

When Conflicts Arise



Collegiate Quarterly

Teacher's Guide

Surveying the Source

Luke 22:24–26; Acts 6:1–4; 15:1–39; James 4:1

Plotting the Course

The students will:

- ▶ Gain a better understanding of the nature of conflict.
- ▶ Develop better conflict resolution skills.

- ▶ Identify personal motives and behaviors that contribute to unhealthy conflict.

Preparing to Lead

“Then the contention became so sharp that they parted from one another” (Acts 15:39). Strife and conflict are nothing new. Indeed, the Bible informs us that there was war in heaven long before a single human being was created. It should therefore come as no surprise that God's

people would experience differences, which at times may become so extreme that individuals must go their separate ways. Nevertheless, we have been given guidelines and specific real life stories demonstrating how we can productively handle such times.

Getting Started

A. Prior to class find or prepare a skit between siblings in which one sibling attempts to exercise authority over the other. The goal of the activity is to demonstrate how the motives of pride and/or selfishness lead to overbearing and controlling behaviors, which ultimately result in fragmentation of relationships.

Explore with students which aspects of the exchange facilitated unity and which contributed to discord in the relationship.

B. Research a modern problem in which inequality of treatment was a factor. This could be a workplace, family, educational institution, or societal scenario. Share the situation with class members examining what might be motivators contributing to the unfair treatment, then analyze suggested settlements to the problem. If the situation has already been resolved, explore what the solution was, then how and why it worked (if it did).

Materials

Bibles, Reproducible Activity, concordances, papers, pencils

Delving Into the Word

A. Exclusivity seems always to bring division. In the early church, an attitude of superiority was prevalent among the Jewish nation which excluded other nations (e.g. Acts 15:6–12). This same problem is manifested in churches today.

Share a personal experience with the class about exclusivity and invite members to share their experiences. Discuss whether there is healthy exclusivity also noting that conflict is not necessarily harmful. (In the case of our exclusive devotion to God, conflict can arise when we defend that relationship.)

Divide the class into small groups and distribute the Reproducible Activity. Complete the activity in small groups.

B. Remind class members that while He walked the earth, Jesus' disciples repeatedly argued about who was greatest among them. Invite a class member to read Luke 22:24–26 out loud. Instead of attempting to “one-up” each other, Jesus challenges them to think outside of their boxes. *Say:* “In the words of Dr. Henry Cloud says ‘Becoming an adult is the process of moving out of a ‘one-up/one-down’ relationship and into a peer relationship to other adults’ (*Changes That Heal*, Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992, p. 208). It should be encouraging that even though Christ's disciples struggled to have adult relationships with each other, they eventually grew up, and so can we.

With the help of Bible concordances, lead the class in a study of how forgiveness and humility combined with maturity, make healthy relationships possible despite the presence of conflict (e.g. Gen. 13:5–17; 50:15–21; 1 Sam. 17:12–40; Rom. 12:3–5; 15:1–7).

Discussing the Ideas

1. How do prioritizing and delegating become important in resolving conflict?
2. What are some specific steps we can take to resolve conflict today?
3. How can we remain thankful and positive while in the midst of unresolved conflict?
4. What symptoms reveal a conflict

may be stemming from pride, envy, or selfishness?

5. What are some differences between healthy and unhealthy conflict?
6. How do we attempt to be the greatest in our lives today?
7. How can we know when a conflict has been resolved?

Closing the Activity

Distribute paper and pencils to students. Review concepts studied especially regarding the factors that contribute to negative conflict, and the processes discussed that facilitate resolution. Invite students to list the factors they recognize in their lives contributing to negative conflict. Then ask them to list the processes they need to consider in order to

experience resolution to any conflicts they are presently involved with.

Close by offering an intercessory prayer on behalf of the students. Begin by expressing praise and thanksgiving, then make confession and make requests on behalf of the students. End the prayer with praise and thanksgiving to God.

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HEALTHY VERSUS UNHEALTHY EXCLUSIVENESS

<i>Reference</i>	<i>Healthy or Unhealthy</i>	<i>Commentary</i>
Exodus 20:1–3	Healthy	As Savior, God has right to our worship
Galatians 2:11–13	Unhealthy	Unhealthy exclusivity became contagious. However, Paul addressed Peter in a godly manner by confronting Peter directly, rather than talking behind his back
Lev. 20:23, 24		
Deut. 7:3, 4		
Mark 2:15, 16		
Luke 15:1, 2		
Exodus 20:14		
John 4:9		
Ezra 4:1–3		
Matthew 10:5, 6		
Acts 10:28		
Acts 11:1–18		
John 14:6		
Acts 4:12		
1 Timothy 2:5		
Acts 10:9–15		
Isaiah 42:8		