conflict one way and some of us view it another way. For example, some of us think conflict can be a learning growing experience. Others of us think conflict is very negative and we avoid it like the plague. We each have a certain view of conflict in our minds and how we view it determines how we interact with it. Our first impressions of conflict will cause us to have certain experiences or beliefs about it.

My first impression of conflict was all-in; go at it until someone comes out a winner. What was your first impression to conflict, Tim?

**Tim:**

I have always viewed conflict as something negative; something to be avoided, Because, in my experience, nothing good ever came out of it. So, that was always my view. Even after years of experience with positive outcomes, my knee-jerk reaction seems to always be, "Oh, that's negative."

Let's define conflict. I think that's important. Conflict, by definition, is a clash; a clash of ideas; a clash of personalities; a clash of priorities. When two people are in a relationship, they are different, therefore they bring their differences into the relationship and that facilitates conflict.

As an illustration, I'd like for you to think about a newlywed couple. They're at their wedding. They're standing on this platform, let's say it's four feet high and under their feet are thousands of conflicts that have not yet emerged in the relationship. They might say, "We're getting along great! We don't have any conflicts." And, I would say, "Oh, you actually have lots of conflicts in your relationship." They just have not yet emerged. As you continue to function in this relationship, these differences show up and thereby create conflict.

**Elaine:**

I remember a time in our relationship when we were newly-married and a difference showed up. I'm going to share that with the folks. I think it would be beneficial, maybe, for some of you to hear about this. I remember this particular day I had bought a new book about marriage. I was in a season of life when I loved reading books about marriage. I was learning so much. This particular book really hit home. When Tim came in that afternoon from work, I plowed into him, and I don't say that word lightly, because that is literally what I did with my words. I plowed into him with this new information including all the changes that I needed to make and he needed to make in order for our marriage to be better. Tim what did you do?

**Tim:**

I think that was okay for you to share those things because you were very excited about it and you wanted me to be that excited, which initially, I was not. It was fine that you were sharing it. The problem for me occurred when you started repeating those things again and again. I think you realized that I was not totally receptive to what you were saying. So, mid-sentence, you're talking, I turn around and walk out, which I don't recommend that. It didn't work out for us very well. But, it happened. I walked into the living room. I pulled the Bible off the bookshelf. I sat on the sofa, flipped open the Bible and it opened to the book of Colossians, chapter 3 and my eye went straight to verse 19 where it says, "Husbands love your wives and do not grow bitter toward them."

I learned two things that day. 1) I learned that I did not understand you (Elaine). I did not understand how you saw the world. You were different in so many ways. You interpreted things differently from me. That was the first thing I learned. 2) The second thing was that, because I didn't understand you, I was growing bitter towards you, and I didn't know it.

**Elaine:**

This was also a learning experience for me. Just because I was excited about the new information I had to share didn't mean that you were ready for it. I could have handled it differently as to not put you on the defense. This is a good lesson. Just because we have good information; just because we're ready for it, does not mean the other person in the relationship is ready. That's why it's so important to handle things in a loving way and with the right attitude.

**Tim:**

Let's look at a couple passages. One, we actually looked at in a previous episode, which you might want to listen to, Episode 1 "Maintaining Peace in Relationships." In Ephesians 4:3, we read, "Make every effort to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace." Peace is in a relationship as a gift from God. And it's our responsibility to keep it. So when conflict emerges, we need to work toward maintaining that peace, even the differences. Romans 12:18 says, "If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone." Then James talks about how easily it is for us to offend one another. He says in Chapter 3, verse 2, "For in many things we all offend. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man and able also to bridle the whole body." The Bible portrays human conflicts throughout. The Old Testament is filled with awful things like murder, backstabbing, and deceit. Even in the New Testament we see conflict in the church. One example is the disciples who were arguing over who was the greatest among them, in the Book of Luke chapter 22.

**Elaine:**

There was also that time in Acts 15:36 when Paul and Barnabas got into a little bit of a squabble there over John Mark. They ended up agreeing to disagree. After all, we are human. Conflicts in relationships are normal. There's no conflict-free relationship that truly experiences intimacy. I think God will use our spouse, our parents, our children, our siblings, our friends and our co-workers to point out areas in our lives that we need to change.

Great relationships have conflict. We have to be careful that we don't think that just because we're in a relationship and there's a conflict, that it's a bad relationship. That just isn't true. Conflicts are necessary and they do happen. I like a quote from a book that we read together years ago called [Wisdom Hunter](#) by Randall Arthur. You can find a link to it on our show notes if you want to get it and read it. Tim, will you read that quote?

**Tim:**

Sure.

"An easy routine way of life which many associate with stability and security only gives man stagnation. On the other hand, progressive resistance in life always has the potential to give man progressive strength and to make man progressively wiser. Resistance makes a man think thoughts he never thought before. It makes a man ask questions he never asked before. It makes a man seek answers he never sought before. It makes a man beg God for help that he never before realized he needed. These quest, quest of the heart and soul eventually make a man deeper, wider, taller."

**Elaine:**

I love that quote. We have it on a plaque in our home. It is so meaningful to us.

Some of the most difficult and life-altering changes, for me, have come from confrontation. In the book of Ephesians, Paul exhorts the Church of Ephesus about the importance of being long-suffering and forbearing with one another. It's a great book in the New Testament that you can read later. I won't read through that whole passage but I want to focus on versus 14 and 15 of the 4th chapter where Paul says that "We should no longer be children tossed to and fro and with every wind of doctrine by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness and deceitful plotting, but speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the Head, Christ."

I want to pull out that phrase, "speaking the truth in love" because I think that's where so many of us get tripped up. We're real eager to speak the truth but it's not often in love. And, that puts the other person on the defense.

I recently heard someone say that one of the greatest ways to show love to another person is by speaking the truth to them. You have to really care about somebody to stick your neck out to speak truth when you're not sure how it's going to be received. So Tim, tell us how we can know when someone is speaking the truth in love.

**Tim:**

It's not always easy to determine that. But, I think one rule of thumb is that love benefits the other person. John 3:16 says, "God so loved the world He gave..." so that we, the world, would benefit. If we are speaking the truth with the intention of helping a person see, maybe what they don't see, I think that's loving.

Conflict can facilitate new information for someone who is different and who sees the situation from a different perspective, as it happened with the conflict we just talked about. If we view conflict as something to avoid, we miss the benefit of learning new ways of seeing the world and seeing so many other things.

Let's talk about conflict resolution styles and how we generally approach conflict. Elaine, what is your normal approach to conflict when it arises?

**Elaine:**

My approach is to lean in and get to the bottom of the issue as soon as possible. This has caused me some trouble in the past because not everyone is ready to engage right away when a conflict arises. A lot of times, it's better to take a deep breath, take some time, and prayerfully consider our words. Then approach it at that point. What is your style Tim?

**Tim:**

As I said earlier, my style is to avoid conflict at all costs. However, sometimes, after I'm in the conflict, I can be pretty intense and somewhat argumentative. But my initial reaction is to avoid conflict if I can.

Actually listeners, we'd love to hear from you. We'd love to know what your conflict reaction (our approach) is because it's so interesting to hear from other people and how you view conflict. For some people the approach or reaction to conflict is to "Fight" or to win or to engage with the objective of, "I am going to stay in this until it's done:

The second approach tends to be the "Fighter." Of course, he or she will usually avoid the conflict, maybe passively try to get out of a conflict, or avoid discussing a problem. Maybe denying that there even is a problem.

But I think the most healthy and biblical approach to conflict is to "Foster Unity."

**Elaine:**

Truly that is God's design. When we foster unity, we're developing something. To develop means to grow. I think the reason most of you may have tuned in today is because, like Tim and me, you want to grow in this area. I believe we all want to grow and learn in this area. We want to know how to benefit from conflict rather than let it beat us down or cause us to lose a relationship. It's very common for relationships to end because of simple conflicts that cannot be resolved.

**Tim:**

Those who foster unity and foster growth are those who keep things in focus. Like, this is not about winning or losing. This is not me against you. This is not about faking peace or playing like everything is okay. It is about growing through the conflict. So we really need to ask ourselves, "How does God want to use this conflict to make me like Him?" Asking "Lord, what do you want to do in me through this conflict?" rather than removing it, maybe there's something you want to use it for, to accomplish something in my life.

Bill Hybles, in his book [Authenticity](#) talks about what he calls "the tunnel of chaos." He says that if you want to drive from Denver, Colorado to Vail, Colorado, you must drive through the Eisenhower Tunnel. It doesn't matter how much you dislike tunnels. If you're going to reach your destination, you will have to travel through that tunnel. So with conflict, it doesn't matter how much I don't like it, if I want to grow; if I want to be closer to the other person; I have to go through it. And I need to go through it as best as I can and as productively as I can.

We've talked about the benefits of conflict. We will talk more about conflict in future episodes. Today we just wanted to give you a brief overview.

Here are some of the benefits that we have talked about:

1. Conflict can bring growth to our lives. We can be better wiser and can appreciate the You can learn things about yourself, what's important to you or what you really believe as you go through a conflict.

2. You can learn about the other person in a conflict when you approach it healthily.
3. differences in that other person if you pay attention

If we are going to experience the benefits that Tim is talking about we have to do some things:

1. We have to identify our conflict resolution Styles whether we're fighters, flighters or we tend to foster unity.
2. We need to be able to speak the truth in love. That's a skill that we need to acquire if we don't know how to do that.
3. We need to choose unity over winning.

One of the reasons we don't get through conflict is simply because we believe lies about ourselves and other people. We will be covering this topic of believing lies in our next episode titled "Understanding the Truth about The Lies We Believe" I encourage you to tune into that. There's going to be some great information there. We hope today's podcast was helpful to you. We know that change is not easy and can be difficult. We do encourage you to take some time on your own to go through the passages we covered. You can find those in the show notes. We'd love to hear from you so if you could, email us or you posts on our Facebook page or you can go to our website at [www.relationalimpact.com](http://www.relationalimpact.com) and you can leave a comment there. Then go ahead and share today's podcast. Thank you for sharing any word of encouragement that would help us and help the people who read your comments. Have a great day, we'll see you next time