

The Wild Fire

Hello. My name is Brian DeCook. I'm the Executive Director at Peace Fire. For seventeen years, I have been an attorney practicing law in the State of Illinois. With the course of my career, I've represented many Christian clients. Over the years, my experience in representing Christians is that they respond to conflict no differently than most people who don't know the Lord. My anticipation in starting the law practice was that in representing Christians I'd be working with people who would respond to conflict differently than my other clients.

When I saw this dynamic at work, I began to ponder weren't Christians responding to conflict differently? At first I thought maybe they just didn't know what the scripture had to say about responding to conflict. As time went on, I realized that they did know that they were supposed to love their brother. They were supposed to forgive. They were supposed to bless their enemy. But as time went on, I realized that the reason most believers don't respond to conflict scripturally and in obedience to Jesus Christ is because they have not been encouraged to do so.

And so we started Peace Fire Ministry to encourage people, to equip people who believe in Jesus Christ to respond to conflict in a remarkably different way, in a way that enables them and equips them with a sustainable method of responding to conflict that is grounded in biblical truth and a relentless reliance in Jesus Christ. We use a fire metaphor to talk about the dynamics of conflict. We talk about two fires: the wild fire and the peace fire.

In this session, I want to talk to you about the wild fire and in the next six sessions of this course, you're going to receive some teaching that we provide in a more comprehensive form on our web site which is www.peacefire.net called the Two Fires course. If you have questions or would like to inquire more about our work or take the course in its entirety, it's available at no cost to students of CLI by contacting Peace Fire.

Let's start the course. In October 1995, a wild fire that became known as the vision fire broke out on Mount Vision in Tomales Bay State Park in California. There were a small group of hikers who spent the day in the park and they decided to set up camp in an unauthorized location in the park. They set up a camp, made a fire, and went to sleep. The next morning, before continuing their hike, they carefully put the fire out by piling dirt, rocks, and more dirt on the fire. Before leaving the camp sight, one of the hikers placed his hand on the pile of dirt checking for radiant heat.

Confident that the fire was out, the hikers continued their journey. But underneath the pile of rocks and dirt, embers continued to glow, much like a cigarette. Two days later, conditions changed. The

weather shifted and those glowing embers ignited into a wild fire that destroyed homes and charred thousands of acres. At its peak level of intensity, the wild fire consumed more than fifty acres per minute.

A conflict, like a wild fire, can be very destructive. Sometimes it appears to be little more than glowing embers. But when conditions are right, it can erupt into a raging wild fire. If not contained, conflict wild fires can destroy marriages, families, friendships, business relationships, church congregations, communities, and even nations. No one is exempt from the wild fires of conflict. The fact that everyone experiences conflict should not surprise a Christian. The Word of God warns you to expect, anticipate, and be prepared for conflict.

Paul and Barnabas warned the Christians at Lystra, Aconium, and Antioch about conflict in Acts 14:21, 22 read as follows, “When they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Aconium and to Antioch strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.” Peter and Jesus both talked that Christians should anticipate conflict to occur. Peter wrote in 1 Peter 4, “Beloved, do not be surprised that the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you as though something strange were happening to you.” Jesus said in John 16:33, “I have said these things to you that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart, I have overcome the world.”

Let’s review the, what we call, flash points from this session. Conflict wild fires can be very destructive. Conflict and tribulation are part of the Christian life. In the Lord Jesus Christ, there is peace, protection, and power to overcome conflict wild fires. Jesus Christ encourages you to take heart in the midst of conflict. As a leader, as a pastor, as a church planter, you are going to encounter conflict. The people that you lead, the flock that you shepherd will experience conflict. Our goal in these next several sessions is to give you a context in which to view conflict and to respond to it and to recognize that the Lord is at work and has a purpose in each conflict you encounter.

In the next session, I’ll introduce you to another fire that can burn in the midst of conflict, the peace fire. While a conflict wild fire is a fire that destroys, the peace fire is a fire that transforms.