

*The Contest For
Superiority
Promotes Strife*

The Word and Prayer

Compiled By Dr. Harold Bollinger

Strife

Strife defined. . Contention in anger or enmity; contest; struggle for victory; quarrel or war

Unlearned questions gender strife.

2 Timothy 2:23-25

But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes.

And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth.

As a teacher, Timothy helped those who were confused about the truth. Paul's advice to Timothy, and to all who teach God's truth, is to be kind and gentle, patiently and courteously explaining the truth. Good teaching never promotes quarrels or foolish arguments.

Whether you are teaching Sunday school, leading a Bible study, or preaching in church, remember to listen to people's questions and treat them respectfully, while avoiding foolish debates. If you do this, those who oppose you will be more willing to hear what you have to say and perhaps turn from their error.

Hatred stirs up strifes.

Proverbs 10:12

Hatred stirreth up strifes: but love covereth all sins.

Godly people are those who love the Lord and are seeking to follow him (Psalm 4:3). As Christians, we have been given the power of the Holy Spirit to help us live godly lives (2 Peter 1:3).

A froward man stirs up strife.

Proverbs 16:28

A froward man soweth strife: and a whisperer separateth chief friends.

When we live by God's Word, he washes away the deadly effects of sin (see Titus 3:4-8), and the hope of eternal life with him gives us a joyful perspective on our present life. The fountain of youth was only a dream, but the life-giving fountain is reality. The choice is yours. You can be enlightened by God's wisdom, or you can be dragged down by the weight of your own foolishness.

Envy and strife brings confusion.

James 3:14-16

But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, and devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work.

Bitter jealousy and selfish ambition are inspired by the devil. It is easy for us to be drawn into wrong desires by the pressures of society and sometimes even by well-meaning Christians. By listening to the advice: "Assert yourself," "Go for it," "Set high goals," we can be drawn into greed and destructive competitiveness. Seeking God's wisdom delivers us from the need to compare ourselves to others and to want what they have.

Strife is a work of the flesh.

Galatians 5:19-21

Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies.

Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

When we have evil desires, we can't ignore them. In order for us to follow the Holy Spirit's guidance, we must deal with them decisively (crucify them these desires include obvious sins, such as sexual immorality and demonic activities. They also include less obvious sins, such as hostility, jealousy, and selfish ambition.

Those who ignore such sins or refuse to deal with them reveal that they have not received the gift of the Spirit that leads to a transformed life.

An angry man stirs up strife.

Proverbs 29:22

An angry man stirreth up strife, and a furious man aboundeth in transgression.

Where there is ignorance or rejection of God, crime and sin run rampant. Public morality depends on the knowledge of God, but it also depends on keeping God's laws. In order for nations and individuals to function well, people must know God's ways and keep his rules. Having God's Word means little if we are not obeying it.

It is an honour to cease from strife.

Proverbs 20:3

It is an honour for a man to cease from strife: but every fool will be meddling.

A person who is truly confident of his or her strength does not need to parade it. A truly brave person does not look for chances to prove it. A resourceful person can find a way out of a fight and avoid retaliating. Foolish people find it impossible to avoid strife. Men and women of character can. What kind of person are you?

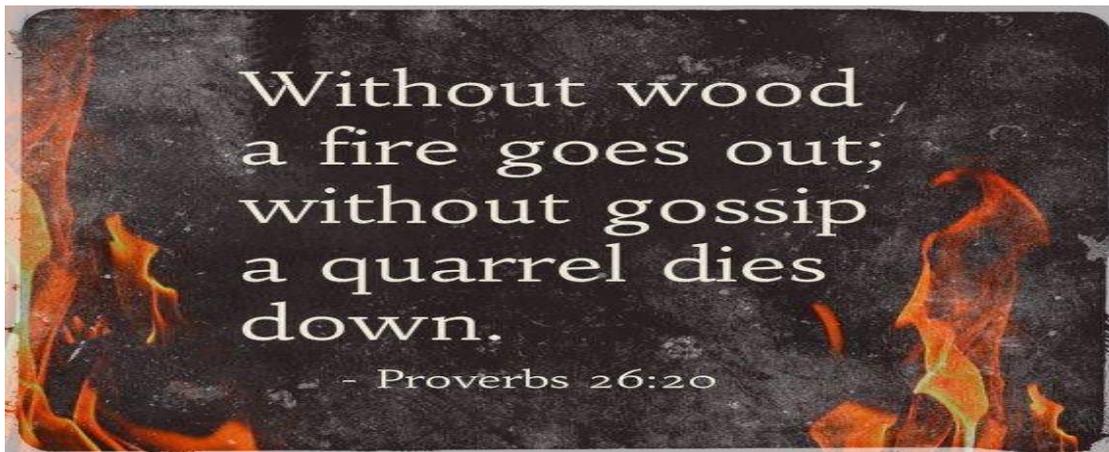
Matthew 18:15-17

Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.

But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.

And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican.

These are Jesus' guidelines for dealing with those who sin against us. They were meant for (1) Christians, not unbelievers, (2) sins committed against *you* and not others, and (3) conflict resolution in the context of the church, not the community at large. Jesus' words are not a license for a frontal attack on every person who hurts or slights us. They are not a license to start a destructive gossip campaign or to call for a church trial. They are designed to reconcile those who disagree so that all Christians can live in harmony.



Without gossip strife, strife will cease.

Proverbs 26:20

Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out: so where [there is] no talebearer, the strife ceaseth.

Talking about every little irritation and piece of gossip only keeps the fires of anger going. Refusing to discuss those cuts the fuel line and makes the fires die out. Does someone continually irritate you? Decide not to complain about the person, and see if your irritation dies from lack of fuel.

Seven things the Lord hates

Proverbs 6:16-19

These six things doth the Lord hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him:

A proud look
A lying tongue, and
Hands that shed innocent blood,
A heart that deviseth wicked imaginations,
Feet that be swift in running to mischief,
A false witness that speaketh lies, and
He that soweth discord among brethren.

Be gentle, speaking evil of no man.

Titus 3:1-3

Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work, [2] To speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, shewing all meekness unto all men. [3] For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another.

As Christians, our first allegiance is to Jesus as Lord, but we must obey our government and its leaders as well. Christians are not above the law. Obeying the civil law is only the beginning of our Christian responsibility; we must do what we can to be good citizens. (See Acts 5:29 and Romans 13:1ff for more on the Christian's attitude toward government.)

How does one "show true humility"? Humility is a very elusive character trait, yet the Bible regards it as a highly important quality. Jesus referred to himself as "humble and gentle at heart" (Matthew 11:29). In Romans 12:3, Paul wrote the clearest definition of humility apart from Jesus' own example: "Don't think you are better than you really are. Be honest in your reevaluation of yourselves, measuring yourselves by the faith God has given us."

Humility, then, boils down to having an honest estimate of ourselves before God. We show false humility when we project negative worth on our abilities and efforts. We show pride when we inflate the value of our efforts or look down on others. True humility seeks to view our character and accomplishments honestly. Recognizing that we have succeeded in an effort need not be pride.

Following a life of pleasure and giving in to every sensual desire leads to slavery. Many think freedom consists of doing anything they want. But this path leads to a slavish addiction to sensual gratification. A person is no longer free but is a slave to what his or her body dictates (2 Peter 2:19). Christ frees us from the desires and control of sin. Have you been released?

The proud stirreth up strife.

Proverbs 28:25

He that is of a proud heart stirreth up strife: but he that putteth his trust in the LORD shall be made fat.

A sinner's conscience will drive him into either guilt, resulting in repentance, or to death itself because of a refusal to repent. It is no act of kindness to try to make him feel better; the more guilt he feels, the more likely he is to turn to God and repent. If we interfere with the natural consequences of his act, we may make it easier for him to continue in sin.

A divided kingdom cannot stand.

Mark 3:24

And if a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand.

These teachers of the law brought a nonsensical accusation against Jesus. They tried to say that Jesus was driving out demons by the power of the prince of demons—in other words, that Jesus' power came from Satan, not God. They wanted the people to believe that Jesus himself was possessed (3:30). This would disprove his claim as the Messiah and place him instead in league with the devil.

The more effective you are in your Christian life, the more extreme will be the attacks of the enemy. Even the most ridiculous accusation will convince some when it's cleverly packaged to sound sincere and concerned. Stand firm for the truth, even when clever attacks come.

Leave off contention.

Proverbs 17:14

The beginning of strife [is as] when one letteth out water: therefore leave off contention, before it be meddled with.

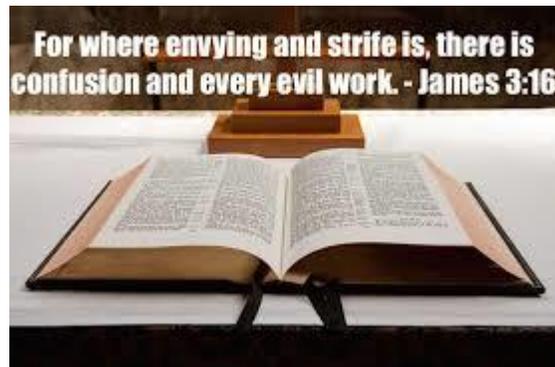
Try never to bring anything into an argument that is unrelated to the topic being discussed. As we grow to be like Christ, we will acquire God's ability to forget the confessed sins of the past.

Wars and fighting come from the lust in your members.

James 4:1

From whence [come] wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?

Quarrels and fights among believers are always harmful. James explains that these conflicts result from evil desires battling within us: We want more possessions, more money, higher status, more recognition. When we don't get what we want, we fight in order to have it. Instead of aggressively grabbing what we want, we should submit ourselves to God, ask God to help us get rid of our selfish desires, and trust him to give us what we really need.



Prayer of deliverance:

Through heaven's door, The Blood of Jesus, I repent of the sin of strife. I denounce and cast out this evil spirit that is influencing my life and disturbing my peace of mind.

In the authority of the name of Jesus Christ. I command this spirit to leave and be cast into utter darkness never to return again.

Right now, I receive my deliverance from this spirit and receive God's peace. I pray in the mighty name of Jesus Christ, amen.

References:

Holy Bible: King James Translation

New American Standard Bible

Additional comments and charts are taken from: *Life Application Study Bible*. Illinois: Tyndale House 2007. Print

