

Learning to Work Through Dissension with Other Believers (Acts 15)

I. THE BACKGROUND (Acts 15:1-4)

A. The Type of Problem (1-2a) (DOCTRINE, discipline, differences)

Ⓞ *PR: Principle: Conflict should not discourage us—it's normal.*

B. The Response to the Problem (2b-4)

Ⓞ *PR: We should not always consider compromise as a valid option (doctrine).*

Ⓞ *PR: NOT to "win", but to discover and yield to the truth.*

II. THE DISSENSION (5)

The issue became personal, as believers of the Jerusalem church identified and struggled with the issue as well.

Ⓞ *PR: Recognize that we may have beliefs from our past that are incorrect.*

Ⓞ *PR: If done in sincerity, no issue is wrong to bring up.*

III. THE DISCUSSION (6-12)

A. The apostles and elders came together to consider this issue (6)

Ⓞ *PR: Input into conflict discussions should logically be limited to those who are qualified to speak on the matter.*

B. There was much discussion [lit. investigation or question] (7a).

Ⓞ *PR: We must be willing to offer the sacrifice of involvement.*

Ⓞ *PR: We are to speak one at a time, in an orderly fashion.*

C. Peter speaks (7b-11).

Ⓞ *PR: We must be committed to our fellow believers as spiritual family.*

Ⓞ *PR: We are to speak up (if we have cause), rather than become bitter.*

Ⓞ *PR: We are to focus on the issue, and not argue by belittling others.*

Ⓞ *PR: Our goal for this issue is to find a solution, not to assign blame.*

Ⓞ *PR: We must communicate clearly, and confront error. (Col 3:16)*

Ⓞ *PR: See admonition is a necessary element in Christian relationships.*

Ⓞ *PR: We are not to bring up one's past. The issue is the issue.*

D. Paul and Barnabas speak (12).

Ⓞ *PR: It is our privilege / responsibility to speak up with studied insight.*

Ⓞ *PR: We must commit ourselves to truly listen as others speak.*

E. James speaks (13-18).

Ⓞ *PR: We must conduct ourselves in an orderly manner, speaking in turn. (Should not be a problem if we're listening to one another).*

Ⓞ *PR: God's plan for each of His established institutions always calls for a primary leader. The leader is: in the state—heads of government, in the home—the husband/father, in a local church the lead or senior pastor.*

IV. THE DISCOVERY OF THE TRUTH (14-18):

A. James focuses the discussion on the Scriptures.

Ⓞ *PR: No matter who it is that speaks (James evaluated Peter, an apostle!), or what happens (v. 12), EACH testimony & experience MUST be weighed against Scripture (2 Tim 3:16-17). Bottom Line: NOT who says it or what happened, but "What does (or doesn't) the Bible say?"*

Ⓞ *PR: The actual issue must be identified before it can be resolved. Resolving the main issue resolves many others. (symptoms/illness?)*

B. James identifies the truth from the Scriptures (14-17; Amos 9:11-12).

Ⓞ *PR: Leaders must know the breadth of Scriptures!*

V. THE DECISION (19-22):

A. James gives his conclusion (19-21).

Ⓞ *PR: The leader is to lead when a Biblical solution to the problem becomes evident. The leader is to summarize the Biblical solution. Since the Scriptures clearly answered the problem, no more discussion was needed.*

Ⓞ *PR: A majority vote is frequently not appropriate, as the authority rests in Scripture, not in the group that has the most votes.*

Ⓞ *PR: When the Scripture has the answer, the Scripture is the answer.*

Ⓞ *PR: We must not only discover the answer to a problem, but we must also appropriate the answer, and that with consideration for all affected.*

VI. THE DELIGHT IN THE TRUTH (22-31):

A. The apostles, elders, and people _____ (22-29).

Ⓞ *OB: Everyone was pleased with James' biblical solution and application, as indicated by their adherence to it. Because of the "top brass" that was present (the apostles), it is obvious that his judgment was not based upon who he was but upon the basis of his biblically sound argument. The assembly had discovered the truth, and now happily yielded to it with the appropriate actions.*

Ⓞ *PR: Telling the right people (leaders) is not _____; is not wrong.*

Ⓞ *PR: We must be ready to wholeheartedly back the _____, having carefully listened to reasoning and argument, and having compared all with Scripture, whether it affirms or rejects our own previously held beliefs.*

B. The messengers from Jerusalem _____ the letter (30-31).

Ⓞ *OB: The results of _____ interactions produced doctrinal soundness and joy in the young believers at Antioch.*

Ⓞ *PR: Godly practices _____ off!*

VII. THE BOTTOM LINE—Final Observations and Review:

The people of the Antioch church, and also the people of the Jerusalem church as they became involved:

- _____ together
- _____ the truth
- and _____
- _____ out the truth
- _____ to the truth
- _____ out the truth.

By confronting this problem head on, through sacrifice and inconvenience, they ultimately strengthened their local churches and the church at large by:

- _____ a Biblical answer for the question at hand,
- _____ believers who struggled with this issue,
- _____ believers who had an unbiblical understanding of the issue,
- _____ believers with firm, sound answers, and
- _____ the godly way to confront real-life problems and resolve them with real-life Biblical solutions.

One Final Observation: _____ !