PREPARE MODULE #2

LEADER :: YOUNG ADULTS | EASTSIDE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

COMPETENCY: Navigate conflict and team dynamics in a way that honors the individual and the team.

OBJECTIVE: Equip yourself with the skills to manage disagreements constructively, promoting personal and collegial relationships, and understanding the biblical perspective on conflict resolution.

ASSIGNMENTS:

- **Assignment #1 // Biblical Insights on Conflict Resolution (20 mins):**
  - Engage with selected passages (Matthew 12:36; Colossians 3:12-15; Matthew 7:3-5; James 1:19-20; James 5:15; Matthew 18:15-20) that provide guidance on handling conflict.
  - Reflect on questions related to each passage, focusing on self-examination, the importance of words, forgiveness, and direct but loving confrontation.
- **Assignment #2 // Contemporary Strategies in Conflict Navigation (15 mins):**
  - Read "Keys to Handling Conflict" by Vanderbloemen.com, integrating scriptural wisdom with modern approaches.
  - Reflect on historical biblical figures and their conflict-handling strategies, understanding that disagreement is natural but can be handled constructively.
- **Assignment #3 // Integrating Biblical Principles with Modern Insights (10 mins):**
  - Read Julie Liem's insights on conflict navigation, emphasizing planning, calmness, active listening, neutral language, and separating the person from the problem.
  - Reflect on how these strategies align with the teachings from Matthew 18 and how they can be applied in current scenarios.
- **Assignment #4 // Personal Reflection and Practical Application (10 mins):**
  - Answer a set of final questions that encourage introspection about personal conflict-handling styles, the inevitability of conflict, and the importance of reconciliation.

- Plan changes in your approach to disagreements based on biblical teachings and contemporary insights.

There are lots of passages in the bible that deal with navigating conflict. We have picked just four of them in order to help you see a picture of how biblically we can look at and deal with conflict in a healthy manner.

ASSIGNMENT #1 (15 MIN)

Matthew 12:36 emphasizes the weight of our words and the accountability we have for them.

Discussion Starter:

1. *Why do you think Jesus highlighted the importance of our spoken words?*
2. *How does being accountable for our words relate to conflict management?*

Colossians 3:12-15 NLT

12Since God chose you to be the holy people he loves, you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. 13Make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others. 14Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds us all together in perfect harmony. 15And let the peace that comes from Christ rule in your hearts. For as members of one body you are called to live in peace. And always be thankful.

Matthew 7:3-5 NLT

3"And why worry about a speck in your friend's eye when you have a log in your own? 4How can you think of saying to your friend, 'Let me help you get rid of that speck in your eye,' when you can't see past the log in your own eye? 5Hypocrite! First get rid of the log in your own eye; then you will see well enough to deal with the speck in your friend's eye.

James 1:19-20 NLT

19Understand this, my dear brothers and sisters: You must all be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry. 20Human anger does not produce the righteousness God

desires.

James 5:15 NLT

16Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results.

Matthew 18:15-20 NLT

15If your brother or sister sins against you, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.' If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector. Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. Again, truly I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything they ask for, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.

QUESTIONS:

1. *Which of the passages do you identify with most/least? Why?*

2. *What 3-4 characteristics do you see as common themes from these sections of scripture?*

3. *If you could sum each passage up with one word about conflict management, what would it be and why?*

4. *When you think of your own life, which passage offers you the most help right now? What is the next step you need to take in your current conflict?*

5. *Taking the one-word summaries from the above question; is there a way that you could turn those few words into a simple step-by-step for dealing with your current conflict?*

ASSIGNMENT #2

Keys to Handling Conflict by Vanderbloemen.com

The Key To Handling Conflict On Your Church Leadership Team

Reflect on the integration of scriptural and modern wisdom in handling conflict.

> *Conflict will be inevitable on any team, regardless of team culture or experience of the members. The key for leaders is to learn how to handle this conflict when it arises while still leading the team well. The Bible gives us many examples of conflict resolution that church leaders can implement next time they find themselves dealing with staff conflict.*

One of the arguments for the historical reliability of the Bible is that the heroes of Scripture are not painted as flawless characters. We see their upsides and downsides—which gives us all hope! Luke, the historian who gives us the history of the first thirty years of the Christian church, records a rough moment when two leaders on a ministry team had a major disagreement.

Paul and Barnabas were very close members of a team, and had done some strategic ministry together. They had shared leadership of a team that traveled to take the gospel message of Christ to new territory. One of the members of that team was a young man named Mark, who also happened to be a cousin of Barnabas. Halfway through the trip, Mark decided he'd had enough and went home. We don't know if he was homesick, if he couldn't face the dangers, or there were personnel issues—but he left. The rest finished the mission without him.

In Acts 15, Paul said to Barnabas, "Let's go back and visit each city where we previously preached the word of the Lord, to see how the new believers are doing." (Acts 15:36) Barnabas readily agreed, but wanted to take Mark again. Paul adamantly refused to have Mark on the team again! "Their disagreement was so sharp that they separated." (Acts 15:39) In the original Greek language, the sharp disagreement means violent emotion. This was not some mild difference of opinion—it was intense and passionate. So big was the disagreement that they parted ways. Paul picked up a new partner, Silas, and set out on another mission. Barnabas took his cousin Mark and sailed for Cyprus—and sailed right off the pages of the Bible, never to be heard of again. Was Barnabas more people-minded and Paul more mission-minded? Barnabas wanted to give Mark a second chance, Paul saw Mark's desertion and lack of perseverance, and would not consider him for the team again.

EVEN THE BEST CHRISTIANS WILL NOT ALWAYS AGREE, AND SOMETIMES THEY WILL INTENSELY DISAGREE.

Patrick Lencioni in his book, The Advantage, writes, "Contrary to popular wisdom and behavior, conflict is not a bad thing for a team. In fact, the fear of conflict is almost always a sign of problems."

Lencioni pictures team conflict on a continuum. At one end is no conflict at all, and at the other end is relentless and destructive conflict. When there is no conflict at all, Lencioni says that this could be a kind of "artificial harmony." He notes that nowhere is this artificial harmony seen more than in mission-driven nonprofit organizations, especially in churches. There is a belief in organizations that we should always have harmony and never disagree. However, some teams also lapse into destructive (and sinful) kinds of conflict. Destructive conflict moves from challenging ideas and perspectives, and resorts to attacking persons.

Dr. John Gottman, marriage researcher at the University of Washington, tracked over 700 couples for more than 20 years, and he could predict with 91% accuracy which of those couples would divorce. How did he predict it? Not by if they argued, but HOW they argued. It is not whether or not you have conflict, but how you deal with conflict that makes a marriage stable or fragile.

ON A LEADERSHIP TEAM THERE WILL BE CONFLICT—BUT HOW YOU HAVE CONFLICT IS THE KEY.

Effective teams will have a willingness to disagree, yet hold each other accountable to not move into destructive conflict.

Lencioni recommends five questions you should ask of yourself and each team member.

1. *Can we keep our egos in check?*
2. *Are we capable of admitting to mistakes, weaknesses, or insufficient knowledge?*
3. *Can we speak openly when we disagree?*
4. *Will we confront behavioral problems directly?*
5. *Can we put the success of the team or organization over our own?*

These 5 questions are great to ask on your current team.

QUESTIONS (10 min)

1. ***Remembering Past Conflicts:*** *Think of a time when you and a teammate had a big disagreement, like when Paul and Barnabas had different views about Mark in Acts. How did you handle it, and how can Matthew 18:15-20's guidance on addressing sins and disagreements help in such situations?*

2. ***Spotting Fake Peace:*** *Colossians 3:12-15 speaks of the essence of harmony and peace. How can you ensure that the peace in your team isn't just surface-level, but deeply rooted in understanding and love?*

3. ***Dealing with Fights:*** *James 1:19-20 tells us to be quick to listen and slow to anger. When tensions rise in the team, how do you put this into practice?*

4. ***Checking Your Pride at the Door:*** *Matthew 7:3-5 emphasizes self-awareness in conflict. Before pointing out a teammate's mistake, do you reflect on your own actions and motivations?*

5. ***Talking About the Real Issues:*** *James 5:15 speaks about confessing and prayer. How often do you encourage open communication in your team, ensuring that issues are addressed and not just buried?*

6. ***Team First:*** *Using Colossians 3:12-15 as a guide, how do you foster an environment where kindness, humility, and patience are paramount, ensuring everyone is thinking of the team's well-being?*

7. ***Speaking Up:*** *Reflecting on Matthew 18:15-20, how do you ensure everyone feels comfortable speaking their truth, even if it's a challenging one, ensuring disagreements are addressed in a healthy and biblical manner?*

ASSIGNMENT #3:

Navigating Conflict through Biblical Principles and Contemporary Insight Article #2 (10 mins)

Foundational Approach from Matthew 18:15-20:

Matthew 18 emphasizes the importance of addressing personal wrongs directly with the individual involved, seeking reconciliation and restoration. If resolution isn't achieved privately, the matter is escalated by involving others, always with the aim of restoring the relationship. The essence is not about proving right or wrong but about winning a brother or sister back.

Julie Liem's (Eastside staff member) Insights on Navigating Conflict with Integration from Matthew 18:

Have a Plan: *Just as Jesus laid out a step-by-step approach in Matthew 18, planning your approach ensures that you are intentional and considerate. Consider the setting, time, and method of communication to foster a constructive environment.*

Be a Calming Agent: *Emulating the patience and calm demeanor of Christ, be the one to set a peaceful tone for the conversation. Recognize that disagreements can be emotional, but the goal is reconciliation, just as Jesus aims to reconcile us to Him.*

Listen Actively: *Jesus often listened to the pleas, questions, and challenges of those around Him. To truly understand the heart of the conflict, be swift to hear, ensuring that the other party feels valued and understood.*

Model Neutral Language: *Just as Jesus used parables and non-accusatory language to teach profound truths, ensure your language is non-confrontational. This promotes understanding rather than defensiveness.*

Separate the Person from the Problem: *Jesus always loved the sinner but condemned the sin. It's essential to differentiate between the individual's worth and the issue at hand. Emphasize that the intent is to address the behavior or situation, not to attack the person.*

Ask for Their Perspective: *Jesus often asked questions to provoke thought and reflection. Before making conclusions, understand their viewpoint, ensuring they feel heard and that any misunderstandings are clarified.*

Land on Next Steps: *The biblical approach in Matthew 18 emphasizes progression, from private discussion to involving others if necessary. Similarly, always conclude a conflict resolution conversation with clear next steps, ensuring both parties are aligned on the way forward.*

Reflection:

Navigating conflict is an art, requiring a balance of assertiveness, empathy, and wisdom. *By merging time-tested biblical strategies from Matthew 18 with Julie Liem's contemporary insights, we can approach conflicts with grace, aiming not just for resolution but for restoration and strengthened relationships.*

QUESTIONS (15 min)

1. *Planning and Approach: Think of a recent conflict you experienced. How could a planned approach, similar to the step-by-step method Jesus advocated in Matthew 18, have made the conversation more effective?*

2. *Tone and Demeanor: Recall a time when someone approached you with a calm demeanor during a disagreement. How did that make you feel, and how did it influence the outcome?*

3. *Active Listening: Have you ever felt that you were not truly heard during a conflict? How might active listening have changed that experience?*

4. *Language Choices: Think about a disagreement where words escalated the situation. How could neutral language have de-escalated the conflict?*

5. *Separating Person from Problem: Can you recall a time when you felt personally attacked during a disagreement, rather than feeling the issue at hand was being addressed? How did that make you feel?*

6. *Understanding Perspectives: Share a time when understanding someone's perspective changed your viewpoint on a conflict. Why is seeking to understand before being understood crucial in conflict resolution?*

7. *Next Steps and Resolution: Reflect on a past conflict that felt unresolved. What next steps could have been established to move towards resolution?*

8. *Biblical Integration: How does understanding Matthew 18's approach to conflict make you view disagreements in a different light? How can you implement this in future conflicts?*

ASSIGNMENT #4:
Final Questions

1. ***Biblical Heroes & Modern Leaders:*** *The Bible paints its heroes with both strengths and weaknesses. As you step into leadership circles, how can you leverage your strengths while being transparent about your weaknesses to navigate conflict more effectively?*

2. ***Conflict's Inevitability:*** *Given that conflict is inevitable, as described in the Vanderbloemen article, and the biblical guidance provided on handling conflict, how will you proactively prepare for disagreements in leadership contexts?*

3. ***Blending Old and New:*** *The module integrates time-tested biblical strategies with contemporary insights. How can you ensure that your personal conflict resolution strategy remains rooted in biblical teachings while being relevant to modern team dynamics?*

4. ***Personal Conflict Evolution:*** *Reflect on how your understanding of conflict has evolved after studying both the biblical passages and modern insights. What changes do you plan to implement in your approach to disagreements as you step into leadership roles?*

5. ***The Goal of Reconciliation:*** *Both biblical teachings and modern insights emphasize not just resolving conflict but restoring relationships. How will you prioritize relationship restoration in your leadership strategy when conflicts arise?*

LEADERSHIP TAKEAWAYS: (to be completed during group discussion)

1. **Conflict is Inevitable but Manageable:** Disagreements will occur, but with the right approach—combining biblical wisdom and modern strategies—they can be navigated constructively.

2. **The Importance of Self-Reflection:** Effective conflict resolution requires introspection, understanding your own role in disagreements, and being accountable for your words and actions.

3. **Prioritizing Relationship and Reconciliation:** The goal in handling conflict is not to "win" but to reconcile, preserving the dignity of everyone involved and strengthening team unity.

4. **Active Listening and Calm Communication:** Being quick to listen and slow to anger, and choosing words carefully, can prevent escalation and promote understanding.

5. **Biblical Guidance as the Foundation:** Scripture provides timeless wisdom on conflict management, emphasizing love, forgiveness, direct confrontation, and the pursuit of peace.