



## Dealing with Difficult Members

Ephesians 4:15-16 - instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

Sooner or later, every Life Group will experience conflict of some sort. It may be a small and passive conflict between two Life Group members or it could be a major disagreement between two sections of the group. Either way, it must be handled and dealt with appropriately. You should not view the conflict as a problem that will threaten to destroy your Group, but rather as an opportunity to grow the group closer together. It is the unacknowledged and unaddressed conflict that is the most dangerous. Conflict that is entered into and resolved leads to deeper intimacy, whether the group is an eGroup for married couples or for single guys. Either way, the principles are the same.

So, as you prepare to address a conflict, ask yourself how to engage with the issues while still seeing the value in the opinions and feelings of the Group member. Remember that prayer is your first step towards dealing with the conflict. Here are some potential steps in the process of dealing with the conflict:

**Address the issue quickly.** As the leader, you cannot delay in dealing with conflict within your group. You cannot put it off and think it will resolve itself.

**Begin with empathy.** Empathy opens a pathway for learning to occur. When you are preparing for a difficult conversation, I ask myself: "Is there another way to show empathy here? Can I put myself in their shoes in some way"? Answering these questions will allow you to confront without the heat of anger.

**Listen closely for underlying messages.** As the leader, remember that it is not always what someone says, but rather how they say it and the meaning behind what they said.

**Never use email to deal with conflict.** Try to avoid using phone or email to deal with conflict. If possible, always deal with conflict in person.

**"You make me so mad!"** As the leader, encourage your group members to avoid using this type of language. Encourage your group members to use statements that start with "I..."; an example would be, "I get upset when..."

**Find the source of the conflict.** As the leader, dig past the surface level of the conflict. Try to find the source of the conflict and deal with the core issues.

**Determine who is involved and its impact on the group.** If the conflict is only tied to a couple of the members, do not bring the other group members into the conflict. Keep the needs of the group in mind, as well as the needs of those involved in the conflict.

**Bring Scripture into the discussion.** Use the Bible as the foundation for answers to the conflict. Choose some specific scriptures that communicate the unity of brothers and sisters in Christ.

What is the biggest conflict that you have ever experienced either in your family or in your workplace? What did you learn from it? How can you use those experiences in your eGroup leadership?

Do you naturally run away from or towards conflict? What is your natural tendency regarding conflict? You need to know your tendencies before the conflict arises in the eGroup.