

Conflict CPR

Session 01: The Issue at Hand

Session Outline

- The Reality of Conflict
 - It's not a bad thing
 - Every church experiences it
 - Most debilitating conflict is escalated and fueled by fewer than 5 people who are loud
 - Few churches effectively deal with the loud minority
- Why We Don't Deal with Conflict
 - Let sleeping dogs that lie
 - No one wants to confront bad behavior
 - The issue of being "Nice"
- The Cost of Conflict
 - Can't grow a church
 - Can't embark on mission effectively
 - Unresolved conflict escalates over time
- Management vs. Reconciliation (the Jesus Model)
- The ultimate goal: Reconciliation (Peter, Jesus, and the apostles)
- The sad reality: Resolution (Jacob and Esau)
- The mandate: Deal With It

Discussion Questions

1. When you were growing up, how was conflict handled in your home? How were "winners" declared?
2. Can you describe a time in your life when conflict led to positive changes?
3. Can you describe an incident in your church when you experienced conflict? How was the conflict handled? Did it lead to positive changes?
4. How do you understand the differences between conflict management and conflict reconciliation?
5. What is the role of conflict in your church today?

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Session 02: Introducing the One-Anothers

Session Outline

- The church's historical reputation
 - The historian Tertullian ... "How they love one another"
 - The camp song *They Will Know We are Christians by Our Love*.
 - Today's cultural experience with the church
- The 5-Fold Love List
 - Love God
 - Love Self
 - Love Neighbor
 - Love Enemy
 - Love One Another
- The Sunday-School Dilemma
- Aha! – 1 Thessalonians 5:15
- How Christians should behave is actually specified and modeled in scripture ... this is the foundation for Conflict CPR

Discussion Questions

1. Discuss the attributes and behaviors of a "Christian" in today's context.
2. Share some examples of how the media portrays the church.
3. How would you characterize the church's reputation in culture? In your general community?
4. Can you think of anyone that the 5-fold love list leaves out?
5. What are some of the differences in how we treat our neighbors versus how we treat one another.
6. What would a church be like if all the leaders and members treated each other as defined in the New Testament's One-Anothers?

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Session 03: The Cause of Conflict

Session Outline

- Every church needs a little conflict
- Conflict arises whenever there's any proposed change ... those who want the change, those who oppose the change, and those who are internally conflicted about the change
- The problem is in how conflict is expressed ... destructive conflict is caused by misunderstandings and bad behavior
- Misunderstandings and Misperceptions: Come from poor communication skills ... on the delivery side and/or on the receiving side
 - The need for good presentation skills ... think first, speak next
 - The need for good listening skills ... hear one another out
 - The need for good feedback loop ... listen and watch while talking – don't formulate answers while "listening"
 - Conflict inevitably escalates when we "think" we're being misunderstood and we keep trying to convince or restate or restate louder because "if they just understood the issue, they'd come to the same conclusion I've come to."
 - The need to agree to disagree agreeably
- Bad Behavior: Acting out ... throwing a temper fit ... not listening ... the downward spiral of "I want it my way or else."

Discussion Questions

1. In your experience, what is the most prominent cause of conflict?
2. Paul suggested that anger isn't sinful ... but that anger can be expressed sinfully. Discuss what you think Paul means.
3. How does poor communication cause conflict?
4. Why do you think some people act out in anger?
5. In a church, what do you think are some of the ramifications of anger expressed inappropriately?

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Session 04: Bullies, Terrorists, Controllers, and Bluffers

Session Outline

- Virtually every church has a couple of these folks – but they are virtually always a very small minority
- Definitions
 - Bully: Someone with a pedigree and who throws their weight around
 - Terrorists: Someone who makes threats
 - Controllers: Those who assert their control in the church or a ministry
 - Bluffers: Those who are persuaded to follow the lead of bullies and/or terrorists
- The church tends to tolerate these behaviors ...
 - Service Clubs, the workplace, a spouse wouldn't tolerate these kinds of behaviors, but the Church too often makes excuses for them
- Bill Easum's advice: Convert or Neutralize them

Discussion Questions

1. Who were the "bullies" in Gospels?
2. How did Jesus deal with the bullies of his day?
3. Discuss the difference between being "nice" and being "kind."
4. Why do you think that a minority in a congregation is able to assert so much influence (such as a bully and a few bluffers).
5. Discuss the difference between bullies, terrorists, controllers, and bluffers.
6. Why do you think that church allows bullies, terrorists, and controllers to disrupt ministries?

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Session 05: Jesus' Reconciliation Plan

Session Outline

- Christian behavior is rooted in the One-Anothers
- Matthew's Gospel contains the Master's Plan for Reconciliation
- Matthew 5:23–24
 - Take responsibility for your actions ... and for misunderstandings/misperceptions
- Matthew 18:15–17 ... The three step plan
 - Go one-on-one
 - Go two-on-one or three-on-one
 - Take it to the church
 - When reconciliation is not an option
- An example of using the Master's Plan for Reconciliation in the church

Discussion Questions

1. Share a time when it was difficult to forgive someone. How was the conflict resolved?
2. Why is it so difficult to practice Matthew 5:23–24?
3. When reconciliation wasn't possible, how did Jesus handle conflict?
4. Talk about how your congregation could implement the Master's Plan for Reconciliation?

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Session 06: Expected Behaviors

Session Outline

- Explore “What is Christian behavior?”
- Why the need for expected behaviors in the church today
- Defining Expected Behaviors
- What happens when expected behaviors are implemented in a church
- Conflict doesn’t end ... but it finds itself resolved at worst and reconciling at best

Discussion Questions

1. In light of the series so far, discuss your view of Christian behavior. How do “Christians” act?
2. What is an expected behavior? Offer a couple of suggestions.
3. What do you think some of the benefits would be if everyone in the church behaved according to the One-Anothers?
4. How do expected behaviors reflect One-Anothers?
5. What would a church have to do to eliminate all conflict?

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Session 07: A Congregational Covenant of Conduct

Session Outline

- Express the need
- Work a plan (retreat or ...)
 - Leadership team or ad hoc team/s does One-Another study ... combines and refines them into less than 10 statements
 - Teams share, combine, and refine
 - Ensure Matthew 18:15–17 is included
 - Send it to word smiths
 - Finalize it in the Leadership Team
- Cast the Vision of the One-Anothers
 - Preach and Teach them
 - Share the Expected Behaviors with key leaders and get buy in
 - Share with the congregation to get buy in
- Vote
- Implement

Discussion Questions

1. Do you think every congregation needs a congregational covenant of conduct? Why or why not?
2. Take some time as a small group and develop a couple expected behaviors by refining some One-Anothers.
3. Do you think it is important to include the Matthew 18:15–17 passage in the expected behaviors? Why or why not?
4. What would be the most difficult part in getting the congregation to embrace a covenant of conduct?
5. What might keep your leaders from implementing the expected behaviors once they were accepted by the congregation?

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Session 08: The High Cost of Conflict Resolution

Session Outline

- Reconciliation is the ideal ... but it's not always achievable
 - Again, Esau and Jacob
- Counting the Cost
 - You will lose members ... not every bully, terrorist, controller will be converted
 - Leadership will feel bad about implementing CPR
- Counting the Gains
 - A safe environment
 - Giving goes up
 - Guests return ... and stay
 - Dealing with conflict eventually becomes normative
- What if you don't deal with it?
 - More of whatever you've got ... only worse

Discussion Questions

1. Share a time in your life when your attempts to reconcile with someone weren't accepted. How did this affect you?
2. Are you aware of unresolved conflict in your congregation? If so, what affects has it had on the congregation?
3. If your congregation adopted and implemented a congregational covenant of conduct, what do you expect would be the cost? The gains?
4. Ultimately, do you think it would be worth the cost? Why or why not?