

“Giving Grace To Those We’re Fighting With”
August 9, 2009 * Acts 15

I. Got conflict? Why is there so much conflict around us?

What’s a quick lesson we learn in Acts 15?

In healthy relationships I must accept conflict as _____
and learn how to _____ my way through it.

II. The First Key To Being A Grace-Giver When In Conflict:

Recognize the _____ of a Conflict.

A. Stage One: _____.

B. Stage Two: Role _____.
What’s this? (Prov.17:14)

C. Stage Three: _____ Collecting.

D. Stage Four: _____.

E. Stage Five: _____.

What lessons can be pick up looking at this list?

III. What are the different ways of managing conflict?

A. _____
1. How did Jesus show this?

B. _____ (lose-win)
1. How did Jesus show this?

2. What’s the difference between this
and being a doormat?

C. _____ (win-a-little/lose-a-little)
1. How did Jesus show this?

D. _____ (win-lose)
1. How did Jesus show this?

E. _____ (win-win)
1. How did Jesus show this?

Some observations about these styles:

A. There are times when each way may be the _____ way.

B. We each have our own _____ style.

C. Each style _____ if we never change our
approach to conflict.

D. Most often, the preferred way to deal with conflict is to
strive for _____.

IV. So tying all this together, what do we see the leaders in the church
doing to resolve the conflict in Acts 15?

A. Grace-givers address the conflict at its _____ levels.

B. Grace-givers don’t make personal attacks; they focus on
the _____.

C. Grace-givers _____ their differences and
_____ to their agreements.

“Giving Grace To Those We’re Fighting With” **August 9, 2009 * Acts 15**

I. Got conflict? Why is there so much conflict around us?

Partly because of sin and selfishness. But also there is much conflict that is “good” or “inevitable” conflict, because we all see the world differently.

What’s a quick lesson we learn in Acts 15?

In healthy relationships I must accept conflict as **normal** and learn how to **navigage** my way through it.

II. The First Key To Being A Grace-Giver When In Conflict:

Recognize the **Cycle** of a Conflict.

A. Stage One: **Tension**.

B. Stage Two: Role **dilemma**.

What’s this? (Prov.17:14)

There’s confusion at this stage. There’s talking to oneself, asking oneself questions. "What’s happening here? Why do I feel this way? Did I do something to cause this?"

C. Stage Three: **Injustice** Collecting.

By this stage, you’re convinced that things aren’t going to change, in fact they’re likely to get worse, and so you begin collecting, listing in your mind all the injustices, all the hurts, that are being inflicted on you.

D. Stage Four: **Confrontation**.

E. Stage Five: **Adjustments**.

Here’s where the dust settles and we decide now what to do next. It’s the place where changes are made, either good or bad. Where the process of conflict is managed biblically, with grace, the adjustment may be a new commitment freely chosen, a new behavior adopted, a new lesson learned, something that brings forgiveness and healing and hope.

What lessons can be pick up looking at this list?

Looking at this list, I think the single most important discipline that a follower of Jesus Christ must learn is to have the wisdom and courage to bring the matter up and talk it out in stages one and two. Normal human nature says bury it in, build it up, blow it out. It breaks my heart as a pastor - and it happens a lot - where I am first made aware of a conflict, either with me or within the church, or between a husband and wife - at stage 4.

III. What are the different ways of managing conflict?

A. **Avoidance**

1. How did Jesus show this?

A guy came up to Jesus once who said, “Lord, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.” And Jesus responded by saying, “Man, who appointed me a judge or an arbiter between you.” Avoidance. Another time, there was a crowd so agitated with Jesus that they were literally about to toss him off a cliff, but the Bible says Jesus passed right through the crowd and was gone. He ducked out. Some hills are not worth dying on, and you gotta live to fight another day.

B. **Accommodation** (lose-win)

1. How did Jesus show this?

Jesus gave us the ultimate example of accommodation when he went to the Cross for you and me. “Greater love has no one than this, than he lay down his life for his friends,” and in respect for the love and friendship that God holds in his heart for us, Jesus endured the cross, that we might be forgiven and brought back home to him.

2. What’s the difference between this and being a doormat?

Some people act this way routinely, they let other people walk all over them all the time, but they do so out of internal weakness. Jesus chose to go to the cross out of a position of strength. He didn’t have to do this. He chose to do this out of love. Doormats don’t choose to be a doormat. They wilt every time. They may try to convince themselves how unselfish they are behaving, how noble they are being the martyr yet again, while the truth of the matter

is they're acting as selfish and weak as could be.

C. **Compromise** (*win-a-little/lose-a-little*)

1. *How did Jesus show this?*

Jesus practiced compromise of sorts in his political dealings with the Romans and other authority figures. He showed respect to people in positions of authority. He told people to pay their taxes: Give to Caesar what is Caesar's. He told his disciples to pay the temple tax (even though you're really free, Jesus whispered to them). He showed a masterful compromising strategy in the story we read of Jesus confronting the mob that wanted to stone the woman caught in adultery.

D. **Competing** (*win-lose*)

1. *How did Jesus show this?*

This person is concerned for the task at hand, what needs to get done, and has less concern for the relationships, as long as the work is accomplished. And I'm going to exert power and persuasion and coercion to get it done. When it came to confronting the Pharisees about their twisted views of the Sabbath day, Jesus was going to win. He ate on the Sabbath. He healed on the Sabbath. He let it be known that he was the Lord of the Sabbath. You are in the wrong about this, I'm in the right; it's going to be this way.

E. **Collaboration** (*win-win*)

1. *How did Jesus show this?*

One day, a huge crowd was following Jesus, and it was getting late in the day, and the disciples came to Jesus and said, "Lord, it's dinner-time, send these people home to get some food." And Jesus said to them, "You give them something to eat." And it turned out that they had a few loaves and fishes for themselves in reserve, and Jesus you could say collaborated with them to feed the multitude.

Some observations about these styles:

A. There are times when each way may be the **best** way.

B. We each have our own **preferred** style.

C. Each style **breaks down** if we never change our approach to conflict.

D. Most often, the preferred way to deal with conflict is to strive for **collaboration**.

IV. So tying all this together, what do we see the leaders in the church doing to resolve the conflict in Acts 15?

A. Grace-givers address the conflict at its **earliest** levels.

B. Grace-givers don't make personal attacks; they focus on the **issues**.

C. Grace-givers **negotiate** their differences and **commit** to their agreements.