

Rick Warren in his sermon “Resolving Conflict” highlights 7 steps for resolving conflict. The basis for this sermon lies in Matthew 5:9 that presents the role of peacemaker as a characteristic of a believer. With unresolved conflict, as Warren said, it blocks fellowship with God, blocks my prayers from being answered, and ultimately blocks my happiness. As he was speaking, out of instances of conflict in my life, I immediately remembered a conflict that I had with my lead pastor. Ultimately, this story of conflict ends with both reconciliation and resolution, but in the moment I felt disrespected, unheard, and unvalued.

As we have now had our lead pastor for about a year and a half, I have had to adjust to a different style of leadership and mentorship. On top of that, being in my first formal vocational ministry role with an organizational hierarchy and expectations to be met has also been an adjustment, such as compiling a youth schedule coordinating lessons and events. That was an expectation pressed upon me from the get-go, creating a calendar across multiple months to give to parents, students, leaders, and the church as a guide for youth ministry. Where my lead pastor and I had come into conflict came after I had created our fall calendar for 2022 in the few weeks between semesters outlining series, creating lesson plans, planning events, coordinating service projects, leaders, speakers, and so much more. The plan was in place, being implemented and then in the second week of September, my lead pastor connected with me and told me they were implementing a church wide series that the youth should be onboard with. I communicated that I had the fall calendar planned, implemented, and that 2 weeks was not enough for me to plan and create a new lesson for a 2 month church series out of capacity between a full time job and graduate school. Ultimately, that was pushed back on and was really told that I needed to be on board with it. I was left feeling frustrated and upset because I felt like I was doing what I was asked to do in creating a calendar, and we were in the middle of our two month study of

Galatians and had to change everything in 2 weeks for a series. Upon this, after sitting with my feelings, I went to God in prayer, asking for wisdom and to discern the validity of my feelings. After praying, I reached out to my pastor and asked to connect. From there, like Warren highlighted, I acknowledged and apologized for how defensive I became over this decision and realized that maybe I was being self-centered because of the work that I did and was proud of the end product. I proceeded to communicate my honest feelings of the situation and that I felt my time and hard work in planning were not being respected. I was able to communicate these feelings in love.

Once I communicated on my end, I was met with grace and understanding by my lead pastor who then acknowledged how I felt and apologized for how sudden the change was and how that impacted me and my team. He listened to my hurt and understood my perspective as he was a former youth pastor and was met with similar challenges in his previous role, while also communicating his reasoning and perspective on why he pushed on me the way that he did. As a result, in acknowledging the conflict in this situation, we were able to reconcile and resolve this issue, and create actionable steps for future instances with church wide events and series. One outcome was better and timely communication. We were able to establish a timeline for when the Church and me as the youth director will know when and what the church wide series will be in enough advance to build that into the calendar, and allow me to plan, communicate, and prepare my youth volunteers. This instance was also utilized at an evening staff meeting where full time, part time, paid, unpaid staff and lay leaders met to discuss what was happening at the church. This created a teachable moment that highlighted conflict resolution. This taught how both parties in conflict can engage with love and understanding in knowing we are a team and have the same goal in reaching the last, the least, and the lost with the Gospel.