

Rom. 14:19  
So then let  
us follow  
after things  
which make  
for peace,  
and things  
whereby  
we may  
edify one  
another.



John 8:32 And  
ye shall know  
the truth and  
the truth shall  
make you free.

October  
29  
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## Conflict Resolution (Patterns in Acts) by Tim Jennings

A man asked his doctor, “Can you do anything about my snoring?” The doctor said, “Why, is it disturbing your wife?” The man replied, “No, it’s disturbing the whole church.” The church is often disturbed from within, not by snoring, but by sin.

In the book of **Acts** Satan used many tools to destroy the people of God. He used *poverty*, but the church just gave more generously (**Acts 2:44-45**). He used *persecution*, but the church just spoke more boldly (**Acts 4:31**). He used *hypocrisy*, but the church just believed more genuinely (**Acts 5:11**).

One of the most powerful tools Satan used to topple the early church was *division*. If he can get God’s troops fighting among themselves they won’t be out saving the lost. They will bleed to death from civil war (**Gal. 5:15**). *The flag of the fledgling church was tattered by a conflict over race and nationality.* The Jews could not understand how Gentiles were accepted by God without first becoming Jews. This racial divide underlies every church conflict in the book of **Acts (Acts 6, 15, 21)**.

This sounds so modern, doesn’t it? The church today continues to struggle with the superficial differences of race and national origin.

Yet, the gospel offers a unique answer to this conflict. It provides a fresh awareness that *by creation* each person is made in the image of God (**Gen. 1:27**) and is part of the same family (**Acts 17:26**). This unity is deepened *by salvation* where we experience equal fellowship in Christ regardless of our physical differences (**Gal. 3:28**). Jesus supersedes all our superficialities!

Nevertheless, conflicts do come. Even in the church. But, while the world resolves conflicts with lawsuits, guns and intimidation, God’s people manage conflict very differently. The gospel approach to conflict resolution is modeled in the book of **Acts**. When discord resounded in the local church, harmony was restored by three rarely used instruments of peace.

### Healing Comes Through Serving (Acts 6:1-7)

Conflict first rattled the rafters of the church just when *“the number of disciples was multiplying”* (**Acts 6:1**). Few things spoil the spread of the gospel like bitterness between believers.

The bitterness arose out of the use of money. The church collected funds for needy Christians (**Acts 4:32-37**), but it was not distributed equally. Widows who spoke and lived as Greeks didn’t get their daily dinner like the widows who looked and talked like the local people. This unequal care created conflict, and the conflict was intensified by *“murmuring.”* Sin thrives when people judge others by external appearance.

How will the church deal with the conflict? Will the strong bully the weak into submission? Will they settle it in court? Will they sever their fellowship? No! Amazingly, *the answer to conflict is loving service.* Seven men are chosen to energize the church to serve the needs of all. They simply traced the pattern Jesus laid before them, who resolved our conflict with God by serving our need (**Phil. 2:1-8**).

Unfortunately, conflict incites most of us to strike back or to pull away, which only makes conflict concrete. However, the gospel invites us to interact with our rivals in humble service.

This is especially true in the local church. We are the body of Christ, and each of us are essential members of it. So, *“there should be no division in the body, but the members should have the same care for one another”* (**1 Cor. 12:25-26**). This equal compassion breaks the grip of conflict.

The next time you are in a conflict, instead of turning to anger or isolation, try serving the needs of the other person. If such grace doesn’t scare them to death, it just might extend a bridge for fellowship.

### Listen to God’s Revelation (Acts 15:1-29)

Next a doctrinal question threatened to rupture the church. Some disciples from Jerusalem spread the lie that Gentiles must be circumcised and keep the Law of

Moses to be saved, but others strongly disagreed (**Acts 15:1-2**).

How do you resolve a conflict when there is a difference of belief? The early church listened to God's revelation! Unity is then built on the eternal wisdom of God and not the shifting sand of human preference (**Eph. 4:11-16**). The early church did two things to understand God's will.

First, they carefully looked at *how God worked*. Peter, Paul and Barnabas reported how they preached the gospel to the Gentiles, and they did not require them to be circumcised or keep the Law. God showed His approval by the miracles that accompanied their message (**Acts 15:7-12**). There is a reason why much of the Bible is written as narrative. Those examples reveal God's will to us.

Secondly, they carefully read *what God said*. James quoted the prophet Amos about how God planned for the Gentiles to be saved. Yet, God didn't make any rules about Gentiles being circumcised or keeping the Law. So, James said, "*I judge that we should not trouble the Gentiles who are turning to God*" (**Acts 15:19**).

Local churches often face doctrinal questions: "What should we believe? What work should we do? How should we worship?" Those questions often create controversy. God's way of dealing with the conflict is to quiet our cravings and listen to God's revelation.

#### **Sacrifice Your Rights (Acts 21:17-26)**

Once again, the church in Jerusalem sat on a powder keg of racial tension. The Jewish Christians heard a false rumor that Paul forbade Jews to circumcise their children or keep Jewish customs (**Acts 21:21**). They felt Paul was on a world-wide campaign to stomp out Jewish culture. Upon his arrival in Jerusalem Paul does two things to resolve this conflict.

*First*, he brings a financial gift from the Gentile churches to help poor Christians in Jerusalem. He hopes this act of *service* will create a common affection (**Rom. 15:26-27**).

*Secondly*, Paul was willing to give up his rights to hold on to his spiritual family. The elders in Jerusalem knew that racial pressures were about to explode, so they made Paul a proposal. Four Christian brothers previously made a vow to God, and the next day they would go to the Temple to complete their vow. The elders asked Paul to go with those men to the Temple, purify himself, and pay their expenses.

This was a humbling and expensive request. They asked Paul to put himself in a dangerous situation, knowing the unbelieving Jews might use this as an opportunity to arrest Paul (which they do!) Why is Paul willing to risk so much? He seriously values unity! Giving up our rights for the sake of unity is something Paul emphasized to churches (**1 Cor. 8-10; Rom. 14**). As our world gets more culturally diverse we will need

to ask ourselves more often, "What is Biblical? What is cultural?" "What is truth? What is tradition?" The answer to such questions will reveal if we truly value the oneness of believers more than our own preferences. Practically, we deepen the bonds of fellowship whenever we gladly give up the rights to our time, plans, money, and wants for the good of spiritual family.

The price for unity is high. Is it worth it? In the book of **Acts** "conflict resolution" resulted in a stronger church, the salvation of the lost, and an undying love between believers (**see Acts 6:7; 15:31; 16:5**). The gospel is the world's best source for conflict resolution...try it.

**Tim Jennings** [focusonline.org](http://focusonline.org)

## **THE LORD IS COMING BACK: GET READY**

*"Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ...."* The Lord came back in judgment on the Jews and the temple. And the Lord will come back at that last day in judgment upon all mankind. The kingdoms of men, the temples of men, the plans and purposes of men come and go. But mark it down: Jesus is coming back; you and I will be judged; we need to be ready. To point us in that direction Matthew gives us five parables that all relate to the Lord's return. **Matthew 13** points us to kingdom parables; **Matthew 24 and 25** challenge us to live in readiness as citizens of the kingdom.

*"But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect"* (**Matthew 24:43-44**). The *thief* is found often in the NT (**1 Thessalonians 5; 2 Peter 3**). If you knew when the thief was coming to rob your house, you would be on guard. Since the thief doesn't first announce his plans, you have to be ready at all times. *"Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his master made ruler over his household, to give them food in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing"* (**Matthew 24:45-46**). Reliable, faithful servants are always laboring, even when the master is away. The servant doesn't know when the master will return; it doesn't matter because the faithful servant is always striving to be faithful.

*"Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Now five of them were wise and five were foolish"* (**Matthew 25:1-2**). The activities of a marriage feast were planned, but not too stringently. The bride and groom would not rush away on their honeymoon after the ceremony. Rather, they would linger and entertain their guests. Movement from one place to another was common but not necessarily timed. No

one knew the exact time the groom would take his bride to his house; no one knew the exact time the wedding feast would be eaten. Were preparations needed? Yes! That is the point of the five wise and five foolish virgins—attendants to the bride. But only five made adequate preparation. The other five were turned away. The point is not hard to understand. *"For the kingdom of heaven is like a man traveling to a far country, who called his own servants and delivered his goods to them. And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability; and immediately he went on a journey"* (Matthew 25:14-15). The talent was a sum of money; the amount given to each servant was according to their ability to handle that amount; there is nothing negative about receiving only 1 or 2 talents. Whatever the amount, faithfulness to use what was given was required. That is how the 1-talent man failed; he didn't use what he had been given to the glory of his master. It is not how much we are given; it is how we use what we have been given.

*"When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats"* (Matthew 25:31-32). We are all accountable; we are all responsible; we will all be judged. Love, sacrifice, giving to the poor—these qualities and actions are at the heart of what it means to be kingdom citizens. Our destiny is written all over our lives *before* we ever reach the judgment seat of Christ. People who are serious about being prepared to stand before Christ are people who are preparing to stand before Christ.

Read **Matthew 24 and 25** again. Isn't Jesus telling us: This is how I expect you to live now, before the judgment? Judgment is coming; get busy; serve Me and serve others. Don't wait to begin. Begin now. Be ready.

**Randy Harshbarger**

## Superstardom Not Required!

Do you know what false humility is? It's saying you're nothing when everything else about you says you know yourself to be something. Like the time when Isaiah the Prophet told Ahaz the wicked King of Judah, *"Ask thee a sign of Jehovah thy God; ask it either in the depth, or in the height above. But Ahaz said, I will not ask, neither will I tempt Jehovah. (Isa 7:11f)"* He refused a direct command of the Lord God in a show of false spirituality. He was rebuked for it in the following verses. Well, the affliction did not die with Ahaz.

Many people today do not pray today because they do not expect God to answer their prayers. It matters not to them that prayer is a direct command from God (**Romans 12:12; Colossians 4:2; 1 Thes. 5:17**) and even that Jesus gave us an example of how to pray,

**Matt. 6.** They feign humility with such sophistries as "God has so many far more important things to take up His time than to listen to my petty concerns." Do you see the arrogance here? God gave a command, but THEY are exempted from the demands of obedience.

Maybe they deem to think those folks mentioned in Scripture got their prayers answered because they are in the Bible. They think they are superstars of the faith so God HAD to answer their prayers. The reality is that they were people just like us, **James 5:17**. They were NOT PERFECT but were faulted, just like us. But they trusted God and prayed to God and He listened, and that is why they are in the Bible. They are forever examples of the truth that God listens to the humble, not to superstars in their own eyes.

**by Cleveland Reddinger**

## Pure Motives Bring Desired Results

At the village church in Kalonovka, Russia, attendance at Sunday school picked up after the priest started handing out candy to the peasant children. One of the most faithful was a pug-nosed, pugnacious lad who recited his Scriptures with proper piety, pocketed his reward, then fled into the fields to munch on it. The priest took a liking to the boy, persuaded him to attend church school. This was preferable to doing household chores from which his devout parents excused him. By offering other inducements, the priest managed to teach the boy the four Gospels. In fact, he won a special prize for learning all four by heart and reciting them nonstop in church. Now, 60 years later, he still likes to recite Scriptures, but in a context that would horrify the old priest. For the prize pupil, who memorized so much of the Bible, is Nikita Khrushchev, the former Communist czar.

As this anecdote illustrates, the "why" behind memorization is fully as important as the "what." The same Nikita Khrushchev who nimbly mouthed God's Word when a child, later declared God to be nonexistent -- because his cosmonauts had not seen Him.

Khrushchev memorized the Scriptures for the candy, the rewards, the bribes, rather than for the meaning it had for his life. Artificial motivation will produce artificial results.

**Moody's Anecdotes, p. 99**

We study the word of God for the spiritual benefit it affords in enabling us to an approved workman of God. **2 Tim. 2:15.** God's word taught to us by preachers, teachers, elders in the church is the spiritual food that gives knowledge and understanding.

**Jer. 3:15; Acts 20:28**

**Psa. 1:1** *Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the wicked, Nor standeth in the way of sinners, Nor sitteth in the seat of scoffers: 2 But his delight is in the law of Jehovah; And on his law doth he meditate day and night. 3 And he shall be like a tree planted by the streams of water, That bringeth forth its fruit in its season, Whose leaf also doth not wither; And whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. 4 The wicked are not so, But are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. 5 Therefore the wicked shall not stand in the judgment, Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. 6 For Jehovah knoweth the way of the righteous; But the way of the wicked shall perish.*

## **HOURS OF WORSHIP**

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Sunday A.M. 10:20 Assembled Worship

Sunday P.M. 5:00 Assembled Worship

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BILL MILLER - TEACHER

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ISLAM VS. CHRISTIANITY  
JIM STAUFFER - TEACHER

SUNDAY SERMON: HOLINESS IS  
DEEPER THAN THE SURFACE  
JIM STAUFFER



## **What Must I Do To Be Saved?**

**Hear** the gospel - Romans 10:17

**Believe** in Jesus Christ - Hebrews 11:6

**Repent** of sins - Acts 17:30

**Confess** Christ as Lord - Romans 10:9,10

**Be Baptized** for remission of sins - Acts 2:38

**Be Faithful** unto death - Revelation 2:10