



Conflict Resolution Part 1/3

Set the scene by placing a large piece of poster paper on a table and invite the women to write on the paper places or relationships in their lives where they may experience conflict.

Have everyone take a seat and ask for two volunteers to hold the paper. They will each stand at a short end of the paper holding it by two corners.

Then read:

There are many causes of conflict in our lives, our work, and sometimes even in our ministries. These conflicts strain relationships. They test bonds. Think of these conflicts as stones that weigh us down, stressing us to a breaking point.

As you read each of the following, place one large stone on the middle of the paper (until the paper breaks)

The stone of accusation tells us “it doesn’t matter what you haven’t inside, so long as the outside looks good.” How quick we are to accuse. When things go wrong, we are quick to find fault with others and place them in the hot spotlight. Do I throw this stone?

The stone of bitterness grows when we hold onto every hurt we have experienced. We can’t find peace and we lash out in bitterness. Do I throw this stone?

The stone of criticism destroys self-esteem - each criticism we pile on destroys the other’s self esteem. Do I throw this stone?

The stone of destruction pounds down with rumors. Over time they destroy, little by little. Do I throw this stone?

The stone of exclusivity tells us that we are better than others. We exclude them. We form cliques. Do I throw this stone?

These stones of conflict have the power to destroy us just as they did our paper. Let us pray that God will help us put down our stones:

Pray using Ezekiel 36:26:

Credits: Adapted from “Mercy Me” MCCW/Erin Lunday 2015, closing prayer from 150 Closing and Opening Prayers by Carl Koch, 1990, stones of conflict source unknown



I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.

So how do we do this? How do we allow God to remove our hearts of stone and give us hearts of flesh instead?

We are going to break into small groups and take a look at what scripture tells us about resolving conflict. Each group has a list of scripture verses. Please read the scripture and then take a turn each sharing how you can apply one of the verses to a conflict you have experienced in your life - whether in your family, among co-workers, in your ministry work.

Give the group ten minutes to do this exercise and then ask a few volunteers to share with the larger group.

So, how do we handle conflict in our ministry work specifically? Recall some examples that were shared by the group (if any were about ministry), then say:

Again we can look to scripture. In Matthew 18:16-17, we read:

If your brother sins [against you], go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have won over your brother. If he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, so that 'every fact may be established on the testimony of two or three witness.' If he refuses to listen to them, tell the church.

God's word is again providing us clear guidance - a step-by-step process, to addressing conflict in your ministry.

In your small groups think of an example of how you could use these steps to address a conflict you have experienced.

Give the group a few minutes to discuss and ask for a few volunteers to share.

Now, I want to caution you: these steps are good and true, but we still have to follow them with kindness and compassion. If I had a conflict with someone on my board and I went to them and said, "Hey, you are sinning and you need to knock it off," I'm not going to get a great result. But if I go to them and say, "Hey, I am worried about you -- you haven't been finishing your projects on time and it's affecting the board. What's going on? Is everything okay?" I am opening the door for dialog, discussion, and healing.



Likewise, if the one on one approach doesn't work and I gather the board to stage an aggressive intervention, the person with whom we are having conflict is going to feel attacked and alone. Instead, perhaps during a board meeting, I address it broadly, "We are working toward this big event and we need to really pull together as a team. I've noticed that we have missed some deadlines, does anyone want to share their ideas or thoughts on how we can address this and work together to get everything done?"

Finally, I can't stress enough the value of having a strong relationship with your priest or spiritual moderator for your ministry. MCCW's spiritual moderator, Father Joe, is amazing and he has helped our board on so many occasions to address conflict.

One example: I worked with someone in a ministry one time who had been doing great work and was so enthusiastic and all of a sudden she just fell off the radar. No one could reach her by phone or email or FB. She was just gone! And after several attempts to reach out, I called our priest and said, "Father, I don't know what to do! I am wondering if she has just given up on us. Should I send her an email and tell thank you for your time on the team but we are going to find a replacement for you?"

And he so wisely said to me, "When someone falls off the radar, that is cause for concern. Have you asked her if she is okay?"

Wow! I had those stones of accusation and criticism in my hand, ready to throw, before I really thought about the person on the receiving end. I took Father's advice and sent her a note saying, "Hey, we are worried about you! Please let us know you are okay and I kept following up for a few more days."

And sure enough, she answered her phone and said, "Thank you so much for checking on me - my mother has been sick, my best friend's mother passed away, and another friend died last week too. I have been traveling to take care of my mother and trying to comfort my friends and I am sick and just so sad."

We talked and I listened and we eventually made a plan for her to come back to the team and do her work. And she was AMAZING. But just think what would have happened if I had just applied those steps clinically. I could have broken that relationship and hurt this woman's self-esteem and our team would have lost a valuable, wonderful part of it!

But how do we remember all of this in the heat of the moment, when your blood is boiling and you are just ready to throw those stones?



One of the ways we can begin to put down our stones is what we did at the beginning of this session: reflection on scripture. The bible tells us that the Word of God is like the rain, it won't go back to heaven without accomplishing its purpose. We can count on God's word to help us overcome the stones in our lives.

We have supplies here on the table for you to write down one or two of the scripture verses you think will most help you when faced with conflict. When you take these home, place them in locations where you will see them in the midst of conflict.

Share where you might put one: Our kitchen is the hub of my family's home and it is also the place where the most chaos seems to happen during the busy hours while the kids are getting ready for school and during the busy hours of homework, dinner and chores. Posting this verse on my kitchen cabinet can help me to recall God's faithfulness is helping me overcome conflict when I feel like yelling or scolding or losing my patience.

Give the group five to ten minutes to create their scripture cards.

Bring the group back and close in prayer:

All powerful God, you dwell within us. Hear our prayer. As we build the sense of community, let's take Paul's words to the Phillippians to heart: "If in Christ there is anything that will move you, any incentive in love, any fellowship in the Spirit, any warmth or sympathy - I appeal to you, make my joy complete by being...one in love, one in heart, and one in mind."

Holy Spirit, in Jesus we have the example of love and fellowship to follow as we create community. Help us to follow his example with determination and joy. In complete trust in your providence, we lift our voices to you, ever-faithful God. Amen.