



Thank you for listening to Kalos Conversations!

EPISODE 21: HOW TO LEAD NIGHT 7 ON CONFLICT RESOLUTION

SUMMARY

In this session we talk about resolving conflict as it arises in your making of disciples and your leading of gospel communities and teams.

THIS SESSION WILL BE A SUCCESS IF:

- We understand that conflict is normative, and that to be Christians living in community is *not* to never experience conflict but to energetically work by faith to resolve conflict in a holy, loving, gospel-centered way.
- We clearly grasp that often the root of conflict is our sinful wiring, or as James puts it, “the desires/passions at war within us.”
- We identify our default conflict resolution style.
- We grow familiar with some of the basic heart postures and tools required for resolving conflict as we lead and make disciples.

WORD

Read and reflect on Philippians 4:2-3 (text is at the end of this section), where Paul is pleading with two godly women who are in a conflict to “agree in the Lord.” We’ll talk through this very helpful text.

PART 1: THE REALITY AND ROOT OF CONFLICT

READ

Read Chapter 10 of *Station Eleven* by Emily Mandel. *Station Eleven* is a novel about a band of musicians/actors who travel and perform in a post-apocalyptic America. These two pages communicate perfectly the both *the inevitability of* and *the genesis of* conflict whenever any group of sinners begin living in community. This is no less true in a church or a gospel community!

WATCH

Watch the first 3:30 of this video with Paul Tripp where he talks about the root of relational conflict.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jDpGOzX2Tik>

PART 2: A GOSPEL-CENTERED POSTURE TOWARD CONFLICT

Read the following section from Pastor Alfred Poirier's book *The Peacemaking Pastor*, which helps us orient ourselves rightly to the reality of conflict in our lives and our church:

"I remember mediating a conflict between the director of a worldwide relief organization and the consulting firm he hired for fundraising. The allegation on the part of both parties was breach of contract. The director had withheld paying for the services he alleged the consultant failed to provide. The consultant, on the other hand, argued that he had provided his services as stipulated in the contract and simply wanted the money owed him.

I distinctly remember the attitude of the director of the Christian relief organization brought to the meeting. Upon meeting me, he demanded, "I hope you can get this over with today. I have a important ministry to do." Clearly, he did not see God in this conflict. Instead, he saw this mediation as a hassle, as an obstacle to his ministry, and to God's work. He was blind to matters of injustice demanding remedy, to broken promises needing confession, to issues of forgiveness and restitution awaiting resolution, and to his severed relationship with a brother in Christ that was crying out for the reconciling grace, power, and wisdom of the Gospel.

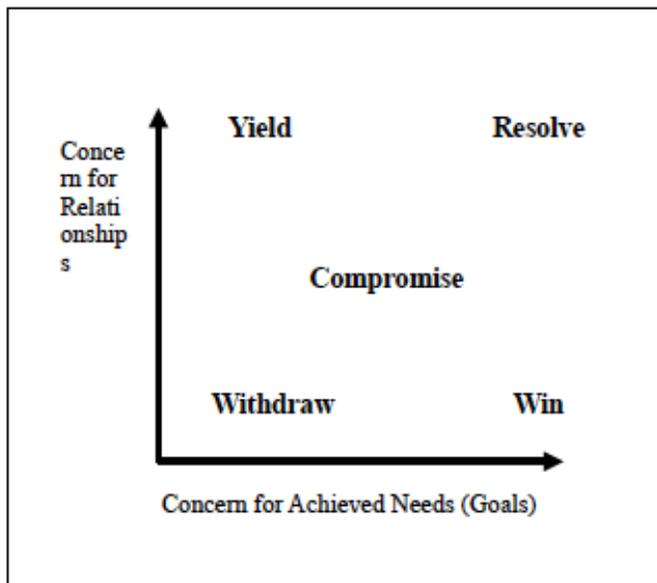
Furthermore, he viewed the whole matter as a justifiable problem that needed to be fixed so that you could carry-on with true ministry. Though he would never confess this of God, he functioned as if God were in a box – a box called "ministry" - cordoned off from the realities of conflict in this life.

What about you? What is your own attitude toward conflict with respect to your ministry? Do you see peacemaking as a fundamental character of the pastoral calling? Or do you view the conflicts in your marriage, family, and church as a moral intrusions keeping you from the important matters of ministry? Do you find yourself grumbling about conflicts in the church as annoying detours keeping you from your real calling? Or do you ever consider it pure joy when you encounter all manner of conflicts, trials, and tribulations?

These are hard questions, but they are important to ask. It is strange that we as pastors, called to preach the gospel of grace to sinners, balk at having to deal with real sinners with real sin in real and messy situations! If we are to apply the word of God to every aspect of life – sin and all – we must change our attitudes about conflict.”

PART 3: HOW I RESPOND TO CONFLICT PERSONALLY AND WHY

Each of us comes at handling conflict in a different way. Some of this stems from personality wiring, some from our family/upbringing and how we’ve seen conflict resolved (or not!) in the past, and some from the expectations of the culture we live in. If we are going to embrace a gospel-centered approach to resolving conflict, it will help to know our personal tendencies. So please read through the following exhibits and be prepared to talk about your default “conflict style” and why you think you tend in that direction.



CONFLICT STYLES

WITHDRAW

Gives up on Goals and Relationships

When we Withdraw from a conflict - either by walking out the door or by brooding in silence, we are at that time turning off the relationship. And we are also turning off any personal goals in that relationship. Unless used as a temporary cooling off step towards Resolve, it is wasteful. Because Withdraw gives up on both personal goals and on relationships, it should be considered the least helpful style for us in dealing with conflict.

WIN

Achieves Goals, Sacrifices Relationships

Win is only slightly better in terms of value since, while gaining personal desires, it does so at the expense of relationships - and we assume that good relationships in a family and on our team are at least as important as personal desires and goals.

YIELD

Maintains Relationships, Sacrifices Goals

Yield has a slightly higher value in terms of working toward a resolution of conflict because it seeks to maintain the relationship. Nevertheless, it does so at the expense of personal goals of one of the parties - and in the long run this is unhealthy for the relationship as well.

COMPROMISE

Bargains Goals for Relationship

Compromise at least seeks to work out some mutually bargained for personal needs, but in doing so it threatens the relationship by compromising some basic values.

RESOLVE

Works with Personal Goals to Improve Relationship

Resolve has the highest value because relationships are actually strengthened in the process of dealing most adequately with the conflict of personal goals and needs. It is also most healthy for the team objectives because it allows variant ideas to be put on the table, discussed openly, and eventually a better solution than either original proposition often appears. This is synergy and is positive conflict at its best.

CASE STUDIES

In these case studies, we want to see/feel things from the points of view of all involved and be explicit about things we would keep in mind and steps we would take toward resolution.

Someone who has been at the church for 5 years suddenly stops attending. You find out through the grapevine that their reasons are two-fold: 1, they were hurt that no one but a pastor from the church came to a recent family funeral. 2, they've been disillusioned with the trajectory of the church ministry for the last year and just want to go to another church. You have personally poured countless of hours into their lives and the lives of their children. They did not say thank you. They did not address their grievances. They did not say "I was hurt." They just left. You have reached out once for a conversation but they ignored your request. It seems they just want to be left alone and not have to deal with anything.

- How would you help to resolve this conflict?

There is an episode between two children in the life of the church. This leads to a conflict between the moms about what happened, who is at fault, how the situation was handled, what needs to happen now, etc. The moms are having a very hard maintaining relational unity in the wake of this.

- How would you help to resolve this conflict?

You are in a gospel community where several of the men and women are fans of craft beer. Conversation naturally flows in the direction of the intricacies of selecting, brewing, consuming, enjoying different kinds of alcohol. At the end of one specific night together, one of the member's most recent batch of craft beer is consumed by a few people. Over the course of the next few weeks it becomes apparent that one couple has removed themselves from all communication/participation with the community. You find out it is because they have taken offense over the community's disposition toward alcohol. In a brief conversation, you become aware that his parents were strict teetotalers, her father was an abusive alcoholic, and they've felt pressured/bullied by the community for their disinterest in/abstinence from alcohol. They do not feel that a truly Christian gospel community would be a place where alcohol is consumed. They have no intention to rejoin the group and are leaning toward leaving the church.

How would you help to resolve this conflict.

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