

Missionary Support Teams

"You will do well to send them on their way in a manner worthy of God. For they went out for the sake of the Name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles. Therefore we ought to support such ones, that we may be Fellow workers with the truth." 3 John 6b-8

Practical helps for evaluation

In recent years, various Church's have been learning more and more what it means to be a sending church, one which sends our missionaries out in an manner worthy of God because they are going out for the sake of the Name. They are going out to champion the Name of God in places where God's name is unknown or horribly neglected. If we love God's glory, His name, then we will love to see the fame of His Name spread to every un-reached people. And those of us who stay behind will therefore seriously and substantially support those who go out from us for the sake of the Name. For are not we who stay behind also living for the sake of the Name, rather than for the sake of comfort, convenience, money or any private ambitions?

To that end, the Board of Missions requires that each missionary, whether short-term (six months or more) or career, have a Church-based missionary support team. In this way we hope to ensure that the needs of our missionaries are more fully meet, and to be active fellow workers with them in the truth.

What is a support team?

A support team is a small group (6-12) of committed people who come together to care for their missionary in a variety of ways, striving to help meet their physical, emotional, and spiritual needs. It is a group of people with whom the missionary can be open and honest, allowing them to see his needs, and share his successes and defeats.

Why have a support team?

Support teams help to make our missionaries feel understood, and provide them with a committed group who will show them practical love, keep them visible before the rest of the Church family and strengthened on the mission field.

What is a support team's job?

In a nutshell, a support team works together to care for their missionary, striving to meet their spiritual, physical and emotional needs. To a large extent this will happen only to the degree that the missionary is willing and able to make his needs known to the team.

The specific ways in which a support team goes about meeting their missionaries' needs will vary depending on the specific personality and needs of the missionary, as well as the personality (creativity) of the support team. Ask your missionary how you can best assist him; learn from the example of other teams; be creative; pray about it.

This doesn't mean that the support team does everything, but they do take personal responsibility to serve as that missionary's advocate at Church.

Minimally, every support team member should make a commitment to:

1. A specific term length. Commit to being on the team for at least one year or preferably the length of the missionary's term.
2. Meet together on a monthly or bimonthly basis or as special needs arise.
3. Pray for your missionary often, individually as well as corporately.
4. Work to create an atmosphere where your missionary feels safe and comfortable to share himself very personally with the team — keeping confidential concerns confidential.
5. Be available to provide practical care for your missionary.

Various support teams have organized themselves differently, depending on the gifts of the individuals involved. Many support teams have found it helpful to have the following roles assigned to various people on the team, leaving other members of the team open to volunteer for other specific, occasional duties.

Church Contact Person - If the church needs information about a missionary, or if they need to organize a support team's involvement in church activities (Missions Conferences, missionary displays, etc.) they will contact this member of the missionary's support team.

Meeting Facilitator - The individual will be responsible to call meetings to order, keep meetings focused on the missionary and help the team's discussion to keep moving.

Team Organizer - Many support teams have found it helpful to have someone on the team organize a number of details that will assist the team to better support their missionary. These include keeping track of missionary prayer requests and answers, keeping track of projects, making up a calendar of team member letter writing assignments, etc.

Communication Person - In case of emergency, it may be helpful for the support team to be organized into an information chain with a contact person at the head of the list. If anyone on the team hears of an emergency that their missionary is facing, they should contact that individual so that information can be passed on quickly and accurately.

Other teams have found it more helpful to divide the work further by assigning each specific role (care package, meeting treats, sermon tapes, missionary displays,

article writer, etc.) to one person on the team so that each member is always responsible for making sure that their role gets taken care of, whether they do it themselves or assign it to someone else.

How are support teams formed?

The individual missionary prayerfully chooses members of a support team. Some missionaries ask friends from their small groups. Sunday School classes, choir, various ministry involvements, etc. to come together to form their support team. Others have asked the small group that they're involved in to also function as their support team. Not everyone on the team has to be from Church, but the majority should and the designated leader must be. The key is for the missionary to choose people with whom they have already established a level of trust, with whom they can be "real."

Why is a support team required by your church?

Missionaries don't go out for adventure, they don't go out for material profit, they don't go out for prestige, nor do they go out merely for humanitarian purposes. They do go out for the sake of the Name. We want the missionaries we support financially to sense deeply that they are genuinely cared for, that they are more than just names on our lists or line items in our budget.

Your Church doesn't just want to "have" missionaries; we want to "send" missionaries in a manner worthy of Christ. How can these happen? The Board of Missions is responsible for all of the missionaries we support. While the Care and Furlough Committee can help by providing resources and information, and by facilitating communication with Board of Missions, they cannot really care for all of these people.

How can you care for your missionary?

Before they go

1. Pray earnestly for them.
2. Be available for them. Encourage them as their emotions vary during different stages of their preparation phase.
3. Ask them about what they are learning as God takes them down the path that will lead them to a foreign country.
4. Write a Prayer Letter / Update letting the church know what your missionaries are up to and how to pray for them.
5. Mail out their prayer letters.
6. Host a reception for them at Church after their commissioning.
7. Have an open house before they leave so they can say good-bye to many of their friends.
8. Help them find information about the country they are going to and the people they will be working among by going to the library, reading missions periodicals, keeping an eye out for articles in the daily paper.
9. Help them find information on needed equipment by reading the Consumer Report articles, discussing with others, etc.
10. Help them to get the supplies that they need to take with them overseas. You can help by running errands, or by offering to take care of their children so that they can more easily run errands.
11. Help them pack the items they'll store here in the U.S. as well as the items they'll take with them or ship.
12. Drop dinner off at their house their last few nights so they can concentrate on accomplishing those last few tasks.
13. Offer to have them stay with you if they need a place just before they leave.
14. Treat them to something special just before they go.
15. Take them to the airport as a team and have a send-off there.

While they are gone

1. Pray earnestly for them.
2. Write often.
3. Remember birthdays, holidays, and other special days with a card, gift, e-mail or phone call.
4. Send them articles of special interest from the newspaper or magazines.
5. Give them a subscription to a magazine like *Newsweek*, *Good Housekeeping* or *Readers Digest* so they can keep up with what is happening in the U.S.
6. Occasionally send "fun care packages" to encourage them or to help meet needs.
7. Send a good book you've especially appreciated.

8. Occasionally e-mail them current, up-to-date information on their team.
9. Keep up to date with what your missionary is doing so that you can encourage them in the work and share their work with the Church family.
10. Write a prayer letter / update to keep the Board of Missions and Church updated on what is currently happening.
11. Pass on any special prayer requests to the church office.
12. Consider visiting your missionary on the field.
13. Mail out their prayer letters for them.
14. Help to take care of your missionary's home while they are away.

When they return

1. Pray earnestly for them.
2. Praise the Lord with them for how God used them overseas.
3. Have housing ready for them when they arrive home.
4. Help them to find a car to borrow during their furlough time.
5. Be at the airport to welcome them home.
6. Have a few groceries for them in their refrigerator and cupboards so that they don't have to go shopping right away.
7. Bring dinner by their house for the first few days.
8. Be available to help them readjust to life in the U.S. Help them to catch up with what is current, what's in and what's out, what's hot and what's not!
9. Give them space.
10. Before they come back, begin keeping a calendar for them, setting up times when people can see them, so that they aren't overwhelmed when they return. Be sure you know their schedule and the people they want or need to see, though!
11. Host an open house so they can see many of their friends and update them.
12. Help organize a time at church where they can show their slides and update the Body.
13. Introduce them to new people at Church.
14. Help them to get caught up on the latest happenings here at Church.
15. Give them a special night out or some other special treat.
16. Mail out their prayer letters.
17. Listen to them be available.

Missionary Care Teams

Purpose

The purpose of care teams is to assure that every church-supported missionary has formed a bond with a group of people from our church for communication, prayer, assistance, and care. The team also serves as a communication link to the church body. Through the care team, the missionary is connected to the greater resources of the

church for encouragement, prayer, assistance, and support, particularly during times of special opportunity or need.

Team Coordinator

1. Communicates directly with the missionary on a regular, periodic basis
2. Assists the missionary in recruiting care team members
3. Passes information along to the care team
4. Schedules team get-togethers for emotional bonding, prayer, and planning on behalf of the missionary
5. Informs the mission's committee and church leaders as warranted on behalf of the missionary

The Team

1. A care team consists of individuals or families who commit to pray for and encourage the missionary.
2. A minimum of five team members is desirable.
3. Teams can be as large as the number of people who want to be involved.

Care Team Responsibilities

1. Communicate with the missionary on a regular basis, at least monthly
2. Familiarize themselves with the missionary's family, ministry, goals, obstacles and needs.
3. Pray regularly for the missionary based on general knowledge and particular requests.
4. Meet or communicate by phone or email as a team during the year to maintain currency.
5. Consider special ways to assist the missionary with resources, skills, and contacts
6. Report specific prayer needs as requested by the missionary to the missions committee.
7. Report specific financial or physical needs to the missions committee.
8. Help the missionary become acquainted with the larger church body.
9. Help the missions committee arrange for visits by the missionary.
10. Help the missionary with presentations for the church.
11. Arrange for special meetings for the missionary when in the community
12. Commit for one year or longer.

Formation

1. The missionary and the missions committee are jointly responsible to recruit a care team coordinator.
2. The missionary and the care team coordinator are jointly responsible to recruit care team members.

Short Term Mission Teams That Make A Difference

Are short term missions Biblical?

Jonah's reluctant mission saved a generation of Ninevites
Paul's Journeys through Asia Minor were mostly short-term.

Can short-term teams make a difference?

Of course they can! The real question is "What Kind Of Difference"?

- It will make a difference in the lives of the "Go-Team"
- It will make a difference in the "Support Team" (those who sent you)
- It will make a difference in the lives of the host church & pastor/leader
- It will make a difference in the lives of the lost you reach.

But only if the team is adequately . . . excellently prepared.

It's all about the great commission.

Found several times in the NT:

Mark 16:15 – Go everywhere - preach the Gospel to everyone

Luke 24:47 – Preach repentance & remission of sins

People are dying for this news of forgiveness . . .

Matthew 28:18-20 – Go make Disciples of all nations – Baptize & teach

John 20:21 – As the Father sent me I send you.

Same message – Same heart for the lost – Same character

Acts 1:8 – You shall receive power . . . be my witnesses . . . Jerusalem etc.

A clear strategy – Start at home

Simple approach – Witnesses tell their own story

His Word – His story – My story –

Acts 4:20 & 5:29 – Can't stop talking of what we have seen & heard

Four Points On Teams That Make A Difference

They are Trained

1. Information

Biblical: Discipleship – Warfare

Historical: History of missions – We are not the first (From Jerusalem to Iryan Jaya – Ruth Tucker)

Cultural: Study the people you are going to serve

- Believers & unbelievers (different cultures . . . hopefully)
- Gather information: Internet – News – State dept. (Travelers Health advisories)
- Political and Religious climate. (ORTHODOX church?)
- Testimonies from Veterans – Wycliffe – YWAM – Campus

2. Relationships –

Groups of individuals become “Teams” vs. “Mobs”

Spend time together – Learn to depend on each other

Time in classroom – Time in the field (projects)

Team building exercises – Problem solving – “Ropes courses”

Watch out for “Lone Rangers” – The “Independents”

No “Pouty Peters” & “Mopey Mary’s”

Look for leaders to rise to the occasions.

3. Motivation & Inspiration

The developing call

The result of exposure to the need and the building relationships

The effect of time in the Word and Prayer

4. They Evangelize

Bottom line of all we do . . . Reaching lost or equipping

Teach your team members **how to start a conversation**. Smile – Say “HI” – Be GREAT LISTENERS. Ask questions – Donde esta Banos? Iglesia? BTW: Learn some of the language BEFORE you go. Greetings. Teach your team to **share their testimony in one minute**. Opportunity will arise as you Travel – Talk – Work

They Get out and DO IT

If you don’t do it here you won’t do it there.

KEYS TO EFFECTIVENESS

-A Devoted Life – *Romans 12:1-2* . . . Committed to the cause

-A Gifted Servant (Abilities) – *Romans 12:6 (1 Cor. 12:11)*

-Empowered for the Work – *Acts 1:8*

-Divine Collisions – *Galatians 6:9-10* (Full of good works)

They are carefully aimed

- Work closely with your host to develop strategy and team projects.
- Focus your team – Let them know what they will be doing
- Aim at nothing and you will surely hit it – Don't just "hang out".
- Give clear expectations
- Remain flexible . . . things are bound to change
- In Spiritual Warfare, Farming, Athletics . . . Stuff happens
- Adapt to a rainy day – Cancelled projects – Delays
- Follow Your leader – Make their job as easy as possible
- Great followers eventually make great leaders
- Their task is to keep us on task
- Move as a unit (as in unit-y)

They understand Ministry = Servant hood

Serve one another – On the team

- You are being watched as you travel and operate
- Support one another – Look for those dealing with "culture shock" or "culture stress". Encourage
- LOVE ONE ANOTHER (And the other "One another's")
- Create a system for constructive team feedback – criticism

Serve your host families and missionaries

- Do the dishes – Pick up trash – Babysit – Make the bed
- Serve the lost – Follow your leader Jesus

Submit to your team schedule

Be ready . . . Be on time for rides, ministry, meals

- "Cup of Cold Water" – *Matt. 10:40-42* – THE BIG REAL STUFF
- Look for that one thirsty – hungry – lonely – broken soul.
- Each one matters to Jesus.
- Illus: Kid on the beach with the Starfish – "It matters to this one" – And it matters to the Jesus too.

Bottom Line – Please Don't Send Out Tourists or "Adventure Seekers"

A Word About Debriefing:

The BRIEFEST method for DE-BRIEFING *Acts 20:37-38*

- Get a window seat on the plane as you leave.
- Are your hosts dancing when you leave? Or are they weeping?

The Next Monumental Step: Re-Engage - Keep them Plugged In.

- Some that went to the field never did anything else.
- They are engaged now . . . Keep them engaged . . . **RECRUIT**
- Give the team a list of ministry options to pray over when they get home.

Short Term Missions Team Preparation

Training is the most important part of your Short Term Mission Program. It is more important than anything you spend your time doing in preparing for your trip. It is more important than support-raising efforts, gathering supplies for your project, or language learning. It is the component that will make your trip a life-long learning experience. It will affect the quality of the impact your group has on the field; it will affect how people get along with each other; it will affect true life-change in the personal lives of the group; it will affect how they see God's world-wide work and their future involvement in it.

Upon returning home, the answers to these questions will be in direct proportion to how well people were prepared for the experience of a short-term mission trip.

- ✓ Did the people you met know that a group of deeply committed Christ followers who love each other and demonstrate that love just visited their town?
- ✓ Did the team delight "to share with *them* not only the gospel of God but *their* lives as well," (as I Thessalonians 2: 8 encourages us to do)?
- ✓ Did the team members see God use them?
- ✓ Did your group experience a rich experience of living and working in community?
- ✓ Is the group on the road to having a new world-view that can affect the way decisions are made for the rest of life?
- ✓ Did they get a start on overcoming the importance of the American fetish with creature comforts? Well, some things may just be impossible!

Top Ten Priorities:

Foundational Principles or Non-tangibles

- Value of a servant-like spirit
- Knowledge of country and culture
- Awareness of culture shock
- Understand our tendency to feel superior or paternalistic

Practical matters or Tangibles

- Build a team to live and work together
- Plan for work project or ministry
- Raise financial support
- Prepare to tell your personal story
- Learn survival language idioms
- Understand all trip logistics (travel documents, health issues, packing, etc)

Forming A Support Team (Short Term and Long Term)

Every missionary needs a team behind them that provides support in 6 areas: morale support, logistics support, financial support, prayer support, communication support, and re-entry support. Let us look at the characteristics of each area.

Morale Support (Josh. 1:9)

The very foundation of the support system. Everyone in the church can be involved in this part of the ministry since in its most basic concept, it is simply saying, "God bless you! We are excited with you in your missionary venture!" This part of the team will listen to the cares of the person and will be able to be an active listener making sure that they get the counsel, encouragement, and uplifting that they need.

Logistics Support (2Tim 4:13)

Handles the nuts and bolts of the missionary's home country responsibilities. This part of the team will handle the financial affairs (money, taxes, health, death) and the personal details (material goods, family matters, ministry needs) for the missionary.

Diligence and concern for details are the essentials for people in this part of the support team.

Financial Support (Phil. 4:10-12)

The most talked-about area of missionary support. This team member watches over the outgo of funds and makes sure that the missionary has the resources that they need to do the job. Needs are communicated to the rest of the team as they come up and not several months after the fact.

If the missionary is involved with an organization that is outside the local church (Samaritan's Purse, Wycliffe, etc.), this team member watches the way the organization is spending their funds.

Prayer Support (Eph 6:18a)

To act according to Paul's statement "For this cause we also, since the day we heard of it, do not cease to pray for you." This prayer in Col 1:9-12 is a model of how to pray for a worker in the field.

The prayer support team helps the missionary with the spiritual warfare that they encounter and hold them up daily.

Communication Support (Phil 2:19)

Essential if the missionary is to feel that the folks at home really care about them. This part of the team will communicate at least weekly with the missionary and will let them know what is going on at home. It is also important that the missionary communicate their needs to this person at least weekly so that the prayer needs can be distributed.

All members of the team need to know exactly what is going on with the missionary. It is possible that the pressures have gotten to the person in the field and they stop communicating. The team may have to send someone to see exactly what is going on. In this age of the Internet, communication should be easier than ever before. One can still call anywhere in the world for a manageable cost and this is sometimes necessary. Photos, tapes, and videos of real people can often minister to the missionary.

Re-Entry Support (Acts 14:28)

A critical and often unrecognized part of the missionary's support team. It is necessary for the team member to be critically aware of signs of culture stress in reverse. The returning person is often unprepared to handle the loneliness, disappointments, letdowns, and feelings of isolation that are commonly experienced.

The speed of life in our culture makes it difficult for a person to adjust to the many areas of their lives in which they need to resume activity. If the missionaries have a family, areas of stress are multiplied. Their immediate needs must be met without them having to worry about whether they can afford all the things necessary to live in their 'new' home environment. The team members handling this portion of the support must have talked to other people who have returned so that they know the kind of problems that will be encountered.

Conflict Resolution -Team Guidelines-

Conflict Resolution Guidelines

As a team, we agree that when we have conflicts and differences among ourselves, we will, first through prayer and time in the Word, examine ourselves for selfish motives and unrealistic expectations of the other person. We will take responsibility to approach or confront the other person if it is appropriate. We will do this in love, for the purpose of restoring unity. We will forgive one another and pray together. We will not discuss the matter with other members of the team, causing them to become involved in the conflict. *"In your anger, do not sin. Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold." Ephesians 4:26-27* If a conflict cannot be settled between the two parties, they will then seek council from the group leader.

Relationship with God

Luke 10:27 states "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul and love your neighbor as yourself." As team members, we agree to seek out an ever-increasing dependence and deepening relationship with God through Christ by setting personal devotions as a priority and humility before God in all communication and circumstances.

Relationships with others

God opposes the proud and gives grace to the humble. *Proverbs 3:34* states, "Though He scoffs at the scoffers, yet He gives grace to the afflicted." We also seek to place other team members needs ahead of our own and seek out understanding in all relationships. We will respect each other by submitting to one another out of reverence to Christ. *Ephesians 5:21* states, "...and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ." This includes listening to each other's opinions, ideas and needs, and respecting time, property, and sleep.

Relationships with nationals

In our relationships with nationals we will be obedient to the absolute truth of God and be women and men of integrity in our behaviors and motives. We will respect any cultural differences we may encounter. In all circumstances, we will seek to glorify God. We will demonstrate our love for God and others to the community, educational leaders and interpreters by respecting their opinions and differences. We will support their endeavors by coming alongside of them with servant hearts and teachable spirits. *I Peter 4:8-10 states, "Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins. Be hospitable to one another without complaint. As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God."*

Relationships with the opposite sex

We will uphold the directives of *Calvary Chapel Huntington Beach* by maintaining relationships with other team members as brothers and sisters in Christ and friendship. We will not engage in dating relationships with each other or nationals. We will also respect other cultural values of relationships with the opposite sex.

Relationships with team leaders

In light of *Romans 13:1*, "*Let every person be in subjection to the governing authorities,*" we will respect our God-given leadership by understanding their responsibility, accepting their decisions, and praying before we approach them with our disagreements. While submitting to and obeying their authority, we will treat them as friends and give them privacy at the proper times.

What Missionaries Need to Know about Conflict

No one has to convince missionaries that conflict exists in missions. It has been a part of missions since the very beginning in the early chapters of the book of Acts. Not only has there been conflict, but also the basic issues are still the same in that there are cultural conflicts, which bring disagreement between missionaries and headquarters as well as conflicts between individual missionaries on the field. Why do we have conflict? What should we do about it? What steps can we take to resolve it? What do we do if you feel like we are attacked? What if it cannot be resolved? Let's consider some of these questions.

Why do we have conflict?

Conflict is normal whenever people who hold different opinions are in a close relationship. Conflict occurs whenever people who care have different opinions on important issues. The more the people care and the more important the issue, the more intense the conflict. Conflicts are simply a fact of life, and they are destructive only if not handled correctly.

Let's take as an example the conflict that arose in Acts 15. Paul and Barnabas returned from their first term of service to the local church that had commissioned them in Antioch. They held a mission conference and told about all that God had done through them. Everything went well for a long time until men from the culture in which headquarters was located visited the church in Antioch.

These men began teaching that unless the men who had responded to the message preached by Paul and Barnabas was circumcised they were not saved. The issue was whether or not this "custom taught by Moses" was a cultural issue or a salvation issue. Thus we have a situation in which missionaries who cared deeply (Paul and Barnabas) disagreed with others on an important question (Salvation). This brought the missionaries into "sharp dispute and debate with them" (v.2).

What should we do about conflict?

The conflict needs to be resolved as quickly as possible. In Matthew 5, Jesus noted that if you are offering your gift to God at the altar and suddenly remember that there is an unresolved conflict with another believer, you should leave your gift there, go settle the conflict, then return to offer your gift to God. We are to settle matters quickly, but we should carefully pick the time and place to be reconciled. Sometimes the conflict is still at a high emotional pitch, and it would be best to wait a while before approaching the other person. If other people are around, it is best not to involve them in the dispute. The important thing, though, is to resolve the conflict soon because the feelings aroused by unresolved conflict soon become established and are more difficult to change.

What steps do we take to resolve it?

Jesus gave a three-step procedure to use in resolving conflict in Matthew 18. In American culture as in much of Western culture where we tend to think linearly, it is usually most appropriate to take these three steps in sequence. ***However, if the conflict is with someone of a different culture, be sure to consult with someone raised in that culture before trying to resolve the conflict.*** These steps in this order may not be culturally appropriate in that situation, and the conflict may only be worsened if you do all of them in this order. The steps Jesus gave are:

Approach the person alone

Often the two of you can resolve the conflict by yourselves and your friendship will be stronger than ever before. Of course, you must choose the time, situation, and manner of approach carefully.

Find a mediator

If a direct approach does not work, or if it is not appropriate in the culture, you should choose a mediator. Again, choose a mediator carefully, one that you believe both parties will see as unbiased and in which both will have confidence.

Take it to the church

If neither you nor the mediator can bring about resolution, the issue should be brought before the larger body. After the church comes to a decision, both of you are to accept the decision. The church is instructed to treat either party who does not abide by the decision as being outside the church.

Let us return to the conflict in Acts 15. Paul and Barnabas were in "sharp dispute and debate" with the visiting teachers, but were unable to settle the conflict alone. They apparently called in mediators there in Antioch, but they were also unable to settle the conflict. So, Paul, Barnabas, and some other believers were sent to headquarters in Jerusalem to settle the conflict.

How do we go about resolving it?

Assuming that the issue is an important one and that you have carefully chosen the time and situation, here are some guidelines found in Acts 15 that will help you resolve the conflict, whether it is two of you alone or it is a whole body of believers.

Give both sides a chance to present

Paul and Barnabas presented their position, and then the Pharisees presented theirs

Give time for adequate discussion

This was a crucial issue (salvation) so there was "much discussion."

Be quiet

Note that "the whole assembly became silent" as they listened to the discussion. Too often in such situations there is an undercurrent of whispering in the crowd.

Listen

"They listened." There is a big difference between being quiet and really listening. Put yourself in the other's place and really try to hear and understand what the other side is saying. Too often we "turn them off," let our minds wander, think about what we are going to say in reply, or just doze off in a long discussion.

Allow others to finish

"When they finished, James spoke up." Do not interrupt until others have finished.

Keep to the issue

The issue here was whether or not circumcision was necessary for salvation. Imagine all the other issues that could have been proposed from the books of the law! Also discuss the issue, not personalities.

Express feelings appropriately

There is no report of verbal attacks or counterattacks during the discussion.

Apply scripture

There may be differing interpretations, but certainly at least look at what the Bible has to say. James quoted from Amos 9.

Propose a solution

James said, "It is my judgment, therefore, that..."

Settle on essentials

They all agreed on several items and wrote a letter.

Accept the decision

When the delegation delivered the letter back to the church at Antioch, "The people read it and were glad for its encouraging message."

Reaffirm your friendship

"After spending some time there" for fellowship, they were sent off "with the blessing of peace."

What if we feel like we are being attacked?

Sometimes you are not the one trying to resolve the conflict and the other side approaches you in an inappropriate way. A good example of this is found in *Joshua 22*. The Israelites had just finished years of fighting for the Promised Land. Every one of God's good promises had been fulfilled and they were ready for a time of peace and rest.

As the tribes living on the east side of the Jordan River were going home, they built a large altar on the property belonging to the tribes on the west side. This angered the tribes on the west side and they "gathered at Shiloh to go to war with them." Fortunately, rather than just attacking, they sent a delegation to talk first; unfortunately the delegation was not skilled in conflict resolution. It was an important faith issue, but Phineas and his group assumed things about the thoughts and motives of those who had built the altar and were predicting what would happen—things that should not be done in conflict resolution.

The delegation started with "How could you...how could you..." Read verses 16-21, noting how many times "you" and "yourself" are used. Put yourself in the place of those hearing the accusations and see how they must have felt.

Fortunately, someone on the east side of the river knew about defusing a conflict situation. First he tried to defuse the situation by affirming that they were both completely dedicated to serving the same God, and he did it using "we" "us" or "our" messages rather than "you" messages. These first person pronouns appear 20 times in verses 22-29, an average of more than two per verse. Following the guidelines we found in Acts 15 and refusing to read minds, judge motives, or predict what will happen, and by using "I" messages (One on one, or "we" messages in a group setting), one can defuse and resolve conflicts as shown in Joshua 22.

What if the conflict is not resolved?

Sometimes conflicts cannot be resolved, and the options then are either "agree to disagree," or part company. Just after the good conflict resolution in Acts 15, we find an irreconcilable conflict between Paul and Barnabas. In planning to go back for another term of missionary service, Barnabas wanted to take John Mark with them. Paul did not, and they had "a sharp disagreement." Apparently Paul was task-oriented and did not want to take a chance on someone quitting, but Barnabas was people-oriented and did not want hurt feelings.

We are not told how they tried to resolve the conflict, but they were not able to do so, and "they parted company." Of course, God works in all things to accomplish his purposes. He sent Barnabas and Mark to Cyprus, while Paul and Silas went to Syria. Note that later Paul changed his mind about Mark and asked to have him visit (2 Timothy 4:11). God uses our conflicts to advance his work.