

# MODULE 4: NAVIGATING CONFLICT

# INTRODUCTION

In this module, **Robb Morgan** explains how communication dynamics impact your sense of connection and conflict. Then, he teaches how to engage in conflict in a healthy way.



This module's teaching will help you answer two central questions:

1. What are the communication dynamics that impact how I connect with others and engage in conflict?
2. How can I engage in conflict in a healthy and biblical way?

# SESSION 1: COMMUNICATION & THE HEART OF CONFLICT

## *Video Notes*

- 1. Communication is the foundation of relationships** (James 3:17). Your interactions can impact your sense of connectedness with others. As a leader in the church, you are called to show up vulnerably, present and open to connecting with those in your spiritual community, and this often results in misunderstandings and conflict. To lead well, you must learn how to deal with conflict well in order to have hope of living together in the gentle, peaceful, yielding kind of way described by James.
- 2. To do conflict well, we must first understand basic communication dynamics that impact each of us, all the time.** Distortion or lack of understanding happens in communication because of the filters that are at play, in both you and the person you are communicating with. Learning about these filters helps you illuminate the emotions, motivations, and values underneath what is being said. Being present to these deeper meanings can also help you when you offend and when you attempt to repair.
- 3. All communication is filtered through motives.** Every person you interact with has some hope, want or need in that communication with you, and you also have intentions. As a leader, it is vital that your motive doesn't get lost and, in some cases, is stated clearly and repeatedly!
- 4. All communication is filtered through worldview and assumptions.** Worldview is the way you believe the world to be and how it should work. You don't go through your day aware of just how much power your worldview has to shape your experiences or interactions. Assumptions are similar in that you can assume that the person you are speaking with has the same information, perspective, or beliefs about certain issues that you may be discussing.

Assumptions may create a misunderstanding or disconnect during communication when they project a shared reality that may or may not be there.

**5. All communication is filtered through values.** You have a reflex to evaluate what you hear based on whether you agree or disagree, or if you think what is being said is good/right, or bad/wrong. These values are sometimes connected to larger cultural values, racial, ethnic, and socio-economic values that you embrace - sometimes even unknowingly.

**6. All communication is filtered through the lens of pain.** There are a few ways to try to manage pain: protect it, project it, or perform around it.

*Protecting pain* comes out most often as defensiveness.

*Projecting pain* happens through projection or transference. *Projection* happens when someone takes their inner thoughts and feelings and ascribes them to another. *Transference* happens when the pain that someone else caused in the past gets placed, or transferred, onto someone else in the present.

*Performing around pain* involves achieving, producing, or accomplishing in order to evade feeling pain.

**7. The best way to improve your communication in conflict is to get curious about what filters are impacting your communication and how.** Start by asking yourself a question: You can take a deep breath and ask, “How much of this is my internal reality, and how much of this is what’s going on externally?” Asking a simple question can help remove the filter, or at least help you to consider another way to interpret what has happened. Then you can ask questions of the other person as well.

## SESSION 1: COMMUNICATION & THE HEART OF CONFLICT

### *Reflection Questions*

1. Which of the communication filters (motive, worldview, assumptions, values, or pain) most often distorts how you hear others or express yourself, and why do you think that is? *Take a moment to consider a recent interaction where this filter was at play.*
2. When you feel misunderstood or disconnected in conversation, what is your typical reaction, and what might that reveal about your inner world or past experiences? *Think about whether you tend to protect, project, or perform.*
3. In what ways do your values or early life experiences shape how you evaluate others during a conversation? Where might these values be limiting your ability to truly listen?
4. What assumptions do you regularly make in your ministry or leadership roles that could be hindering real connection or clarity in communication? *Consider moments during a church service, team meeting, or mentoring conversation.*
5. How might James 3:17 guide your posture in future conflicts or challenging conversations?

What would it look like for you to be peace-loving, gentle, and willing to yield, especially when you're under pressure?

# SESSION 2: ENGAGING IN HEALTHY CONFLICT

## Video Notes

**1. Conflict is not an exception, but a normal part of relationships.**

Because conflict is a given in any emotional system you are a part of, learning to lead well through it is essential.

**2. The stories you tell yourself about conflict shape the way you engage with it.** You may have internalized stories like “conflict ends relationships” or “my voice doesn’t matter.” These beliefs cause unhealthy behaviors like withdrawing, dominating, or pretending everything is fine, and can prevent you from looking or sounding like Jesus in those conversations.

**3. The healthy way to engage in conflict is to *steward* it, not to *resolve* it.**

You can begin to see disagreement and arguments as opportunities for discipleship rather than challenges to be won or lost. This means the process of how you show up in conflict is more important than the outcome.

**4. There are three postures to healthy biblical conflict: curiosity, humility, and courage.**

- *Curiosity* invites others in rather than shutting them down—it’s a posture of listening, not reacting. Asking questions is the ultimate show of hospitality. It communicates, “I’m willing to see you and know you, and I honor your story.”
- *Humility* means agreeing with God about who you are—owning both your gifts and your flaws. Following the model of Jesus, you can practice showing up in disagreements with both conviction and compassion.

- It takes *courage* to question your assumptions and own the impact of your words and actions, and then to begin to do the courageous work of cleaning up the mess of your part of the conflict. Part of cleaning up our mess means taking responsibility not just for the wrong you did, but actually listening deeply for the impact and apologizing for the lasting effects that the person is experiencing.

**5. You can grow your capacity for conflict through repetition.** You grow in conflict skills by practicing in low-stakes situations. Jesus calls you to be a peacemaker—not by avoiding conflict, but by moving toward it. This isn't just personal development—it's discipleship, and it contributes to the renewal of all things.

## SESSION 2: ENGAGING IN HEALTHY CONFLICT

### *Reflection Questions*

1. What early messages did you receive about conflict growing up, and how do those messages still influence the way you engage in disagreement today?

Think about the unspoken rules or roles you learned—were you expected to stay quiet, take charge, avoid conflict altogether?

2. When you find yourself in a tense or challenging conversation, are you more focused on winning, fixing, or growing? Why do you think that is? *Consider how your motives might shift the way you approach resolution or relationship.*
3. Which posture—curiosity, humility, or courage—do you find most difficult to embody in conflict, and what might that reveal about your current spiritual formation? *Be honest about what feels risky or unnatural for you, and invite God into that awareness.*
4. If you were to create one personal value or commitment to guide your behavior in conflict (no matter how the other person responds), what would it be?

How might that value reflect the way of Jesus in your relationships?