

**Introduction:** Many churches across our country are hot beds for strife. Many pastors feel the frustration of strife within their congregations.

### **1. PATTERNS OF STRIFE** (What is strife?)

Solomon uses three Hebrew words to define strife.

A. "**Strife**" (Hebrew "madon") meaning "strife or contention" and found 17xs in Proverbs. This Hebrew word is translated in the KJV as "strife" in Proverbs 15:18; 16:28; 17:14; 22:10; 26:20; 28:25; 29:22; as "contention" in Proverbs 18:18; 18:19; 19:13; 22:10; 23:29; as "contentious" in Proverbs 21:19; 26:21; 27:15; and as "discord" in Proverbs 6:14; 6:19. This word comes from a root word which primarily means to govern or judge..

("madon" by in Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament, Vol. 1, page 188)

B. "**Strife**" (Hebrew "massa") meaning "strife or contention" and found 2xs in Proverbs. This Hebrew word is translated in the KJV as "strife" in Proverbs 17:19; and "contention" in Proverbs 13:10.

("massa" by Milton C. Fisher in Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament, Vol. 2, page 593)

C. "**Strife**" (Hebrew "rib") meaning "strife, contend, or controversy" and found 8xs in Proverbs. This Hebrew word is translated in the KJV as "strife" Proverbs 15:18; 17:1; 20:3; 26:17; 26:21; 30:33; and as "contention" Proverbs 17:14; 18:6. This word has a wide range of meanings. The basic root word means "combat" and can refer to physical combat between two men or verbal combat between two individuals (i.e. quarrel or chide). Interestingly, "strife" (Hebrew "rib") is in contrast with "quietness" (Hebrew "shalwa").

("rib" by William White in Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament, Vol. 2, page 845)

**Summary note:** The following facts may be known about strife. Strife means . . .

1. To enter into combat with or contend with another.
2. To be an adversary with another.
3. To quarrel with another
4. To govern, judge or rule over another

### **2. PICTURES OF STRIFE** (What does strife look like?)

Solomon describes strife in three ways.

- A. Proverbs 17:14 = like letting out water (NIV "breaching a dam")
- B. Proverbs 18:19 = like bars of a castle (NIV "barred gates of a citadel")
- C. Proverbs 26:21 = like coals to burning coals (NASV, NIV "charcoal to embers")
- D. Proverbs 26:21 = like feeding wood to a fire
- E. Proverbs 27:15 = like a constant dripping of water

### **3. PROVOCATION FOR STRIFE** (What are the root causes of strife?)

Solomon lists at least nine main causes for strife.

- A. Proverbs 6:12-14 = deceit in the heart (the naughty and wicked person)

- B. Proverbs 10:12 = hatred
- C. Proverbs 13:10 = pride (NASV "presumption")
- D. Proverbs 15:18 = wrath (NASV, NIV "hot-tempered") (the wrathful man)
- E. Proverbs 16:28 = perversity (the perverse man)
- F. Proverbs 18:6 = fool's lips (the foolish man)
- G. Proverbs 22:10 = scorner (NIV "mockler")
- H. Proverbs 23:29-30 = too much wine
- I. Proverbs 26:20 = talebearing (NASV "whisperer" NIV "gossip")
- J. Proverbs 28:25 = a proud heart (NASV "arrogant man," NIV "greedy man")
- K. Proverbs 29:22 = anger (the angry man)

**4. PROBLEMS SURROUNDING STRIFE** (How concerned should we be about strife?)  
Solomon gives us five insights to the seriousness of strife.

- A. Proverbs 6:16-19 = discord is hated by the LORD and is viewed as an abomination.
- B. Proverbs 17:1 = strife affects the quality of life in the home
- C. Proverbs 17:19 = strife continues because of the love of sin
- D. Proverbs 18:19 = strife affects relationships with the brethren in a very negative way
- E. Proverbs 27:16 = strife is very difficult to stop once it gets started

**5. PROTECTION FROM STRIFE** (How should a wise person deal with strife?)  
Solomon suggests eight ways to handle strife or stop strife.

- A. Proverbs 13:10 = learn to take advice or be open to receive counsel from others
- B. Proverbs 15:18 = learn patience or how to control your emotions
- C. Proverbs 17:1 = learn to do without or don't go where strife exists
- D. Proverbs 17:14 = learn to drop a matter before it gets to the point of strife
- E. Proverbs 18:18 = learn to settle disputes  
"One way of settling disputes in Bible times was by casting the lot (cf. 16:33). The yes-or-no decision given by lots helped avoid an ongoing conflict or litigation between strong opponents. (Book of Proverbs, Sid S. Buzzell, as found in The Bible Knowledge Commentary, page 945)
- F. Proverbs 22:10 = cast out the scorner
- G. Proverbs 26:20 = remove those causing gossip or slander
- H. Proverbs 28:25 = learn to trust the Lord

**Conclusion:** Strife destroys churches. Churches must learn how to eliminate strife.