

**NEW** STARTING **January**  
**9**  
**SERIES!**

# HANDLING CONFLICT

Seeking peace in a **divided world**

**MOUNTAIN TOP**  
CHURCH

**INVITE A  
FRIEND!**

# A Guide to Handling Conflict

## Seeking Peace in a Divided World

Conflict is nearly inevitable. We experience it in the office, around the dinner table, and online. Today, it feels like there is more tension in the air as the world becomes more and more divided. This January, we will take a look at some timeless wisdom and clear biblical direction on how to handle conflict.

**WE'D LOVE FOR YOU TO JOIN US ON-CAMPUS  
OR ONLINE SUNDAYS AT 9:15 OR 11:00 A.M.**



To get the conversation started and begin asking ourselves how we can be set apart and make a difference we've provided eight tips.

Before we begin to look at any practical advice about managing conflict, it is important to -

### REMEMBER:

If you have no conflict, you have no honesty. If you have no honesty, you have no intimacy. If you have no intimacy, you have no community.

### RECOGNIZE:

Conflict is inevitable, but it can also be a catalyst. We get to decide if it's a catalyst for growth or destruction.

# A Guide to Handling Conflict

## Seeking Peace in a Divided World

- 1. WHEN YOU FIND YOURSELF IN A CONFLICT, ASK GOD TO REVEAL YOUR MOTIVES.**
  - Allow space for God through the Holy Spirit to expose your motives and rid you of selfish ones so that you can approach the situation in a Christ-like manner.
  - The better you understand yourself, the more likely you are to remain level-headed and understand someone.
- 2. PAUSE, TAKE TIME TO NURTURE A "COOL SPIRIT" INSTEAD OF A "HOT HEAD"**<sup>1</sup>
  - We think more clearly and speak more gently with a measured approach.<sup>2</sup>
  - "Quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger" - James 1:19<sup>3</sup>
- 3. PUT DOWN YOUR SWORD AND STEP TO THEIR SIDE.**
  - Don't lead with an argumentative spirit. Conflict resolution is rarely achieved with a combative approach.
  - Create safe spaces where people feel heard. Resolution is more likely if both sides feel they have been heard.
- 4. ESTABLISH BOUNDARIES AND STRUCTURE THE PROCESS**
  - Set ground rules for conflict resolution. What topics are off-limits? What tone is unacceptable? What is on the table for negotiation? The goal is to make sure everyone knows they will be heard. Establish a process where all parties take turns speaking their own minds.
- 5. LOOK FOR COMMON GOALS (OR COMMON IDEOLOGY, NORMS, OR VISION)**
  - Ask each other - "What can we agree on?"
  - Agree upon the most desirable outcome for all involved.
- 6. DON'T ESCALATE; EDUCATE**
  - How we use our Power and Authority matters!
  - It is always tempting for a person with power to make threats. But threats only make it harder to reach an eventual agreement
  - Instead, use your power to educate rather than the negative
    - e.g. Don't say "If you don't agree...", instead say, "If we come to an agreement..."
- 7. DON'T REJECT; REFRAME**
  - When someone makes a proposal that does not satisfy, don't simply say, NO. Find a way to reframe their request. Point out the ways the conflicts progressing is progressing rather than focusing on frustrations.
- 8. DON'T PUSH; BUILD THEM A GOLDEN BRIDGE TO RETREAT**<sup>4</sup>
  - Oftentimes, the only thing keeping someone from the agreement is that agreement will cause them to lose face. In this case, it is important to offer concessions. Help them get something they want so that they don't feel they have lost.

[1] Proverbs 17:27- "Whoever restrains his words has the knowledge, and he who has a cool spirit is a man of understanding."

Proverbs 29:22- "A hot-head provokes quarrels, and one mastered by anger commits all kinds of sins."

[2] William Ury, in his book *Getting to Yes*, refers to this approach as 'getting on the balcony.' This is all about gaining perspective instead of reacting out of hasty anger in the moment. A good deal of this list is inspired by Ury's work in this book.

[3] Also, Proverbs 17:28, 12:15, 18:2, 15:1, 29:20, 21:23, 10:19, 18:13, etc. All of these speak to the truth that there is wisdom in keeping our mouths shut and that persuasiveness is the product of sweet speech rather than harsh words.

[4] Sun Tzu, an ancient Chinese military general, counseled military leaders to build a "golden bridge" for an opponent to retreat across. Without an escape route to retreat, your opponent will engage in battle and fight like a caged and cornered tiger. You can avoid battling the tiger and even win the war if you give your opponent a graceful, face-saving way out.

