

# **Ministry in the Midst of Conflict**

# **A Theology of Conflict**

**There is a Trail of Conflict Throughout  
Scripture**

- **It begins in Genesis 3.**
- **It ends in Revelation 20.**
- **It is everywhere between.**

# **Examples of Conflict Throughout Scripture**

- **Genesis 4- Cain and Abel**
- **Genesis 6- Man's Rebellion Against God**
- **Genesis 11- The Tower of Babel**
- **Matthew 21:12-13- Jesus and the Merchants**
- **Luke 4:28-30- Jesus in Nazareth**

# **Examples of Conflict Throughout Scripture**

- **John 8:3-11- Jesus and the Pharisees**
- **Acts 6:1-6- Complaints in Jerusalem Church**
- **Acts 15:1-31- A Dispute About Circumcision**
- **Acts 15:36-40- Paul and Barnabas Argue**

**The question is not whether  
we will have conflict in the  
church, but how we will  
handle it when it comes.**

# **Guidance for Christian in Conflict**

## **Ephesians 4:25–27 (NIV84)**

**25 Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body. 26 “In your anger do not sin”: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, 27 and do not give the devil a foothold.**

# **Guidance for Christian in Conflict**

## **Ephesians 4:29–30 (NIV84)**

**29 Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. 30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.**

# **Guidance for Christian in Conflict**

## **Ephesians 4:31–32 (NIV84)**

**31 Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. 32 Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.**



# **A Theology of Conflict**

- **Understanding Conflict From a Biblical Point of View**
  - A. Conflict as a Result of the Struggle to Understand God's Direction for Ministry**
    - 1. Segregation vs. Integration- Acts 10:9-11:18**
    - 2. The Necessary Conditions Required for Salvation and Membership in the Church- Acts 15:1-35**

# **A Theology of Conflict**

- **Understanding Conflict From a Biblical Point of View**

## **B. Conflicts as a Result of Differences Between Persons**

- 1. Paul and Barnabas- Acts 15:36-41**
- 2. Loyalties of Corinthian Christians- 1 Cor. 1:10-12 and 3:4-4:6**

# **A Theology of Conflict**

- **Understanding Conflict From a Biblical Point of View**

## **C. Conflict as a Result of Sinful Motives**

- 1. David and Uriah- 2 Samuel 11**
- 2. Jesus and the Money Changers- Matt. 21:12-16**
- 3. Peter vs. Annanias and Sapphira- Acts 5:1-11**

# **A Theology of Conflict**

- **Three Basic Types of Conflict Among God's People**

## **1. Conflicts over Purposes and Goals**

- **Is the Gospel for Jews only, or is it also for Gentiles? Acts 10:9-11:18**
- **Should Mark Accompany the Missionary Team? Acts 15:36-41**

# **A Theology of Conflict**

- **Three Basic Types of Conflict Among God's People**

## **2. Conflicts over Programs and Methods**

- **Must Gentile Christians be Circumcised?  
Acts 15**
- **What are the Legitimate Responsibilities of the Apostles and Disciples Acts 6:1-7**



# **A Theology of Conflict**

- **Three Basic Types of Conflict Among God's People**

## **3. Conflicts of Values and Traditions**

- **David and Uriah 2 Samuel 11**
- **Jesus and the Money Changers Matt. 21:12-13**

# **A Theology of Conflict**

- **Biblical Understandings of the Results of Conflict**
  1. **Conflict in the Church can have Positive Results**
  2. **Conflict in the Church can strengthen Unity in the Spirit**
  3. **Not all Conflict is Sinful**

**The question is not whether  
we will have conflict in the  
church, but how we will  
handle it when it comes.**



# **Conflict Outcomes- What Conflict Can Lead to**

- **New Directions in Ministry**
- **Successful Problem Solving**
- **Growth in Understanding,**
- **Forgiveness, Intimacy**

# **Conflict Outcomes- What Conflict Can Lead to**

- **Isolation**
- **Domination**
- **Unresolved Hurt And Church Splits**

***It all depends on how we handle it.***

# Things That Never Work

- Trying to cut a deal or appease a faction, especially in a dysfunctional situation.
- Shielding denominational leaders from the truth, trying to please them when the church is at risk.

# **Conflict is Normal-**

## **Reasons for Conflict**

- 1. We have different experiences and perspectives.**
- 2. People have different values, goals, and methods.**
- 3. People feel strongly about things.**
- 4. More than one opinion on a subject may be legitimate.**

# **Conflict is Normal-**

## **Reasons for Conflict**

- 5. Well-meaning people can miscommunicate.**
- 6. There may be theological disagreements.**
- 7. We bring our dysfunctional family dynamics to church with us.**
- 8. Some people are antagonistic.**

# **Leadership is The Key to Managing Conflict: Healthy Leaders...**

- 1. Maintain a healthy interior,  
spiritual life.**
- 2. Understand their roles as  
prophets, caregivers, servant-  
leaders.**



# **Leadership is The Key to Managing Conflict: Healthy Leaders...**

- 3. Know when to emphasize the task, relationships, or even break off.**
- 4. Build healthy leadership teams.**

# **Some Leaders Contribute to Conflict**

- 1. By exhibiting anger or aggression- picking fights.**
- 2. By remaining too detached, not connecting with people's pain, or waiting too long.**
- 3. By being too compliant, trying to please everybody, or never taking a stand on anything.**



# **Anatomy of a Conflict**

- 1. One party acts in such a way as to cause another party to feel threatened.**
- 2. The threatened party reacts to the threat.**

# Kinds of Threats

- To physical property, body, or life  
Example- Jezebel and Naboth
- To psychological well-being  
Example- Jesus' rebuke of Peter
- To social identity  
Example- Jewish church in Acts 15
- To authority or position  
Example- James and John request

# Kinds of Reactions to Threats

- Self-Protecting
- Self-Giving

# **Self-Protecting Behaviors**

- **Fight to Win**
- **Avoid Others- Flight**
- **Comply Outwardly- Fake**

# **Self-Protecting Behaviors**

- **Pretend Not to Care**
- **Move from Issues to Character Assassination, Gossip, Triangles**
- **Distance Others by Either Extremes of Rage or Self-Righteousness**

# **Self-Giving Behaviors**

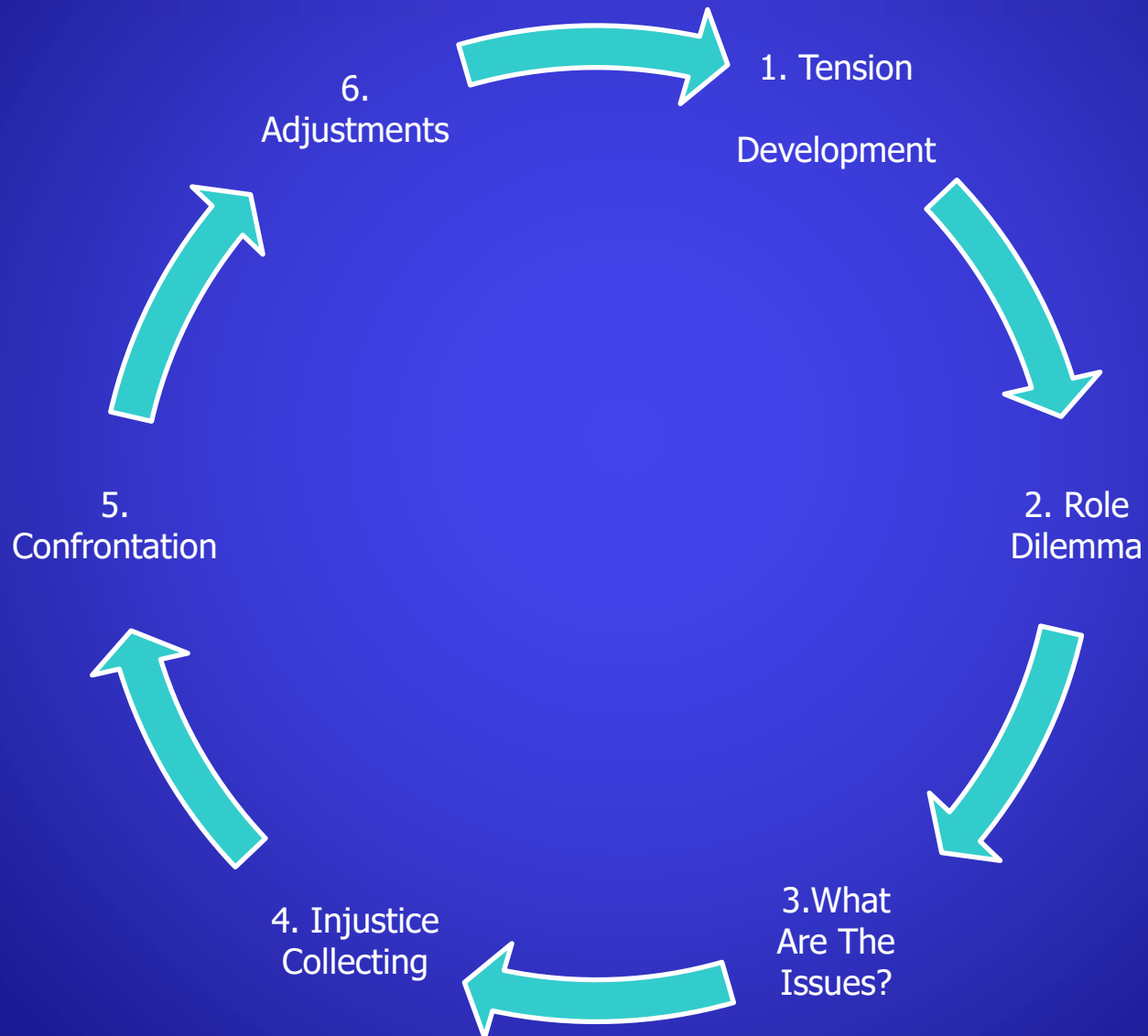
- **Go to Those Who've Wronged You**
- **Go to Those You've Wronged**
- **Own Your Part in the Conflict**

# **Self-Giving Behaviors**

- **Work Through Your Own Issues**
- **Try to Empathize**
- **Be Willing to Forgive and be Reconciled**

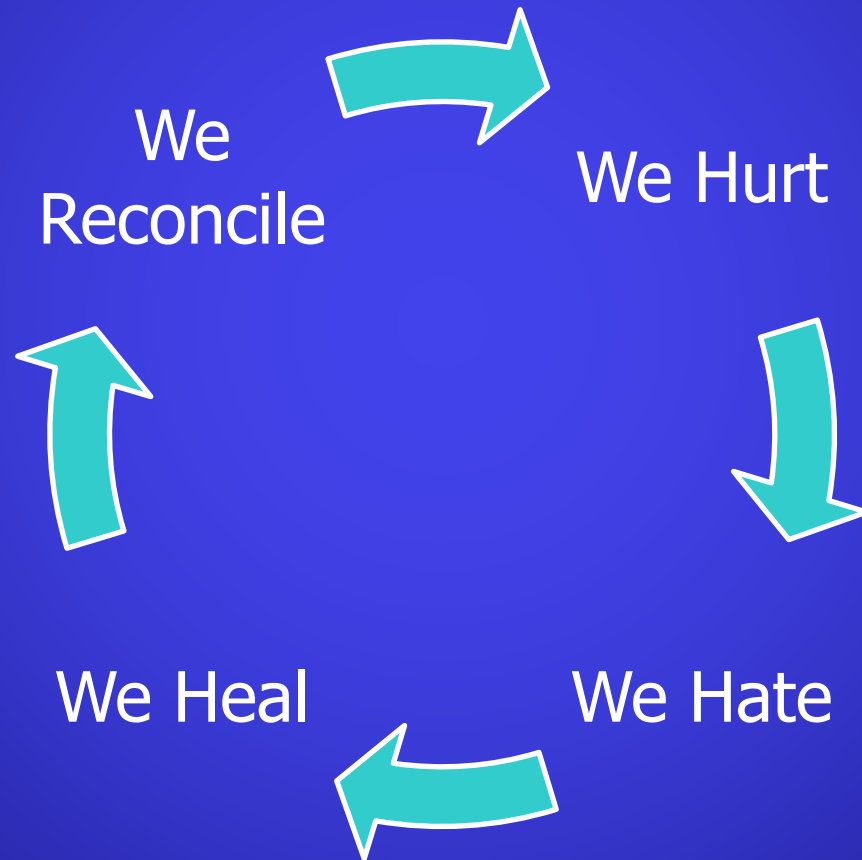


# The Conflict Cycle

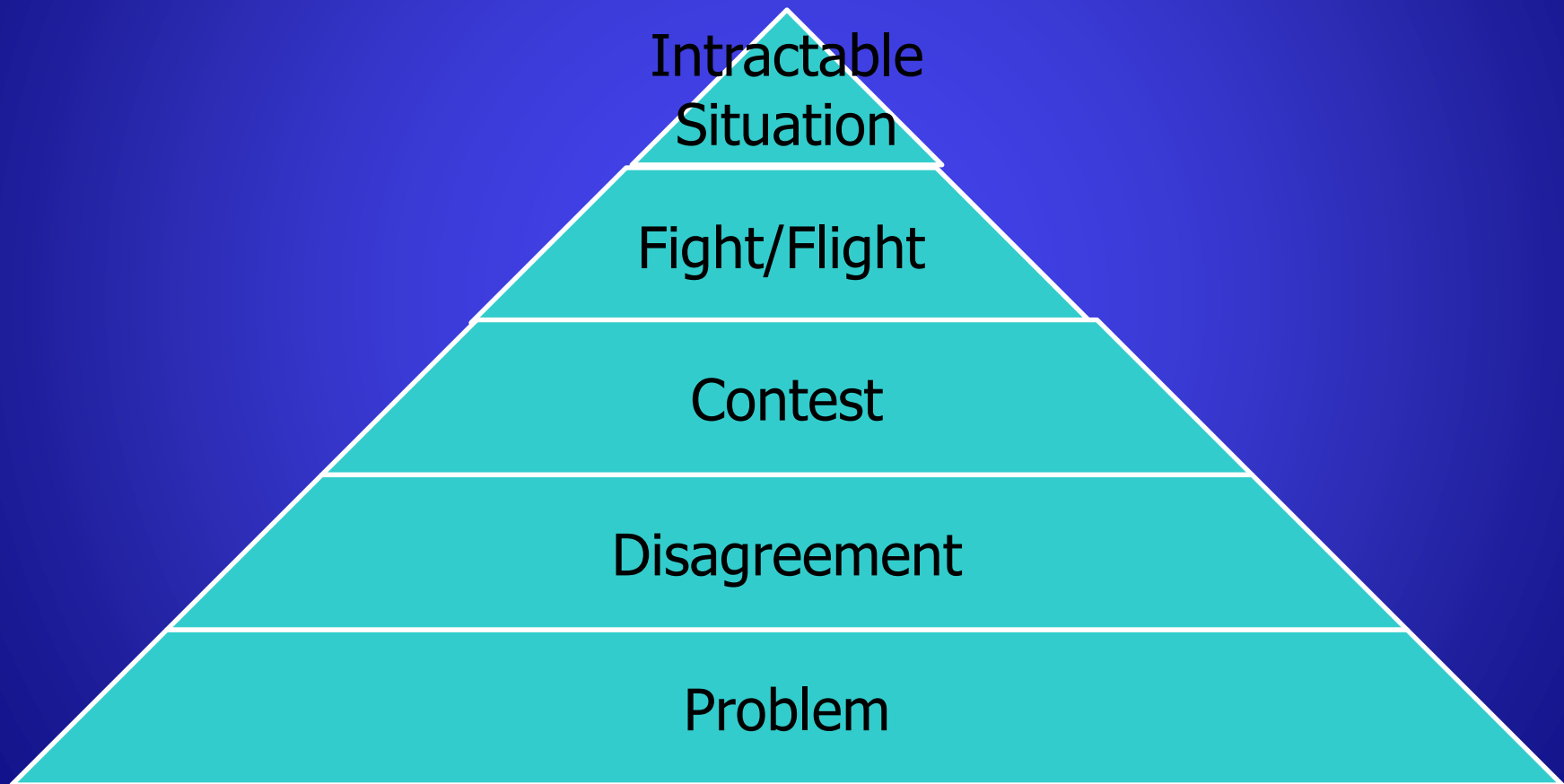




# Crisis of Forgiveness



# 5 Levels of Conflict



# Conflict Management Styles

- **Avoiding- The Turtle**
  - Intent to stay out of the conflict
  - Avoids identifying with either side
  - Passive, abdicating
  - Sees the issue as trivial
  - Believes there are more important issues to be dealt with
  - Sees the issue as hopeless

# Conflict Management Styles

- **Accommodating- The Teddy Bear**
  - Intent to preserve relationships at all costs
  - Attempts to resolve conflict quickly
  - Sweep the conflict under the carpet
  - Appeases others by accepting blame
  - Our getting along with each other is more important than the issue over which we are in conflict.

# Conflict Management Styles

- **Collaborating- The Owl**
  - Intent to get all parties involved in defining the conflict and in carrying out mutually agreeable steps for managing the conflict
  - Assertive, yet flexible
  - Doesn't ignore or avoid conflict, but turns it into a problem-solving situation in which all can participate in finding solutions.

# Conflict Management Styles

- **Compromising- The Fox**
  - Intent is to provide each side with a little bit of winning in order to persuade each to accept a little bit of losing.
  - Assumes it is impossible to fully satisfy everybody
  - Assertive, persuasive, and sometimes manipulative
  - Asks that personal desires be submitted to the common good



# Conflict Management Styles

- **Competing- The Shark**
  - Intent is to win
  - Places prime importance on personal goals or his/her interpretation of what is best for the organization
  - Willing to sacrifice the relationship in order to accomplish this
  - Aggressive, domineering, and generally uncooperative in the pursuit of any solution except his/her own

# Conflict Interventions

## **1. Generate Useful and Valid Information**

**Valid-** information that can be trusted, because it is perceived to come from a trustworthy source.

**Useful-** People can understand it clearly



# Conflict Interventions

- 1. Generate Useful and Valid Information**
- 2. Invite People Into a Problem Solving Exercise**
- 3. Allow Free and Informed Choice**
- 4. Motivate Internal Commitments to the Agreements That Are Made**

# **The Interplay of Change and Conflict**

- 1. Much conflict occurs out of resistance to change.**
- 2. Conflict is also one of the major ways change comes about.**

# The Interplay of Change and Conflict

- 3.** Conflict usually signals a need for change.
- 4.** Conflict management attempts to change “things to be fought” into “problems to be solved.”

# Two Kinds of Organizational Interventions- Model 1

- 1.** Everyone seeks to win and never to lose, but will not admit it to each other.
- 2.** Downplays, avoids, even forbids any show of emotion. Insists that everyone be rational.

# **Two Kinds of Organizational Interventions- Model 1**

- 3. People withhold information from each other to improve their own position.**
- 4. People build coalitions to strengthen their position and weaken the other side.**

# **Two Kinds of Organizational Interventions- Model 2**

- 1. Provides valid and useful information to all the parties involved.**
- 2. Allows free and informed choice to all the stakeholders regarding options at hand.**



# **Two Kinds of Organizational Interventions- Model 2**

- 3. Builds internal commitment to the choices that are made.**
- 4. Diligently monitors the commitments made to ensure follow-through.**

# **Moving a Church from Model 1 to Model 2**

- 1. Work for a win-win way of operating.**
- 2. Leaders must begin operating in Model 2 fashion.**

# **Moving a Church from Model 1 to Model 2**

- 3. Work hard on communicating.**
- 4. Give deliberate attention to recruiting, training, and deploying lay leaders.**

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we will have conflict in the  
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