

## ARGUING/CONTENTION

(See also Pride, Selfishness, Anger, Gossip, Brawling Woman,  
Bitterness, Unkind Speech)

### **General information and commandments about this sin:**

Pr. 15:18 An angry man stirs up strife. Pr. 29:22 An angry man leads to strife.

*Remove an angry child from a group to end strife.*

Pr. 3:30 Do not strive without a cause.

*Teach the child to ask himself, "Is there really an issue worth arguing over?"*

Pr. 17:14 Stop arguing before contention starts.

*Help the child stop before quarrels begin.*

*Remove the child who insists on arguing.*

*Enforce a stop to argumentative conversations.*

Pr. 18:6 Is a fool, invites a beating.

Pr. 20:3 Any fool can start a quarrel.

*This is a good verse to post on a wall in your home.*

*Point out that it takes strength to abstain from a quarrel, more strength than it takes to participate.*

*Commend the child who refrains from involving himself in a potential quarrel.*

Pr. 21:9 Is better to live in the corner of a housetop than with a contentious woman.

*Read a commentary on this verse. What does it mean? How can a child's contentious spirit drive others away from him?*

Pr. 21:19 Better to live in the wilderness than with a contentious woman.

*Read stories of survival and hardship in deserts and wildernesses. How can a quarrelsome person drive his associates to prefer the wilderness to his company?*

*Be especially diligent to model a quiet spirit before daughters and train them to lovers of peace rather than quarrelsome and petty.*

Rom. 13:13 Should not walk in strife.

Pr. 28:25 Is proud. Pr. 13:10 Comes only from pride.

*Deal with the pride in the child's heart.*

Js. 3:16 Strife leads to confusion and evil.

Js. 4:1-2 Comes from lust.

*Deal with selfishness in the child's heart.*

*Discuss the root cause of the child's quarrelsome spirit. What is he seeking that he does not have? What motivates him to argue?*

Pr. 10:12 Strife stirred up by hatred.

*Deal with the problem of hatred. Train the child to love others as Christ loves him and has commanded him to love.*

2 Tim. 2:23 Avoid foolish, ignorant disputes which lead to strife.

*Teach to walk away from arguments, avoid disputes, recognize foolish disputes.*

*Do not allow your child to argue with you.*

Pr. 16:28 Froward man sows strife.

*Give the child a package of bean seeds. Have him plant some in a pot. Then show him a picture of tomatoes and tell him you want tomatoes to grow from his seeds. How does he respond? Then give him a package of flower seeds that you have labeled "strife." Ask him to plant them and point to the picture on another package of vegetable seeds labeled "peace." Tell him that you want this kind of plant to grow from his seeds. Will it work?*

2 Tim. 2:24 Must not quarrel, be gentle to all.

*Lead the child in demonstrating some act of kindness and gentleness toward those he is seeking to engage in argument.*

Rom. 12:18 Live peaceably.

*Do not allow quarrelling. Separate those involved.*

Pr. 25:24 Is not desirable.

Col. 3:12-13 Should be longsuffering and forgiving.

*Help the child learn to forbear. Take him aside during an argument and talk to him. Pray with him. Send him back with instructions to be patient and forbearing in the situation.*

*When he is tempted to argue, have him recite verses that he has memorized related to arguing and peacemaking. (See end of this chapter.)*

Pr. 18:18 Cast lots to put an end to arguing.

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*Teach children to do this to settle arguments over disputed items or privileges (i.e. toss coin, draw straws, etc.). Both parties must agree to peacefully honor the results.*

Eph. 4:26 Don't let the sun go down with you still angry.

*Train children, by words and actions, and by your own example, to resolve arguments and come to peace, to forgive and to cease from anger before going to bed.*

*Do not let a child go to bed without resolving any disagreements you and he may have.*

*Post this verse in your house and refer to it often.*

### ***What happens, or should happen, to the contentious person:***

Rom. 1:28+ Given over to a debased mind.

Gal. 5:15 Will be consumed by one another.

*Must put a stop to habitual quarreling, or household peace will be destroyed.*

Mk. 3:25 A house divided cannot stand.

*Build a house out of Legos, cardboard, wood, etc. Break it in half. Can it still stand? Can it offer the same protection?*

*Study the civil wars that have occurred in different countries. What was the effect on each country and its people?*

Pr. 21:19 Should be avoided. Titus 3:9 Avoid.

*Isolate the child when he insists on being argumentative.*

*Do not allow friendships with contentious children.*

Rom. 14:19 Should follow peace and that which edifies.

*Help the child to think of words and actions that will build up instead of destroying. Then help him to carry these actions out.*

*Teach the child to speak kindly and respectfully when an issue arises that he feels he must disagree with.*

Pr. 22:10 Cast out.

*Remove the contentious child from a group. Isolate, or have him work alongside a parent.*

Pr. 26:20-21 Will experience strife.

*Remove the contentious child. Do not allow him to play or socialize with others.*

*Do not tolerate gossip. Discipline the talebearer.*

*Do not allow a child to bring his grievances to you before he has properly appealed to the other people involved. Train the child to talk first to the person with whom he disagrees. If the other person does not respond to his appeals, then he should gently appeal next to you. Constantly reporting to parents disagreements and the wrongdoings of others, without attempting to work things out first, leads to household strife.*

Matt. 5:25 Delivered to a judge.

*Assure the children that if they do not settle a disagreement between themselves in a quick and godly way, that you will step in and train them in the process.*

Gal. 5:19-21 Won't inherit kingdom of God.

*Deny deposit into long-term savings.*

*Levy a fine from the child's long-term savings.*

*Explain that the child's argumentative spirit can injure his future relationships with you and his siblings. If he doesn't learn how to get along with family members now, he will be less likely to be friends with family members later.*

**What should the contentious person do?**

Matt. 5:39-41 Don't insist on rights.

*What rights is the child demanding? Discuss this with him. What rights do any of us really have?*

Matt. 18:15-17 Talk alone to one who offended you. Then take two or three witnesses, then go to the church authorities.

*Teach the child to carefully follow this sequence when resolving differences. He should talk to the person who offended him first before he involves anyone else in the problem.*

*Study **The Brother-Offended Checklist** (produced by Doorposts) with your family, and walk your children through the steps outlined when they have a disagreement with someone.*

Rom. 15:5-6 Should pray for God's grace to live in harmony with others..

*Diligently pray for peace amongst family members, church family, and friends.*

*Pray as family for peace in your household.*

*Stop and pray together when arguments arise.*

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### **To what is the sin of contention likened?**

Pr. 26:21 Contentious man is like coals to coals and wood to fire.

*Observe a fire as it burns. What happens if no fuel is added to it? What happens to a fire that has almost died when wood is added to it?*

*Discuss the following quote with your child: "Some persons make it their occupation to sit by the fire, to feed and fan the flame, lest it be extinguished...A Christian should bring water, not fuel, to the fire" (A Commentary on Proverbs, Charles Bridges).*

Pr. 17:14 Releasing water.

*When our children were young, we had a "mud pit" in the back yard (an unplanted section of flower garden that the kids quickly appropriated) that very graphically helped illustrate this principle. The boys would build a network of rivers and dams, and then flood the whole complex with the hose. Once one dam started to give way, there was little hope of stopping the force of the water from destroying the whole system.*

*Build a city in the sand or dirt, construct a dam, and then watch what happens if water is allowed to escape through even a small breach.*

*It is easier to not allow any breach to form in a dam than it is to try to repair a breach once it is there. Protect the peace of your home by not allowing breaches of fellowship to exist.*

Pr. 18:19 Contentions are like the bars of a city, and an offended brother is harder to win than a strong city.

*Talk about these verses when reading Medieval history. Imagine participating in a siege against one of the fortified castles of that day – the battering rams, catapults, boiling tar, etc. – all the weapons and armor that the knights employed in an attempt to gain the advantage over those inside the castle walls. This verse reminds us that it is just as hard to win back the heart of an offended brother. It is much better to not offend our brothers to start with than it is to try to repair the relationship after the offense has occurred.*

*Pray with the child when he needs to resolve a disagreement with someone. Pray for both parties to be humble and ready to repent and forgive.*

Pr. 19:13 Contentious wife is like continual dripping.

*We used to have a very annoying drip over our garage side door. Every time I went through that door on a rainy day that drip dripped right down the back of my neck! And when it couldn't find a neck to drip on, it dripped onto the ground in front of the door, which made an annoying mess there, too! A contentious person can be like that annoying drip.*

*Leave a faucet dripping for awhile. How does it affect those who hear it? How does it affect the surface that it strikes?*

*A drippy faucet is also a good illustration of this principle, especially if the drip falls into a basin of water or onto a metal surface so that it makes plenty of noise. That little drip can become very irritating to the ears, and it is also wasting an amazing amount of water over a period of time. A constant drip also leaves its permanent mark in the sink over a long span of time.*

Pr. 25:24 It is better to live on a housetop than with a contentious wife.

*Life on a rooftop would be pretty uncomfortable and inconvenient. What would drive a husband to choose this over the comfort of his home?*

Pr. 27:15-16 Like a continuous dripping on a rainy day. Restraining a contentious woman is like trying to restrain the wind or grasping oil.

*If the house leaks so that the rain gets into the house, the husband cannot escape, whether he is inside or outside. The rain will find him either way. A contentious wife becomes a curse and annoyance rather than a haven and helpmeet as she should be.*

*Try to restrain the wind or to hold oil in your hands. Have a relay. Start with 1/2 cup of oil in your cupped hands, pass it on to the next family member, have him pass it on, and so forth. How much oil is left when you are done? (Do this outside.)*

Pr. 26:17 Meddling with strife that doesn't involve us is like taking a dog by the ears.

*What will likely happen to the person who pulls a dog's ears?*

*Talk about this verse when a young child is too rough with an animal and the animal snarls or nips in his defense.*

Pr. 30:33 Like churning milk makes butter, like wringing the nose brings blood.

*The inevitable result of anger and quarrelling is strife.*

*Pour cream into a jar, put on the lid and shake it vigorously for a few minutes. What happens?*

**Stories that illustrate the consequences of contention and arguing:**

Joseph and his brothers, Gen. 37:3-5, 18-27, 45:24 Contention rooted in jealousy. Led to conspiracy, lying, and kidnapping.

*Joseph was still willing to forgive, recognizing God's hand in his life. Joseph's life was blessed with prosperity and rulership; his brothers' lives were haunted with guilt.*

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Disciples, Mk. 9:34 and Lk. 22:24 Pride, striving without a cause. Led to reproof.

Ephraimites, Jg. 12:1-6 Contention rooted in pride. Led to defeat.

*Compare Jephthah's response to the Ephraimites, and its results, with Gideon's soft answer in Jg. 8:1-3.*

Paul and Barnabas, Acts 15:39 Disagreement over whether to take Mark with them or not. Separated.

Jephthah's brothers, Jg. 11:1-11 Strife originating from hatred and pride. Jephthah ended up head and captain over his brothers.

David's brother, Eliab 1 Sam. 17:28-29 Accused David of pride and scheming. David did not continue the argument, but went on to kill Goliath and be exalted in the kingdom.

Rehoboam, 2 Chr. 10:14-16 Provoked people to rebellion. Strife without a cause.

Amaziah, 2 Chr. 25:17-24 Strife out of pride, led to defeat and captivity.

Absalom, 2 Sam. 13:22 Contention from hatred and desire for revenge. Led to murder of Amnon.

Jacob and Esau, Gen. 27:41-45, 33:4-11 Hatred and desire for revenge. Originated from pride and indifference. Esau forgave.

### ***The blessings of a peaceable spirit:***

Rom. 15:6 Will glorify God (which is our purpose in life).

Pr. 15:1 A soft answer turns away wrath.

*Point out to the child when this happens.*

*Rehearse with the child appropriate and godly ways to respond to wrongs committed against him. What can he say and do when someone hurts him? Insults him? Disagrees with him?*

*Send the child back into an argument with a soft answer, and see what happens!*

Ps. 133 Like ointment on Aaron's head, and the dew on Mt. Hermon.

*Give special perfume, bath oil, skin lotion, etc.*

*Notice how refreshing and beautiful the dew is on an early, sunny morning. How is this like a peaceful household?*

2 Cor. 13:11 God of peace will be with you.

*Help child notice the sense of peace in his soul when he is willing to be peaceful with his brothers.*

*Take the child out for a special outing or date, or for a walk with you.*

Pr. 12:20 Joy!

*Work as an entire family on living peacefully with each other. Have a special family feast, party, or outing to celebrate your progress.*

Pr. 17:1 Better to have a dry morsel and quietness, than a house full of sacrifice with strife.

*Serve a meal of dry bread after an especially contentious day. (But don't serve it with a contentious and vindictive spirit!)*

Pr. 20:3 It is an honor to cease from strife.

*Honor the peacemaker.*

*Make public mention of his peacemaking.*

*Have a special family feast in honor of peacemakers in your household.*

Ec. 4:6 Better to have one hand full, than to have strife with both hands full.

*Take away the object of contention (i.e., if children are fighting over toys and cannot come to an agreement, take away the toys they are fighting over. Do not allow them to play with them).*

Matt. 5:9 Called a child of God.

Heb. 12:14 Will see the Lord.

*Enjoy a special outing or meal out with the child.*

*Give him a gift of your time. Let him choose what he would like to do with you.*

1 Pet. 3:10-11 Will love life and see good days.

*Grant a special day out (the child chooses the location and activities).*

*Have a special day of honor at home.*

*Have a special friend over for the day.*

Pr. 15:18 Being slow to anger appeases strife.

*Train the child to pray when provoked, and to restrain himself, rather than reacting impulsively (and sinfully).*



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### **Stories illustrating the blessings of peacemaking:**

Abraham with Lot, Gen. 13:5-9 Lived peaceably, treated Lot better than himself, was content with "one hand full" with peace. Was blessed with prosperity.

Abimelech, Gen. 21:22-32 Made a covenant with Abraham following strife over a well.

Isaac's herdsmen, Gen. 26:20-22 Dug new wells when others were stolen.

Abigail, 1 Sam. 25:23-35 Gave a soft answer which turned away David's anger. Wanted to make peace. Led to her honor in marriage to David.

### **Verses to memorize:**

Ps. 34:14 "Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it."

Ps. 133:1 "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!"

Pr. 20:3 "It is an honour for a man to cease from strife: but every fool will be meddling."

Mk. 9:50b "...and have peace one with another."

Rom. 12:18 "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men."

Rom. 14:19 "Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another" (NKJV).

2 Tim. 2:24a "And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all..." (NKJV).

1 Th. 5:13b "And be at peace among yourselves."

Js. 3:17 "But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy."

Heb. 12:14 "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord."

Heb. 13:1 "Let brotherly love continue."

Rom. 12:21 "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."

Gal. 5:15 "But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another!" (NKJV).

Phil. 2:2-3 "Fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself" (NKJV).

1 Pet. 3:8 “Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous.”

Phil. 2:14-15 “Do all things without murmurings and disputings: that ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world.”

Js. 4:1-2 “Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask” (NKJV).

Pr. 13:10 “Only by pride cometh contention: but with the well advised is wisdom.”

Pr. 15:18 “A wrathful man stirs up strife, but he who is slow to anger allays contention” (NKJV).