



# Sermon Notes

**Topic:** This Is Living: Conflict in Christ

**Preacher:** Ps Sam Toms

**Bible Passage:** Philippians 4:2–5

**Date:** Sunday 28th September 2025

## Study Guide Overview

Paul writes into a very real, very human situation: conflict between two women in the Philippian church—Euodia and Syntyche. He doesn't ignore it, suppress it, or dismiss it as unspiritual. Instead, he names it publicly, calls the church to help, and reminds them of their shared mission in Christ.

Conflict, Paul shows us, is inevitable in life—even among faithful believers. But how we handle it matters deeply to God. We can either let conflict tear at unity, or we can let the Spirit guide us into gentleness, joy, and Christlikeness.

Through the lens of the “Five Animals of Conflict” we see that people naturally default to different styles:

- **Bull (My Way)** – forceful, decisive, but can harm relationships.
- **Koala (Your Way)** – peace-keeping, kind, but risks burying truth.
- **Turtle (No Way)** – avoids conflict, creating space, but leaves wounds unhealed.
- **Fox (Half Way)** – compromising, practical, but sometimes superficial.
- **Owl (Our Way)** – collaborative, wise, but can be slow and demanding.

No single style is always right; each has strengths and weaknesses. The call is not to stick with our natural response but to prayerfully discern which approach best honours God, protects unity, and builds the church.

Ultimately, Paul roots the church's handling of conflict in **rejoicing, gentleness, and Christ's nearness**. We don't aim to “win” arguments but to reveal Jesus in how we disagree. As Micah 6:8 reminds us: “*To act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God.*”

**Takeaway:** *Conflict is normal, but how we respond can either reflect sin or showcase Christ. God calls us to handle disagreements with gentleness, joy, and Spirit-led wisdom—never letting sin against us produce sin in us.*



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## Small Group Questions/Discussions

### Theme: Handling Conflict in a God-Honouring Way

#### 1. Starting Warm-Up

- Share a time when conflict made you stronger in a relationship (family, workplace, or church).
- Why do you think Paul names Euodia and Syntyche in a letter read publicly? What does that teach us about conflict in the church?

#### 2. Digging into Scripture

Read **Philippians 4:2–5** together.

- What stands out to you in the way Paul handles conflict here?
- Why do you think Paul immediately turns the church's attention to *rejoicing in the Lord* and *gentleness* after naming conflict?
- How might "The Lord is near" shape how we approach conflict?

#### Cross-References to explore:

- Matthew 18:15–17 – Jesus' framework for addressing sin and conflict.
- Micah 6:8 – Justice, mercy, humility in relationships.
- Ephesians 4:2–3 – Bearing with one another in love to keep unity.

#### 3. The Five Animals of Conflict

Walk through each style (Bull, Koala, Turtle, Fox, Owl).

- Which style do you most naturally fall into?
- Where have you seen that style used well? Where has it caused problems?
- Which style is hardest for you to practice—and why?

#### 4. Probing Heart Questions

- When you are in conflict, do you care more about being right or about being Christlike?
- Do you tend to see the other person's perspective as valuable, or do you assume the worst?
- Have you ever let someone else's sin create sin in you (anger, bitterness, gossip, unforgiveness)?
- What does it look like to rejoice in the Lord even while in conflict?

#### 5. Applying It to Life

- Think of a current or recent conflict. How might you respond differently if you chose the style that best honours God rather than your default?
- What practical step can you take this week to bring gentleness into your relationships?
- How might prayer change your perspective on a conflict you're facing?

#### 6. Group Prayer

- Pray for wisdom to know how to respond to conflict in a Spirit-led way.
- Pray for gentleness and unity within your life group and church community.
- Pray for courage to deal with conflict honestly but with grace, never letting sin against us create sin in us.