

# 7 Ways to Deal with Conflict

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Whether a church has 10 or 10,000 members, there will be conflict that must be dealt with appropriately for God's will to be accomplished. Whether the conflict is over who will lead a Sunday School class or how the church parking lot should be paved, disagreement is inevitable. One of the pastor's toughest jobs is making sure the conflict doesn't prevent the church from achieving its ultimate job of carrying out the Great Commission.

Here are seven ideas for handling conflict in a constructive way:

## **1. Confront the person or issue directly or honestly.**

Nothing is worse than letting an issue simmer until it boils over into the entire church. Go directly to the person causing the conflict and seek to resolve it. If you can make concessions while still honoring Christ, do so, if this will settle the issue. The Bible offers a plan in Matthew 18:15-17. Follow it.

## **2. Don't go looking for trouble.**

Let sleeping dogs lie. Don't fix it if it isn't broken. Proverbs 3:30 wisely says "Do not accuse a man for no reason -- when he has done you no harm."

## **3. Delegate if you know you cannot be successful.**

If you anticipate trouble with a particular family or individual, ask another person you trust to work with them. Pastors and deacons need each other. Use one another's skills to avoid trouble. Moses needed the direction of his father-in-law Jethro to keep from overloading his plate with the many decisions the people of God faced in the wilderness, and so do you. Read Exodus 18:1-27 to see how God blessed this delegation of duties.

## **4. Agree with the person if at all possible.**

When you make a mistake, promptly admit it. It is better to trust the outcome to God than to deny our error when it is evident for everyone to see. In Matthew 5:25, Jesus

directed us to: "Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still with him on the way, or he may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison."

#### **5. Mediate the issue.**

Mediation means we involve a third person to help settle the matter. A good mediator asks each side to suggest what they need to resolve the issue. After listening to both sides, the mediator then suggests a compromise position that both sides can accept.

#### **6. Take the issue to the Lord and leave it there.**

Some people cannot be satisfied unless they destroy others or they feel they have totally won the argument. Don't go there with those people. Sometimes the only person who really understands our side is Jesus. If the issue still troubles you, continue praying about it and ask God to make it a non-issue for you.

#### **7. Ask God to get involved in a supernatural way.**

Every area of strife is a spiritual problem. While you can't resolve the issue for others, you can settle it for yourself. No problem can be totally separate from the spiritual issue that accompanies it. Ask God to work behind the scenes. Admit faults of your own that you cannot see. In every situation, we must trust God to be the one who finally settles issues in the local church and in our lives.

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