

Introduction:

Today we're going to look at *conflict in the church*.

Things we will look at in this lesson:

Conflict in the Church

Conflict in the Church:

01. By writing honestly about the problems of the church, what did Luke do?

02. What is one mark of a spiritual church?

03. What did Satan attempt to do to the early church in Acts 6?

04. What was the conflict in the early church the result of?

05. Feeling neglected, what did the Greek-speaking widows in the early church begin to do?

06. What do those who complain often want?

07. What are we to do when we see something that is wrong?

08. What does the Christian method of problem solving involve?

Article 1)

A Godly Response to Conflict (Acts 6:2-4): If members of a church have acted unwisely in creating a problem and keeping it going, leaders must act wisely and decisively to solve it. Most serious church problems exist because of leaders' lack of wisdom or courage in solving them. The apostles took five steps when faced with division in the church...

(1) They recognized the problem existed and took intelligent steps to solve it. Ignoring problems usually only compounds them. Most issues are best dealt with at once. That is how the apostles handled complaints about the distribution of food to the widows.

Article 1) continued...

(2) They did not condemn or accuse either side. They did not scold the Hebraic Jews for being unfair or berate the Hellenistic Jews for causing trouble or complaining. The apostles wisely took the focus away from pointing the finger of blame and placed it squarely on finding a solution that would work for everyone. Leaders must be fair and recognize that some things are legitimate problems. Regardless of our best intentions, inequities and problems do occur.

(3) They honestly faced their own limitations. The apostles recognized that their first priority and calling was to preach and teach the Word. Whether or not they were gifted and strong in areas of administering a welfare program, they realized they could not do everything at once. Peter and the apostles did not take the criticism personally. That is hard when you are in leadership and someone complains about a problem. But they had the wisdom to know that this was a legitimate problem. Even though the problem was not their fault, they were not excused from listening and trying to solve it.

Nothing is gained when a leader responds to a group with resentment, self-serving threats, condemnation, or judgmental words and unkind deeds. Even though they had been beaten (5:40) and busy (5:42), they did not use that as an excuse. Poor leadership could have splintered the Jerusalem church. However, wise leadership brought the church together so even greater growth could occur. If leaders in a church are willing to assume that kind of honesty and humility, people almost always respond positively. The apostles recognized the problem was occurring because their structure had not grown to accommodate the growing numbers of people and needs. The apostles did not have time to do every leadership task. As the Jerusalem church grew, they were stretched too thin. The solution was not for them to try to do the work better. Instead they needed to arrange their priorities and involve others in ministry.

(4) They were open to change. Anytime there is growth, there must be change. People must be willing to change gears and get used to doing something in a new way. This is especially true in the church. Too often churches or individuals get in ruts and no longer are willing to change. The attitude, We have always done it this way; this is the way it always should be, keeps people from entering into new ministries and experiences God has for them. And other people cannot get involved in ministries they are called to and capable of doing. A good example is Stephen. His selection to serve in this way opened the door to a growing opportunity to minister in other ways (Acts 6:8).

(5) They delegated authority to others who were qualified and capable. They delegated authority to others who were qualified and capable.

09. What role did the seven appointed to, “wait on tables”, fill?

10. What were the primary duties of the Twelve apostles?

11. What three qualifications were required for the seven chosen by the apostles?

12. What could happen as a result of meeting the internal needs of the church?

13. What does growth always come with?

Article 2)

Chain of events recorded following the church trouble in Acts 6:

(1) Stephen emerged as a leader and his eventual martyrdom was followed by the persecution by Saul.

(2) That sent Philip to Samaria and to the Ethiopian official, it also sent believers to Antioch.

(3) In turn, Antioch sent relief to Jerusalem and also sent out the missionary Paul, whose labors resulted in churches and letters.

(4) Today, we still benefit from the good God worked through the problem seen in Acts 6.