

HOW TO HANDLE CONFLICT

Unfortunately, from time to time, some conflict may arise in the group. Whether it's between two other members, or you and a group member just don't seem to click, or there's always disagreement between a few people.

Whatever situation may arise, we want you to feel prepared to handle it.

The first thing is to always remain as the calming presence if conflict arises, it is best to keep your cool and remain relaxed. It sounds a little obvious and maybe easier-said-than-done if someone is yelling at me, but it will help set the tone for the group.

“Look at it this way. If someone has a hundred sheep and one of them wanders off, doesn't he leave the ninety-nine and go after the one? And if he finds it, doesn't he make far more over it than over the ninety-nine who stay put? Your Father in heaven feels the same way. He doesn't want to lose even one of these simple believers. If a fellow believer hurts you, go and tell him—work it out between the two of you. If he listens, you've made a friend. If he won't listen, take one or two others along so that the presence of witnesses will keep things honest, and try again. If he still won't listen, tell the church. If he won't listen to the church, you'll have to start over from scratch, confront him with the need for repentance, and offer again God's forgiving love. “Take this most seriously: A yes on earth is yes in heaven; a no on earth is no in heaven. What you say to one another is eternal. I mean this. When two of you get together on anything at all on earth and make a prayer of it, my Father in heaven goes into action. And when two or three of you are together because of me, you can be sure that I'll be there.” **MATTHEW 18:12-20**

One successful way for conflict resolution is modeled in Matthew 18 and outlined here:

STEP 1:

Talk privately with the person(s) involved in the conflict. It's great to avoid addressing the person in front of the group, addressing in front of the group adds many factors of discomfort and vulnerability. If you notice things getting heated, you can calmly ask if the person could speak to you outside or in a different room. Check in with them, see what's going on. Often if a person is stirring up conflict, something deeper is going on, chances are they are not just an awful person. Maybe things aren't going well at home or at work and they are lashing out in other places because of it. Affirming words come in handy here too. Statements like “Hey, you add so much to the group every single week, you have amazing insight and wisdom, what's going on? We're a group; we can't be arguing with each other like this.” “We all love you.” Just things to reassure they are a valued part of the group, and that you care. See if they are open to resolve it, work it out and move past it.

STEP 2:

If they continue to stir up conflict after having a personal conversation with them, perhaps one or two members from the group that they get along with could all have the conversation together. Again, not in front of everyone to avoid the feeling of being ambushed. Assure the person that we as a group and a family have to work these things out.

STEP 3:

If this still isn't working, the conflict will not be resolved, the issue is too big, and the group is uncomfortable and cannot work it out, connect with your Area Leader. This may be a good time to ask the person or people to take a break from group for a while. An area leader can get them connected with a minister to see what is going on.

STEP 4:

Continue, as a leader and a group, in prayer and love for that person. Avoid gossip and slander against that person. Let them know they are welcome back anytime.

We hope this isn't too intimidating for you; it's a tough and uncomfortable thing to handle. The second something like this comes up, reach out to your Area Leader and just let them know what's going on. This is not something that always happens, but we still would like you to be prepared for it if it does.