



# Spirit Empowered CHURCH

Spirit Empowered Church

Mid-Week Service

July 27, 2022

## 1. A Spirit Empowered Church Handles Conflict Biblically

- a. There has been this facade that the early church was perfect, peaceful, and always in harmony. But the Biblical record bears out quite a bit to the contrary. There was conflict over doctrine, conflict between Apostles, conflict within the Local Church, and even conflict over who could and could not be saved. The book of Acts is full of Conflict.

- b. Conflict, though uncomfortable, can generate points of stall or points of acceleration depending on how it is handled and navigated.
- c. For example, Acts 15 records such a point of contention. Acts 15 records the conflict that took place between Paul and Barnabas and a group of men from Judea over the issue of whether or not Gentiles should be circumcised. You think you have tough conflict issues to resolve, how would you like to deal with that one? But there are six valuable lessons on conflict resolution we can glean from this passage:
  - d. **Hear Both Sides of the Story** – Paul and Barnabas reported how God had used them to see the Gentiles converted. Believers who were part of the party of the Pharisees explained how the Gentiles must be circumcised and required to obey the Law of Moses (Acts 15:2-5). The apostles and elders heard both sides of the story.
  - e. **Engage in Discussion** – Next, the apostles and elders took time to discuss the matter (Acts 15:6-7).

- f. **Present the Facts and be Sensitive to What God is Doing** - After much discussion, Peter addressed the crowd by drawing the crowd's attention to the facts ... the work God was doing among the Gentiles and the reality that God had accepted the Gentiles by giving them the Holy Spirit (Acts 15:7-11).
- g. **Provide Supporting Evidence** - Paul and Barnabas shared about the miraculous signs and wonders God had done through them among the Gentiles. Then, James spoke up and quoted the prophets to confirm the work of the Spirit among the Gentiles (Acts 15:12-18).
- h. **Based on the facts, articulate a Responsible Solution to the Conflict** - James said: "It is my judgment, therefore, that we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God. Instead, we should write to them, telling them to abstain from food polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from the meat of strangled animals and from blood. For Moses has been preached in every city from the earliest times and is read in the synagogues on every Sabbath" (Acts 15:19-21). The solution was based on the facts. However, the solution also did not ignore the Gentiles' responsibilities.

i. **Put Together a Communication Strategy that Brings**

**Clarification** - After the solution was articulated, the apostles and elders put together a team to deliver a letter to the Gentile believers in Antioch, Syria and Cilicia. The letter brought clarification to the entire situation and provided a solution.

**2. A Spirit Empower Church seeks to Heal those Who have Made Mistakes**

- a. In Galatians Chapter Two, the Apostle Paul is recording a conflict that happened between himself and the Apostle Peter. Now some may say, “Wait a minute, you mean to tell me that the Apostles had disagreements and conflicts with one another?” Absolutely they did!
- b. Whether it is arguing over the possibility of Gentiles being able to become a part of the Church in the Book of Acts or in the text of Galatians chapter Two, conflict is nothing new to the Church. Notice in the text of **Galatians 2:11-13**, “**But when Peter came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. For before certain men came from James, he was eating with the Gentiles; but when they came he drew back and separated himself, fearing the circumcision party. And the**



rest of the Jews acted hypocritically along with him, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy. But when I saw that their conduct was not in step with the truth of the Gospel, I said to Peter before them all, “If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you force the Gentiles to live like Jews?””

- c. Now what is the backstory of this text? To make a long story short, the Apostle Peter was torn between the Jewish Christians and the Gentile Christians who seemed to have some differing views over a few matters. Peter was willing to hang out with the Gentiles so long as the Jewish group was not around but when they showed up, Peter would disassociate himself. Paul hears of this matter and a conflict ensues.
- d. The Apostle Paul, though loyal to the Church and to the Apostleship, was not willing to allow fear to cripple another Apostle’s life and ministry. Thus Paul confronts Peter over the matter and a verbal conflict ensues. But notice, in the midst of the conflict and confrontation, the Apostle Paul refused to demean a fellow servant.

- e. Paul's loyalty to Christ and to His Church spurred him on to confront Peter but to not "cut" Peter. We must understand that our loyalty to one another in Christ should drive us to be willing to confront our brethren but to never use the confrontation as a time to cut one another with our words. Confrontations are meant to be bring healing and restoration; not perpetuating pain and destruction.
- f. We must mature to the place where we can have hard discussions for the sake of healing and not for the sake of gaining an upper hand of thinking that one is right and one is wrong.

### 3. A Spirit Empowered Church embraces and supports its Leaders and Pastors

- a. I want to address something here that I feel bears speaking to but I need my intent and heart understood in so that what I say will be embraced and understood; not twisted and misunderstood.
- b. Hebrews 13:17-18, "Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not

with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you. <sup>18</sup> Pray for us, for we are sure that we have a clear conscience, desiring to act honorably in all things.”

- c. Now, a few things here: I clearly understand that there have been abuses of this Scripture. I understand that there have been abuses committed by “spiritual leaders” and by clergy. I am completely aware of this; however, the abuses of leaders should not be an excuse to refuse to support righteous leadership.
- d. Church, pastors and leaders have made mistakes. Things have not been handled correctly and this is an undeniable fact. Guys, I have made mistakes. I am not a perfect leader and never have claimed to be.
- e. I am also not suggesting that all claimed rights of leadership is worthy of submitting too. To speak into some of this, the Apostle Paul lends some clarity to the intent and purpose of spiritual leadership when it comes to those who lead in the church. It’s not about position but rather about the calling...
- f. 1 Corinthians 4:14-21, <sup>14</sup>“I do not write these things to make you ashamed, but to admonish you as my beloved children. <sup>15</sup> For though you have countless guides in Christ, you do not have many fathers. For I became your father in Christ Jesus through

the gospel. <sup>16</sup> I urge you, then, be imitators of me. <sup>17</sup> That is why I sent you Timothy, my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, to remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach them everywhere in every church. <sup>18</sup> Some are arrogant, as though I were not coming to you. <sup>19</sup> But I will come to you soon, if the Lord wills, and I will find out not the talk of these arrogant people but their power.

<sup>20</sup> For the kingdom of God does not consist in talk but in power.

<sup>21</sup> What do you wish? Shall I come to you with a rod, or with love in a spirit of gentleness?"

- g. Notice how Paul points to the fact that the church at Corinth had many “leaders” or as he put it, countless guides in Christ, but they didn’t have many fathers. A leader, without the heart of a father, can turn his role into a means of driving agendas rather than building and molding disciples. A leader scolds but a father admonishes. A leader drives things forward but a leader with the heart of a father leads things forward.
- h. Also, when it comes to correction, would we rather receive it from a father or a stranger?
- i. Brothers Compete and Contend: Fathers Correct and Celebrate