

Conflict Resolution Case Study

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“The only way to resolve a conflict,” Rick Warren says, “is to face it.” As someone who prefers to maintain peace through avoiding confrontation, Warren’s teaching on true peacemaking was impactful and practical. Warren explains in his teaching on how to resolve conflict and restore relationships that unresolved conflict blocks an individual’s fellowship with God, and can block their prayers and happiness. In this conflict resolution case study I will apply Warren’s teaching to a conflict I have experienced in ministry.

A few years ago I was serving as a care pastor at our church’s largest campus. It was a volunteer role consisting of serving on Sundays and taking some time during the week to follow up with newcomers and those who requested prayer. A main part of my responsibility was to keep up to date with the process queue on the church database. I reported directly to the campus pastor.

One week I was dialed into a conference call with one of the other volunteer care pastors and the campus pastor. The campus pastor surprised us with an intense and stern correction for what he considered to be our combined negligence in tending to the care call process queues. He expressed his frustration and disappointment and concluded by sharply asking us if we were even interested in doing ministry at all. I was shocked by the nature of the correction and took great offense.

I took a day to reflect on what had happened. There was an element of truth his words in that I needed some assistance in navigating the process queues as I was new to the program, but I was responding to the prayer requests. I was doing the work, but failing to adequately document and sign off on it.

My response to this conflict utilized some of Warren’s seven steps to being a peacemaker, but neglected others. I do not recall asking God for wisdom in how to respond; I

was much too impulsive and called the pastor back the next evening. This could have been a bad move if I spoken rashly and bitterly. But I did manage to make the first move, which is unusual for me. I was hurt, but could obviously tell that he was upset by the need to bring this correction as well.

I began by defending myself. It was an important matter to my pride and integrity that he knew that I had been faithful to my task in reaching out. This was a missed opportunity. If I had taken more time to fully reflect on the matter, I may have realized with God's help that even though I had done what was expected I had still neglected to ask for the required help in operating the database so that the whole team could be aware of my progress. This defensive posture was seeking to protect my pride and could have hindered the resolution. I eventually owned that mistake, but I didn't begin with "what's my fault" which Warren suggests as step three.

Upon reflection I realize that I utilized steps five and six of Warren's teaching to great effect. I spoke the truth tactfully. I explained that though I thought the correction was necessary the extra accusation questioning at whether or not my heart was in the right place for ministry was unnecessary and hurtful. There was an apology and a clarification from him on that point, I confessed that I should have been proactive in requesting his assistance in learning the system. Warren's sixth step, "Fix the problem not the blame", was implemented by us both. It became clear that the problem was really a lack of communication and once everything was put out into the open we were able to dedicate time and attention to fixing the problem. If I had allowed my pride to get in the way this could have turned into a bigger conflict with a larger potential fallout.