

Conflict Management

As relationships in groups deepen, conflict is inevitable. A group that experiences no conflict among members is probably either a brand-new group or a group that has not pursued authentic relationships. Let's look at some biblical principles for conflict management and then at some effective conflict management strategies for small group leaders. The Bible differentiates between quarreling and constructive conflict. Quarreling is negative because it refers to vain arguments or disagreements for the purpose of promoting self-worth or causing division. James 4: 1-3 asks us, "What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God." This kind of quarreling is not pleasing to God. Paul told Timothy the same thing in 2 Timothy 2:24, which says, "The Lord's servant must not quarrel." There is much in Scripture for leaders to use constructive criticism and exhortation in order to bring about spiritual growth. In 2 Timothy 3: 16 this is referred to as "rebuking," and in other places as "admonition" or "exhortation. "

Biblical Principles for Conflict Management

distinctions between quarrel & conflict

Quarreling James 4:2

seeks win/lose

tends to divide/choose sides

exaggerates strife.

is an end in itself

tears down

is a battle

usually has a hidden agenda

is usually hard

Constructive Conflict (Matt. 5:23-26)

leads to win/win

seeks reconciliation/choose steps

speaks truth in love

is only about what is in the open

brought about by necessity in community

is usually hard

is a means to an end

is work

clears path toward something better

Key Scriptures for Conflict Management

Mirror rather than try to change people's feelings

(Rom. 12:15 1 Cor. 12:26)

Seek to edify and be gracious (Eph. 4:29-32)

Speak truth in love- Eph4:15,25

Express real emotions, but do not sin (Eph. 4:26-27)

Settle private disputes privately (Matt. 18:15-17)

Do not keep a record of wrongs (1 Cor. 13:5)

Think before you speak (Prov. 15:23,28)

Do not return insult for insult (1 Peter 3:8-9)

Check your motives for conflict James 4:1-2; Prov 13: 10

Pursue peace & edification in relationships (Rom. 14:19)

Avoid needless quarrels (Prov. 20:3; 2 Tim. 2:24)

Remember group members' interests as well as your own (Phil. 2:4)