**Introduction**

All churches will experience conflict at some time.
The real test is how we deal with it.
Will we resolve our conflicts in a way that honors Christ?

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**I. We are a new community in Christ. Verses 1-7**

This letter is written to:
- Philemon – our dear friend and fellow worker
- Apphia – our sister, Philemon’s wife
- Achippus – fellow soldier and pastor of the church
- The church at Colosse

When we deal with conflict, we pray for grace and peace. We remember God is our father and Jesus is Lord of his church.

We are a family.

Whose rules are you living by?

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“Are you living in your “father’s house” or your “Father’s house”?“
Peter Scazzaro

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Sometimes we need to learn new ways of communicating, listening and resolving conflict.
II. We are called to forgive.
Verses 8 – 21

Forgiveness is to be freely given.
• I appeal to you. Paul doesn’t order him. Verses 8 – 9
• I appeal to you for my son, Onesimus. There is a pun on his name which means useful.
• I don’t want to do anything without your consent. Verse 14

• Think about what God has done. Verses 15-16
• Paul doesn’t even state what he wants Philemon to do. His goal is reconciliation, but he hints at emancipation. He wants it to be Philemon’s choice.

Forgiveness is costly.
Paul, in a Christ-like act, intercedes between a disobedient slave and his master and says, “Charge it to me.” Verse 18
It is what Christ did for us when he died on the cross to pay the penalty we deserved.
It is costly to forgive. Someone needs to admit the wrong, forgive the hurt and bear the cost.

III. We are called to be peacemakers.
Verses 22-25

Fifty years later, Ignatius, one of the great Christian martyrs, wrote a letter to the church at Ephesus. He addressed the letter to Onesimus, the bishop of Ephesus.
The goal of reconciliation is to restore relationships.

“Getting relationships straight is just as important as getting doctrine straight.”
David Garland

More churches split over relationships than over doctrine. Both are important for a healthy church.
Conclusion

The Peacemaker’s Pledge

As people reconciled to God by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we believe that we are called to respond to conflict in a way that is remarkably different from the way the world deals with conflict (Matt. 5:9; Luke 6:27-36; Gal. 5:19-26). We also believe that conflict provides opportunities to glorify God, serve other people, and grow to be like Christ (Rom. 8:28-29; 1 Cor. 10:31-11:1; James 1:2-4). Therefore, in response to God’s love and in reliance on his grace, we commit ourselves to respond to conflict according to the following principles:

Glorify God – Instead of focusing on our own desires or dwelling on what others may do, we will rejoice in the Lord and bring him praise by depending on his forgiveness, wisdom, power, and love, as we seek to faithfully obey his commands and maintain a loving, merciful, and forgiving attitude (Ps. 37:1-6; Mark 11:25; John 14:15; Rom. 12:17-21; 1 Cor. 10:31; Phil. 4:2-9; Col. 3:1-4; James 3:17-18; 4:1-3; 1 Peter 2:12).

Get the Log out of Your Own Eye –

Instead of blaming others for a conflict or resisting correction, we will trust in God’s mercy and take responsibility for our own contribution to conflicts – confessing our sins to those we have wronged, asking God to help us change any attitudes and habits that lead to conflict, and seeking to repair any harm we have caused (Prov. 28:13; Matt. 7:3-5; Luke 19:8; Col. 3:5-14; 1 John 1:8-9).

Gently Restore – Instead of pretending that conflict doesn’t exist or talking about others behind their backs, we will overlook minor offenses or we will talk personally and graciously with those whose offenses seem too serious to overlook, seeking to restore them rather than condemn them. When a conflict with a Christian brother or sister cannot be resolved in private, we will ask others in the body of Christ to help us settle the matter in a biblical manner (Prov. 19:11; Matt. 18:15-20; 1 Cor. 6:1-8; Gal. 6:1-2; Eph. 4:29; 2 Tim. 2:24-26; James 5:9).

Go and Be Reconciled – Instead of accepting premature compromise or allowing relationships to wither, we will actively pursue genuine peace and reconciliation – forgiving others as God, for Christ’s sake, has forgiven us, and seeking just and mutually beneficial solutions to our differences (Matt. 5:23-24; 6:12; 7:12; Eph. 4:1-3, 32; Phil. 2:3-4).

By God’s grace, we will apply these principles as a matter of stewardship, realizing that conflict is an assignment, not an accident. We will remember that success in God’s eyes is not a matter of specific results, but of faithful, dependent obedience. And we will pray that our service as peacemakers will bring praise to our Lord and lead others to know His infinite love (Matt. 25:14-21; John 13:34-35; Rom. 12:18; 1 Peter 2:19; 4:19).