Course 6, Session 5 Student Notes: Handle Conflict Like a Leader

Go and Tell Him, Just the Two of You

Big Idea: Conflict is not the enemy, avoided conflict is. Address it directly, privately, and redemptively, the way Jesus taught.

How to use these notes. These are yours to study on your own, before or after the session. Read each section slowly. Under every principle there is a **Notes** space to write what stands out to you, and a **Reflect** question to answer honestly in writing. Keep your Bible nearby. Take about 30 minutes, and end in prayer. Bring your notes and questions to the group.

Open in Prayer

Before you begin, pray this simple prayer, or your own: “Father, You are a God who moves toward us to make things right. You do not avoid us or gossip about us, You come directly and in love. Give me that same courage as I study, to face conflict Your way. Amen.”

The Scripture for This Session

Read these slowly, out loud if you can:

- **Matthew 18:15**, “Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.”
- **Matthew 18:16 to 17** (if he will not hear, take one or two more, then tell it to the church).
- **Proverbs 27:17**, “Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend.”

Reflect: Be honest. When someone upsets you, what is your very first move? Do you go quiet and stew, tell others before you tell them, blow up, or actually go straight to the person?

The Big Picture

Here is a sentence that might sting a little: the peace you are protecting by avoiding conflict is not real peace. It is a cheap imitation, and it is costing you more than the hard conversation ever would. We tend to think of a conflict avoider as a peaceful person and a person who confronts as a troublemaker. Jesus flips that. In His

teaching, the loving thing, the mature thing, the peacemaking thing, is to go directly to the person and deal with it. The one who avoids is not keeping peace, they are letting a wound fester under a bandage of politeness.

Last session you learned to develop people, even the risky ones. But here is what nobody tells you when you start gathering and developing people: more people means more friction. The very folks you pour into will sometimes disappoint you, disagree with you, or hurt you. Tonight we learn the clearest conflict method in all of Scripture, straight from Jesus in Matthew 18, and we make the case that using it is one of the most loving things a leader ever does. Here are four truths to learn it by.

Principle 1: Go Directly and Privately First. It Is the First Move, Not the Last.

Turn to Matthew 18:15. Jesus says, “if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone.” Stop right there, because ninety percent of what you need is in that one verse, and ninety percent of our conflict failures come from ignoring it. Look at the order Jesus gives. First move: go. Not wait, not stew, not hint, not post about it, not tell your spouse and two friends first. Go. Second: to him. Directly to the person involved, not to everyone around them. Third: and him alone. Privately, just the two of you, with the person’s dignity protected, no audience, no ambush.

Now watch what most of us actually do instead. We get hurt, and our first instinct is anything except going directly and privately. We go silent and let resentment build, and we call it being the bigger person when really we are just avoiding. Or we do the opposite, we vent to everyone else, we build a little coalition of people who agree with us, and by the time we finally talk to the person, half the room already has a version of the story. Both of those are disobedience to verse 15. One avoids, one gossips, and both make the wound bigger.

Reflect: When someone upsets you, what do you usually do first instead of going to them, and what has that pattern cost you?

Notes:

Principle 2: The Goal Is to Win the Person Back, Not to Win the Fight.

This is the single most important thing in the whole passage, the aim. Verse 15 does not say, go and tell him his fault so you can win. It says, “if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.” Gained him. Won him back. The whole point of biblical conflict is not to win the argument, it is to win the person.

That changes everything about how you walk into a hard conversation. If your goal is to be right, you will fight to win, and even if you win the point you will lose the person. If your goal is to gain your brother, you will go in with humility, you will listen, you will assume the best, and you will fight for the relationship, not against the human being. A leader who forgets this turns every disagreement into a courtroom. A leader who remembers it turns conflict into one of the deepest forms of care.

Reflect: Think of your last hard conversation. How would it have gone differently if your only aim had been to gain the person rather than to be proven right?

Notes:

Principle 3: Keep the Circle Small and Protect Dignity.

Jesus gives an escalation, and notice how patient and protective it is. Verse 16: if he will not hear you, then take one or two more, so that every word is established by witnesses. Only if the private conversation truly fails do you widen the circle, and even then only a little, one or two trusted people, not a mob. And verse 17, only if that still fails does it go to the wider community.

See the wisdom here. Jesus keeps the circle as small as possible for as long as possible. He protects the relationship and the person's reputation at every step. The goal is never to expose or humiliate, it is to restore. You go wider only when love truly requires it, never because it feels good to have people on your side. Telling three friends before you tell the person is not harmless processing, it shapes the story, hardens positions, and damages someone's reputation before they can even respond.

Reflect: Where have you widened the circle too fast, told others before you told the person, and what did that do to the relationship?

Notes:

Principle 4: Healthy Teams Have Honest Friction, Not Zero Friction.

Avoidance often hides behind the word peace, and we need to expose that. Proverbs 27:17 says, "iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend." Sharpening is not gentle. It involves friction and sparks. A team with zero tension is not a healthy team, it is usually a team where people have quietly stopped being honest.

So the goal is not a team with no friction, the goal is a team where friction is honest, direct, private when it needs to be, and always aimed at making each other better, never at wounding. A leader who avoids all conflict produces a dull, weak team. The skill is not avoiding the sparks, it is keeping them honest and aimed at making each other sharper. And the leader sets that tone by going first, by modeling the hard, gracious conversation instead of the cold shoulder.

Reflect: Are you avoiding the healthy friction that would sharpen your team or family? Where is honest, respectful tension actually needed right now?

Notes:

The Story: Go and Tell Him, Just the Two of You (Matthew 18:15 to 17)

Read the three verses out loud, slowly. It is the clearest conflict manual ever written, and the tragedy is how rarely God's own people actually follow it. Set the context first. In Matthew 18 Jesus is teaching His disciples how to live together as a community, and He knows something they will soon discover: wherever people gather, people rub. He does not pretend conflict away, and He does not tell them to just be nice and bury it. He gives them a clear, step by step method for when a real offense happens. That alone is worth noticing. Jesus expects conflict among His followers, and He gives instructions for it rather than shaming them for having it.

Verse 15 carries the whole weight: go, to him, alone, and the aim is "thou hast gained thy brother." Verse 16 adds patience, widen the circle only if the private talk fails, and only to one or two. Verse 17 makes the wider community the last resort, never the first move, and even then the aim is still restoration. At no point does Jesus authorize humiliation, gossip, or public shaming as a casual move. Mature communities are not conflict free, they are conflict competent. They handle it the right way, going directly, aiming to restore, and keeping the circle as small as love allows.

Reflect: Jesus makes "go to him, alone" the first move, but for most of us it is the last move, if we do it at all. What would obeying verse 15 this week actually require of you?

Notes:

Put It Into Practice

1. Name the conflict. Quietly name one conflict you have been avoiding. A tension with a team member, a family member, a partner, or a friend. Something left unsaid that is quietly hardening.

Then write your honest goal in this conversation. Is it to win, to vent, to be proven right, or to gain the person? Write it down honestly, and if it is not "gain the person," rewrite it until it is.

2. Write your first sentence. Write the first sentence you would actually say to open the conversation, in private, face to face. Make it honest but gracious, direct but kind, an opening that invites a conversation rather

than starting a fight. For example: “Hey, something has been sitting between us, and I care about us too much to let it fester. Can we talk?”

My real first sentence:

3. This week’s assignment. Go and have the conversation. Obey Matthew 18:15. Go directly to the person, alone and in private, with the goal of gaining them, not winning. Do not send it in a long text, and do not route it through someone else. Go to them. Then write what happened, how they responded, and what it did to the relationship and to your own peace:

Go Deeper (Optional)

- **Read:** *Boundaries for Leaders* by Henry Cloud, and *Crucial Conversations* by Kerry Patterson and team, the modern classic on the high stakes talks most people avoid.
- **Listen:** the *Craig Groeschel Leadership Podcast*.
- **Study:** Matthew 18:15 to 17; Proverbs 27:17; Galatians 6:1; Ephesians 4:15; Matthew 5:23 to 24.

Close in Prayer

“Father, thank You that You did not avoid me in my fault but came directly and made things right. Give me that same courage. Move my feet toward the person I have been avoiding, guard my heart so my goal is to gain them and not to win, and make me a peacemaker who faces conflict Your way, honestly, privately, and in love. Heal the relationships that have been fractured by silence. In Jesus’ name, Amen.”

Crown Revenue Academy · A ministry of Crown Revenue · “Go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.” Matthew 18:15