

Article Review

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What is one concept that stood out to you in this article?

In the article, “The Inevitability of Conflict and the Importance of its Resolution in Christian Higher Education” by Leslie Sturdivant Ennis, different styles of conflict resolution are analyzed in the midst of unavoidable conflict, particularly in Christian institutions of higher education. Ennis (2008) explains, “The presence of conflict is an inevitable aspect of human existence and interaction. Among Christian adherents, the subject of conflict and its proper resolution has been a source of misunderstanding and angst for centuries.” The article attempts to provide effective ways to resolve conflict, while also highlighting some methods that are commonly emphasized, but not beneficial to the Church and other Christian institutions. One particular concept that stood out to me was Ennis (2018) explanation of how Christians resolve conflict, “Christians, necessarily a part of Christian institutions, have treated conflict as something to avoid—an approach that has led to their detriment both individually and corporately.” Rather than treating conflict as a problem that needs to be avoided and minimized, what would change if we sought to resolve conflict directly and effectively to maximize gains for everyone?

What implications does this concept have for leading in the church?

The implications this has for leading in the church would be that conflict needs to be addressed, not avoided. Conflict resolution is a skill many Christians, churches, and Christian institutions lack. Rather than resolving the conflict that may come with diversity and change, Ennis (2008) explains that, “Avoidance of conflict is not synonymous with Jesus' equal admonition to 'Love your enemies' (Matthew 5:43) but, instead, asserts that conflict can be beneficial toward Christian justice and change.” Rather than trying to create a culture or institution that prevents conflict from arising, Christians must learn to resolve conflict properly.

The article outlines conciliation as an effective response to conflict. Ennis (2008) explains that there are three personal peacemaking responses (Overlooking an offense, discussion, and negotiation) and three assisted responses (Mediation, Arbitration, and Corporate Discipline). Leaders must learn to recognize, acknowledge, work through, and resolve conflicts that arise in the church by applying these methods of conciliation.

What needs to change in your life as a result?

Personally, I feel that Ennis (2018) words it nicely when he states, “It is precisely the presence of a living, loving God in the lives of all Christians that mandates active recognition and resolution of conflict and prohibits avoidance of conflict as a false cloak of Christian love and concern for other Christians and the world.” It is because we are Christians that we must learn to acknowledge and resolve conflict. Despite the fact that I grew up learning to avoid and push away conflict, I must begin to learn to genuinely love others the way God does through conflict. It is upsetting that Christians do not recognize the responsibility we have to resolve conflict, but I want to make a personal commitment to address conflict appropriately, but directly.

References:

Ennis, L. S. (2008). The inevitability of conflict and the importance of its resolution in Christian higher education. *Christian Higher Education*. 7(4). 339-356.