

ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH- Red Bud, Illinois

Adult Bible Class

"Communication Skills, Anger Management, or How to Fight With Your Spouse"

VI. Managing Conflict

1. Differences in opinion, preference, or conviction among people is to be expected, given that each one of us is uniquely created by our Heavenly Father. What we like is not necessarily right, nor is what we don't like necessarily wrong (that someone else must fix). An old Latin proverb is *de gustibus non est disputatem*, "concerning tastes there is not to be a dispute" [unless you cheer for the Cubs! ;)]
2. Because of our sinful natures, however, we should not be surprised that others (and we ourselves when we are honest about it) pursue a position that is based on "what seems best to me."
3. The reality of our sin presents the temptation to pursue what I want at the expense of or to the neglect of others around me.
4. Conflict is a "state of disharmony between incompatible or antithetical persons, ideas or interests." This clash may occur when an agreement is required or a decision needs to be made and two or more people have variant opinions as to what would be best. (Easily abused power is when decisions are made by only one person.)
5. Just as anger is not bad in and of itself, conflict is not bad either. It is what we do with conflict that will make it bad (what the devil wants) or have it turn out well (what God wants).
6. Conflict can be:
 - a. A time of growth for all the parties involved;
 - b. A chance to experience the saying that "two (or more) heads are better than one";
 - c. A time for creativity to happen as a variety of alternatives are examined;
 - d. An opportunity to evaluate one's own performance objectively;
 - e. A time to grow in understanding one another;
 - f. An opportunity to realize our own deficiencies and make adjustments; and
 - g. An opportunity to practice placing others before ourselves.

Philippians 2:3-6³ Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. ⁴ Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. ⁵ Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, though He was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,

Acts 15:36-41. Paul and Barnabas discuss going on a second missionary journey.

And after some days Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us return and visit the brothers in every city where we proclaimed the word of the Lord, and see how they are." Now Barnabas wanted to take with them John called Mark. But Paul thought best not to take with them one who had withdrawn from them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the work. And there arose a sharp disagreement, so that they separated from each other. Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus, but Paul chose Silas and departed, having been commended by the brothers to the grace of the Lord. And he went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.

What is the conflict here? _____

What is the negative result of this conflict? _____

What is the positive result of this conflict? _____

See 2 Timothy 4:9-11. What is the eventual result? _____

VII. Strategies for Enlisting Conflict

Conflict provides an opportunity to bring about good. Consider Jesus' conversation with a Samaritan woman at the well in the town of Sychar recorded in John 4:7-26. There were many possible conflict points: male/female; He is a Jew/she is a Samaritan (ethnic hatred); He is a religious teacher/she is living an openly ungodly life. While the two of them speak past one another for awhile (Jesus on a spiritual level; she is on an earthly, material level), eventually they get to the same point, that Jesus is God's promised Messiah.

Tips for when you serve as a mediator for a conflict:

1. Pray for patience, empathy, insight and strength to keep your commitments to all parties involved.
2. Realize that you get more information and cooperation by asking questions rather than by making accusations.
3. Encourage each party to the conflict to share their "ideal" resolution.
4. Spend time letting each party involved know that their "ideal" is understood by others in the process. This requires them to work on "active listening."
5. Ask questions such as "What would you like to see result from this?", "What would your own behavior have to be to reach this resolution?" and "What would the other's behavior have to be to reach this resolution?"
6. Ask each person to answer the question, "What is preventing you from behaving in a way that will solve this conflict?"
7. Have each party involved commit to making one behavioral adjustment in order to resolve this conflict.
8. Work each party closer to one another by bringing them to see the "irrationality" of part of their position and the "rationality" of part of the other party's position.

Romans 12:14-18 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight. Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.

VIII. Some Possibilities for Behavioral Adjustments When Dealing With Conflict

1. Clarify the issue. Assure each other that all parties are discussing the _____ data.
2. Focus on the _____ of your communication, not the _____ of the argument.
3. Do not be unduly influenced by the opinions of your _____. This issue is unique to you.
4. Practice "one-down" thinking, rather than "one-up" arguing (be a _____).
5. Seek to understand the other's viewpoint; _____ beyond the surface (reflective or active listening).
6. Seek _____ for problems rather than opportunities for vengeance.
7. Avoid using past _____ for leverage in a disagreement.
8. Avoid the temptation to exaggerate with absolute words such as "_____" or "_____."
9. Do not say things that simply are not _____.
10. Use "___" statements which take the burden off of the listener (assertiveness).
11. Choose the appropriate _____ and _____ for a discussion that might cause conflict.

What is the most common room in the house for conflict? _____

12. Avoid personal _____ and name-calling. These only prove that you have no intellectual leg to stand on in an argument (e. g. "homophobe" in today's cultural conversations).
13. Learn to say: "I may be _____ and you may be _____." This will end a lot of conflict.
14. Understand that there are two components to your forgiveness. (See Jesus' words in John 8:2-11.)
 - A. Even though your action was wrong, I forgive you and will not treat you the way that your behavior deserves to be treated ("neither do I condemn you"); and

B. My expectation is that your behavior will change (and perhaps mine as well) so that this will not happen again (“go, and from now on sin no more”).