

## Program

1.15pm-2.45pm

**Subject Descriptor:** Most of us don't like conflict yet conflict occurs in every relationship in our lives and leaving it unresolved is costly. This session will equip you with godly wisdom, practical skills, and vital tools to have meaningful and 'fierce conversations' in every area of our lives with those we care about.

**Aimed at:** For Christians

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## Welcome

Disclaimer!

- Our aims today:
  - to look at what good and bad conflict is
  - offer an approach to the way we handle conflict
  - recommend some resources.

## Conflict

- *Conflict* is when some form of friction, disagreement or discord exists between individuals or groups.
- *Conflict* is a feature of human condition – unavoidable.

Timothy Lane suggests five preliminary perspectives which may be helpful for Christians to consider as we approach this topic (Lane, 3-5):

### 1. The Bible is a story of Conflict

### 2. Conflict is an opportunity

James 1:2-4

### 3. No Conflict if out of God's control

c.f. Ps 46, 55, 61 et al.

### 4. Not all conflict can be resolved – immediately

### 5. There are often many layers to conflict

### Exercise:

- Think of a conflict that you have recently been engaged in (perhaps still engaged in) – describe it to the person beside you.  
(Note: Keep the discussion anonymous. And just describe the situation, no need to analyse or offer solutions. 2 minutes each)

### Handling Conflict

#### Stakeholders

- Recognise that conflict doesn't happen without others!
  - a.
  - b.
  - c. (2 Cor 7:5)

#### The Wrong Strategy

- Different people will use different strategies to get what they want – and may change tact mid-conflict.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ – aims to gain or maintain power, success or comfort. Rejects failure, discomfort and being out of control.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ – aims to gain approval and means the person will often be quick to agree, fear rejection and have a hard time saying 'no'.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ – aims to be approved or comfortable – avoiding rejection or discomfort. This is the 'head in the sand' approach.

**Reflection:** Can you see yourself in those strategies?

## **Assertion vs Avoidance**

- Assertion builds self-confidence – positive dynamic
- Avoidance leads to dominance – negative dynamic

## **A Strategy for Christian Conflict**

### **1. Pray**

- Phil 4:6-7

Directive: Pray whenever in situations of conflict.

- James 4:2c

### **2. Self-examination**

- James 4:1-3

Question: Is my attitude and behaviour right now honouring to Christ?

### **3. Repent and Petition**

- James 4:4-11

Questions:     What do I need to repent of?  
                      What do I need to ask for in terms of grace?  
                      Is there anything I need to ask forgiveness for (of the other person)?

### **4. Engage in hard listening**

Question: Can I put the problem into words in a way that the other person/s would agree?

### **5. Consider the Principle (not the practice)**

- Mark 11:11-19 c.f. Mt 21:12-22; Lk 19:45-47; Jn 2:13-16.

Question: What is at stake and does it undermine the gospel?

## 6. Consider the other person/s

- Col 3:12-14, 1 Thess 5:14-18

Question: How do I uphold this person (whom I disagree with)?

## 7. Plan your conflict

- ‘Hatred stirs up conflict, but love covers over all wrongs’ (Prov 10:12).

Question: What will be ‘won’ if you win this conflict?

## 8. Engage in your conflict

- Exercise Christian humility and assertiveness - you are wanting to win the person not the argument.

‘Christian humility is not the command to be a human doormat. Christian assertiveness is a humility that accepts one limits and one’s worth as a child of God’  
(Halverstadt, 36)

- Stay in control or abort
  - ‘A hot-tempered person stirs up conflict, but the one who is patient calms a quarrel’. (Prov 15:18 c.f 29:22)
- Avoid black and white options - don’t paint into the corner – try and give the person a way to save face.

### Exercise:

- Considering the conflict that you raised earlier – what steps do you need to take from here?

### Useful Resources

- Lane, Timothy, S.      *Conflict – A Redemptive Opportunity* (New Growth Press: Greensboro, 2006)
- Halverstadt, Hugh F.   *Managing Church Conflict* (John Knox Press: Kentucky, 1991)
- Sande, Ken              *The Peace Makers – A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict* (Baker Books: Michigan, 2004).
- Scott, Susan            *Fierce Conversations – Achieving Success at Work and in Life One Conversations at a time* (Berkley: New York, 2017) – Note this book is not a Christian book.