

Making Better Decisions

Lesson 5-6: Resolving Conflict

Discussion Guide – Confidentiality Reminder

One Word Check-in

Update – Personal, Business, Leadership

“So if you are presenting a sacrifice at the altar in the Temple and you suddenly remember that someone has something against you, leave your sacrifice there at the altar. Go and be reconciled to that person. Then come and offer your sacrifice to God.”
Matthew 5:23-24 (NLT)

Conflict is unavoidable. All relationships experience some level of conflict – great partnerships, lousy partnerships, best friends, enemies, spouses, children, friends and family. The workplace is no exception when it comes to conflict. Money, politics, selfish ambition, envy, competition, jealousy, ego and pride serve as fuel for conflict explosion.

Business is based on relationships. We must nurture and restore damaged relationships for companies to succeed. This applies to team members and clients. We will experience conflict on a regular basis both at home and at work, so we must begin to understand the proper ways to handle it.

Know this: relationships are more important than being right. If you have an issue, you need to acknowledge it. Too many people allow issues to stew and grow, only addressing them when they reach a boiling point. Handling conflict this way makes it difficult to maintain relationships over the long term. Conflict avoided creates bitterness and anger. Either party involved in the conflict, whether in the right or wrong, can take ownership of working towards a resolution.

Examine yourself first. Many times, we are the problem. Before we approach another person, we must be able to honestly look at ourselves in the mirror and ask the question, “How have I contributed to the conflict I am currently facing?” It is very possible you have contributed to the problem more than you realize. Owning your portion of the conflict will squash pride and create a spirit of humility, which are both important ingredients needed to bring resolution.

Have a face-to-face discussion with the other person. This is the part where most people stumble. We tend to discuss the issue with everyone but the other person involved. We build a case with like-minded people who will see the issue through our own bias. Our individual personality types play a part as well, causing some of us to completely avoid having a difficult conversation. Emails and text messages are not an effective strategy. In fact, these most likely make it worse. If you are not willing to address a conflict in-person, then don't assume there will ever be a resolution.

Start with “I am sorry.” Three magic words in any conflict are “I am sorry,” and you do not have to be the one at fault to say these words. It takes tremendous humility to say, “I am sorry” and mean it.

Love the person more than the conflict. Some relationships take time to heal. Even if the conflict is not fully resolved, simply understanding another person's position is a great start to restoring the relationship. Continuing to love someone during a conflict allows the temperature of the issue to decrease.

Shared Experiences:

- Can someone share a conflict they have had and how it was resolved?
- Can someone share a conflict they are currently dealing with. How did you contribute to it? How have you attempted to resolve it?
- Our personality types contribute to how we view conflict resolution. Can someone share their Myers-Briggs, then how you view resolving conflict?
- Can someone look in the mirror and honestly see how they may have contributed to a conflict?

Bottom line: Healthy relationships are the key to a joyful and meaningful life. Our relationships with others affect our relationship with the Father. Jesus never evaded conflict and we shouldn't either. Resolution can only occur when we address and not ignore conflict. Approach every conflict resolution conversation with humility and ownership of your portion of the conflict.

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Dig Deeper

Want to learn more?

- *Book:* [The Five Dysfunctions of a Team, A Leadership Fable](#) by Patrick Lencioni
- *Podcast:* [Eli talks with Joseph Grenny about his book "Crucial Conversations"](#) by 210Leaders
- *Book:* [Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking When Stakes Are High, Second Edition](#) by Kerry Paterson, Joseph Grenny, Ron McMillian and Al Switzler
- *Video:* [The Gift of Conflict](#) by Amy E. Gallo presented at TEDxBroadway
- *Book:* [HBR Guide to Dealing with Conflict \(Assess the Situation, Manage Your Emotions, Move On\)](#) by Amy Gallo published by the Harvard Business Review Press

A potential path forward

Use the five questions below to help you think and process before you have a conversation with the other person. Going in prepared allows you to have a more tempered and meaningful conversation that can better lead to resolution. Keep in the back of your mind that relationships are more important than being right.

- What is the issue?
- Why is the issue creating a conflict?
- How did you contribute to the issue?
- What is the other person's perspective?
- What is a perfect outcome?