

**BIBLE  
STUDIES  
FOR LIFE**

# WHEN RELATIONSHIPS COLLIDE

SAMPLE



RON EDMONDSON



SAMPLE SESSION

EVEN  
CHRISTIANS  
COLLIDE





*What is the silliest argument you've ever been a part of?*



## THE POINT

*Conflict can arise because of different priorities.*



## THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

Some of the biggest fights I have witnessed have been over trivial things in a church: paint color, carpet or tile, order of service, whether to buy toilet paper in bulk or as needed. (Not kidding. It happened.) In every situation, Christians were doing the arguing. Most of the time there were two legitimate sides to the discussion, but those involved felt only their opinion was valid enough to defend.

If we step back from the source of conflict in each of the examples above, most of us can see they are trivial in light of the eternal issues the church faces. None of us wants to admit that we get upset about trivial things. They don't seem trivial. But conflict can arise because of different priorities. We want to believe we have our priorities in the right place and we are defending the right positions. Sometimes it takes a 10,000 foot view to help us see what to do. Thankfully, God understands this tension in life and through His Word we have examples of good people who struggled with conflict. The story of Mary and Martha is an example.



# WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

## **Luke 10:38-42** (HCSB)

**38** While they were traveling, He entered a village, and a woman named Martha welcomed Him into her home.

**39** She had a sister named Mary, who also sat at the Lord's feet and was listening to what He said.

**40** But Martha was distracted by her many tasks, and she came up and asked, "Lord, don't You care that my sister has left me to serve alone? So tell her to give me a hand."

**41** The Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and upset about many things,

**42** but one thing is necessary. Mary has made the right choice, and it will not be taken away from her."

## *Key Words*

**distracted** (v. 40) – The Greek word meant pulled or dragged away. It described someone too busy, or overburdened.

**worried and upset** (v. 41) – The first word was used by Jesus to describe the kind of anxious concern a person might have for food or clothing rather than trusting the Lord to provide (Matt. 6:25-34). The second word literally meant stirred up or troubled.

**necessary** (v. 42) – That which is a requirement, a requisite, a necessity.





## **Luke 10:38**

Jesus frequently visited homes along His journey. For example, Zacchaeus invited Jesus into his home in Jericho (Luke 19:6). Matthew invited Jesus into his home in Capernaum (Matt. 9:9-13). Simon Peter invited Jesus into his home in Capernaum (Mark 1:29-34). Martha also welcomed Jesus into her home (Luke 10:38).

It is interesting that Martha did the inviting. It would be additional work to entertain Jesus and His disciples. Martha worked to feed and care for the men's physical needs.

We sometimes get the indication from this story that Mary was the more spiritual sister. But what Martha did was incredibly spiritual. She invited Jesus into her home. Hospitality shows God's love. Martha also had a right motive in wanting to serve others. She followed a biblical command to consider other's interests ahead of her own (Phil. 2:4).

Recently, I became pastor of a new church. The people have been overwhelmingly kind to me. When I accept a visit to someone's home, my wife and I are treated almost embarrassingly well. They want to know my favorite foods. They don't want to fix anything I wouldn't like. They prepare their best desserts. I can sit wherever I want to sit. (You know the man has a favorite chair, but it's never even mentioned.) I have to exercise more these days, simply because of their hospitality, but they want to honor their pastor. (They are doing a good job of it.)



***Which sister do you  
most relate to? Why?***

**QUESTION #2**



Most of us go to great efforts to entertain guests in our homes. We can understand why Martha was upset—there was work to be done. Martha was preparing for a suddenly planned visit of 13 hungry and tired men at her house. One of those men was Jesus.

I remember how much my mother loved to entertain. She would invite family, friends, coworkers, and people from church to visit in our home. As much as my mother loved to host people, she always stressed the few days leading up to the event. She wanted things to go well with their visit.

***How can our responsibilities sometimes be a source of conflict?***

**QUESTION #3**

**STEP BACK**

***A ministry you're involved in is growing and doing well. But it's causing tension in your personal life because it's taking time away from home.***



**1.** Stepping back and considering God's priorities would affect me by:

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**2.** Stepping back and considering God's priorities would affect my home by:

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**3.** Stepping back and considering God's priorities would affect my ministry by:

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## Luke 10:39-40

While Martha completed her many tasks, Martha's sister Mary was absent from the kitchen. The connotation I have heard people make is that Martha was the structured, driven personality and Mary may have been a little ... shall we say ... lazy. We don't necessarily get that from this event. Mary may have been found helping her sister in the kitchen on most days. We do know Mary and Martha often showed unity in their approaches. They both sent for Jesus when their brother Lazarus was sick (John 11:3).

What we see from the event is that Mary, on this particular visit, focused on simply enjoying the presence of Jesus. The phrase, "at the Lord's feet" indicates a posture for learning. She was gleaning from the teaching of Jesus. The customs of the day shunned many women from learning. Women were exempt from studying the Torah. This was a huge opportunity for Mary that she would have few times in her life.

Jesus was probably tired and hungry from traveling and teaching. It would seem inhospitable to ignore His needs or not care for His comfort. Without the help of Mary, Martha baked the bread, set the table, and prepared the meal. She apparently grew more frustrated the longer she thought about her sister sitting rather than helping.

This was a family conflict. There was work to be done to care for the guests. It had to be done if people were going to be properly fed. That was Martha's position. At the same time Jesus was the busy, on-the-go Son of God. He wouldn't be there long. That was Mary's position. Both women focused on good things. The conflict was over noble matters. This isn't a passage about right or wrong. This is a passage about priorities.

Jesus intervened in the conflict and brought a larger perspective.



***When was a time you had to choose between studying the Bible and accomplishing work that needed to be done?***

**QUESTION #4**



## **Luke 10:41-42**

Often our choices of how we spend our time can cause conflict with others who would make different choices. Our conflict may be with our spouse over how we are going to spend a weekend. It could be with our work over whether to work overtime or go home early. It might be with our own schedule, determining what we can and cannot do with our time.

Every day we make choices based on priorities. That doesn't make the other choice wrong. It doesn't mean we won't have to do all of the choices at some point. It means that in the act of making decisions, it isn't always about right and wrong, as much as it is about good and better.

I have never believed Jesus was criticizing the work we do in the kitchen. I don't believe Jesus is opposed to cooking a big meal or helping guests feel at home. Throughout the Gospels, Jesus enjoyed social engagements. He was frequently found eating. This event at the home of Martha and Mary reminds us we can become distracted with seemingly good things while neglecting things of greater value. That can happen in our careers, our personal time, our family life, and our relationship with Jesus. We need Jesus to give us the big-picture perspective. This may solve much of the conflict we experience.

I like that Jesus didn't ignore Martha's concern. Jesus loved Martha and Mary (John 11:5). Instead of overlooking Martha's concern, Jesus narrowed in on it. Jesus brought perspective to the conflict between Mary and Martha by reminding Martha that, when picking options of how to best spend her time, on this particular day—in this precise moment—Mary chose the better option. Martha was not doing wrongly. Caring for Jesus' physical needs was good. But on this day, sitting to learn from Jesus was the priority.

# BEST

***What must you consider when you are deciding between good, better, and best?***

**QUESTION #5**



## LIVE IT OUT

- ▶ **Identify what's important.** Evaluate a conflict, looking for what each party considers important.
- ▶ **Reorder your priorities.** Your stance in a conflict may be good and valid, but it may need to take a temporary backseat to a greater priority.
- ▶ **Take a half-day retreat.** Do nothing but “sit at the feet of Jesus” in prayer and Bible reading. You will gain a fresh perspective on your other priorities.



The next time an argument arises, step back to see the bigger perspective. **Choose according to Jesus' priorities.**

## Fair Game



*I've never been the kind of wife to create gourmet meals. I can successfully follow a recipe, but I wouldn't call myself a great cook. Very early in my marriage, I could make about four dishes. Terrell and I ate a lot of chicken and green beans. I also could bake a cake, so there was that. Somehow I perfected homemade potato soup, which quickly became my husband's favorite meal ... until the potato soup fight.*



To continue reading “Fair Game” from *HomeLife* magazine, visit [BibleStudiesforLife.com/articles](http://BibleStudiesforLife.com/articles).





## My thoughts



## When Relationships Collide

We have looked at different relationships in the pages of Scripture, relationships from which we can pull solid principles for resolving conflict. As we strengthen our relationships, the ultimate goal is to develop into people who know Christ and His gracious work, who are contributing servants in the community of faith, and who are effectively engaging the culture without losing distinction.

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## Christ



Jesus Christ seemed to give up everything He had worked for when He allowed Himself to be crucified. His seemingly defenseless position, however, achieved His ultimate goal: the salvation of all who believe in Him. Sin has placed the human race in conflict with a holy God, yet God provided His Son, Jesus, who willingly stepped in to remove our sin and appease God's wrath.



# Community



Relationships are torn apart by self-centeredness. The family and the church are to be Christ-centered. When conflict in the church is carried out with grace and love, problems are solved, the church is strengthened, and the world gets a positive witness of the gospel at work.



# Culture



Who am I to call into question what others believe or do? Personal preferences are one thing, but when it comes to truth—clear biblical teaching—we must stand our ground and speak up.





# LEADER GUIDE

# WHEN RELATIONSHIPS COLLIDE

## GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS

In order to make the most of this study and to ensure a richer group experience, it's recommended that all group participants read through the teaching and discussion content in full before each group meeting. As a leader, it is also a good idea for you to be familiar with this content and prepared to summarize it for your group members as you move through the material each week.

Each session of the Bible study is made up of three sections:

### 1. THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE.

An introduction to the theme of the session and its connection to everyday life, along with a brief overview of the primary Scripture text. This section also includes an icebreaker question or activity.

### 2. WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

This comprises the bulk of each session and includes the primary Scripture text along with explanations for key words and ideas within that text. This section also includes most of the content designed to produce and maintain discussion within the group.

### 3. LIVE IT OUT.

The final section focuses on application, using bulleted summary statements to answer the question, *So what?* As the leader, be prepared to challenge the group to apply what they learned during the discussion by transforming it into action throughout the week.

For group leaders, the *When Relationships Collide* Leader Guide contains several features and tools designed to help you lead participants through the material provided.

## ICEBREAKER

These opening questions and/or activities are designed to help participants transition into the study and begin engaging the primary themes to be discussed. Be sure everyone has a chance to speak, but maintain a low-pressure environment.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Each "What Does the Bible Say?" section features at least four questions designed to spark discussion and interaction within your group. These questions encourage critical thinking, so be sure to allow a period of silence for participants to process the question and form an answer.

The *When Relationships Collide* Leader Guide also contains follow-up questions and optional activities that may be helpful to your group, if time permits.

## DVD CONTENT

Each video features teaching from Ron Edmondson on the primary themes found in the session. We recommend that you show this video in one of three places: (1) At the beginning of group time, (2) After the icebreaker, or (3) After a quick review and/or summary of "What Does the Bible Say?"

The Leader Guide contains additional questions to help unpack the video and transition into the discussion. For an expanded leader guide with commentary, see the "Leader Tools" folder on the DVD.



## SAMPLE SESSION: EVEN CHRISTIANS COLLIDE

**The Point:** Conflict can arise because of different priorities.

**The Passage:** Luke 10:38-42

**The Setting:** As Jesus journeyed toward Jerusalem (Luke 9:51), He stopped at the home of Mary and Martha. While Jesus taught in their home, Martha focused on the duties of a hospitable host, but Mary focused on listening to Jesus teach. Both women were doing good things, but at that moment, only one was necessary: to listen to Jesus teach.

**Icebreaker:** What is the silliest argument that you've ever been a part of?

**Optional follow-up:** What specific "triggers" (events, circumstances, key words, etc.) tend to send you down the path toward a relationship collision?

**Optional activity:** Display several household items that represent common triggers for conflict. These items could include a TV remote, a checkbook, a garbage bag, a roll of toilet paper, a screwdriver, a pillow, and so on. Encourage participants to pick up different items and even pass them around as you discuss the following questions:

- Which of these items produces the strongest emotional reaction for you? Why?
- Which of these items represents a collision point in your family?
- Why do you think such trivial things can create so much tension?
- Have you developed a game plan for navigating these moments when they surface?

**Video Summary:** Ron opens the video teaching by talking about how conflict is prevalent even among Christian believers. Conflict seldom disappears on its own. Rather, it requires intentionality on someone's part. He uses the text to point out how Martha and Mary's friendship seemed to help them bear conflict. It's also helpful to point out that Jesus was neither unfamiliar nor uncomfortable with conflict. This helps us understand that God will often use conflict to redirect our hearts to what is truly important. In his video message Ron also says that it's helpful to do some self analysis and recommends two questions to ask ourselves:

- What unresolved conflict is in my life?
- Are there issues I have neglected or hidden in my heart?



## WATCH THE DVD SEGMENT FOR SESSION 1, THEN USE THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS TO TRANSITION INTO THE STUDY.

- The video references a man who had held a grudge for 40 years. Talk about the fallout of unresolved conflict in our lives. Ask group members: What are the dangers and ultimate results of harboring a grudge?
- Ron points out that Jesus is neither unfamiliar nor uncomfortable with conflict. Ask: What does this reveal about God and how He might use conflict in our lives?

### WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

#### ASK FOR A VOLUNTEER TO READ ALOUD LUKE 10:38-42.

Response: What's your initial reaction to these verses?

- What questions do you have about these verses?
- What new application do you hope to get from this passage through your study?

#### TURN THE GROUP'S ATTENTION TO LUKE 10:38.

#### **QUESTION 2:** Which sister do you most relate to and why?

This question provides a great opportunity for group members to tell their stories, which is important as people seek to reveal themselves to the group. Make time for those stories if they come.

**Optional follow-up** using John 11:18-27: The same Martha is found in this passage of John. What attributes become evident in Martha's actions and words in this passage?

#### **QUESTION 3:** How can our responsibilities sometimes be a source of conflict?

This is an application question that asks group members to consider how not only their own responsibilities, but the responsibilities of others in their lives, might contribute to interpersonal conflict.

**Optional follow-up:** Scripture illustrates for us that Martha was a passionate person. How do you think attributes that are usually very functional and positive—like passion—can also contribute to conflict?

**Optional activity:** Draw attention to the exercise in the Group Member Book labeled Step Back. You may choose to lead your group through this exercise together or give members a few moments to respond on their own by writing their answers in their books.



## MOVE TO LUKE 10:39-40.

**QUESTION 4:** When was a time you had to choose between studying the Bible and accomplishing work that needed to be done?

This question requires group members to recall a time when they had to wrestle with priorities, timeliness of responsibilities, and perhaps even how their decision would affect those around them. There are times when we simply need to get a job done and other times that avail themselves more to Scripture reading and study. The decision often comes down to planning and balance. Family members, people with whom we work, and friends deserve our best and prioritizing is an important first step in avoiding conflict.

**Optional follow-up:** What factors make planning and prioritizing most difficult in your life?

## CONTINUE WITH LUKE 10:41-42.

**QUESTION 5:** What must you consider when you are deciding between good, better, and best?

This is an application question that may result in another opportunity for group members to share their stories. You can encourage this kind of self-disclosure by asking, “When have you rejected something ‘good’ in favor of what was ‘best’?”

**QUESTION 6:** Martha was very willing to confront. How do you typically respond when confronted by others?

This is a self-revelation question included to initiate a discussion of conflict and how each of us handles it.

**Note:** This question does not appear in the group member book. Use it in your group discussion as time allows.

**Optional follow-up:** Are Christians supposed to respond in a particular way when confronted?

**Optional follow-up:** Talk about how Jesus, Martha, and Mary all handled this situation. What are some skills and takeaways to be gleaned from this interaction?

## LIVE IT OUT

Invite group members to consider both past and present conflict and the effects of unresolved conflict. Point out three lessons learned from Luke 10:38-42:

1. **Identify what’s important.** Evaluate a conflict, looking for what each party considers important.



**2. Reorder your priorities.** Your stance in a conflict may be good and valid, but it may need to take a temporary backseat to a greater priority.

**3. Take a half-day retreat.** Do nothing but “sit at the feet of Jesus” in prayer and Bible reading. You will gain a fresh perspective on your other priorities.

**Challenge:** Encourage participants to be sensitive to those moments with potential for conflict and, in the moment, consider how priorities might influence their actions. Ask group members to take the time to journal about the experience and come prepared to share during the next meeting.

**Pray:** Ask for prayer requests and ask group members to pray for the different requests as intercessors. As the leader, close the prayer time by being the last person to take your petitions and praises to God. Be sure to invite God into every aspect of each life represented in the room where conflict, the potential for conflict, and the origins of conflict are concerned.





## WHERE THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

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### TITLE

**Pressure Points** *by Chip Henderson*

**When Relationships Collide** *by Ron Edmondson*

**Do Over: Experience New Life in Christ** *by Ben Mandrell*

**Honest to God: Real Questions Christians Ask** *by Robert Jeffress*

**Let Hope In** *by Pete Wilson*

**Productive: Finding Joy in Work** *by Ronnie and Nick Floyd*

**Resilient Faith: Staying Faithful in the Midst of Suffering** *by Mary Jo Sharp*

**What Is God Like?** *by Freddy Cardoza*

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September 2013

September 2013

December 2013

December 2013

March 2014

March 2014

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*Title and release dates subject to change.*

*\*This is not a complete list of releases. Additional titles will continue to be released every three months. Visit website for more information.*



## WE ALL FACE CONFLICT.

Some conflicts are quick and over in a moment. Others can last a lifetime. Just because two people disagree or have different ideas doesn't necessarily mean the conflict is detrimental. What matters is your attitude or response to the situation. In *When Relationships Collide*, Ron Edmondson will lead you to discover how to deal with conflict in appropriate, biblical, Christ-honoring ways.

### RON EDMONDSON



Senior pastor of Immanuel Baptist Church in Lexington, Kentucky, Ron is passionate about planting churches, helping established churches thrive, and assisting those in ministry think through leadership, strategy, and life. Ron's strong theological background guides him to teach faithfully from Scripture, and he writes almost daily on leadership, church, and family at [ronedmondson.com](http://ronedmondson.com). Ron and his wife Cheryl have two adult sons.