

Transcript-87

Shea Houdmann

I don't know if you've been observing the world recently, but here at Got Questions we have and we're seeing a lot of conflict. At Got Questions this may surprise you, but we get a lot of people who don't necessarily agree with some of our answers and that results in conflict. There's conflict culturally with COVID, with race relations. There's conflict in the world, even as we speak. Major conflict breaking out in the world. So I thought it would be super helpful for us to have an episode where we discuss conflict resolution. So my guest today is Jay Payleitner. He's the author of *Don't Take The Bait to Escalate* so Jay welcome to the show.

Jay Payleitner

Shea, what a delight. Thanks for having me. I appreciate it.

Shea Houdmann

So Jay, what led you to write a book on conflict resolution.

Jay Payleitner

Well, you've already touched on a little bit. This world we live in it seems every time you turn around, there's a little more conflict. Whether it's COVID related or political related or the world situation. As an author I'm going OK. How can how can I, in my own little world here, as I sit at my desk here and outside Chicago IL, how can I help bring that to a conclusion? So I would struggle with that. Kicking around some ideas on how what kind of book I would write without a book contract of any kind. Just seeing the I would put something together.

Jay Payleitner

And then the exact same. It's a God thing. At the exact same time at a marketing meeting at Salem Publishing, they were just in conversation and one of the marketing manager says something about you know what we shouldn't. Well, we don't want that to escalate. We shouldn't take that bait. We shouldn't take that bait.

Jay Payleitner

Something about. It's like something like that and Tim Peterson, the publisher there said, wow, that's the a great name for a book. And so they laughed about that and then not long afterward, they said, you know what? I bet you Jay Payleitner could write that book. So the title *Don't Take The Bait to Escalate* was not mine. That came from the publisher who tracked me down and asked me to write the book.

Jay Payleitner

And I thought. While that we're gonna join forces on this project and suddenly I had a book contract and we made it happen. I wrote it last fall and in the end of 2021 and suddenly it's coming out at the exactly right time as Putin is invading Ukraine. Holy cow, again, it's a God thing that made this work exactly. *Don't Take the Bait To Escalate*. What an amazing a gift that was to me and hopefully to the world we'll see so.

Shea Houdmann

What makes you particularly passionate about conflict resolution?

Jay Payleitner

Well, because that is exactly the world we live in. But what was it so amazing to me was that when I approached this whole thing, I thought that conflict was a bad thing. I mean, in general it's because it's hard conflicts. It's not even the edgy kind of words to a pronunciation, but. When I dug into it, I realized that. Wow conflict can be a good thing.

Jay Payleitner

Conflict I looked back at when my marriage hit bottom. That conflict led to a stronger marriage, so conflict competition is a kind of conflict competition between companies or rivals athletic rivals that the develop respect and friendship. And creativity comes out of competition, negotiation, honest and honorable negotiation kind of leads to a synergy between the organizations. Shea without conflict there would never be any heroes or mentors or empathy. Without conflict, there wouldn't be any rules and rules are good things. If there's never a conflict there never be any apologies or uncovering the deeper truth. I mean, it's conflict in our life that draws us to God and what is it? James trials of many kinds they test our faith and produced perseverance. So conflict is a good thing. When I started writing that book, I didn't know that, but it became so clear as I was digging into the topic.

Shea Houdmann

So whenever I've taken a personality test, some peacemaker always comes up high for me that I'm bringing two sides together, like kind of ending a conflict is it's kind of hard wired in to me, and if it was on one of the biblical spiritual gifts list, it would probably be a spiritual gift of mine, but definitely an interest, a passion of mine. But, in our service at Got Questions obviously we deal with some controversial issues that often result in conflict. As I said at the very beginning, but and when you transition the conversation more towards like a Christian focus is conflict within the church is conflict among Christians a bad thing? A good thing? And what are some of the examples you've seen of how God has used conflict in the Christian realm?

Jay Payleitner

Wow well yeah. You can imagine how church elders. I mean, we would very specific examples would be church elders, wrestling with a theological issue or a personnel issue. If a pastor is make some bad decisions ultimately, if they do it right. If they approach it with love and respect and empathy. And biblical application, that church body is gonna come stronger. And of course, there's all kinds of biblical admonitions for when you have conflict with someone you go to them. Yeah, somebody who made mistake you go to them and I cover it the book. A little bit. Of course, you can't get away from it. If someone wrongs you go to them and give him a chance to make it right, and if they don't make it right and you go to some elders and if that doesn't make it right, you can go to the entire church and then sometimes you have to, you know, wash your hands with them and turn it loose. Turn it over to the God's, ultimate judgment. I guess it's. A good word judgment, right?

Shea Houdmann

Yeah, so in your experience, we've done a really good intro here of introducing conflict in the sense of it happens and positive things can result from it, but I don't want to summarize too much of your book for you, but maybe give a basic outline what? What is the right approach to conflict resolution?

Jay Payleitner

I came up with the four factors, I call them, that you want to use and approaching any conflict. I didn't start the book with that idea. I started the book with the idea of I'm just gonna create right and based on my experience in conflicts in film, conflicts in books, conflicts in real life, conflicts in politics and business, conflicts at Thanksgiving dinner table Shea.

Jay Payleitner

And in marriage and friends and neighbors, I just wanted to work through some real life scenarios and some fictional scenarios, even that in how those conflicts were resolved in a positive way and it became so clear after a while that, wow. In all, in every case there was four factors that had to be the whoever wanted to resolve the conflict. Whoever, whatever character or whatever situation wonders of the conflict they had these four factors that always came into play and they are decide what you really want, not what you want, but decide what you really want which is different sometimes.

Jay Payleitner

Know the risks as when you enter conflict there are some there are risks involved and then we'll empathy, empathize with your adversary as we know the world could use a little more empathy. Looking at walking in the other person shoes and even the golden rule doing it to others as you would have them do unto you. That idea that understand what the other people need. So decide what you want. Know the risks.

Jay Payleitner

Empathize with your adversary and finally and this is where maybe the world doesn't come together and get this point. Expect the win. Be optimistic. The idea that you know God's gonna work it all out for good ultimately. If you, according to his purpose, of course, Romans 8:28, so those are the four things the four factors and it's stunning the way they apply those to any conflict you got a good chance of working it out in a positive way.

Shea Houdmann

So just to our audience, I when I read Don't Take the Bait to Escalate, it's excellent book. I really learned a lot and I especially appreciated the stories. The illustrations, whether fiction or real world, that really helped me to understand or think through this, but what I'd like you to do is maybe go through and with each of the four factors elaborate on each one and maybe this. I know we don't have a ton of time, but briefly give an illustration that fits each one of those so people can get a good idea of what they will experience when they read your book.

Jay Payleitner

Thank you, I'm thinking about the most obvious thing obvious when it comes to me is early in my marriage. I'm married 40 some years now to my to the lovely Rita and early in our marriage one of our

conflicts was that, Oh my, golly was just tragic and terrible and horrible. I liked crunchy peanut butter and she liked creamy peanut butter. What a terrible conflict.

Shea Houdmann

Hey, I'm with you on this one.

Jay Payleitner

So and so. Let's apply the four factors, decide what you really want. OK, I want a crunchy peanut. But what I really wanted was my wife to love me and respect me and trust me and build our marriage. So I mean I wanted that crunchy peanut butter, but what I really wanted was a was a healthy strong marriage. Know the risks. If I make a big deal about my need for crunchy peanut butter, we're not going to get along. There's there'll be less romance in the marriage, probably if I can put it that way, and then a little and empathize with the adversaries like wow, she likes creamy.

Jay Payleitner

I need to I need to get in. I need to have some empathy for that need she has as now it's a minor small point and just creamy peanut butter. And then expect to win. Let's expect to win let's see how God works this out. OK, So what we did decide was to come in some.

Jay Payleitner

Sometimes compromise is a terrible idea. Sometimes it's a good thing and what we did was compromise every other jar was creamy then crunchy then creamy then crunchy. But one day we were at the grocery store together and we still had a half a jar creamy peanut butter and I went and bought a crunchy jar because it was my turn and suddenly we had two jars of peanut butter in the house. What a brilliant idea. So God worked that out so now. So after that we bought 2 jars of peanut butter in the cupboard. What a brilliant fantastic idea.

Jay Payleitner

The bigger lessons there might be sometimes conflicts, Shea have really easy answer. If you just kind of take a breath and let them happen. So anyways, that's the four factors applied to a pretty easy low key conflict, but could have gone over the edge, you know if you would have if I would have made a big deal about that. Could have done some serious damage.

Shea Houdmann

Yeah, that's interesting. That story really reminds me. So recently our youth leaders at our church asked most of the adults in the family to share with the teenagers, a video describing lessons they've learned for healthy relationships, whether it's marriage or whatever, and one of the older couples shared a video that one of their I really don't know how big a conflict it was, but they have very different ways of handling the toothpaste tube. Like the one person squeezes from the middle. Another person squeezes from the back end. At some point there was some level of conflict. I'm just like laughing. It's like I have never cared enough about as long as there's toothpaste in the tube, I don't care how my wife got it out. So eventually they did what you guys did and just you know why don't we just get two toothpaste tubes?

Jay Payleitner

There you go.

Shea Houdmann

And so it's yeah, coming up with solutions and like going for the win. OK, what can we do that we're actually end this conflict permanently so we never have to deal with again. Stuff like that. That seems simple, but the principles can apply from a very trivial situation. The same principles apply to a major one, so maybe share another one. I really liked your being a baseball player. To tell us about your high school baseball rivals illustration.

Jay Payleitner

Well, I have five kids in all four or five of them play baseball or softball. My four sons played baseball and some of their best friends still to this day were rivals on a baseball team. You think of you know middle school, two boys show up the two best kids in the team. They both want to be shortstop. That's part of the deal where you want to be short stop and maybe bat clean up. That's the goal, and you can imagine that that's conflict. There's rivalry there.

Jay Payleitner

But if you decide what you really want, the four factors again, applying the four factors, they both want to enjoy the game, to win some games, to be the best team you can be, and to you know, build some relationships. The risk if you're a real jerk about it and you pour Gatorade on his glove or yeah, or you want complained to the coach. This the bad things happen is yeah, the team doesn't gel. And then if you think to empathize with your adversary and sometimes an adversary isn't, this mean spirited, adversarial role it's just the yeah the guy the person you're in conflict with.

Jay Payleitner

If you think about what the other person needs and how to help them be a better ballplayer, then if you expect the win. You go into it with hope and enjoy and passion for the game. Suddenly those two boys. They probably end up being best friends because they're the ones who are lifting up the team and leading the team together. So that's another example of when competition conflict rivalry, both wanting to have the same role as a shortstop or batting cleanup. Suddenly the conflict turns out to be a win for everybody.

Shea Houdmann

So let me ask you this. In my experience, the vast majority of people do not enjoy conflict. We don't not typically actively searching it out, but I have a few friends. And then in our experience at Got Questions we have a lot of people have contacts where they are just itching for a conflict. So when you're in a conflict with someone who's actually really enjoying it, what are some principles to how to steer that conversation towards resolution? And when the other person is actually enjoying the conflict itself, rather than enjoying trying to reach a amicable solution.

Jay Payleitner

Well, you you're framing this now, as conflict as an as a negative thing. And I'm because after writing this book, I'm having a hard time wrapping my brain around that because I see conflict as this good thing that good stuff comes out of it. I think what you're describing here is kind of a jerk. How do you deal with? How do you deal with guys who are just kind of? They don't? They're not in the conflict for a win. They're in the conflict just for the sake of this stirring things up. I've been being pains. So I think. What you gotta do. Going into that kind of relationship is you know what? See the big picture. See that God's in charge, even though you can't, you can't influence this. Your adversary in this case, and maybe have a sense that you're going to listen.

Jay Payleitner

Maybe this person does have a good point. Be ready to forgive as need be and also bring some calm to the situation. Maybe take a few steps back again. Let's see. See the big picture kind of thing. But yeah, there are folks out there who will drag you down, and it might be the time you know time to they'll turn him loose and get out of a situation. But there are quite a few instances in the book. Well, I do talk about ways to escalate and those people want to escalate the conflict. The whole point is there are strategies to deescalate the conflict.

Shea Houdmann

And one of the things that your book focus on and actually talk about the positive aspects of conflict that very true in my life and most of the very close friendships that I have now at some point there was a conflict. And they became that choice. OK, is this conflict going to end the relationship, or is this something we're going to resolve? And then when it's resolved, the relationship is stronger than ever because there's a deeper level of trust between you and the other person when they know oh this person really has my best interest at heart and they really want conflict to be resolved rather than just, they're not going to abandon me the next time we have a disagreement. So I've definitely seen it in my own personal life that when conflict is resolved in a godly way that it results in stronger relationships.

Jay Payleitner

For sure, as I said, I hate hitting bottom. Oh I, I lead marriage conferences on occasion. I've written a few books on marriage and I will look out in the audience and I'll say how many of you it might be 50 couples out there. How many of you have hit bottom in your marriage? And about half people raise their hand and in and then I'll say yeah, ain't it great and they all laugh. They know exactly what I'm talking about.

Jay Payleitner

How conflict in marriage get past it? It'll make your marriage stronger, but I need to challenge anybody listening right now. You are in conflict with somebody. Probably it's a sibling or a good friend. And you need to make that call and not be oh, I'm so sorry for what we've gone through, but do the hey man, I you know what I'm, I gotta tell you that I'm missing us I'm missing us, you and I used to be good friends used to hang out or I was thinking about you the other day and just open the door for some positive memories and maybe separate yourself from the conflicts.

Jay Payleitner

There's a good chance you dont even remember what the conflict was about. We all know folks who are who are who haven't talked to their brother or sister in decades. Like are you kidding me? Maybe my

parents too? Now call your dad or your mom this mother day or your dad this Father's Day and say hey. Don't expect a big apology but just take down those walls and you'll be glad you did.

Shea Houdmann

Yeah, absolutely. So let's do. I really like what you shared about John Chapter 8. So what do you learn from that passage about conflict resolution?

Jay Payleitner

Well, that's a classic. When we think of Jesus and conflict, people go right to well yeah, Jesus had righteous anger and he turned over the tables in the temple. But my favorite moment when Jesus entered into a conflict was when the Pharisees had gathered to stone the adulteress woman. And Jesus walks in into that situation. John Chapter 8 and he doesn't use a lot of words. He asked, he starts drawing in the sand, which is taking a moment which is really good model for us.

Jay Payleitner

Sometimes in conflict. Don't jump right in with a shouting match. Take a moment and draw in the sand. Now we don't know what he drew in the sand there. It could be the sins of the Pharisees. It could be something from some Old Testament law. It could be just some little hieroglyphics that he wanted to give people time to think about what they, what they had done. And he said, you know, you were who without sin cast the first stone. He didn't say he didn't say that what the woman did was, there's nothing wrong with it.

Jay Payleitner

That's what people forget. He didn't let her off the hook, yeah, So what happened was He draws in the sand. He gets up a couple times and you can picture that scene where he brings peace and calm and the Pharisees kind of dropped their stones 1 by 1. Interestingly, the more mature, the older Pharisees left first, 'cause they probably had more sins in their life to think about the Bible doesn't tell us. But imagine going wow and probably the younger ones I'm the younger ones who go. I'm gonna stick around I'm gonna stone this woman.

Jay Payleitner

Well, no, then they finally all left and then Jesus turned to the adulteress woman, who by law deserved to be stoned and said, paraphrasing, they don't condemn you, I don't either go and sin no more. So he gave her the assignment go and sin no more so that whole scene there. John Chapter 8 is a real model for DEESCALATING a nasty, nasty moment of conflict.

Shea Houdmann

Yeah, so again, this is the Got Questions podcast with Jay Payleitner. We're discussing conflict resolution so again your book is excellent. I highly recommend it. There will be links to where people can purchase the book and learn more about you at podcast.gotquestions.org. When this episode goes live and also in the show notes for this episode. And on the description on YouTube, but Jay let me just give you a final opportunity. So who ultimately is this book for? And who do you think? Like who will find this book particularly helpful, and you can't just say everyone.

Jay Payleitner

Well, most people will pick up this book 'cause they think it's a business book because there are quite a few. You know, pretty nice books on conflict resolution and they get into the psychology and the philosophy.

Jay Payleitner

This is a book for anybody who ever has conflict in their in their life, Shea which is ever which is everyone but, uh, no, you know what? It's almost a kind of almost a devotional of sorts and that you go through and you get a chance to consider more than 20 different times when conflict might enter a life and that that could be you know, a Union negotiations that could be when some drunk driver backs into you in a parking lot that could be when if you're arguing with your neighbor about some tree that drops sap on his car, there are strategies we need to do use in everyday life for well, deescalating conflict or drawing people close, and that's the only way that you can share the gospel.

Jay Payleitner

Shea is by admitting that there's conflict in our lives that in sin is conflict. So you got to admit that there's conflict in our lives that. There's a battle between light and darkness with, you know Satan is there routing us onto conflict that is unresolved. And of course we need to build relationships. So any authentic Christ follower needs to have the principles of how to resolve conflict to draw people close.

Jay Payleitner

And in my the last thought on this little topic would be this in relationships you can finish any conversation by pushing people away or you can finish conversations by drawing close to you and it's especially important in families.

Shea Houdmann

Agreed entirely. So the thing I like most about the book is it's simple and there are four steps to decide what you really want. Know the risks. Empathize with your adversary and expect to win, but then you also go into depth on each of these points and use illustrations to help us see how these things actually work out. So again, highly recommend the book. Don't Take The Bait to Escalate by Jay Payleitner so Jay thank you again for being on the show today.

Jay Payleitner

Shea, God bless I so appreciate your time.

Shea Houdmann

This has been the Got Questions podcast. Got questions Bible has answers. And we help you find them.