

Conflict

Dear Facilitator: For several weeks we have been discussing how successful families communicate, support one another, and organize their lives.

This week we are going to focus on conflict. Conflict is inevitable. How do you handle conflict when it comes? Today we will spend some time looking at the conflict between Abram and Lot in Genesis 13.

It might be helpful for you to know what we hope to accomplish through this lesson. Participants will:

1. Identify conflict.
2. Develop strategies to handle conflict.

During the past few lessons, we have made commitment statements. This week's commitment statement is: Conflict is not a sin; how we handle conflict can be a sin.

We pray that God will give you direction and clarity as you prepare the lesson and activities. We hope that the families in your group will grow together in God's love and become a source of friendship and support for one another.

Blessings

Prior to Meeting


Object Lesson:

Watch this video prior to the session and prepare to reenact it for the lesson: Nothing Is Impossible <https://youtu.be/JFyzbMFVf2g>.


Materials needed for the introductory object lesson:

- 8.5 x 11 sheet of paper
- Scissors

Welcome *5 minutes*


 **Say:** Welcome back! I hope it's been a good week for all of you as you have been working diligently on many things that are positively influencing your family.


Last week we spent time talking about growing spiritually as a family.


 **Ask:** Did anyone try something this past week that made a positive difference in your family that you would be willing to share?


Introduction *5 minutes*

 **Say:** I have an 8.5 x 11 sheet of paper.


 **Ask:** Do you think that I can walk through the paper?


 **Say:** It seems impossible, but is it?

 **Do:** Nothing Is Impossible Object Lesson—Stepping Through Paper: <https://youtu.be/JFyzbMFVf2g>.


 **Say:** Sometimes we have fights or disagreements with others, and it feels like we will never be able to fix the situation. It can feel impossible.


However, with the right tools, we can learn how to get through the conflict.

 **Say:** Sometimes we might find that conflict is a serious disagreement or argument between people. Conflict happens all the time with different people. Conflict is inevitable. Romans 3:23 says, “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” It is because of sin that we have conflict; however, as our commitment statement points out, conflict is not a sin—how we handle conflict can be a sin.

 **Say:** Let’s look at an example from Genesis 13.

Read: Genesis 13. (Prior to reading, give a bit of the background of the story, explaining who Abram and Lot are and how they ended up in the predicament.)

 **Ask:** How did Abram handle the conflict? How did Lot? What was the better way to handle it?

 **Say:** The Bible says, in Proverbs 15:1, “A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.” And Proverbs 13:10 says, “Where there is strife, there is pride, but wisdom is found in those who take advice.”

So, what will we be trying to accomplish through this session?

Today’s teaching objectives are to:


1. Identify conflict.
2. Develop strategies to handle conflict.

During the past few lessons, we have made commitment statements. This week’s commitment statement is: Conflict is not a sin; how we handle conflict can be a sin.

Notes

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Family & Table Talk 20 minutes

 **Say:** Identify a time when you had conflict.

1. How did you handle it?
2. Did the conflict go away after you handled it?

After the meal, children are dismissed to their group.

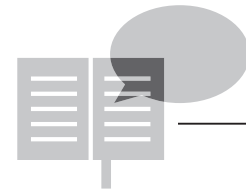
<i>40 minutes</i>	
<h1>Parent Training</h1>	
<i>Engaging the World</i>	CONFLICT

There is conflict in all relationships. The balance between positive and negative interactions is more important than the number of negative interactions/conflicts.

Couples tend to argue in one of four ways. Three of these ways are okay and one is not. First, some couples are volatile, meaning that they have frequent and passionate arguments, but tend to get over arguments quickly and maintain fondness for one another even while they argue. Second, some couples are validating, meaning that they argue politely, considering the other person's point of view while validating the other person's feelings. Third, some couples are avoidant, meaning that they don't argue very often, tend to agree to disagree, and each person tries to resolve many problems on their own. The fourth way of handling conflict is not okay. Couples that are hostile argue with defensiveness, contempt, and withdrawal. Instead of responding constructively to one another, they tend to complain and accuse.

This cycle of negativity can grow and increase in severity. This way of fighting, called negative affect reciprocity, is the single feature that best distinguishes distressed from nondistressed couples. Therefore, one key to helping couples survive and thrive is to teach them how to avoid this negative, retaliatory cycle. People more often take offense than they mean to offend. If both people are asked to keep track of the number of times (a) they hurt, angered, or upset their partner and (b) their partner hurt, angered, or upset them, there's a good chance that both people would have more offenses recorded in group b than in group a.

In other words, people more often feel hurt by their spouse or partner than they think they have hurt their spouse or partner.



Scripture SUPPORT

Proverbs 15:1

*A gentle answer turns away wrath,
but a harsh word stirs up anger.*

(Full Chapter)

Proverbs 13:10

*Where there is strife, there is pride,
but wisdom is found in those who take
advice.*

Genesis 13

ABRAM AND LOT SEPARATE

¹³ So Abram went up from Egypt to the Negev, with his wife and everything he had, and Lot went with him. ² Abram had become very wealthy in livestock and in silver and gold.

³ From the Negev he went from place to place until he came to Bethel, to the place between Bethel and Ai where his tent had been earlier ⁴ and where he had first built an altar. There Abram called on the name of the LORD.

⁵ Now Lot, who was moving about with Abram, also had flocks and herds and tents. ⁶ But the land could not support them while they stayed together, for their possessions were so great that they were not able to stay together. ⁷ And quarreling arose between Abram's herders and Lot's. The Canaanites and Perizzites were also living in the land at that time.

⁸ So Abram said to Lot, "Let's not have any quarreling between you and me, or between your herders and mine, for we are close relatives. ⁹ Is not the whole

land before you? Let's part company. If you go to the left, I'll go to the right; if you go to the right, I'll go to the left."

¹⁰ Lot looked around and saw that the whole plain of the Jordan toward Zoar was well watered, like the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt. (This was before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.) ¹¹ So Lot chose for himself the whole plain of the Jordan and set out toward the east. The two men parted company: ¹² Abram lived in the land of Canaan, while Lot lived among the cities of the plain and pitched his tents near Sodom. ¹³ Now the people of Sodom were wicked and were sinning greatly against the LORD.

¹⁴ The LORD said to Abram after Lot had parted from him, "Look around from where you are, to the north and south, to the east and west. ¹⁵ All the land that you see I will give to you and your offspring[a] forever. ¹⁶ I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth, so that if anyone could count the dust, then your offspring could be counted. ¹⁷ Go, walk through the length and breadth of the land, for I am giving it to you."

¹⁸ So Abram went to live near the great trees of Mamre at Hebron, where he pitched his tents. There he built an altar to the LORD.

Our threshold for what counts as an offense seems to differ depending on whether we were the offender or the person being offended. This difference can lead to problems. The person who feels hurt may be wanting or expecting remorse, an apology, or for that person to make amends, but the other person may not even be aware that their spouse feels hurt. Without awareness, the offender won't apologize, show remorse, or make amends. Therefore, it is important to help people become more aware of the times that they may have hurt their partner without knowing it. This can be done by regularly checking in with one's partner to ask if anything is bothering them. Saying sorry does not equal making amends.

Saying "Sorry" is Not Enough

*(Adapted from work by Laura Luchies,
PhD September 25, 2015)*

We have all heard that actions speak louder than words, and this adage is especially true when we have hurt others. Offenders might simply say, "I'm sorry" and expect to be let off the hook for their hurtful actions. They could also do the opposite by going the extra mile to make amends by accepting responsibility for their actions, expressing regret, and trying to compensate for what they did. A victim is inclined to forgive and remain in a relationship with their offender if a continued relationship is likely to be safe and valuable for the victim. By themselves, apologies may not go very far. Sincere apologies should be accompanied by amend-making behaviors that indicate responsibility and regret for one's misdeed and reparation to make up for the hurt and harm it caused.

Sincere amends promotes forgiveness, which, in turn, promotes stronger amends in a mutually reinforcing cycle. Amends promotes forgiveness because receiving amends makes victims feel like the perpetrator understands and validates their experience of the offense. A verbal apology is likely to be met with a verbal offer of forgiveness. Behavior that expresses amends is likely to be met with behavior that expresses

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forgiveness. Forgiveness involves letting go of negative emotions and behaviors toward one's perpetrator. Forgiving is beneficial for the victim, even in the absence of amends.

Reconciliation involves returning the relationship between the victim and perpetrator to its pre-offense state. Reconciliation is beneficial for the victim only when the perpetrator has made amends. Otherwise, reconciliation can return the victim to harm's way. Forgiveness does not equal reconciliation. Both forgiveness and amends can take time.

Forgiving in the absence of amends (or other indication that the offender is unlikely to commit the offense again) can make a person feel like a human doormat. Forgiving a partner who HAS made amends tends to increase one's self-respect. Forgiving a partner who HAS NOT made amends tends to decrease one's self-respect, making one feel like a human doormat. First, they were "walked on" by the original offense. Now, they didn't stand up for themselves and put themselves in the position of possibly being hurt again by letting the offender off the hook.

If you are expected to forgive with no strings attached, you're more likely to be transgressed against. In one study, both members of couples predicted how much they would forgive their spouse if their spouse were to commit each of 20 specific transgressions in the next few months (e.g., lie, disrespect, forgot something important, infidelity). Those who predicted that they would be most forgiving were most likely to have a partner commit those transgressions in the next five months. Sadly, it seems like expecting to be forgiven makes us more likely to hurt by others.

Romans 6:1-2 seems relevant: "What shall we say then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means!" We all hurt other people and probably do so more often than we realize. We should make every attempt to become aware of the times we hurt others, stop doing those things, and do

something real to restore the damage we've caused. If we do this, those we have hurt can forgive us without the fear of being victimized again and without feeling like a doormat. Although forgiveness is important, recognizing and making up for the times we hurt others is just as important.

We covered a lot of material during our time together. Our objectives were to:

1. Identify conflict.
2. Develop strategies to handle conflict.

This week's commitment statement is: Conflict is not a sin; how we handle conflict can be a sin.

To end our lesson, please answer the following:

1. Who has an insight tonight about something you've learned or want to try?
2. What will you change or improve in your role as a parent this week?

Notes

Ages 4-16

40 minutes

Student Training

Engaging the World

CONFLICT

Objectives

- **Help children identify conflict.**
- **Help children be aware of what causes conflict.**
- **Help children be aware of consequences for not resolving conflict.**
- **Help children be aware of what the Bible teaches us about conflict.**
- **Help children be aware of strategies to handle conflict.**

Ever since the beginning of time, people have had to deal with conflict. Conflict is a serious disagreement or argument between people. It happens when a person wants their way or feels that they are being disrespected or treated unfair.

The earliest recorded example of conflict was in Genesis 4:1-12, when Adam and Eve's sons experienced a conflict. The older brother, Cain, was a farmer, and the youngest, Abel, was a shepherd. At the appropriate time, both young men came to present their offering to the LORD. Cain brought a sacrifice from his harvest of crops, and Abel brought a sacrifice from

his herd of sheep. When God received the offerings from the two brothers, He told Abel He was pleased with his gift, but God told Cain He was not pleased with his gift. This caused Cain to be angry and extremely jealous. The Bible does not say why God was not pleased, but this infuriated Cain. Afterward, in a fit of jealous rage, Cain killed his brother, Abel.

We see from the Bible that without some kind of resolution, a conflict can result in negative consequences like anger, blame, resentment, anxiety, grudges, ongoing tension, or violence. Some disagreements are more difficult to resolve than others,

but if people are not willing to work to find a solution to a conflict, it can fester and destroy relationships between friends and family members.

The fact of the matter is that every family will experience conflict between its members from time to time. Conflict is natural, and especially with children, it is an everyday occurrence. Dealing with conflict is how children learn to set boundaries and control their emotions. Family conflict happens since we are emotionally connected with our family members. Because these are the people that are closest to us, conflict with family members can hurt us the most. We love our family members, but that doesn't mean we always like them or get along with them.

God created families so that we would have a place where we would be loved, supported, encouraged, and cared for while we are growing and developing into the man or woman God created us to be. Family is also the place where you learn about and practice important life lessons you will have to master if you are going to have a productive and prosperous future. Resolving conflicts is one of those life lessons.

When families get along, it provides peace, belonging, comfort, security, and togetherness. Colossians 3:14 says, "And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity." It saddens God when families are filled with conflict and strife. A Christian family is supposed to be unified and working together as a team for God. It is impossible for a family to set a godly example and be a light in the community when they are plagued by unresolved conflict. Not only that, but conflict comes from the evil one. Satan knows that if he can keep a family in constant bickering and disagreement, then he can limit a family's accomplishments and ruin their influence. It pleases God when we live in harmony with one another. First Corinthians 1:10 instructs us, "I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our LORD Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another in what you say and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly united in mind and thoughts."

When you are a member of a family, you are required to strive to love one another unconditionally. In 1 Corinthians, it describes the kind of love God wants us to have for one another. First Corinthians 13:4-7 says, "Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres." When family members learn to love each other in this way, it creates an environment where it is safe to learn to work out any disagreements that may come between them. Colossians 3:13 tells us, "Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the LORD forgave you." So, once we work through a conflict, the Bible says we need to forgive and move on.

Although teachers help children learn to solve disagreements when they happen at school, parents are the main authority in your life, and family is the main place where instances of conflict happen. It is good for children to be allowed to solve their own problems when they can, but in the home, parents are the lead mediators for resolving conflicts among family members. It is up to them to make sure you are taught many life lessons. Learning to resolve conflicts is one of these important life lessons.

The key to handling conflict is to learn to identify your emotions and to control how you express your emotions. You must also learn to pay attention to the other person's emotions and realize that just as you have feelings and needs, so do others. Philippians 2:3-4 says, "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others." It is okay to have feelings, but you must control your actions. It is also important to remember that yelling and name-calling never helps to settle a disagreement. Proverbs 15:1 says, "A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger." But there is no need to worry

because you and your parents have the Holy Spirit to help you. As your parents guide you, your siblings, and friends in solving disagreements, you all will become more sensitive to others. With time and practice, you will become effective in resolving conflicts.

Here are some steps you can practice that can help resolve disagreements:

1. Take a break and calm down.
2. No yelling, name-calling, or put-downs allowed.
3. Listen. Let each person tell their side of the story and what they feel and need.
4. Let each person repeat what they heard the other person say.
5. Take responsibility for your actions.
6. Find common ground, the things you can agree on.
7. Brainstorm solutions to the conflict and be willing to compromise.
8. Be willing to apologize, affirm, and/or forgive.
9. Pick a solution and try it! (Sometimes it helps to write the solution plan down and have all parties sign the agreement to follow the plan.)
10. Give it some time and then follow-up to see how the solution is working out.

Psalm 133:1 says, “How good and pleasant it is when God’s people live together in unity!” As you learn to lessen your conflicts, and to effectively solve them when they do occur, you will live out the meaning of this verse. God will be proud of you. You, your siblings, and peers will be able to live together in unity. How pleasant that will be!

DISCUSS

- Lead children in a discussion about how to identify conflict.
- Lead children in a discussion about what causes conflict.



Scripture SUPPORT

Genesis 4:1-12

The story about the conflict with brothers Cain and Abel.

Colossians 3:14

And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

1 Corinthians 1:10

I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our LORD Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another in what you say and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly united in mind and thoughts.

1 Corinthians 13:4-7

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

- Lead children in a discussion about why it is important to your future to learn to resolve conflict.
- Lead children in a discussion about the consequences of unresolved conflict.
- Lead children in a discussion about steps to take to solve conflict.



Activities

Activities are age appropriate. One is focused on ages 4-11, and the second is for older children ages 12-16.

AGES 4-11

Materials

Technology to show video

“Resolve the Conflict 1” worksheet

Pencils, crayons, or markers

Easel or white board for group discussion (optional)

Have children view YouTube:

<https://youtu.be/SOBpSK1fEZ0> “Everyday Conflicts, Creative Solutions”

(“Everyday Conflicts, Creative Solutions” is a Preview clip, so it has some writing on the video, but it is a very good example of the lesson.)

- After children view video, distribute the “Resolve the Conflict 1” worksheet. Put the children in groups.
- Assign a conflict from the worksheet to each group. Have one group of children create a skit on the wrong way to handle the conflict and have the other group of children create a skit about a better way to resolve the conflict. If there are only enough children to create one group, have the group create a skit to act out the incorrect way and correct way to solve the problem. Film the skits if possible and allow the children to view themselves.
- An additional video to support the lesson is: https://youtu.be/DvSk5T_OUfU “Social Skills Training: Resolving Disagreements”

AGES 12-16

Materials

Technology to show video

"Resolve the Conflict 2" worksheet

Pencils, crayons, or markers

Easel or white board for group discussion (optional)

Have children view YouTube:

<https://youtu.be/4gQOZLdHIHM>

"In the Mix: Peer Mediation—A Process of Respect"

- After children view video, distribute the "Resolve the Conflict 2" worksheet. Put the children in groups.
- Assign a conflict from the worksheet to each group. Have one group of children create a skit on the wrong way to handle the conflict and have the other group of children create a skit about a better way to resolve the conflict. If there are only enough children to create one group, have the group create a skit to act out the incorrect way and correct way to solve the problem. Film the skits if possible and allow the children to view themselves.
- An additional video to support the lesson is:
https://youtu.be/KZ_hqpadQRQ



Scripture SUPPORT

Colossians 3:13

Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the LORD forgave you.

Philippians 2:3-4

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

Proverbs 15:1

A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.

Psalms 133:1

How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity!



CHALLENGE QUESTION

DO I SHOW RESPECT FOR OTHERS
WHEN FINDING A SOLUTION
TO A CONFLICT?

CHALLENGE COMMITMENT

WHAT ARE YOU WILLING
TO DO TO WORK ON THE CHALLENGE
QUESTION THIS WEEK?



AFFIRMATION *Have children repeat:*

*I am becoming more
and more effective at
resolving conflicts!*

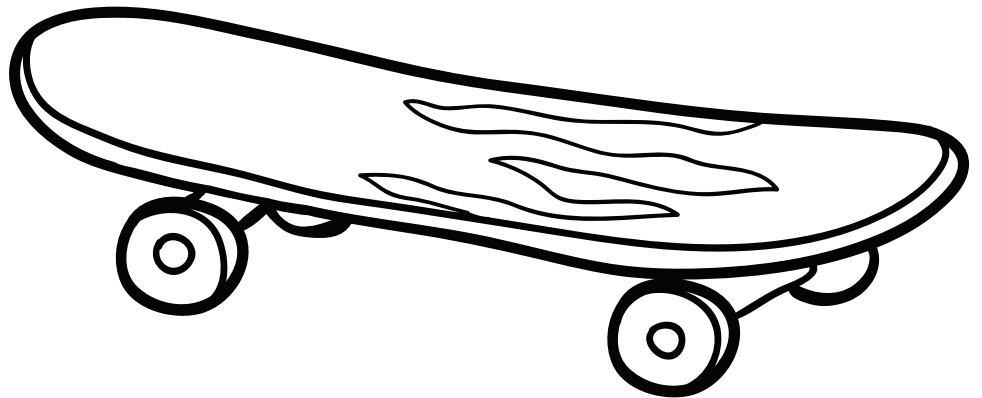
RESOLVE THE CONFLICT WORKSHEET

In a group, discuss the conflict scenarios below. Together, create a skit to teach the incorrect way and then the correct way to resolve each conflict. There may be more than one way to resolve each conflict.



Scenario 1

When you come home from school, your mom is upset because she thinks you broke her favorite vase without telling her about it. She automatically grounds you, but you know it was your brother who did it.



Scenario 2

You and your best friend have plans for the weekend, and you've been looking forward to hanging out all week. On Friday afternoon, your friend tells you you'll have to do it another time because he's doing something with someone else.

 RESOLVE THE CONFLICT WORKSHEET

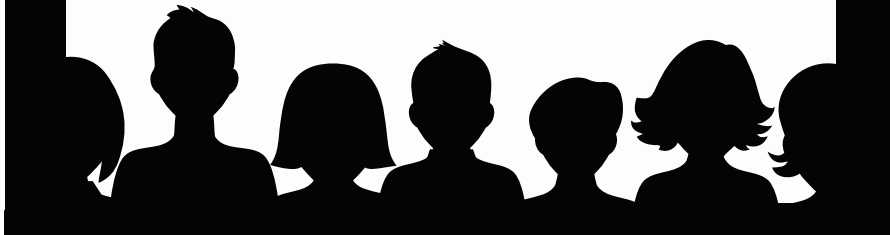
In a group, discuss the conflict scenarios below. Together, create a skit to teach the incorrect way and then the correct way to resolve each conflict. There may be more than one way to resolve each conflict.

**Scenario 1**

While getting ready for school, you notice your favorite sweater is missing. You figure your younger sister borrowed it, so you ask her where it is. She reluctantly pulls it out from under her bed, with a big stain on the front of it.

Scenario 2

You want to go to the movies with your friends Friday, but your parents have a different idea: They want you to go with them.

**Scenario 3**

A classmate has asked you for the twentieth time to borrow a pen. Every time you lend her one, you don't get it back. This time you say, "No." She gets angry and starts to yell at you.

