

Resolving Conflicts and Making Godly Appeals

I. BEING OF ONE MIND

- A. Jesus prayed earnestly that His people would walk in unity. This reveals how much He values it.
²¹ That they all may be one...²³ that they may be made perfect in one... (Jn. 17:21-23)
- B. Keeping the unity of the Spirit requires lowliness, suffering long, and bearing with each other.
¹ Walk worthy...² with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love,³ endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. (Eph. 4:1-3)
- C. Paul called the leaders to invest much work into cultivating a like-minded spiritual family. This involves strategically sowing the Word into our community, providing opportunity for two-way communication of ideas, developing appeal structures, and continually repairing relationships.
¹⁰ I plead with you...that you all speak the same thing...that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. (1 Cor. 1:10)
² Being like-minded...being of one accord, of one mind.³ Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.⁴ Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but for the interests of others. (Phil. 2:2-4)

II. RESTORING WOUNDED RELATIONSHIPS

- A. The spirit of a relationship can be wounded (without the people themselves being wounded). In other words, when former trust and communication are injured, then the relationship is wounded.
- B. A relationship can be wounded long before it is broken. A broken relationship requires much more skill and attention to heal. If we address the relational wounds or infection at the early stages, then we can avoid divisiveness in the body and “gangrene” that kills the relationship. As a spiritual family, we seek to repair slightly wounded relationships before they become broken relationships. It is better to be proactive—an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.
- C. It is difficult to win an offended brother back to an open spirit (an easy flowing relationship). The purpose of a fortified city is to keep certain people out of it.
¹⁹ A brother offended is harder to win than a strong city... (Prov. 18:19)
¹⁹ An offended brother is more unyielding [unresponsive] than a fortified city... (Prov. 18:19 NIV)
- D. The primary cause of a wounded relationship is the sense of not ***being wanted*** (feeling rejected). The signs of a wounded relationship include a sense of not ***being wanted***, a ***guarded heart*** (less receptive and more cautious), and ***strained communication*** (a defensive tone).
¹⁸ There is no fear [of rejection] in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment [fear of being judged]. He who fears has not been made perfect in love. (1 Jn. 4:18)

III. MAKING A GODLY APPEAL

- A. When any feel mistreated in our ministry infrastructures, they should make an appeal first to the Lord, then to the brother who mistreated them, and then to the leaders who have authority to help with the solution. To share an offense with a friend who is not a part of the solution is slander.
- ¹⁵ *If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone...*
¹⁶ *But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more... (Mt. 18:15-16)*
- B. **Tell him his fault:** Some appeals to a brother can start in an email or phone call, but most will require a face-to-face meeting. When we meet face to face we feel differently. Often the Spirit will intervene and we will feel more affection and mercy than when talking about him to others. Many do not meet with their brother to save time. (It usually costs much more time by not meeting).
- C. We are changed by the process of gaining courage and clarity in appealing to our brother. We often discover much about our heart and weakness in the process of preparing to appeal to our brother. If we skip this step, we lose opportunity for growth and for our brother to respond to us.
- ¹ *If a man is overtaken in any trespass...restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.* ² *Bear one another's burdens...* (Gal. 6:1-2)
- D. The leaders are required to be strictly confidential (unless bringing in leaders over them to help).
- ¹³ *A talebearer reveals secrets...he who is of a faithful spirit conceals a matter. (Prov. 11:13)*

IV. MAKING THE APPEAL

- A. Our appeal starts with asking questions, requesting help, and sharing feelings first to the Lord and then to the brother. If needed, we then go to a leader in a position to help with the solution.
- B. First, we appeal to the Lord.
1. **Ask questions of the Lord:** Before meeting, we ask the Lord what He thinks about them and the conflict. We ask Him to speak into our deficiencies in the conflict and how we lacked sensitivity in the relationship. We use this to humble ourselves before our brother.
 2. **Request help from the Lord:** Ask Him to prepare the heart of the brother (spouse, child, etc.) before your meeting. The Lord may give a prophetic dream or speak to their heart.
 3. **Share your feelings with the Lord:** about the brother, the conflict, and relationship. This helps us to get in touch with our positive and negative feelings that are pent up inside us.
- C. Second, we begin our appeal to the brother by asking questions, making requests, and sharing. This gives us opportunity to gain insight into blind spots in our heart and to understand his heart better. It is not effective to start the meeting with accusations, or seeking to win an argument.

1. **Ask questions of the brother:** instead of starting the meeting with statements against the brother. For example, “What were you thinking when you told me...?”
 2. **Request help from the brother:** Ask him for help to understand his heart. For example, “Help me process or understand what I heard or was feeling when you told me...”
 3. **Share your feeling with the brother:** We share how we feel or what we heard him say, instead of making accusations. For example, “I felt rejected when you said...” or “I heard you saying that you wanted me off the team when you said...”
- D. We must confess our faults to our brother. Do not say, “I am sorry, if I have offended you,” but say, “I repent of sinning against you,” (by coming up short in love). When we say that we are sorry if they were offended, we are actually saying that they are easily offended, and we are not really saying sorry at all.
- ¹⁶ **Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed**
(Jas. 5:16)

V. WE MUST JUDGE WITH THE RIGHT SPIRIT

- A. Jesus commanded us to rebuke a brother who sins against us and to use righteous judgments. Scripture commands the Church to bring righteous judgment to those with destructive doctrines and behavior (Mt. 18:15-17; 1 Cor. 5:1-11; 2 Cor. 11:12-15; Eph. 5:11; 1 Thes. 5:14, 21; 2 Thes. 3:6-14; 1 Tim. 5:19-20; 2 Tim. 4:2; Titus 1:10-13; 2:15; 3:10-11; 1 Jn. 4:1; Rev. 2:2, 14-15, 20).
- ³ **If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him.** (Lk. 17:3)
- ²⁴ **Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment.** (Jn. 7:24)
- B. Many misinterpret this verse to mean we must never say that someone is wrong. The word *judge* means to analyze or evaluate, to approve or condemn, with the intention of making wrong things right. We must do it in the right process for the right purpose and with the right spirit. This requires a “vigorous spirituality” to invest the time and humility to discern all the real issues.
- ¹ **Judge not, that you be not judged.** ² **For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you...** ⁵ **First remove the plank from your eye, and you will see clearly to remove the speck out of your brother’s eye.** (Mt. 7:1-5)
- C. Gently: We approach them tenderly without harshness as we hope for the best in the process. We look for their sincere intention to obey Jesus, and we confess some of our struggles to them.
- ¹ **If a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.** (Gal. 6:1)
- D. A gentle response diffuses anger in the one you speak to; a harsh tone will stir anger up.
- ¹ **A soft answer turns away wrath [anger], but a harsh word stirs up anger.** (Prov. 15:1)

- E. Humbly: We are to examine ourselves because the knowledge of our own failures humbles us. We are to approach others with a sense of our personal failure and take responsibility for our faults. We should seek to repent quickly, with a teachable spirit that is able to “hear,” without being defensive.
- ⁵ *First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck out of your brother’s eye. (Mt. 7:5)*
- F. Accurately: We take time and effort to get all the available information. Those content with partial information have already made up their minds against another. We do not know all the complex details in the circumstances of another’s life.
- ¹³ *He who answers a matter before he hears it, it is folly and shame to him...¹⁷ The first one to plead his cause seems right, until his neighbor...examines him. (Prov. 18:13-17)*
- ¹⁹ *Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath. (Jas. 1:19)*
- G. Patiently: We give people time to understand the gravity of their sin, and time to repent, without quickly concluding that they refuse to repent. We must not rush through the process too quickly.
- ²¹ *I gave her (Jezebel) time to repent of her sexual immorality... (Rev. 2:21)*
- H. Confidentiality: We only make the information known to those with authority to help in the restoration process. We do not reveal the past sins of anyone who repents.
- ¹³ *A talebearer reveals secrets, but he who is of a faithful spirit conceals a matter. (Prov. 11:13)*
- ⁸ *Above all things have fervent love...for love will cover a multitude of sins. (1 Pet. 4:8)*
- ⁹ *He who covers a transgression seeks love, but he who repeats a matter separates friends. (Prov. 17:9)*
- I. Mercy is more successful than judgment. We seek to show mercy by not requiring that they appeal with 100% accuracy in their facts against us. If only 5% is accurate, then focus on that 5% and ask their forgiveness for it. Try to hear their pain and to understand how we contributed to it.
- ¹³ *Mercy triumphs over judgment. (Jas. 2:13)*
- J. The Spirit is the guardian of the culture of the Body of Christ. He requires that we dwell together in a culture of honor. Blessing comes from honor. Honor heals and dishonor divides. We seek to see their budding virtues that we may bless them. To be of the same mind requires that we seek to be agreeable instead of resistant. We seek to “get on their team.” Do not be wise in your opinion; in other words, do not presume to understand all that God sees in them and the conflict.
- ¹⁰ *In honor giving preference to one another...¹⁴ bless and do not curse...¹⁶ Be of the same mind toward one another...Do not be wise in your own opinion...¹⁸ as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men... (Rom. 12:10-18)*