



Managing Conflict in the Local Church



We Will Discuss:

- ◆ Types of Church Conflicts
- ◆ Identifying escalating levels of conflict
- ◆ Conflict Resolution Strategies
- ◆ Helping church leaders understand the need to manage conflict

Philosopher William James

“Whenever you're in conflict with someone, there is one factor that can make the difference between damaging your relationship and deepening it.”

That factor is attitude.

Famous Author Max Lucado

“Conflict is inevitable, combat is optional”

This quote rings true for all conflict situations.

Conflict is



- ◆ A serious disagreement or argument
- ◆ Fight, battle, or war (*Merriam-Webster*)
- ◆ *a*: Competitive or opposing action of incompatibles: antagonistic state or action (as of divergent ideas, interests, or persons)
- ◆ *b*: mental struggle resulting from incompatible or opposing needs, drives, wishes, or external or internal demands (*Merriam-Webster*)

Types of Church Conflicts

Relationship Conflicts

- ◆ Occur because of the presence of strong negative emotions
- ◆ Misperceptions or stereo types
- ◆ Poor communication or miscommunication
- ◆ Repetitive negative behaviors
- ◆ Relationship problems often fuel disputes and lead to the unnecessary escalation of destructive conflict.

Types of Church Conflicts Data Conflicts

- ◆ Data conflicts occur when people lack information necessary to make wise decisions
- ◆ People are misinformed
- ◆ Disagree on which data is relevant
- ◆ Interpret information differently, or have competing assessment procedures
- ◆ Most data conflicts will have data solutions.

Types of Church Conflicts Interest Conflicts

Interest conflicts are caused by competition over perceived incompatible needs.

Conflicts of interest result when one or more of the parties believes that in order to satisfy his or her needs, the needs and interest of an opponent must be sacrificed.

Types of Church Conflicts

Structural Conflicts

- ◆ Caused by forces external to the people in dispute.
- ◆ Limited Physical Resources or Authority.
- ◆ Geographic Constraints – distance or proximity
- ◆ Time – too little or too much
- ◆ Organizational Changes
- ◆ Most structural conflicts will have a structural solution

Types of Church Conflicts

Value Conflicts

- ◆ Caused by perceived or actual incompatible belief systems
- ◆ Values are beliefs that people use to give meaning to their lives
- ◆ Values explain what is good, bad, right or wrong, just or unjust
- ◆ Differing values can, but doesn't have to cause conflict

The Need for Managing Church Conflict

1. Need for Unity
2. Need for Reconciliation
3. Need to Maintain Healthy Influence

Five Levels of Conflict



- ◆ LEVEL 1— A Problem to Solve
- ◆ LEVEL 2— Self Protection
- ◆ LEVEL 3— About Winning
- ◆ LEVEL 4— Fight or Flight
- ◆ LEVEL 5— Destroy the Enemy



LEVEL 1—A Problem to Solve

1. Tackling the problem
2. No personal attacks
3. Not digging up old problems



LEVEL 2—Self Protection

1. Worried about saving face
2. Disputers keep records of wrong
3. Casting doubt or judgment on the other party




LEVEL 3—It's About Winning

1. People lining up to take sides
2. The soul motivation is to win
3. Language becomes vague



LEVEL 4—Fight or Flight

1. Fighting for your position
 - a. The fight centers on principles
 - b. No room for compromise
2. Fleeing the situation altogether
 - a. Unable to see any resolution in sight
 - b. Relationships are damaged



LEVEL 5—Destroy the Enemy

1. Positions are locked in
2. The genesis of the problem is lost



Strategies to Manage Conflict

- ◆ Following Matthew 18: 15-33
- ◆ Collaborative problem solving
- ◆ Seek an interventionist



ALWAYS REMEMBER

- ◆ Conflict cannot be resolved through avoidance
- ◆ Establish the facts
- ◆ Confront the issue
- ◆ Practice forgiveness



Collaborative Problem Solving

Ground Rules:

- ◆ Be willing to take time to understand other's point of view
- ◆ Develop & maintain an attitude of cooperation, NOT competition
- ◆ Accept that differences are OK
- ◆ Work towards mutual solution
- ◆ Communicate clearly



Collaborative Problem Solving, *cont...*

Steps to Take:

- ◆ Identify the problem or issue
- ◆ Focus on the interest and needs
- ◆ Deal with the offense as soon as possible
- ◆ Invent options
- ◆ Make the agreement
- ◆ Reach a consensus



Biblical Examples of Conflict Resolution

- A. Old Testament
 1. Abraham & Lot (Genesis 13: 5-10)
 2. Moses & the tribe of Reuben (Numbers 32: 1-18)

- B. New Testament
 1. Paul & Philemon
 2. Jesus (Mark 10: 35-44)

Favorite Scripture

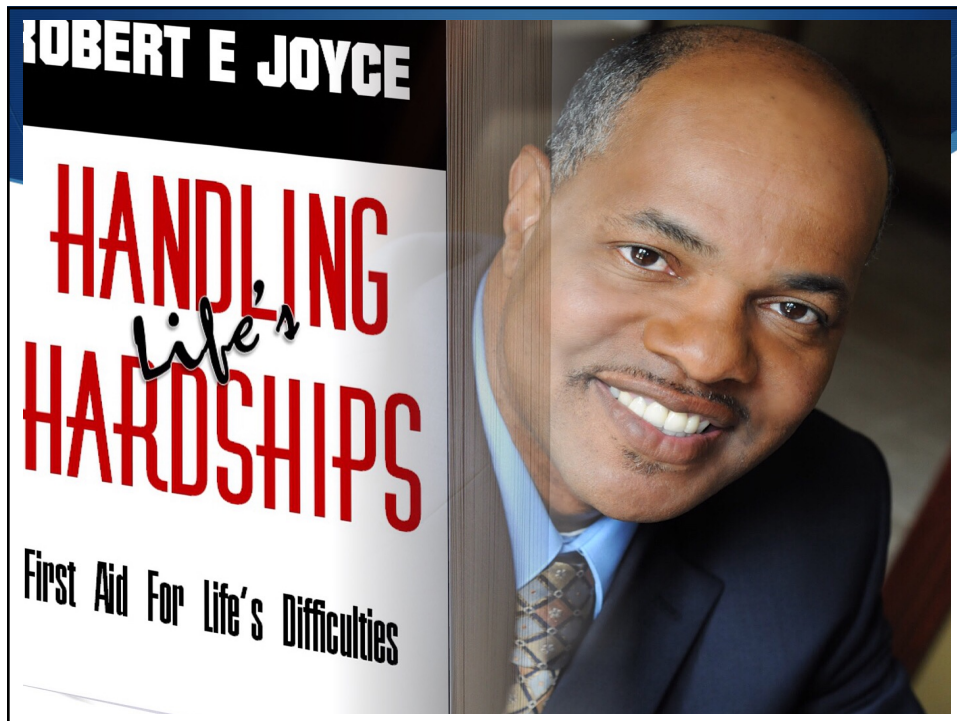
“Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God”

Matthew 5:9.



Take Home Message...

Conflict is best handled when individuals prayerfully and humbly focus on loving others, with the intent of restoring relationships



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<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9EcseJhGho>