

# **SPIRITUAL GROWTH RESOURCES**



**WEEK 11 | JAN 23-30**

**TOPIC: CONFLICT/  
UNITY**

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# PROLOGUE

The Carmichael SDA Church is providing spiritual growth resources for individuals, couples, families, and small groups as an extension during this pandemic for a church that is scattered like salt and to indeed be salty; to be light and receive another infusion of power. Pick and choose from these resources for your spiritual growth, whether it's during your time of personal devotions or family worship or small group gathering. The 10 options include:

1. Video
2. Bible Dialogue
3. Prayer Experiences
4. Discussion Questions
5. Application Ideas
6. Sharing Options
7. Bible-In-My-Head, Heart, and Hand
8. Sing-Along
9. Inspirational Music
10. Kids of All Ages

# CONFLICT & UNITY

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## INTRO AND VIDEO



Within the Seventh-day Adventist heritage is the understanding of a “Cosmic Conflict.” This conflict happens on a spiritual level between good and evil. Whether we are aware of it or not, there are powers and forces behind the scenes. Yet, we know that Satan is working to destroy the inhabitants of the earth and that God is working to save the inhabitants of the earth.

With this kind of knowledge we shouldn't be surprised that conflict happen. It happened in heaven (Revelation 12:7) and it happens here on Earth (Revelation 12:12).

Just like this conflict represents a spiritual battle, unity happens on a spiritual level. Any attempt to resolve conflict solely in the earthly realm will only produce temporary and superficial unity. This doesn't mean we shouldn't strive for unity and avoid conflicts. It just means that true unity can only be realized when conflicting sides are humble and bow down to only one Lord. We experience unity when we move together for the same cause. Conflict arises when we don't get what we want (James 4:1-2) and we try to obtain it without God's blessing. James invites us to ask God for what you want and if you don't get what you want from God, then maybe we're asking for the wrong thing (vs. 3).

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# BIBLE DIALOGUE

A very popular section of the Gospels is called the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus gave a "sermon" about practical living with instructions on how to apply the God's law to everyday life. God's people had been focused on the external keeping of the Law, disregarding the importance of internalizing the Law.

Looking back at that sermon, we see a parallel between the giving of the Law to Moses on Mount Sinai in the book of Exodus. It's like Jesus being the new Moses, giving the Law again, but giving it a fuller meaning. While it was practical when given, throughout generations it had lost its vitality and true meaning.

The first few verses of Matthew 5 lists "blessings" we call Beatitudes (vs. 3-11). Another way to say "blessed" is "happy is the person who..." Among these blessings we find peacemakers. "Blessed (Happy) are the peacemakers..." (vs. 9).

Jesus seems to be talking to a group of people who wanted to bring God's kingdom by force and violence rather than by peace. By pursuing this form of unity or peace they wanted to show themselves as loyal "sons of God." Jesus flipped the script and told them if they want to usher in God's kingdom, peacemaking would bring a more lasting effect.

This week's study is based on the story of Abraham and Lot. They had a family dispute. Abraham served as a peacemaker in the midst of a potentially disastrous outcome.

# STUDY

## CAN'T WE JUST GET ALONG?

When have you had to help family or friends stop fighting and then make up?

### READ GENESIS 13:1-12

1. How can a person's possessions create conflict?
  - A. They don't.
  - B. Too much stuff can easily become a distraction.
  - C. Other people get jealous.
  - D. People easily make comparisons (Who has more?).
  - E. Storage issues.
  - F. More likely to be robbed.
  - G. Tension within the family about who gets what.
  - H. Other.
2. How do you deal with conflict started by a family member?
  - A. Ignore it.
  - B. Take charge of it.
  - C. Call for a family council.
  - D. Put another person in charge of it.
  - E. Draw straws or do "rock, paper, scissors."
  - F. Force a showdown of force.
  - G. Pray with the person who is at fault (not you).
  - H. Always support the family member, even if wrong.
  - I. Other.
3. How do family members relate to you when you're wrong?

- A. Ignore me.
- B. Give me the mean or “silent” treatment.
- C. Offer to serve as a mediator.
- D. Attack me.
- E. Pray for me.
- F. Pray with me.
- G. Provide support and encouragement.
- H. Point out the faults of others.
- I. Give me the first choice of whatever I want.
- J. Other.

4. Why did Abram and Lot separate?

- A. There was no other resolution available.
- B. It was the easiest way out of their problem.
- C. Neither was willing to give in to the other.
- D. They both simply had too much stuff.
- E. God told them to do it.
- F. It was the obvious answer to their problem.
- G. It was their herdsman’s fault.
- H. So they could remain close.
- I. Other.

5. Why did Abram give Lot the first choice on where to live?

- A. Abram was a “softie” and gave Lot whatever he wanted.
- B. God had told Abram to give Lot the first choice.
- C. It really didn't matter to Abram.
- D. This went contrary to the custom of respecting elders.
- E. Lot’s relationship mattered more to him than the land.
- F. Abram kind of knew what the results would be.
- G. It was customary to give younger people first choice.
- H. Other.

6. What did Abraham gain or lose by sharing his “lot”?

- A. He gained peace in place of perpetual squabbles.
- B. He lost the more fertile area for his flocks and herds.
- C. He gained a more “natural” lifestyle.



- D. He lost the daily contact with the people of Sodom.
- E. He gained a more tightly-knit family.
- F. He lost the opportunity to influence more people.
- G. He had to trust God more.
- H. Other.

7. When have you give someone else first choice? Why?
8. What steps do you take for unity in spite of conflict or even through conflict?

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# PRAYER EXPERIENCES

## **That they may be one - John 17:21**

Jesus prayed for his disciples and for the future generation of disciples who would have to face an ugly world. The climax of this prayer is a cry for unity among His followers. If Jesus prayed such a prayer, it seems to make sense that we make this part of our prayers too.

As we pray for unity among the disciples (us), keep in mind that Jesus acknowledges the importance of being united with the Father. So our prayers for unity are twofold:

- That I be united to God like Jesus was united to the Father.
- That believers be united.

Our prayer is not just for our sake, but for Christ's sake. It is for evangelistic purposes - "so that the world may know..." (17:23).

Here, Jesus prays specifically for unity among believers, not the "world" (17:9). The prayer among believers is for unity which

will be a greater witness to the world than any other evangelistic effort.

When the “world” sees this kind of love and unity in the church, the “world” will want to be part of such a community of faith. That’s where the prayer in Luke 10:2 comes in. Jesus says there’s something else we need to pray for - Laborers to gather the harvest.

### **Here’s the succession**

1. Pray that “**I**” be united with Christ.
2. Pray that “**we**” be united in Christ.
3. Pray that “**they**” be united to Christ.

### **Pray the Prayer of David in Psalms 122:6-9**

122:6      *Pray for the peace of Jerusalem!*

“May they be secure who love you!

122:7      *Peace be within your walls*  
and security within your towers!”

122:8      For my brothers and companions’ sake  
I will say, “*Peace be within you!*”

122:9      For the sake of the house of the LORD our God,  
I will seek your good.

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# **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

Select from these questions, or let them prompt your own questions. You can reflect on these by yourself, or discuss them with another person or group of people.

1. When do I experience conflict? When do I experience unity?
2. With whom do I experience conflict? With whom do I experience unity?
3. Why do I experience conflict? Why do I experience unity?
4. How people who are different from each other experience unity together?
5. What does it take for people to “work through” conflict?
6. What part does ego play in conflict? What part does ego play in unity?
7. What part does justice/injustice play in conflict? What part does justice/injustice play in unity?
8. Are you the type of person who “stirs the pot” or one who “calms things down”?
9. What did Jesus model for us when it came to conflict? What did Jesus model for us when it came to unity?
10. Why did Jesus pray for the unity of his disciples (John 17, especially vs. 20-23)?

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# APPLICATION IDEAS

Some people react differently to conflict. Some run away from it and others run towards it. Let's look at the benefit and downside of both reactions.

First, if you tend to be the person who runs away from conflict, how's has that worked for you? Does conflict go away when you go away? We are the one's that usually say, “Can't we just get along?” Some take the “sweep-it-under-the-rug” approach. I've learned that avoiding conflict, sweeping it under the rug, doesn't take conflict away. Sometimes its there waiting

for you or will come back sometime in the future. We can either keep avoiding the inevitable in the name of keeping peace, or we can face the reality of conflict and be part of the solution and truly be a peacemaker. Now, there are times when getting away is necessary, but a conflict needs to be addressed in some way so it doesn't keep coming back. Like Paul, him and Mark had to part ways, but later on they reunited.

There are other people, who do not run away from conflict, instead are there to address the issue head on. The question for this person is, are you being a peacemaker or trying to win an argument. Are you trying to prove your point without listening to the other side's points?

Peacemaking requires humility and patience. It requires listening with the intention of really wanting to understand and assess a situation with the purpose of bringing honor to God in the outcome.

A question you can ask yourself is, did I win someone over with my approach in resolving a conflict or did I just let my opinions and facts be known?

Was God glorified in the way I handled that situation? Did I edify the other person or tear them down? Did I seek unity or division? Is your reaction, "Oh well, I told them the truth. If they don't like it, too bad!"

When having to face an issue, as uncomfortable as it may seem, take some time to pray, asking God the best possible way to be a peacemaker.

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# SHARING OPTIONS

Happiness comes from being a peacemaker (Blessed are the peacemakers). When someone tries to get their way by force, with violence, by cheating, taking short cuts in life, they may get where they want to be, or get what they want to have. Are they happy in the transition? How many people did they have to lie to, steal from, take advantage of, hurt along the way? This approach will most likely bring conflict at some point in life. It could be internal conflict or external.

Internal conflict, where peace is missing within. This comes when we are doing things that go against our values. At our core they know it's wrong or feels wrong. We have a conscious that tells us that there's a better way.

External conflict, many times inevitable, where there is no peace with someone else.

As Peacemakers, we are called to bring this awareness and come alongside others and walk with them through the internal and/or external conflict in their lives. We may be tempted to shy away from giving some honest feedback, but for their sake, we may have to. Of course, what we share, we share in the Spirit of Christ, in humility, not adding to the conflict, but being an agent of peace.

This doesn't necessarily mean that we are resolving their issue. It could look like we are willing to listen, ask some questions, give some kind of perspective, including a spiritual perspective. Let the Spirit lead you.

## **Read these examples of peacemakers**

Ge 13:8-9 Abraham; 1Sa 25:14-31 Abigail; Esther 10:3 Mordecai; Isa 53:5 the suffering servant

And here's one more sharing option. Please share your experimenting with these Spiritual Growth Resources with Pastor Pedro Trinidad. Phone or text at 925-951-7041, or email at [ptrinidad@carmsda.org](mailto:ptrinidad@carmsda.org).

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# BIBLE-IN-MY-HEAD, HEART, AND HAND



# SING-ALONG

beyond the walls



Community of Christ

## We Are One in the Spirit

THE BEYOND THE WALLS CHOIR

One God, one Lord  
Jesus the Saviour





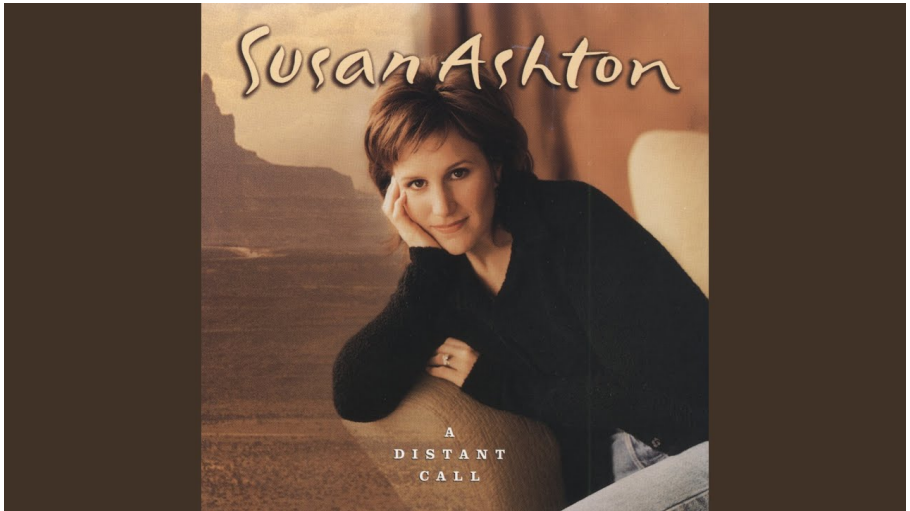


**There is only one God**  
**There is only one King**  
**There is only one Body**  
**That is why we can sing**



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# INSPIRATIONAL MUSIC



# KIDS OF ALL AGES

What's your favorite thing to have for dessert? Every year on my birthday I go to the Cheesecake Factory Restaurant and I order my very most favorite dessert: a piece of Godiva chocolate cheesecake, with a side of fresh raspberry sauce to pour over it.

I always look forward to my favorite part - the very first bite, sliced right off the pointy end of the triangle. And every year when I bring that delicious slice of chocolatey-heaven home with me and pop open the lid of the container, the very same thing happens:

My son Caleb says, "Ooooooh Mommy - I require a tax - you must give me one sample bite!"

My son Toby says, "What! Chocolate cheesecake!! Might I have just one little morsel? A sweet taste for a sweet son?"

My son Wyatt says, "Hey I'm starving! And you're eating that in front of me - so you better let me have one enormous chunk of that!"

And my daughter Brooke says, "Mommy, wouldn't it make you so especially happy to share your birthday cheesecake with your very favorite daughter?"

They're clever, crafty, and cute, these kids of mine. So every year, I give in - one bite to one, one bite to another, a bite stolen from a sneaky one while I'm not looking....sometimes I share happily at first, but then I start to feel more and more crabby and selfish as the sharing goes on.

Do you know what happens by the very end of it? That's right - you guessed it. The large slice of cake that was supposed to be

all mine is now just a smashed pile of a few leftover scoops. That beautiful triangle of birthday perfection is now just a torn apart mess.

The Bible says that sometimes the church can be like my slice of birthday cheesecake - that the more we argue and fight with each other, the more broken apart and sloppy and messy we will look. That's why Paul wrote the church people in Corinth, "Try to agree with each other in what you say, so that there will be no more divisions among you!" The more pieces you cut a cake into, the smaller and smaller and smaller it gets. The more opinions and fights you cut a church up into, the smaller and smaller it will get, too. People might leave because they don't want to be part of all the fighting and arguing and name calling.

There's a lot of places in life when we WON'T want to agree with each other, but that's when we have to work hard to stay together and stay united. We have to share ideas and we have to let other people make choices we don't like. This might sound hard - as hard as sharing a perfect piece of cake that you should have all to yourself - but in the end, it shows the world that there's something special about us. There's something amazing about a group of people who don't always agree, but stay united anyway. What's the secret to staying united? The secret is that everybody puts Jesus, and puts each other, above their own desires.

What's the secret of sharing your very own birthday cake and not feeling crabby about it? Well, I'm still not quite sure about that....

### **Family Talk Time:**

1. What's something you've had to share that you felt crabby about - a treat, a room, a toy, the credit, some special time, or something else?

2. Why isn't the church a perfect place where everybody gets along? Why isn't our family a perfect place where everybody gets along? How is the church like a family?
3. Read 1 Corinthians 1:10. How is it possible to be "perfectly united" with someone you don't like or don't agree with? Is this crazy, impossible, fake, or actually do-able? How?
4. How could we make our family a more united and agreeable team this week? How can each person do their part - what is your part?

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