



COLLABORATIVE DISCIPLESHIP

2 Cultivate

How to Resolve Conflict

1 Connect

Summary Initially it is best to approach a person with whom you're having conflict one-on-one (Matthew 18:15–16). If you're aware that someone is angry with you, you should take the initiative to resolve the conflict (Matthew 5:21–26). This lesson will give you a strategy for talking to someone with whom you're having a conflict.

Read Matthew 18:15–16.

“If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that ‘every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.’”

There are wise and effective ways to confront others.

Go over the facts:

- Always start by stating the relevant facts.
- Don't express how you interpret anything or how you feel about it (yet).
- It's usually best to address a pattern of behavior with someone rather than a one-time, isolated incident. We all have low moments, and we should seek to believe the best about others.
- Don't use words like “always” and “never” (“You always do this!”). Instead, be as specific as you can, “You've done this five times in the last few days.”
- Example: “Hey, do you have a few minutes to talk? Earlier today you said you would email the group by 5pm. I haven't seen it. Did you send it?”

Explain how you interpret the facts:

- With the facts agreed upon, share your interpretation of the facts, and then clearly communicate the problem.
- Be careful not to judge the motives behind someone's statements or actions. This can be quite hurtful. Don't say, “I think you're looking me in the eye and lying to my face!”
- Example: “There seems to be a pattern of you not following through on the things you say you will do. This makes it hard for me to take you at your word and trust what you say.”

Share how you feel about what happened:

- Once the facts are stated, and they know how you interpret the facts, and they know the problem you have, you can now share how you feel about what happened.
- Use I statements: “I felt insulted when you said I was a fool.”
- Example: “That's really frustrating, because I'm counting on you to do these things. When you tell me one thing and do another, I feel disrespected.”

Have you ever initiated a conversation to work through a conflict with someone? How did it go?

3 Care

Since we last met, what happened as a result of expressing Christ's love to others?

If you are angry with someone and the conflict needs to be resolved, talk with them this week and seek to resolve your conflict.

If you know of someone who is angry with you, talk to them this week and see if you can resolve the conflict.

Remember you can't make others forgive you. If you sincerely try to resolve a conflict but they are still angry with you, you have still fulfilled Romans 12:18 which says, “If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.”

Seek to understand what happened and why:

- This can't be a monologue. You must hear from the other person and seek to understand what has happened and why it happened.
- Seeking to understand makes the conversation easier and helps you keep an open mind to other perspectives on what has happened.
- It can take a lot of the tension and anger out of the conversation.
- Example: "I want to understand why these things aren't getting done. Why you will say something will be done by a certain time, and then it doesn't happen."

Express your desire:

- Make it clear what you wish were true. Offer specific actions for the future. What are you asking the person to do? What are you pledging to do?
- If appropriate, you may also want to discuss consequences if nothing changes.
- Sometimes people just aren't going to change. It's healthy to be able to accept that someone may never be who you want them to be or do what you want them to do. Conflict resolution isn't about trying to control and manipulate others.
- Example: "I didn't realize you had a family emergency this afternoon. Next time something unexpected comes up and you are able to, could you please text me a short note to let me know? What do you think about getting together to see if there are some strategies we can put in place to help you stay focused?"

Discuss

What do you like about these ways to confront others and what do you find difficult or confusing?

If you don't like one of the examples, how would you phrase it to make it better?

Respond graciously when others confront you.**Be open:**

- Listen and be open to what others tell you.
- Don't be defensive.
- Don't take this conversation as an opportunity to bring up a complaint you have about them. You can do that after this conflict is resolved, unless your unresolved conflict is contributing to this specific conflict.
- Example: "Thank you for having the courage to bring this up with me. Is there anything else that's bothering you?"

Take responsibility:

- You may not have intended to upset or hurt someone, but they've felt it, so it is valid and real.
- Be humble. The goal isn't to be right. The goal is to experience unity and love.
- Example: "I'm so sorry I hurt you. I didn't intend to, but I did. Will you forgive me?"

Seek to understand:

- Seek to understand what caused the perceived conflict.
- Example: "How can I help you feel more respected and loved?"

Seek to grow:

- No matter how much you feel you haven't done anything wrong, assume that there is always some truth in what is shared with you. Ask others who know you what they think, but not as a means to gossip or justify yourself.
- Pray and ask God to help you take away at least one way you can grow in love, responsibility, unity and humility.
- If appropriate, offer to be held accountable.

Discuss What do you like about these ways to respond when others confront you and what do you find difficult or confusing?

Roleplay Have two people in the group roleplay a conversation about a conflict of your choosing. Debrief their conversation as a group. What was well said and what could be improved?

Read Matthew 5:23–24.

“Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift.”

If others are upset with you and you know why, don’t wait for them to confront you.

- Be specific about what you did.
- Acknowledge how it made them feel.
- Express regret for what you did
- Ask them to forgive you for what you did.
- Make restitution (if necessary). Restitution means that if you broke something then you fix it, if you stole something then you return it, and if you lied then you tell the truth.
- Example: “I saw the look on your face when I called you “lazy” in front of the group. I judged you, insulted you, and I embarrassed you in front of our friends. I’m very sorry I did that. I already called each of our friends and told them I was wrong to have done that. Will you forgive me?”

Discuss What do you like about these ways to confess to someone and what do you find difficult or confusing?

When someone comes to you to confess something:

- Don’t minimize their behavior by saying, “It’s Ok.” Even if they didn’t hurt you.
- Thank them for having the courage to admit their wrong.
- Be kind. Don’t use this as an open door to make them feel worse or to criticize them.
- Forgive them. See the lesson on [How to Forgive Others](#).
- If needed, be honest about how you feel about your relationship and about any boundaries you may need. See the lesson on [How We Grow](#).
- Example: “Thank you for your honesty. That did hurt me and I do forgive you. To be honest I’m struggling to believe that you won’t do it again and that our relationship is worth the pain. If this continues to happen, we may need to spend less time with each other until things change.”

Discuss What do you like about these ways to respond to someone who confesses to you and what do you find difficult or confusing?

Pray In light of what we’ve discussed, how can we pray for each other right now?