

HOW TO USE THIS RESOURCE

Option 1: Use this in a Group Setting

1. Follow along in this Facilitator Guide and you'll find instructions, timeframes, and extra notes just for you. The Student Handout is a separate file. Be sure to make copies for each student in your group.
2. Make sure you have what you need for the optional Live It Out activity.

Option 2: Use this in a Mentoring Relationship, or for an individual student

1. Make a copy of the Student Handout and give it (or send it) to the student. All the instructions he or she needs are in that handout.
2. Skip the Live It Out activity near the end of this lesson.

✓ OBJECTIVE:

Christ-followers are called to live in unity, demonstrating peace and forgiveness. Yet often conflict defines our relationships more than these things. In the book of Matthew, Jesus lays out some clear steps for solving personal conflicts, but a leader's responsibilities go one step further. Leaders play a role in solving (and preventing) the conflicts that appear in their sightlines. Leaders protect unity, build people up, and stick up for the run down. This lesson will help students identify the kinds of things that protect unity and peace so they can apply them to areas of conflict (or even potential conflict) in their communities.

? OPENING QUESTIONS:

2–3 minutes

- What's your first reaction when you face conflict with someone?
- As a leader, what's your role in resolving conflict amongst your team members or people you are leading?

Facilitator Note: If your group of students is small enough, you can have each person share their answer. For larger groups, have them pair and share to answer these questions.

📖 BIBLE BACKGROUND:

20–25 minutes

Read the following together:

“You know you’re involved in this church when you have a list of people you don’t really like.” These are not the kind of words you expect to hear from a pastor at the lunch-for-new-people event. But they are often true. When you are really committed, passionately involved, deeply invested, there will be tension. Some people will drive you nuts, and you’ll probably drive them nuts, too. And that’s good. It means you care, you’re passionate, and you have a goal or a mission in sight. The problem is, we are all so different. Some people value relationships more than the task. Other people only see the end goal and run over everyone to get there. Some are thinkers; others are doers. The good news is, God made everyone different. The bad news is, God made everyone different. So if you’re working with people toward a goal you actually care about, you’re going to run into some conflict.

Think of all the different types of teams you are on throughout the week. Your family is a team, your friends, your church youth group, your group project for class, your student leadership team—and there are probably others. Now look at the words below and circle any that describe actions that have taken place in one of your teams.

Deserting	Dominating	Frustration	Gossiping	Bullying	Lobbying
Excluding	Holding grudges	Keeping records of wrongs	Unforgiving	Giving the cold shoulder	Anger
Argument	Quitting	Blaming	Avoidance	Judgment	Isolation

Each of these words is a sign of conflict that can either fester and sabotage your team and mission, or conflict that be resolved and actually make your team stronger than it was before.

Personal Conflict Resolution

What if you are the cause of a conflict with someone?

Read Matthew 5:23–24.

- Stop what you're doing.
- Go to the person immediately.
- Ask for forgiveness.
- Serve God.

What if someone else causes conflict with you?

Read Matthew 18:15–17.

- Go alone to the person and discuss the matter.
- If the person agrees, reconcile.
- If not, come back with two or three others (fair and neutral people).
- If the person agrees, reconcile.
- If not, bring the matter to someone older and wiser in the church (like a small group leader or youth pastor).
- If the person refuses to reconcile, have nothing more to do with the individual.

As a leader, you have twice the responsibility for conflict resolution. If it's personal (involving you and someone else), God laid out a clear plan for you to follow (check out the box above). If it's on your team or within your sightlines, as a leader you're supposed to facilitate a resolution. Leaders are peacemakers, team builders, and unifiers. Take a look at what the Bible says about this.

Facilitator Note: Matthew 18 is perhaps the best-known Scripture passage dealing with confronting other Christ-followers in love. If there is interpersonal conflict in the group you are leading, encourage those students to go to each other humbly and ask for forgiveness. While it's important to focus on the leadership implications of students living as peacemakers, in unity, and resolving group conflict, that can't be done until the leader resolves their own personal offenses and conflicts.

As you read the verses below, make a list (in your own words) of the things these verses say to do in order to deal with conflict. Write your answers in the "Do This" and "Not That" columns. *For example: "Answer gently or patiently. Don't be short or harsh with people."*

Proverbs 15:1, "A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger."

James 1:19, "Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger."

Do This

Not That

Romans 12:16–18, “Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited. Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.”

Matthew 5:9, “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.”

Galatians 6:1a, “Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently.”

Titus 3:9–11, “But avoid foolish controversies and genealogies and arguments and quarrels about the law, because these are unprofitable and useless. Warn a divisive person once, and then warn him a second time. After that, have nothing to do with him.”

Matthew 5:44, “But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.”

Hebrews 12:15, “See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.”

Ephesians 4:29–5, “Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.”

Luke 10:27, “He answered, ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind,’ and, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’”

Isaiah 1:17, “Learn to do right! Seek justice, encourage the oppressed. Defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the case of the widow.”

Do This

Not That

Discuss:

- What difference would it make if the things on this list described you whenever you face conflict?
- What items in the “Do This” column are hardest for you to do in the midst of conflict? Why?
- As a leader, when do you face the most conflict in your team?
- How will you make sure to live out of the “Do This” column during those times?

LIVE IT OUT: Extremes Line Up (For Use in a Group Setting)

15-20 minutes

What you will need:

- Students in groups of 5 to 10.
- A watch or something to keep time with.

Objective:

The goal of this activity is to create an environment in which the pressure is on and student have to make subjective decisions quickly. This naturally invites conflict. However, as the team works through each decision, they have a chance to demonstrate the “Do This” column over the “Not That” column from earlier.

Instructions:

Say something like:

You and your team are going to have to work really fast and stay really honest. I'm going to give you guys a series of extremes and you'll need to line up according to where you fit on the spectrum. You'll be timed and will need to work quickly to get in order.

Here are a few practice rounds:

1. Line up from youngest (on the left) to oldest (on the right) in under a minute. *This should be really easy for students. Keep time for them, and let them know how long it took.*
2. Now line up from shortest (on the left) to tallest (on the right) in less than a minute. *Again this will be easy. Let them know their time when they are done.*

Now for the real challenges:

Keep time for students. When they are finished, ask if they all agree that they are in the right order. If yes, move to the next one. If not, ask why not? And give them one more minute to rearrange. Do your best to keep the pressure on by reminding them how many seconds they have left.

Don't let students “tie” with each other. The line must be single file.

1. Line up from the loudest (on the left) to the quietest (on the right) in less than two minutes.
2. Line up from the most competitive (on the left) to the most collaborative (on the right) in less than two minutes.
3. Line up from most driven by tasks (doers, on the left) to most driven by relationships (relators, on the right).

Debrief:

- What was hard about this activity? What problems did you face?
- How did you react to the problems you faced?
- How hard was it to live out the “Do This” column from earlier and prevent or resolve conflict? Why?
- What can you do to improve the way you deal with conflict moving forward?

APPLY IT:

2–3 minutes

Based on your answers and what you’ve learned from this study, how can you lead from the “Do This” column this week?

Be specific:

What are you going to do?

When are you going to do it?

Is there someone who can keep you accountable?

Facilitator Note: Whenever students make applications, challenge them to be specific. It’s one thing to say, “I’m going to trust God more.” The truth is, our students won’t really know if they did this, or if they grew in trust over the week. It’s another thing to say, “Every morning this week before I eat breakfast, I’m going to tell God that today is his and that I trust him, and I’m going to ask him to give me the strength to replace worries with trust.” Challenge your students to answer the questions under the “Be Specific” section. You can even have them pair up, share their applications, and ask for accountability from their partner. Also, make sure students choose applications appropriate to their maturity levels. One student may be deeply challenged by a certain application, while another student wouldn’t get much out of it.

PARTING THOUGHTS:

“Don’t be afraid of opposition. Remember, a kite rises against; not with; the wind.” —Hamilton Mabie

“Whenever you’re in conflict with someone, there is one factor that can make the difference between damaging your relationship and deepening it. That factor is attitude.” —William James

PRAY:

When students are finished making their applications, spend some time praying as a group about being peacemakers and resolving conflict. Ask God for unity in this group.