



Preferred Path[®]
Core Course

**Communicating,
Building Consensus,
and Resolving Conflict**

**in
Christian Communities**

Facilitator Manual

Welcome, Facilitators! You play a very special and important role in helping participants have a good experience with this course. Here is a short summary of the plan:

- Each lesson is designed to be completed in less than an hour, depending on time for discussion.
- See our letter to participants for an overview of the learning model.
- Your Facilitator Kit gives you everything you need.
- Our instructions appear in each lesson in a square like this one.
- Everything in your manual is the same as Participant version, except for these special instructions.
- We recommend reading through each lesson and viewing the video Mini-Lecture ahead of time.
- Have fun and if you have questions, please call or email us using the content information in the Facilitator Kit!

Course Overview

- What conflicts do we face at home, work, school, church life and with neighbors?
- What difference does Christian faith make when it comes to conflict resolution and peacemaking?
- We will learn a *Preferred Path* for resolving conflict.
 - ◆ Based on biblical principles
 - ◆ Integrated with behavioral science tools
- We will give special attention to:
 - ◆ Communicating
 - ◆ Building consensus
 - ◆ Resolving conflict
- We will learn how to take the *Preferred Path* approach at home, at work, school, church and with neighbors.

Learning Objective

The learning objective of this course is for participants to be able to:

- Recognize and analyze opportunities to enhance communication, build consensus, and resolve conflict as they arise in the real world.
- Apply a biblical model to achieve better outcomes in these circumstances.

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Welcome to the *Preferred Path* Core Course!

Would your life be better if you could –

- Communicate well (listen for understanding, speak and be heard)?
- Unbundle problems to create a path for consensus (agreement on what to do) on hot topics?
- Resolve conflict at home, work, in church, or neighborhood?

If your answer is yes to any of these questions, this course is for you. Six lessons provide you with an introduction to proven tools that build on guidance found in Scripture, integrated with contemporary negotiation and mediation practice, to help you communicate better, build consensus, and resolve conflict with another person or group.

Intended for a small group format, the manual you hold in your hand, plus the facilitator’s video, will help you track key concepts and put them into practice during the week. Here is a short list of what you’ll find in this course:

- Key Scriptural foundation for each lesson.
- Integrated with tools used by professionals whose livelihood depends on helping others communicate well, negotiate agreements to avoid lawsuits, and resolve conflict as an alternative to force.
- A proven experiential learning model that invites immediate practical application.
- Short and engaging lectures that share new knowledge to use along the way.
- Summary tips galore (see inside back flap of this manual for your personal “cheat sheet”).
- A “no frills” time schedule: six lessons, 50 minutes each, “take what you need and leave the rest.”
- All assembled by two people—a psychologist and attorney, drawing on their experience as mediators, teachers, parents, and grandparents with lessons learned from the trenches in church, corporate, and international conflict.

Here’s how this course works. Everyone gets a manual in which to write notes and use as a road map. A facilitator opens each session and takes you through an exercise to “prime the pump” for each topic. Video Mini-Lecture with outline provided in the manual follows. We wrap up each session with Application Questions, Practice via exercises and the *Preferred Path* Conflict Game, and Transfer Tips.

And if you forget all this? Visit *www.preferredpathcr.com* and log in with User Name and Password provided to each participant and facilitator. From your phone or computer, access tools from the course for “just in time” use in your real world.

We hope you have a great time with this course! May God bless you richly as you explore every step on the *Preferred Path*.

Karl and Diane Slaikeu

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Materials for Facilitator for Lesson One:

Make two copies of script: “Hey, Dad, who was that on the phone?”

To Do: With early arrivals, pick two “volunteers” to read roles of Dad and Daughter. Suggest they step into another room to read script through once. Encourage “overdoing it” and having fun.



Lesson One: What is the *Preferred Path*? (and do I really need it?)

If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.' If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector.

Matthew 18:15-17

Concrete Experience (3 minutes)

The exercise involves two volunteers reading a script, with short debrief discussion to follow, leading into the Mini-Lecture. Set up the reading to the group by saying: "Let's listen in on this conversation between a father and his 13-year-old daughter. She walks in as he is finishing a phone conversation."

Debrief (3 minutes)

Ask the group: "What's going on here?" or "What did you observe?"
As people respond, reflect back/summarize their comments.
Ask: "What does this skit make you think of on the topic of conflict resolution in Christian communities."
Summarize with "Good job! And now let's listen to the first Mini-Lecture."

Lesson One: Learning Objectives

- Recognize opportunities at home, work, school, church, neighborhood to:
 - ◆ Improve Communication
 - ◆ Build Consensus
 - ◆ Resolve Conflict
- Describe what happens:
 - ◆ Without *Preferred Path*
 - ◆ With *Preferred Path*

Mini-Lecture Outline

Christians aren't supposed to have conflicts, are they?

- ◆ Some say No.
- ◆ But we know differently.

How about you?

Preferred Path Questionnaire

Please answer the following questions. Or, if you don't like questionnaires, skip this and go straight to “**Do I Need This?**” test on page 10.

My main interest is improving relationships at:

- Home
- Work
- Church
- School
- Neighborhood
- All of these

I am already thinking of a case from the past where this course might have helped. (Please write a phrase or sentence to remind you.)

The “hard part” for me, the greatest challenge, is:

- Dealing with strong emotions
- Uncovering hidden interests
- Dealing with “denial” and “avoidance”
- _____
- _____
- _____

Specifically, I would like to learn new ways to:

- Enhance my listening skills
- Learn to speak my ‘mind and heart’
- Build consensus
- Think ‘outside the box’
- Help others make peace
- Bring justice to situations where wrong has been done (or perceived so)
- Other: _____

Do I Need This?

These questions were submitted by a Jeff Foxworthy fan. Please check all that apply.

- If you wake up one day and find half of your congregation walked away and took the church building with them, then you may need the *Preferred Path*.
- If your church has ever had a pastor run out of town by fewer people than it takes to play a pick-up basketball game, then you may need the *Preferred Path*.
- If you come home one night to find all of your clothes and personal effects thrown on the front steps, then you may need the *Preferred Path*.
- If the team you lead regularly holds meetings to which you are not invited, then you may need the *Preferred Path*.
- If things are so bad that you have someone taste your food before you eat it and start your car before you drive it, then you may need the *Preferred Path*.

Scoring:

If you checked one to four items, please continue with this course. If you checked all five (or know someone who could), please apply to teach this course.

Definition of *Preferred Path*

- For situations at home, work, school, church, neighborhoods.
- When the hard part is emotions, broken relationships, violence.
- The *Preferred Path* offers a way to justice, peace, healing, and reconciliation.

The *Preferred Path*

1 Pray and Prepare	2 Act in Love	3 Listen/ Speak Collaboratively	4 Request Facilitation/ Mediation	5 Refer to Higher Authority for Decision	6 Take Other Action
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Based on Two Sets of Guiding Principles

- From Scripture
- Negotiation/Mediation Practice

Guidance from Scripture

“Love enemies” - *Matthew 5:44*

“Brother or sister sins against you” - *Matthew 18:15-17*

“Go and be reconciled” - *Matthew 5:23-24*

“Forgiveness” - *Matthew 18:21-22*

“Lawsuits” among believers - *I Corinthians 6:1,7*

“Love which binds in perfect unity” - *Colossians 3:14*

“Interests of others” - *Philippians 2:4*

“Don't be anxious” - *Philippians 4:7-8*

“The Holy Spirit intercedes” - *Romans 8:26*

Guidance from Negotiation and Mediation Practice

Conflict can have good or bad outcomes

- Bad outcomes:
 - ♦ Broken relationships
 - ♦ Emotional wear and tear
 - ♦ Financial loss
 - ♦ Bodily harm or death
 - ♦ Lowered morale
- Good outcomes:
 - ♦ Policy changes
 - ♦ Improved relationships
 - ♦ Enhanced teamwork
 - ♦ Tools, techniques and confidence to manage conflict

Conflict can have multiple causes

- Differing interests
- Communication breakdown
- Personality differences
- Negative treatment
- Lack of negotiation skills
- Evil
- Psychopathology

Four Ways to Resolve Conflict

Conflict Management Continuum

1 Avoidance	2 Collaboration	3 Higher Authority	4 Power Plays
• Decision by Chance	• Decision by the Parties	• Decision by Third Party	• Decision by Force
• Take No Action	• Individual Initiative • Negotiation • Mediation	• Chain of Command • Arbitration • Litigation	• Strikes • Violence

Key Definitions

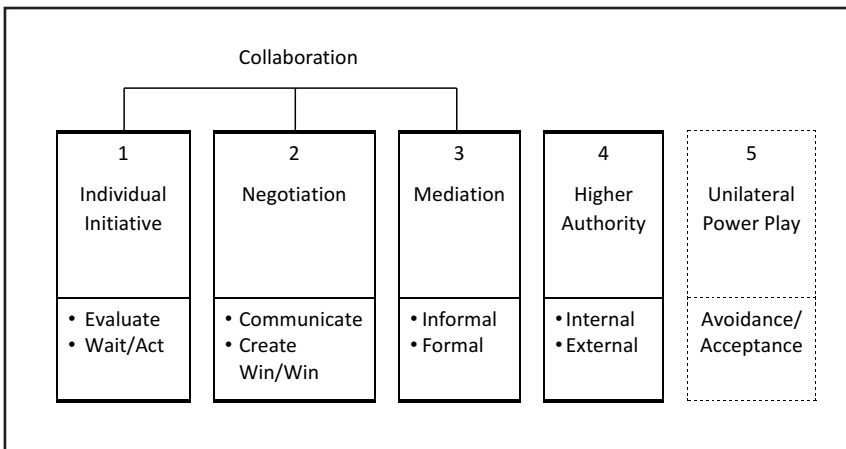
- Negotiation: the parties work it out
- Mediation: a third party assists, but parties still control outcome
- Arbitration: third party makes decision
- Litigation: judge or jury makes decision

Collaboration as a Way to Peace, Justice, Healing, and Reconciliation

- Lasting change often requires
 - ◆ Private confrontation
 - ◆ Acknowledgement/apology/repentance
 - ◆ Corrective action
 - ◆ Accountability
- Limitations of court and war
- Advantages of collaboration

To Maximize Good Outcomes, Order the Options with Collaboration First and Higher Authority, Force and Avoidance in the Backup Role

Preferred Path Model of Conflict Resolution



An Integrated Christian Version of the *Preferred Path*

- Matthew 18 foundation
- Precede with two blatantly Christian steps
- Along the way, use
 - ◆ Spiritual disciplines
 - ◆ Communication, negotiation, mediation tools

The *Preferred Path*

1 Pray and Prepare	2 Act in Love	3 Listen/ Speak Collaboratively	4 Request Facilitation/ Mediation	5 Refer to Higher Authority for Decision	6 Take Other Action
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Step 1 reminds us to *pause* and *pray* at the start, turn the matter over to God, ask for guidance as we *prepare* for what's next.



Step 2 reminds us to act in love toward the other person or group, no matter what.

Step 3 is the engagement step: speak with the person; draw him or her out; listen actively for interests, hurts, concerns, and possible remedies.





Step 4 is for situations where direct conversation derails or presents risks: informal facilitation by a third party or mediation by a professional can open doors that parties left alone cannot.

Step 5 is when the parties say, “We can’t do this, or shouldn’t do this; it should be a decision by a higher authority; we give it to them.”



Step 6 is the backup to everything that precedes it. If collaboration and higher authority fail to achieve resolution, parties still have options: living with the situation as it is (walling it off); continuing in prayer and waiting for a new opening; or other direct action.



Other Features of the *Preferred Path*

- Steps 1-4 are win/win
- Steps 5 and 6 are win/lose
- You can loop forward or back
- Compliance and ownership of outcome occur in Steps 1-4
- If you need a legal precedent, go to Step 5
- Accountability with apology and repentance occur in Steps 1-4
- Peace, justice, reconciliation, and healing occur in Steps 1-4

And What if the Other Side Knows Nothing of This?

- *One person* can follow the path and influence others
- Test this proposition in lessons ahead

With No *Preferred Path*

- The following methods likely will rule:
 - ◆ Avoidance
 - ◆ Higher authority (court, Roberts Rules of Order, divisive votes)
 - ◆ Force

- Leading to:
 - ◆ Money spent
 - ◆ Stress
 - ◆ Broken relationships

With *Preferred Path*

- Prayerful dialogue, discussion, confrontation
 - ◆ Peace, justice, healing, reconciliation
 - ◆ Or, peaceful separation
- Accountability, positive change vs. damage control

Application Questions (1-2 minutes)

Using the questions in the manual, invite responses to each question, summarizing what you hear. Encourage/reinforce participant comments that link any point from the lecture to participants' personal experiences.

1. Can you think of situations from your past where using the *Preferred Path* might have helped?
2. Can you use this right now, or in the future?

Practice (About 20 minutes total)

Practical Exercise (10 minutes). Have characters do same skit as for Concrete Experience, except this time have daughter attempt to tell dad about *Preferred Path* concepts. Ask daughter to improvise by replacing the line “Why can’t you just talk to them?” with anything she wishes to start a conversation about how the Preferred Path might be a better way. Discuss what worked and what didn’t.

Play the *Preferred Path* Conflict Game (10 minutes). From the game kit, take out the instructions card, and ONLY those cards marked for Lesson One. Put the stack with colored side up on a table in the middle of the group. Have one person read instructions, then divide into teams and play the game. When time is up, or all cards done, ask each person to record personal score (same for each member of team) in his/her manual.

Transfer Tips

- This week at work, home, in church, or in your neighborhood, do you see situations where people are trying to communicate, or reach agreement on something, or with some conflict?
- How are they doing?
- In *Preferred Path* language, what steps do you see them using?
- Make a few notes in your manual or journal about where you see the greatest need for *Preferred Path* principles in your world, based on your observations this week.