

WORSHIP

SUGGESTED WORSHIP SONGS:

You Are Good, Amazing God, Covered, Your Great Name

WELCOME

Share one or two valuable life lessons you have learned as a result of experiencing conflict whether at home, work or church.

WORD

ACTS 15:19-23, 30-33

¹⁹ Therefore it is my judgment that we do not trouble those who are turning to God from among the Gentiles, ²⁰ but that we write to them that they abstain from things contaminated by idols and from fornication and from what is strangled and from blood. ²¹ For Moses from ancient generations has in every city those who preach him, since he is read in the synagogues every Sabbath. ²² Then it seemed good to the apostles and the elders, with the whole church, to choose men from among them to send to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas—Judas called Barsabbas, and Silas, leading men among the brethren, ²³ and they sent this letter by them...

³⁰ So when they were sent away, they went down to Antioch; and having gathered the congregation together, they delivered the letter. ³¹ When they had read it, they rejoiced because of its encouragement. ³² Judas and Silas, also being prophets themselves, encouraged and strengthened the brethren with a lengthy message. ³³ After they had spent time there, they were sent away from the brethren in peace to those who had sent them out.

A Harvard study showed that the most outstanding quality of a happy life come from DEEP and MEANINGFUL CLOSE RELATIONSHIPS. However, even in the best of relationships, we can be sure that conflict will arise. Conflict is inevitable and this can also be beneficial to the relationship if handled properly. In this pivotal chapter of Acts, an important conflict was resolved through communication and submission. The conflict was about whether or not Gentile believers must first follow Jewish rituals (circumcision) in order for them to be saved. The Jewish people followed Moses all their lives, and now, the church is welcoming Gentiles, who do not submit to Judaism. This sparked a crucial issue that needed to be addressed as **John 17:20-21** commands us to **“preserve the unity”** in the body of Christ.

How did Paul and the church leaders resolve this challenge? Paul and Barnabas decided to go back to the apostles in Jerusalem and went through a God-glorifying process.

The biblical process of resolving conflicts as exemplified in ACTS 15 involves these 5 things:

1. PROACTIVE

In resolving conflicts, we need to take the initiative and be action-oriented. Passivity has no place in the reconciliation process. Notice **Acts 15:6-7** – they (the church leaders) proactively decided to look into this matter. The decision to consult the church in Jerusalem was not only crucial, but also very considerate of unity in the church.

When we try to fix the conflicts that we encounter, it is important not to delay and address the issues by looking for a resolution.

Resolving conflicts must be personal – to address issues effectively, we must remember to eliminate possibilities for miscommunication. This is why it is important to have face-to-face conversations with the people involved in the issue. Like Paul and the rest of the characters in **Acts 15**, let us be proactive in reaching out to others!

2. PERSPECTIVE

We learn from **Acts 15** how listening to the perspectives of other people is crucial to resolving conflict.

As Paul, Barnabas and other Antioch believers consulted the elders and apostles in Jerusalem, they listened to what the leaders had to say – in particular, we see Peter mention in **v.7-11** his opinion on how to deal with the Gentiles becoming believers in the faith. He particularly said that God “made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith” (**v9**).

As Peter clarified the revelation given him, the other leaders were **patiently listening**. When James (the brother of Christ) spoke, he also prodded the people to listen to him after listening to Peter.

In conflict resolution, it is important to listen patiently to all sides of the matter in order for us to make sound decisions regarding the concerns at hand. We must see matters in the perspective of ESSENTIAL vs NON-ESSENTIAL things. Not every issue is a matter that we

WORD (cont'd)

should “die for”. **With non-essentials**, let us allow **liberty** in those matters but as we do so, let us not cause others to stumble. Remember that as disciples of Christ, we must in all things practice charity (love).

3. PRACTICE LOVE

James' response and contribution to the discussion was proof that in resolving conflicts, we must learn to practice LOVE. In **Acts 15:19**, he operated in love as he listened to authorities and other leaders. James acted based on Jesus' most important command in **John 14:34-35** for believers to “love one another”.

James, in the succeeding verses of chapter 15, referred to **Amos 9:11-12** as tangible proof of the fact that Gentiles will eventually also seek the LORD. His suggested resolution was that of consideration and love for the Gentile believers and he just made sure that the focus is on God alone.

In **1 Corinthians 10:31-33**, we are reminded that our primary agenda is to “**do all to the glory of God**” and consider that we “**do everything in love**” (**1 Corinthians 16:14**).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

(Leaders: Please choose questions that are appropriate to the level of spiritual maturity of your members)

1. What is the most recent conflict you have encountered in your life? Was it in the context of the family, the church or ministry, or the workplace? How do you usually respond to these problems or challenges?
2. Determine which aspect of biblical conflict resolution you need to improve on. Do you need to be more proactive? Do you need to learn to listen to other perspectives? Should you practice love more?
3. How can you pursue God's agenda in the midst of resolving conflict?

WORKS

PRAY CARE SHARE IN ACTION

God's main agenda is to reconcile people to Himself through Jesus Christ. What will you do **this week** to be Christ's ambassador of reconciliation?

Who will you pray for?

Who will you show God's love to?

Who will you share the gospel to?

4. PURSUE GOD'S AGENDA

The conclusion of this passage in **Acts 15** shows us that those who discussed the conflict finally achieved an agreement which was acceptable for all.

They put the decision in writing, and they sent a **Jewish** believer **Judas**, and **Silas**, a **Gentile believer** to share the news to the church in Antioch (**v.22**). It was such a blessed picture to end the story as people rejoiced upon hearing the decision. In **verses 32-35**, we see the church pursuing God's agenda as Judas and Silas encouraged and strengthened the brothers, while Paul and Barnabas stayed at Antioch to teach and proclaim the word of the Lord. They kept the main thing the main thing. God's ultimate agenda is to reconcile us with Him, as we are told by Paul in **2 Corinthians 5:17-19** that GOD is the ultimate reconciler... He resolved our conflict with HIM. He reconciled us to Himself through CHRIST! Our greatest conflict is with GOD because of our sins. But the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross resolved this biggest conflict. May we all be truly reconciled with God, and in turn practice resolving conflicts in TRUTH and LOVE!

WEEKLY PRAYER POINTS

I. Thanksgiving

- Worship God for who He is, what He has done, and what He will do in our lives

II. Country and the World

- Upright and moral governance of Public Servants
- A God-centered Philippines
- Repentance and Salvation

III. Church

- That CCF Members would honor and love God and make disciples
- Elders, Pastors, Leaders, and Families
- Ministries and Churches worldwide

IV. CCF Facilities

- Worship and Training Center
- Prayer Mountain

V. Personal Concerns

- Deeper intimate relationship with God
- Righteous living
- Salvation of family and friends