



Ticked Off!

Dealing with Anger and
Conflict in an Angry and
Conflicted World

A 4-Week Curriculum for Senior High Youth
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Dealing with Anger and Conflict in an Angry and Conflicted World

We know that adults have plenty of problems dealing with handling anger and dealing with conflict. We see it in our churches, our work places, in our families, and among groups of friends. It should be no surprise then that due to the social, emotional, and developmental realities of being a teenager, many of our youth are even less equipped to handle similar emotions and situation.

From petty grievances among best friends, to escalating rivalries, to frustrations within the family system, to the nightmarish displays of violence that torment our school campuses nationwide, our youth are confronted with a bevy of conflict situations every day. From disagreements and differences of opinion to those infused with anger including verbal or physical fights, our youth need tools to deal constructively in these situations.

Purpose of this 4-week curriculum:

- ? Help our kids understand what is conflict
- ? Recognize the implications of acting out in anger
- ? Explore biblical models of conflict resolution and forgiveness
- ? Connect these biblical models to the realities of their experiences

✍ ✍ We also believe that it is important that our youth understand that anger is a normal human reaction and that it is not in itself wrong, but that it is important to develop some tools for dealing with anger and conflict on an individual basis.

Week One: What is Conflict? "Yeah I'm Mad! So what?" (Recognizing the effects of anger globally, nationally, personally.)

Week Two: Biblical Models for Conflict Resolution "But, didn't David kick a little Goliath . . .?"

Week Three: Biblical Models for Forgiveness

Week Four: Rituals for Healing

Who is it for? Senior High Students, roughly ages 14-18

How long will it take? About 1 hour for each session

Week One: What is Conflict? "Yeah I'm Mad! So what?"

Purpose/Description: Define and identify conflict globally, nationally or locally, and personally. How is anger a player in these situations?

✍ **Materials Needed:** Magazines and newspapers, poster boards, glue sticks, scissors, tape (to hang posters); Handout A. Chalk/whiteboard/large paper, markers for brainstorm.

Warm Up: Large Group Brainstorm

Think of a time when you were in conflict, or in a "fight" with someone. How did you feel? How did you react? What were your emotions? What did you say, or want to say? Who do you fight with? What are other words to describe "anger"? Keeping these ideas in mind, each person write your own definition of conflict.

Activity #1:

Working as individuals or in groups of no more than 3, have everyone scan local and national newspapers and magazines. When they find headlines, stories, or pictures that describe people and groups who are not at peace, have them cut them out and glue them to a piece of poster board. Hang the posters on the wall next along with the definitions of conflict.

Activity #2:

Fighting, anger and conflict surround us in the world, in the news, on TV. But it also occurs closer to us. Who have you been in conflict with? Have you ever felt conflict with yourself? Using the handout, reflect and write about a time when you were in a fight, or in conflict. Fold this in half when you are finished and keep it for later reflection.

Response:

How do you know when someone is angry? Using these responses, ask:

Has God ever been angry? (Read Exodus 15:7 or Numbers 32:13. Then read Exodus 34:6 "slow to anger". Ask the students how they fit these two verses together?)

Was Jesus ever angry? (Read Mark 4:35-41, Jesus speaks angry words toward the disciples. Can you think of other examples?)

Discussion of these verses can lead to answering two questions:

- 1) Is anger bad?
- 2) Is it OK to be angry? If yes, then how do we deal with anger? How can you approach the situation recorded in the reflection?

Bible suggestions:

- ? Exodus 32:11-14 (God turned anger into compassion)
- ? Psalm 78:38
- ? Psalm 86:15 (Prayer about God who is slow to anger)
- ? Ephesians 4:25-29 (Do not let the sun go down while still angry.)

Closing:

God recognizes that we will be angry and in conflict at times in our lives. God knows that our feelings are real and must be taken seriously. However, God would not intend for us to hurt others because of our anger. We can rely on God for comfort, strength and mercy during the tough times when we are angry.

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, anger and conflict surround us our world, and often consume us. We pray for countries and governments that are divided that you will help them resolve differences. We pray for families and individuals who are torn by anger and conflict that you will mend the hurt. Lord, guide us, encourage and strengthen us

Week Two: Biblical Models for Conflict Resolution.

"But, didn't David kick a little Goliath . . . ?"

Purpose/Description: To show participants that conflict was resolved in a number of different ways in the Bible . Sometimes people have to talk out their differences before conflict. Sometimes people have to avoid conflict. Sometimes people simply need to separate to avoid conflict. Then, there are times when one must stand up, and conflict is a healthy means to work through and solve problems and differences. Students will work through these passages and should come away with an understanding that conflict is OK for Christians, and with a greater amount of resources to decide how to work through conflict.

Warm Up: "Whose line is it anyway?" (20 minutes)

This warm up will be sort of a take-off of "whose line is it anyway?" Each of the six biblical passages has a certain way of resolving conflict (i.e. in Genesis 13:5-11, Abram and Lot parted company before they had a conflict).

Biblical Examples of Resolution:

- ? Genesis 13:5-11 "Separating before conflict arises"
- ? Genesis 26:17-22 "Avoiding conflict"
- ? Joshua 22:11-34 "Talking through misunderstandings"
- ? 1 Samuel 17 "Standing up to a fight"
- ? Matthew 21:12-13 "Taking a right stand"
- ? Acts 15:1-35 "Constructive conflict and debate"

The youth leader should come up with a scenario similar to the one in each bible passage that involves a comedic element. Then divide the youth into six groups, have them introduce themselves and "improv" their way through the skit. Because some kids are shy, and might feel pressure, the youth leader (or small group leaders) may take part in each skit. Encourage the youth to have with it and let loose.

Activity: (10-20 minutes)

After the warm up, the groups will each be given the actual bible story, and sent off in their groups to discuss a series of questions about the actual biblical event:

- 1) What was the conflict that was taking place, or going to take place in this story?
- 2) What did the people involved do to solve this conflict?
- 3) What was good about it? What was bad?
- 4) Think about a situation that could happen that would be similar in . . . your church . . . with your friends . . . or in your country? Could this sort of way of resolving conflict work?

Response: (20-30 minutes)

The groups will gather back together in the big group and the youth leader will lead a discussion as

and how it could apply to their lives. If some of the groups had trouble with theirs, the youth leader should be prepared to work through some of the questions with the large group.

Closing:

The youth leader will lead prayer, but encourage students to volunteer prayer requests about people, regions, areas, or organizations that need prayer for their current conflict (e.g. peace in the Middle East).

Week Three: Biblical Models for Forgiveness **"To forgive, do I have to forget?"**

Purpose/Description: This week we will look at forgiveness, what the Bible says and how it plays out in our daily lives. The hour will include a warm-up, an activity, a discussion/response time and a closing prayer time.

✍ Materials needed: Many blocks of any kind (plastic, cardboard. etc.), paper, markers, crayons, pencils, Bibles, CD player and music, candle for prayer time, a chalk board or similar material

Warm-up and activity:

Break the group up in to two groups. Give each group blocks and instruct them to build a wall. The wall will separate the two groups. Tell them to make it as high and as thick as they can. Once their walls as build. Invite them to talk about times they have been in fights or times when they felt anger or out of control...

*What was your worst verbal fight?
Have you been in a physical fight?
When have you felt angry with someone?
What does anger feel like? Physically, emotionally?
How did you resolve it? Did you?*

Try to have the entire group talk with each other...with the wall between them. After some time ask them to begin to slowly take the wall down—peacefully.

Explain that forgiveness is like taking a wall down.

It may be thick or thin, build of strong materials that wear down over time or weak ones that dissolve easily. Pieces of the wall may never come down. Forgiveness is a process. Today we are going to look at the tools God has given us to take apart the walls of anger, fear and hate that separate us. Our tools for forgiveness.

Response:

Matthew 18, Matthew 6:9-15, 2 Corinthians 2:5-10, John 20: 19-23, Colossians 3:12-17

Have the students read over the Bible passages. Encourage them to write down words and phrases

that would help in the forgiving process. Remind them of their fight stories in the opening exercise. Write the words on a board.

How did you go about forgiving people?

How have people forgiven you?

Are there people in your lives you just can't forgive?

How would the Bible passages worked or not worked for them?

Why is forgiveness important for a group to function?

Remind them: *Forgiveness is only possible because of God's presence in our lives...the Holy Spirit at work. Forgiving people is difficult. It is a process. Like taking down a wall...it takes time and energy.*

Some other ideas for talking about forgiveness:

The International Forgiveness Institute states that Forgiveness:

Is a gift God has first given us.

Is a journey of choice that takes time.

Is a gift not a deal.

Isn't pretending that no harm was done.

Isn't forgetting.

Allows us hate the offense without hating the offender.

Lowers our anxiety, decreases our anger and depression and increases self-esteem, hope, harmony.

Activity:

Pass out paper and drawing materials...instruct them draw some ways we ritualize forgiveness in our lives. *What rituals does our community use to "officially" forgive people?* (examples: handshakes, hugs, meet for conversation, sign a contract, write letters to the person, journal in private, communion, sharing the peace, confession and forgiveness in church....)

As they are drawing play music in the background and begin to move in to the closing worship.

Closing:

Invite the group to focus on a relationship where they need forgiveness.

Gracious and forgiving God, we have lost sight of you and have become focused on our own ways. Refocus us. Remind us of your love. Renew our faith. You first forgave us and now we ask for strength to forgive others.

(give space for the group to add prayers)

Send your Holy Spirit into our lives so that we can begin to take down the walls that separate us. Take down the walls that infest our schools, our neighborhoods, our families, our thoughts and our souls. Rebuild us in your image and keep us in your grace always. For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen

Week Four: Rituals of Healing

Purpose/Description: Review past weeks, what people have learned or discovered, and plan a ritual for healing (e.g. a healing service) that could be shared also with the Junior High Youth if desired.

Materials: Worship books (from list below), candles, anointing oil, other items for decorating or creating the ritual space, musical instruments if desired.

Review:

What is Forgiveness? (Taken from *Helping People Forgive* by David Augsburger)

1. Accepting and forgiving are different processes. We accept persons for the good that they are or do. We forgive persons for the evil that they did or caused.
2. Excusing and forgiving are different processes. We excuse people when we no longer hold them accountable. We forgive people when we hold them accountable but do not excuse.
3. Tolerating and forgiving are different processes. We tolerate what another has done when we overlook or ignore. We forgive what we cannot tolerate, will not overlook or ignore.
4. Forgetting and forgiving are different processes. We do not need to forgive if we can simply forget - forgetting is passive, avoidant, repressive; it denies, detaches, dismisses. We do not forget when we forgive, but the meaning of the memory changes – forgiving is active and aware; it is recognizing the injury, owning the pain, and reaching out to reframe, re-create, restore, reconstruct, rebuild, reopen what can be opened.

Activity:

Facilitate planning of healing service. Have students incorporate ideas of ritual from last week's session. Invite them to be creative, to include what might be healing for them. If conflict arises, facilitate drawing on biblical models from session two as appropriate. Allow small groups to plan, organize or coordinate different parts of service or to be responsible for setup, cleanup, etc. Demonstrate or explain aspects of existing rituals that might guide them, but remind them that there is no one way and to make it their own.

In your planning include a time and place to actually do the ritual/ have the service that is planned. Include others, like family, junior high youth, friends, etc. as desired. Plan publicity as necessary.

Scriptural and Liturgical Tools for the Forgiving Process

1. Lutheran Book of Worship
 - a. Brief Orders of Confession and Forgiveness used for weekly worship
 - b. Corporate Confession and Forgiveness
 - c. Individual Confession and Forgiveness
 - d. Hymns on a theme of forgiveness or repentance (#303-312)
2. The Occasional Services Book: This book contains several liturgies that can be used to formally work through parts of the forgiving process.
 - a. Individual Confession and Forgiveness: This is a short, private service that takes place

- b. Collection of Psalms, Lessons and Prayers: Topics include anxiety (p.57), guilt (p. 60), and anger. (p. 69)
 - c. Service for the Word of Healing: This is a corporate service that includes the laying on of hands and/or anointing with oil by ministers. Prayers cover a variety of needs for healing. (p. 89)
 - d. Prayers During the Time of Separation or Divorce: A collection of prayers that speak to forgiveness without reconciliation. (p. 287)
3. With One Voice
 - a. Brief Order of Confession and Forgiveness used for weekly worship
 - b. Hymns on a theme of forgiveness and healing (#732-741)
 4. Bible: Scriptures contain numerous passages pertaining to forgiveness, choosing one to use will depend heavily on both your present situation and the biblical context. Some of the translations of "forgiving" won't mesh with Augsburg's paradigms shown above; this can work for or against you when getting close to the scripture text.
 5. Other songs and prayers from your collection.

Closing:

In what other situations might a service or ritual of healing be helpful? (e.g. when someone has been physically sick, after divorce, or death, or a friend moved away, etc.) What are some small rituals that they could incorporate into their own relationships (something simple)? Provide a small list scripture passages that might be helpful to them.

Prayer: (select a prayer from one of the rituals listed above).