



**LESSON 13:** "Contentious Charlie" **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**KEY VERSE:** Proverbs 17:1 – *"Better is a dry morsel, and quietness therewith, than an house full of sacrifices with strife."*

### INTRODUCTION

The number of legal cases brought before our American courts give testimony to the fact that we live in a culture characterized by contention and strife. Proverbs has a great deal to say about this ongoing problem. Strife and contention is the outward manifestation of the anger and wrath that boil within a person.

The Hebrew had many different words to describe strife and contention. Normally, however, the word simply pictured a verbal battle between two \_\_\_\_\_.

We need to understand that God's word places great value on living lives free of strife (Prov. 20:3). In Romans 12:18, the Christian is challenged, "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men." Let's allow the book of Proverbs to answer three frequently asked questions about contention.

### IS CONTENTION DANGEROUS?

The book of Proverbs makes it very clear that strife and contention brings great danger for two reasons:

1. **Contention can become** \_\_\_\_\_ **(Prov. 17:14).**
2. **Contention can take away any hope of** \_\_\_\_\_ **(Prov. 29:9).**  
The Hebrew word translated, "contendeth" in Proverbs 29:9 pictures a man making a legal argument before a judge. The author of Proverbs says that it is possible to win a legal battle and still find no happiness.

### WHAT CAUSES CONTENTION?

Proverbs is careful to present many causes of strife. The wise man becomes aware of these causes in order to avoid contention.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ **(Prov. 13:10)** — Those who are unable to admit their faults and mistakes walk in pride which brings strife.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ **(Prov. 10:12)** — Where there is strife, there is hatred. Whether in the church, the workplace or the home, the absence of peace indicates that hatred abounds.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ **(Prov. 26:20)** — A word whispered in secret can cause open warfare!
4. \_\_\_\_\_ **(Prov. 23:29)** — Alcohol lowers natural inhibitions and leads to violent outbursts.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ **(Prov. 25:8)** — The inward emotions of anger and wrath must be contained patiently or great harm will follow.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ **(Prov. 18:19)** — Sarcasm, name-calling, character-assassination are all causes of ongoing strife.

Three kinds of people are prone to strife. The fool (Prov. 18:6), the scorner (Prov. 22:10) and the froward (Prov. 16:28). Fools demonstrate no fear of God. Scorners have not yet crossed the line and rejected God but their words prove that their heart is moving away from the Lord. Froward individuals are "crooked" and not to be trusted.

### CAN WE AVOID CONTENTION?

For those who would avoid contention, the book of Proverbs provides at least four important matters of counsel:

1. **Learn how to** \_\_\_\_\_ **(Prov. 18:18).** — The "lot" spoken of in Proverbs 18 was a tool used for deciding a matter between adversaries. The adversaries would agree ahead of time which course would be taken before the lot was cast. It was much like "flipping a coin."
2. **Don't argue without a good** \_\_\_\_\_ **(Prov. 3:30).** — Some people are not happy unless they are agitating others – just ask anyone who grew up with a brother or sister!
3. **Learn to practice biblical** \_\_\_\_\_ **(Prov. 10:12).**
4. **Be slow to** \_\_\_\_\_ **(Prov. 15:18).** — While the secularist learns to bully his way to success, the Spirit-led Christian learns to turn from strife.