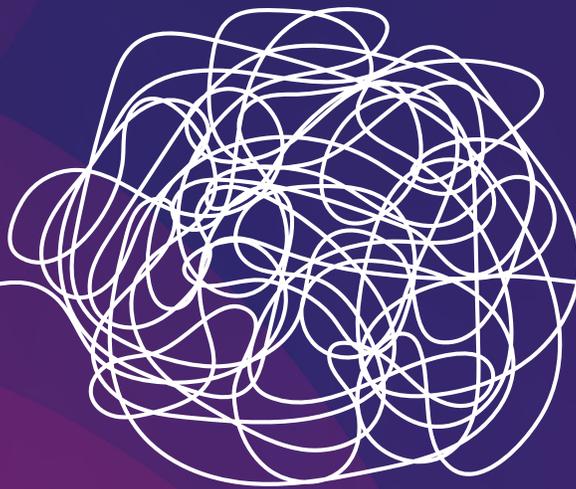


90-DAY

PEACEMAKING CHALLENGE



MARCH · APRIL · MAY

Resolving Everyday Conflict

DISCUSSION NOTES:

In our modern society, people tend to take a “hard-line” or black and white approach to sin – *this is wrong and that is right*. This often leads to condescending and judgmental attitudes that make it impossible to see things from the other’s perspective. Peacemaking, as taught by Jesus, shows us an entirely different approach to addressing differences of opinions. **His perfect love is the standard.** Approach these materials and your discussions with love first. Nothing in these materials is about proving someone right or wrong, but rather how we can grow to love each other, *even in conflict*, as Christ loves each one of us. Strive to create an **environment of generosity and love** in your small group.

In the back of the book, you will find some discussion questions, including a few for *“if you are presently in conflict.”* **Your small group discussion should focus on the tenets of resolving conflict**, how we can understand them better and use them in our lives – but should never stray into actual resolution of a participant’s real conflict. The small group setting is not the appropriate place for that, and only those trained in Peacemaking and Conflict Resolution as *conflict counselors* should mediate with the person in that way. You can point participants to those questions to contemplate personally, but not in the discussion. Any relevant questions from the back of the book have been included in the guides.

Resolving conflict as outlined in this book **does not** mean that every conflict in your life will come to a neat and tidy, or expected, resolution if you use these steps. While the book does walk you through how to approach a person you may have conflict with, the only thing that you can control is *your response to conflict as guided by the teachings of Jesus Christ*. The resolution is an **inner resolution and peace**, knowing you have handled the disagreement the way God wants you to. Since you cannot control the other person’s actions, the only thing you can do is reconcile the situation with God and in your heart.

Main ideas in each chapter are *italicized* and pulled out of the main text as **bolded phrases** – be sure to cover these in your discussion. It is not necessary to use every question in the guide. Please pick and choose questions that are fitting for your specific small group, and also feel free to start each session discussing the details from each chapter that each person felt to be particularly interesting.

INTRODUCTION AND SESSION 1: THE NATURE OF CONFLICT

ICEBREAKER

What is a relationship in your life that you value? Why?

BIBLE REFERENCES

James 4:1-2

Acts 6

1 Corinthians 12:12-31

John 13:35

John 17:23

Romans 12:18

Ephesians 4:3

KNOWLEDGE & INTERPRETATION QUESTIONS

1. *Peacemaking is applying the gospel and God's principles for problem solving to everyday life* (p.13). What does this statement mean to you? What are God's principles for problem solving?
2. How is the entire Bible a story about conflict and reconciliation? How should this guide us as Christians?
3. How can our sinful desires fuel conflict? Refer to James 4:1-2. Why do you think James uses the image of war to describe out-of-control desires?
4. What is the *spark*, *gasoline*, and *fuel* of conflict?

BIBLICAL QUESTIONS

1. Take a look at 1 Corinthians 12:12-31. Discuss what Paul's analogy about the body of Christ tells us about conflict and where it could come from.
2. Read Acts 6: What was the conflict? How did they deal with it? What was the resolution?
3. Read Philippians 2:4. What happens when someone constantly makes his or her interests *more important* than the interests of others? What happens when someone constantly makes his or her interests *less important* than others?

SESSION 2: THE HOPE OF THE GOSPEL

ICEBREAKER

Describe a moment when or place where you felt peaceful.

BIBLE REFERENCES

John 13:35

John 17:21, 23

Romans 8:3

Colossians 1:21-22

John 3:16

Romans 3:20

Ephesians 2:8-9

Isaiah 53:1-12

1 Peter 2:24-25

2 Corinthians 5:15-21

Colossians 3:12-15

Ephesians 3:16-19

1 John 3:16

Luke 6:27-28

Romans 5:8

Matthew 5:23-24,
18:15

1 John 1:8-9

KNOWLEDGE & INTERPRETATION QUESTIONS

1. What things or characteristics keep us from living the way God wants us to?
2. How would you describe the gospel in your own words?
3. *Just knowing the right thing to do never brings peace* (p.25). Why? What does bring peace?
4. How do you understand this quote from the book: *We miss God's great plans for us if we think of the gospel only as the key to eternal life...the gospel is for now* (p.28)?

BIBLICAL QUESTIONS

1. Read Matthew 18:21-22. Why do you think Peter was seeking a limit on the number of times a follower of Christ was required to forgive someone?
 - a. What might have been shocking to Peter about Jesus' response?
 - b. Do you think Jesus literally meant more than seventy times?
 - c. What is important about being in a state of "readiness" when it comes to facing an opportunity to forgive someone?
2. Read Colossians 3:12-15 together. With the new life God has given us, what can we experience? How do the sacraments cultivate this new life in us?
 - a. If the list of things in these verses sound impossible for your life, talk about what God has done for you already.
 - b. How can you let those truths change you?

SESSION 3: ESCAPING, ATTACKING, OR PEACEMAKING

ICEBREAKER

Have you ever gotten lost while on a road trip with someone? What happened and how did you find your way again?

BIBLE REFERENCES

1 Corinthians 6:1-8

1 Corinthians 4:20-5:2

Genesis 4:2-9

KNOWLEDGE & INTERPRETATION QUESTIONS

1. When conflict arises, what are our natural human responses? Discuss each response in detail.
 - a. Why do you think these types of responses are instinctual for humans?
 - b. Are they godly or sinful responses, or some combination of both?
2. Why do some people believe if you ignore a problem long enough, it will go away? What usually happens instead?
3. What is *peacefaking*?
4. What is *peacebreaking*?
5. How are the conflict responses of escape and attack self-serving?
6. How does responding with peacemaking shift your focus?

BIBLICAL QUESTIONS

1. **Escaping conflict:** Read 1 Corinthians 4:20-5:2.
 - a. What is the issue the Corinthians were ignoring?
 - b. What excuses could they have used to justify leaving it be?
 - c. What did Paul say was the appropriate response to this situation?
 - d. What would an escape response in a congregational setting look like today?

SESSION 4: GO HIGHER

ICEBREAKER

When making a decision, what things do you consider to help you decide?

BIBLE REFERENCES

1 Corinthians 10:31

John 5:30

Proverbs 3:5-7

John 14:15

Ephesians 5:1-2

Psalms 37:31

Proverbs 19:11

Proverbs 17:14

1 Peter 4:8

Ephesians 4:2

Psalms 103:8-10

Luke 6:36

KNOWLEDGE & INTERPRETATION QUESTIONS

1. What does it mean to glorify God? Discuss some examples of how Jesus glorified God while on earth.
2. In what situations might you decide to overlook a conflict rather than confront or deal with it? Why is this sometimes an appropriate solution? When is it not appropriate?
3. We put ourselves in conflict with God when we sin. How does He deal with this conflict? How do you deal with this conflict?
4. Why is “Go Higher” the first G principle in resolving conflict? How does this contrast with society’s view of conflict.
 - a. Think about expressions such as, “It’s my right to...” or “But I’m in the right...” Does it really matter to God who is right?

BIBLICAL QUESTIONS

1. Review the Bible verses on page 53 together. Think of and share examples of when you have been treated with mercy and grace, when someone has overlooked a sin of yours.
 - a. Overlooking is not the same as “forgive and forget.” Discuss how overlooking an offense is an *active*, *strong*, and *practical* choice. Discuss what it would look like to live in an *atmosphere of grace*.
2. Read Ephesians 5:1-2 together. How do these verses summarize what you’ve learned in this chapter?

SESSION 5: GET REAL

ICEBREAKER

What is amusing about a fun-house mirror? Would it be an effective device to use for getting ready in the morning? Why or why not?

BIBLE REFERENCES

Matthew 7:3-5

Psalm 139:23-24

Hebrews 4:12

Proverbs 19:20

Proverbs 28:13

NOTE TO CONSIDER:

When you go to confess a wrong, remember that you are there to serve the other person, not to get comfort for yourself. Focus on showing God's love to the person you harmed. (p.69)

KNOWLEDGE & INTERPRETATION QUESTIONS

1. When something goes wrong, why do most people want to immediately assign responsibility for what happened?
2. How does knowledge of the Bible help us to “get real”?
3. Why is taking responsibility for your part in a conflict crucial to peacemaking? What is the main question you should ask yourself in this step?
 - a. If you're having trouble, start with the two following questions: *Why am I so upset about this situation?* and *What am I hoping to gain by addressing this conflict?*
 - b. What do these two questions reveal?
4. Walk through the Seven A's of a good confession on pages 64-67. Discuss each point and why it is important.
5. What qualities or traits are helpful in “getting real”?

BIBLICAL QUESTIONS

1. Read Matthew 7:1-5.
 - a. What is Jesus teaching us here about our response to conflict?
 - b. Why is it difficult to see conflict clearly, to really understand everything that is factually true?
 - c. Could we even admit that sometimes we don't want to see all the facts? How can we fight that fear of looking at ourselves clearly in conflict?

SESSION 6: GENTLY ENGAGE

ICEBREAKER

The playwright George Bernard Shaw once said, “*The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place.*” What do you think about this quote?

BIBLE REFERENCES

Galatians 6:1

Matthew 18:15-17

James 5:20

Matthew 7:1

Matthew 5:21-24

Luke 17:3

1 Corinthians 5:1-13

James 1:19

2 Timothy 2:24-25

NOTE TO CONSIDER:

If you bring a witness when you are “gently engaging” someone, they are witnesses to the gospel and the teachings of peace-making; they are not there to take sides or adjudicate.

KNOWLEDGE & INTERPRETATION QUESTIONS

1. Consider the different definitions given of the word *restore* in Galatians 6:1 – *mend, repair, equip, complete*. How do these additional insights affect that way you think about engaging someone about their sin?
2. What are the benefits of initiating a conversation with someone with whom you are in conflict even when you believe it is not your fault?
 - a. Explain the importance of modeling acknowledgment and genuine repentance (what we talked about last chapter) before asking someone else to do that.
3. When is it necessary for you to bring another’s sins to their attention?
4. What qualities or traits are helpful in “gently engaging” others?
5. What is God’s role in the step of “gently engaging” others? Reference 2 Timothy 2:24-25. How else can God help you to “gently engage” others?

BIBLICAL QUESTIONS

1. Read Galatians 6:1-6.
 - a. What do these verses warn against?
 - b. What does it mean to get “caught” in sin?

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. Why might we feel reluctant to confront another's sins?
2. In this chapter, we learn that it is important to actually go and speak face-to-face with the person about their sins. Why is this face-to-face connection important? Why is it so hard to do?
 - a. Is there anything we can do to make this step easier? Discuss the other suggestions on page 81 for when you go to "gently engage" someone.
3. React to this thought: *The governing dynamic is love. A rule of thumb should be to **go in love** or don't go at all.* Discuss how you would like someone else to approach you in a conflict.
4. Consider the PAUSE Principle: Read Philippians 2:1-4, then discuss the following steps:
 - a. **Prepare.** (See Proverbs 14:8) Think ahead about the conversation and what you can do in advance to make it go well; pray, read Scripture, develop options, plan your remarks, anticipate reactions, etc. *What can you say or do to help the person you are confronting not feel like they are being backed into a corner?*
 - b. **Affirm relationships.** Every conflict involves both people and a problem. Focusing on the problem and not the people makes things worse. Be sure to make sure the other person knows that you value your relationship with them. Try something like, "We're friends, aren't we? Can I speak openly with you?" *Why is it important to communicate the priority of relationship over the resolution of the issue?*
 - c. **Understand interests.** An *interest* is what really motivates someone, the underlying thing they are trying to accomplish. It could be a concern, desire, need, limitation, or something a person values or fears. Take time to understand what the other person really wants and cares about. *Why would it be unproductive to try and guess a person's motives?*
 - d. **Search for creative solutions.** Don't get stuck on only two choices. *Why do you think more than two options is important? What does it reveal about your attitude towards the other person?*
 - e. **Evaluate options objectively and reasonably.** Include a specific step in the process that checks how the solution is working.

PERSONAL TAKE-HOME

Reflect on a time when you had a conversation with someone who wronged you.

What about this conversation went well?

What didn't go well?

CHALLENGE

Is there someone that you need to "gently engage"?

Take some time to write down your thoughts about the situation.

Do you feel it falls into one of the situations when this would be necessary?

Walk through the PAUSE Principle and write an outline of your possible discussion with them.

SESSION 7: GET TOGETHER

ICEBREAKER

Are you forgetful? Is it possible to forget something on command?

BIBLE REFERENCES

Matthew 5:23-24

Ephesians 4:32

Colossians 3:13

Matthew 6:12

Isaiah 43:25

Isaiah 59:2

Romans 12:18

Luke 23:34

Acts 2:36-41

KNOWLEDGE & INTERPRETATION QUESTIONS

1. Discuss what the chapter says about what forgiveness is not, and what forgiveness is (p.88-91).
2. *[Forgiveness] means to release a person from punishment or penalty.* What punishment are we releasing people from when we forgive them? What punishment are people released from when God forgives them?
3. Why is it important to understand how God has forgiven us in order to truly forgive others? Consider that Jesus has also died for that person, and in His eyes, we are all the same.
4. What is the difference between forgiveness and reconciliation?
5. Discuss the Two Components and the Four Promises of forgiveness. How are they connected?
 - a. Which would be the most difficult for you?
 - b. How do you know when you've forgiven someone?

BIBLICAL QUESTIONS

1. Read Matthew 5:21-26.
 - a. What do these verses tell you about forgiveness?
2. Discuss this quote from Thomas Watson: *When we strive against all thoughts of revenge; when we will not do our enemies mischief, but wish well to them, grieve at their calamities, pray for them, seek reconciliation with them, and show ourselves ready on all occasions to relieve them. This is gospel forgiving.*
 - a. Compare this quote to Ephesians 4:1-3, Colossians 3:12-17, and Philipians 2:1-4.

SESSION 8: OVERCOME EVIL WITH GOOD

ICEBREAKER

Discuss these quotes: *It is better to bite your tongue than to eat your words... Never trust your tongue when your heart is bitter... The tongue, like a sharp knife, kills without drawing blood... The wise person has long ears and a short tongue...*

BIBLE REFERENCES

2 Corinthians 10:3-4

Luke 6:27-28

Romans 12:14

1 Peter 3:9

Proverbs 13:20

Romans 12:17

1 Peter 2:12

Romans 12:18

Ecclesiastes 12:13

Proverbs 20:22

Psalms 37 and 73

Romans 12:20-21

Psalms 120:4

Colossians 3:15

KNOWLEDGE & INTERPRETATION QUESTIONS

1. Review some of the basic principles that you have learned in the last seven sessions.
 - a. Spark/Gasoline/Fire of conflict
 - b. The Slippery Slope
 - c. What is an idol?
 - d. The Four G's of Peacemaking
 - e. The Seven A's of Confession
 - f. The Two Components and Four Promises of forgiveness
2. How do humans define success? How does God define success?
3. In reconciliation, what is your job and what is God's?
4. Why is it sometimes hard to respect and cooperate with God's methods for dealing with people who persist in doing wrong? Does changing your view to see things from God's perspective affect your ability to pursue peacemaking in these situations?

BIBLICAL QUESTIONS

1. Read Luke 13:34-35.
 - a. What past destructive behaviors of Jerusalem's inhabitants did Jesus identify?
 - b. What was Jesus lamenting here? What did He want more than anything?
 - c. What was preventing Jesus from having a peaceful and flourishing relationship with most of the people in Jerusalem?

