

The way to get strife out of our lives and our homes

First, let's not allow a discussion on strife or our reading of God's words on this subject, to condemn us, just because we have sometimes got into contention with other people. If we've received God's forgiveness and are now living in the Spirit, that is, in Christ, there is to us now no condemnation (Rom 8:1). For the Bible is to us not law, which condemns (2 Cor 3:9) but truth and grace which will make us free from strife (John 8:32 and Gal 5:18). Freedom from strife will come from the Bible.

Our goal therefore is not to try and obey God's written words through our own will power, God's freedom doesn't come that way. But rather to let God, by His Spirit, speak to us through even one of the Bible verses below and then believe with our hearts what we hear. Then the life of God that's in those words will begin to free us from strife, change our nature, and further conform us to the nature of Jesus Christ.

What is strife or contention? The Bible uses the words interchangeably:

Strife Bitter sometimes violent conflict or dissent, fighting, quarreling, hostility, animosity between people.

Contention To contest, to argue, to stir up, to provoke to anger, to clash, or to quarrel or fight – friction between people.

What does strife lead to?

James 3:16 **For where there is envying and strife, there is confusion and every evil work.** (Strife between people leads to every work of evil: Like, offense, unforgiveness, hatred, lying gossip, revenge, self-gratification, and other sins).

Just how bad is strife ?

Gal. 5:19-21 **Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: adultery ...idolatry, witchcraft...strife...murders, drunkenness...they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.**

Again, remember God's object here is not condemnation but rather liberation – **For God did not send His son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved** (delivered, preserved, kept safe, healed made whole) John 3:17. That would include being delivered from strife. Notice the horrendous company strife keeps in the above verses. Strife is a work of our flesh or human nature, not a work of our new born again spiritual nature. If as a Christian I live in the flesh I will do the works of the flesh, including contending with people. But if I submit my will to the Holy Spirit continually, then I'm no longer living in the flesh.

Rom 8:9 **But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.** (This is written to Christians – so I can be born again but if I am not currently submitted to the leading of God's Spirit, then right now, I don't belong to Christ.)

To what does God liken strife and contention?

Pro 26:21 **As...wood is to fire; so is a contentious man to kindle strife.** (Strife is a raging fire that is kept burning by friction between people).

Pro 27:15-16 **A continual dripping on a rainy day and a contentious woman are alike. Restraining her is like restraining the wind or grasping oil with the hand.** (Contention is a constant and unstoppable aggravation).

What are some things that cause strife ?

- Anger** Pro 29:22 **An angry man stirs up strife, ...**
Eccl 7:9 **Be not quick in your spirit to become angry, for anger lodges in the bosom of fools.** ESV
- Pride** Pro 28:25 **A proud (independent from God) man stirs up strife ...**
Pro 13:10 **Contention comes only by pride ...**
- Scoffing** Pro 22:10 **Drive out the scoffer (remove the person who scoffs at, ridicules and makes light of spiritual truths) and contention will go out, Even strife and disrespect will cease.**
- Hatred** Pro 10:12 **Hatred stirs up strife, But love covers all sins.**
- Dishonesty and Gossip** Pro 16:28 **A dishonest man spreads strife and a gossip separates close friends.** ESV
- Meddling** Pro 26:17 **He that passes by and meddles with strife not belonging to him, is like one that takes a dog by the ears.**

How does strife between two people begin?

Proverbs 17:14 **The beginning of strife is when one lets out water (speaks anger provoking words) therefore leave off contention, before it be meddled with (by the devil fueling your thoughts and theirs).**

James 3:6 **The tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue...defiles the whole body, and...it is set on fire by hell.**

Oh what damage a few ill chosen flaming words can do. The tongue can be a fire, setting others on fire while it itself is set on fire by hell. That's why the thoughts of the wicked one are called fiery darts, they will inflame us and then if we give our voice to those thoughts they will inflame others. Oh the blessings of letting God master our tongues and alerting us as to where and from whom the contentious thoughts come.

2 Cor 2:11 **Lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant (or we shouldn't be) of his devices (also translated as "thoughts").**

What does my getting into repeated strife with others say about me?

I'm a fool: Pro 18:6 **A fool's lips enter into contention...**

I love to sin: Pro 17:19 **He who loves transgression (sin) loves strife: ...**

I'm a carnal Christian 1 Cor. 3:3 **For you are still carnal: for where there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are you not carnal, and behaving as mere (unsaved) men?**

To be carnal is to live under the direction of our human nature, primarily our brain, and not under the direction of God's Spirit. It is living as if I were still unconverted.

How does strife end?

Remember that we are not trying to conform ourselves to, or attain to, these words of God. If we are in the Spirit and not carnal, God's words are no longer law but they are spirit and they are life. So the desire of our hearts should be that God, by His Spirit, speak to us through one or more of these scriptures. When this happens and we open the door of our hearts to His words, by believing them, the words will literally enter into us and will begin to conform us to themselves – that is, to Christ Himself.

Pro 20:3 **It is an honor for a man to cease from strife:** (it's a work of the flesh:)

Gal. 5:19-21 **Now the works of the flesh...which are these...strife...** But if you:

Gal 5:16 **Walk and live habitually in the Holy Spirit, responsive to and controlled and guided by the Spirit: then you will certainly not gratify the cravings and desires of the flesh, of human nature without God (including contention and strife).** AMP

Pro 15:18 **... He that is slow to anger calms strife.**

Pro 26:20 **Where there is no wood the fire goes out; And where there is no gossip (no bringing up of others' past wrongs), strife ceases.**

2 Tim 2:23 **Avoid foolish and ignorant questions, knowing they generate strife.**

Psa 17:3 **...I have purposed (in my heart) that my mouth shall not transgress.**

As God gets a hold of my heart through one or more of these words, I will find that, by Him, my inner spiritual strength is increasing and that He now leads me to:

Deliberately Pause before I speak or reply – giving God's Spirit in me time, through the remembrance of and faith in His words, to quench that flaming retaliatory thought that first came into my mind – probably from Satan. Enabling me to keep a bridle over my mouth and to believe the truth that God keeps watch over the door of my lips.

Psa 141:3 **Set a guard O Lord over my mouth Keep watch over the door of my lips.**

Psa 39:1 **I will restrain my mouth with a bridle while the wicked are before me.**

Eph 6:16 **...You will need faith (in God and His words) as your shield to stop the fiery darts (his strife filled thoughts) aimed at you by Satan.** NLT

Walk away before an inflammatory situation has time to ignite. And go immediately somewhere quiet and ponder the situation, allowing God to have access to my heart and mind with His thoughts and words of peace and wisdom:

Phil 4:8 **Whatever things are true, honest, righteous, pure, lovely, and of good report, (all referring to God's words) if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy — meditate (think) on these things.**

Can two Spirit filled Christians disagree without getting into strife? Yes, but let each separately seek God with submissive neutrality. Each will then hear the same voice.

1 Cor 1:13 **Is Christ divided?** How then can two who are yielded to Him be divided?

Choose not to believe grievous words that may have been spoken to me – either by someone or some spirit – for often a person doesn't mean what they say in a heated moment (they are likely under the influence of a spirit) and thoughts that come from wicked spirits are lies. The sooner I start learning how to bring thoughts into captivity to the obedience of Christ (God's living word in my heart) the better. (2 Cor. 10:4-5)

Psalms 133:1 **Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!**

Forgive that other person even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven me (Eph.4:32). Not trying to forgive based on feelings but understanding that Jesus Christ bore that person's sin on the Cross. Forgiving by simple faith in God's words on forgiveness in me, in the name and nature of Christ. What freedom and joy there is in forgiveness.

Col 3:13 **Bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.**

Seek forgiveness: When I get quiet with God He may gently reveal to me where I have missed it and contributed to the strife or even been primarily responsible for it. What a blessing to then have the humility of Christ to overcome ugly pride and be able to say to someone; "I'm sorry, please forgive me" and to really mean it.

Matt 5:23-24 **if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother...**

Pray: the proof that I have, in my heart, truly forgiven someone, who I think wronged me, is whether I can now freely pray for them. For they may still be held captive by the thoughts of the enemy: I can pray a believing prayer that God would grant them repentance (2 Tim. 2:25). Since sin has separated them from God, the Holy Spirit may lead me to pray a believing prayer that they be reconciled to God (1 John 5:16).

2 Tim. 2:24 **The servant of the Lord must not strive (quarrel, be contentious)...**

Phil 4:2 **I implore ----- and I implore ----- to be of the same mind in the Lord.**