

**Men's
Servant Leadership Study**

Week 6

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

Memory Verse for the Week: 1 Corinthians 10:31

In brief, write out the last significant conflict that you had, and with whom you had it. At the end of this week's study you will be expected to write out a simple plan, using the four G's of conflict management and any other insights from the study, which would have helped you do a more effective job of handling your conflict/fight. The four G's of conflict management will be covered on days 1 through 4.

Day 1 Conflict Management

Read Matthew 5:23-24, 18:15-17

One thing is certain: As a leader, you'll face relational conflicts. No leadership model exists that will allow you to avoid them. The question isn't "Will I face conflicts?" but "How can I best manage conflicts when they arise?"

When Jesus addressed problems, He tackled them head-on. While delivering the Sermon on the Mount (and later in Matthew 18) He dealt with the issue of conflicts brought about either by others offending us or by our offending them. While the Lord was addressing the problem of sin, there are broader principles at work in His teaching. And no matter which side has caused the problem, the solution is the same: First, go to the person with whom you are experiencing a conflict and address the issues face-to-face. Avoid involving a third or fourth person, especially if their knowledge of the situation will worsen the problem for the offending individual. Such discussions tend to intensify the conflict and further undermine the relationship.

Second, go to the person quickly. Jesus counseled that, if someone is worshiping God and remembers that he or she has offended a friend, the appropriate response is to stop right there and go immediately to the offended individual. With those words Jesus made it clear that relational harmony is so important that it must be achieved before effective worship can take place (Matthew 5:24). After all, how can a man or woman connect with God when he or she has unresolved relational issues with a brother or sister?

Effective leaders don't ignore conflict. They manage it by creating an environment in which people are enabled to work through relational friction on a one-on-one basis. Only after such efforts have failed are

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others allowed to enter the conflict, and then only for the purpose of bringing about reconciliation. Conflicts can't be avoided. But they can be managed. And a wise leader will devote himself or herself to learning how to do that.

1) Read Matthew 5:21 – 22 in order to put verses 23 – 24 in context. How seriously does God take dealing with offenses/conflict properly?

Read the scriptures and summarize each one.

G# 1 (Glorify God)

Conflict provides opportunity to:

1. 1 Corinthians 10:31 _____

2. Romans 12:14, 20 – 21 _____

3. 2 Corinthians 3:18 _____

DAY 2 Conflict Management and Who God Is

Although the players may be invisible, we live in the context of a titanic spiritual war in which the opposing forces of light and darkness contend for the souls of men and women. Scripture assures us that, although this invisible war is real, it is also temporary; God Himself will bring history to a point at which this cosmic conflict will be finally resolved. Read Revelation 19:11-21 for a vivid symbolic description of the final intervention of the King of kings and Lord of lords in the affairs of human history.

Read Revelation 19:11-21

The vivid imagery in this passage portrays the decisive intervention of the Son of God at the end of the age when He defeats the forces of ungodliness at His second coming. In his triumphant return, the King of kings and Lord of lords will eliminate the powers of sin and of death and bring all spiritual conflict to an end (1 Corinthians 15:24-26). After His second coming, Christ will bring all things under subjection to God the father (1 Corinthians 15:28).

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In His wisdom and sovereignty, God is able to use conflict to accomplish His divine will. Although this is not the best possible world, Scripture assures us that God is using this fallen world in preparation for the new heavens and new earth. In the meantime, God patiently awaits the right moment for the final resolution of all things (2 Peter 3:9-10).

In His creation, God is using conflict to produce a greater good. In what ways can conflict, if properly managed, do this in the context of human relationships? What can you learn from the 2 Peter passage about the role that patience plays in the face of conflict?

Read the scriptures and summarize each one.

G# 2 (Get the Log Out)

Self-examination

1. Matthew 7:5 _____

Ask yourself, is it worth fighting over?
2. Proverbs 19:11; Colossians 3:13 _____

Conflict starts in the heart with unmet desires.
3. James 4:1 _____

Confession brings freedom.
4. Proverbs 28:13 _____

Day 3 Conflict Management and Who I Am

Fight or flight, aggression or avoidance – neither of these strategies provides an effective long-term technique for managing conflict. Because we have different temperaments, some of us are less confrontational than others. Still, a good leader must develop the skill of confronting others when necessary. Read the note on 2 Samuel 14:1-15:37 to learn from a negative example. There you'll see how David mismanaged his conflict with his son Absalom.

Read 2 Samuel 14:1-15:37

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Absalom had heard that his half brother Amnon had raped his sister Tamar, yet he had failed to confront Amnon. Instead, he deceitfully arranged for Amnon's murder two years later and fled after the deed had been done (2 Samuel 13).

King David had also failed to discipline Amnon (13:21-22), and now he was shirking his responsibility to settle his conflict with Absalom, even though his son longed to see him. David relented only after Joab entreated him to restore Absalom following three years of banishment. But even after allowing him back into the city, David refused to see Absalom for another two years until Absalom forced the issue and the meeting did take place. But it was too late; Absalom had become embittered against his father and conspired to take the kingdom away from him. David's conflict avoidance strategy not only failed to work but eventually escalated to conflict. Had he dealt promptly with the issues surrounding Amnon and Absalom, Amnon's murder and Absalom's conspiracy might have been averted.

The key to conflict management is prompt reconciliation by lovingly speaking the truth (Ephesians 4:15). Effective conflict managers know how to balance truth (confrontation) and love (reconciliation). Effective leaders learn to be peacemakers by dealing directly with disagreements and seeking amicable resolutions. David shows us that putting off confrontation only strains relations and inevitably compounds the problem.

Take a moment to look at two other cases of conflict management in the Old Testament. Look at Genesis 31 and consider how Jacob and Laban mismanaged their conflict. By contrast, read Genesis 32 to see how Jacob sought to be reconciled to his estranged brother Esau.

Read the scriptures and summarize each one.

G# 3 (Gently Restore)

1. Galatians 6:1 _____

Just between the two of you
2. Matthew 18:15 _____

What if someone has something against me?
3. Matthew 5:23 – 24 _____

In love.
4. Ephesians 4:15 _____

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DAY 4 Conflict Management and How It Works

While the word conflict usually carries a negative connotation, conflict itself doesn't have to be negative. That's why we've titled this week's study "Conflict Management" rather than "Conflict Resolution" – a conflict is not something that simply needs to be "resolved," as though getting through it and moving on are the highest goals. Conflict produces energy, and energy can be channeled in positive directions. How can a leader make this happen? See Ephesians 4:1-3 to discover the keys to managing conflict with the goal of a positive outcome.

Read Ephesians 4:1-3

The critical issue in conflict management – and the one that most strongly influences one's approach to it – is this: "What will my proper management of this conflict accomplish?" Christians who live up to their calling (v.1) must keep unity through a commitment to peace (v.3); that's the preferred outcome. So how can a godly leader approach conflict so that it cements unity between the participants?

Think your way through verses two and three. Ask what each element named contributes to managing conflict so that unity and peace result. Imagine how people would approach conflict if humility, gentleness and patience provided the context in which all participants viewed the situation, and if unity and peace were the sole motives. Imagine how the process would work if all participants exercised these qualities as they worked through conflict. Imagine that conflict, as intended, produces growth in individuals and unity between people.

You may object, "Conflict produces growth and unity? Never heard of that before." But conflict between people produces energy, and energy can be channeled into different directions. For example, a conflict between a husband and a wife can serve as a venue for open and honest discussion, which can lead to greater understanding between the two and, in turn, a better relationship. Similarly, a conflict between two engineers over the design of a product can lead to a better design than either one was capable of producing alone. The key to positively channeling the energy that conflict produces is in exercising the qualities that Paul speaks of in verse 2. When we exercise humility, gentleness and patience with one another, we have a much greater chance of producing the best outcomes: greater productivity, more honesty, unity and peace (v.3).

Think your way through verses 2 & 3, and explain what each element named contributes to managing conflict so that unity and peace result.

"Be [completely] humble": _____

"[be] gentle": _____

"be patient": _____

"bear with one another in love": _____

"make every effort to keep the unity of the faith": _____

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Read the scriptures and summarize each one.

G# 4 (Go and be Reconciled)

1. Matthew 5:24 _____

2. Colossians 3:13 _____

3. Philippians 2:4 _____

4. Romans 12:21 _____

DAY 5 Conflict Management and What I Do

Conflict is a fact of life in this world, so it’s crucial that a person in a leadership position learns how to manage it with an eye toward positive closure. Jesus provides us with some guidance and Martin Luther King Jr. offers some practical direction with regard to how we can do this.

Read Matthew 5:43-45

Few tasks a leader faces are more emotionally or mentally challenging than that of managing conflict. Over the course of a career, every leader will have countless opportunities to work with others through relational, philosophical and methodological differences. On occasion those differences may lead to personal strife, and the leader’s opponent may appear to be an enemy. At such times the words of Jesus in this passage will take on added significance.

On Christmas Day, 1957, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. delivered a sermon at the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama. It was based on this very passage of Scripture, and the sermon’s title was “Loving Your Enemy.” Through the course of his sermon, Dr. King suggested three ways by which we can do just that.

First, we must develop and maintain the capacity to forgive. Such forgiveness doesn’t mean that we ignore the wrong committed against us. Rather, it means that we will no longer allow the wrong to be a barrier to the relationship. Forgiveness, according to King, “is a catalyst creating the atmosphere necessary for a fresh start and a new beginning.”*

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Second, we must recognize that the wrong we've suffered doesn't entirely represent the other person's identity. We need to acknowledge that our opponent, like each one of us, possesses both bad and good qualities. We must choose to find the good and focus on it.

Third, we must not seek to defeat or humiliate our opponent, but to win his or her friendship and understanding. Such an attitude flows not from ourselves, but from God as his unconditional love works through us.

As followers of Christ who seek to lead as He led, we must remember that the more freely we forgive, the more clearly we reveal the nature of our heavenly Father.

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1) List the four actions in verse 44 that show proof that we are sons of God.

2) List the 4 G's from this week's study

3) Using the 4 G's approach and any other insights gathered from this week's study rethink that conflict that you wrote about on day 1, and document a plan of action that you would take if you had to do it all over again. (Note: Avoiding the conflict/argument is NOT part of the plan, unless it wasn't really worth arguing over in the first place)

4) Is there someone that you still need to get right with?

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