



PREPARE MODULE #3

LEADER:: KIDSIDE | EASTSIDE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

COMPETENCY: Develop good listening skills to manage conflict in a healthy way.

OBJECTIVE: To help team members dive into the principles of leadership that involve intentional listening and how to manage conflict with others in a positive and healthy way.

ASSIGNMENTS:

- Assignment 1 // Read various verses and answer the corresponding questions.
- Assignment 2 // Read *Seven Healthy Ways to Resolve Conflict* by Carey Niehwhof, and answer the corresponding questions.
- Assignment 3 // Read *Listening for What Really Matters*, and answer the questions.
- Assignment 4 // Listen to Andy Stanley's podcast, [Listen, Learn and Lead - Andy Stanley Leadership Podcast - Omny.fm](https://www.omny.fm/podcasts/andy-stanley-leadership-podcast)

ASSIGNMENT 1

Read the following verses and answer the questions.

As a part of leadership, at some point you will deal with conflict, whether directly or indirectly. You might see two children in conflict or you might see two members of your team dealing with a conflict. You might even be involved with conflict yourself someday whether in Kidside or at home, work, or school. Dealing with conflict in a way that promotes dialogue instead of shutting people down is a great leadership skill to have.

Proverbs 15:1

A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.

Proverbs 10:12

Hatred stirs up conflict, but love covers over all wrongs.

Proverbs 15:18

A hot-tempered person stirs up conflict, but the one who is patient calms a quarrel.

QUESTIONS:

1. *What does the Bible have to say about what causes conflict?*

2. *What does the Bible say about how to stop conflict?*

ASSIGNMENT 2

Read the 7 Healthy Ways to Resolve Conflict at Church or Work article and answer the questions.

7 Healthy Ways to Resolve Conflict at Church or Work

Carey Nieuwhof

So you're dealing with a conflict and you're feeling some tension with someone you work with or serve with at church.

Join the club.

But rather than let it linger, address it. The stakes are simply too high.

I'm increasingly convinced many churches simply don't grow because they suffer from conflict and that many teams never thrive because there's simply too much tension.

What do you do?

Well, first realize you're not alone. In the United States, 70% of the people who go to work today will tell you they don't like their jobs.

So many people I know get frustrated at work. And one of the top frustrations?

The people they work with.

Conflict happens wherever people gather- in families, in churches, at work, and in communities at large.

I think Christians often struggle with conflict because:

- In the name of **grace**, we feel we need to **sacrifice truth**, but...
- When we **speak truth**, we often don't know **how to speak it with grace**.
- We worry about **hurting other people's feelings** when one of the best things we can do is offer honest feedback.
- We're not sure how to **support someone we genuinely disagree with**.

None of that needs to be.

I have learned, through trial and error, that these 7 strategies below can help me deal with conflict.

I hope they can help you.

1. Own your part of the conflict.

Conflict and even bad chemistry are almost never 100% one person's fault.

Thinking you're not part of the problem is often the problem.

One of the best expressions I've heard of how to figure out the extent to which you might be part of the problem is to ask a compelling question: What's it like to be on the other side of me?

Jeff Henderson asked that question in a great series at North Point Church called Climate Change.

Own what you can. What is it like to be on the other side of you? Ask some people.

2. Go direct.

Often issues are mishandled because we talk about someone rather than to someone.

Your co-worker at the water cooler isn't the problem, so why talk to him about it?

Jesus was crystal clear on how to handle conflict, but very few Christians follow his practice. In the name of being 'nice' ("I can't tell her that!"), we become ineffective.

Talk to the person you have the problem with. Directly. If you haven't got the courage to do it, maybe the problem isn't even big enough to worry about.

3. Believe the best about others

It's easy to assign bad motives to people. Instead, give them the benefit of the doubt. They might not realize how they are coming across. Believe the best about others; don't assume the worst.

Believing the best can help you address an issue directly without ruining the relationship. It can turn hurtful into helpful.

Here's an example: "Rachel, you might not realize this, but sometimes your emails can come across demanding or even demeaning. I'm not sure you're aware of that, but I just wanted to let you know how they leave me feeling sometimes. I know you probably don't mean to do that."

That gives the person an out, and frankly, many times, they probably had no idea they were coming across negatively.

When you believe the best about others, you tend to get the best from others.

4. Explain- don't blame

How to talk to the person you're struggling with is where many people struggle.

And those conversations often go sideways because people begin with blame. Don't blame. Explain. Instead of saying "You always" or "You never" (which might be how you feel like starting), begin by talking about how you experience them.

If you're dealing with an "angry person," for example, you might frame it this way: "Jake, I just want you to know that when you get upset in a meeting, it makes me feel like the discussion is over and I can't make a contribution."

If you're dealing with gossip, try something like: "Ryan, on Tuesday when you told me what happened to Greg on the weekend, I felt like that was something Greg should have told me directly."

Do you hear the difference between explaining and blaming?

Blaming others is a guarantee that the only person who won't grow is you.

5. Be specific

Giving one or two specific incidents is much better than making general accusations or commenting on personality traits. "The other day in the meeting" or "In your email on the August numbers yesterday" is much more helpful than "You just always seem so frustrated."

The more specific you are, the more you de-escalate conflict and move toward a hopeful ending.

6. Tell them you want things to get better

What the person you're confronting needs is hope.

At this point, they probably feel defensive, ashamed, and (hopefully) sorry.

Let them know the gifts they bring to the table and the good they do.

Tell them you are looking forward to the future and want things to work out.

7. Pray for them

I know this sounds trite, but it's not.

Don't pray about them. Pray for them.

It is almost impossible to stay angry with someone you pray for.

It can also give you empathy for them, and at least in your mind's eye, it places you both firmly at the foot of the cross in need of forgiveness. It will take any smirk of superiority out of your attitude, which goes a long way toward solving problems.

QUESTIONS:

- 1. Have you ever avoided having a difficult conversation at work, at home, in school, or in ministry? Based on what you have just learned, how might you have faced that conflict differently?*
- 2. Carey believes that the best way to have a difficult conversation is to give specifics, and explain instead of blame. What is the difference between explaining and blaming? Do you agree or disagree? Why?*
- 3. Believing the best about others and giving them the benefit of the doubt can be hard. Why do you think this is an important thing to try to do when in a conflict? Explain.*
- 4. In your area of serving at Kidside, how do you see conflict arising, if at all? How would you deal with conflict between two kids? Between two members of your team? How would you deal with conflict if it involved yourself and another team member or parent?*

ASSIGNMENT 3

Listening For What Really Matters

Listening levels and intuition indicators adapted from the work of Dr. Joseph Umidi.

The key to being able to connect as a leader is listening to the person or persons with whom you are dialoguing. There are three levels of listening:

- *Level 1: Self-focused listening*

Self-focused listening is, just as the name indicates, all about the listener. When practicing level 1 listening, questions like “What does this mean to me?” and “How will this impact my life?” are running through the listener’s head. The focus is on the listener and how what is being communicated impacts him/her.

- *Level 2: Others-focused listening*

Others-focused listening is about the speaker. When practicing level 2 listening, questions like “What does this mean to this person?” are running through the listener’s head. The focus is on the speaker and what he or she is communicating.

- *Level 3: Purpose-focused listening*

Purpose-focused listening is still about the speaker, but it’s listening for what is really happening below the surface. Questions like “What does this really mean?” and “What would cause the speaker to respond in this way?” are in the listener’s head. The focus is not only on the other person but also on the underlying meaning and significance of what is happening.

Obviously Level 1 listening is a terrible basis for developing questions that will help people learn, grow, and discover for themselves. If someone tells you they’re struggling to find a job and all you’re thinking is, “I hope they don’t ask me for money,” you’re not likely to ask them any questions that help them deal with the situation they’re in.

Level 2 listening is clearly better. In the above scenario, if you're practicing level 2 listening, you're concerned about the person and his or her situation. You might ask questions like, "What can I do to help you find a job?"

Those aren't bad, but level 3 listening will allow you to help the person figure out what it is he or she really needs to navigate the situation. With level 3 listening, you're looking for what's below the surface. You're trying to figure out the why behind the what. You might ask a question like, "What has made it so difficult for you to find a job?"

Now we're getting somewhere. Maybe the person says that when they apply they're told they don't have enough education. So then you follow up with, "What would it take for you to get the additional education you need?" You can see where the question you asked when practicing level 2 listening wasn't bad—you were clearly concerned about the person and their situation—but it also wasn't the most helpful.

The likely response to the question, "What can I do to help..." is something like, "If you hear of any openings in my field, let me know." But if the person doesn't have the needed education, while you might be able to help them find a job if you're good friends with a hiring manager, you probably can't, especially if that hiring manager friend doesn't owe you a big favor. Hiring someone who doesn't have the qualifications for a position is no small thing. And either way, what happens when that person needs to change jobs again?

But with the level 3 question you're able to get at the root cause of the person's inability to find a job and begin helping him or her think through how to deal with it.

Notice that in this scenario, you didn't have any answers for the person. You didn't solve his or her problem. You didn't even figure out the solution. You simply asked questions that caused the other person to come up with solutions.

Intuition Indicators

Level 2 and especially level 3 listening requires looking out for intuition indicators, key markers that will help identify underlying issues. They include:

- **A person's own discernment** - Is there anything the person has already figured out that maybe they just don't realize? Look for statements like, "I know that ultimately I need to get more education to have the job I want, but school is so expensive." He or she knows what to do but needs help figuring out the how.
- **Patterns and fruit** - Listen for recurring themes or results in what the speaker is telling you. If the speaker mentions that he or she has been laid off twice before, you might ask a question like, "You've mentioned you've been laid off three times, is there a common thread that runs through these that might help explain why?"
- **Strong emotions or reactions** - Perhaps the speaker angrily responds to your question with, "All of my bosses have been terrible people!" Often when people respond with an intense emotion, there's something more going on. Maybe they had a particularly damaging relationship with a boss that has colored their relationship with their other bosses. Maybe their bosses have been fine and they simply don't like authority. Ask questions like, "What are some specific experiences that made you dislike them so much?" And then you might ask follow-up questions about how the boss might have felt in that situation to help them see the other side.
- **History items** - This is something in someone's past that might be impacting their present situation. Maybe they state that they didn't have a very good relationship with their parents and then later mention they struggle relating to their bosses. It's possible that the problems with their parents are coloring their interactions with their bosses. You might ask, "What do you think makes it difficult to relate to your bosses?"
- **Confirmation and counsel** - What advice or perspective has the speaker gotten from other trusted friends or advisors? Listen for things like, "My last boss encouraged me to..." "My mom said I should..." The speaker may need you to ask questions that help analyze and evaluate the advice already given.
- **Red flags** - This could be anything that raises a level of concern in your mind.

1. *Do you think that you are a good listener? Why or why not?*

2. *What do you think makes a great leader open to listening and hearing what others have to say in order for them to make great decisions?*

3. *Have you seen a leader who balances "insulation" (allowing them to get things done) and an open door (allowing them to hear outside voices)? Have you found a way to balance those as well?*

4. *Have you worked with a leader or a boss who only wants that "good news" that Andy talks about? How did you navigate bringing them "bad news?"*

5. *What and who are you listening to to help you make good and informed decisions?*

6. *How can you help create a culture where people feel heard and valued in your home, work, and area of service at Kidside?*

What are at least two LEADERSHIP TAKEAWAYS from this module? Be prepared to discuss with your group.

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