

Conflict Resolution in Youth Ministry

Followers often question the decisions of a leader, and that inevitably leads to conflict. How the leader responds in this challenging environment will define his or her ability to lead. Jesus taught on the subject of conflict resolution numerous times. He wanted His disciples to be able to relate to each other in a healthy, God-honoring way. In Matthew 18:15–20 Jesus teaches the correct way to deal with personal disputes. Conflict is a constant struggle for leaders. Resolving conflict is an important leadership skill.

This sheet can be used by a youth worker, student leader or youth ministry staff to reveal and resolve any conflicts within the ministry. Use the first question and blanks below to answer how you personally handle conflict currently. Then fill in the remaining blanks with your thoughts about how you will resolve any existing problems or struggles you see in the youth ministry.

How do you currently react to most conflict?

The ability to resolve conflict in a healthy way is vital to being effective as a leader. Being in leadership requires making tough calls and uncomfortable compromises. Conflict is unavoidable for leaders. Resolving conflict separates good leaders from great leaders. Some leaders buy into the myth that conflict must be avoided at all costs because it is scary and unproductive. The reality is that conflict cannot always be avoided. When properly addressed, conflict can be positive and productive. Conflict resolution is the leadership skill of being able to settle disagreements in a healthy, constructive manner.

Identify a conflict currently in the youth ministry and write it down. Include as many details as possible.

How has this conflict been dealt with so far?

Leaders must face and resolve conflict with three key requirements:

1. Leaders must demonstrate confidence when confronted with conflict. Their followers will quickly sense any doubt or reluctance on the part of the leader, and will lose faith in the leader's ability to lead.
2. Leaders must demonstrate compassion. When conflict arises, great leaders remember that the enemy is not the person causing the conflict. The real enemy is usually something else, like fear. Conflict is based on people's incomplete or inaccurate understanding of the situation, or an unmet need in their lives.
3. Leaders must secure the consent or commitment of the people involved in the conflict. Great leaders listen to all sides of a dispute, render a fair and impartial decision, and explain the rationale for the decision to everyone.

**Apply these three requirements to your current conflict in the youth ministry.
How can you:**

Demonstrate confidence when confronted about this conflict?

Demonstrate compassion?

Secure the consent or commitment of the people involved?

An area of life that often brings conflict is our relationships with other people. Answer the questions below in order to develop a better understanding on how to apply conflict resolution principles to real-life situations.

Think about the relationships in this conflict. Identify one relationship that has been broken by this conflict. Describe the situation.

What do you need to do to resolve this conflict?

How will dealing with the conflict in a healthy way help you to be a more effective leader?

What is one specific step you can take to grow in the area of conflict?

*"Difficulties are meant to rouse, not discourage. The human spirit is to grow strong by conflict."
William Ellery Channing*