



★ Way Point Chronicles ★

*** Traveling through the Old Testament by Chronological Stories ***

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In *Mastering Conflict and Controversy* one of the author, Speed Leas identifies five levels of conflict. We will look at these briefly in a moment. He introduced the chapter called *The Varieties of Religious Strife* with these words:

“Conflict comes in many colors.

We normally know it as red, fiery hot: shouting matches, withdrawn pledges, fired pastors, split churches. This type of conflict burns everyone it touches.

But conflict also comes in blue, cool and calm as a placid mountain lake. Issues are moved, seconded, debated calmly, and voted upon. People walk out of meetings “losers” but not bitter or angry.

Other conflict is green, contributing to the growth of a congregation. Some is black, foreboding doom for the church. Some is an amorphous gray, uncertain and undecided but enveloping the church like a fog.” (p 83-84)

He says in his consulting work two major factors give him a clue about the difficulties a church is facing. “...the objectives of the parties involved and the amount of distorted thinking.” (p 84)

Objectives mean what are the goals of the people. In higher levels it is to hurt others and gain control.

By distorted thinking he stated, “As people become more anxious or frightened, it becomes more and more difficult for them to think clearly about what is actually going on.”

Perhaps the most insightful statement he makes is, “...the level of conflict has less to do with the problem than it does with people’s reaction to it.”

Let me simply give us a summary to show his levels of conflict.

Level 1- Predicaments- Major objective is to solve problems. Disputants don’t accuse people.

Level 2-Disagreement-Parties become concerned about self-protection. They want to come out looking good. Parties are interested in scoring points.

Level 3- Contest- Parties now want to win. They lose perspective on issues. Many times the assumption is that others have evil motives. People become fixated on feelings.

Level 4- Fight/Flight- Major objective is to break the relationship. Opponents are punished, shamed, and attacked in the hope that they will choose to go away. Parties push their own will at the expense of the whole. They recruit outsiders to come join the cause.



Coordinates:
Genesis 13:5-13

Sights to See:

1- Conflict many times can be avoided or enflamed by our reaction. Proverbs 16:27-28 HCSB “A worthless man digs up evil, and his speech is like a scorching fire. 28 A contrary man spreads conflict, and a gossip separates friends.”

2- Conflict has potential to escalate until it become destructive if we do not watch what we choose. Proverbs 26:20 HCSB Without wood, fire goes out; without a gossip, conflict dies down.

3- Strife can be avoided at times by surrendering for the good of the whole and to preserve relationships.

4- We make many decisions that seem trivial that have eternal consequences to us and our lineage.

5- Many times the things that look the best are the worst in the long run. We must seek to understand all aspect of our decisions. The fertile plains was a trap of the lust of the eye for Lot.

