

HARNESSING THE POWER OF CONFLICT HANDOUT

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Workshop Description:

Contrary to what many believe, conflict is filled with power that can bring significant positive change. When managed well, conflict can have very beneficial results. In this workshop we will examine key issues of the conflict dynamic, evaluate various responses and identify ways to harness the positive power of conflict.

Introduction:

- 1 - For many people conflict feels like an enormous, chaotic force that seems intimidating and even terrifying
- 2 - The Bible takes conflict very seriously.
 - A - Matthew 5:24 tells us that we should leave our gift at the altar and go be reconciled with our brother or sister. Then we can return and bring our gift to the Lord.
 - B - Jesus said, “blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the sons of God.”

Ken Sande, *The Peacemaker – A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict*

“Peacemakers are people who breathe grace. They draw continually on the goodness and power of Jesus Christ, and then they bring his love, mercy, forgiveness, strength, and wisdom to the conflicts of daily life. . . God calls us all to be biblical peacemakers, to allow his redemptive, transforming love to spill over into our relationships.”

- 4 - Unfortunately, conflict is inevitable. Wherever there are people with different ideas, backgrounds, beliefs and agendas there will be conflict.
- 5 - The good news is that conflict has the power to bring about some very positive results. The challenge is to harness that power and use it to accomplish constructive outcomes.
 - A - Conflict can be a catalyst for change. It can provide the impetus that pushes us out of our rut and impels us forward.
 - B - Conflict helps to bring problems to the table and set the stage to promote new ideas and opportunities.
 - C - Conflict can help people collaborate, clarify their goals and build teams who collaborate to work to achieve those goals.
 - D - Conflict can air out resentments and bring greater understanding. When properly managed it leads to open and honest discussion that can enrich relationships.
 - E - Managing conflict can strengthen personal relationships and achieve harmony and unity.

- F - Conflict gives us the opportunity for spiritual growth and the demonstration of the power of the Gospel of Christ.

Understanding the Nature of Conflict:

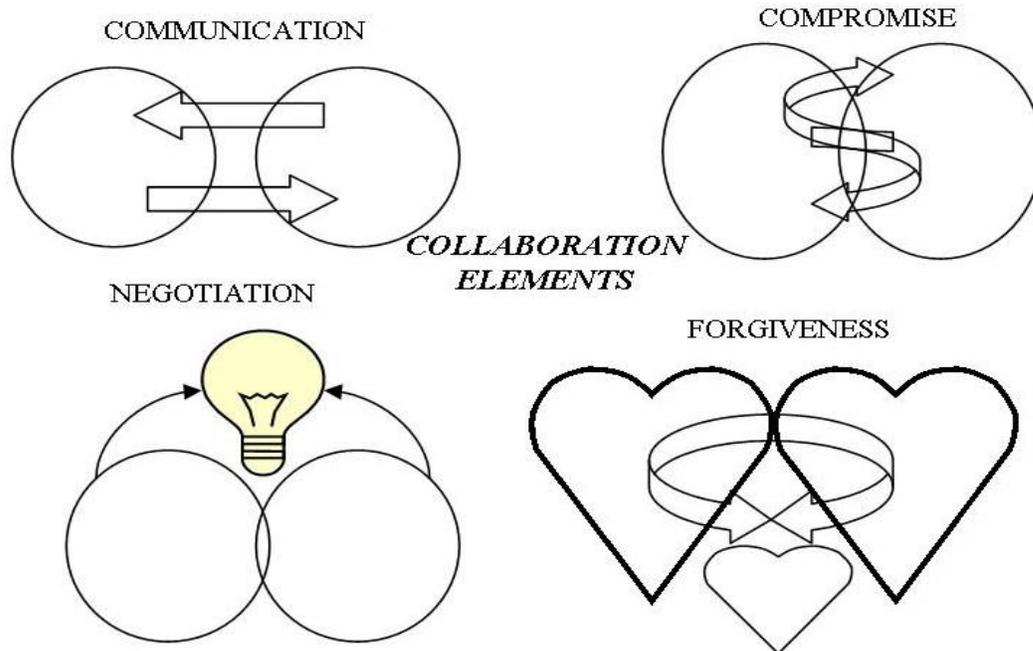
- 1 - Defining Conflict
 - A - “A struggle over values and claims to scarce status, power, and resources in which the aims of the opponents are to neutralize, injure, or eliminate the rivals.” (Coser 1967)
 - B - “Conflict is an expressed struggle between at least two independent parties who perceive incompatible goals, scarce resources, and interference from others in achieving their goals.” (Wilmont & Hocker, “Interpersonal Conflict,” 2011)
 - C - Conflict is “. . . a clash between hostile or opposing ideas, interests or persons.” (<http://www.lighthouseconsulting.org/Articles/KOTResolvingConflictSuccessfully/>)
 - D - “Conflict is defined as a clash between individuals arising out of a difference in thought process, attitudes, understanding, interests, requirements and even sometimes perceptions.” (<http://www.managementstudyguide.com/understanding-conflict.htm>)
 - 1 - Frequently, perception is at the core of interpersonal conflict. Often what is perceived is different from what is real or true.
 - a - **Perceived incompatible goals** are central to all conflicts.
 - b - **Perceived scarce resources** can be physical, economic, social or emotional
- 2 - Components of conflict
 - A - **People**
 - B - **Differences** that are perceived as a threat.
 - C - **Strong emotions** about a problem or situation.
- 3 - Phases of conflict
 - A - **Prelude.** The prelude to a conflict involves a wide variety of circumstances, perceptions and beliefs.
 - B - **Triggering Event.** Conflict never arises without a triggering event.
 - C - **Initiation Phase.** This is the point at which the conflict has already started and now becomes obvious.
 - D - **Differentiation Phase.** In this phase parties articulate their differences.
 - E - **Resolution Phase.** In this phase the parties begin to work together through communication, compromise and negotiation to move toward resolution.
- 4 - The ways we respond to conflict are usually handed down through our families.



- A - **Competing.** Competition can become very aggressive with one or more parties doing whatever it takes to win the conflict.
- B - **Avoidance.** Attempting to ignore and avoid most conflict. This can even include denial where someone will pretend the problem does not exist.
- C - **Accommodation.** One party will give in and go along with the other person.
- D - **Collaboration.** This is where both parties work through the process to

Harnessing the Power of Conflict:

- 1 - In order to harness the power of conflict we must respond to it in ways that are gospel-centered and biblically faithful.
- 2 - In Ephesians 4:1-3, Paul gives us some truths that are truly critical for managing conflict to achieve a positive outcome.
- 3 - Harnessing the power of conflict requires collaboration where both parties work cooperatively together to achieve mutually beneficial goals.
 - A - Collaboration moves us from being in opposition to one another to partnering with one another.
 - B - It includes a commitment to a mutual relationship and shared goals.
 - C - Each party is valued and has unique roles to play in bringing about the desired outcomes.
 - D - In a collaborative relationship, resources, responsibilities, and rewards are shared.
 - E - The collaboration of two or more parties opens the possibility that they will accomplish more together than any one of them could have done alone.
- 4 - Authentic collaboration includes four key elements;



- A - **Communication.** In this context communication involves creating a space or atmosphere where people can convey their thoughts, feelings and concerns in effective ways.
 - B - **Compromise.** Compromise is the choice to make certain concessions in order to achieve a mutually beneficial outcome.
 - C - **Negotiation.** Negotiation is a process in which people strive to reach agreement by discussing differences and identifying desired goals.
 - D - **Forgiveness.** In Col. 3:12-13 Paul tells us that we need to forgive one another as the Lord has forgiven us.
- 6 - Setting the stage for success.
- A - Spend time in prayer.
 - B - Educate ourselves.
 - C - Select a location to meet.

Communicating to Achieve Resolution:

- 1 - Respect the other person.
 - A - Work to understand and validate the other party's feelings and point of view.
 - B - Don't take the conflict personally. Try to see under the surface and not get stuck in the immediate negative emotions.
 - C - Listen well. James 1:19
 - 1 - Don't interrupt
 - 2 - Ask questions
 - 3 - Watch body language
 - 4 - Reflect back what you are hearing. Paraphrase what you think the other person is saying to make sure that you are really hearing is what they are trying to communicate.
 - 5 - Give them a chance to respond and explain. This helps to avoid miscommunication.
 - D - Use **I** statements to communicate your feelings clearly without attacking the other person. Prov. 15:1
 - F - Focus on the problem, not on the person.

- G - Look for common ground. This will help to build teamwork.
- H - If necessary take time outs to cool down in order to keep conflict from escalating. Schedule a follow-up time to continue working to resolve the issue.

The Process of Managing Conflict:

- 1 - After you have thoroughly communicated with one another and understand where you are coming from you can work can begin the steps to move toward positive outcomes.
- 2 - Together brainstorm ways that you might be able to resolve the conflict.
 - A - Set an agenda
 - B - Actively present multiple options
 - C - Write the options down as they arise. Don't evaluate them at this time.
 - D - Evaluate the options together and decide on a plan of action.
 - E - Set a time to jointly evaluate the progress of the plan of action.
 - F - If necessary, go back to the options from the brainstorming session and decide on another plan of action.

Conclusion:

- 1 - Romans. 12:18 as far as it depends on us we are to live at peace with all people.
- 2 - Harnessing the power of conflict that enables us to live at peace with all people does not mean that we avoid conflict, but that we manage it well in order to maximize the potential positive benefits of that conflict.