

“How to Resolve Conflict”

Whenever people gather together in a family setting, office group or church ministry, there is bound to be conflict. We are made so differently and see things from a variety of angles. Learning how to deal with conflict within your team graciously and effectively when it arises is a part of the leader's ministry. There is a danger of allowing conflict between two team members to fester and go unresolved for too long:

POTENTIAL DAMAGE OF UNRESOLVED CONFLICT:

- It can cause friends to major in the minors
- It can drag others into our conflict
- It gets worse the longer it's unresolved
- It can derail our spiritual growth

“Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, ²⁴leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift.”
Matthew 5:23 (NIV)

“Unresolved conflict grieves the heart of God and goes against his character of Peace. It impedes our faith, hinders our prayer life and robs us of a chance to mature.”

3 STEPS AT RESOLVING CONFLICT -

Step #1: Have them retell the stories of injury.

It is important to get both parties to share their position, interests or feelings about the conflict. Give them time to retell their stories of injury, so that they feel they are being heard. Make sure they don't use accusatory or exaggerated language. While one party shares make sure the other party simply listens. Tell them they will have a chance to respond but first they must simply listen. Encourage the listening party to say things like, “I may not agree...I'm not admitting anything...but here is what you are saying...Let me see if I understand...help me see it your way.”

Remember: 90% of problem solving is problem identification. Make sure they LISTEN TO EACH OTHER!

“Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry,”
James 1:19

Step #2: Have them share sorrow for the offenses.

Apologies are so important in conflict resolution. They reflect the sorrow of the offender and a commitment that the offense won't happen again. However, before someone offers an apology, it is important that they are done the right way:

4 Problems With Apologies:

1. They come way too soon before they really know the depth of injury.
2. They come with an attached, "I'm sorry...but you..."
3. They come with callousness or apathy.
4. They come way too late, or not at all.

Step #3: Have them itemize their interests in a compatible way.

Chances are there is a way in which both interests can be met if enough time, prayer and creativity were applied. Help both parties think of ways in which both interests can be met. Make sure you point out underlying issues and not just the words that are being said.

"God blesses those who work for peace, for they will be called the children of God." Matthew 5:9 (NLT)