

# KID'S CONNECTION

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**Conflict Resolution:** adapted from "Blessed Are the Peacemakers" by Larry Shallenberger, Children's Ministry magazine July/August 2001.

Conflict is scary and most of us cringe at that word. Yet conflict is unavoidable—even in the church. In the face of conflict, Paul tells us to overcome the fight or flight instinct and work it out. Here's a 5 step process to help work out conflict.

## Step 1: Screen It

When you're offended, the first thing you ask yourself is "Can I overlook this offense in love?" Determine if it's really worth your energy to be upset. If the conflict is minor, the offense should not create a division between you and the other person. The offense should also not be doing harm to God's reputation or to others. If the offense meets these criteria then prayerfully let it go.

## Step 2: Chug It

Choosing to ignore the conflict is like stuffing milk into the back of the refrigerator and pretending it doesn't exist. Keeping conflict past its expiration date leads to bitterness and gossip. A rancid smell will begin to create sourness in your heart. So chug the conflict; drink it in. As you reflect on the issue at hand you become less of the passive victim and take another step closer to being a peacemaker.

## Step 3: Test It

What role did you play in creating the conflict? Jesus calls us to evaluate our role in the disagreement before we begin to deal with anyone else's wrongdoing.

- Have I been in past conflicts with others about this issue?
- How would you feel if the other person adopted the tactics you are using to deal with the issue?
- Has the situation become worse because you did not deal with it promptly?
- What parts are you leaving out when you retell the story?
- Have you ignored God's conviction?

If you discover an eyeful of your own shortcomings, confess them and take the plank out of your own eye.

## Step 4: Just Do It

Time is required to resolve friction. Jesus cares about the processes you use in conflict resolution more than the issue you are fighting over. Matthew 18: 15-17 shows us God's way of working through conflict.

- Talk privately to the person
- If you can't agree, then get help from a third, unbiased party.
- If the 3 parties can't come to resolution, then take it to the church body. The goal always remains restoration.

Avoid destructive habits counter to conflict resolution:

1. Triangulation: Party A is upset with party B who tells party C who becomes upset with party A. You get the picture. Around and around it goes and everyone gets hurt.
2. Hit and Run: Don't use e-mail, voice mail, or letters to dialogue your displeasure with someone. Words can be misinterpreted. A face to face encounter is much more productive.
3. The Gladiator: Don't confront in an arena of spectators.

## Step 5: Finish It

Have I said my final 10%? Most people find it easy to say 90% of what they are upset over but the remaining 10% stays hidden. Questions over motives & fear of avoiding emotional injury tempt us not to reveal the entire truth. Did I listen to the other person's side? Active listening helps get to the root of the conflict. Did I restore the relationship?

**Never forget the goal is reconciliation not victory.**

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