

## **Conflict Management**

### DEFINITION

Dictionary:	“The opposition or simultaneous functioning of mutually exclusive impulses, desires, or tendencies.”
Latin:	“To strike together.”
Speed Leas:	“Conflict happens when two pieces of matter try to occupy the same space at the same time.”
Larry McSwain:	“Conflict is a situation in which two or more human beings desire goals which they perceive as being attainable by one or the other but not by both.”
Composite:	“Conflict is the tension that exists because of real or perceived differences over resolving issues or problems.”

## **GENERAL UNDERSTANDINGS ABOUT CONFLICT**

### **GOALS OF CONFLICT MANAGEMENT**

1. Make clear decisions.
2. Increase tolerance for differences.
3. Reduce aggressive behavior.
4. Reduce passive behavior.
5. Reduce manipulative behavior.

### **TRUTHS ABOUT CONFLICT**

1. Conflict is inevitable.
2. Conflict is neutral.
3. We need to confront a conflict as soon as possible rather than denying or ignoring it.
4. You cannot have healthy change without conflict.
5. If you don't manage the rate of change appropriately, you will produce destructive conflict.
6. The pastor's leadership style is a key factor in whether a conflict is constructive or destructive.
7. God is **NOT** the author of chaos but the provider of qualities that lead to peace.
8. Prior unresolved church conflict exists as a key ingredient in most current church conflict situations.

9. When persons grow spiritually and emotionally they are less likely to be the initiator of destructive conflict.
10. We need to pray more and talk less about issues for church approval. We should not seek an answer from human reason but from the revelation of God's will.

## **CONSTRUCTIVE CONFLICT**

This refers to a problem solving process, which results in a positive impact on the ability of the congregation to solve the problem and also increases Christian growth and church fellowship.

1. Members feel confident in dealing with their differences.
2. The decision-making processes are fair and exercised impartially.
3. Members behave themselves in an appropriate Christian manner.
4. People are willing to cooperate with the leadership and each other.
5. Their main focus is on a common purpose.

\*Adapted from Speed Leas

## **DESTRUCTIVE CONFLICT**

This refers to the outcome of a problem solving process, which results in a negative impact on the ability of the people to solve the problem and also hinders Christian growth and fellowship.

Bob Sheffield

1. Members are unsure whether their relationships can stand the strain of their differences.
2. Members are rejected by some people who once were their friends.
3. People use words with violent endings.
4. People feel a sense of loss of control.
5. It seems that others want to split the church down the middle.
6. The membership loses sight of God's purpose for the church.

\*Adapted by Speed Leas

## **CAUSES OF FRICTION**

- Stress
- Confusion
- Power
- Fact or rate of change
- Communication difficulties
- Congregational differences
- Unmet needs within the congregation
- Fear
- World View
- Decision Making Style

## **LEVELS/TYPES OF CONFLICT**

1. Problem to solve-solve the problem.
2. Disagreement-self protection.
3. Contest-Make sure your side wins.
4. Polarized fighting-Break the relationship by leaving or getting some others to leave, also hurting, punishing or humiliating the others.
5. Obstinate factions-Destroy the other.
6. Suppression/denial-post conflict stress.