

SERIES - RELATIONSHIP GOALS**Week 2 - Conflict Goals****BIG IDEA**

Conflict is inevitable; how we respond is our choice. Conflict is not something to avoid; it's an opportunity to follow Jesus, the peacemaker.

SCRIPTURE

Matthew 5:9, Matthew 5:23-24, Ephesians 4:15

ICE BREAKER

How would you describe the way you handle conflict? What movie or TV character handles conflict the most like you?"

OPENING THOUGHT

Many people are poor at resolving conflict. Christians are no exception to this. There are at least two reasons for this: the first relates to wrong beliefs about peacemaking, and the second relates to a lack of training and equipping in this area (From Peter & Geri Scazzaro, *Emotionally Healthy Relationships*)

BIBLE DISCUSSION

1. Read Matthew 5:9. What stood out to you? What do you think is the difference between a peacekeeper and a peacemaker?
2. Read Ephesians 4:14-16. What do you notice about this passage? How do you think speaking the truth in love is a reflection of our maturity?
3. Read Matthew 5:23-24. How does it influence your understanding of peacemaking verses peacekeeping?

LIFE APPLICATION

4. How did your parents/family navigate conflict? How do you think those examples influenced you?
5. In her book *Fiercehearted*, Holley Gerth wrote,

"Nice comes from fear. Kindness comes from love. Niceness says, "I want to please you." Kindness says, "I want the highest good for both of us." Niceness says, "I will tell you what you want to hear." Kindness says, "I will speak the truth with grace."

What do you think she means by nice comes from fear, but kindness comes from love? How can "nice" be destructive to a relationship?

6. Holley Gerth goes on to say,

"Jesus was kind, but he was not nice. He spoke the truth from his heart. He dared to disappoint people. He obeyed God instead of trying to make everyone happy."

Why is it so difficult to be kind, to speak the truth in love, to navigate conflict in healthy ways?

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7. Why do you think it's important to God that we navigate conflict well?
8. What strategies do you have for navigating conflict in healthy ways? If you don't have any strategies, how might your relationships improve by having them?
9. In this week's message we were given three strategies to help you move toward healthy conflict. Take some time to address each one:
 - **"I notice...and I prefer.":** This method will provide a way to navigate minor issues (before they become huge issues) in a kind, clear and respectful way by expressing a complaint that includes a possible solution. Another example is: "I noticed you left the towel on the bathroom floor and I'd prefer you hang it on the hook." How might this strategy help navigate conflict?
 - **"Puzzled":** Instead of assuming you know what is going on in someone else's head or making a story up about their motives in your head, calmly and respectfully say, "I am puzzled..." Example... I am puzzled as to why you didn't return my call. Our assumptions influence the way we navigate conflict.
 - **"I feel ____ when you ____":** When the issue is a bit more emotional than a towel on the floor or a missed phone call, the best strategy is to state the problem (pick a concrete behavior that is not a strong emotional issue for you) then express what you're feeling. Example... "I notice you bring your phone to the table. I feel unimportant when you look at your phone during dinner".

CHALLENGE

Take some time with the group to practice these strategies before you leave. At first, they will seem awkward as any new skill is, but commit to implementing them over the next week. During the next week, identify a conflict that is going on in a relationship and make a plan. Choose a strategy to address it. Conflict is inevitable, normal, and necessary, and healthy conflict is the way to becoming a peacemaker.