

## Leading by Faith

### Session #10: Resolving Conflict

**Welcome** – Welcome back! Last session, we learned about and discussed Christian Liberty, and I urged you to embrace it for:

- your own well-being,
- your relationship with others in general,
- your good participation in church, and
- your leadership for sure.

The practice can be summed up in the words of Rupertus Meldenius:

- In essentials, unity;
- in non-essentials, liberty;
- in all things, charity.

I think we must have unity in essential doctrine, essential church practices, essential Christian lifestyle choices and essential approach to society.

- And liberty in the non-essentials in those 4 categories.
- And charity or grace always with each other.

I gave three examples of essentials and non-essentials.

- Not top three, just picked three.
- And you discussed them for deeper understanding.

**Discussion – What was your most impactful take away from the 9th session? Why?**

6:15 PM – Our topic tonight is resolving conflict.

- I'm approaching this topic from a leadership point of view, because this course is leading by faith, and you are leaders or aspiring leaders.
- I think some of the principles here will apply to your personal experience of conflict too, but it is about resolving conflict in the people you lead.

I have 5 principles for you. First, #1, on the topic of resolving conflict, as a leader you want to be proactive in reducing conflict and its effects.

- 1. Encourage a culture for healthy disagreement** – You must be able to have healthy disagreement, and then, you want to lead in such a way that others want to have healthy disagreement and can learn how to do that. Now, on this first point, I have 5 points:

**Build Trust** – Groups and teams who trust one another have less conflict and resolve conflict well. Trust takes time & care to build but erodes quickly. How do you build trust?

- Admit your weaknesses & mistakes and encourage others to do so. Do not conceal them.
- Invite help when you need it and constructive feedback you want it. Do not be a lone ranger.
- Stay in your lane but offer the help that you can provide to others outside your lane when it's clear that someone needs help. Don't be callous to the needs of others.

How to build trust:

- Give people the benefit of the doubt until it is proved they don't warrant it. Don't jump to conclusions about the intentions and aptitudes of others without attempting to clarify them.
- Appreciate the skills and experiences of others. Don't be arrogant.
- Focus on the most important issues. Don't be petty.
- Offer and accept apologies. Don't hold grudges.
- Look forward to being together. Don't avoid spending time with the people you are leading. Build trust! 2<sup>nd</sup> way to encourage healthy disagreement...

**Reduce fear of conflict** – Groups and teams who do not fear conflict with one another will have less conflict and resolve conflict well. How do you reduce fear of conflict?

- Embrace Christian liberty! Don't be a legalist.
- Minimize back-channel conversations and personal attacks. Do not gossip.
- Welcome the input of everyone. Don't shut people down.
- Focus on actual, real issues and problems. Don't be overly philosophical in your conversations and debates.
- Put important topic on the table for discussion. Don't ignore the elephant in the room.
- Nobody likes walking on eggshells. Fear of conflict will produce more conflict and erode or even destroy relationships.
- 3<sup>rd</sup> way to encourage healthy disagreement...

**Insist on commitment in relationships** – Groups and teams who commit to one another will have less conflict and resolve conflict well. How do you do that?

- Commitment to a group or a ministry team should be offered up front, because it will be tested by life. People can try them out in some cases, but don't lower the commitment bar in relationships so that more people are in the relationships.
- Create clarity about roles in groups or teams if there are roles. Do not be ambiguous about what we are doing and how we are doing it.
- Learn from mistakes together. Don't fear failure.
- Move forward. Don't revisit discussions and decisions again and again. That erodes commitment.
- Change direction if necessary and do it the best you can. Don't second guess each other. 4<sup>th</sup> way to encourage healthy disagreement...

**Hold people accountable** – Groups and teams who hold each other accountable will have less conflict and resolve conflict well. How do you hold people accountable?

- Establish respect among people to hold each other accountable to the group standards. Do not carry an undue burden on yourself as the leader to be the sole source of discipline. Leaders must lead, but group and team members can't be a bunch of children bringing all their problems to you.
- At the same time, don't let mutual accountability become group-management. *Example of ORD with me.*

How to hold people accountable:

- Take corrective action with thoughtful candor and appropriate respect. Don't dance around issues or burden situations with unnecessary process and bureaucracy.
- Be careful about calling out people in a group if a private conversation would be more effective. Don't embarrass people who are following you.
- Set the performance standard yourself and hold others to an appropriate level of that standard. No one will be as committed as you are, but shouldn't everyone be 70%, or whatever.
- Identify potential issues and problems before they are in full bloom. Don't be overly passive. 5<sup>th</sup> and last way to encourage healthy disagreement...

**Define results** – Groups and teams who know what their purpose is and what they are aiming to achieve in their relationships have less conflict and resolve conflict well. How do you define results?

- Know your setting. Results are different in a ministry team than in a Life Group.
- Keep it simple. Don't overengineer it.
- Celebrate what you want more of. Don't be overly driven that you don't stop and smell the roses.
- Personal ambition within the team concept & goals is good for the team. *Example of Ben making 3's.*

The topic tonight is resolving conflict. The first step in that is preventative. In the dentist's world, if conflict is a cavity, this first step is to brush your teeth...Encourage a culture for healthy disagreement by building trust, reducing the fear of conflict, insisting on commitment in relationships, holding people accountable, and defining results.

**Discussion – Which one of these five do you need to do more of so that you encourage healthy disagreement?**

6:40 PM – Okay, that's #1 on the topic of resolving conflict.

- Before we get to #2, I want to celebrate anyone who has finished that spiritual Navy seal assignment of writing out your own copy of Deuteronomy.
- Who has done that? And give us a word, a sentence or two of what impact it had on your soul?
- Excellent #2...

**2. Put on your shepherd's hat during interpersonal conflict –** Church leaders wear several hats. Sometimes you are sheer leader, other times a manager, still others a developer, and often a shepherd. And there's probably more hats than that.

Some definition of these terms may be helpful so that you can see what I am getting at by your shepherd's hat.

Leading is knowing what we should do next and mobilizing us to get it done.

- Leading is about us. Group. While it is true we lead our own selves, leadership mostly involves more than one person. The word inherently communicates that someone is in front of one or more others.
- Leading involves insight into *what's next*. It includes understanding the reality of the situation. Assessing what is going on right now. Then, identifying what is coming. Seeing into the future, either preferred or predicted. Having intuition...decision-oriented insight.
- And leading is *influencing others* to make it happen...it is a compelling picture of the future as it can and must be *combined* with a resolve and an ability to rally people to get it done.

Leadership, then, can be...

- Physical – Steve led the group up to the top of a mountain on a hike.
- Emotional – Brenda led Mike on.
- Intellectual – Deb led the class to a conclusion about that difficult problem.
- Motivational – Ralph led me to get back to working out at the gym.
- Spiritual – Dave led George to Christ.
- Civic – Ronald Reagan led the USA through a Cold War.
- Organizational – Truet Cathy has led Chick Fila to incredible success.

In ministry, leadership can be individual, familial, small group, large group, congregational, or organizational.

- A children's director led a person to become a volunteer.
- A pastor led a family into significant relationships in the church.
- A Life Group leader led his group to serve at FMSC.
- Pastor Manny is leading our students on a missions trip this summer.
- I know a pastor who led a church from 3 music styles to 1.
- I have led a church into multi-site ministry.

Leading is knowing what we should do next and mobilizing us to get it done. Managing is exercising authority over a person in order to achieve the goals of the group or organization.

- The Bible uses the word 'manage' mostly in reference to money and households.
- So, a person owns money. They have authority over it. They use that authority to achieve their goals with the money.
- Or a person has a family. They have authority in that family. They use that authority to achieve the goals of the family.

In a ministry management setting of either employees or volunteers, it is similar.

- Someone is in charge. They have authority. They have the right to direct others.
- They do that in order to achieve the goals of the ministry, of the church.

If I am managing you, I am telling you what to do and holding you accountable to get it done.

- I may even tell you how to do it, when to do it and where to do it.
- If I am a good manager, I'll tell you why we want it done...how it connects with our goals.
- Further, I will resource you with what you need to accomplish it.

Management can be done at various leadership altitudes:

1. Task – Visit that person in the hospital. Execute this to-do.
2. Tactic – Run this visitation program. Tactics are multiple tasks.
3. Strategy – Care for our congregation. Strategies have multiple tactics.
4. Vision – Create a caring community. A vision has multiple strategies.

Managing is exercising authority over a person in order to achieve the goals of the organization whether those goals are task-oriented, tactical, strategic, or visionary.

- By the way, people will say they are being micro-managed when their boss manages them at a lower altitude level than they prefer.
- They want to be managed at the tactical level, and their boss manages them to task.
- Clarity on that issue actually helps both manager and employee. Because most often you manage people at multiple altitudes.

Now, when you are experiencing conflict, I'm not saying you shouldn't lead or manage, but definitely put on your shepherd's hat. Why?

- Shepherding is helping people become more like Jesus Christ through the Word and prayer.
- Perhaps think about it this way. Ask yourself these questions, when you are trying to figure out whether you should lead, manage or shepherd.

Is the situation before me about what is good or best for the future?

- We need to change this and therefore I need to get this person or these people to understand where we are, what needs to be different, how that can be different, what their role is, and motivate them to be part of the solution.
- If so, I should think, "Lead them!"

Is the situation before me related to alignment or effectiveness?

- Is this person not doing their job or their volunteer work, or not doing well, or doing other things that are outside the scope of their responsibilities, they aren't staying in their lane, etc.
- If so, I should think, "Manage them!"

Is the situation before me related to virtue?

- Does this person need me to help them become more like Jesus Christ? Is that what is going on?
- If so, I should think, "Shepherd them!"

Conflict is the absence of peace, which is a virtue.

- Therefore, it requires the shepherd's hat.
- It should include some Scripture and prayer.

7 PM – Resolving conflict. #1 Encourage healthy disagreement. #2. Put on your shepherd's hat. Third...

**3. Categorize the conflict** – What kind of conflict is this? As you are experiencing it personally with someone, or as you are observing it in people that you are responsible to shepherd or lead. Is it a conflict about...?

**Opinion** – Two people are arguing about a topic that isn't essential for unity. Christian Liberty.

**Preference** – One person prefers doing things in a way that the other doesn't, and it is simply a matter of taste. Just what they like. And they don't like what the other person did.

**Personality** – One person is just totally different than another person and it's causing conflict. Or one person is too much like the other person and their sameness is causing conflict.

**Style** – Someone doesn't like your leadership style of you or another person in the group. For example, on the DISC, one is a high D and I. The other would much prefer an SC. They want a steady, compliant, example of what should be done rather than a directive, relational sales pitch about it. *Make Youth Group better.*

**Wisdom** – One teammate or group member thinks another had the right to decide, but they didn't make it right. That is, they think it was unwise in the content, communication or execution of the decision. They don't think that way is better than what has happened before or what is in their mind. *Paper signups vs PCO.*

**Authority** – The two people are in conflict because one decided something and the other didn't think they had the authority to make that decision. That were not in their lane in their mind. They didn't have the right to do what they did. They are changing something they have no business changing. When disagreeing, they will sometimes appeal to what they deem to be the rightful authority. *Flag in sanctuary example.*

**Sin** – One person is disturbed by another's lack of righteousness or their perception of how righteous they are. They feel sinned against or are observing sin against others in content, communication or execution of a decision. They might not say it. Perhaps they are polite or kind. You may need to uncover it.

Talking people through disagreements with these categories will resolve conflict better.

- It is so helpful to identify the conflict and get agreement between the two about the nature of it.
- It's much harder to resolve if you don't. If you have to agree to disagree on the nature of it, it will be much more difficult to achieve peace related to it.

After you identify the category, and hopefully get agreement on the category with the people who are in the conflict...#4 is...

**4. Gauge the intensity** – Use a scale of a 1 to 10, or 1 to 5, whatever you like. The questions to figure that out are:

How strongly does each person feel the conflict?

- How deeply has it hurt?
- How broadly has it impacted others?

Then, rate it. Ask each person in the conflict to gauge the intensity from their perspective.

- Some people come off more intense than they would rate it.
- Others come off very calm and there's a hurricane CAT5 going inside them.
- Intensity of the conflict matters. You can't lead well in resolving it if you don't know how much passion there is in it. Then, lastly...

**5. Deal with it accordingly** – Let me give you some principles.

The higher the category, the quicker you are going to want to address it.

- From lower to higher:
- Opinion, preference, personality, style, wisdom, authority, sin.

The greater the intensity, the longer the resolution process will take.

- I don't respond quicker to higher intensity. I respond quicker when it's a higher category.
- Sometimes people get very intense over dumb opinions. I don't feel the need to try to resolve those.

But no matter what the category is, if the intensity is high and stays high, it takes longer to resolve.

- Just be prepared for that. Generally speaking.
- I have seen miraculous changes quickly but for the most part that's how it goes.

I do as much as possible right when I experience conflict happening.

- If conflict is developing right before my eyes, I act. I don't ignore. I don't wait.
- I don't go into full blown conflict resolution and this entire process, but I do whatever I can do to be a person of peace.
- As far as it depends on me, be at peace with all people.

I don't tolerate long term, unresolved conflicts on a team or in a group that I am aware of, no matter what the category.

- If they keep going on, that means there needs to be a change in personnel.
- One person needs to leave the group if they can't get along after trying to do so over and over. Life is too short!

If it is sin, there is a Biblical pattern for resolving it.

- Don't use this pattern for anything other than flagrant, persistent, unrepentant sin.
- Give people grace. Bear with each other's sinful selves.

If it is a pattern of sin...Matthew 18:15-17 is helpful:

**<sup>15</sup>“If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. <sup>16</sup>But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. <sup>17</sup>If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.**

**Matthew 18:15-17 (ESV)**

Conflict resolution about sin starts with self-examination.

- Some behaviors are so serious, they only need to happen once.
- With other behaviors or attitudes, make sure they are consistent before you act.
- Is this something that I need to address with the other person? Is it something that these two people need to work out?
- And am I sure my motivation is good?

Then, when you know you need to act, go to that person privately, or have the person go to the other person in private.

If it isn't safe, you shouldn't do that.

- Like, there are some people that I haven't confronted privately,
- because the situation is so bad or they are so untrustworthy that I can't be alone with them at all.

If they listen, hallelujah, if they don't and it's unresolved, the next step is witnesses and helpers.

- The last step is the church which I take to mean Pastors, or Elders, or in some cases, the entire membership.
- Flagrant, consistent, patterned, unrepentant sin is worthy of excommunication.

**Discussion – Is there a conflict with someone in your life that you could use the help of the group?**

7:25 PM – Assignment reviews & new one:

- Recruit a leader to sign up for this course in the Fall. Only 29 signed up. We need 100. 😊
- Text, call, visit someone that you are shepherding.
- Have an agree to disagree conversation.
- Have a “come to Jesus” conversation to resolve a conflict.
- Let's pray.