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THE LEADERSHIP LINEUP

UNCHANGING LEADERSHIP PRINCIPLES TO KEEP YOU AND THE MINISTRY YOU LEAD IN PEAK POSITION

Reading the lineup is key to maximizing one's surfing opportunity. Having solid objects on land to line up and hold one's position is essential in light of the shifting nature of the ocean. Similarly, leaders within Christian Surfers need solid, unchanging principles to hold them in position so they can maximize their ministry opportunities. The Leadership Lineup features unchanging leadership principles to keep you, and the ministry you lead, in peak position.

LINEUP #3: Christians and Conflict

Christians and Conflict - A Biblical Model

by Reggie Colbert

You are in the lineup and one surfer is getting all the waves...or to be specific, getting all of your waves! He even burns you when you finally get a wave to yourself. To top it off, a beginner gets in your way on your first good wave to yourself! After you have calmly explained whose wave is whose, the person still doesn't seem to understand the rules of surfing. Your temper is rising; suddenly you are very aware of the 'Christian Surfers' sticker prominently positioned on your board and begin wondering if you could peel it off before you let fly at someone!

Conflict has been with us from the beginning. The Bible begins with God creating this beautiful world we live in. As soon as humans enter the picture of paradise, conflict is the result! Adam and Eve are tempted to distrust God and fall out of relationship with God himself (see them hiding in the garden) as well as with each other (can't even look upon their nakedness without shame). They quickly enter into the blame game when God calls them to account. Adam blames Eve and God (*Genesis 3:12*), "The woman whom You gave to be with me made me eat of that fruit that You told us never to touch." Eve in turn blames the Serpent (*Genesis 3:13*), "The Serpent deceived me, and I ate." From then on, the human history is a story of conflict and how not to deal with it very well! We are the one dysfunctional species!

Conflict is part of life because we are living in a state of broken relationship with God and each other. The good news is that God is constantly interacting with us to restore us into relationship with Him. His agenda has never changed. So the issue isn't whether we have conflict or not, but whether we will deal with the inevitable conflict in a biblical way.

Here's a few biblical instances of conflict. Read these accounts and reflect upon how the conflict started and how it was handled. Sometimes conflict can be avoided, other times simply confronted, ideally always resolved.

Abram and Lot - Genesis 13

Jesus at the Temple - Matthew 21:12-13, Mark 11:12-19, Luke 19:45-48, John 2:12-16

Paul and Barnabas - Acts: 15:36-40

Discussion point: Not all conflicts result in sin. In the examples of Paul and Barnabas, and Abram and Lot, how did the conflict result in God 'launching' them into new and better directions for their lives in service to God? Have you ever considered that God may actually be using conflict in your life?

Some conflicts do result in sin. For instance, there are certain people who surf 'my spot' that I try and avoid. I just do not like them in the water or on land. I have caught myself getting so angry with one in particular that I was actually chasing him for a bit of 'confrontation' to teach him some respect! My emotional state was 'self-justification' and 'vengeance'. Even though his behavior was the issue, my intention was to beat that behavior out of him! He had become the problem, not the behavior. I often fall into the default mode of dealing with

conflict in destructive ways. I want to win. Slowly I am learning to look for God's will in the conflict when I first feel the tension of conflict arising. God's Spirit is helping me be creative in conflict, to act in love with the greater purpose of God's kingdom values dominating the conflict, rather than proving I am right!

Discussion point: For Paul and Barnabas, were they experiencing conflict because they were not spiritual enough? Did one or the other sin? What was God doing there in that split up? (*Acts 15*)

Jesus started conflict as we read in Matthew (and the parallel passages) and went looking for confrontation in 'clearing the temple'. If Jesus had conflict why are we so taken by surprise when conflict sucks us down into its clutches?

Discussion point: Are there times when we are obligated to a conflictual confrontation? Describe an event from your life-experience when you felt 'right' about the conflict you started.

Jesus also was great at resolving conflict. *John 8:3-11* is the story of Jesus dealing with the Pharisees and the woman caught in adultery (wasn't the man as guilty as the woman?). The Pharisees were correct in upholding the law which demanded the woman be killed. The woman deserved punishment. What would you have done in this situation? The Pharisees were doing their job. Yet, how did Jesus treat them in this situation and what was the final result of how Jesus managed this conflict? Was it a restored relationship?

Sometimes Jesus avoided conflict. When Jesus was rejected in his hometown of Nazareth, they wanted to kill him! He could have fought back, but what did he do? (*Luke 4:28-30*) A wise man once told me, "You don't have to participate in every conflict you are invited to." Now there's a new idea!

So how does conflict evolve?

Check out this 'Five Steps of Conflict' cycle and discuss a specific conflict according to each step.

The Cycle of Conflict

- **Tension Development:** The first sign or sense of impending conflict is the 'feel' of tension with the other person or persons. How does your body tell you that you are tense? Are you aware of your muscles, stomach, nerves, speech patterns, span of attention, and emotions giving you clues and signals that you are tense?
- **Role Dilemma:** When we get that feeling of tension development it throws us out of our normal behavior with the other person or persons. A prominent warning sign of this is a communication breakdown.
- **Injustice Collecting:** When your communications are broken, separation is called for and sides are taken. The other party has become the enemy and artillery is being collected for the impending war. Past events get dredged up, past wrongs are recalled to be used as weapons against the other party.
- **Confrontation:** The actual issue of the conflict has been replaced with the person. The pressure is intense, and all those weapons collected in the previous stage are ready for use. In a managed conflict it will be the issues that are confronted. In an unmanaged conflict the people will be the issue.
- **Adjustments:** There are basically just three options available: First: end the relationship, Second: attempt to return to normalcy (put all those weapons and artillery on hold! It is a 'cold war' mentality), and, Third: evaluate the situation and create a new set of expectations and commitments for the relationship.

To renegotiate a relationship there are three elements that need to be present:

- **Generate valid and useful information.** We have memory banks full of information that could be used as the ammo to hurt the other party of the conflict. Just because it may be true does not mean it is valid for this situation nor may it be helpful for restoration
- **Allow a free and informed choice.** Often the previous roles of the relationship obligate a person in conflict to fall back into that old role in order to restore the relationship. If this is the case, there is a winner and a loser. That is not true restoration. The goal is restoration that allows the other party growth and development. To fall back into the old ways of doing things does not resolve the conflict, it merely 'masks' it for a short time. Both parties must feel they are free to choose as they need, and their choice is based upon the useful and valid information.
- **Motivate personal commitment to the agreement.** The Bible uses the concept of a 'covenant' for this process. A covenant is a contract between parties both having obligations to honor in order that the contract be fulfilled. In biblical instances of God making covenants with mankind, promises were made to us in return for the fulfillment of the covenant agreement. The amazing concept here is that God willingly entered into a covenant relationship with us in order to bless us! If we are to reflect God's character, we also must have a motivation for mutual blessing.

Conflict is dynamic so be careful! When you alter your behavior simply because of the tension you are feeling, the conflict is controlling you! Behavior is simply the outward expressions of inner motivations. The earlier it is discussed (Tension Development stage) to find out what is causing the behaviors signaling impending conflict, the easier it is to resolve. (The example of Abram and Lot applies here. Abram dealt with the conflict before it became a full confrontation. He was willing to give Lot the 'best' land so that he could maintain the 'better' values. In the end, what happened to Lot? *Genesis 19*)

Remember, you will have conflict in your life, big and small. Expect it. Be aware of it. Learn to recognize potential conflict before it swallows you up. But conflict is not sinful of itself - sin results from the manner in which we behave in the conflict.

Wherever love is lost to hatred,
Gentleness to maliciousness,
Truthfulness to dishonesty,
Humility to selfishness,
It is sin.

Discussion point:

Consider these verses from Proverbs: 12:18, 15:28, 18:13, 22:11

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This is a condensed version of a unit from the CS Foundations Training. You can have the outlines of both the Leaders Notes and Trainees Worksheets for this and other units by going to the affiliates password section of the CSI website: <http://www.christiansurfers.net/FilesLogin.aspx>.

- 1.1 CS Fundamental: Vision, mission, core values, core strategies of CS
- 1.2 Leadership Issues: Character, style, stages, habit of Godly leaders.
- 1.3 Building partnerships with the local church and other ministries.
- 1.4 Developing and maintaining a leadership team, community and Kingdom culture.
- 1.5 Evangelism Content: Fundamentals and preparing a testimony.
- 1.6 Evangelism Process: Building relationships and recognizing stages of responsiveness.
- 1.7 CS Best Practices: Structure, systems, legal, finances requirements as per country.
- 1.8 The Surfing Culture: Trends, contextualization, values, and ways to effect culture.

Contact your national leader for password.

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