



*Full Board Training—***WORKSHOP 3: Conflict Resolution**

PARTICIPANT'S GUIDE

RELEVANCE: Conflict in life and among a ministry team is not a matter of *if* conflict will happen, but *when* it will happen. Wise leaders will recognize this reality and provide ongoing training on conflict resolution. Scripture provides principles and examples for leaders to follow when conflict arises. This training module follows the trajectory of the power of a leader's words (Proverbs), to the biblical model for dealing with conflict (Matthew 18), to viewing conflict as an opportunity for growth (Acts 6).

CONTEXT: This workshop is number 3 of 4 that comprise the Annual Core Training, one-day event in the PWOC LDP. Workshops 3 and 4 are meant to be presented back-to-back for the PWOC board.

TIME: 90 minutes

INTRODUCTION (5 minutes)

Conflict in life and among a PWOC board is not a matter of *if* conflict will happen, but *when* conflict will happen. We want to be wise leaders who recognize this reality and live out the PWOC motto, "We are workers together for Christ." As leaders, we have the power to encourage or to discourage, to promote peace or to promote conflict. We can make the choice to take offense, or we can choose to overlook offense. As part of a PWOC leadership team, we wield influence, and our words are the currency of that influence.

- **Discuss:** In a small group of 3 or 4 people, share an example of a time when a positive word from someone made a difference in your life and leadership.

Words spoken at the right time are like gold apples in a silver setting.

Proverbs 25:11 (CEB)



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1. THE POWER OF A LEADER’S WORDS (10 minutes)

Focus: Words have power to encourage or discourage. A leader’s words are her currency for influence.

Conflict Resolution: Video #1 (8:33)

- The average person speaks between 16,000 and 20,000 words per day.¹ That is a lot of words to not be intentional about how they are used!
- Words are like living _____; they are capable of growing, changing, spreading, and influencing the world in many ways. The influence may be direct or indirect through others as they carry emotional weight and meaning. This is especially true for someone in leadership.

Words are like eggs dropped from great heights; you can no more call them back than ignore the mess they leave when they fall. - Jodi Picoult, *Salem Falls*

- Examples from Scripture on the Power of Words:
 - Genesis 1
 - Isaiah 55:11
 - Hebrews 4:12
 - Psalm 119:105
 - Matthew 4:4
 - Proverbs 12:18
 - Proverbs 15:11
 - Proverbs 18:21
 - 1 Peter 3:15-16
 - Luke 6:45

“Words are the currency of relationship.” -Brenda Pace

- *May these words of my mouth and this meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer (Psalm 19:14).*

My Notes:

¹ <https://ubrp.arizona.edu/study-finds-no-difference-in-the-amount-men-and-women-talk/#:~:text=On%20average%2C%20women%20speak%2016%2C215,speak%2015%2C669%20words%20per%20day> (accessed June 2, 2021).



ACTIVITY 1: THE POWER OF WORDS—PROVERBS (10 minutes)

➤ **Make a list:** Work with your same small group. Read the Old Testament Proverbs and make a list of Positive and Negative things you learn about the power of words from these sayings.

- *The wise in heart accepts commands, but a chattering fool comes to ruin (Proverbs 10:8, NIV).*
- *Whoever derides their neighbor has no sense, but the one who has understanding holds their tongue (Proverbs 11:12).*
- *The words of the reckless pierce like swords, but the tongue of the wise brings healing (Proverbs 12:18).*
- *Those who guard their lips preserve their lives, but those who speak rashly will come to ruin (Proverbs 13:3).*
- *A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger (Proverbs 15:1).*
- *The soothing tongue is a tree of life, but a perverse tongue crushes the spirit (Proverbs 15:4).*
- *Gracious words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones (Proverbs 16:24).*
- *Those who guard their mouths and their tongues keep themselves from calamity (Proverbs 21:23).*

POSITIVE	NEGATIVE



11. CAN WE TALK? (30 minutes)

Focus: Conflict is unavoidable in team ministry. An effective leader will not neglect crucial conversations but will address conflict quickly and face to face in order to promote unity.

➤ *Discuss:* What words do you think of when you hear the word *conflict*?

Conflict is: “A struggle of _____.”²

➤ *Take a Walk:* Using this as a working definition, take a five-minute walk, in a group of 2 or 3 (working with a new partner/group), to brainstorm the primary issues that can cause conflict on a team. Your group will have the chance to share your ideas.

Conflict Resolution: Video #2 (10:26)

The issues that cause conflict on a leadership team will vary. Most likely they will fall under the categories of:

- **Goals:** Conflict may result because of differing goals or _____ among team members.
- **Miscommunication:** Conflict may result because a leader does not explain or identify expectations.
- **Personality:** Conflict may result because there is a lack of _____ between two people or an inability to find an effective way to relate to another person on the team.
- **Resources:** Conflict may result from competition over scarce resources, or that the allocation of resources seems unfair.
- **Styles:** Conflict may result from differing communication and _____ styles.
- **Values:** Conflict is often not just a differing of opinions, but a differing of values.

² Chris Adams, *Transformed Lives* (Nashville: Lifeway Press, 1999), 172.



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Non-negotiables when it comes to conflict:

- 1) **Address conflict quickly*** *see Conflict Considerations below*
- 2) **Address conflict face to face** (when possible)

Matthew 18:15-17 (NIV): *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.*

- This passage is not about broken and damaged relationships; it is about guarding and keeping relationships.

In Matthew 18:10-12 Jesus talks about a shepherd going to look for the one sheep that is lost. The ninety-nine were important, but the one that wandered away was worth search and rescue. Just like this shepherd, in ministry we must always operate with a missional mindset, looking at the situation with redemption as the goal.

In their book *Leading Women Who Wound*, Sue Edwards and Kelly Matthews declare we can become “skilled peacemakers” if we follow the steps Jesus taught in Matthew 18:15-17. Here’s how they break down the steps:

Peacemaking Step 1: Go and Show

If your sister sins, go and show her her fault when the two of you are alone. If she listens to you, you have regained your sister.

- This directive is given to believers with the initiative taken by the one who is offended. If someone wounds you, you are to go to her.

***Conflict Considerations:** Author Denise Van Eck encourages these considerations before a crucial confrontation:

- **Pray.** Ask the Lord to help you prepare for the conversation and confrontation.
- **Clarify your purpose.** Do you have a need for everyone to know you are in charge? Is there a need to get your way?
- **Begin with empathy.** Empathy opens a pathway for understanding to occur.
- **Is this a matter of taste or truth?** Are you upset about a situation because you don’t like it, or is there something that is truly wrong and needs to be corrected?
- **Clarify the issue.** Try to narrow down the central issue to one word. Is the issue trust? Confidence? Competence?
- **Be honest with yourself.** Have you contributed to the conflict? Is the issue that bothers you in another person something you see in yourself?



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- **Look ahead to future consequences.** What will be the result if this issue is *not* addressed? Will you be a part of shaping the future in a positive way by this confrontation?
- **Let go of control.** Remember you cannot control what another person thinks, feels, or believes.
- **Initiate the conversation.** Be the grown up and act.³ Go as soon as there is a question or concern.
- **Keep the circle small.** Contain the issue so it does not become a bigger issue. The more people involved the more challenging the resolution.

Peacemaking Step 2: Take Witnesses

But if she does not listen, take one or two others with you, so that at the testimony of two or three witnesses every matter may be established.

- Witnesses can provide emotional safety, accountability, and insight as they listen and observe. Agree together (with the person being confronted) who the witnesses will be with the goal to bring in people who are trusted and will be helpful.

Peacemaking Step 3: Take it to the Church

If she refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. If she refuses to listen to the church, treat her like a Gentile or a tax collector.

- Edwards and Matthews suggest that if we follow the instructions of Jesus, no more than ___ or ___ people should be aware of the conflict.
- If the issue remains unresolved, it must be confronted by leadership. In the case of PWOC, that would be the PWOC Chaplain Sponsor.
- The challenge as we lead in our home, ministry context, and community is to learn another language: The language of peace and resolution.
- Ephesians 4:3 admonishes us to *Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.*

➤ **Reflect:** Take a moment to practice self-examination. Put a plus sign “+” by any of the Peacemaking Steps or Conflict Considerations listed in this section that come naturally to you. Put a minus sign “-” by the Peacemaking Step(s) or Conflict Consideration(s) that are most difficult for you. If you have extra time, use it for contemplative prayer.

³ Denise Van Eck, “The Conversation You Dread,” *Leadership Journal* XXV, no. 4 (Fall 2004): 39. Used with permission per fair use standards.



ACTIVITY 2: CONFLICT RESOLUTION SCENARIOS (15 minutes)

- *Apply Your Knowledge:* Work in groups of 2-3. Take about 5 minutes to consider the conflict resolution scenario assigned to your group in light of your personal reflections regarding what comes naturally to you and what is most difficult for you in handling conflict. Answer the questions below. Your group will have the chance to share your ideas.
1. Based on your personal tendencies, how do you think you would react in this situation?
 2. What consequences would follow? Would your action/inaction bring healing or further damage?
 3. Do you need to shift your perspective or approach on conflict resolution? How?

Conflict Resolution Scenarios

Scenario 1: Your PWOC President is extremely extroverted and has to verbally process everything. Board meetings are frustrating and always go overtime. The decisions that are made are often later reversed, making the meetings feel like a total waste of time. The board is frustrated, and you see cliques forming. It’s not like there is sin involved, and maybe the President can’t help the way she is, so should you say something? What do you do?

Scenario 2: One of the women in your PWOC body is becoming well known for her public outbursts filled with frustration and anger over a variety of topics. She feels justified in her behavior and sees it as “being genuine” rather than “being fake” like everyone else. You see some women in the PWOC body avoiding her, while a few others are beginning to behave like her. It doesn’t take much to set her off, and the atmosphere of your PWOC morning is shifting. What do you do?

Scenario 3: You are the 1VP of Spiritual Life and are in the process of choosing studies for the Fall semester. You have wisely chosen to build a team who will prayerfully help you make selections. There is a particular study that you feel called to offer, but there is a sharp divide on your team. One woman is so strongly opposed to the study that she states she will no longer attend PWOC if the study is offered. You are at an impasse. What do you do?



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Scenario 4: Your ZVP of Programs wants “all hands on deck” for the setup, execution, and cleanup of the next Program. She asked you to bring several items for decoration. It takes you quite a while to assemble the items, plus a few trips to the store to supplement what you do not have. When you get to the chapel to help with setup, you see several of the items you were asked to bring already there and in use. You are told your items are not needed, yet you invested time and money and feel hurt. You don’t want to be petty—it’s just stuff. Do you say something? Do you let it go? What do you do?

Scenario 5: You are the Outreach Coordinator on the board and have a powerful vision for how to reach your community for Christ. Your ideas require financial support. When you present your plans to the President, you are told there is no money for outreach, but you happen to know from a private conversation with the Financial Liaison that several thousand dollars has been allocated to PWOC. Is the President lying? Why would she say there’s no money if there is? Is she against outreach? Against you? What do you do?

Scenario 6: You are the Praise & Worship leader. One of the women on your team thinks it is wrong to sing anything but hymns. She still participates in worship practice and sings on the team...so long as it is a hymn. Though she is mostly respectful, you have heard some sharp side-remarks and recently overheard her talking to a friend, expressing her doubts about your leadership, specifically because you choose songs “from the radio” that are not appropriate (in her opinion). You understand that PWOC encompasses a wide variety of beliefs and perspectives. Should you address this? What do you do?

Scenario 7: You are a detail-oriented PWOC President trying to work with the PWOC Chaplain Sponsor who is a global, big-picture, visionary sort of thinker, who wants to be involved in the decision-making process. As you are trying to make plans for your year, you are finding it hard to nail down specifics on calendar, budget, curriculum, and theme. Your Chaplain wants to keep options open, but you need some concrete plans to move forward. Your board is beginning to become impatient with your vague answers on all these topics. You don’t want to badmouth your Chaplain, but his/her indecision is impeding progress and creating tension. What do you do?

III. CONFLICT IS INEVITABLE, BUT COMBAT IS OPTIONAL (20 minutes)

FOCUS: Conflict does not have to be something from which we shy away from or fear. We can learn to use it as an opportunity for positive growth. In the words of Max Lucado, “Conflict is inevitable, but combat is optional.” How we respond to conflict and how we resolve it will limit or enable our success as a leadership team.

Conflict Resolution Video #3 (8:15)

Conflict is inevitable, but combat is optional.

- Max Lucado

- **Acts 6:1-7:** *In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Hellenistic Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, “It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. Brothers and sisters, choose*



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seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word.”

This proposal pleased the whole group. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; also Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism. They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them.

So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith.

- Conflict offers many opportunities for a PWOC leadership team. The tension can lead us toward identifying needed change. Working through conflict can be the catalyst for more productive PWOC ministry.
- When we steward conflict well, we invest in the discipleship of others, which is the primary purpose of the PWOC Aims. The world can see the character of Christ at work in His people. Above all, God is glorified as we work together for Christ in the pursuit of unity.

My Notes:

- *Mark & Journal:* What impacts you the most in this paragraph? Why? Mark what is most significant to you, then journal about it.

Conflict is actually an opportunity. First Corinthians is a long conflict resolution letter. At the end of chapter 10, Paul sums up by saying, “...whatever you do, do all to the glory of God, not for your own good but for others. Follow my example.” Paul says to look at conflict as God looks at it. In every conflict, He has given you an opportunity to exalt Him. He wants you to behave so differently that people take notice and are impressed. It is an opportunity to grow in Christlikeness. If we embrace conflict as a primary means of sanctification—it’s not something we go looking for, but when it comes—we slow down and say, ‘Lord, if nothing else in this situation, refine me.’⁴

My Thoughts:

⁴ The Leadership Forum, “Keeping Conflict Healthy”, *Leadership Journal* XXV, no. 4 (Fall 2004): 21.



Conflict Resolution Video #4: Conclusion (4:07)

...the Bible teaches that we should see conflict neither as an inconvenience nor as an occasion to force our will on others, but rather as an opportunity to demonstrate the love and power of God in our lives. –Ken Sande, Peacemaker

➤ *Responsive Reading:*

Leader: When we are tempted to take sides rather than work together,

ALL: Jesus, help us live in peace.

Leader: When we are tempted to hold grudges,

ALL: Jesus, help us live in peace.

Leader: When we are tempted to gossip or be malicious,

ALL: Jesus, help us live in peace.

Leader: When we would rather complain than work toward a solution,

ALL: Jesus, help us live in peace.

Leader: When we find ourselves adding to disorder or division,

ALL: Jesus, help us live in peace.

Leader: In the inevitable misunderstandings and miscommunication we will face,

ALL: Jesus, help us live in peace.

ALL: Give us courage to admit our wrongs without being defensive.

Give us determination to assume the best about others.

Teach us to imitate you, God

To be gracious

To be compassionate

To be slow to anger

To be rich in love.

Help us make every effort to stay unified in the Spirit through the bond of peace. Amen.⁵

⁵ “Congregational Reading about Unity”, Rethink Worship: Creative Ideas for Your Services, January 14, 2013,. <http://www.rethinkworship.com/congregational-reading-about-unity/>, accessed June 2, 2021.



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