

Crossroads Community Church staff is committed to approaching conflict in a way that glorifies God and gives us an opportunity to disciple others. We recognize that disagreements will happen, but we want to create an environment that fosters relationships that engage us in healthy biblical conflict. The following document is a guide to follow, so we can embrace conflict as an opportunity not as an inconvenience.

Scriptures to read and remember when considering conflict:

"There are six things the Lord hates, seven that are detestable to him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked schemes, feet that are quick to rush into evil, a false witness who pours out lies and a person who stirs up conflict in the community." Proverbs 6:16-19

"It is to one's honor to avoid strife, but every fool is quick to quarrel." Proverbs 20:3

"Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift." Matt 5:23-24

"In the same way, you who are younger, submit yourselves to your elders. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, 'God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble.' Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you."

1 Peter 5:5-7

In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:

Who, being in very nature God,
did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;
rather, he made himself nothing
by taking the very nature of a servant,
being made in human likeness.
And being found in appearance as a man,
he humbled himself
by becoming obedient to death—
even death on a cross!
Therefore God exalted him to the highest place
and gave him the name that is above every name,
that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father. Philippians 2:5-11

We are committed to respond to conflict according to the following 4 Principles.

1. **Glorify God**
2. **Get the Log Out**
3. **Gently Restore**
4. **Go and Be Reconciled**

Glorify God: How can I please and honor God in this situation?

Get the log out of your own eye: How can I show Jesus' work in me by taking responsibility for my contribution to this conflict?

Gently restore: How can I lovingly serve others by helping them take responsibility for their contributions to this conflict?

Go and be reconciled: How can I demonstrate the forgiveness of God and encourage a reasonable solution to this conflict?



Preparing

Our goal is to draw attention to God's grace. We have undeservingly received His love, mercy, forgiveness, strength, and wisdom through Christ. We can use conflict to do the following:

- We Glorify God by trusting, obeying, imitating and acknowledging Him.
- Serve other people by helping to bear their burdens or confronting them in love.
- Grow to be like Christ by confessing sin and turning from attitudes that promote conflict.

We do not want to avoid a situation or try to overcome our opponent but rather, have a peacemaking response that honors God and loves our neighbor.

"...first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye." Matthew 7:5

Our first step in any conflict is to pray for your own ownership in the situation. Allowing God to show us our own sin and where we need to confess and change our own behavior.

"Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." Psalm 139:23-24

As we go into conflict, it is important that we have the right motives. We want to have a peacemaking response that is looking out for everyone involved and not just for "myself." Conflict can be fueled by good desires that you have elevated to a sinful place, such as an unhealthy craving to be understood, loved, respected or vindicated. Check your attitude and change it based off of Philippians 4:2-9:

- Rejoice
- Let your gentleness be evident to all
- Replace anxiety with prayer
- See things as they really are
- Practice what you've learned

Going

There is a seven step process to examine yourself and move forward as a peacemaker.

1. **Ask the Lord and others for help with self-awareness.** Do the work beforehand to understand your part in the conflict. Understand how your attitude and actions can change to make the situation better.
2. **Address everyone involved as soon as possible.**
3. **Avoid "if, but and maybe"** Don't make excuses; be specific when possible with both attitude and actions.
4. **Apologize.** Express sorrow for the way you affected someone.
5. **Ask for forgiveness.**
6. **Accept the consequences.**
7. **Alter your behavior.** Commit to changing harmful habits.

Psalm 103:8-10 The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. He will not always accuse, nor will he harbor his anger forever; he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities.

We should always pray first and ask God for discernment. Here are a series of questions to ask yourself when considering confronting someone else:

- Does it dishonor God?
- Does it damage a relationship?
- Is it hurting other people?
- Is it seriously hurting the offender himself?
- Is it creating a division among us that has lasted longer than a short time?

Whether you choose to forgive or overlook the minor offence, it is an active process, not passive. Being part of the active process means that you **will not**:

- Talk about the situation to others, if you are not seeking wise, biblical advice.
- Dwell on the situation.
- Revisit the incident or use it against the other person.
- Allow this incident to stand between you or hinder the personal relationship.
- Allow it to cause bitterness.

Some conflict requires negotiating. We want to give God glory and not be looking out for only our own interests but rather look for solutions that mutually benefit everyone involved. A biblical approach to negotiation may be summarized in five basic steps, which can be referred to as the PAUSE principle.

- **Prepare** (pray get the facts, seek godly counsel, develop options)
- **Affirm relationships** (show genuine concern and respect for others)
- **Understand interests** (identify others' concerns, desires, needs, limitations, or fears)
- **Search for creative solutions** (prayerful brainstorming)
- **Evaluate options objectively and reasonably** (evaluate, don't argue)

Enduring

"If your brother or sister sins, 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." Matthew 18:15-20

This passage gives us a biblical process to follow with fellow believers. The process takes a private to more public approach. If you can not overlook the offense, you talk to the person or the people involved first. If an understanding can not be reached, you may need to add more prayer support and bring in one or two more believers to meet with you and the other person. If the problem is still not resolved, you may have to widen your community of believers that will help you resolve the matter.

God does not measure success by the outcome of a conflict but by your obedience. You are not responsible for other people's actions. If a situation is not resolved, you should continue to seek a biblical solution.

"Starting a quarrel is like breaching a dam;
so drop the matter before a dispute breaks out." Proverbs 17:14

Not all conflict is easily solved in one conversation and can continue to go on. Sometimes it may even mean knowing when it is time to reconvene rather than quarreling. It is also helpful to follow five principles for overcoming evil, which are described in Romans 12:14-21.

- Control your tongue; “Bless those who curse you.”
- Seek godly advisors; identify with others, and do not become isolated.
- Keep doing what is right (1 Peter 2:12, 15; 3:15-16)
- Recognize your limits; instead of retaliating, stay within proper biblical channels.
- Use the ultimate weapon: deliberate focused love (John 3:16, Luke 6:27-31)

Unity

As believers we have been commissioned to make other believers.

“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” Matthew 28:18-19

As a staff we are working together for the same mission.

“Crossroads Community Church exists to meet people where they are and help them take their next steps with Christ.”

“As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called.” Ephesians 4:1-4

Paul tells us in Ephesians that we are to make every effort to be in unity. It is our job as believers and as staff members to make every effort to be at peace with our coworkers, our volunteers, church members, and our community. We will look at conflict as an opportunity to grow in Christ as individuals and collectively.

This document was adapted from Watermark Church's "Field Guide to Conflict" and from Ken Sande's book "The Peacemaker: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict."