

BIBLIOLOGY OF STRATEGIES AND SKILLS OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION

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Abstract

This study is a Bible- and Spirit of Prophecy-based research on strategies and skills for conflict resolution. The study examines the concepts of conflict and conflict resolution, the conventional strategies and skills for resolving conflict, and posits that the Bible is full of wisdom on how conflict should be handled and that Biblical principles for conflict resolution can be applied to any type of conflict. The scripture provides the best approach to conflict resolution, one that will result in lasting peace if all parties involved commit to following God's ordained methods.

Keywords: Bibliology, conflict, Skills, Strategies, Resolution

INTRODUCTION

Conflict can be defined in many ways and can be considered as an expression of hostility, negative attitudes, antagonism, aggression, rivalry, and misunderstanding. It is also associated with situations that involve contradictory or irreconcilable interests between two opposing groups. According to Olayemi, Olugbenga, and Oluokun (2019), the concept of conflict has a variety of meanings: "disagreement," "clash," "friction," "disharmony," "struggle," etc., and conflict is a real part of everyday life.

Wherever people with different interests, skills, and experiences work together, there is potential for conflict. Many fear conflicts as they regard them as uncomfortable and destabilizing. However, when conflicts have been identified and clearly stated at an early stage, there is a chance of positive conflict resolution. But when there is no awareness that

conflict is brewing (or no one feels responsible for dealing with it), it can become destructive and break a group apart. Conflict is like change and will always occur due to the dynamics of human interactions. This is because we all have different interests, goals, perceptions, viewpoints, values, and experiences. Conflict is both a force that can tear relationships apart and the force that binds them together, a dual nature that makes conflict either healthy (constructive) or unhealthy (destructive). Conflict is a reality of social life and exists at all levels of society (Centre for Multiparty Democracy - Malawi, n.d).

Conflict resolution can be defined as the informal or formal process that two or more parties use to find a peaceful solution to their dispute. Robbins (1983) lists five different methods of resolving conflict, which are competition, collaboration, avoidance, accommodation, and sharing. However, according to Musara (2013), conflicts should be

resolved by finding alternatives that are creative solutions rather than compromises. One should venture into conflict resolution with courage and determination, with the sole aim of making the parties work on a possible solution.

In light of the above, this study will provide analytical articulations of biblical ideas as profound philosophy for strategies and skills of conflict resolution.

METHODOLOGY

This study is a qualitative, hermeneutical approach that emphasizes historical-contextual analysis and comparative thematic study on the Bibliology of Strategies and Skills of Conflict Resolution. The essence of the study is to provide a better understanding of Biblical perspectives, bearing in mind the fact that the Bible is full of wisdom about how conflict should be handled as opposed to the conventional methods. The study was based solely on the Bible, the writings of E. G White, and other related Bible literature, to collect, analyze, and interpret the findings as well as their applicability to all forms of conflicts.

BIBLE HISTORY AND BACKGROUND TO CONFLICT

There are several instances in the Bible where conflict is highlighted. Starting from the book of Genesis (Gen 3:6-11), the story of the fall indicates a conflict emerging between God and man. God took the initiative of trying to resolve the conflict by intervening through dialogue first of all. God furthermore acted as the mediator. This is revealed in His action of moving towards man when man was hiding and providing a solution to the dilemma of man (Gen 3:1-24). The Bible has many stories on conflict resolution, and the Bible is full of wisdom about how believers should handle conflict, yet too many Christians end up handing their disputes over to the secular court

to decide their fate, an outcome that will be determined by worldly statutes, rules, and regulations that may or may not align with Biblical wisdom or a Christian worldview and values.

According to the Bible, God reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them. God has therefore entrusted to us the message of reconciliation.

2 Corinthians 5:18-19 (KJV)

18 And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; 19 To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.

In Matthew 5:9, Jesus says, *"Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God."* The concept of reconciliation and being a peacemaker has to do with helping others have peace with God through Jesus Christ and also helping others live at peace among themselves. Hebrews 12:14 calls us to *"Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord."* It is clear from these passages that God intends His followers (Christians) to resolve conflicts when they arise, and hence, some Biblical options for conflict resolution.

First, if an offense is minor, the Bible encourages God's followers to overlook the offense. Proverbs 19:11 says, *"The discretion of a man deferreth his anger; and it is his glory to pass over a transgression. This passage implies overlooking an offense, which simply means to forgive the person and keep the relationship intact without ever mentioning the incident. Extending forgiveness in this way reflects the understanding that the offender is a fellow*

member of the fallen human race and that God can be trusted to sanctify that person just as He sanctifies all those who belong to Him. First Peter 4:8 conveys a similar concept when it says, *"And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins."*

In a situation where the offense is more serious or occurs consistently, the Bible gives instructions on how to confront the offender to restore the relationship. In fact, restoring a broken relationship is so important that God commands His followers to take the initiative to reconcile not only when they have been offended, but also when they are the offender:

23 Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; 24 Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift." (Matthew 5:23–24).

In the understanding of the perversity of human nature, Jesus gave explicit rules for our dealing with one another in conflict situations. Hear what He says:

(Matt 18:15-18 KJV)

15 Moreover, if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.

16 But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.

17 And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglects to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican.

18 Verily I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

These scriptural verses bring to our attention the presence of conflict and that there should be a way to reduce conflict. As conflict surfaces, according to this passage, some channels need to be followed. The conflict process prescribed by these texts is a good model for handling conflict situations. It assists all parties involved to take their time to look through their differences. Matt 18:15-18 seems to be the best model for handling conflict because it reduces the spilling over of conflicts to other people.

According to the passage, resolving conflict should first be done privately. A private meeting keeps the offender from undue shame or embarrassment, and the goal of private confrontation is always to restore the relationship. If the private meeting does not resolve the conflict, the next step is to involve a small number of people to help bring reconciliation. This could be a mutual friend, professional counselor, or therapist who will ensure clear communication and healthy interactions. If private meetings and involving a small number of people for outside help do not bring resolution to the conflict, it can be brought before the church leaders to hold the person accountable to Scripture. If the person does not agree with the church leaders' assessment, he should then be subject to church discipline with love.

E. G. White in the book *Christ's Object Lessons*

Our Lord teaches that matters of difficulty between Christians are to be settled within the church. They should not be opened before those who do not fear God. If a Christian is wronged by his brother, let him not appeal to unbelievers in a court of justice. Let him follow out the instruction Christ has given. Instead of trying to avenge himself, let him seek to save his brother. God will guard the interests of those who love and fear Him, and

with confidence we may commit our case to Him who judges righteously. (COL 248.5)

In laying the foundation for the process of resolving conflict, Jesus warns that before even beginning that process, His followers should take time to self-reflect. He says, *"Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye."* (Matthew 7:5). We should humbly assess our own contribution to the conflict and correct our own behavior and attitude before trying to point out someone else's shortcomings. The goal should be to serve people by lovingly restoring the relationship.

Once our attitude is one of humility and service, we have to prepare the actual words and delivery of the confrontation. Here again, the Bible has instructions. Ephesians 4:15 says, "Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ." Christian maturity is marked by the ability to share difficult truths lovingly.

The Biblical processes of reconciliation notwithstanding, Romans 12:18 instructs that, *"If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men."* As Christ followers, we are to forgive, as ultimately conflict resolution can provide us the opportunity to display the gospel to others and experience God's grace in our own lives. It is against this background that this study explores conflict situations in the Bible and the strategies and skills adopted in resolving such conflicts.

Causes of Conflict in The Bible

The causes of conflict are diverse, but the common causes, as exemplified in the Bible, are:

- i. Jealousy and envy, as in the case of Joseph and his brothers in Genesis Chapters 37 - 45

- ii. Competition which may arise due to declining or scarce resources, as in the case of Abraham and Lot (Genesis 13:5-18)
- iii. Disagreement about who is responsible for a specific task (as in the disciples' case of who will be the greatest according to Mark 9:33-35).
- iv. Differences in values, personalities, and attitudes (as in the contention between the brethren in Corinth in 1Cor. 1:10-17).
- v. Misunderstanding and misperception among team members or other teams that may result from poor communication, as in the case of men from Judea's view on salvation in Acts 15:1-2.
- vi. Exerting power on others or questioning the authority of other people (power struggle) as applies to the reason behind the Jerusalem council on whether circumcision was binding on the Gentiles in Acts 15:1-12
- vii. Pursuing different goals by individuals or teams, as evident in the persecution faced by Paul and Barnabas in Iconium by the unbelieving Jews in Acts 14:1-7. (Olayemi, Olugbenga, and Oluokun; Chituru, and Alu, 2017; Dickson, and Alu, 2012)

CONFLICT SITUATIONS IN THE BIBLE WITH RESOLUTION STRATEGIES AND SKILLS

Some conflict situations in the Bible and the strategies and skills used to resolve them are explained.

Personal Conflict (Matthew 18:15-17).

In understanding the perversity of human nature, Jesus gave explicit rules for dealing with personal conflict, as indicated in Matt 18:15-17.

(Matt 18:15-18 KJV)

15 Moreover, if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between

thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.

16 But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.

17 And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican.

The principles involved in this Biblical conflict resolution strategy and skills, according to Chituru and Alu (2017), are:

- i. Discussion of the issue on a personal basis (one-on-one);
- ii. If not resolved, involve witnesses (two or more other persons);
- iii. If he neglects to hear them and will not be humbled, then tell it to the church (larger body);
- iv. If he neglects the church, if he slights the admonition and will neither be ashamed of his faults nor amend them,
- v. Then, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and publican; let him be cast out of the communion of the church, secluded from special ordinances, degraded from the dignity of a church member.
- vi. Let him be put under disgrace, and let the members of the society be warned to withdraw from him (that is a disclaimer) that he may be ashamed of his sins, and they may not be infected by it or made changeable with it.

According to the passage, resolving conflict should first be done privately as a way to restore the relationship. If the private meeting does not resolve the conflict, the next step is to involve a small number of people to help bring reconciliation. This could be a mutual friend or a professional counselor who will help ensure clear communication and healthy interactions. If private meetings and involving a small number of people for outside do not bring

resolution to the conflict, it can be brought before the church leaders for resolution according to Scripture. If the person does not agree with the church leaders' assessment, he should then be subject to church discipline with love. It is noteworthy that private admonitions must always go before public criticisms.

Joseph and his Brothers (Genesis Chapter 37 – 50)

The Biblical story of Joseph showed how he was sold into slavery by his brothers, who were jealous of his prophetic abilities to analyze dreams and of his being their father's favorite.

Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age: and he made him a coat of many colours (Gen 37:3).

And his brethren envied him, but his father observed the saying. (Gen37:11)

Joseph, the favored son of the patriarch Jacob, was given into captivity by his own envious brothers. In Egypt, Joseph rose to become the prime minister of Egypt and governed the country during a seven-year famine, during which his brothers visited Egypt seeking grain, only to encounter their brother, whom they had long presumed dead. Joseph tested them to see if they had changed; he was satisfied and therefore revealed his identity. Finally reunited with his beloved brother Benjamin and his father Jacob, Joseph reconciles with his family, and Pharaoh invites them to settle in Egypt as overseers of his livestock.

In the story of Joseph and his brothers, several elements of conflict resolution emerge from Scripture, which include recognition of one's wrong actions (admission of one's guilt), remorse, and forgiveness. Here, Joseph's brothers admitted wrong for their own misdeeds and feel remorse for the harm they caused, without rationalizations or justifications.

And they said one to another, we are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we

saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us (Genesis 42:21)

On the part of Joseph, the most powerful element in conflict resolution was his belief in divine providence, an indication that it is possible to frame past evil within a paradigm of a divine plan. *"But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save many people alive" (Gen. 50:20)*. Providence has the power to inspire and give hope to those who suffer; it actually can redeem suffering. Joseph was not consumed by anger and desire for vengeance, and apparently forgave his brothers.

The scriptural elements of conflict resolution in the situation presented are that each party in any conflict should empathize with the victimization of the other and show compassion towards the other, as well as demonstrate sincerity and changed attitudes by concrete actions, including a cessation of violence and provocations.

E. G. White, in her book *Patriarchs and Prophets*, has this to say:

Joseph was satisfied. He had seen in his brothers the fruits of true repentance. Upon hearing Judah's noble offer, he gave orders that all but these men should withdraw; then, weeping aloud, he cried, "I am Joseph; doth my father yet live?" (PP 230.3)

His brothers stood motionless, dumb with fear and amazement. The ruler of Egypt was their brother Joseph, whom they had envied and would have murdered, and finally sold as a slave! All their ill treatment of him passed before them. They remembered how they had despised his dreams and had labored to prevent their fulfillment. Yet they had acted their part in fulfilling these dreams, and now that they were completely in his power, he

would, no doubt, avenge the wrong that he had suffered. (PP 230.4)

Seeing their confusion, he said kindly, "Come near to me, I pray you;" and as they came near, he continued, "I am Joseph, your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt. Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life." Feeling that they had already suffered enough for their cruelty toward him, he nobly sought to banish their fears and lessen the bitterness of their self-reproach. (PP 230.5)

Abram and Lot (Genesis 13:5-18)

A brief background to this case was written in Genesis 13:5-7: 5. *"And Lot also, which went with Abram, had flocks, and herds, and tents. 6. And the land was not able to bear them, that they might dwell together: for their substance was great, so that they could not dwell together. 7. And there was a strife between the herdsmen of Abram's cattle and the herdsmen of Lot's cattle: and the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelled then in the land."*

Sometimes, prosperity comes with attendant challenges or problems, but the principles to be learnt here are:

- i. The abundance of livestock over available grazing land led to the conflict. (Gen. 13:5-6);
- ii. Quarrelling between Abram's and Lot's servants (Gen. 13:7). Conflict arose due to their immense wealth - there was more livestock than available grazing/pasture land. The scarcity of available pastureland, and sometimes of water, resulted in strife between Abram's shepherds and those of Lot. Each group naturally wanted to see its master's possessions prosper (Chituru & Alu, 2017).
- iii. In Genesis 13:8-9, Abram called Lot for resolution.

- a. 8 *And Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we be brethren.*
- b. 9 *Is not the whole land before thee? Separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left.*

Abram and Lot subsequently separated in Verses 10 and 11. Abram here employed a combination of conflict strategies and skills, which include collaboration, accommodating, and compromising, for which Lot and he agreed on a decision. Trying to meet the needs of all people involved (collaboration); was willing to meet the needs of others at the expense of his own needs (accommodating), and tried to find a solution that would at least partially satisfy everyone (compromising). Abraham's use of compromise in this case is highly exceptional. Abraham had a passion for relationships, values for oneness, peace, and continuity against wealth, fame, and position.

Abraham's sincerity and commitment to conflict resolution are further demonstrated in the fact that, though separated, he kept an eye on his nephew. The brotherly love he expressed in the face of conflict was never broken, even after separation (Genesis 14). Inasmuch as conflict is neither good nor bad, the handling will determine the result of the conflict.

The lessons in this case for today's business are that conflicts between workers can crumble the business if care is not taken, and as a result, workers must be made to realize that they are stakeholders. Separation may be the best solution, but without resentment. One party will always be at a disadvantage, but this should be accepted in good spirits (McCain, 2002). In the same vein, collaboration, accommodating, and compromising models are key principles in conflict resolution. The willingness of

Abraham to compromise his rights should be a lesson for crisis-ridden families and communities.

Separation of Paul and Barnabas (Acts 15:36-41)

36 And some days after, Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do. 37 And Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark. 38 But Paul thought it not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work. 39 And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other: and so, Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus; 40 And Paul chose Silas, and departed, being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God. 41 And he went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches.

As Paul and Barnabas were discussing their second missionary tour, Mark's name came up. Barnabas was determined to take along also John, who was called Mark. But Paul did not think it proper to take him along with them, because he had departed from them from Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the mission." (Acts 15:37, 38) and as a result, there was a difference of opinion (Claire, 2019). The Bible record indicates that a "sharp contention" developed between them (Acts 15:36-41). They could not reach an agreement, and so they separated. The story of Paul and Barnabas, who had been very close workmates but who, because of a disagreement, parted ways, is an indication that conflict can end up in the breaking of strong bonds that may have existed before (Musara, 2013).

E. G. White says:

"Barnabas was ready to go with Paul, but wished to take with them Mark, who had again

decided to devote himself to the ministry. To this, Paul objected. He “thought it not good to take ... with them” one who, during their first missionary journey, had left them in a time of need. He was not inclined to excuse Mark's weakness in deserting the work for the safety and comforts of home. He urged that one with so little stamina was unfitted for a work requiring patience, self-denial, bravery, devotion, faith, and a willingness to sacrifice, if need be, even life itself. So sharp was the contention that Paul and Barnabas separated, the latter following out his convictions and taking Mark with him. “So, Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus; and Paul chose Silas, and departed, being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God.” (The Acts of Apostles 20:22)

There are some vital principles that one may learn from the dispute that developed between these Christian brothers. The conflict between Paul and Barnabas was not over a doctrinal issue but a personal dispute based on individuals' judgment. To their credit, neither Paul nor Barnabas let the conflict distract them from their respective efforts to spread the gospel, and as a result, more work was accomplished for the Lord because of the manner in which their disagreement was handled.

Here, in resolving the conflict, the Bible principles of Jesus as a model for love and forgiveness were followed. The incident certainly shows both the humanness of the interaction and also how love covered over the issue. When Paul wrote to the Corinthian congregation while he was doing missionary work in Ephesus, Paul spoke of Barnabas, along with Peter and the other apostles, as a close fellow worker. (1 Cor. 9:5, 6). The mention of Barnabas in 1 Cor 9, 6 indicates that there was no ill-will toward Barnabas in the heart and mind of Paul, which shows that these relationships survived the conflict.

In the same vein, despite everything that happened at Pamphylia (Acts 13:13) and the emotionally violent disagreement over Mark in Acts 15:36-41, Paul, at the end of his life, found Mark to be very useful for ministry. In 2 Timothy 4:11. Paul writes, “*Luke alone is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is very useful to me for ministry.*” Paul's recognition and forgiveness of Mark is a beautiful picture of love, grace, perseverance, and restoration (Kucicki, 2015).

Ethnic Prejudices (Acts 6:1–6)

One of the most difficult tasks of any Christian community is to maintain unity when differences of opinion arise on matters of the identity and mission of the church. These differences can lead to devastating consequences.

Acts 6:1-6

1 And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration.

2 Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, it is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables.

3 Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business.

4 But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.

5 And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas, a proselyte of Antioch:

6 Whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them.

The growing church in Jerusalem, represented in Acts 6, verses 1–3, was promptly challenged by the problem of inequity and lack of fair play among the various stakeholders, and such disaffection reached a situation of murmur and open agitation. Some early Christians appeared to be prejudiced against the widows of Greek heritage in their midst and provided them with less food than the widows of Hebrew heritage. This perceived favoritism caused a rift in the early community of believers. Whether or not the favoritism was real, the text does not say. It says only that some people believed that it was. This conflict threatened the church's unity very early on. In this case, ethnic division was seen so quickly in the church. These conflicts could have destroyed the church in its infancy had it not been for thoughtful apostles and leaders who sought the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the Scriptures to resolve these tensions.

The early church was growing rapidly, and this growth brought increasingly heavy burdens on the apostles. The apostles listened carefully to the complaints of Greek-speaking believers and asked them for a solution. The selection of the seven men to become associates of the apostles was left to this group, and they recommended seven disciples, all of them from Greek-speaking heritage. These men were said to be “of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom” (Acts 6:3). With this, the ministry of the apostles, which until then had been both to preach the Word of God and to distribute food to widows, was divided into two groups, each doing an equally valuable ministry for the proclamation of the gospel.

To resolve the conflicts that should have destroyed the Church at its infancy, the apostles listened carefully to the complaints, sought the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the Scriptures, balance power between the Hebraic and the Hellenistic Jews, by restructuring the already structured church polity that placed only the Hebraic Jews at the helm of affairs at the

expense of their Hellenistic brothers and planting seven men to take care of the welfare of the populace and so it is timely to assert that ‘the early Church was not afraid to do two things that are always difficult: share the power and make structural changes.

The Biblical conflict resolution strategies and skills used here could be employed by secular or religious institutions, and the organized sector comprising people, especially those with cultural divergences susceptible to unfair treatment, which may invariably lead to complaints.

The Jerusalem Council (Acts 15: 1-20)

The conversion of Gentiles to the gospel of Jesus Christ is an event in the book of Acts that sets the stage for the greatest conflict in the life of the early church, one that threatens its existence and mission. Misunderstanding and misperception among team members, questioning of the authority of other people (power struggle), were the reasons behind the Jerusalem council on whether circumcision was binding on the Gentiles in Acts 15:1-12.

Some Jewish Christians thought that salvation was possible only for those who belonged to the covenant people of God, and this implied that circumcision was a requirement. And as part of a faithful lifestyle, these Jewish believers also believed that they were to avoid any contact with Gentiles that could thwart their own salvation. The Jews had very strict traditions regarding their association with Gentiles. These traditions quickly became a stumbling block for the new Christian community when the apostles began to reach out to Gentiles who wished to become followers of Jesus. The issue here was rooted in conflicts over deeply held interpretations of the Old Testament stories regarding circumcision and relationships with Gentiles.

To resolve the conflict, the apostles, elders, and delegates from Antioch sat together and discussed for a long time without resolution until Peter, Barnabas, and Paul made speeches. Peter's speech alluded to the visionary revelation that God gave him and to the gift of the Holy Spirit, which opened the way for the mission to the Gentiles. Then Paul and Barnabas shared their stories of what God had done through them for the Gentiles, and as a result, many eyes were opened to the new truth. There was policy formulation for a lasting solution, and hence it was decided that a letter should be sent to the Gentiles to avoid eating meat offered to idols, eating meat of animals strangled or that had blood, and committing any terrible sexual sins.

"But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood."
(Acts 15:20)

The conflict resolution strategies and skills employed by the Jerusalem Council, according to Chituru and Alu (2017), were as follows:

- i. The channel of grievances was established;
- ii. A meeting of apostles, elders, and delegates was held;
- iii. The problem was discussed and debated to reach a compromise or consensus;
- iv. There was fair hearing/evidence as Paul and Barnabas were allowed to speak;
- v. The leader of the council (James) reviewed the issue based on the evidence and biblical agreement, which serves as their constitution.
- vi. There was policy formulation for a lasting solution and,
- vii. It was decided that a letter should be sent to the Gentiles to abstain from eating meat offered to idols, eating meat of animals strangled or that has blood, and committing any terrible sexual sins.

On the Jerusalem Council, E. G. White has this to say:

"The council which decided this case was composed of apostles who had been prominent in raising the Jewish and Gentile Christian churches, with chosen delegates from various places. Elders from Jerusalem and deputies from Antioch were present, and the most influential churches were represented. The council moved in accordance with the dictates of enlightened judgment, and with the dignity of a church established by the divine will. As a result of their deliberations, they all saw that God Himself had answered the question at issue by bestowing upon the Gentiles the Holy Ghost, and they realized that it was their part to follow the guidance of the Spirit. (Ellen G. White, The Acts of the Apostles, pp.196:1)

Acts 15 reveals that the church, in its assembly of representative members, may indeed speak with binding authority upon the whole church, as that authority is based upon the Written Word.

The conflict resolution strategies and skills exemplified in the above sampled Biblical conflicts could be applied to different secular situations.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Conclusion

This study provides an overview of the scriptural basis for conflict resolution as well as some practical guidance on the steps pursued for biblical resolution of conflict. The Bible is full of wisdom about how conflict should be handled; instead of conflicting parties, especially Christians, handing their disputes over to the secular court to decide their fate. Biblical principles for conflict resolution can be applied to any type of conflict, and Scripture provides the best approach to conflict

resolution, one that will result in lasting peace if both parties will only commit to following God's ordained methods. If we look to His word and follow His guidance, we can experience peace from conflict and provide a compelling witness to others of His goodness and love. It is hoped that this study will provide resources to support the process of conflict resolution Biblically.

Recommendations

1. Families and individuals should follow the Biblical approach to resolving conflict by keeping anger under control, honest and fair handling of the conflict, listening carefully and speaking tactfully, willingness to forgive and forget, and development of a positive and healthy attitude towards disharmony.
2. National and public conflicts usually result from competition, which may arise due to declining or scarce resources. The Biblical conflict strategies and skills employed by Abram, including collaboration, accommodation, and compromise, should serve as a lesson for crisis-ridden nations and communities.
3. One of the international world agendas today is an agenda for peace: preventive diplomacy, peacemaking, and peacekeeping. The conflict-resolution strategies and skills employed by the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:1-20) could be adopted by the United Nations Security Council for peacemaking and peacekeeping. The strategies that involve the establishment of a channel of grievances, meetings of the council with delegates, fair hearings from delegates, discussing and debating issues to reach a compromise or consensus, and policy formulation for a lasting solution may be of paramount assistance.

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