



# **Resolving Conflict**

## **Instructor's Guide**

Vibrant Church Renewal  
USA/Canada Evangelism Ministries  
Church of the Nazarene, International



# Acknowledgments

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# I. Module Introduction

Section	Time	Page	Brief Description
I. Module Introduction	5 Mins.	P. 4	Introduce module, objectives, outline.
II. Lecture	25 Mins.	P. 6	Facilitator presents information that will foster a climate in which church leadership can deal appropriately with conflict.
III. Small Group	20 Mins.	P. 11	Participants work in teams to evaluate a case study and make recommendations on how to handle a conflict.
IV. Discussion	5 Mins.	P. 15	<p>Participants share thoughts about the information presented and insights about how the information will assist in their leadership.</p> <p>Two possible questions to start the discussion in addition to the questions answered during the exercise are:</p> <p>What new ideas or thoughts did God reveal to you?</p> <p>What new techniques will you begin using as you think about others in your church?</p>
V. Action Planning/ Reporting	15 Mins.	P. 15	Participants begin preparing for their homework assignment: Identify a recent conflict where you were a key participant in resolving the conflict. Based on the information presented in the lecture, evaluate which approach you used, what actions were positive for resolving the conflict, and what you will do differently when faced with a similar situation.
VI. Module Wrap-up	5 Mins.	P. 16	Close the module with your final comments regarding the topics.
<b>TOTAL</b>	75 Mins.		

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## Preparation Checklist

The following information will help you prepare to instruct this module.

- ◆ Review the material and make notes of specific areas for special emphasis.
- ◆ Check to ensure the following materials are available:
  - PowerPoint presentations
  - Participant handout (copy as needed)
- ◆ Gather the following materials:
  - Pens and/or pencils
  - Other material you want to use
- ◆ Check the classroom for:
  - Projector
  - Sufficient number of tables and chairs for the participants
- ◆ Arrange the room so each team sits around an individual table and you have ample room to move among the teams.

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## I. Module Introduction

(5 Minutes)

Notes

Let the participants know the material is theirs to keep and encourage them to take notes. The participant material includes:

- Purpose
- Objectives
- “Fill in the blanks” for the lecture
- Application exercises

**The purpose of this module is to:**  
**Create a climate in which church leadership  
can deal appropriately with conflict.**

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**The objectives for this module are:**

- Identify the sources of church conflict.
- Develop processes by which to address issues present in a local church.
- Suggest skills profitable for conflict reduction.



## II. Lecture (25 Minutes)

Notes

The underlined text represents the blanks in the participant booklet.

Before beginning the lecture, direct the participants to the Action Planning/Reporting section of their material. Ask them to briefly describe a recent (last six months) conflict where they played a key role in the resolution. Ask them to describe the background, the behavior of the parties involved, and their own behavior/emotions. Limit the time for this activity to four minutes or less.

### I. Scriptural Examples of Conflict

#### A. Acts 15

Do Gentiles have to become Jews before they become Christians?

#### B. Acts 6

Will the Greek-speaking widows be neglected in the welfare distribution?

#### C. Acts 15:36-41

Paul and Barnabas separate over differing leadership assessment

#### D. Galatians 2:11

Paul goes toe to toe with Peter

Ask participants to work in groups of three or four (or church teams) to look up scripture and fill in the blanks. Assign each group two or three scriptures.

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Notes

## II. Scriptural Support of Conflict Resolution

- A. "If a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of **GENTLENESS**" (Galatians 6:1)
- B. "We have renounced disgraceful underhanded ways; we **REFUSE** to practice cunning" (II Corinthians 4:2).
- C. "The weapons for our warfare are not **WORLDLY**" (II Corinthians 10:4).
- D. "Be subject to one another out of reverence for **CHRIST**" (Ephesians 5:21)
- E. "Then let us no more pass **JUDGMENT** on one another... let us then pursue what makes for peace and mutual up building" (Romans 14:13,19).
- F. "If anyone **REFUSES** to obey what we say in this letter, note that man and have nothing to do with him, that he may be ashamed" (II Thessalonians 3:14).
- G. "Do not look on him as an enemy, but **WARN** him as a brother" (II Thessalonians 3:15)
- H. "Finally, brethren, farewell. Mend your ways, heed my appeal, **AGREE** with one another, live in peace, and the God of love and peace will be with you" (II Corinthians 13:11).
- I. "Do not **REBUKE** an older man, but exhort him as you would a father, treat younger men like brothers, older women like mothers, younger women like sisters, in all purity" (I Timothy 5:1-2).

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## II. Lecture

Notes

The scripture makes clear that we are to do everything we can to keep conflict down, but we are not to AVOID confrontation if it is principle-oriented. The problem is : we can find scripture to support our position if we are being ATTACKED or wanting to do the attacking.

A healthy emotional person and an objective leader will accurately DETERMINE what scripture applies when. In the next few minutes together, let's clarify how we distinguish Christian conflict from carnal combat.

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### III. Constants About Conflict

- A. Conflict isn't always bad or HARMFUL.
- B. Conflict HAPPENS even if you have no interest in what the other party wants.
- C. Conflict can start from MINOR issues and become a major issue.
- D. Conflict may be INHERENT in your job description as a leader.
- E. Conflict may occur with someone you LIKE or dislike.

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If we do not deal with conflict within twenty-four hours, there is only a two percent chance the conflict will ever be dealt with successfully.

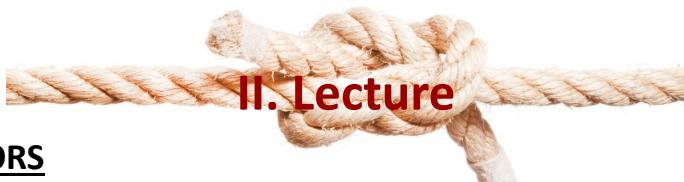
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### IV. Five Traditional Approaches to Handling Conflict

#### A. WITHDRAWER

Takes the LEAVE/LOSE approach. A withdrawer believes in "walk away power". He/She will avoid conflict even though they may lose something important.

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## II. Lecture

Notes

### B. DOMINATORS

Take the WIN/LOSE approach. Dominators operate as though they have the right and the power on their side.

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### C. PLACATORS

Take the YIELD/LOSE approach. A placator will do about anything to maintain the relationship.

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### D. COMPROMISERS

Take the MINI-WIN/MINI-LOSE approach. Compromisers believe both parties have something to give and something to take. Compromisers are convinced that both individuals are partially right.

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### E. COLLABORATORS

Take the WIN/WIN approach. Collaborators do whatever it takes to get the job done and maintain relationships at the same time.

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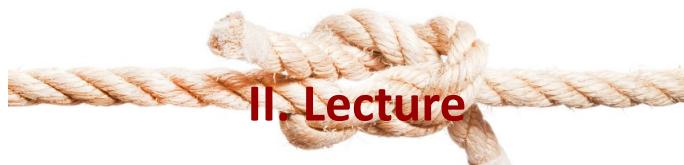
## V. Keys to Conflict Reduction

### A. BUILD Trust

1. Conflict will SUBSIDE in direct relationship to the amount of trust built.
2. AFFIRMING one another within the church is a means of building trust.
3. Trust is needed in the church second only to what is needed in the home.
4. Where people genuinely TRUST each other, love flourishes.
5. ACCEPTANCE of each other promotes trust, too.
6. When we ADMIT to our humanness, people are more apt to generate confidence in us.

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## II. Lecture

Notes

7. Encouragement is a means of building up trust as well.  
“You were there when I needed you,” (pastoral care)  
**HEIGHTENS** the trust factor.
8. Integrity of life **GENERATES** trust.
9. Broken confidence **DESTROYS** trust.
10. Ridicule **LOWERS** the trust level.
11. **BROKEN** promises wipe out the confidence factor.
12. Conflict does not divide us, but **LACK** of trust does.

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### B. **GIVE** Grace

The following is from *Conflict and Caring* by Keith Huttenlocker:

Ethics, as well as grace, suggests that we do any or all of the following during conflict.

1. Calmly **ACCEPT** the chastisement of the people.
2. **PROFIT** wisely from all warranted criticism, regardless of its origin or manner of presentation.
3. Openly **REPENT** of any wrong or foolishness.
4. Freely **FORGIVE** those who have trespassed against us and treat them as forgiven.
5. **VOLUNTARILY** make the requested changes that are not unscriptural or otherwise irresponsible (i.e. harmful to others).

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## II. Lecture

6. Preach and **PRACTICE** love toward all
7. Remain an example of **COMPOSURE** and integrity in all situations.
8. Speak and write **POSITIVELY** when addressing the congregation and the outside community.
9. **DEEPEN** a personal walk with Jesus Christ.
10. **LIMIT** authority to that granted by the church bylaws, resisting all temptations to invoke “marshal law.”

If we do not deal with conflict within twenty-four hours, there is only a two percent chance the conflict will ever be dealt with successfully.

Notes

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## III. Small Group Exercise

(20 Minutes)

The small group exercise portion of the module provides an opportunity for the teams to discuss the information presented and how it applies to their church.

*Turn to the Small Group Exercise portion of your participant handout. In this section you will read a case study. I will then ask some questions to encourage your thoughts about the dynamics at work in the situation and you will discuss your recommendations for resolving the conflict. You will have 3-4 minutes to read the case study.*

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## Case Study: When the Leaders Leave

Notes

Ron Taylor, district superintendent for 83 churches , winced as he explained to his wife, Sue, his frustration with New Life Church. He saw signs of an impending split. Angry members, who were also strong leaders in the local church, were phoning weekly.

The pastor of New Life Church was Chuck Parsons, a minister Ron had recommended to the congregation four years earlier. Ron and Chuck's friendship had been cemented by annual deep-sea fishing trips together. Ron hated even the thought of suggesting Chuck look for another pastoral assignment, but he dared not lose a church that possessed a bright future.

Neal Gray, former pastor, told his district superintendent, "I've taken the church as far as I can. The church needs a personable and dynamic leader if it is going to reach its potential." Neal prepared the congregation to accept their new pastor. Members and regular attenders reported genuine enthusiasm with Chuck's arrival. His humor, interpersonal skills, and warm personality raised expectations. Chuck had grown up as a son of a single parent. He had received affirmation from his local church. This acceptance contrasted with the feelings of inferiority that were reinforced by students who called him "Chubby" and "Fatso." As he laughed with them, he discovered that his light-hearted spirit endeared him to others.

Since Chuck had come to serve New Life four years ago, attendance had edged up each year until an average of 143 people worshipped each Sunday. The new members were migrating from the other and usually smaller churches in crisis.

Ron soon heard reports six or seven more families were leaving if Pastor Chuck stayed.

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## Case Study (cont.)

Notes

Jim, one of the leading members of the church, a businessman and former preacher's son, told Ron, "I have always supported my pastor, but this guy keeps embarrassing me. He appears unprepared for the worship services and his jokes are inappropriate. I won't invite my friends to church—I haven't for a year and a half. He can't manage himself — his time or his mouth. I need a pastor."

Ron wrestled with his options. He decided to approach Chuck about taking another church. Upon suggesting a change, Chuck expressed concern about whether he could do as well elsewhere. After all he was 53 years old and every church might not accept a pastor his age. He enjoyed pastoring this particular fellowship. His wife had just received a job promotion. His youngest daughter was a junior in high school. Now was not a good time to make a change. Besides, he hadn't received any complaints or lost any members in over three months.

Ron smiled wryly at Sue, "Chuck has misread the climate. I got the leadership to back off a few months ago and now Chuck thinks everyone is happy. Honey, 80% of the members support him, but I think he is losing his leadership and their finances and he doesn't know it."

### Closing Questions:

Choose one of the following issues and the implications related to those issues to spark the participants' thoughts about the different dynamics.

1. Personal vs. organization goals
2. Care-givers and care-consumers

When everyone has had a chance to read the case study, discuss the following questions:

1. Personal vs. Organization Goals:

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- a. What were the agendas of Pastor Chuck; Ron, the district superintendent; and Jim, the leader member?
  - b. Whose goals hold the greater importance in your mind?
  - c. How could collaboration make an improvement among the principals?
  - d. On what issues would you suggest compromise?
  - e. How would you advise Ron, the district superintendent?
2. Care-givers and Care-consumers
- a. Compare the new people to the longer tenured members of New Life.
  - b. What happens when the number of needy people over-extends the ability of leadership to minister?
  - c. What kinds of people are most open to the Church's ministry?
  - d. How should the church respond to a large influx of people with problems?
  - e. How do you feel when individuals you know customarily take, rather than give?

***What are the best steps to take to solve this case?***

***What criteria would influence your decision making?***

Following a brief discussion of some of the questions, instruct the participants to work as teams to respond to the **closing questions** in their material.

Remain available during the exercise time to answer questions.

Announce to the group when five minutes remain. Again announce to the group when two minutes remain.



## IV. Discussion

Notes

(5 Minutes)

Participants share thoughts about the information presented and insights about how the information will assist in their leadership.

If you're ahead of schedule, the discussion can go a few extra minutes. However, It's easy to lose track of time so watch the clock.

Two possible questions to start the discussion in addition to the questions answered during the exercise are:

What new ideas or thoughts did God reveal to you?

What new techniques will you begin using as you think about others in your church?

Open the floor for discussion. If the group is hesitant to discuss, start with one of the questions they discussed during the exercise.



## V. Action Planning/Reporting

(15 Minutes)

Participants begin preparing for their homework assignment: Identify a recent conflict where you were a key participant in resolving the conflict. Based on the information presented in the lecture, evaluate which approach you used, what actions were positive for resolving the conflict, and what you will do differently when faced with a similar situation.

## VI. Module Wrap-Up

(5 Minutes)

This section provides an opportunity to close the module.

- Ask participants to share their thoughts about the module.
- Answer any questions and provide encouragement.

