

MENTOR GUIDE

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

Participant Reflection Questions

After watching the video, participants will answer or journal the following questions for reflection. Feel free to utilize these questions for discussion at your next Coaching Session.

- 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 1: ACTIVITY

Using the Traffic light tool, call to mind an interaction when you started to notice some yellow lights in yourself or the other person. Or maybe even a moment when the heat got to “red” - with explosive words or aggressive body language.

Write about this moment with the following prompts:

- What did you think and feel?
- What did you say or not say?
- What assumptions were you making about the other person?

Now, pause and invite God to speak about the situation. God, give me the grace to notice where you were in that interaction. *Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal the filter that is most distorting the way you hear and speak to others.*

Record anything that stirs in you and what you feel God is saying.

Now, go back to that moment in your imagination. Reflect & Record:

- What could you have said or done differently?
- What would be a more empowering way to show up in the moment?

We do this reflective work to get present to our preferred future. Knowing who and how you want to be when faced with a similar situation again is an important step toward staying calm in conflict.

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

Participant 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?

SESSION 2: ACTIVITY

Call to mind a recent conflict/disagreement in which you played a part. Pray for God's help and leading to be curious about yourself in this moment:

- What about this person/situation is so triggering to me?
- What are my emotions about this experience of conflict?
- What doesn't feel safe to me? What feels threatened or at risk?
- Take a moment to pause with God and see what he might say to you about this experience.

Now, consider:

- Is there a different meaning you could make about this person or situation?
- Is there a more empowering way you can tell this story?

ACTIVATION ASSIGNMENT

Put This Into Practice

1. Practice a move toward conflict: Have a crucial conversation.

Don't start with the most heated, complex situation. Start small; pick something that will allow you to build your muscles.

2. Restorative practice: Choose a conflict and ask a series of questions (adapted from the Colossian forum):

- What happened?
- What have you thought about since that happened?
- What was the impact on you and others?
- What is the hardest part about this for you?
- What am I willing to do to make things right and move forward?

MENTOR SESSION GUIDE

While the content we've provided will be impactful for participants, as a VLE mentor, the time you spend helping participants process will be transformative. Please use this time to make thoughtful observations and be prepared to speak into their lives. This time together will provide many opportunities to have an "ICNU (I See In You) Conversation", which will be catalytic in their growth and development! Here is a sample agenda you might consider using for your time together:

Connection (5-10 minutes). This is a great opportunity for small talk, to warm up the conversation. You can ask how their week has been, or if they have anything exciting coming up.

Celebration (5-10 minutes). Ask them if they have seen God do something in their lives or ministry in the past two weeks that they'd like to share. This is an opportunity for you to affirm and reinforce the good growth that is happening.

Coaching Conversation (40 minutes). See Coaching Conversation Section on the next page. This portion will be specific to each module.

Care & Prayer (10-20 minutes). As you wrap up your time together, make space for the work of the Holy Spirit. This could look different every time, especially if you are meeting with an individual versus a group. If you are with an individual, you could ask if the Holy Spirit has brought anything to the surface for them, and then pray into that. If you are with a group, this might be an opportunity for a hot seat, or for participants to break off into pairs and pray for each other.

Closing Communication (5 minutes). This is the time to highlight the next module, important church events, or announcements, etc.

MODULE 4: COACHING CONVERSATION

Module 4: Navigating Conflict helps participants reflect on their patterns and challenges with conflict while growing in emotional maturity and Christlike communication. This module doesn't just teach tools—it invites leaders to engage conflict as an opportunity for formation, reconciliation, and spiritual authority. Healthy conflict leadership requires a deep, Spirit-led awareness of both our hearts and the people we serve.

1. Start by sharing a story about your growth in handling conflict.

- In the past, how did you approach conflict, and what has changed over time?
- Where do you struggle and find tension in conflict, and what helped you learn to stay grounded, honest, and loving in difficult situations?

2. Invite participants to reflect on their Activation Assignment by asking:

- What did you learn about your conflict style?
- How did the self-reflection tools challenge or affirm what you already knew about yourself?
- Was there a situation this month where you had the chance to practice something new?

3. Next, dig into a few of the key themes from the sessions. Use these prompts to explore together. Remember to share your thoughts and experiences!

- The heart of conflict: How do your internal fears, desires, or wounds tend to surface during conflict?
- Communication patterns: Which of the communication tools stood out or felt especially helpful?

- Redemptive confrontation: What does it look like to approach conflict with both truth and love?

4. Move toward leadership application by asking:

- How does your way of handling conflict affect your team, family, or ministry culture?
- What one shift could help you create a more honest and safe environment for others?
- Who do you need to move toward this month—and what might that look like?

5. Close with a time of prayer and ministry. You might want to use listening prayer or create space for participants to share areas where they're seeking peace or breakthrough.

- Ask the Holy Spirit to bring clarity and courage in approaching any needed conversations.
- Pray for wisdom, gentleness, and boldness to lead others through conflict in a Kingdom way.