



Practical Christian Living

Dealing with Conflict

What is the hardest thing about other people for you to get along with?

It is an unfortunate reality that even in the church there are some times disagreements and conflicts among Christians. Personality differences, doctrinal differences, or doing something that offends or hurts another Christian are things that are bound to happen from time to time and it is important that we deal with times like that appropriately and biblically.

In Matthew 18 Jesus talks about what to do if another Christian sins against you. **Matthew 18:15-20**

Jesus says “brother” but he is not just talking about men. This also applies if a sister sins against you. *What is the first thing Jesus says you are to do?*

- Go to him and show him his fault

The attitude in which this is done is extremely important. *How would you approach someone like this in a way that shows you care?*

If we are not careful we will go to someone to prove we are right. *How can an attitude of arrogance rather than love short-circuit this process?*

- It shows that we are not as interested in helping the one who was wrong and heal the relationship with them than we are getting our way or trying to be better than they are.

What does Jesus say is the result if that person listens to the correction?

- They will be won over.

What else will happen to that relationship?

- It will be mended and healthy again.

What does Jesus say to do if they will not listen?

- Take some witnesses and then, if still not resolved bring it before the church/elders.

Notice, Jesus doesn't say to go and talk to a whole lot of people about the problem. He doesn't advocate spreading rumors. We often don't really have all the facts when we think someone has wronged us. It is important that you not judge too quickly and ask questions rather than make accusations. Telling anyone about it other than the person in question is a last resort.

Why do people tell everyone but the person in question?

Why is it important to go to mature Christians with the problem rather than “itching ears” or a young Christian?

- You are seeking more than a witness—when you take the second step you are seeking counsel. Maybe in that process you get feedback and information that you didn't realize before.

What does Jesus mean by “treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector?”

- That is an odd statement because Jesus treated tax-collectors and sinners with love.
- Yet, the ones Jesus spent time with were repentant and trying to do better.
- Jesus is saying treat them as you would someone who has no interest in the things of God.

Reconciliation is an important concept for Christians to understand. We often realize our need to be reconciled to God but what about our need to be reconciled with each other?

How important is it for the world to see Christians know how to reconcile their differences?

- It sends a tremendous message of unity that the world needs to see demonstrated in our lives.
- If the world sees us snapping at each other will they want to be a part of God's community?

Learning From God's Example of Reconciliation—Romans 5:6-10

We see in this passage that Christ didn't die for us because we were nice or pretty or had it all together. *Who did Christ die for?*

- The ungodly.

Christ's death brought about our reconciliation with God. God initiated it even though we were the ones who had done wrong. *When someone does you wrong how important is it that you initiate the reconciliation process? Why?*

- Very important

We often want someone to come and say they were wrong or sorry but it doesn't always work that way.

If God can forgive and reconcile us when we were still sinners, how should that make it easier for us to reconcile with others?

Application:

Make a list of who you have open conflicts with or things that were never resolved. *How could you go about bringing a resolution to those conflicts and reconciliation with those people?*

Who is the hardest person or what is the toughest situation you may have to go out and reconcile?