SOLVING CONFLICTS IN PAPUA NEW GUINEAN BAPTIST CHURCHES

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INTRODUCTION

Conflict creates disharmony, tension, and fear. However, conflict also fosters change, growth, and maturity. For conflict to be useful, though, one must first understand it. This article defines conflict, and types of conflict, and then looks at biblical ways of resolving conflict, in the context of Baptist churches in Papua New Guinea.

CONFLICT

Conflict is a problem in human relationships involving people. It is a struggle over things, which one perceives as important. These may include values and beliefs. They may also include claims of status, power, and resources, one individual wishes to gain over another individual.[1] Conflict occurs when two or more individuals disagree, and dislike the view of the other. Leas and Kittlaus define conflict as, "a situation, in which two or more human beings desire goals, which they perceive as being attainable by one or the other, but not by both".[2] Bossart defines conflict as:

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[1] Kenneth Gangel, and Samuel Canine, *Communication and Conflict Management: in Churches and Christian Organisations*, Nashville TN: Broadman Press, 1992, p. 131.

[2] Speed Leas, and Paul Kittlaus, *Church Fights*, Philadelphia PA: Westminster Press, 1977, pp. 28-29.

> From our difference of needs and values, amidst the segments of our systems, the different movements and motivations within the individual or group, can compete for favour, with that competition for supremacy of need or value having the task of maintaining our sense of self worth.[3]

KINDS OF CONFLICT

Leas and Kittlaus identify three kinds of conflict: intrapersonal, interpersonal, substantive.[4]

Intrapersonal Conflict

Intrapersonal conflict is a struggle, which a person has within himself or herself. Often this conflict occurs within his or her mind. This may be the result of different feelings warring against each other. It may be struggling to determine what to do, while being concerned about others. This is a situation, where "one's Puritan conscience can be in conflict with his playful side; or his rational, calculating self can be in contest with his love for the non-rational and aesthetic".[5] For example, in a church worship service, some people may want to sing praise and worship songs, while others may prefer traditional hymns. The music leader struggles, in his own mind, how to select songs to please both members of the congregation. He wants to introduce praise and worship songs, but, at the same time, he does not want to threaten or undermine those who prefer traditional hymns. This is a constant struggle, when one tries to do the right thing, yet, at the same time, he does not want to offend the other party.

Interpersonal Conflict

This conflict relates to differences between people. It refers to issues, when people relate to one another. This is a conflict, where one person is striking against the other, primarily over their non-compatibility as persons. This

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[3] Donald E. Bossart, *Creative Conflict in Religious Education and Church Administration*, Birmingham AL: Religious Education Press, 1980, p. 12.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid.

conflict is not generated by what a person does, or what he thinks about an issue, but by how he feels about the other person. Interpersonal conflict reflects one's bias in colour, whether he is black or white, in age, whether one is old or young, or profession, whether one is a minister or layman. For example, someone may say, I do not like this professor, because she is a woman, or I do not like this student, because he is talkative. Interpersonal conflict primarily reflects one's feeling about another person.

Substantive Conflict

This conflict is between two individuals, or between an individual and a group, or between groups. This kind of conflict has to do with people disputing over facts, values, goals, and beliefs. Between individuals, it can be a contest between the student and his professor, or the head of the agency and a staff member. This kind of conflict often justifies the loyalty of one's position, or the groups he or they represent. This may include differences in personal views and opinions, differences in how things should be done, or differences over values and goals.

POSITIVE ROLE OF CONFLICT

In most cases, conflict has not been totally accepted as a valued portion in the mission of the church, because the church often experiences the problem of disintegration, dysfunction, and dissociation.[6] The church that can best respond to conflict management, according to Leas and Kittlaus, is the "one described as the pluralistic community".[7] A pluralistic community church is one, in which its membership is very diverse, and calls for reconciliation in the internal dynamics of the congregation. Leas and Kittlaus list four major areas where conflict can, essentially, be a positive experience for the church. These include the following:[8]

> 1. Empowerment. This suggests, when church life and practice is dead, internal conflict is sometimes necessary to shake it to life,

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[6] Bossart, *Creative Conflict*, p. 116.

[7] Ibid., p. 117.

[8] Leas and Kittlaus, *Church Fights*, pp. 35-41.

to revive and energise its process for group life, toward accomplishing its mission.

2. Established identity. This suggests conflicts are helpful, when the church's identity is in question; boundary lines are established, between the insiders and the outsiders.

3. Unifying the group. This suggests that conflict, at times, plays down the difference within the congregation, and forces people to be more effective in working together as a task group.

4. Bearing the tolerable. This suggests conflicts can make individuals and groups become aware of their own strengths and limitations.

Conflicts in areas of weaknesses and strengths help people to gain experience and grow. Conflicts are neither evil nor wrong. Conflicts should not be equated with bad feelings, hostile attitudes, or anger. Bad feelings do not constitute interpersonal, or substantive, conflict, until they are manifested in some kind of behaviour that strikes against another person or group. Furthermore, viewing conflict as a positive development will facilitate great potential for growth and maturity toward attaining the mission for which the church is aiming. The church has the responsibility to educate and encourage its members, to see positive effects of conflicts, in areas where they, as a church, need to correct their discrepancies, work to overcome them, and grow in their faith, into maturity, with these experiences.

PAULINE PRINCIPLES IN CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

In Antioch, a conflict occurred, in which Paul applied principles that can be adapted in conflict management. These are: (1) the principle of appealing to

the authority of scriptures; (2) the principle of appealing to the integrity of the leadership; and (3) the principle of appealing to the unity of the body.[9]

The Principle of Appealing to the Authority of Scripture

Paul had been preaching that both Jews and Gentiles needed to be saved, by faith, through the saving grace of God. The incident in Antioch occurred when Peter, who had been eating with the Gentiles, withdrew his presence, when some Jewish men arrived from Jerusalem. Paul pointed to Peter's behaviour, which was contrary to what Paul had been promoting in his presentation of the gospel to the Gentiles, such as, to the Gentile church in Ephesus (Eph 1:13). Paul responded by appealing to the scripture, saying, "Know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ" (Gal 1:16). According to Paul, and the gospel he preached, there is no difference between Jews and Gentiles, as far as salvation by faith is concerned. The appeal to scripture was necessary for confrontation, since Paul and Peter had a common reference to what is understood from the scripture. This process requires the direct use of scripture for admonishing and teaching, to ensure growth and maturity in the making.[10]

The scriptures provide the basis for Christian truth and value. The understanding and expectation of a common value, in reference to scripture, provides a system, necessary to manage a conflict situation. When both parties recognise the importance of subjection of differences to the higher value in the Word of God, an appeal to that measure brings courage and confidence in confronting another leader.

THE PRINCIPLE OF APPEALING TO THE INTEGRITY OF THE LEADERSHIP

Managing a conflict situation involving another leader is not a simple task. A lot is at risk, depending on the nature and outcome of the resolution adhered to. Managing a conflict situation must be understood as both an opportunity, and an experience from which to learn and grow. "Managing

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[9] Gangel and Canine, *Communication and Conflict Management*, pp. 175-176.

[10] Jay E. Adams, *Competent to Counsel*, Nutley NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1970, p. 55.

conflict is more than gaining control. It is a process of listening to, understanding, and caring about, people."[11] Moreover, leadership is seen to be more important than any issue or program. It is an attempt to correct a wrong. Augsburger calls this:

> "[C]are-fronting". It simply means, "I love you. If I love you, I must tell you the truth (even if it hurts). I want your love. I want the truth. Love me enough to tell me the truth."[12]

Caring-fronting is an attempt to restore the integrity of the person, both as an individual and a leader. A leader's position should not be taken lightly, because of the influence leaders have on others. If the behaviour was wrong, many, who follow, may either be lost or corrupted. Any responsible leader, concerned with the flock, will stand up for them. He will teach the truth, from the scriptures, and guide them to experience that truth for themselves, and to be responsible Christians in the body of believers.

THE PRINCIPLE OF APPEALING FOR THE UNITY OF THE BODY

The principle of unity has three positive effects for the unity of the body of Christ. These are: (1) it maintains unity for growth; (2) it maintains Christian testimony and witness; and (3) it maintains conviction in the faith.

Maintaining Unity for Growth

Paul was concerned with the growth and the maturity of the Gentile church. Peter's behaviour had the potential to severely hurt the young Gentile church. Paul had to publicly rebuke Peter, in order to maintain unity, for the young church to grow. "Care-fronting is offering real confrontation that calls out new insights and understanding."[13] This kind of approach unites love and power, which is concerned, at its heart, for relationship, and with concerns for goals and values that are of significant importance.

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[11] Bryan Cardis, "Why Do Churches Fight?", in *Church Administration* (June 1993), p. 6.

[12] David Augsburger, *Caring Enough to Confront*, Scottdale PA: Herald Press, 1973, p. 8.

[13] Ibid., p. 10.

Furthermore, conflict allows for growth and stability. It also creates a desire for improvement, where necessary. Such is the aim for growth and self-realisation. This is achieved through the experience of growth, as a creative possibility from the cost of strain.[14]

Unity is possible in any given conflict situation involving leaders. However, both parties must have a common point of reference. It is claimed that, for Christians, the scriptures are the only reference for any sound assessment and judgment. Confrontation in dialogue produces social activity; it creates understanding, and acceptance, and facilitates unity in the body of believers.

Paul recognised the importance of maintaining unity in the body. In his letter to the Corinthians, who were struggling with division among themselves, he urged them to sort their differences, for the sake of unity (1 Cor 6:1-4). Paul exhorted the Philippians to bear with one another in love. He wrote, "Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit, through the bond of peace" (Phil 1:13). Furthermore, Paul appealed to the leaders in the church to help sort out the differences between two leading women, Euodia and Syntyche. Despite their differences, as Christians, they are expected to agree, for the sake of the unity of the body of Christ.

Maintaining Christian Testimony and Witness

The second aim of confrontation is to appeal to Christian testimony and witness. The eyes of the world are focused on the church, particularly on the leaders. When things go wrong, leadership gets the blame for it, whether directly or indirectly.

Christian morality and ethics call for scrutiny. Maintaining the unity of the body is tantamount to Christian witness and testimony. Paul, in writing to the young pastor, Timothy, suggested that he set a strong model for the "believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith, and in purity. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers" (1 Tim 4:12, 16).

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[14] Ibid., p. 122.

The Christian church is expected to demonstrate its ability to set a godly character, and unite in its efforts to handle conflict situations. By demonstrating this, the Christian church can proclaim an alternative model for an ungodly society.

As Christians manage conflict situations, they are expected to appeal to the testimony of their faith, and the witness of the scriptures, as the sacred and holy truth of God. Christians are urged to search the scriptures, to apply the principles and truth found in it to assist them in managing conflict situations. Gal 2:14-20 testifies that the scriptures must be honoured.

Since God is holy and true (1 Peter 1:16), His words are a guide and direction for all aspects of Christian life and practice. It is important for believers to appeal to the attributes of God, as a reminder that God's character is the best model for Christian living. Christ has given the physical demonstration of a godly character. This example is to be a constant reminder of God's desire for every believer. A godly lifestyle can impact the world as a powerful testimony and witness.

Maintaining Conviction in the Faith

Peter's behaviour had influenced those who saw him, and could be a destructive force to the young church if not corrected. His action was inconsistent with the gospel of Christ. This was a public matter, because of the number of people present. Paul resorted to confronting Peter in public with a strong rebuke, maintaining an appeal for peace and understanding, that unity may prevail. When such behaviour is misleading others in public, a public rebuke is necessary, while it is still fresh and new. In writing to the Gentile Ephesians, Paul makes an appeal to them, "I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit, through the bond of peace" (Eph 4:1-3).

The Gentile believers at Antioch were hurt by what happened that day. Paul noticed this, and confronted Peter. He also appealed to the Gentile Christians for wisdom and understanding. The understanding of biblical values is important for cohesion, and unity of the Christian faith.

Augsburger notes that, "Truth, with love, brings healing, truth, told in love, enables us to grow, truth, in love, produces change."[15] Furthermore, care must be taken to honour the scriptural basis for faith building (2 Tim 3:16).

The individual's integrity, together with the Christian faith, is necessary to build a sense of personal worth and acceptance. The right approach may not be an easy one, and may include confrontation, which sometimes hurts. Yet, the right moment for reaction and timing encourages members to find self-acceptance, worth, personal values enriched, and reconciliation exemplified; thereby creating the unity of the body.[16]

Confidence in the pastoral leadership helps promote unity among peers, and members, in the fellowship. The recognition of authority, submission, forgiveness, and acceptance are some places with which to start, if unity is to be achieved. This also encourages and facilitates the need for understanding each other, in order to develop workable relationships.

Christian leaders are expected to use the Bible as a guide for determining what is right, fair, and just in applying Pauline principles, in confrontation. Conflict management needs prayer, love, and understanding by all concerned parties, when appealing to the scriptures, to the integrity of the leadership, and for unity among the believers in the body.

AN EFFECTIVE WAY OF SOLVING CONFLICT
IN THE BAPTIST CHURCH IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Many problems do not easily go away. Some problems have easy answers, while others may be difficult to solve. Problems must be worked through, or else they remain a barrier to the growth and development of people.[17] According to Scott, there are two ways to confront another human being.[18]

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[15] Augsburger, *Caring Enough to Confront*, p. 20.

[16] Adams, *Competent to Counsel*, p. 55.

[17] M. Scott Peck, *The Road Less Travelled: A New Psychology of Love, Traditional Values, and Spiritual Growth*, New York NY: Simon & Schuster, 1978, p. 31.

[18] Ibid., p. 152.

The first is the way of arrogance. This is the most common way of parents, spouses, teachers, and people generally, in their day-to-day affairs. It is usually unsuccessful, producing more resentment than growth, and other effects, which are not intended. The second is the way of humility. It is not common, requiring, as it does, a genuine extension of oneself. It is more likely to be successful. Peck asserts that:

> Confronting problems is painful. To willingly confront a problem early, before we are forced to confront it by circumstances, means to put aside something pleasant, or less painful, for something more painful. It is choosing to suffer now, in the hope of future gratification, rather than choosing to continue present gratification, in the hope that future suffering will not be necessary.[19]

Confronting people, who are in the wrong, is an unpleasant experience, yet it is necessary; any responsible leader is concerned about the spiritual life of the individuals involved. Peck states: "To fail to confront, when confrontation is required for the nurture of spiritual growth, represents a failure to love."[20]

The account, in Gal 2:11-21, reflects the need to confront with care and love. It was a situation, which required immediate confrontation. A test of a leader is the ability to recognise a problem before it becomes an emergency. Maxwell lists seven ways leaders can recognise a problem, in the following sequence:[21]

1. They sense it before they see it (intuition).

2. They begin looking for it and ask questions (curiosity).

3. They gather data (processing).

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[19] Ibid., p. 31.
[20] Ibid., p. 153.
[21] John Maxwell, *Developing Leaders Within You*, Nashville TN: Thomas Nelson, 1993, p. 73.

4. They share their feelings and findings to a few trusted colleagues (communicating).

5. They define the problem (writing).

6. They check the resources (evaluating).

7. They make decisions (leading).

Paul sensed and noticed there was potential danger for the young church. He took the initiative, as a responsible leader, speaking with confidence and authority, he addressed an obvious conflict situation, in order to solve it.[22] The approach Paul took was necessary, under the following circumstances: (a) the teaching of the gospel was compromised; (b) Peter's manner of behaviour was unbecoming of a key church leader; (c) the Jewish Christians, who were present, followed his example; (d) the Gentile Christians were confused, with their faith at stake; (e) the men from Jerusalem may have thought Peter did the right thing, in support of their claim that salvation by grace through faith is incomplete without the law. The so-called gospel to the Gentiles, having come to faith in Jesus by God's grace, is now questioned. The faith of the Gentile believers was at stake.

Confusion and disbelief were in their eyes. The nature of the situation was both confusing and critical for the young, growing church. The situation required someone stepping in to correct, and set the record straight. Disturbed by the whole episode, the apostle Paul stepped in to confront the situation. The apostle Peter, who had initiated the crisis, needed someone above him, or his peer, to set the situation right. Paul responded, as an apostolic equal and peer, to correct Peter's misleading thought, and manner of behaviour.[23]

In this case, confrontation involved two opposing individuals: firstly the individual involved; and secondly, the issue, or the problem, in question. It takes a person, and an issue, to create a conflict. Once a conflict has

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[22] Adams, *Competent to Counsel*, p. 55.

[23] Gangel and Canine, *Communication and Conflict Management*, p. 116.

occurred, there is a responsibility to reconcile the parties involved. The following must be confronted: the person, the problem, and the situation.

CONFRONTING THE PERSON

The Galatians account required face-to-face confrontation with the individual directly involved. There is no excuse in the church, when the leadership is at fault. Confrontation is healthy and necessary. "When Peter came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he was clearly in the wrong" (Gal 2:11).

Paul rebuked Peter to his face, in public, not considering the presence of other people. The approach Paul took was due to the nature and intensity of the situation. Not only was Peter's behaviour undermining the integrity of Paul's leadership, his behaviour also influenced other Jewish Christians to follow him. Furthermore, the young Gentile believers were even more confused, their faith, based on grace alone, was now threatened by inclusion of observance of the law.

Paul "stood up to" Peter, because he was "clearly in the wrong".[24] It was necessary, because Peter was a senior leader in the church. Many people looked up to Peter, as a leader among the disciples. Peter's behaviour went against his own conscience, and against the revelation that he had received in Acts 10.[25] Paul must do something to intervene and reconcile the situation. Paul had to face him as an apostolic equal. Paul rebuked Peter publicly, when the issue was still new and fresh.

Since many others, including Barnabas, followed Peter's example, it seemed appropriate and necessary, given the circumstances, for Paul to react in such a manner. There are cases, in the course of one's leadership responsibilities, when the situation calls for immediate reaction, although with caution.

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[24] R. A. Cole, *The Epistle of Paul to the Galatians: An Introduction and Commentary*, Grand Rapids MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1974, pp. 73-74.
[25] Ibid.

Confrontation is necessary, when faith is compromised. Paul faced several immediate concerns. Firstly, he was concerned over Peter's integrity, as a senior leader in the church. Secondly, he was concerned over the need to correct the misunderstanding about the truth of the gospel. Thirdly, the need to teach those concerned regarding the truth for salvation. Paul appealed to the consistency of the scripture, with respect to the gospel he preached.

In confrontation (Gal 2:11-21), some degree of opposition has been encountered. One wishes to subdue or remove it, not by punishment, but by influencing the mind to adapt and change.[26] According to Adams "the mind must be confronted, and be influenced to change for the better".[27]

Paul appeals to the truth, consistent with the gospel, to correct and influence Peter's thinking, and those in line with his thinking. Paul appeals to Peter's mind that Peter should change his mind.

To confront, in this case, was to have Peter change his mind, acknowledge his weakness, and to adhere to the teachings of the gospel. The confrontation with Peter vindicates Paul on the nature of the gospel, but it shows Peter's conduct to be inconsistent with his faith. The face-to-face encounter suggests that its purpose was to clear the issue, not personal hostility. The person involved, and the issue concerned, must both be confronted and rebuked, on the basis of worthy values and goals.

CONFRONTING THE PROBLEM

When conflict occurs, there is a problem. Problems among church members must be the concern of all, because it will affect the life of church. The church must learn to own, confront, and solve its problems.[28] The church must develop skills and courage in approaching conflicts among her

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[26] Adams, *Competent to Counsel*, p. 44.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Peck, *The Road Less Travelled*, p. 32.

members, which may involve some planning, to approach the situation. There are four basic steps to follow:[29]

Firstly, it is necessary to determine the cause of the conflict. That involves stating the problem clearly in writing. The understanding of the cause and effect of the problem will determine the kind of assistance needed. Secondly, it is necessary to know who, and how many people, were directly involved. It involves identifying the sources of the problem, enabling specific individual(s) or group(s) to approach. Thirdly, it is necessary to know how many people were affected by the conflict. It involves identifying those who may have been affected by the conflict. Fourthly, is the need to plan a strategy, with processes devised to confront the problem, and deal with it. It involves organising people and resources, if required, to solve this conflict.

Confrontation always implies an issue, a problem, not an individual person. This presupposes an obstacle that must be overcome, and be dealt with, because something is wrong in the life of the one being confronted. Dayton and Engstrom write:

> Confrontation is necessary to right a wrong. The idea that something is not right, there are some difficulties, or some need, which must be acknowledged, and be dealt with, is the central focus of this confrontation nature. Its purpose is to effect personality and behavioural change.[30]

Christian leaders are not immune from sin. There are times when one makes mistakes, but that does not undermine the person's ability as a leader. Whatever the issue may be, it must be addressed, for the good of all. As much as possible, the leader must be encouraged to continue in the faith. The apostle Peter had a definite theological problem; grace by faith was insufficient for salvation, without the observance of the law. His problem

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[29] Edward R. Dayton, and Ted W. Engstrom, *Strategy for Leadership: God's Principles for Churches and Christian Organisations*, Mandaluyong Manila: OMF Literature, 1989, pp. 95-108.
[30] Ibid.

was evident, by his move to withdraw from the Gentile to the Jewish table. This was a definite mistake, which must be corrected.

Paul made no mistake about it, he pointed out the error to Peter, in front of them all (Gal 2:14-16). Then he goes on to justify his answer, by explaining that, "If righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing" (Gal 2:21).

The ultimate goal of conflict management includes both reconciliation and integration. The process is painful, and does hurt deeply. It takes a lot of courage and authority in the Lord to confront another leader in the wrong. That is not easy, as leaders; yet the mandate to correct and help a brother's mistake is one's responsibility. It is the leader's primary responsibility to protect and maintain the Christian faith, in all manner and practice, by keeping in line with the teaching of scripture, even if it means confronting another. There is no easy way out, through cheap grace. Conflict is a process, a means to an end.[31] Bossart writes:

> It is a way to correct the . . . disruption and chaos of the old, with the establishment of harmony and resolution of the new, and not yet. Conflict is as essential to the Christian faith as is the cross.[32]

Conflict, is not a problem in itself, rather problems can give meaning, and can evaluate one's action and practice. Furthermore, on a positive note, problem redefines the position and faith on one's practice and belief.[33] For Christians, it is an opportunity for growth, education, maturity and personal development. Such crisis situation enables those involved to mature, and grow in their faith. It takes a certain degree of humility and commitment on those involved to accept correction and patience to be corrected by another for change to occur.

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[31] Bossart, *Creative Conflict*, p. 95.

[32] Ibid.

[33] Maxwell, *Developing Leaders Within You*, p. 70.

CONFRONTING THE SITUATION

The men, who came from Jerusalem, held strong views regarding the law. They insisted that salvation by grace through faith was insufficient without the law. In their presence, Peter became nervous, and acted hypocritically. This prompted Paul to confront Peter. "You are a Jew, yet you live like a Gentile, and not a Jew. How is it, then, that you force Gentiles to follow Jewish customs" (Gal 2:14)?

Paul had no choice, but to confront the situation, in order to bring both Peter, including those with him, and the Gentile believers, all back to the truth of the gospel, and the unity of faith among the believers. It is necessary to confront issues and problems, when they purposefully create disunity, and disrupt peace among leaders.

Confrontation is one of the least-glamorous, and most difficult, facets of leadership. It is, however, one of the leadership's most necessary and important responsibilities. Failure to confront produces negative results, for both persons and the organisation. Only, as the art of confrontation is carried out, under the divine leadership of the Holy Spirit, will the kind of personal and organisational results, desired by leaders, be accomplished.[34]

Paul knew the issues involved in this situation. He understood God's values and desires; he confronted the situation, and argued on that basis. Paul's reference to the scriptures, and the meaning of grace, convinced Peter and the others that what he said was true. Peter accepted the rebuke, with calm maturity and humility. He accepted the correction, as a mark of a true Christian leader.

Rensis and Jane Liker gave five helpful suggestions for problem solving, when confronting a crisis situation. Firstly, locate the problem, and state it clearly. Be sure it is the real problem. Secondly, define the conditions or criteria by which the solution must be satisfactory. Thirdly, search for all promising solutions. Fourthly, obtain all relevant facts, for the extent of

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[34] Gangel and Canine, *Communication and Conflict Management*, p. 181.

each solution. Try to meet all criteria, and get the desired effects. Fifthly, evaluate all suggested solutions, in terms of the criteria, and desirable effects.[35]

According to Paul, confrontation to correct wrong is required, when the truth is compromised or denied, in the clear light of the gospel. It is essentially necessary to confront, when the gospel is compromised, when leaders are involved.

CONCLUSION

This study was undertaken to determine scriptural principles for solving problems in Papua New Guinean Baptist churches. The research showed that conflict can be defined, categorised, and delineated. This research also found that the New Testament church resolved a major problem by the application of Pauline principles: (1) the principle of appealing to the authority of scripture; (2) the principle of appealing to the integrity of the leadership; and (3) the principle of appealing to the unity of the body.

Further, the research found that, in the light of Pauline principles, there is an effective way of solving conflict in the Papua New Guinean Baptist churches. These are: (1) confronting the person; (2) confronting the problem; and (3) confronting the situation.

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