

5 Guidelines for Conflict Resolution

Conflict is no stranger within the local church. Different opinions, diverse perspectives, and opposing priorities can cause your best leaders and staff to experience conflict with each other. This is normal and virtually unavoidable amongst leaders. Leaders cause motion and motion causes friction!

The goal is not to practice avoiding conflict, instead we all need to become good at resolving conflict.

In order to be good at conflict resolution, the first step is to know the primary internal causes. When we understand what causes conflict, we can begin to recognize and deal with it before it gets the best of us.

7 primary internal causes of conflict:

1. Immaturity
2. Self-Centeredness
3. Insecurity
4. Pride
5. Controlling nature
6. Fear (Fear of loneliness, rejection, abandonment, being manipulated etc.)
7. Broken trust

The bottom line is that conflict emerges when we don't get what we want.

What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? **2** You desire but do not have, so you kill. **You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight.** You do not have because you do not ask God. **3** When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

James 4:1-2

We all wrestle with some of these internal causes that lead to the more visible expressions of conflict.

7 primary external causes of team conflict:

1. Unhealthy culture
2. Unclear or misaligned vision
3. Lack of communication
4. Unclear expectations
5. Territorial attitudes

6. Unhealthy competition
7. Ineffective systems and processes

5 Guidelines to Conflict Resolution:

1) Give the benefit of the doubt.

My personal frame of reference is that our staff is made up of really smart people who are committed to the vision and work hard to do the right thing. So when something seems odd my first reaction is to assume the best. When I choose to give the benefit of the doubt and seek to understand, it's amazing how quickly conflict dissipates.

2) Extend trust.

Your teammates need to earn your respect, but it's important that you give them trust up front. If and when they violate that trust, that's a different story, but until then operate in an environment of mutual trust.

3) Get the issue out on the table.

Don't hold back. Polite harmony never advances the vision or accomplishes meaningful success. If there is a problem, get it on the table. Be candid, speak truth, but do so with kindness and honor. Seek to understand, listen carefully, and find common ground within the vision.

4) Set your agenda aside.

[James 4:2](#) is a truth we can't escape. We get upset when we don't get what we want. Maybe it's a bigger budget, or more staff, or greater recognition... and the list goes on. The Devil loves it when we fight like that. However, when we rise above our own agenda, personal ambition, and seek the best for others and the church overall, everyone wins!

5) Forgive and move on.

It doesn't always work out happily-ever-after. Sometimes people are hurt and it takes time to heal. Forgiveness is a critical part of any healthy staff. It may take time and God's peace to help you through the process. But in the end, restoration needs to be realized so that you may continue to model the kind of relationships that honor God.

> [Read more from Dan.](#)