

Wisdom in the Workplace: Conflict Resolution

- “Conflict is inevitable. You are already a walking civil war.” (Nick Wanyoike)
- Conflict in Christian organisations is also inevitable
- Conflict is very stressful
- Conflict in our culture tends to be denied / swept under the carpet
- The Bible has a lot of teach us about how to handle conflict in a godly way

Philippians 2:1-4 Colossians 3:8-17

Small Group Discussion

- What different sorts of conflicts and challenges might we face at our placements?
- Tell a story about conflict handled badly (or not handled at all) bringing about a worse situation. (Avoid gossip, leave out names)

Conflict situations usually have several things in common:

- There are high stakes and potential consequences
- There are opposing viewpoints
- There is uncertainty about how the conversation will play out
- There is often historical baggage
- There are powerful emotions involved

All this points to RISK

What are the main reasons for putting off difficult conversations??

A survey of 500 managers asked them why they put off conversations – these were the reasons they gave

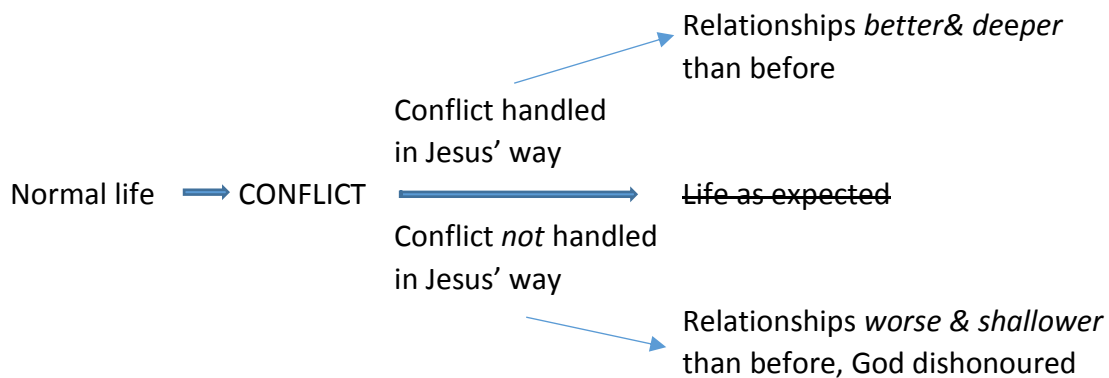
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|---|-----|
| • Didn't want to create a bad atmosphere | 29% |
| • To avoid confrontation | 18% |
| • Didn't know how to say it | 16% |
| • Worried about the reprisals | 11% |
| • Thought it might make the situation worse | 11% |
| • Didn't want to upset someone | 8% |
| • Lack of time | 7% |

Did the issue:

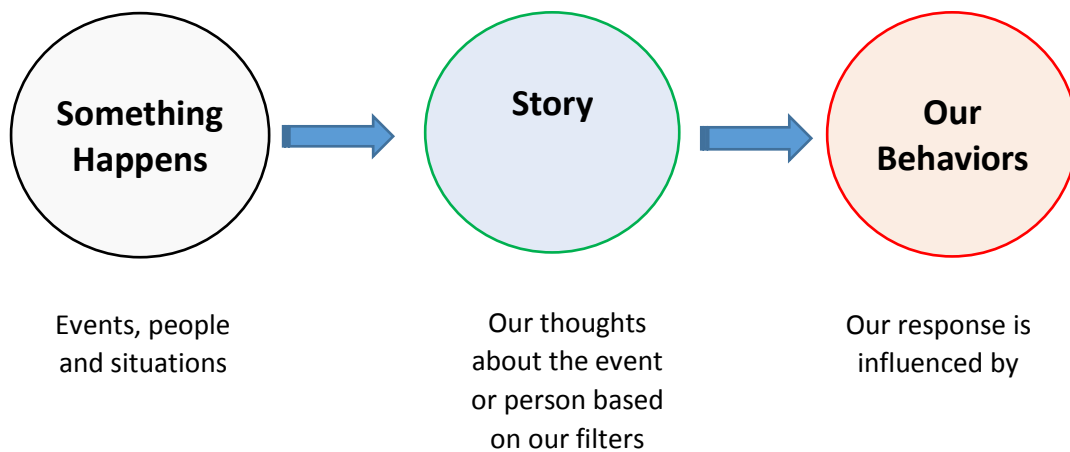
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|-------------------|-----|
| • Resolve itself? | 4% |
| • Get worse? | 43% |
| • Stay the same? | 49% |

The other 4% reported that someone else had tackled the issue

Every Conflict Offers an Opportunity



What are my filters, stories and assumptions?



Our Basic Problem

- 'I' (not 'i')
- Always right
- The standard of what's good and best
- Worthy of praise
- Deserving of honor and respect
- Greater and more important than those around me
- James 4:1; Gal. 2:20

Empathy Phil 2:1-4

Once we have got past our EGO we can try to **understand** where the other person is coming from – see things through their eyes.

['Difficult conversations: How to discuss what matters most' Douglas Stone](#)

['The hope of Biblical peacemaking as a response to the challenge of conflict', *The briefing* Nov 2010](#)

['Cracks are Serious' Peter Mead](#)

When to overlook and when to confront

Prov 19:11 Matt 18:15-17

- Is it a one-off event? Or does it keep happening?
- Can you forgive and move on, or will it affect your ongoing relationship with the other person?
- Is it affecting other people?
- Have you prayed about it? Have you asked for God's leading?

General 'rules' for conflict

- Think the best of other people.
- Approach with humility and respect.
- Pray!!! Pray for the other person, that God would bless them. Pray that God would give you insight and wisdom to understand the other person and their perspective. Pray for the Holy Spirit to be present and pray for Him to convict you of your sins!
- It is easy to fall into negative attitudes about others when there is conflict; to think they are playing power games or not being open with you. Maintaining a positive perspective and being united by the love of Christ is often what enables Christians to continue together through difficult times.

Tool #1: Deal with yourself

Luke 6:41-42

The first conversation to have is with yourself:

- What emotions are you experiencing?
- What is the issue?
- Why is it bothering you?
- What is your purpose in having the conversation?
- What will happen if you have or don't have this conversation?
- What is your own part in the conflict? How have you sinned in similar ways at other times?
- Are you remembering your own sinfulness and how you have been forgiven?

Colossians 3:8-17

Don't fight, label, gossip

1. Remember God's love for you (v12) – "The solution doesn't come from technique; it has nothing to do with one-upmanship; it flows out of being – who you are in Christ as a beloved child of God and your receiving of grace and comfort" (Nick Wanyoike)
2. Forgive as you have been forgiven (v13) – doesn't mean it was right; doesn't mean you should trust them; but does mean that vengeance belongs to the Lord not me and now I pray good for them
3. Listen to the Peace-of-Christ referee blow the whistle (v15)
4. Listen to the gospel word and let it dwell richly in us (v16)
5. Give heartfelt thanks (v16-17 cf. 1 Thess. 5:18)

Tool #2: Listen

“Seek first to understand...”

- Listen with curiosity and care; not judgment
- Ask open-ended questions
 - “Tell me more...”
 - “Help me understand...”
- Reflect back to make sure you have understood

Tool #3: “Yes, AND...”

- We all see the world differently
- This is about owning and stating your point of view, *AND* being open and willing to hear and accept another point of view
- “I hear what you are saying and I...”

Tool #4: Use “I” Messages

- Start your sentences with “I”
- Sentences that start with “you” sound accusatory and blaming and will likely result in defensiveness

(If you are misinterpreted, use a contrasting statement... state the message you’re NOT trying to send and then state the message you want to communicate)

Tool #5: Own Your Own Stuff

Focus on personal accountability, not blame

Expressing personal accountability = accepting responsibility for my own actions and non-actions

Tool #6: Apologise well

1. Address everyone involved
2. Avoid “if”, “but”, and “maybe” (don’t make excuses or try to justify your actions)
Luke 15:11-24
3. Admit specifically (both attitudes and actions)
4. Apologise (express sorrow for the way you affected someone)
5. Accept the consequences (Luke 19:1-9)
6. Alter your behaviour (commit to changing harmful habits; Eph. 4:22-32)
7. Ask for forgiveness

Mediators

Esther 5-10; 1 Sam 25; Phil 4:2-3

- What are the advantages of using a mediator?
- What are the disadvantages of using a mediator?
- What are some real life situations in which a mediator would be more effective at resolving a problem than a direct, confrontational approach?