

Resolving Conflict

Participant Handout

Purpose:

Create a climate in which church leadership can deal appropriately with conflict.

Objectives :

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

I. Scriptural Examples of Conflict

- A. Acts 15:1-35
- B. Acts 6:1-7
- C. Acts 15:36-41
- D. Galatians 2:11

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 _____" (Galatians 6:1)
- B. "We have renounced disgraceful underhanded ways; we _____ to practice cunning" (II Corinthians 4:2).
- C. "The weapons for our warfare are not _____" (II Corinthians 10:4)
- D. "Be subject to one another out of reverence for _____" (Ephesians 5:21)
- E. "Then let us no more pass _____ on one another...let us then pursue what makes for peace and mutual up building (Romans 14:13,19).
- F. "If anyone _____ 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 _____him as a brother" (II Thessalonians 3:15)
- H. "Finally, brethren, farewell. Mend your ways, heed my appeal, _____ with one another, live in peace, and the God of love and peace will be with you" (II Corinthians 13:11)
- I. "Do not _____ an old 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)

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

A healthy emotional person and an objective leader will accurately _____ what scripture applies when.

III. Constants About Conflict

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

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.

IV. Five Traditional Approaches to Handling Conflict

- A. _____
Takes the _____ / _____ approach. A withdrawer believes in "walk away power". He/She will avoid conflict even though they may lose something important.
- B. _____
Take the _____ / _____ approach. Dominators operate as though they have the right and the power on their side.
- C. _____
Take the _____ / _____ approach. Placators will do just about anything to maintain the relationship.
- D. _____
Take the _____ / _____ approach. Compromisers believe both parties have something to give and something to take. Compromisers are convinced that both individuals are partially right.
- E. _____
Take the _____ / _____ approach. Collaborators do whatever it takes to get the job done and maintain relationships at the same time.

V. Keys to Conflict Reduction

- A. _____ Trust
 1. Conflict will _____ in direct relationship to the amount of trust built.
 2. _____ one another within the church is a means of building trust.
 3. Trust in the church second only to what is needed in the home.
 4. Where people genuinely _____ each other, trust flourishes.

5. _____ of each other promotes trust, too.
6. When we _____ to our humanness, people are more apt to generate confidence in us.
7. Encouragement is a means of building up trust as well. "You were there when I needed you," (Christian care) _____ the trust factor.
8. Integrity of life _____ trust.
9. Broken confidence _____ trust.
10. Ridicule _____ the trust level.
11. _____ promises wipe out the confidence factor.
12. Conflict does not divide us, but _____ of trust does.

B. _____ Grace

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

Ethics, as well as grace, suggest to pastors that they do any or all of the following during conflict.

1. Calmly _____ the chastisement of the people.
2. _____ wisely from all warranted criticism, regardless of its origin or manner of presentation.
3. Openly _____ of any wrong or foolishness.
4. Freely _____ those who have trespassed against the pastor and treat them as forgiven.
5. _____ make the requested changes that are not unscriptural or otherwise irresponsible (i.e. harmful to others).
6. Preach and _____ love toward all.
7. Remain an example of _____ and integrity in all situations.
8. Speak and write _____ when addressing the congregation and the outside community.
9. _____ a personal walk with Jesus Christ.
10. _____ authority to that granted by the church bylaws, resisting all temptations to invoke "marshal law."

Small Group Exercise

Read the following case study. After the instructor completes the discussion regarding the study, complete the questions at the end and discuss your opinion with your team members.

When the Leaders Leave

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's 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.

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:

Chose 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
 - 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.

- b. Remain available during the exercise time to answer questions. What kinds of people are most open to the Church's ministry?
- c. How should the church respond to a large influx of people with problems?
- d. How do you feel when individuals you know customarily take, rather than give?