



You got conflict? – What an opportunity!” – November 07



In an Adult Bible Fellowship or other mid-size group, what are the chances that over time there might be a conflict between (i) two group leaders, (ii) a group leader and a member of the group, (iii) two members of the group, (iv) a member of the group and a Church Staff member or (v) a member of the group and another member or attender of the Church?

Remote possibility? Fair possibility? Good possibility? Absolute possibility?

Whether or not you wish to acknowledge it, conflict is an inevitable fact of life! The fact that you are a member of a “group” seals the inevitability of conflict. One of the essential criteria of an effective group is that its leaders facilitate for the group a biblical response to conflict and engage in biblical peacemaking.

The question for today is “What is the first thing you think of when you hear the word ‘conflict’? I ask that question to mid-size group leaders all around the country. I wonder how many reading this article would respond, “an opportunity to glorify God”? And yet, this is the biblical response!

From my perspective, the greatest resource on this issue (after the Word of God) is a Christian organization called Peacemakers Ministries whose mission is “to equip and assist Christians and their churches to respond to conflict biblically, providing coaching, mediation and arbitration services to help resolve lawsuits, family conflicts, business disputes and church divisions” and whose training services include seminars (around the country and the world), the national Reconciler Training and Certification Programs, and custom training for denominations, seminaries and parachurch ministries. You can check out this ministry at www.HisPeace.org. The ministry’s founder, Ken Sande, has written an excellent book on Christian conciliation entitled The Peacemaker. As a Certified Christian Conciliator through this organization, I have had the privilege of training church leaders on biblical conflict resolution and engaging in a biblical peacemaking ministry.

I challenge leaders of every mid-size group to consider adopting “The Peacemaker’s Pledge”, developed by Peacemaker Ministries, a commitment to biblical conflict resolution, which states in general:

“As people reconciled to God by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we believe that we are called to respond to conflict in a way that is remarkably different from the way the world deals with conflict (Matthew 5:9, Luke 6:27-36, Galatians 5:19-26). We also believe that conflict provides opportunities to glorify God, to serve other people, and to grow to be like Christ (Romans 8:28-29, I Corinthians 10:31-11:1, James 1:2-4).

Therefore, in response to God’s love and in reliance on his grace, we commit ourselves to responding to conflict according to the following principles.”

There are four such principles, all brought to you by the Letter “G” and their sequence is significant. The Pledge continues:

1. “Glorify God: Instead of focusing on our own desires of dwelling on what others may do, we will rejoice in the Lord and bring him praise by depending on his forgiveness, wisdom, power and love, as we seek to faithfully obey his commands and maintain a loving, merciful, and forgiving attitude (Psalm 37:1-6; Mark 11:25; John 14:15; Romans 12:17-21; I Corinthians 10:31; Philipppians 4:2-9; Colossians 3:1-4; James 3:17-18, 4:1-3; I Peter 2:12).”

2. "Get the log out of your eye: Instead of blaming others for a conflict or resisting correction, we will trust in God's mercy and take responsibility for our own contribution to conflicts-confessing our sins to those we have wronged, asking God to help us change any attitudes and habits that lead to conflict, and seeking to repair any harm we have caused (Proverbs 28:13, Matthew 7:3-5, Luke 19:8, Colossians 3:5-14, I John 1:8-9)."
3. "Gently restore: Instead of pretending that conflict doesn't exist or talking about others behind their backs, we will overlook minor offenses or we will talk personally and graciously with those whose offenses seem too serious to overlook, seeking to restore them rather than condemn them. When conflict with a Christian brother or sister cannot be resolved in private, we will ask others in the body of Christ to help us settle the matter in a biblical manner (Proverbs 19:11, Matthew 18:15-20, I Corinthians 6:1-8, Galatians 6:1-2, Ephesians 4:29, II Timothy 2:24-26, James 5:9)."
4. "Go and be reconciled: Instead of accepting premature compromise or allowing relationships to wither, we will actively pursue genuine peace and reconciliation-forgiving others as God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven us, and seeking just and mutually beneficial solutions to our differences (Matthew 5:23-24, 6:12, 7:12; Ephesians 4:1-3; Philippians 2:3-4)."

The Pledge concludes:

"By God's grace, we will apply these principles as a matter of stewardship, realizing that conflict is an opportunity, not an accident. We will remember that success in God's eyes is not a matter of specific results, but of faithful, dependent obedience. And we will pray that our service as peacemakers will bring praise to our Lord and lead others to know His infinite love (Matthew 25:14-21; John 13:34-35; Romans 12:18; I Peter 2:19, 4:19)."

What conflicts are challenging your group right now? What an opportunity!

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