

Conflict Management

Lesson designed by: Mark Blackwelder

Course description: Part 4

This course deals with principles for understanding and resolving conflict in the home, the church, and life in general. This particular lesson will focus on the biblical examples of conflict and how they can serve as models for us today.

Course Objectives: By the end of this class students will be able to:

- A. Identify the types of conflict Jesus dealt with in his own ministry.
- B. Use a model for interpersonal conflict resolution from the life of Paul.
- C. Use a model for group conflict resolution from Acts chapter six.

Outline of the class:

- A. Organize the class into discussion groups of 3-5. Ask them to select three examples of times Jesus had to manage conflict and identify common elements of his approach to those conflicts.
- B. The groups should then share their observations with the class and propose the most useful of Jesus' strategies.
- C. The instructor then leads the class in a discussion of the following conflict scenarios from Jesus' ministry, identifying them on the basis of their point of tension (Gangel and Canine 2002, 167-172):
 - 1. Role definition (Luke 22:24-27)
 - 2. Role expectation (Luke 10:38-42)
 - 3. Values conflict (John 12:1-8)
 - 4. Difference of perspective (Matt. 20:1-16)
 - 5. The role of the context (John 21:15-19)
- D. Discuss Paul's confrontation with Peter (Gal. 2:11-21) and share the following model for interpersonal conflict resolution:
 - 1. Address problems appropriately (11)
 - 2. Identify the real problem (12)
 - 3. Recognize the consequences (13)
 - 4. Affected parties should be involved (14)
 - 5. Appropriate questions clarify the issue (14)
 - 6. A clear solution must be presented based on guiding principles (20)

E. Read and discuss the concern addressed in Acts 6:1-7 and share the following model for group conflict resolution:

1. Make the problem known to appropriate parties (6:1-2; 15:1-6)
2. Consider possible solutions (6:2; 15:7-17)
3. Decide on an appropriate solution using the accepted structure (6:3-4; 15:19-21)
4. Acceptance and implementation of the decision (6:5-6; 15:22-31)

* Note that these same models are evident in Acts 15:1-35!

Conclusion:

- A. Conflict has always been a part of the life of the church. Jesus dealt with conflict very effectively by understanding the points of tension and addressing them with grace and appropriateness.
- B. The Bible provides a useful model for interpersonal conflict resolution. Galatians 2 illustrates this model in the interaction between Paul and Peter over the treatment of the Gentiles.
- C. Acts 6 shows us a model for group conflict resolution that prevented the church from experiencing division at a time when a conflict could easily have escalated, doing significant damage to the church.