

Group Leader's Guide

Helping You Prepare to Lead the *Resolving Everyday Conflict* Study



PEACEMAKER®

MINISTRIES

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Introduction

First of all, thank you! As facilitator, your role is an important one—your guidance during the study will make all the difference between an average study and a great study. So we are grateful for your involvement, your preparation work, and your willingness to lead a group through this study on everyday conflict. We think it will be life-changing for everyone involved, and we pray that God would do a great work in your group in the weeks ahead as you study this material together.

While your role is important, don't worry ... it isn't *that* hard. You can do it! This booklet is designed to give you all the information you need to prepare for and lead a study of *Resolving Everyday Conflict*. So please take the time to read it through in its entirety before your group begins.

But to give you a sense of what important questions are answered, here's a quick overview of what's in this guide:

- **What Will the Study Look Like?** Gives a close look at the structure of each session.
- **What Do I Have to Make Sure I Do?** Details eight important “to-do’s” for the leader.
- **How Should I Prepare for Each Session?** Explains four important ways to make sure you are ready each week.
- **What Do I Need to Know for Each Session?** Provides session-specific details that you’ll need to know ahead of time.
- **What Else Do I Need to Know?** Gives you some other things to think about as you prepare, such as what to do if the discussion gets off track from the teaching, and how to lead someone to Christ.

What Will the Study Look Like?

The Structure for Each Session

Let's begin by taking a big-picture look at how the study works. Each session will have the same general structure:

- **Introduction/Icebreaker** – Obviously, it will take a few minutes to get going each session, and so it's a good idea to make use of that time where people are settling in. Depending on how well your group knows each other (and how much time you have), it might be helpful to ask some kind of "icebreaker" question each week. A good lead-in question will help "get the juices flowing" before the teaching begins and help your group build relationship and trust. Some sample icebreaker questions are included on pages 19-20 (or feel free to make up your own).
- **Teaching Video** – Each video segment is about 30-35 minutes long (exact times are shown on the back of the DVD case). Be sure set up the room/equipment so that everyone in your group can easily see and hear.
- **Discussion Questions** – At the end of each session, the Participant Guide contains a few questions for the group to discuss. The discussion time is one of the most important facets of this study. This is where your group will really dig in, think about the principles, and begin applying the concepts to your own lives. So please don't skip this critical activity!

NOTE: Extra discussion questions are found later in this booklet.

- **Optional Activities** – If appropriate (and if you have time), you can lead the group through a couple of additional activities:
 - **Personal Application Questions** – The Participant Guide also contains one or two "Apply It to Yourself" questions at the end of each session. These questions

are meant to help participants apply the principles from that week's session to a conflict they currently are facing. But as you might guess, that can get pretty personal pretty quickly. If anyone in your group is comfortable sharing about these situations, great! That will help make the teaching more real for the entire group. Otherwise, it's best to encourage people to take the time and answer these questions on their own—you can either give them some time during the study to do this, or have them to do it later outside of the group setting.

NOTE: these questions are "optional" in the sense that you don't have to take time during the session to do them, but we strongly recommend that you have your group do them at some time. Otherwise, it will be much harder for group members to personalize the concepts and apply them to their own lives, which is truly the goal of the entire study.

- **Prayer** – It's a great idea to have your group pray for one another, supporting one another and asking God to help in those difficult situations each person faces. But be sensitive if you have non-Christians in the group.
- **Digging Deeper** – The Participant Guide also lists some "Digging Deeper" questions (these are located near the end of the guide). These optional questions will help the participants dig deeper into Scripture as they wrestle with the concepts of each session. If time allows, you could consider doing some of these activities as a group.

You should be able to go through each session in about an hour (though if you have more time, you can easily fill it with optional activities or more discussion questions).

What Do I Have to Make Sure I Do?

Eight Important “To Do’s” for the Leader

Before you start ...

- 1 • Make sure each of your group members has a Participant Guide.** The Participant Guide will serve as an essential reference during the study (and in the future), and so everyone in your group will need one. To order, call our Resource Center at 800-711-7118 or visit www.Peacemaker.net/bookstore. (Remember that the main *Resolving Everyday Conflict* study box already comes with ten Participant Guides.)
- 2 • Pray for your group.** God may use this study as a life-changing experience for the people in your group—it can change their relationships and their handling of conflict in profound ways. Pray that God would reveal himself to the people in your group, that the good news of the gospel truly would touch their lives, and, in particular, transform how they relate to others through his Word and Spirit. That’s our prayer for your group, and we hope it becomes your prayer as well.
- 3 • Be prepared.** You will serve your group best if you invest the time to prepare well each week. Details on the suggested preparation process are on pages 8-10.
- 4 • Make it work for your group.** Every group is different, and ultimately, you know your group the best. Feel free to shape the study in a way that works well for your group. For example, if you are doing this study in the workplace context, you can nudge the discussion questions more toward applying the principles at work. Some potential questions might be: What would it mean if more people would overlook offenses here at work? What are the benefits or pitfalls of overlooking an offense at work?

During the study ...

5. Set an example. The most effective way to lead any group is through your personal example. You'll help inspire and motivate your entire group if you:

- Relax! You don't need to impress people. "I don't know, but I'll try to find out," is one of the best statements a group leader can learn to make. Don't try to be perfect—just keep pointing them toward the Savior.
- Be open and vulnerable in sharing your own struggles and victories as a peacemaker. People often learn best from our failures and mistakes (and they definitely identify the best with these experiences). Draw attention to Jesus' grace and sufficiency.
- Stay on track as much as possible during each session, but let go of the plan completely if special needs or issues arise.

6. Involve everyone in your group. Find ways to let everyone give meaningful input during the discussion time. Draw in your quiet members and don't let one vocal person dominate the discussion. You might want to divide into groups of 3-4 to answer certain questions and then come back together as a larger group and debrief.

7. Create a "safe environment" within your group. This study could potentially bring up some difficult personal issues, and so it's important that people feel safe to share about them. One way to foster this kind of environment is to promote confidentiality—guarding the trust and confidences of the people in the group. Make sure everyone knows that it's not OK to discuss outside the group any personal information that's been shared within the group—"what's said in the group stays in the group." It's also helpful to keep group members from critical or judgmental words, but instead, to talk about others using gracious, constructive, and encouraging words.

8. Encourage your group to do their “homework.” In many ways, what your group members get out of this study will be proportional to what they put into it. This is such powerful material and so thoroughly filled with the gospel that your group will be blessed the most if they commit to attend every session, come on time, and engage with the material. And in terms of “homework,” make sure they complete the “Apply It to Yourself” section at the end of each session.

How Should I Prepare for Each Session?

Four Ways to Make Sure You Are Ready Each Week

OK, so we’ve already asked you to be well-prepared for each session, but what does that really mean? In this section of the Group Leader’s Guide, we’d like to give you some specific help with your preparation.

In general, preparing means to:

1. Understand the “Big Idea”
2. Select the Best Discussion Questions
3. Think of a Personal Example
4. Do Background Reading

For each of the eight sessions, we’ll provide specific helpful information on each of these four topics (see pages 11-19). But first, let’s cover them from a general perspective:

Understand the “Big Idea”

If you expect the members of the group to grasp the “big idea” for each session, you should make sure you understand it first. You should watch the video of the session in advance, or at the very least, look through the Participant Guide to see the main teaching topics for the week. As long as you understand the main point, you’ll be able to help drive that point home during the discussion and any wrap-up you do as part of the study. To give you some help, we’ve listed a summary statement of the “big idea” for each session in the next section of this booklet.

Select the Best Discussion Questions

You know how much time you have, and you know your group. So feel free to choose the most interesting questions (or make up your own!) that fit your time constraints and the issues your group is facing right now. Again, the Participant Guide lists three or four questions at the end of each session. You can start with those questions, but just in case a question falls flat (and who hasn’t had that experience in a group?), we’ve included a couple of additional questions for each session here in this booklet. Look for questions that ask “How ...?” or that can’t be answered with “yes,” “no,” or some other one-word answer. In addition, you can always ask more general questions like, “What stood out for you this session?” or “Is there anything in this session that really challenges you?”

It’s also a good idea to end the discussion time by asking everyone in the group to identify a take-away. When a large amount of information has been presented, it is often helpful to write down one thing that you want to remember or something you’d like to change about yourself. In this way, you are encouraging your group to be doers of the Word and not just hearers when it comes to this study.

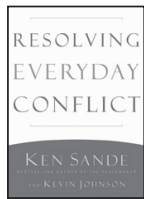
Think of a Personal Example

Again, you’ll help your group by being willing to set an exam-

ple as the facilitator. Along those lines, it will be helpful for you to prepare a personal example (positive or negative) from your own life that illustrates something about the Big Idea for each section. By being willing to share a meaningful experience from your own life, you'll encourage the others in your group to do the same. And again, it doesn't have to be a "successful" example. The people in your group will identify with you much more readily if you share an example where you really struggled to apply the principles. You may never actually get the opportunity to share your example (don't force it in there), but it helps to be ready in case there's a lull in the discussion or an appropriate moment arises.

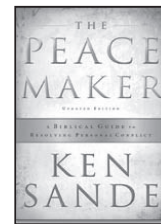
Do Background Reading

The Bible has so much to say about relationships and conflict that you can always dig deeper. So the members in your group may have questions that require a little bit of background reading on your part.



For this reason, you may want to read in advance sections from the *Resolving Everyday Conflict* book, by Ken Sande and Kevin Johnson. One copy of this concise guide to biblical peacemaking was included with this video study. In the next section, we've noted specific parts of the *Resolving Everyday Conflict* book that go along with each session in the *Resolving Everyday Conflict* study.

Also, if you're interested in more in-depth study of biblical peacemaking, you may want to read *The Peacemaker* by Ken Sande. It's a thorough guide to resolving the conflicts of everyday life and a great tool for anyone looking for more information and examples of life-changing, scriptural principles.



We highly recommend either of these books for any group member interested in the topic. The *Resolving Everyday Conflict* book and *The Peacemaker* are available for purchase online at www.Peacemaker.net/bookstore or by calling the Peacemaker Ministries resource center at 800-711-7118.

What Do I Need to Know for Each Session?

Session-Specific Information

SESSION 1: Facing the Flames of Conflict

Big Idea

We need to understand the nature of conflict. There are lots of opportunities for conflict to arise in life, but in general, conflict follows a recognizable pattern. In particular, we must recognize the role of our own desires as the gasoline that makes conflict turn into a destructive inferno. Also, we see that the Bible paints a different picture for relationships: one of unity and love.

Extra Discussion Questions

1. Look at the picture on page 4. What other conflicts might be going on in others' lives that they keep completely hidden? Do you sometimes feel like you are the only one that struggles with relationships and conflict? Why?
2. Was the "Radically Different Vision" for Christians more of an encouragement or a challenge to you? Why?

Personal Example

Think of a conflict in your life where you saw the spark/gasoline/fire pattern and be ready to share with the group. In particular, think about a desire that got "out of control" and made the conflict worse.

Background Reading

For more details on the topics covered in this session, read the following section of the *Resolving Everyday Conflict* book:

- Chapter 1 (pp. 11-22)

SESSION 2: A New Way of Thinking

Big Idea

We need to understand our typical response to conflict and how neither escaping nor attacking are the right responses. Also, we learn that overlooking is a great first option for dealing with a conflict situation.

Extra Discussion Questions

1. How might we force/intimidate others (the Assault response) in subtle ways at home or at work?
2. How does overlooking someone else's wrongs similar to how God treats us? How is it different? Is God "thick-skinned" toward us?

Personal Example

Think about your own tendency to respond to conflict (escape or attack) and be ready to share what that looks like in your own life.

Background Reading

For more details on the topics covered in this session, read the following section of the *Resolving Everyday Conflict* book:

- Chapter 3 (pp. 35-44)

SESSION 3: Go to Higher Ground (Glorify God)

Big Idea

We tend to leave God out of our conflicts, when ultimately, he's the only one that can solve them through the gospel—what Jesus did for us on the cross. The gospel is not just a ticket to heaven, it changes everything in our lives, including how we respond to conflict.

Extra Discussion Questions

1. Think about the teaching on the “moment.” How have you seen this play out in your own life? Even if you have any situations where the first “moment” is past, how can you still start doing the right thing?
2. Think about the parable of the unmerciful servant. In what ways are you tempted to insist on getting your “17 dollars” from others, even in light of the millions that you have been forgiven? At home? At work?

Personal Example

This session is the most explicit gospel presentation in the study. If your group has any non-Christians or even people who may go to church occasionally, but still aren't sure of their salvation, be ready to talk to them more about the gospel and what it means to be a Christian. (See also the topic *How do I lead someone to Christ?* later in this booklet on page 22.) And sometimes professing believers are most in need of a reminder of the “amazing grace” found in the gospel. As you talk about these things, be ready to give an example of how the gospel has transformed an area of your own life.

Background Reading

For more details on the topics covered in this session, read the following section of the *Resolving Everyday Conflict* book:

- Chapter 4 (pp. 45-56)

SESSION 4: Get Real About Yourself (Get the Log out of Your Eye)

Big Idea

Before you spend much time thinking about what the other person did, Jesus calls you to take responsibility for your own contribution to a conflict, regardless of how small. And to take true responsibility and begin to change, you have to understand your own heart and where your desires might have become demands (i.e., idols).

Extra Discussion Questions

1. Have you ever seen the “Golden Response” happen? Why do you think it works that way? The “Golden Response” shouldn’t be the primary motivator for confessing a wrong. Why?
2. In what subtle ways do people (and their idols) train those around them to give them what they want? How do we punish and reward in ways that are actually a form of ungodly manipulation?

Personal Example

Be prepared to share an example of an idol you’ve seen in your own life and how it’s reared its ugly head in a conflict. How did you recognize it? (This might help others to identify their own idols.)

Background Reading

For more details on the topics covered in this session, read the following section of the *Resolving Everyday Conflict* book:

- Chapter 5 (pp. 57-69)

SESSION 5: Accepting Responsibility: Making an Effective Apology

Big Idea

Even if you realize you need to apologize, a “bad” apology will only make things worse. Use the “Seven A’s” tool to make a “good” apology that genuinely seeks to heal the hurt you’ve caused.

Extra Discussion Questions

1. What’s the difference between genuine sorrow and regret (“I’m sorry I got caught.”)? How can you tell them apart?
2. Have you ever been on the receiving end of a great confession? A lousy one? How did it make you feel?

Personal Example

Be prepared to share an example of a time when you had to confess something even though you didn’t want to. Explain how well your confession lined up with the “7A’s” and how it was received. How might you do it differently today?

Background Reading

For more details on the topics covered in this session, read the following section of the *Resolving Everyday Conflict* book:

- The middle portion of chapter 5 (pp. 62-67)

SESSION 6: Gently Engage Others (Gently Restore)

Big Idea

When someone wrongs us, it is entirely appropriate to go talk to them about it, but it must be done in love. If that conversation doesn’t go well, the next step is to get help from others in order to be reconciled. A tool to use in those sorts of conversations is the “PAUSE Principle.”

Extra Discussion Questions

1. What does getting help specifically look like for struggles at home? At work? What are some options you have to get help when you need it?
2. Think back to the video of the husband and wife who were fighting about where to go on vacation (from Session 1). Think about the PAUSE principle and how it might have changed how they approached this conflict. What were each of their “interests”? What common interests did they have? How would that have helped them resolve the issue?

Personal Example

Be prepared to share an example of a time when someone came to you to confront you on an issue (or when you had to go to someone else to do the same thing). How did it work out? What was good in their approach? What wasn't helpful?

Also, it would be good to demonstrate a time when you reached out for help from a friend, church leader, or other trusted advisor. Many times, people's pride can hinder them from getting the help they need, and so your example will show that not only is it OK to get help, but that it's a good thing—it's what the Bible tells you to do in this situation.

NOTE: With the discussion in this session about getting help, it will be important for you to understand specific protocols for getting help for the people in your group. For instance, if you are studying this in a workplace setting, be sure to know the specific ways that employees can get help in a way that fits within your organization's policies and procedures. Or if you are studying this in a church setting, find out what pastor or leader you can refer group members to if they need help with a conflict.

Background Reading

For more details on the topics covered in this session, read the following sections of the *Resolving Everyday Conflict* book and

the Peacemaker Ministries website:

- Chapter 6 (pp. 71-84)
- The PAUSE Principle:
www.Peacemaker.net/PAUSE-Principle

SESSION 7: Get Together on Lasting Solutions (Go and Be Reconciled)

Big Idea

Forgiveness is a decision, based on God's forgiveness of us, not to hold an offense against another person. This can take place in two components: a heart component, where we give the offense to God, and a transactional opponent, where the offender repents and we grant forgiveness. Ultimately, God gives us the ability to forgive.

Extra Discussion Questions

1. Say a neighborhood kid broke one of your windows with a baseball and comes to you to apologize. Discuss the reasons it might be better to extend mercy and the reasons it might be better to make him experience some sort of consequence.
2. What advice would you give someone who says to you, "Yeah, I've forgiven her. I just don't want to have anything to do with her anymore."? Does that match up with true forgiveness? How would you feel if God said this to you after you confessed your own sin?

Personal Example

Think of your own story involving forgiveness. When did you have to forgive someone? Why was it hard? How did you do it?

NOTE: This session may bring out some pretty difficult issues from peoples' pasts as they are challenged to forgive. So be pre-

pared to help those who are struggling with unforgiveness. It's also a good opportunity to circle back with the non-Christians in the group and share once again what it means to experience forgiveness through Christ.

Background Reading

For more details on the topics covered in this session, read the following section of the *Resolving Everyday Conflict* book:

- Chapter 7 (pp. 85-98)

SESSION 8: Overcome Evil with Good

Big Idea

Even when peacemaking doesn't seem to "work" (although we must keep in mind that God's definition of success is different from ours), we are called to persevere in loving those who mistreat us—overcoming evil with good.

Extra Discussion Questions

1. Which of the five principles in this section help you the most? Which are the hardest to actually do? Why?
2. How does the distinction between "your job" and "God's job" encourage you? Challenge you?

Personal Example

Was there ever a time when you were kind to someone who mistreated you? Tell the group about what happened. How was it like/unlike how God treats you?

NOTE: Because this is the last session, your main focus should be wrapping up the study on a positive note, encouraging everyone in the group to think about what they will take away from this study. If anyone in the group has a story to tell of reconciliation in their own life (big or small), give him/her a

chance to tell it and celebrate it! Whether they're about a dramatic reconciliation or a subtle change in someone's heart and attitude, these stories are evidences of God's work.

Background Reading

For more details on the topics covered in this session, read the following section of the *Resolving Everyday Conflict* book:

- Chapter 8 (pp. 99-107)

Sample Icebreaker Questions

Feel free to use any of the following questions to help your group relax and get to know each other. You can always ask questions like, "What's your favorite dessert?" to get people to open up, but the questions here have a bit of peacemaking flavor to them, which will help you get people thinking about the topic.

- What comes to mind when you hear the word *peace*? How about the word *conflict*?
- When you were a child, was there a person in your family or circle of friends who was a peacemaker? What qualities made them that way?
- Complete this sentence: "Something that easily robs me of peace is _____."
- What thoughts come to mind when you hear the word *idol*? (e.g., American Idol) (This is good for Session 4.)
- Most books/movies have a plot that is dependent on a major conflict. Think of a favorite and tell the group about the conflict part of the plot.
- Complete this statement: "A person who has strongly influenced my life is _____."
- Who is the best listener you know? What makes you feel

like he or she is really listening?

- What is your ideal vacation? Is peace and quiet a part of it? Why or why not?
- Give an example of how someone's words have had a long-lasting effect on your life (for good or ill).
- One of the things that brings me the greatest pleasure in life is _____.

After the first few weeks, when your group is more comfortable with one another, you can ask questions that go a bit deeper or that help people review and apply what they are learning. Some questions you might ask include:

- What was the most helpful thing you learned in our last session?
- Did anyone have an opportunity to apply what we learned last week? What happened?

What Else Do I Need to Know?

Other Considerations as You Think about the Study

What if our discussion seems to get off track?

Even after your group has heard a great presentation of a Christ-centered response to conflict, you may notice that your group (or you yourself!) struggles to apply that teaching in group discussion. Group members may talk about a difficult conflict they're struggling with, and it's often tempting to offer pretty unbiblical advice.

“She hurt me so much, I plan to never speak to her again. She's just not safe.” Heads nod all around at this blatant example of an Escape response to conflict (see Session 2).

Often in situations like this, the group will “police” itself, pointing back to biblical principles without your help. So you may not need to say much as others lovingly help one another back toward a biblical response.

But sometimes, the pain they hear in another person's conflict makes them reluctant to “push back”—they don't want to appear unsympathetic or uncaring. Maybe they themselves are “escaping” on the Slippery Slope at that moment, fearing an awkward encounter if they tell the person something he or she doesn't want to hear.

In such situations, just be aware that you may need to gently point the group back to the biblical principles.

The simplest way to do this (and the best way to teach your *whole* group) is by asking questions. “Jim, in this situation, where do you see yourself on the Slippery Slope of conflict? How could you ‘go to higher ground / glorify God’ in this situation?” Work toward helping the person apply the teaching they've just heard to their own situation. Don't let these “teachable moments” slip by!

How do I lead someone to Christ?

As you lead your group through this study, you will hear Tim Pollard emphasize again and again that the gospel is the key to resolving conflict (particularly in Session 3). The only way that men and women can truly see their own wrongs, confess those wrongs, and seek forgiveness is by experiencing the forgiveness of God in Christ themselves.

Now keep in mind some may not respond to the message of the gospel, even when they've heard it clearly. The Bible promises that this may happen. In that situation, don't be discouraged—your job is to continue to love the members of your group and hold out the hope of forgiveness in Christ.

But sometimes, over the course of the study, it may become clear to a person in your group (or you may sense) that he or she has *never really experienced* the forgiveness of Jesus Christ. What can you do then?

If this happens to you, rejoice! God may be giving you the great privilege to be used by him to walk with this person through the gospel message and encourage them to respond to it. What should you do?

First, trust God. Remember that he's the one who changes people's hearts and who brings about moments like this: he makes it happen, not you. And if you know that this person's salvation is in God's hands and not yours, you can take great comfort in knowing that the Lord will accomplish his purposes.

Second, remember that the conflicts that brought this person to the study in the first place can be good illustrations of our need for a savior. "You came because of a conflict with another person." Or "You know how another person has hurt you, and how you just know in your heart that what they did (or what you did) was wrong ... that it was against God's law." In each of these cases, the person already understands the concept of "sin" or "breaking the law"—it's just a sin or offense against him or her!

When you talk with this person, what should you say? Generally, remember to listen well. Have a *conversation*, not a pre-packaged presentation by you. God is working in this person's heart, and you just get to be there and watch him do it. But as you talk with the person, the following can be a good general guide for your conversation:

- There is a God. The person you're talking with has been exposed to this idea through the study and probably believed this before the study even started. That's good: in most cases you'll already have that in common.
- God created the world and God created the people in the world, all perfect and all to bring praise to God.
- But sadly, the first human beings, Adam and Eve, and every human being since, has consistently turned away from God, looking for something other than God to make them happy. And that looking for something else leads people to sin and is itself a sin. All people willfully end up on "the wrong side of the law" from God.
- The result of that willful rebellion is punishment and death (physical and spiritual).
- Since every single human being (including you and me) has sinned and rejected God, every single human being (including you and me) deserves punishment and death. Without an intervention from God, we are hopeless.
- What can be done? The only hope is found in Jesus Christ:
 - God sent his Son, Jesus, for sinners like us and to live a perfectly righteous life on our behalf.
 - He lived that perfect life on earth and died that perfect death for us, bearing on the cross the punishment we deserve for our sins.
 - When we place our faith in Christ, through his death on the cross, he takes on the punishment that we rightly deserve. And, amazingly, we receive his perfect righteousness (his perfect "record"). We are acceptable, pure, and right before God because of what

Christ has done on our behalf.

- If that's true, what is our response? The gospel calls you to:
 - **Confess** your sins—admit that you really did sin, that you truly deserve punishment for those sins.
 - **Repent** of your sin. That is, with God's help, to turn away from your sin and to turn toward God.
 - **Believe** (that is, to have "faith) in Jesus Christ. Faith is really placing all your trust and all your confidence not in yourself, but on the promises that Christ has given to you and on Christ himself who made those promises.

Be sure to continue to encourage the person throughout the course of the study to become involved in a church where the gospel is preached. And be sure to let your church's pastors and leaders know about God's work in this person's life.