

Conflict Resolution: A Productive Pattern

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If you are a fan of Rambo or Chuck Norris, it is not uncommon to see them attack a whole city of enemies and win. But what about mere mortals who would only self-inflict harm if we punched someone or tried to use karate ala Bruce Lee? I can't speak for anyone else, but I more closely resemble Maxwell Smart. Yet the Bible says something very interesting along these lines in Proverbs 18:19. *"A brother offended is harder to win than a strong city, and contentions are like the bars of a castle."*

Like a lone soldier facing a hostile city, you will need some help if you are going to succeed. The good news is that you have the most powerful Person in the universe on your side if you are a Christian. We have the example of Christ as He came to resolve the conflict between God and the world of sinners. Paul writes: *"God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself (2 Corinthians 5:19)."* In His example, we find a very helpful pattern that we can follow.

1. HE TOOK THE INITIATIVE FOR PEACE AND DID NOT WAIT ON US TO TAKE THE FIRST STEP (1 John 4:9,10)
2. GOD SET ASIDE HIS RIGHTS AND PLACED OUR NEED ABOVE HIMSELF (Philippians 2:8). Do not miss the fact that His path led to the glory of God.
3. HE DEALT WITH SIN HEAD ON. Only He could be the substitute for sinners, because only He was righteous. (1 Peter 3:18). The question for us is this: "Are we willing to go to any lengths necessary to see sin put to death in our relationships?"
4. GOD OPENED THE DOOR OF RESTORATION AND INVITED US INSIDE. (Ephesians 2:17,18)
5. GOD SAID WITH ALL TRUTHFULLNESS: "I FORGIVE." (Ephesians 1:7)

God has modeled the steps necessary to repair bruised and broken relationships. He has shown you how to take back the city.