



*Philippians 4*

“4 Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice! 5 Let your forbearing spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near. 6 **Be anxious for nothing**, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. 7 And **the peace of God**, which surpasses all comprehension, shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. . . . 12 I know **how to get along** with humble means, and I also know **how to live** in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned **the secret** of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. 13 **I can do all things** through Him who strengthens me.”

**Paul was not easily shaken and exhorts others to follow him.**

- ✓ **He is writing from prison, with a frustrated mission, and few friends.**
- ✓ **God's peace cannot be touched by the world's circumstances.**
- ✓ **He had learned and knows how to rejoice with stress, conflict, & pain.**
- ✓ **He was confident that he could handle whatever came his way.**

*2 Peter 4:12*

“Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you;”

- ✓ **The Biblical writers saw conflict as inevitable in a broken world.**
- ✓ **All Biblical characters experienced conflict.**
- ✓ **The church was never exempt from conflict.**
- ✓ **The peace of the Gospel is sought because of conflict.**

**Persons of Godly character not only expect conflict**

**but also understand that God can use it for good.**

**1. Conflict awakens spiritual insights.**

*Matthew 10:34*

“I came not to bring peace but, a sword.”

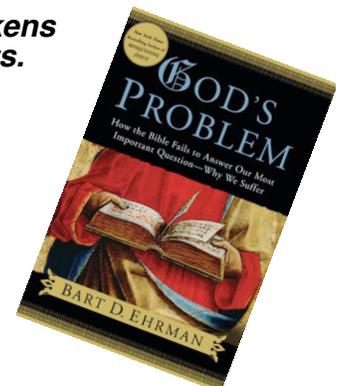
**Jesus may unsettle our hearts and our relationships so that we embrace his grace and welcome his appearing.**

**1. Conflict awakens spiritual insights.**

**Illustration:**



Bart Ehrman



“Why the Bible Fails to Answer our Most Important Question - Why we Suffer?”

## The Biblical narrative freely acknowledges:

1. The suffering of humanity.
2. The conflicted nature of human existence.
3. The gospel story addresses the problem of justice and suffering.
4. The need to wait for a promised deliverance.

*Romans 8:18*

“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.”

*Philippians 3:10*

“that I may know him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings, being conformed to his death;”

*“Why the Bible Fails to Answer our Most Important Question - Why we Suffer?”*

### *The more important questions behind the question:*

1. **The problem of good** - From where do we DERIVE a sense of justice (good and evil)?
2. **The problem of evil** - How do we explain the EXTENT of human injustice to others?
3. **The problem of despair** - Where is there HOPE in a broken world of suffering?

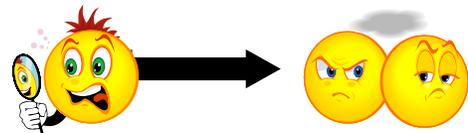
### **2. Social conflict often exposes inner, unresolved, personal conflicts.**

*James 4:1*

“What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? **Is not the source your pleasures that wage war on your members?**”

Personal Dissonance

Public Conflict



Troublemakers are troubled individuals who do not need self-discipline so much as the grace of God in their lives.

You will have trouble being a peacemaker if you are not at peace yourself.

If you are not at peace yourself don't be surprised if you are a troublemaker.

### **3. Conflict is a sign that the image of God is alive in us.**

People have feelings about values.



People want their values to be shared.



People have conflicting inner values.



## Peacemakers appeal to the image of God in each of us by:

1. Empathizing not only with the victims of suffering but also with passions of conflicted people who cause the suffering.
2. Offering hope in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

### Romans 8

“<sup>18</sup> For I consider that the **sufferings of this present time** are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us. . . . <sup>22</sup> For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. <sup>23</sup> And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even **we ourselves groan within ourselves,**”

**Peacemakers see the suffering and hear the groaning.**

### Romans 8

<sup>23</sup> . . . **waiting eagerly** for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body. <sup>24</sup> For in **hope** we have been saved, but **hope** that is seen is not **hope**; for why does one also **hope** for what he sees? <sup>25</sup> But if we **hope** for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait **eagerly for it.**”

**Peacemakers offer hope and call for patience and perseverance in waiting for it.**

## 4. Conflict is an invitation to respond with wisdom and grace.

### 1 Corinthians 13

“<sup>4</sup> Love is patient, love is kind, and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, <sup>5</sup> does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, <sup>6</sup> does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; <sup>7</sup> bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.”

### James 3

“<sup>13</sup> Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show by his good behavior his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom. <sup>14</sup> But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth. <sup>15</sup> This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic. <sup>16</sup> For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing. <sup>17</sup> But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy. <sup>18</sup> **And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.**”

## What can I do?

- ✓ Commit yourself to being a peacemaker.
- ✓ Study to see the value in conflict.
- ✓ Let social conflict reveal your inner conflicts.
- ✓ Empathize with both the victims and with the troubled victimizers.
- ✓ Renew your confidence in the Gospel of grace in the Cross of Christ.