

HANDLING CONFLICT

Conflict is inevitable in small group life. We need to be prepared for it. Below are some good reminders of how conflict is handled in a healthy, godly manner. These guidelines come from the workbook, *Coaching Life-Changing Small Group Leaders*, pp. 110-111.

****First and foremost we follow the pattern laid out for us in Matthew 18.**

1. LEADERS ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE PROCESS, NOT THE OUTCOME.

You give wise counsel, guide the process, and hold people accountable. In the end, whether or not they forgive and reconcile is entirely out of your hands.

2. THE CONFLICT NEED NOT BE RESOLVED IN ONE MEETING.

Life is not a TV show – not everything can be solved in thirty minutes. As you are dealing with conflict, give some space. Allow people time to process their thoughts and feelings. Allow time to work things out and heal.

3. CONFLICT MUST BE PROCESSED WITH TRUST AND CONFIDENTIALITY.

There is great potential for additional wounding if confidentiality is not held high. Don't discuss this matter with people outside the group, unless it is truly someone from whom you are seeking wisdom and insight.

4. PREPARE YOUR HEART.

Recommend a time of prayer and solitude, often a half or a whole day, for each person involved in the conflict to prepare their hearts for the process they are going to walk through.

5. START SOON.

Waiting will only deepen the wounds and prolong the pain.

6. MEET FACE-TO-FACE.

Email and telephones are great for some things, but not for conflict resolution. Letters and emails only document the offense and allow people to read into their words. So set the appointment by phone and meet face-to-face to talk. We call these 3D-communication whereas letters, text, and email are 2D.

7. KEEP IT SIMPLE.

If the conflict is between two group members, then according to Matthew 18, they should talk to each other first. You may need to encourage them or hold them accountable for doing this.

8. AFFIRM THE RELATIONSHIP.

This is always the starting point when you meet. The goal is to restore a broken relationship or to help a person grow.

9. GET THE FACTS.