

Following Jesus Through Conflict

Preparation:

- Make four posters (“The Ghost”, “The Hulk”, “The Lawyer” and “The Peacemaker”) and post them on the four corners of the room.

Say: As we explore how to deal with conflict, let’s take a moment to identify a few different conflict types.

Have students take turns reading the different conflict types and their descriptions.

The Ghost	The Hulk	The Lawyer	The Peacemaker
Leaves people on read	Reacts emotionally	Argues every detail	Avoids upsetting people
Avoids confrontation	Raises voice quickly	Needs to win	Apologizes constantly
Hopes the problem goes away on its own	Turns small issues into explosions	Keeps receipts/screenshots	Says “its ok” when it clearly is not

Say: Let’s get up and move a bit. I’ll ask a prompt and I want you to answer the question by going to the corresponding corner. When you get to the corner, choose someone from your group to share why they answered the way they did.

Tip: Remind students not to violate the 8th commandment by bringing up specific names as they discuss different conflict types.

Ask: When conflict happens...

- Which type is hardest to deal with?
- Which one do people usually become online?
- Which one shows up most frequently between parents and teenagers?
- Which one emerges when people are hurt?

Bring everyone back in together and ask a few follow up questions:

- Why is conflict hard?
- What usually makes conflict worse?
- What kind of conflict do you see most at school or online?

Read: James 4:1-2

Ask: What does James’ answer reveal about where conflict actually originates?

Say: We all know Ghosts, Lawyers, Hulks or Peacemakers. And each of us likely identifies as one of these. But there is another conflict type that Jesus perfectly embodies: The Anchor. As we abide with Christ, He leads us to controlled by His love. This causes us to see people differently and seek reconciliation rather than just resolution.

Ask: What is the difference between resolution and reconciliation?

Resolution: Removes conflict

Reconciliation: Restores relationship

Read: Acts 15:36-41 and Genesis 45:1-8

Ask: Both of these situations dealt with conflict in different ways. Which is an example of reconciliation and which is resolution?

Say: Let's take a closer look at how Paul talks about reconciliation as he writes the church in Corinth. These were Christians who had drama, conflict, hurt feelings, pride, gossip, and broken trust. In other words...they were a lot like us. Notice how he speaks to them

Read 2 Corinthians 5:14–21 aloud.

Say: As we read, make note of repeated words or phrases.

Some words you might help them discover are: reconciled, Christ, all, ambassador, love, new creation...

Say: Let's go back through this passage to pull out truths that lead us to our anchor, Jesus when dealing with conflict.

Truth #1: Anchors Have a Different Motivation

Say: Conflict often leaves us saying things like...

- "I'm hurt...so I need to protect myself."
- "I need to win this argument."
- "They disrespected me...so they owe me."
- "I want them to feel what I felt."

Ask: Where is the focus in these statements? (self)

Read 2 Corinthians 5:14–15

Say: Let's help each other rewrite these statements to better reflect the motivation of our anchor, Jesus.

As you do this, help participants to be reminded of the forgiveness we receive through Jesus' death. Consider what Jesus said in the following verses: Matthew 5:39, Matthew 5:9, Matthew 5:44, Luke 23:34

Ask: How does hurt usually affect the way we treat people? Why is it hard to remember Christ in the middle of conflict? How would conflict change if your first thought was, "Jesus died for this person too"?

Reflection Scenario:

A friend leaves you out of a group chat intentionally.

Ask: What might your sinful instinct be (think back to the conflict types)

Say: A Christian response does not mean pretending it didn't hurt.

Ask: How might you respond being controlled by Christ's love?

Suggestions: *speak the truth honestly*
refuse hatred
remember Christ's mercy toward you and your sin
seek restoration instead of destruction

Truth #2: Anchors See People Differently

Read 2 Corinthians 5:16–17 aloud

Ask: When dealing with conflict what labels are we tempted to put on people that reduce them down to only sinful flesh?

Say: In Christ, people are more than their worst moment, their reputation, their sin, their failures. This includes you too. The reality of the Gospel means you are not permanently defined by your sins either. You can confess and be forgiven by Jesus' death, removing the stain of that sin.

Ask: What labels do people get stuck with in high school? How do labels damage relationships? Why is it hard to believe someone can actually change?

Baptismal Reality

Say: As baptized children of God, our deepest identity is not athlete, lonely, anxious, popular, rejected, smart, jerk. Our deepest identity is forgiven and belonging to Christ. This new identity changes how we view ourselves and others.

Ask: Is there a difference between how we should reconcile with baptized Christians and non-Christians.

Jesus died for the non-Christian, although if they lack faith, they will not receive the benefit of His gift for them. This should not change how we act, but it may change how they react to us.

Truth # 3: Anchors are Ambassadors of Reconciliation

Read 2 Corinthians 5:18–21 aloud

Say: Remember that the word “reconcile” means restoring a broken relationship. Sin separated us from God. Jesus restored peace through His death and resurrection. As Christians, we carry that same message into our relationships. Conflict resolution is not the same as reconciliation. Resolution solves practical problems. Reconciliation restores relationships through repentance and forgiveness.

Read Matthew 18:15 and Ephesians 4:25-32

Ask: What is the goal of going to someone directly who has sinned against you? What are some helpful things to keep in mind regarding our attitudes and words? What are some ways they might respond? Should that change the way you approach them?

Ask: What does healthy confrontation look like? Why do people avoid hard conversations? What’s the difference between revenge and reconciliation?

Practical Tools for Reconciliation

1. Check Your Heart

Before responding, ask yourself...Am I acting out of pride? Am I trying to punish someone? Have I prayed about this?

2. Own Your Part

Even if the other person was “more wrong,” ask: What did I contribute? Where did I sin? Confession begins with honesty.

3. Confess Truthfully

Don’t say “I’m sorry if you got offended.” Own up to your part honestly. Instead, say “What I did hurt you and I am sorry.” Specific confession reflects repentance.

4. Forgive Fully

Christian forgiveness does not mean pretending sin is okay, immediately rebuilding trust or removing all boundaries. It means releasing vengeance to God.

Important Boundary Point

You can forgive someone and still need distance, involve parents/pastors/counselors or take time to rebuild trust slowly. Forgiveness and wisdom belong together.

5. Take the First Step

Christ came toward us first. Do not wait around and say “I’ll apologize if they do first.” Reconciliation usually begins when one person humbly moves first.

Personal Reflection Activity

Have students reflect and quietly write:

- someone they need to forgive
- someone they need to confess to
- one step they could take this week

Do not require sharing. You could optionally provide index cards.

Because your identity rests in Christ...

You don’t have to win.

You don’t need to fix everyone.

You don’t have to be accepted by everyone.

Remember that...

God the Father is in control.

Jesus Christ has already reconciled you to the Father through His cross.

And the Holy Spirit is still at work softening hearts, convicting sinners, healing what is broken and creating faith through the gospel.

Closing Prayer

Lord Jesus,

You endured the cross to reconcile us to the Father. Forgive us for the ways we wound others through anger, gossip, avoidance, and pride. Teach us to confess honestly, forgive freely, and pursue peace with humility and truth. Give us courage to take the first step toward reconciliation and remind us that You alone are our Savior. Strengthen us to endure conflict with grace and love.

Amen.