



Dealing with Conflict in Our Churches

Introduction

Conflict is normal in a fallen world.

In order to be a good disciple of Christ, it's important to think through how to deal with conflict.

Christians are called to Unity and Peace

As Christians we are called to pursue peace (Ps 34:14; Jer 29:7; 1 Cor 7:15; 2 Cor 13:11).

“Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification” (Rom 14:19).

Key Question: What does it look for Christians to deal with conflict in a God-honouring, Christ-exalting way?

Addressing Conflict in Our Local Church

START WITH YOUR OWN LIFE – 4 things

1. Pray for God's Mercy

“I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where does my help come? My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth” (Psalm 121)

Mercy begins at the foot of the cross, but we have a responsibility to ask for it.

2. Submit Yourself to God

“¹³Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom. ¹⁴But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. ¹⁵This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. ¹⁶For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice. ¹⁷But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. ¹⁸And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.”
(James 3:13-18)

Humility and meekness bring peace.

Humility and meekness is the exact opposite of what you pursue in the war of conflict.

Why do we spend so much energy trying to argue, persuade and prove we are right, when we know what matters first and foremost is our disposition towards a holy God?

Humble yourself before God; and he'll begin to change your life.

3. Examine Your Desires

“What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel.” (James 4:1-2a).

We often make the person across from us the enemy, but the true enemy is not outside of us, but within us.

Rather than expending all of our time and energy in fighting with the person in front of us, James says the place to start is our own heart.

“You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye” (Matthew 7:5).

4. Confess and Repent

We confess our sin because the Bible directs us to do so.

Confession of sin starts with God. "Against you and you only have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight" (Psalm 51:4).

But it is also important to confess sin to other believers.

Proverbs 28:13-14: "He who conceals his sin does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy."

James 5:16: "Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed."

When does a conflict turn around?

Conflict resolution does not work unless there is repentance.

HOW DO WE INTERACT WITH OTHERS DURING CONFLICT – 4 things.

1. Listen to the Other Person

The biblical picture of a bad listener is the fool.

- A fool takes no pleasure in understanding, but only in expressing his opinion. (Proverbs 18:2)
- If one gives an answer before he hears, it is his folly and shame. (Proverbs 18:13)
- Do you see a man who is hasty in his words? There is more hope for a fool than for him. (Proverbs 29:20)

"Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger" (James 1:19).

Practical Application:

1. How good are you at listening? Rate yourself on a scale of 1 (poorest of listeners) to 10 (best listener on the planet)
2. To test your rating, ask someone who knows you really well what they would rate you?

2. Be Careful about What Comes Out of Your Mouth

James 3 addresses the power of the tongue and the danger of letting it rule your life and the necessity of taming our tongues with God's help.

In a conflict between two Christians, one of the best skills you can learn is to not respond in kind.

Choose your words carefully.

Put a Christ-centered filter on your mouth.

3. Be Quick to Forgive

The motivating factor for forgiving should be the fact that God has forgiven you.

“Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God has forgiven you” (Eph. 5:32).

Refusing to forgive someone is not an option for Christians.

4. Always Speak In Love

We need to see others as God sees them. They are Christ's possession; bought with his blood.

6 THOUGHTS FOR LEADERS, COUNSELLORS AND MEDIATORS

1. Treat this like a Spiritual battle.
2. Deal with people's hurt or pain, which get in the way of resolving the conflict.
3. Expose their bias.
4. Once you've heard both sides tell their story, bring them together.

“The one who states his case first seems right, until the other comes and examines him” (Proverbs 18:17).

5. Reconciliation and Unity can look different in every situation.

“If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all” (Romans 12:18).

6. Root your mediation in the Gospel