



**A practical free program of specific tried-and-tested tools  
for effectively and swiftly  
dealing with conflict in the home, workplace, church and community.**

**Program:**

- **Tips and Tools for Healthy Conflict Resolution**
- **Family Feuds: Managing Family Conflict**
- **Dealing with Destructive Conflict: Identify and Terminate**
- **Harnessing Constructive Conflict: Rules for Fighting Fair**
- **Workplace Warfare: Managing On-the-Job Conflict**
- **Unresolved Conflict: Where to From Here?**
- **Question and Answer Session**

# Resolving Conflict in the Home and Workplace

A program of specific tried-and-tested tools for effectively and swiftly dealing with conflict in the home, workplace, church and community.

Lionel Hartley, PhD

Program:

Tips and Tools for Healthy Conflict Resolution

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Harnessing Constructive Conflict: Rules for Fighting Fair

Workplace Warfare: Managing On-the-Job Conflict

Unresolved Conflict: Where to From Here?

Question and Answer Session

Resolving Conflict in the [2] Home and Workplace

Seminar Transcript (word-for-word)

By Lionel D C Hartley, PhD

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Published by: L&R Hartley

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Resolving Conflict in the [3] Home and Workplace

## [Slide: Introduction]

### Who is your speaker for today?



**Lionel Hartley**, author, radio broadcaster, public speaker and retired sociologist.

He was a Lifestyle Educator and Family-life Counsellor for three decades.

He is a grandparent, married to Rosemary with three grown children.

*Lionel D C Hartley, DipAdmin(NZIM), HonDip (DramArt), DipTheol (SDB), RGN (Psy,PsyPaed, Admin,Nutn), BA (Lit), MA, PhD [etc.][etc.]*  
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**We welcome your participation in today's seminar.  
Time will be allowed at the end for your questions.**

She was just fifteen. Tears filled her eyes and quivers moved her lips. Quickly she placed her hands over her ears. The shouting from her mother exploded her emotions and her restraint. And, suddenly, she screamed for mother to shut up!

Conflict.

From all accounts, he stood above the rest. His preaching touched hearts and informed minds. His church suffered growth pains. People came from all around to be a part of the ministry growing under his leadership. Quietly, however, on one otherwise

forgettable morning his wife walked out. She did not come back. He resigned. They divorced. Their children cringed. The church almost fell apart. The community laughed.

Conflict.

Across the table he stared into the other man's eyes. Slowly he stood. Pointing his finger in his new adversary's direction, he said, "Never, never have we done it like that before." It was classic. The obstruction grew from long years of control and power. How dare anyone else presume to offer guidance for his small [business] organization?

Conflict.

The meeting was informal. Few were invited. She figured the privacy of her own home served to strengthen her cause. Slowly she began. "I've been studying my Bible at great length lately. I've discovered something our church has never taught before. Now I'm wondering if our Pastor is really the man to lead us."

Conflict.

8:30pm. Once again, he failed to come home on time. Even the children wondered why Daddy seemed to be away so much. There were those strange phone calls. The phone would ring. The Mrs. would answer,

“Hello.” Click. Nothing. The caller hung up. And what about those new clothes he seemed to be buying so quickly over the past few weeks. Why the change in style? And what of his quiet, pensive demeanour of late? Did she detect a note of guilt sketched in his eyes? Finally, the day came. He said, “We need to talk...”

Conflict.

Ring. Ring. “ABC Products. This is Sam Johnson. How can I help you?”

“Mr. Johnson, my name is Jane Smith. I work in accounts receivable for XYZ Industries. I’m calling to find out when we can expect payment on your overdue account. I see that ABC Products has been issued two past-due notices.”

Silence.

“Mr. Johnson? Mr. Johnson are you still there?”

“Ah, yes, sorry. You seem to have caught me off guard. I was under the impression that bill had been paid. Let me check with my partner and I’ll call you back.”

“Well, okay, Mr Johnson. What time will you be calling?”


“Ah, well, I’m not really sure. I’ll call you soon. Goodbye.” Click. Sam’s mind began to race, “Not another one. What is George doing? He knows the

books are his responsibility. I know there has been plenty of income to cover our expenses. Why are these bills not being paid?”

Conflict.

Not one of the above scenarios is false. Unfortunately, they are also not unusual. They could be the stories of people we know — right there in our family, our community, our church, our business. Everyone either has a problem, is a problem, or lives with a problem.

[Slide]



**Managing and Resolving  
Conflict in a Positive Way**

- 1. Conflict Resolution in the Home**
- 2. Conflict Resolution and Mediation in the Workplace**
- 3. Conflict Resolution in Faith Communities**

Our seminar today is divided into three sections. In this first section I will deal with issues of conflict in the home. We will then learn some skills to deal with

Resolving Conflict in the [7] Home and Workplace

and mediate conflict in the workplace. Later in the program I will investigate conflict resolution from a spiritual perspective looking at conflict among people with a religious faith or belief system. In this latter section, even if you have no faith in Sacred Writings, what I will share may still be of benefit.

Firstly, here are some tips and tools for healthy conflict resolution.

Conflict is a normal, and even healthy, part of relationships. After all, two people can't be expected to agree on everything at all times. Since relationship conflicts are inevitable, learning to deal with them in a healthy way is crucial. When conflict is mismanaged, it can harm the relationship. But when handled in a respectful and positive way, conflict provides an opportunity for growth, ultimately strengthening the bond between two people. By learning the skills you need for successful conflict resolution, you can keep your personal and professional relationships strong and growing.



[Slide]

## Fundamentals of Conflict Resolution



Conflict arises from differences. It occurs whenever people disagree over their values, motivations, perceptions, ideas, or desires. Sometimes these differences look trivial, but when a conflict triggers strong feelings, a deep personal and relational need is at the core of the problem—a need to feel safe and secure, a need to feel respected and valued, or a need for greater closeness and intimacy.

**[Slide o/lay]**

## **Recognizing and resolving conflicting needs**

If you are out of touch with your feelings or so stressed that you can only pay attention to a limited number of emotions, you won't be able to understand your own needs. If you don't understand your deep-seated needs, you will have a hard time communicating with others and staying in touch with what is really troubling you. For example, couples often argue about petty differences—the way she hangs the towels, the way he parts his hair—rather than what is really bothering them.

In personal relationships, a lack of understanding about differing needs can result in distance, arguments, and break-ups.

In workplace conflicts, differing needs are often at the heart of bitter disputes. When you can recognize the legitimacy of conflicting needs and become willing to examine them in an environment of compassionate understanding, it opens pathways to creative problem solving, team building, and improved relationships. When you resolve conflict and disagreement quickly and painlessly, mutual trust will flourish.

[Slide]

## Successful conflict resolution depends on your ability to:

- Manage stress
- Control your emotions and behaviour
- Pay attention to feelings
- Be aware of and respectful of differences

**Successful conflict resolution depends on your ability to:**

**[Slide o/lay] Manage stress while remaining alert and calm.** By staying calm, you can accurately read and interpret verbal and nonverbal communication.

**[Slide o/lay] Control your emotions and behaviour.** When you're in control of your emotions, you can communicate your needs without threatening, frightening, or punishing others.

**[Slide o/lay] Pay attention to the feelings being expressed** as well as the spoken words of others.

**[Slide o/lay] Be aware of and respectful of differences.** By avoiding disrespectful words and actions, you can resolve the problem faster.

Now, you don't need to write these down yet as I will be going over them again soon in more detail.

## **Ways of Managing and Resolving Conflict**

Conflict triggers strong emotions and can lead to hurt feelings, disappointment, and discomfort.

When handled in an unhealthy manner, it can cause irreparable rifts, resentments, and break ups. But when conflict is resolved in a healthy way, it increases our understanding of one another, builds trust, and strengthens our relationship bonds.

[Slide]

**Unhealthy responses to conflict are characterized by:**

- **Self preoccupancy**
- **Negative reactions**
- **Withdrawal of love**
- **Expectation of bad outcomes**
- **Fear and avoidance of conflict**



**Unhealthy responses to conflict are characterized by:**

- Self preoccupation: An inability to recognize and respond to matters of great importance to the other person
- Explosive, angry, hurtful, and resentful reactions
- The withdrawal of love, resulting in rejection, isolation, shaming, and fear of abandonment
- The expectation of bad outcomes
- The fear and avoidance of conflict

A lack of trust. Suspicion is a breeding ground for destructive conflict. A husband or wife who was hurt, let down, lied to by parents or by earlier companions may have a difficult time totally trusting his or her partner. Destructive conflict breeds rapidly when we refuse to trust one another. Dr. Jay Adams gives an excellent picture of its tentacles:

Tom and Jill sat across the desk. She said in the most bitter terms. "I am absolutely certain that this husband of mine is cheating on me; he's been stealing money from his overtime pay. I know he's been stealing money. And I want to know what he's been doing with it." She had been holding this over his head for the last four or five months, ever since she discovered it had been going on. Turning to her husband, the

counsellor said, “Tom, where did the money go; did you really take it?” Slowly he reached into his pocket, pulled out his wallet, dug down into the secret compartment, and replied, it’s all here,” as he pulled it out and threw it down on the desk. “I’ve been saving it for our anniversary for a special time for Jill.”

There is no hope for a relationship to grow as long as one partner holds a shred of suspicion over the other. Mistrust is a killer to companionship, and the conflict which arises out of it destroys with vengeance.

[Slide]

## Healthy responses to conflict are characterized by:

- Recognition of what's important
- Readiness to forgive
- Ability to seek compromise
- Belief in win-win



### Healthy responses to conflict are characterized by:

- The capacity to recognize and respond to important matters
- A readiness to forgive and forget
- The ability to seek compromise and avoid punishing
- A belief that resolution can support the interests and needs of both parties



[Slide]

## Key Conflict Resolution Skills

- **Quickly relieve stress**
- **Recognize and manage your emotions.**
- **Improve your nonverbal communication skills**
- **Use humour and play to deal with challenges**

### Key Conflict Resolution Skills

The ability to successfully manage and resolve conflict depends on four key skills. Together, these four skills form a fifth skill that is greater than the sum of its parts: the ability to take conflict in stride and resolve differences in ways that build trust and confidence.

#### [Slide o/lay] Conflict resolution skill 1: Quickly relieve stress

The capacity to remain relaxed and focused in tense situations is a vital aspect of conflict resolution. If you don't know how to stay centred and in control of yourself, you may become emotionally overwhelmed

in challenging situations. The best way to rapidly and reliably relieve stress is through the senses: sight, sound, touch, taste, and smell. But each person responds differently to sensory input, so you need to find things that are soothing to you.

**[Slide o/lay] Conflict resolution skill 2: Recognize and manage your emotions.**

Emotional awareness is the key to understanding yourself and others. If you don't know how you feel or why you feel that way, you won't be able to communicate effectively or smooth over disagreements. Although knowing your own feelings may seem simple, many people ignore or try to sedate strong emotions like anger, sadness, and fear. But your ability to handle conflict depends on being connected to these feelings. If you're afraid of strong emotions or if you insist on finding solutions that are strictly rational, your ability to face and resolve differences will be impaired.

**[Slide o/lay] Conflict resolution skill 3: Improve your nonverbal communication skills**

The most important information exchanged during conflicts and arguments is often communicated nonverbally. Nonverbal communication includes eye contact, facial expression, tone of voice, posture, touch, and gestures. When you're in the middle of a

conflict, paying close attention to the other person's nonverbal signals may help you figure out what the other person is really saying, respond in a way that builds trust, and get to the root of the problem.

Simply nonverbal signals such as a calm tone of voice, a reassuring touch, or a concerned facial expression can go a long way toward defusing a heated exchange.

#### **[Slide o/day] Conflict resolution skill 4: Use humour and play to deal with challenges**

You can avoid many confrontations and resolve arguments and disagreements by communicating in a playful or humorous way. Humour can help you say things that might otherwise be difficult to express without creating a flap. However, it's important that you laugh *with* the other person, not *at* them.

You can also defuse a tense situation by laughing at yourself. For example, when my wife Rosemary and I were courting there was one particularly memorable occasion when we were taking a walk together along a riverbank. I was so absorbed in our conversation I did not notice that the grass verge that we were walking on was giving way under my weight. Rosemary was far enough away from the edge not to disappear into the river, but I was less fortunate. Rosemary watched in amazement as I slowly slid out of sight. As I felt this strange sinking feeling, my first thought was, at

least I haven't landed in the water. Just as I was thinking this, the water began to lap around my face and I felt the wetness seep through my clothing. As I clambered up the slippery riverbank, my blue tailored suit, white shirt and tie dripping with riverweed and mud, I could see that Rosemary didn't know whether to laugh or cry. Although I was soaked to the skin, my suit ruined and surely looking less than my best, I defused the situation by bursting out laughing. In my uncomfortable state this was at first feigned, however as Rosemary joined in and the tension was diffused, I realised just how humorous I must have appeared. When humour and play are used to reduce tension or anger, to reframe problems, and put the situation into perspective, tension, and indeed conflict, can actually become an opportunity for greater connection and intimacy.

[Slide]

## Tips for managing and resolving conflict

- **Make the relationship your priority.**
- **Focus on the present.**
- **Pick your battles.**
- **Be willing to forgive.**
- **Know when to let something go.**

### **Tips for managing and resolving conflict**

Managing and resolving conflict requires emotional maturity, self-control, and empathy. It can be tricky, frustrating, and even frightening. You can ensure that the process is as positive as possible by sticking to the following conflict resolution guidelines:

#### **[Slide o/lay] Make the relationship your priority.**

Maintaining and strengthening the relationship, rather than “winning” the argument, should always be your first priority. Be respectful of the other person and his or her viewpoint. Demonstrating respect is one of the greatest keys to opening the channels of

communication. Mutual respect means that we come away from the situation better not bitter.

**Focus on the present.** If you're holding on to old hurts and resentments, your ability to see the reality of the current situation will be impaired. Rather than looking to the past and assigning blame, focus on what you can do in the here-and-now to solve the problem.

**[Slide o/lay] Pick your battles.** Conflicts can be draining, so it's important to consider whether the issue is really worthy of your time and energy. Maybe you don't want to surrender a parking space if you've been circling for 15 minutes. But if there are dozens of spots, arguing over a single space isn't worth it.

**[Slide o/lay] Be willing to forgive.** Resolving conflict is impossible if you're unwilling or unable to forgive. Resolution lies in releasing the urge to punish, which can never compensate for our losses and only adds to our injury by further depleting and draining our lives.

**[Slide o/lay] Know when to let something go.** If you can't come to an agreement, agree to disagree. It takes two people to keep an argument going. If a conflict is going nowhere, you can choose to disengage and move on.

The author Leonard Sweet writes about Tom Wiles who served a stint as university chaplain at Grand Canyon University in Phoenix, Arizona. A few years earlier, Tom had picked Leonard up at the Phoenix airport in Tom's new Ford Utility and whisked him away to keynote a leadership conference at the university. Since Leonard was still mourning the trade-in of his Dodge truck, they immediately bonded, sharing truck stories and laughing at his bumper-sticker: "Nothing is more beautiful than a man and his truck."

As Leonard climbed into Tom's near-new Ranger for the ride back to the airport the next day, Leonard noticed two big scrapes by the passenger door. "What happened here?" he asked.

"My neighbour's basketball post fell down and left those dents and white scars," Tom replied with a downcast voice.

"You're kidding! How awful," Leonard commiserated. "This truck is so new I can smell it."

"What's even worse is my neighbour doesn't feel responsible for the damage."

Rising to his newfound friend's defence, Leonard said, "Did you contact your insurance company? How are you going to get him to pay for it?"

"This has been a real spiritual journey for me," Tom replied. "After a lot of soul-searching and discussions with my wife about hiring an attorney, it came down

to this: I can either be in the right, or I can be in a relationship with my neighbour. Since my neighbour will probably be with me longer than this truck will, I decided that I'd rather be in the relationship than be in the right."

[Slide]

## Rules for Fighting Fair Part 1



**Rules for Fighting Fair Part 1**

1. Remain calm
2. Express feelings in words, not actions
3. Be specific
4. Deal with only one issue at a time
5. No "hitting below the belt"
6. Avoid accusations
7. Don't generalize
8. Avoid pretence
9. Don't stockpile
10. Avoid clamming up

The slide features a background image of a man and a woman standing in profile, facing each other with serious expressions, suggesting a conflict. The man is wearing an orange t-shirt and has his arms crossed. The woman is wearing a white top and has her hair in a ponytail. The background is a blue sky with white clouds.

[Slide o/lay] **Remain calm.** Try not to overreact to difficult situations. By remaining calm it will be more likely that others will consider your viewpoint.

[Slide o/lay] **Express feelings in words, not actions.** Telling someone directly and honestly how you feel



can be a very powerful form of communication. If you start to feel so angry or upset that you feel you may lose control, take a “time out” and do something to help yourself feel steadier.

**[Slide o/lay] Be specific about what is bothering you.** Vague complaints are hard to work on.

**[Slide o/lay] Deal with only one issue at a time.** Don't introduce other topics until each is fully discussed.

This avoids the “kitchen sink” effect where people throw in all their complaints while not allowing anything to be resolved.

**[Slide o/lay] No “hitting below the belt.”** Attacking areas of personal sensitivity creates an atmosphere of distrust, anger, and vulnerability.

**[Slide o/lay] Avoid accusations.** Accusations will cause others to defend themselves. Instead, talk about how someone's actions made you feel

**[Slide o/lay] Don't generalize.** Avoid words like “never” or “always.” Such generalizations are usually inaccurate and will heighten tensions.

**[Slide o/lay] Avoid “make believe” (pretence).** Exaggerating or inventing a complaint - or your feelings about it will prevent the real issues from surfacing. Stick with the facts and your honest feelings.

**[Slide o/lay] Don’t stockpile.** Storing up lots of grievances and hurt feelings over time is counterproductive.

It’s almost impossible to deal with numerous old problems for which interpretations may differ.

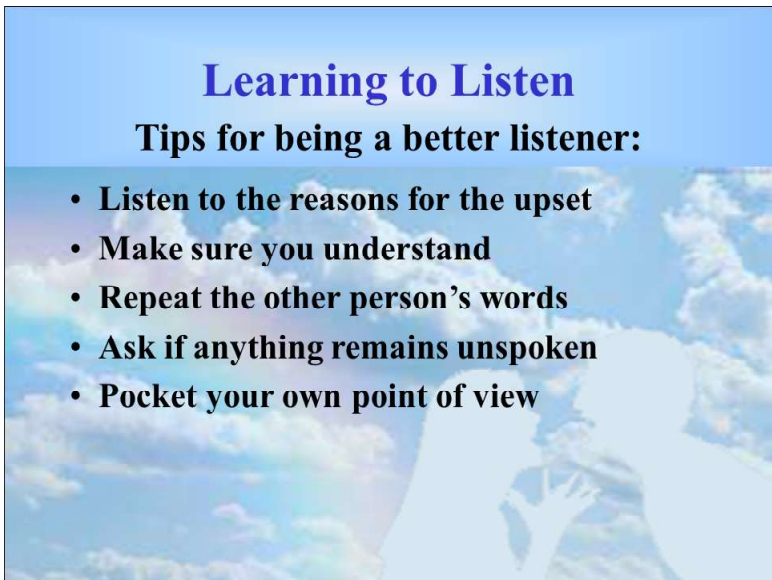
Try to deal with problems as they arise.

**[Slide o/lay] Avoid clamming up.** When one person becomes silent and stops responding to the other, frustration and anger can result. Positive results can only be attained with two way communication.

## **Managing and resolving conflict by learning how to listen**

When people are upset, the words they use rarely convey the issues and needs at the heart of the problem. When we listen for what is felt as well as said, we connect more deeply to our own needs and emotions, and to those of other people. Listening in this way also strengthens us, informs us, and makes it easier for others to hear us.

[Slide]



**Learning to Listen**

**Tips for being a better listener:**

- **Listen to the reasons for the upset**
- **Make sure you understand**
- **Repeat the other person's words**
- **Ask if anything remains unspoken**
- **Pocket your own point of view**

### **Tips for being a better listener:**

· Listen to the reasons the other person gives for being upset.

- Make sure you understand what the other person is telling you—from his or her point of view.
- Repeat the other person's words, and ask if you have understood correctly.
- Ask if anything remains unspoken, giving the person time to think before answering.
- Resist the temptation to interject your own point of view until the other person has said everything he or she wants to say and feels that you have listened to and understood his or her message.

[Slide]



**Learning to Listen**

**Responses While Listening:**

- **Encourage**
- **Clarify**
- **Restate**
- **Reflect feelings**
- **Validate concerns**

The slide features a blue header with the title 'Learning to Listen' in bold blue text. Below the header, the text 'Responses While Listening:' is displayed in bold black text. A bulleted list of five items follows: 'Encourage', 'Clarify', 'Restate', 'Reflect feelings', and 'Validate concerns', all in bold black text. The background of the slide is a light blue sky with white clouds. In the bottom right corner, there is a close-up photograph of a man with glasses and a surprised expression, with his hand cupped behind his ear as if listening intently.

When listening to the other person's point of view, the following responses are often helpful:

**[Slide o/lay] Encourage** the other person to share his or her issues as fully as possible.

- "I want to understand what has upset you."
- "I want to know what you are really hoping for."

**Clarify** the real issues, rather than making assumptions. Ask questions that allow you to gain this information, and which let the other person know you are trying to understand.

- "Can you say more about that?"
- "Is that the way it usually happens?"

**[Slide o/lay] Restate** what you have heard, so you are both able to see what has been understood so far

- It may be that the other person will then realize that additional information is needed.

- "It sounds like you weren't expecting that to happen."

**[Slide o/lay] Reflect feelings** - be as clear as possible.

- "I can imagine how upsetting that must have been."

**[Slide o/lay] Validate** the concerns of the other person, even if a solution is elusive at this time. Expressing appreciation can be a very powerful message if it is conveyed with integrity and respect.

- “I really appreciate that we are talking about this issue.”

- “I am glad we are trying to figure this out.”

## **Family Feuds: Managing Family Conflict**

In the early years of marriage, it is important to address conflict rather than avoid it. Sociologist Judith Wallerstein, after interviews with couples, wrote:

Every married person knows that “conflict-free marriage” is an oxymoron. In reality it is neither possible nor desirable ... In a contemporary marriage is it expected that husbands and wives will have different opinions. More important, they can't avoid having serious collisions on big issues that defy compromise.

I would like to add to this by proclaiming that if two people agree on everything, then one of them either isn't thinking or allowed to think.

[Slide]

## Family Feuds: Managing Family Conflict

- Healthy conflict can help strengthen relationships
- Unhealthy conflict and anger cover up love and affection
- The success or failure of a marriage may depend on the way a couple copes with their anger

If conflict is handled in a healthy way, it can help strengthen relationships, but if conflicts continue, anger can cover up love and affection. In my research into anger, research seems to indicate that more anger is developed in marriage relationships than in any other relationship. Unresolved anger is the principal cause of violence toward another person. The success or failure of a marriage may depend on the way a couple copes with their anger.

Conflict, anger, and fights in a marriage are caused by differences between marital partners. Left unresolved, these can lead to distrust, tension, and even fear. Most



people have learned to deal with anger by either venting it or suppressing it. When a couple experiences conflict, they eventually learn what they can and cannot reveal about themselves to avoid future conflicts. Some couples yell and scream, back off, and then gradually move closer again until another conflict arises. Some couples go too far and hurt each other emotionally or physically with their angry outbursts. Other couples deal with anger by suppressing it. Many people feel uncomfortable about expressing anger directly so they learn not to make an issue of things. Suppressed anger can be dangerous because it is always there simmering below the surface. Another substitute for expressing anger directly is passive-aggression (I deal with this in a lot more detail in my Anger Management Seminars but chronic criticism, sarcasm, and nagging are examples of passive-aggression). Another example of suppressing anger over a period of time can be indifference. Couples may become emotionally detached.

If couples learn to express anger and deal with their conflicts early in their relationship, it can strengthen their marriage in the long run. Here are some more guidelines that can help couples with conflict management. Called **bonding fighting**, the idea is for partners to try to build up, not tear each other down even as they argue.

**[Slide]**

## **Rules for Fighting Fair Part 2**



**Rules for Fighting Fair Part 2**

- 11. Level with each other**
- 12. Use “I-statements” when you can**
- 13. Avoid mixed, or double messages**
- 14. Choose the time and place carefully**
- 15. Focus on the ‘now’ problems**
- 16. Any complaint needs at least one solution**
- 17. Accept that you can’t change your spouse**
- 18. Don’t try to win**
- 19. Know how and when to stop fighting**

The slide features a background image of a man and a woman in conversation. The man is wearing an orange shirt and has his arms crossed, while the woman is wearing a white top and is looking towards him. The background is a soft-focus outdoor scene with a blue sky and greenery.

**[Slide o/lay]** 1. Level with each other. Don’t assume you know how your mate feels. Conflicts often go unresolved when couples don’t talk about their feelings and neither is aware the other is holding back.

**[Slide o/lay]** 2. To avoid attacks, use “I-statements” when you can.

I-statements are most effective if communicated in a positive way.

**[Slide o/lay]** 3. Avoid mixed, or double messages. These can be verbal or non-verbal. Mixed messages

allow people to let others know they are angry at them and at the same time to deny they are.

**[Slide o/lay]** 4. Choose the time and place carefully. Be sure both of you are ready to talk.

**[Slide o/lay]** 5. Focus on the problems that are happening now.

**[Slide o/lay]** 6. If you have a complaint, be ready to propose at least one solution to the problem. Recognize there are several ways to solve a problem and be willing to compromise.

**[Slide o/lay]** 7. Accept that you can't change your spouse, but that you can change what you do. People who refuse to change or insist they can't change, are refusing to have an intimate relationship.

A certain bride was terribly nervous as she stood at the back of the church waiting for the cue for her grand entrance. Gripping Daddy's arm she whispered her fears to him. What if she should trip on her train? What if she should look around and see someone who would make her laugh out loud? What if she noticed that a friend was absent? What if ...

Her daddy patted her hand reassuringly and said she only had to think about three things. Firstly, to walk down the centre of the aisle. Secondly, to continually look ahead at the altar. And thirdly to listen to the hymn for when the music stops she stops. Just those three things: the aisle, the altar and the hymn.

So as she walked in to the organ playing the Bridal March, we all heard her say to herself, “aisle, altar, hymn; aisle, altar, hymn; aisle, altar, hymn; I’ll alter him”

**[Slide o/lay]** 8. Don’t try to win. If one partner wins, the other must lose. If both partners can understand each other’s differences, they become closer and both win.

**[Slide o/lay]** 9. Happy couples know how and when to stop fighting. Ideally a fight ends when each has had a chance to air their differences. But sometimes if partners are too hurt to continue, they need to stop arguing before they reach a resolution.

Happy couples are not conflict free. Instead, they change behaviours, and present reasonable alternatives. Even having fights may bring a couple closer together if they work to overcome the assumption that conflict and anger don’t belong in a healthy relationship.

[Slide]

## **Workplace Warfare: Managing On-the-Job Conflict**

**Chronic workplace conflict leads to:**

- **Loss of synergy**
- **Lost productivity**
- **Administrative and legal costs**
- **Perception costs**
- **Turnover and attrition**
- **Toxic company reputation**

### **Workplace Warfare: Managing On-the-Job Conflict**

According to a study by the Society of Human Resource Management, HR managers report spending between 24 and 60 percent of their time dealing with employee disputes.

When people work with people, they are going to disagree from time to time. Squabbles happen. And without proper management, simple disagreements can escalate into all types of full-blown battles: turf disputes about roles, responsibilities and territories; policy disagreements about how things should be done; even personality and style clashes.

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**[Slide o/lay]** Whatever the type, chronic workplace conflict leads to:

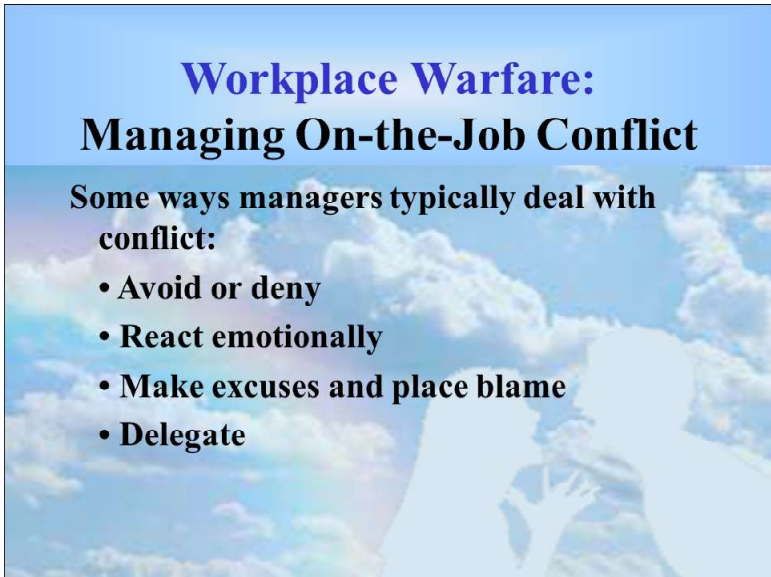
- **Loss of synergy** – office morale suffers and co-workers do not want to work together.
- **Lost productivity** – job performance suffers when employees are distracted by conflict.
- **Administrative and legal costs** – valuable time and money is wasted settling disputes.
- **Perception costs** – groups of workers who continually argue are viewed as less competent and trustworthy by others in the company.
- **Turnover and attrition** – good people eventually tire of the negative environment and leave for a better corporate culture.
- **Toxic company reputation** – in extreme cases, an organization suffering from chronic conflict can develop a “toxic” reputation, repelling top performers.

### **Conflict is Inevitable – But it Doesn’t Have to be Destructive**

Employees are more than a mere collection of job skills. Each person shows up for work each day as just that – a person – bringing along a complex mix of

emotions, experiences, personality, values, ambitions, wants and needs. While this mix often yields innovation and collaboration among co-workers, it can also lead to conflict.

[Slide]



**Workplace Warfare:  
Managing On-the-Job Conflict**

**Some ways managers typically deal with conflict:**

- **Avoid or deny**
- **React emotionally**
- **Make excuses and place blame**
- **Delegate**

Here are some ways managers typically deal with this conflict:

- Avoid or deny – ignore it long enough and the problem will go away
- React emotionally – become angry, aggressive or fearful

- Make excuses and place blame
- Delegate – make it someone else’s problem

Defence mechanisms such as these can have disastrous consequences for your organization.

But conflict doesn’t have to be destructive. In fact, conflict can be very healthy for a work group – with the right management.

As a manager, you influence whether a disagreement turns your company into a war zone, or instead fuels creative problem solving. The key lies in how you manage conflict.

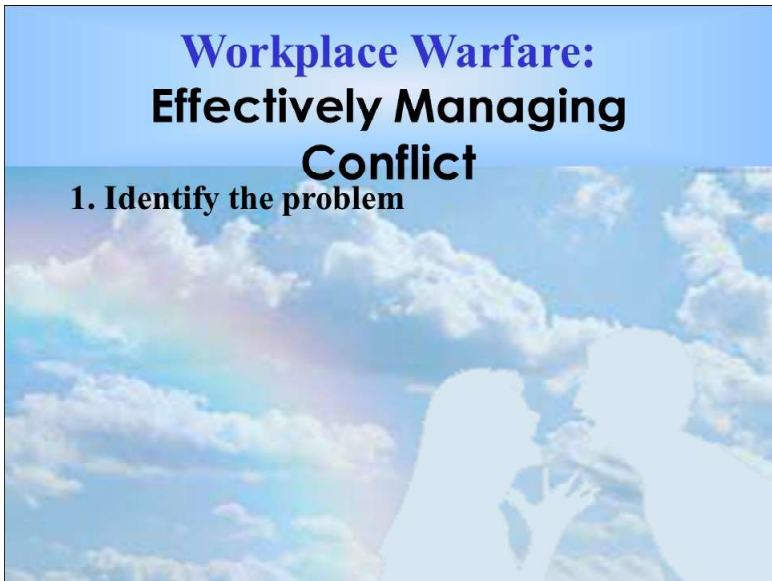


## Effectively Managing Conflict

Don't fight conflict. It's a normal part of business. If you feel uncomfortable or anxious about dealing with conflict, don't worry – none of us is born knowing how to deal with differences of opinion.

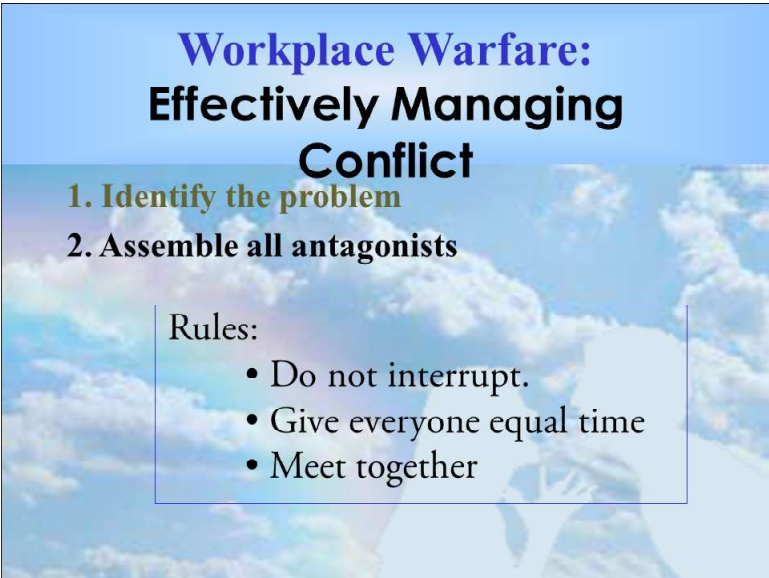
Effectively managing conflict is simply a skill you must learn, then in turn teach to employees.

[Slide]



**1. Identify the problem** – make sure everyone knows what the issue is.

[Slide]



**Workplace Warfare:  
Effectively Managing  
Conflict**

- 1. Identify the problem**
- 2. Assemble all antagonists**

Rules:

- Do not interrupt.
- Give everyone equal time
- Meet together

**2. Assemble all antagonists** – give each a few minutes to present his perspective and opinion, following these rules:

- Do not interrupt.
- Give everyone equal time to speak.
- Meet together – never meet with parties individually.

[Slide]



**3. Set expectations** – let all parties involved know you will not take sides, and are committed to ensuring resolution. Express your confidence in their abilities. Tell them you expect them to resolve the conflict as civil adults.

[Slide]

**Workplace Warfare:  
Effectively Managing  
Conflict**

- 1. Identify the problem**
- 2. Assemble all antagonists**
- 3. Set expectations**
- 4. Actively listen**

Responses have two components:

- Naming the feeling
- Stating the reason

**4. Actively listen** – encourage all parties to use active listening – restating, in your own words, what the other person has said.

- This key conflict resolution skill demonstrates that you understand and are concerned about the other’s point of view.

- Responses have two components: naming the feeling the other person is expressing, and stating the reason he feels that way (e.g., “It sounds like you’re annoyed by Egbert’s lateness.”).

- Active listening promotes better communication and has a calming effect in emotional situations.

[Slide]



**Workplace Warfare:  
Effectively Managing  
Conflict**

- 1. Identify the problem**
- 2. Assemble all antagonists**
- 3. Set expectations**
- 4. Actively listen**
- 5. De-escalate when necessary**

**5. De-escalate when necessary** – use conflict de-escalation to keep the discussion from turning into an argument.

[Slide]

## Workplace Warfare: Effectively Managing Conflict

1. Identify the problem
2. Assemble all antagonists
3. Set expectations
4. Actively listen
5. De-escalate when necessary

Tips for de-escalating

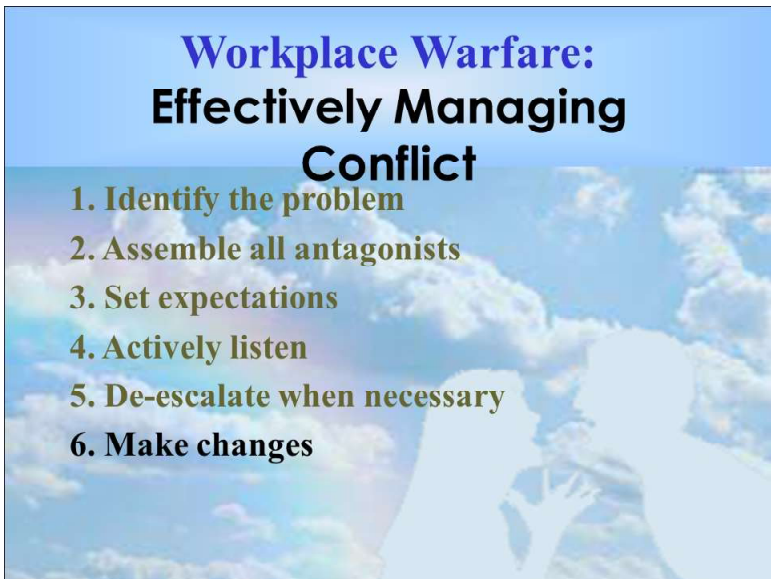
- Stick with “I” statements
- Focus on work behaviours
- No name-calling or put-downs
- Stay factual; avoid generalities
- Use a soft civil tone
- Use civil body language
- Take a time-out if needed
- Acknowledge points of view

### **Tips for de-escalating:**

- Stick with “I” statements; avoid “you” statements.
- Focus on work behaviours; don’t allow personal attacks.
- Do not allow name-calling or put-downs.
- Require antagonists to stay factual and avoid sweeping generalities.
- Encourage participants to use a civil tone; soften your tone as well.

- Make sure body language is civil as well (crossed arms, clenched fists and eye rolling can be as hostile as spoken words).
- Take a time-out if needed to cool down.
- Acknowledge different points of view.

[Slide]



**Workplace Warfare:  
Effectively Managing  
Conflict**

- 1. Identify the problem**
- 2. Assemble all antagonists**
- 3. Set expectations**
- 4. Actively listen**
- 5. De-escalate when necessary**
- 6. Make changes**

- 6. Make changes** – discuss and commit to making changes necessary to resolving the conflict.
- Ask each participant to describe specific actions they'd like to see the other party take.

- Have participants verbalize what the other could do more of, less of, stop or start.
- Figure out what needs to be done, realistically, to achieve each individual's goals.
- Find an area of compromise – is there some point on which everyone agrees?  
Use this as a starting point. If there is no area of agreement, focus on a common long-term goal and begin from there.
- Come away from the discussion with concrete steps each participant will take toward resolving the conflict.

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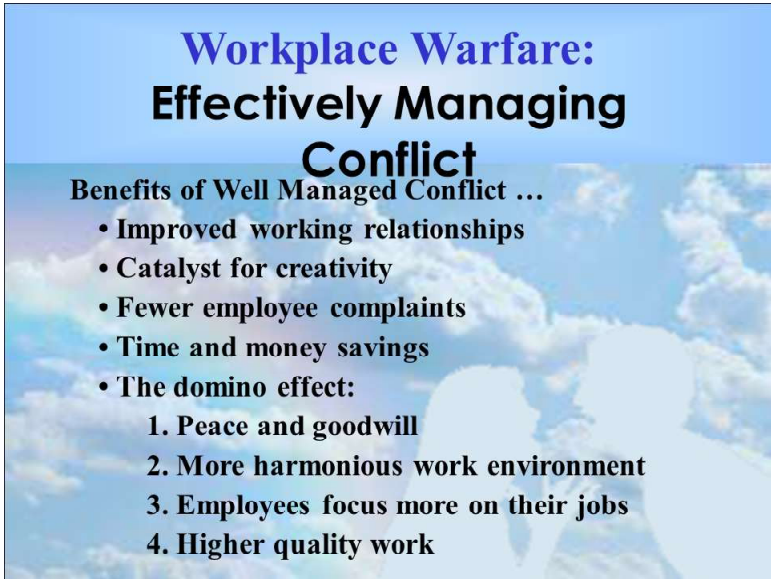
**Workplace Warfare:  
Effectively Managing  
Conflict**

- 1. Identify the problem**
- 2. Assemble all antagonists**
- 3. Set expectations**
- 4. Actively listen**
- 5. De-escalate when necessary**
- 6. Make changes**
- 7. Review progress**



**7. Review progress** – once commitments are made, set a time to review progress – hold participants accountable for living up to their commitments.

[Slide] **Benefits of Well Managed Conflict**



**Workplace Warfare:  
Effectively Managing  
Conflict**

**Benefits of Well Managed Conflict ...**

- **Improved working relationships**
- **Catalyst for creativity**
- **Fewer employee complaints**
- **Time and money savings**
- **The domino effect:**
  1. **Peace and goodwill**
  2. **More harmonious work environment**
  3. **Employees focus more on their jobs**
  4. **Higher quality work**

Given all the negatives of workplace conflict, managers often view it as a problem that needs to be eliminated. But when managed properly, workplace conflict does have its upside. In fact, it can even be healthy.

Here are a few of the benefits:

- **Improved working relationships** – when disagreements are resolved in a controlled and civil manner, employees’ respect for one another grows.

- **Catalyst for creativity** – conflict yields innovation – it provides a work group with opportunities to learn, grow and develop new solutions.
- **Fewer headaches** – in general, managers who deal with conflict successfully experience fewer employee complaints than managers who fail to do so.
- **Time and money savings** – informal complaint resolution reduces administrative processing and eliminates legal fees.

### **The Domino Effect**

Successfully managing conflict has a positive domino effect, allowing managers to create a workplace where employees thrive:

- 1 Even when disagreements occur, civility and respect shown during conflict resolution will foster a sense of peace and goodwill in an otherwise stressful workplace.
- 2 Less stress yields a more harmonious work environment.
- 3 A well-balanced work environment allows employees to focus more on their jobs.
- 4 Improved focus leads to higher quality work – a real incentive for all organizations to effectively manage workplace conflict.

[Slide]

## Conflict Resolution in Faith Communities

**Conflict Resolution  
in Faith Communities**

Leslie Vernick :

- ✓ Pray
- ✓ Prepare
- ✓ Practice



**“Blessed are the peacemakers,  
for they will be called sons of God.” — Matthew 5:9**

Conflict is inevitable. No relationship is immune. When managed biblically, conflict can serve as a catalyst for change and an opportunity for spiritual and relational growth. Why then are we afraid to tell our friend that her words hurt us, to ask our boss for a raise, or to confront our family member about his drinking problem and its effect on his family?

According to Ken Sande, author of *The Peacemaker—A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict* the reason is clear. “Many believers and their churches have not yet developed the ability to respond

to conflict in a gospel-centred and biblically faithful manner,” explains Sande. “When Christians become peacemakers, they can turn conflict into an opportunity to strengthen relationships and make their lives a testimony to the love and power of Jesus Christ.”

What does a peacemaker look like?

“Peacemakers are people who breathe grace,” says Sande. “They draw continually on the goodness and power of Jesus Christ, and then they bring his love, mercy, forgiveness, strength, and wisdom to the conflicts of daily life.”

Do you naturally “breathe grace?” I don’t. Yet, it is what God calls us to do. Not all of us are called to teach a Bible study, sing in the choir, or work with youth, but all of us are called to “go and be reconciled” (Matt. 5:24 NIV) to our brothers and sisters, our friends and family, and the people in our churches and community. God calls us all to be biblical peacemakers, to allow his redemptive, transforming love to spill over into our relationships.

This section of our seminar will show you how.

Based solidly on God’s Word, this seminar will give you what you need to respond to conflict biblically and constructively. You will learn the importance of prayer and preparation in resolving conflict, why you

must first “take the log out of your own eye,” how to confront someone in love, and how to navigate destructive conflict. What’s more, I will share some solid, biblical tips to resolve conflict in your relationships.

God created us for relationship. Do not let unresolved conflict rob you of the joy that healthy relationships can bring.

Opportunities for conflict are everywhere—in our home, workplace, church, and community. Our response could make or break the relationship.

Pamela Conrad understands the difference a biblical response could make. Several years ago, she received a letter from her mother-in-law that contained, quote: “20 years of pent-up anger.” She had just buried her 35-year-old brother who had committed suicide and was recovering from pneumonia. Unable to reach her mother-in-law by phone, Pamela sat down to write her a letter. “I prayed it would be constructive and that I could rise above the hurt and anger to address her concerns and fears,” explains Pam. The result? “Today we are friends,” says Pam. “This was a hard turn-the-other-cheek lesson for me, but it had a wonderful outcome.”

**[Slide o/lay]** Author and Christian counsellor Leslie Vernick works with people like Pamela to resolve conflict in their relationships. She instructs clients to pray, prepare, and practice. “Pray about it,” says Vernick. “Pray for wisdom, humility and the right words. Then prepare.” She suggests they write out what they want to say and practice saying it over and over again. “One of the things I tell people when they’re practicing is to rehearse in their heads ways things could go wrong,” she says. This way, when you hit a bump in the conversation, you’re prepared to steer the conversation back on course.

## Tips for Biblical Conflict Resolution

Skill and practical tools for resolving conflict are important. But, according to Ken Sande, “As important as practical skills are, the focus always has to be on motive. If our desire is to honour Christ, everything else will follow.”

[Slide]



### Conflict Resolution in Faith Communities

#### Tips for Biblical Conflict Resolution

- **Define the problem and stick to the issue**
- **Pursue purity of heart**
- **Plan a time for the discussion**
- **Affirm the Relationship**
- **Listen carefully**
- **Forgive** (*see handout*)
- **Propose a solution**

Keeping that in mind, here some practical tips that can help you resolve personal conflict. By applying these practical tips and tools for resolving conflict to your relationships, you can turn obstacles into opportunities to demonstrate the love and power of the gospel. What’s more, you will know the deep,

abiding joy that comes through obedience to God's Word.

**[Slide o/lay]** Define the problem and stick to the issue. Clearly define the issue and stay on topic during the discussion. Conflict deteriorates when the issue that started the conflict gets lost in angry words, past issues, or hurts tossed into the mix.

**[Slide o/lay]** Pursue purity of heart. "Take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye" (Matt. 7:5 NASB). Before approaching others regarding their faults and shortcomings, prayerfully face up to your own. Confess any way you might have contributed to the problem.

**[Slide o/lay]** Plan a time for the discussion. Plan a time to meet with the other person when you are both rested and likely to respond in love to the other person's concerns. When you are tired, stressed, and distracted with other responsibilities, things rarely will go well.

**[Slide o/lay]** Affirm the Relationship. Affirm the relationship before clearly defining the problem. For example, "Our relationship is important to me. But



when you don't return my calls, I feel rejected and unimportant." Avoid blaming the other person and saying, "You make me feel..." Instead, say, "When you do 'that', I feel 'this'." There is a very good chapter on this in the book by Drs Henry Cloud and John Townsend titled: *How to Have That Difficult Conversation You've Been Avoiding* (Zondervan 2005)

**[Slide o/lay]** Listen carefully. Once you share your feelings, listen to the other person's perspective. Lean in; be present. "One of the most powerful communication techniques I know is to listen well," points out Sande. Make sure your body language conveys that you are open to the other's perspective. Reflect back to the individual what you believe you have heard. For example, "I heard you say that you feel expectations from me. Is that correct?"

**[Slide o/lay]** Forgive. Forgive others as Christ has forgiven you. Forgiveness is both an event and a process. Again I quote from Ken Sande, who suggests we make forgiveness concrete with four promises:

- I promise I won't bring this up and use it against you in the future.

- promise I'm not going to dwell on it in my own heart and mind.

- 'm not going to talk to other people about it.

- I'm not going to let it stand between us or hinder our personal relationship.

**[Slide overlay]** Propose a solution. Remember the relationship is more important than the issue. When working toward a solution, consider Philippians 2:4-5: "Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus." Seek solutions that keep everyone's best interests in mind.

## **Destructive Conflict: Recognize It. Stop It.**

**[Slide]**



**How to Deal with  
Destructive Conflict**

- **Speak up (Matt. 18:15)**
- **Stand up (Matt. 18:16)**
- **Step back (Matt. 18:17)**

— Leslie Vernick, *The Emotionally Destructive Relationship: Seeing It, Stopping It, Surviving It*

Where there is destructive conflict, you will often find cruelty, neglect, deception, control, indifference and even abuse.

Destructive conflict flows from unhealthy people and relationships. Where there is destructive conflict, you will often find a pattern of cruelty, neglect, deception, control, indifference and even abuse in the relationship.

What differentiates destructive conflict from healthy disagreement is that it involves a pattern of unhealthy communication.

Destructive conflict flows from individuals who consistently fail to admit their weakness, lie, rationalize, deny, apologize instead of changing their behaviour, blame others instead of “owning” their part of the problem and who are defensive instead of open to feedback. Similar to ingesting poison, a steady diet of destructively conflict can kill you—emotionally, spiritually and even physically.

Just ask Egbert. He is still working to overcome the damage caused by destructive conflict. Raised in a home where conflict deteriorated into emotional, verbal and even physical abuse, he grew up thinking the way he was treated was “normal.” “While in college I accepted Christ,” says Egbert. “He helped me to forgive my abusers and brought healthy relationships into my life. Unfortunately, my abusers didn’t change; and for years I could not deal with the emotional fallout.”

To overcome the damage caused by years of unhealthy conflict, Egbert attended anger management classes at a local church, worked with a mentor, and continues to see a Christian psychologist, who is helping him apply biblical truth to his sense of self and his relationships. “My abusive family members haven’t changed,” says Egbert. “I have.”

**[Slide o/lay]** Leslie Vernick, licensed clinical social worker and author of *The Emotionally Destructive Relationship: Seeing It, Stopping It, Surviving It*, works with individuals like Egbert. She identifies three steps, based on Matthew 18:15-17, we should take when dealing with destructive conflict:

**[Slide o/lay]** Speak up. "If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you" (Matt. 18:15 NIV). "God calls us to be peacemakers, not peacekeepers," points out Vernick. She says pursuing peace might mean risking conflict in order to bring about a genuine peace (Ps. 34:14; Heb. 12:14 NIV).

Speaking up is very different from venting, which can have negative consequences. We should speak the truth to someone in love after we have spent time praying and preparing for our time together. Approach that person in gentleness and with humility (Gal. 6:1 NIV).

**[Slide o/lay]** Stand up. "But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses'" (Matt. 18:16 NIV). God calls us to stand against sin,

evil, deception, abuse and wickedness. When others are blind to their sin, God calls us to enlist the help of others. With a supportive person or church by your side, say, “I will not continue to live in fear,” “be lied to” or “be degraded.”

**[Slide o/lay]** Step back. ”If he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector (Matt. 18:17 NIV),” says Jesus. In biblical culture, Jews did not have close, personal relationships with pagans and tax collectors.

Vernick says when someone refuses to respond to our concerns, the relationship changes. “You cannot have fellowship with someone who refuses to respect your feelings, doesn’t care about you, won’t respect you and who isn’t honest.”

When we step back from the relationship, it helps minimize the damage and gives the other person time to reflect on his behaviour and the relationship. It sends a message that a pattern of sinful, destructive behaviours is unacceptable to us and to God.

She points out that even when we find it necessary to step back from a situation, God calls us to love. The apostle Paul says, “We bless those who curse us. We

are patient with those who abuse us” (1 Cor. 4:12). And in Romans 13:10, “Love does no harm (NIV).”

As we learn to identify destructive conflict and apply God’s Word to our situations, we can minimize its damage in our lives. What’s more, we move from victim to victor, honouring God in even the most difficult of circumstances.

### [Slide] Fighting Fair Part 3



**Rules for Fighting Fair Part 3**

20. Value your relationship
21. Put pride in your pocket
22. Build trust
23. Be honest
24. Stay by
25. See through your partner's eyes
26. Be prepared to listen
27. Be prepared to talk
28. Be tactful
29. Be flexible

The slide features a background image of a man and a woman standing and facing each other in a tense conversation. The man is wearing an orange shirt and has his arms crossed, while the woman is wearing a white top and also has her arms crossed. The background is a soft-focus image of a cloudy sky.

### [Slide o/lay] Value Your Relationship.

Well-managed conflict is a factor in successful marriages. If a fight gets out of hand, you lose control of yourself as well as your ability to foster the relationship. That results in damage to your marriage.

The degree to which you value your marriage will determine the amount of effort you're prepared to make toward establishing a healthy, happy relationship.

**[Slide o/lay] Put Pride In Your Pocket.**

It isn't easy to surrender our defences. Most humans prefer to win a battle by whatever means. The trouble with this kind of win/lose living is that you survive on pride.

Pride builds walls between you and your spouse, which makes it hard to know your spouse's needs and wishes. Pride can easily render you unteachable. Pride prevents you from benefiting from your spouse's wisdom.

Lowering your defences allows you to admit mistakes and failings. It gives you the opportunity to apologise and seek forgiveness. Resolving difficulties is easier when the walls of pride are removed.

**[Slide o/lay] Build Trust.**

An accepting attitude invites openness. We all talk more freely when our words and actions aren't being judged or criticised. When your partner values your ideas and opinions, you feel closer to her or him. It's easier for you both to be truthful in the context of such acceptance. Much that would fester into an argument dissolves in such an atmosphere.



**[Slide o/lay] Be Honest**

Devious embellishments (white lies) may get you out of a tight spot, but expediency will eventually cost you your partner's trust. The only uncomplicated way of communicating with your spouse is honestly. It's easier to believe in the good intentions of someone who 'tells it like it is.' When you know where you stand with one another, the difficulty in addressing problems is greatly reduced.

**[Slide o/lay] Stay By.**

It's important to remain in one another's company when disagreement arises. Fast exits and slamming doors reveal an immaturity that only delays the restoration of harmony.

It's impossible to discuss anything with someone who isn't there. The sooner the problem is dealt with, the less chance it has of becoming more complicated and harder to resolve.

**[Slide o/lay] See Through Your Partner's Eyes.**

No two people see an issue in exactly the same way. Try to view the problem from your spouse's viewpoint. It may take on quite a different complexion. Certainly, it will enable you to understand your partner's feelings more clearly. That puts you in a better position to deal with the problem objectively.

**[Slide o/lay] Be Prepared to Listen.**

It's amazing how much better you'll understand your partner when you begin to really hear what he or she is saying.

The more fully you give attention to what is being said, the more opportunity your spouse will have to fully explain his or her perceptions. This will enable you both to get a better grasp on the issue. It will also help you to avoid misunderstandings that often begin an argument.

**[Slide o/lay] Be Prepared to Talk.**

The silent treatment generates ill feeling between two people. The more fully you discuss an issue the more likely you are to resolve it.

It's better to take time to talk it out to the satisfaction of both parties. That's what you'd usually do in a business or professional setting-so why not at home with your spouse?

**[Slide o/lay] Be Tactful.**

Speaking the truth in love is an old skill for courageously bonding people together. It takes courage to be truthful. However, seeking the right time, place and circumstances to confront your partner is as important as your rightness in doing so. People tend to be drawn rather than pushed toward reconciliation.

**[Slide o/lay]** Be Flexible.

Maintaining a position when it's no longer helpful to the relationship can erode the respect others may have for you. If you're able to change and adapt (within reason) according to your partner's needs and wishes, you can avoid needless conflict and the stress that goes with it. In being flexible, you can nurture your relationship so that it becomes the haven of harmony you had always hoped it would be.

**[Slide]**



The slide features a light blue background with a faint image of two men in suits standing back-to-back with their arms crossed. The text is overlaid on this background.

## Unresolved Conflict

- **Support from friends / faith community**
- **Professional mediation**
- **Physical separation**

**Unresolved Conflict: Where to From Here?**

“The best-laid plans of mice and men often go awry,” says John Steinbeck in his classic novel, *Of Mice and Men*.

Resolving Conflict in the **[67]** Home and Workplace

Men. That line seems particularly fitting when applied to the topic of conflict resolution. Despite diligent prayer, careful planning and a humble spirit, attempts at conflict resolution rarely go as planned. What happens if we are unable to reach an agreement? What's next?

Let's examine our options as we look at three, real-life scenarios:

### **[Slide o/lay] Take One or Two Others Along**

Wendy and Ginger attended the same church. Wendy's daughter, Christina, had severe food allergies. She approached Ginger, Christina's Sunday school teacher, concerned about the types of food she served in class and offered to help be part of the solution. Ginger did what she could to accommodate Christina's needs while maintaining as normal a class as possible.

They reached an impasse. Wendy and Ginger responded biblically; they took it to the next level and asked Marc Romero, the children's pastor to help mediate the situation.

"I'm not trained in conflict resolution," confided Pastor Marc. "I did the only thing I knew to do—go to the Bible and pray for wisdom." As he prayed, he felt God revealed the root issue—the adults' focus

had shifted away from the child. Once he redirected their focus back to the child, they experienced unity and began to work together toward a solution. With Pastor Marc's help, they are now working on guidelines that focus on the child's best interests.

What makes this incident so compelling is that Wendy and Ginger's church have no formal peacemaking structure. "Scripture has promised that God has disbursed his gifts in the body, and he makes good on his promises, even if there's not a formal peacemaking ministry in the church," says Ken Sande, president of Peacemaker Ministries and author of *The Peace Maker: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict*.

But what if bringing in a third party to help resolve the conflict doesn't work?

### **[Slide o/lay] Professional Mediation**

A dour Englishman was seated on a train between two ladies arguing about the window. One claimed that she would die of heatstroke if it stayed closed. The other said she would expire of pneumonia if it was opened. The ladies called the conductor, who didn't know how to resolve the conflict. Finally, the gentleman spoke up. "First, open the window. That will kill the

one. Then close it. That will kill the other. Then we will have peace.”

Consider a professional mediator. That’s what Karen O’Connor did when faced with a conflict over her relationship with a friend. “She wanted a ‘best friend,’ status,” explains Karen while she wanted to enjoy a variety of friendships. “She pressured me with gifts, phone calls and time together.” Unable to manage the mounting tension in the relationship, Karen invited a mutual friend—a professional mediator—to help resolve the conflict. “With his help, we were able to ‘hear’ each other and to apologize for anything we did to hurt the other,” says Karen. Through it all, Karen learned to recognize unhealthy or ‘toxic’ relationships and to identify those personality types that best complement hers.

Karen’s situation is not unusual. We all carry baggage from our past that affects our relationships in the present. When unresolved heart issues result in the toxicity spilling over into the relationship through such destructive and manipulative behaviour as verbal and emotional abuse, compulsive lying, denial, control and addictions, then seek outside, professional help. If you’re unable to locate a professional mediator or conciliator in your area, talk with a Christian counsellor who could guide you through the process of reconciliation and restoration.

## **[Slide o/lay] Physical Separation**

In a faith community setting this may mean redemptive discipline by the appropriate governing body.

In a work setting this may mean changing jobs or requesting a transfer to another department. It may mean requesting the transfer of the other party. When I was charge nurse in a psychiatric hospital in the 1970s I requested of management the transfer of a certain young nurse who repeatedly made unwelcome advances to me while we worked together on night duty. When she ignored my repeated polite requests to desist it was easier to have her transferred to another ward than waste energy arguing.

In a personal setting, if there is physical violence, then a temporary personal separation may be the safest. Divorce is a coward's way of assuming that the cost of loving exceeds the cost of leaving.

Interestingly, a 1998 study in Minnesota found that the majority of those who have gone through a divorce wish they had tried harder to work through their differences. This study, by the non-profit Minnesota Family Institute, discovered 66 percent of those divorced look back with regret that they didn't give their marriage a better effort.

Finally, Gordon MacDonald, in his excellent book *Magnificent Marriage*, wrote, “If we do not master constructive conflict, destructive conflict will master us. To insure that this not happen, we must be willing to honestly inquire into some of the roots of those things which pave a freeway toward destructive tendencies [in our relationships].

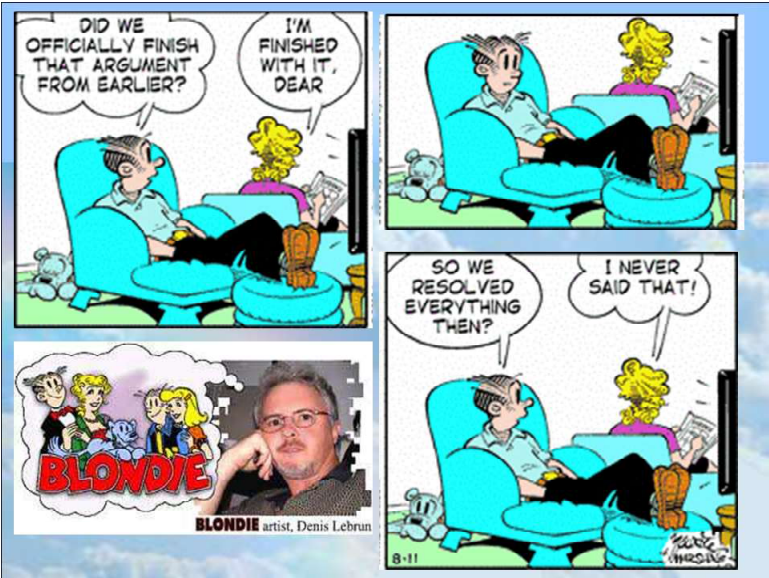
I have to confess frankly that it is much easier to take a hard look at these roots on paper, to write about them, or even to speak about them. But it never becomes easier to analyse them when I am in the middle of the actual heat of [an argumentative] debate.

...

If knowledge were the key to overcoming all destructive conflicts, psychologists and psychiatrists would lead the list as the happiest people in the world. But a look at the statistics shows them to rank high in divorces and suicides.

Why? Because the roots of inner and interpersonal conflict are not intellectual; they are matters of the inner spirit which dog the mind and make constructive sharing a seriously impaired capacity apart from the freedom found in a spirit of [willingness to change].





## Resolving Conflict in the Home and Workplace

Question  
Time

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Resolving Conflict in the [73] Home and Workplace



## Tips for Dealing with Conflict

None of us can escape conflict. Once we find ourselves in a conflict situation, whether it is in our business or professional lives, most of us tend to experience varying degrees of stress. Many of us want to reduce stress. By learning new skills and “self talk,” you may be able to deal more effectively with conflict.

Learning these skills and practicing them requires practice. Most of our habits and behaviours take many years to learn, so change is not likely to occur overnight. Usually it takes time to become more self-aware and to find the motivation to change unwanted behaviours, beliefs, attitudes, and actions.

As an adjunct to the seminar presentation, the purpose of this handout is to provide you with a general overview of how to deal more effectively with conflict in your professional and personal lives. Hopefully, you will find a few useful tips here. Please note conflict resolution is a broad and complex topic and this handout covers a few highlights of conflict resolution and, like the seminar, is not intended to be comprehensive.

As you know, individuals are unique and will approach, react and deal with conflict in their own special way. Some individuals react calmly whereas others “fly off the handle” and others just let conflict roll off them like “water off a duck’s back.” If you are one of those folks whose blood pressure rises in a conflict situation, you are likely to want to learn how to manage conflict more effectively. Some general tips are:

- Try to be calm and not reactive. Your “hurt” feelings can influence how you present yourself and this may be negative.
- Place some distance between your feelings and the issue. Try to not get caught up in your emotion. Focus on the issue and the facts rather than on the other person.
- Look at the facts. Be aware of how your perceptions,

feelings and judgments can cloud your perception of the real issue. Our perceptions are often influenced by factors such as our past, the environment and culture in which we live, our gender, age, etc.



- Try to depersonalise the conflict and not attach any blame.
- Do not try to steer the discussion to serve your own interests. Be open-minded and willing to listen and learn.
- Manage your feelings, emotions, and keep your thoughts and words in check. Take a few deep breaths and allow yourself time to pause and think before responding.
- Practice or role-play your conflict scenario with a friend or colleague before the “real” situation. Role-playing allows you an opportunity to learn and to be better prepared.

When you find yourself in a conflict that you wish to resolve, it’s always a good idea to set up a meeting with the other person(s). Meeting in person as opposed to using the phone or email to resolve conflict is preferable. Phone or email allows too much room for misinterpretation.

Agree on a date, time, the length of time required and a location that is convenient for both parties. As a courtesy, let the other person know in advance of the meeting what you plan to discuss. If the other person declines your invitation or refuses to acknowledge you (tempers could be high!), then distance yourself from this scenario for now and give them a “reasonable” length of time to get back to you. Conflict “avoiders” often need additional time to clearly digest information and prepare for the meeting.

Once the meeting takes place, you could try to diffuse some tension by making some “small talk.” Using an “ice-breaker” to enquire about how their family is, any upcoming vacation plans or other light topic of discussion can help set the right tone.

.../Continued ...

## Some general tips for the initial meeting are:

- Identify the conflict.
- Acknowledge the situation or the other person's feelings by making a comment such as "I can see this is tough for you." Be empathetic.
- Clearly state your own point of view.
- Invite the other person to state their point of view.
- Keep checking with one another to make sure there is no misunderstanding of what is being said by making a comment such as, "I understand you to be saying is ..." or "What I hear you saying is..." Use your own words to describe your understanding of what the other person has just said. Be careful to not repeat their words verbatim or you may annoy them further.
- Be hard on the issues and not hard on the person.
- Depersonalise the conflict and do not blame.

Conflict resolution requires good communications and listening skills. Verbal communications can lead to misunderstandings. For example, the same word can have different connotations depending upon the person's culture and background.

To minimize conflict, try to paraphrase what you understand the other person to be saying.

Throughout the discussion, be curious and ask questions. Curiosity will help you remain calm and focus on the issues and not your feelings. Ask open-ended questions using "how", "what", "when", and "where." Open-ended questions open up the dialogue and give both parties the information required to find common ground. Avoid using "why" as it can cause the other person to become defensive. In addition, avoid asking close-ended questions that require just a "yes" or "no" response.

Close-ended questions do not provide the other person with the opportunity to articulate what they have to say. Don't make the mistake of assuming that you know the answers to the questions before asking. Also, do not manipulate the situation by framing the question to get the answer that you want.

Listen attentively. Listening is a skilful art that requires much concentration. Listening is hard work! During the conversation, take moments to check in with the person speaking to paraphrase what you think they are saying.



Express yourself clearly. Be assertive rather than aggressive. For example, use "I" to express your feelings rather than using "you."

Often when we use the word "you" it can lead to "finger pointing." Clearly state your needs and expectations. Work towards arriving at a mutually agreeable solution.

Keep a positive attitude and be future-focused. Don't dwell on the negatives of the past. Learn from past mistakes and keep moving forward.

Near the end of your discussion, summarize what is important to both parties. Once the facts are on the table, it will be easier to come up with a solution. You want a solution to the problem that is acceptable to both parties.

Finally, you want to come to a resolution or at least to a temporary end to the conversation without a resolution.

If you do come to a resolution, put the terms of your agreement in writing and have both parties sign it. A written agreement is not only helpful in both professional and personal relationships, it can serve as a good reminder for the future should a similar situation arise.

If you do not come to a resolution, you may want to look for ways to amend what has happened in the past and suggest new ideas to improve your relationship in the future; check to see if ideas work for both; and agree about who will do what. Continue to work with one another to create trust and minimize fear.





## Coming Together for Life - From Conflict to Caring

(A couple's activity sheet )

### I play a role in our conflicts...

**B**laming, and avoiding being blamed by the other, is one of the most constant sources of bickering and escalating angry arguments.

This exercise is designed to help you identify how you contribute to each argument. Even when you feel the problem is 99.9% the other person's responsibility, it is extremely important that you still be able to say how you are aware that you contributed to the problem. To say it before you start listing how it's the other person's fault gets you bonus points!

Do any of the following statements apply to you? Check the ones that apply to you.

Then turn to your partner and say it in your own words, taking turns saying what you've checked?

I am aware that you have rarely heard me say, "I made a mistake." I will try to tell you when I know I've made a mistake.

I can be very judgmental and act like a parent with you sometimes. That's not right, and I want to change that, without blaming you.

I have difficulty saying that I might have made a mistake that hurt you. Or saying that I'm aware that what I did, or did not do, has hurt you. In the future, I will be more sensitive to how I may have hurt you.

I have difficulty getting away from the idea that one of us is right, and that the other therefore is wrong. I can see how my attitude makes our conflicts worse. I want to improve my ability to simply empathize with you, without judging what is right and wrong.

I have trouble seeing that your feelings are legitimate and that they make sense to you. When I cannot understand then I sometimes make you justify them, which I know makes you feel a lack of respect on my part. I want to get better at accepting how you experience problems, without trying to invalidate your feelings by making you defensive.

In a conflict I am not good at showing you that I feel bad for how I've affected you. It is hard to show you that I care about your experience of a problem or your point of view. In the future, I'll make an effort to show you that I do feel badly for how I've affected you.

I am aware that I often get caught up in the argument of 'whose fault is this?'. This means I'm unable to tune into you, trying to understand what you're feeling. I'm going to stop the blaming.

I sometimes justify my behaviour, when I'm really just feeling guilty or defensive. I want to stop justifying my bad behaviour with you. I want to stop justifying my rudeness.

I am aware that sometimes the tone of my voice sounds harsh and rejecting. I can see that it would be hard for you not to defend yourself when I speak that way. I want to work on speaking more respectfully to you.

I become fearful and don't talk about that feeling with you. I end up showing that I am angry, hurt or I withdraw from you. I am going to try to get better at talking with you about what I'm anxious about.

I can be insensitive to your feelings sometimes, and I've rarely admitted that I'm aware of how hurtful that can be for you. I want to see myself being more sensitive to how things affect you. I want to see myself being able to listen to you and I want to be able to accept it if you tell me that I have been insensitive to you.

Sometimes I know I can be very selfish, and I rarely admit that I'm aware of how hurtful that can be for you. I want to make it safe for you to talk to me about this when it happens.

I have been dishonest with you in the past. I can understand how hard it is for you to trust what I say to you. I need to face this problem of being deceptive.

I hope you can eventually forgive me. I'm aware that I need to demonstrate that I have changed before you can trust me more fully again.

Another type of deception is not talking about how I feel. I may be hurt, disappointed or angry and I often do not tell you how I feel as I feel it. I need to improve my ability to share my feelings more with you. I want to improve generally in my willingness to communicate more about what's going on in my life, particularly how I'm feeling.

I tend to blame you in a blanket fashion for my troubles when I know that you are not the sole cause of my frustrations. I am going to work on seeing my responsibility in problems I'm having.

**Congratulations** on taking the first step toward making your relationship the best that it can be!

One of the main points of this activity is to get couples to look at what can be changed on their side of the fence.

When you look over to your partner and see that he or she is making changes by expressing and listening differently, it can motivate you to follow suit.

So be your partner's motivator by modeling the way that you want him or her to speak and listen to you.

Adapted from Marc Sadoff, *Coming Together for Life*  
- *From Conflict to Caring*. "RealHope", 2004



# Resolving Conflict in the Home and Workplace

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## Developing a Formal Process for Dealing with Conflict in the Workplace

**Y**ou have a formal process for training sales people and processing payroll. What about resolving conflicts? Establishing formal guidelines for managing conflict will increase everyone's comfort level and ultimately yield better results.

If you don't have one already, use these steps to create a process that makes sense for your organization:

- 1. Expect conflict** – realize that friction will occasionally emerge in the course of human work relationships. Make it a rule to deal with conflict immediately – never sweep it under the rug.
- 2. Get employee ownership** – involve them in creating your formal resolution process. Consider creating a simple survey to get a pulse on the types of conflict your employees experience.
- 3. Make it routine** – set a regular time and place for airing grievances.
- 4. Follow the system** – use the 7 Step Process outlined by Dr Hartley in today's seminar to resolve disputes before major conflicts arise.
- 5. Put your process in writing** – give a copy to every employee and make it part of your new hire packet.
- 6. Education** – provide employees with formal conflict resolution training. (See [www.lrhartley.com/seminars](http://www.lrhartley.com/seminars))
- 7. Use incentives** – find a way to reward employees for resolving conflicts in a civil, healthy way.

## Be Proactive – Manage Conflict by Preventing It

- 1. Nip conflict in the bud** – bring up troublesome issues before they become problems.
- 2. Identify triggers** – situations that cause the greatest discord in your business. Employees can be especially useful in identifying triggers.
- 3. Search for hidden sources of conflict** – sometimes, the real source for conflict is not readily apparent. Look at both the overall function of a group, as well as what is happening at the micro-level (individual personalities, goals, communication patterns) to determine how to head-off conflicts.
- 4. Get everyone on the same page** – make sure all employees understand job descriptions, individual and company goals, etc. Many conflicts can be prevented when employees understand their respective roles.
- 5. Accentuate the positive** – recognize and praise accomplishments to minimize “jockeying for position” that generates friction among competitive employees.
- 6. Encourage healthy debate about work issues** – discussions based on differing opinions and perspectives can build tolerance and patience among team members, diffusing tensions before they mount.
- 7. Ignore and discourage gossip** – be a leader and role model by refusing to gossip, actively or passively.

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## Conflict in the Church – with our Brethren and Sisters

A first step in resolving conflict in a church setting is to go right back to basics and ask yourself, “Who is in control? Who should be in control?”

Consider this:

### **Who is the head of the church? To whom does the church belong?**

(1 Corinthians 12:27; Ephesians 1:22-23; Ephesians 4:15-16; Colossians 1:18)

### **What are the credentials of this leader?**

- .. Sovereign (Ephesians 1:20-22)
- .. Lord and Saviour (Colossians 1:13-14)
- .. Creator and Sustainer (Colossians 1:15-17)
- .. King of Kings and Lord of Lords (1 Timothy 6:15-16)

### **What is the evidence and goals of this leader’s headship?**

- .. Unity (Ephesians 4:12)
- .. Love (Ephesians 4:16)
- .. Imitate Christ (Ephesians 4:20-5:1)
- .. Reconciliation (Colossians 1:20)
- .. Peace (Colossians 1:20; Colossians 3:15; 1 Corinthians 14:33)
- .. Holy and blameless (Colossians 1:22b)
- .. Spiritual growth (Colossians 1:28b)
- .. Stability of faith (Colossians 2:5)
- .. Walk in Christ (Colossians 2:6)
- .. Edifying body life (Colossians 3:1-17)

### **What part do I play in this?**

(1 Corinthians 12:12-31; 1 Corinthians 13:1-13; 1 Corinthians 16:13,14; Ephesians 5:1-21)

### **How does our local leadership team fit into this picture?**

(Ephesians 4:11-32)

### **Forgiveness:**

When you are ready to forgive, remember that forgiveness is both an event and a process. According to Ken Sande, *The Peacemaker—A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict* (Peacemaker® Ministries), you can make forgiveness concrete with four promises:

- .. I promise I won’t bring this up and use it against you in the future.
- .. I promise I’m not going to dwell on it in my own heart and mind.
- .. I promise I’m not going to talk to other people about it.
- .. I promise I’m not going to let it stand between us or hinder our personal relationship.

# Conflict in the Church – with our Pastors and Leaders

**T**here are no perfect leaders, but God gives leaders the responsibility and the authority to maintain the unity of the church. During interpersonal conflicts that is a thankless job. Pastors often have the unpleasant task of serving as mediator between hurt, conflicting, or immature members. They're also given the impossible task of trying to make everyone happy, which even Jesus could not do! The Bible gives pastors very specific instructions on how to deal with divisive people in the fellowship. They are to avoid arguing, gently teach the opposition while praying they'll change, warn those who are argumentative, plead for harmony and unity, rebuke those who are disrespectful of leadership, and recommend to the Board to remove divisive people from the church in accordance with Church Manual and other officially agreed policies.

## **Biblical instructions to pastors and leaders** *from the Amplified Bible*):

“Remind [the people] of these facts and [solemnly] charge them in the presence of the Lord to avoid petty controversy over words, which does no good but upsets and undermines the faith of the hearers” (2 Timothy 2:14 ).

“But refuse (shut your mind against, have nothing to do with) trifling (illinformed, unedifying, stupid) controversies over ignorant questionings, for you know that they foster strife and breed quarrels. 24 And the servant of the Lord must not be quarrelsome (fighting and contending). Instead, he must be kindly to everyone and mild-tempered [preserving the bond of peace]; he must be a skilled and suitable teacher, patient and forbearing and willing to suffer wrong. 25 He must correct his opponents with courtesy and gentleness, in the hope that God may grant that they will repent and come to know the Truth [that they will perceive and recognize and become accurately acquainted with and acknowledge it], 26 And that they may come to their senses [and] escape out of the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him, [Henceforth] to do His [God's] will” (2 Timothy 2:23-26).

“I entreat and advise Euodia and I entreat and advise Syntyche to agree and to work in harmony in the Lord” (Philippians 4:2).

“Tell [them all] these things. Urge (advise, encourage, warn) and rebuke with full authority. Let no one despise or disregard or think little of you [conduct yourself and your teaching so as to command respect]” (Titus 2:15).

“Remind people to be submissive to [their] magistrates and authorities, to be obedient, to be prepared and willing to do any upright and honorable work, 2 To slander or abuse or speak evil of no one, to avoid being contentious, to be forbearing (yielding, gentle, and conciliatory), and to show unqualified courtesy toward everybody (Titus 3:1-2).

“This message is most trustworthy, and concerning these things I want you to insist steadfastly, so that those who have believed in (trusted in, relied on) God may be careful to apply themselves to honorable occupations and to doing good, for such things are [not only] excellent and right [in themselves], but [they are] good and profitable for the people. 9 But avoid stupid and foolish controversies and genealogies and dissensions and wrangling about the Law, for they are unprofitable and futile. 10 [As for] a man who is factious [a heretical sectarian and cause of divisions], after admonishing him a first and second time, reject [him from your fellowship and have nothing more to do with him], 11 Well aware that such a person has utterly changed (is perverted and corrupted); he goes on sinning [though he] is convicted of guilt and selfcondemned (Titus 3:8-11).

**T**he Bible is clear about how we are to relate to those who serve us: "Obey your spiritual leaders and submit to them [continually recognizing their authority over you], for they are constantly keeping watch over your souls and guarding your spiritual welfare, as men who will have to render an account [of their trust]. [Do your part to] let them do this with gladness and not with sighing and groaning, for that would not be profitable to you [either]" (Hebrews 13:17).

**Pastors will one day stand before God and give an account of how they watched over us.**

**But we are accountable, too. We will give an account to God of how well we followed our leaders.**

**And finally**, if we want the absolute best possible pastoral team (Pastor/s and leaders) for our church — God's ideal for our particular congregation — then we must earnestly pray for the spirituality of the team that we already have!

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