



Managing Conflict in the Local Church

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Objectives:

- Help church leaders understand the need to manage conflict
- Identify escalating levels of conflict
- Learn Biblical strategies to resolve conflict that bring glory & honor to Christ



Conflict

- A serious disagreement or argument, typically a protracted one (www.dictionary.com)
- Fight, battle, or war (*Merriam-Webster*)
- *a*: Competitive or opposing action of incompatibles : antagonistic state or action (as of divergent ideas, interests, or persons) *b*: mental struggle resulting from incompatible or opposing needs, drives, wishes, or external or internal demands (*Merriam-Webster*)



The Need for Managing Church Conflict

1. The church is made up of redeemed sinners
2. The church is under the attack of Satan
3. The church is affected by influences of the world



Five Levels of Conflict

- LEVEL 1— A Problem to Solve
- LEVEL 2— Self Protection
- LEVEL 3— It's About Winning
- LEVEL 4— Fight or Flight
- LEVEL 5— Destroy the Enemy



LEVEL 1—A Problem to Solve

1. Tackling the problem
2. No personal attacks
3. Not digging up old problems



LEVEL 2—Self Protection

1. Worried about saving face
2. Disputers keep records of wrong
3. Casting doubt or judgment on the other party



LEVEL 3—It's About Winning

1. People lining up to take sides
2. The soul motivation is to win
3. Language becomes vague



LEVEL 4—Fight or Flight

1. Fighting for your position
 - a. The fight centers on principles
 - b. No room for compromise

2. Fleeing the situation altogether
 - a. Unable to see any resolution in sight
 - b. Relationships are damaged



LEVEL 5—Destroy the Enemy

1. Positions are locked in
2. The genesis of the problem is lost



Strategies to Manage Conflict

- Following Matthew 18: 15-33
- Collaborative problem solving
- Seek an interventionist



Following Matthew 18: 15-33

- Conflict cannot be resolved through avoidance
- Establish the facts
- Christ gives the Church the authority to resolve conflict
- The church must practice unlimited forgiveness



Collaborative Problem Solving

Ground Rules:

- Willing to take time to understand other's point of view
- Develop & maintain spirit of cooperation, NOT competition
- Accept that differences are OK
- Work towards mutual solution
- Communicate clearly



Collaborative Problem Solving, *cont...*

Steps to Take:

- Identify the problem or issue
- Focus on the interest and needs
- Deal with the offense as soon as possible
- Invent options
- Make the agreement
- Reach a consensus



Seek an Interventionist

1. When to use an interventionist
 - a. When parties agree on a mediator
 - b. When leadership has a desire for God's glory

2. Importance of neutrality
 - a. Must be intentional
 - b. Interest is only to honor Christ



Biblical Examples of Conflict Resolution

A. Old Testament

1. Abraham & Lot (Genesis 13: 5-10)
2. Moses & the tribe of Reuben (Numbers 32: 1-18)

B. New Testament

1. Paul & Philemon
2. Jesus (Mark 10: 35-44)



Take Home Message...

Jesus said, “Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God” Matthew 5:9.