

# Dealing with Conflict by Joel Blalock with Lifeway with additions by Kris Swiatocho

1. Confront the person or issue directly or honestly.

Nothing is worse than letting an issue simmer until it boils over into the entire church. Go directly to the person causing the conflict and seek to resolve it. If you can make concessions while still honoring Christ, do so, if this will settle the issue. The Bible offers a plan in Matthew 18:15-17. Follow it.

Mat 18:15-18

"If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.' If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector.

2. Don't go looking for trouble.

Let sleeping dogs lie. Don't fix it if it isn't broken. Proverbs 3:30 wisely says "Do not accuse a man for no reason -- when he has done you no harm." Sometimes when we feel offended by what a person says, does or communicates to us through the phone, email or text message, etc...its best to wait a while and make sure you have reason to be offended. Sometimes what they meant to communicate was not meant to offend you. So before you react, take some time and pray. Then, if you are still not sure, talk to the person and ask them to clarify what they said or wrote.

3. Delegate if you know you cannot be successful.

If you anticipate trouble with a particular family or individual, ask another person you trust to work with them. Use one another's skills to avoid trouble. Moses needed the direction of his father-in-law Jethro to keep from overloading his plate with the many decisions the people of God faced in the wilderness, and so do you. Read Exodus 18:1-27 to see how God blessed this delegation of duties.

4. Agree with the person if at all possible.

Before reacting to a person and assuming its their fault, be sure of your part in the conflict. When you make a mistake, promptly admit it. It is better to trust the outcome to God than to deny our error when it is evident for everyone to see. In Matthew 5:25, Jesus directed us to: "Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still with him on the way, or he may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison."

Note: Settle matters quickly...it's important that we handle areas of conflict quickly. It's so easy to pretend the conflict will go away or the opposite, we vent to everyone we know spreading gossip which in turn only makes matter worse.

5. Mediate the issue.

Mediation means we involve a third person to help settle the matter. A good mediator asks each side to suggest what they need to resolve the issue. After listening to both sides, the mediator then suggests a compromise position that both sides can accept. It's important to try and find a place of resolution. Even if the "place" is small, its a start. Once we take one step, we can take and other and so on.

6. Involve the next leader up/deacon/pastor

When at all possible means, try and solve conflict before going to your leaders, deacons and/or pastor. However, when the steps outline above do not work, you will have to take the next step and involve the next leader up whether lay or staff. Be sure you are clear and to the point regarding the conflict. Document any necessary information including your steps and a time line. Ask for direction and guidance regarding your part.

IN ALL CONFLICT

Take the issue to the Lord and leave it there.

Some people cannot be satisfied unless they destroy others or they feel they have totally won the argument. Don't go there with those people. Sometimes the only person who really understands our side is Jesus. If the issue still troubles you, continue praying about it and ask God to make it a non-issue for you.

Pray for your part.

Every area of strife is a spiritual problem. While you can't resolve the issue for others, you can settle it for yourself. No problem can be totally separate from the spiritual issue that accompanies it. Ask God to work behind the scenes. Admit faults of your own that you cannot see. In every situation, we must trust God to be the one who finally settles issues in the local church and in our lives.

Pray for the other person(s)

No matter what the other person has done or said, we must always pray for them. The enemies goal is always to steal, kill and destroy (John 10:10). The enemy wants to isolate you, make the conflict all about you and have you leave the ministry/church. If we know that is his goal we have to do the opposite. Remember that the person you have a conflict with is a brother or sister in Christ. They may not be where you are spiritually so we have to have grace for them, just like God has given you grace. Be patient and wait for God to do his part. Always seek to unify..even if it takes time due to having to heal.