



CONFERENCE CALL 10 **REVIEWING MONTH 9, EXPLORING CONFLICT AND CONFRONTATION**

1. CONNECTING AROUND EMBRACING CHANGE

These questions are extrapolated from month nine of coaching calls. One at a time, share your thoughts by answering one or two of the following questions:

EMBRACING CHANGE

- What have been two of the most difficult changes you have had to navigate in your life personally and professionally? What did you identify as the difference between the two?
- Consider the doctrine of the immutability of God, the fact that God does not change. How does that impact your view of change, your fear of change, and your faith in the midst of change?
- As you deal with change in the future, what new learnings or commitments will you bring to the process? How will it be different for you as a leader and for your church?

2. COLLABORATING: DEFINING CONFLICT

Wherever there are two people, there are two opinions, and where there are two or more opinions, there is opportunity for conflict.

The English word **conflict** comes from the Latin word *conflictus*. It means *collision*, and is literally translated *to strike together*. The Greek word for **conflict** is the root of the English word *agony*. It means a gathering, contest, struggle, or fight with some opposition.¹

The seeds of conflict can often be traced to a single source: our own passions and desires that are self-focused.

James 4:1 (NET Bible) lets us in on the details:

"Where do the conflicts and where do the quarrels among you come from? Is it not from this, from your passions that battle inside you?"

Proverbs 13:10 (TLB) tells us:

¹ Borrowed from Jim Van Yperen's seminar at the 2006 Elders and Church Leaders Conference.

"Pride leads to arguments; be humble, take advice, and become wise."

When we try to impose our thoughts, feelings, or opinions on others - or when they try to insist that their view or perspective should be implemented - hostility and opposition may arise. Conflict often follows.

Share honestly about a time when you tried to impose your view or decision on someone else, or a group of people, and it led to open hostility or conflict.

Share another example of a time when someone tried to foist his or her viewpoint upon you and the result was an escalation that brought conflict.

What were your learnings from these experiences? How do you define conflict? In your experience, how has conflict helped you? How has conflict hurt you?

3. CONFLICT FOR POSITIVE CHANGE

In ***Management: A Biblical Approach***, Myron Rush provides three positive aspects of disagreement, recognizing that conflict involves hostility, but disagreement can occur without enmity.²

1. Disagreement can lead to individual and organizational growth.

We can "grow, develop, and improve when we learn to work through disagreements using proper methods of confrontation."

2. Disagreement can reveal the need to change.

We can be forced to evaluate our own positions, perspectives, and beliefs, rather than become resentful or defensive when we are challenged. An immature leader "allows disagreements to erupt into conflicts."

3. Disagreement can help make us more tolerant of opposing views. Learning to accept different viewpoints without developing hostile reactions is a mark of a mature leader. Growing our capacity to accept criticism without retaliation can be a far greater help than a hindrance.

When was a time you grew from a disagreement and didn't allow it to escalate into conflict?

What were some of the key decisions or actions you took that diffused the situation? Can any of these become a template for how you respond in the future? In what ways?

² Myron Rush, *Management: A Biblical Approach* (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 1983), 198-199.

4. REACTING TO CONFLICT

Although we cannot control another person's action, we can control our own reaction. Our response to a potentially conflictive condition can be the difference between a disagreement and an openly hostile situation.

We can either respond with compliance, aggression, or withdrawal. We can choose submission, fight, or flight.

Both our wiring and our choices influence our response when confronted with conflict. In ***Making Peace: A Guide to Overcoming Church Conflict***, Jim Van Yperen³ identifies the following ways we respond to conflict:

Evasive

- Run away from conflict
- Minimize the problem
- Shift the burden

Passive

- Keep silent to maintain peace
- Deny there are problems
- Fear to speak out
- Take a victim role

Defensive

- Put people down to build up oneself
- Build coalitions around oneself
- Blame others
- Make excuses

Aggressive

- Attack or threaten others
- Shame others to gain influence
- Threaten legal action
- Win at all costs

Which of these four responses best describes your reaction to conflict?

³ Jim Van Yperen, *Making Peace: A Guide to Overcoming Church Conflict* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2002).

How can you look to the model of Jesus for help and direction in dealing with conflict in your life, your leadership, and your ministry? How did his actions and reactions give us an effective example to follow?

5. RESPONDING TO CONFLICT

Regardless of the reason why conflict and confrontation exist, and whether reconciliation is necessary, your response as leaders is important in times of conflict and confrontation.

The values and guidelines we use to navigate situations and relationships with the potential for conflict help us to overcome hostility, frustration, and anger. Those values can help us move to a place of reconciliation, restoration, and redemption.

You might ask yourself the following four questions when you are going through conflict or are assessing the need to confront. These questions may help you with discernment and wisdom, which will help ensure a greater degree of peace and unity.

1. Glorify God: Will my intentions or actions bring glory to God?

If I am to glorify God in everything I do, how does that happen in the midst of conflict? How can I take a step back and assess how my response may or may not please and honor God in this situation?

2. See clearly: Is the log in my eye keeping me from having a proper perspective on the situation?

Challenges to seeing clearly can include our attitude, our heart, our speech, or our actions. Ask yourself, "What kind of self-examination is necessary before I confront or enter into conflict?"

Matthew 7:5 (NRSV)

You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your neighbor's eye.

3. Seek restoration: How can my response bring restoration to a situation or relationship?

The purpose of confrontation is not to point out people's sin or where their actions have missed the mark. Confrontation's purpose is to bring restoration, not condemnation. Correction should come with gentleness, humility, and kindness, rather than hostility and anger.

Galatians 6:1-3 (MSG)

"Live creatively, friends. If someone falls into sin, forgivingly restore him, saving your critical comments for yourself. You might be needing forgiveness before the day's out. Stoop down and reach out to those who are oppressed. Share their burdens, and so complete Christ's law. If you think you are too good for that, you are badly deceived."

4. Pursue reconciliation: How can I extend the forgiveness I have received from God toward others?

Even though we have personally experienced the greatest forgiveness in the world, we can forget and fail to extend that forgiveness to others. Scripture calls us to a place of forgiveness and reconciliation in our relationships as we live in biblical community.

The love and forgiveness we have received from God provide the foundation out of which we respond to others with genuine reconciliation and restoration. We are to love one another—freely and fully.

Colossians 3:12-14 (TLB)

"Since you have been chosen by God who has given you this new kind of life, and because of his deep love and concern for you, you should practice tenderhearted mercy and kindness to others. Don't worry about making a good impression on them, but be ready to suffer quietly and patiently. Be gentle and ready to forgive; never hold grudges. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others. Most of all, let love guide your life, for then the whole church will stay together in perfect harmony."

Which of these four questions challenges you the most as you respond to conflict and confrontation? Why?

How does your church, ministry environment, or workplace need to become a place of restoration and reconciliation? What steps do you need to take to help create it?

6. LEADING OTHER LEADERS: BIBLICAL SNAPSHOTS

Dorothy Day

"We have all known the long loneliness and we have learned that the only solution is love and that love comes with community."

Priscilla – Acts 18

*"He began to speak boldly in the synagogue; but when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained the Way of God to him more accurately. ²⁷And when he wished to cross over to Achaia, the believers encouraged him and wrote to the disciples to welcome him."
(Acts 18:26-27a, NRSV)*

Huldah – 2 Chronicles 34

“So Hilkiah and those whom the king had sent went to the prophet Huldah...She declared to them, ‘Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel: Tell the man who sent you to me, Thus says the Lord: I will indeed bring disaster upon this place and upon its inhabitants, all the curses that are written in the book that was read before the king of Judah...But as to the king of Judah, who sent you to inquire of the Lord, thus shall you say to him: Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel: Regarding the words that you have heard, because your heart was penitent and you humbled yourself before God when you heard his words against this place and its inhabitants, and you have humbled yourself before me, and have torn your clothes and wept before me, I also have heard you, says the Lord.’” (2 Chronicles 34:22a, 23-24, 26-27, NRSV)

Ruth 2

“Then Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, ‘Blessed be he by the Lord, whose kindness has not forsaken the living or the dead!’ Naomi also said to her, ‘The man is a relative of ours, one of our nearest kin.’ Then Ruth the Moabite said, ‘He even said to me, “Stay close by my servants, until they have finished all my harvest.”’ Naomi said to Ruth, her daughter-in-law, ‘It is better, my daughter, that you go out with his young women, otherwise you might be bothered in another field.’ So she stayed close to the young women of Boaz, gleaning until the end of the barley and wheat harvests; and she lived with her mother-in-law.” (Ruth 2:20-23, NRSV)

- The biblical women in each of these stories found themselves in stressful or conflict-possible situations. How did each woman handle the potential conflict in front of them? How did their leadership positively guide the situation?
- How does each biblical woman inspire you as a leader as you seek to develop healthy responses to disagreement and conflict?

7. NEXT STEPS

Monthly coaching pairs/triads:

Each month, you will receive an outline that will help you explore important leadership topics by yourself and then in your peer coaching triads. The next month’s topic is:

- Month 10 **The Current Reality:** How do you support and empower leaders?

Next Video Conference date:

Clarifying Questions:

Below you will find four questions that we encourage you explore throughout your 12-month leadership journey. Consider them each month, to see how they may be changing for you:

- What kind of leader do I want to be one year from now?
- What kind of leader do I want to be 5 years from now?
- What phrases describe me and my leadership style?
- What do I hope is my leadership legacy?