

# Hot Takes and Hard Conversations

## The Big Idea

*Peacemaking is not peacekeeping. We can hold deep convictions and deep relationships at the same time.*

## Why This Lesson Matters for This Audience

This generation is surrounded by conflict—political, cultural, racial, theological. The pressure to have a public opinion on everything is exhausting, and many feel trapped between tribal loyalty and genuine conviction. This lesson equips them to engage with grace and truth, using the Matthew 18 pathway and Romans 14 principles.

## Session Timing & Flow

Segment	Time	Notes
<b>Opening</b>	5 min	Ask: “What’s a topic you’ve learned to never bring up at Thanksgiving dinner?” Let a few people answer. Then: “What if we could talk about hard things without destroying relationships? That’s what we’re exploring today.”
<b>The Tension</b>	5 min	Name the hot-take culture. Acknowledge how exhausting it is.
<b>The Text</b>	12–15 min	Romans 14:1–13 is the primary text. Walk through the context: a church arguing about food and holy days. Paul’s solution isn’t to pick a side—it’s to stop judging each other on disputable matters while standing firm on what’s clear. Then Matthew 18:15–17 for conflict resolution.
<b>The Table (Discussion)</b>	15–20 min	Use questions 2, 4, and 5 as core. Question 2 (distinguishing clear commands from disputable matters) is essential for Church of Christ students. Question 4 (peacemaker vs. peacekeeper) is the key distinction. Question 5 (Matthew 18 process) gives them a practical tool.
<b>The Takeaway</b>	3–5 min	Listen to understand before responding to win.

## Priority Discussion Questions

If time is short, focus on questions **2, 4, 5** from the companion guide.

Question 2 teaches them how to categorize issues—essential vs. disputable. This is one of the most important hermeneutical skills they’ll develop. Question 4 reframes their role. Question 5 gives them a process.

1. When you feel strongly about a hot-button issue, what do you usually want more: to be understood, to be proven right, or to be faithful to Christ—and how does that shape the way you talk?
2. In the Text (Romans 14) - How can we discern whether an issue is:
  - a clear biblical command,
  - a matter of wisdom, or
  - a disputable matter where Christians can differ?What's one current issue you would place in each category, and why?
3. In Romans 14, Paul tells believers to “welcome” those who differ on disputable matters. What would “welcoming” practically look like in your real world: at work, in your friend group, or online?
4. James 1:19 calls us to be “quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger.” Where do you most tend to reverse that order (slow to hear, quick to speak, quick to anger)? What is one concrete practice you could try this week to flip that pattern?
5. Jesus blesses “peacemakers,” not just “peacekeepers.” Think of one situation where you’ve tended to avoid conflict or to escalate it. What would peacemaking—not just keeping the peace—look like there?

## Facilitation Tips

**TIP:** This lesson will tempt you (and the class) to wade into specific political or social debates. Resist. The goal is to teach them a framework for engagement, not to settle any particular issue.

**TIP:** If the class starts debating a specific hot-button issue, redirect: “This is exactly the kind of topic Romans 14 addresses. The question isn’t who’s right about this specific issue right now—it’s how do we engage as Christians when we disagree?”

**TIP:** The Romans 14 distinction is critical in Churches of Christ, which have historically debated many matters of opinion. Help them understand: there are essentials (salvation, baptism, the gospel, moral commands) and there are disputable matters (political opinions, matters of personal judgment). We hold the first category with conviction. We hold the second with grace.

## Doctrinal Notes

**DOCTRINE:** Romans 14 does not teach that everything is a matter of opinion. The New Testament contains clear commands (baptism, the Lord’s Supper, sexual morality, the deity of Christ) and areas of personal judgment (political affiliation, dietary choices, educational philosophy). The Church of Christ has historically worked to identify biblical authority through command, example, and necessary inference. This lesson is an opportunity to teach that framework while also acknowledging that Christians of good faith sometimes reach different conclusions on matters where Scripture is less explicit.

## **Your Story This Week**

*Share a time when a disagreement strained a relationship—and how you navigated it. Or share a time when you handled conflict poorly and what you learned. Humility is more instructive than competence here.*