

RCCG Family Praise Chapel Bible study 2020

Topic: What do you do when worship turns to war? Managing conflict within the church: James 3:18-4:1-12

Conflict is something that everyone wants to avoid. Conflict is also something that everyone realizes is inevitable. Ever since the fall of man, people have been fighting with one another for a countless number of reasons.

What is conflict? “Conflict is a difference in opinion or purpose that frustrates someone else’s opinion or purpose.” “Conflict in the congregation is a situation in which two or more members or factions struggle aggressively over what is or appears to be mutually exclusive beliefs, values or assumed powers or goals.”

It is important to identify conflict when it arises and alleviate it to encourage growth. To do this, you must be able to recognize and be aware of what causes conflict. *Spiritual issues* are emotional, and most churches are made up of people with varying levels of maturity. We come from diverse backgrounds. We view things differently. We sometimes get our feelings hurt, express ourselves badly, get angry with the pastor, feel slighted by the staff, or worry that our opinions aren’t being heard. And don’t forget the Devil! He attends church regularly with a load of firewood and gas to throw at any controversy. **2 Cor 12:20**

What causes conflicts in the church? James asks a question in **4:1**... “where do wars and fights come from among you?” And he answers the question immediately. He said the problem lies with people’s desire for pleasures... I believe that conflict (anywhere it exists) is always a sign of an underlying problem. **James 4:1-6; Gen 4:5-8; I Tim 3:3-6; 3 John 9-12; Prov 13:10 (Luke 22:24; Judges 12:1-6).**

1. **James 4:2-3** – Unsatisfied desire (you lust and do not have – you cannot stop wanting stuff, even when you have); uncontrolled passion or jealousy (you kill and envy and you are not able to obtain); untapped potential (you fight and war, yet you do not have because you do not ask – trying to get things by your own schemes instead of asking God)
2. **Acts 6:1-7 – Growth and unmet needs.** Rapid growth causes a paradigm shift or a focus shift. When this happens, you can commission people to handle basic things. **Change is another area of conflict.** Conflict is always a possibility when change occurs in the organizational structure of the church, change that involves the physical facilities of the church produces the possibility for conflict, and the possibility for conflict also exists when the church membership begins to change. **Unmet needs are another reason for conflict in the church.** There are people who become upset to the point of not coming back to church because they felt, whether rightly or wrongly, that their needs were not being met. This may mean that no one visited them during an illness, not enough attention was given

during a crisis experience, or someone failed to minister to a family member who was a shut-in.

3. **Acts 15:1-15** – Theological differences can cause conflicts in the church. See the many divisions in the church today.
4. **Philosophical differences between godly people – Acts 15.** Paul and Barnabas. There are times when often drastic and often painful decisions have to be made for the sake of the mission.
5. **Personality differences – Phil 4:2-4.** This may require counseling. We must learn to be forbearing.
6. **Use or misuse of power** in the church by pastor, staff, deacons, or members can be very damaging to the church. “When power is used as a manipulative device, a way to dominate people or a situation, and to control a group for selfish purposes, power is being misused.” This can be done by the pastors, deacons, staff, and members of the church. “Sometimes a congregation allows the power to reside in the hands of one group or one person. At other times power is simply assumed without formal or informal permission by anyone...Just as damaging, however, is the person who assumes power and then by whatever means available seeks to keep it.
7. **Diverse membership in the church** is another cause of conflict in the church. Churches have gift differences, age differences, and length of membership differences, but also, we are all just different. Poor communication within the church leads to conflict. Members must learn to communicate with each other and understand what each is saying and meaning.

Types of conflict II Timothy 2:25-26

1. **Internal Conflicts**—This type of conflict is within oneself, such as anger or bitterness
2. **Substantive Conflicts**—Examples of this type of conflict are church budgets, committees, removal of pastor, or other church staff members, church building projects.
3. **Value and Belief Conflicts**—This type of conflict deals with Biblical Doctrine.
4. **Relationship Conflicts**—This type of conflict deals with the heart in the area of lack of forgiveness and making things right with an individual or group.
5. **Information Conflicts**—The way information is given out to staff or the church on any issue
6. **System Conflicts**—This type of conflict is how a church is governed and who is responsible for what.

Is Church Conflict Good or Bad? Someone recently surveyed about 60 pastors regarding how they handle conflict in church. The answers were as follows: talk about it (44%); prayer (25%);

kindness (18%); church discipline (18 %); read Bible (5%); fasting (2%); and run away (2%). Individuals as well as churches have common responses to conflict.

Some of the most typical responses to conflict are the following: 1. Avoiding: “Problem? What problem?” 2. Accommodating: “I give up” (people pleasers) 3. Compromising: “Let’s just split the difference” 4. Competing: “I win; you lose” 5. Collaborating: “You scratch my back, and I’ll scratch yours”. A church is a family and conflict is unavoidable, but how it is handled will determine whether the experience will be positive or negative.

Every pastor and church must struggle with issues, and the question comes, **what issues are worth battling over** – what are the majors and minors? The following are four issues worth battling over in the church: 1. Biblical fidelity. No discounting the teachings of Christ 2. Living out what we believe. Biblical teaching must affect daily lives 3. Our church’s unity. All members must support this, divisiveness is sin 4. Verbal integrity. Remaining truthful in confrontation or conflict.