

1 CORINTHIANS
Why . . . and Why Not?
1 Corinthians 6:1-8

We live in a lawsuit-crazy world! I Googled about it, and read that there are more than 40 MILLION lawsuits filed in the U.S. EVERY YEAR! People are suing anything and everything that might have money in an effort to get rich off of any hint of failure or mistake that a person or a company might make. Lawsuits are a way to “stick it to the man!” And boy, is the man being stuck these days. In fact, we all are! Lawsuits are often the very reason why so many products are so costly, and why insurance is so sky-high, and yet so necessary. These days, you almost have to make your 5-year old kid’s friends sign a waiver before they can come and play in your backyard! Our society has turned something that was meant to protect us from egregious abuse and harm into something that is looking for any excuse to greedily take enormous sums of money from any and every vulnerable source. This is the world’s way, and it has become so common in our day that it is seemingly just taken for granted. **And then there is the way that God wants his children to behave in their spiritual family. 1 Corinthians 6:1-4 NIV**

1 If any of you has a dispute with another, do you dare to take it before the ungodly for judgment instead of before the Lord's people? 2 Or do you not know that the Lord's people will judge the world? And if you are to judge the world, are you not competent to judge trivial cases? 3 Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more the things of this life! 4 Therefore, if you have disputes about such matters, do you ask for a ruling from those whose way of life is scorned in the church?

There are several observations that we can make from this text that are often SURPRISING to many believers. I think that is because we make far too many ASSUMPTIONS that are based on CULTURAL norms. We must begin, however, with a basic REALITY about life in the church:

DISPUTES between believers WILL OCCUR.

Paul and Barnabas; Dispute over circumcision [Acts 15]; Euodia and Syntyche [Phil. 4]

Dispute=Case, Commercial transaction, Suit

The IDEA in this word is not necessarily at first some kind of SINFUL OFFENSE, but a DISAGREEMENT about some issue between believers. It can be an “agreement” gone bad, or a business partnership getting contentious. It can be over an accident that occurs in another church member’s yard. It can refer to any “ISSUE” that arises between people where they cannot agree on a resolve. As we unpack this passage, we must remember a couple of KEY THOUGHTS.

***Remember: Not everyone in the church is in the family!**

***Believers are still “works in progress.” Proceed with caution!**

***Use WISDOM when dealing with all people. This passage does NOT encourage gullibility or naivete. Don’t set yourself up for foolish disputes!**

- Seek counsel before making financial decisions or business partnerships!
- Be CLEAR about what you are agreeing to BEFORE you commit.
- Agree upon having witnesses about any agreement that you make with another.

***Commit to God that you will HONOR HIM . . . no matter how others act!**

- Determine to HONOR your word, NO MATTER WHAT!
- ["A godly man honors his own word to his hurt!"]

My dad's story of dispute with a church member in another state: \$10,000!!

[Tell the first part only about the issue and the man's initial response.]

It is our PRIVILEGE to decide HOW and WHERE we will settle our disputes.

***This does not give us permission to refuse to go to court if someone pushes this through legal channels, unless you release your right to fight for your case.**

-This is a SPIRITUAL issue, not just a practical matter!

Acts 6 – First church fight. Acts 6:1-6 NIV

1 In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Hellenistic Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. 2 So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, "It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. 3 Brothers and sisters, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them 4 and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word." 5 This proposal pleased the whole group. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; also Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism. 6 They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them.

What are you to do if a fellow believer REFUSES to settle the issue agreeably? First, it must be understood that this is not a SIN issue, but a PERSPECTIVE issue. **If it is a sin issue, then this is the pattern you follow: Matthew 18:15-17**

15 "If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. 16 But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.' 17 If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector.

Church MEDIATION should follow a similar path, but with a different agreed upon goal.

***Church Mediation: How it works.**

Believers will one day judge nations and angels, so they should be able to judge disputes between each other.

-Passages on reigning: Revelation 5:10; 20:4-6; 22:5; 2 Timothy 2:12

The fundamental principle here is that believers who faithfully follow Christ and obey his will for their lives will one day REIGN over certain realms in their heavenly future.

But there are other reasons why we are qualified to settle disputes between people:

- We have the Mind of Christ and the indwelling Spirit of God.
- We have the Word of God
- We have the God-given, UNCHANGING VALUES for making wise judgments.

It is better to SUFFER WRONG than to DO WRONG to our fellow believers.

1 Corinthians 6:5-8 NIV

5 I say this to shame you. Is it possible that there is nobody among you wise enough to judge a dispute between believers? 6 But instead, one brother takes another to court--and this in front of unbelievers! 7 The very fact that you have lawsuits among you means you have been completely defeated already. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be cheated? 8 Instead, you yourselves cheat and do wrong, and you do this to your brothers and sisters.

It is a SHAMEFUL matter for believers to go to human courts for their family disputes.

It appeals to people who do not VALUE the things we value most!

It DENIES the insight of wise believers in our midst.

Paul wrote that even the LEAST among believers should be qualified to judge! **(Vs. 5)** This was actually more sarcasm from Paul, since the Corinthians thought they were so "wise!"

Most importantly, it brings shame on the name of JESUS when we cannot settle our own disputes.

Paul made it clear that the foremost issue in disputes between believers is the WITNESS of CHRIST. Our testimony is SHATTERED when we prove that we do not get along any better than this crazy, greedy world! **Jesus said that the world would know that we are HIS DISCIPLES when we LOVE one another, not when we SHOVE one another!** Paul said that our personal desires must not be the thing we value most. We cannot allow ourselves to be DRIVEN by the ALMIGHTY DOLLAR and the creature comforts of this world. We must be willing to DIE to our own wants and needs in order to further the cause of Christ.

The existence of lawsuits between believers is a sign of spiritual DEFEAT.

-It is evidence of CARNAL desires. **James 4:1-4 NIV**

What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? 2 You desire but do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do

not ask God. ³ When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

Key Question: What is my MOTIVE for the lawsuit, and what is my GOAL?

-It is evidence of MISTRUST and DIVISION in the family of God.

The willingness to suffer wrong is a sign of FAITH in God.

Remember Paul's words to Philemon when his escaped servant (who had become a believer) was returned to Philemon: **Philemon 1:18**: "Charge Onesimus's bill to my account!" Paul was willing to PAY for Onesimus's crime and the resulting costs that accompanied it in order to promote PEACE in the church. The whole letter was written to encourage the right way to settle even significant disputes. Even in the Old Testament, we see evidence of FAITH in those who faced unfair treatment and handled it with GRACE and SELF-DENIAL.

-Remember Abraham's dispute with Lot: Genesis 13:7-11 NIV

7 And quarreling arose between Abram's herders and Lot's. The Canaanites and Perizzites were also living in the land at that time. 8 So Abram said to Lot, "Let's not have any quarreling between you and me, or between your herders and mine, for we are close relatives. 9 Is not the whole land before you? Let's part company. If you go to the left, I'll go to the right; if you go to the right, I'll go to the left." 10 Lot looked around and saw that the whole plain of the Jordan toward Zoar was well watered, like the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt. (This was before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.) 11 So Lot chose for himself the whole plain of the Jordan and set out toward the east. The two men parted company:

Abraham displayed great faith in God when he relinquished the right to pick his own spot! He did not have a sense of ENTITLEMENT to the best place. He did not fight over the right to get what he wanted. He did not quarrel over the best water rights or the finest beachfront views! Instead, he TRUSTED GOD to provide for him and give him what he needed. The promises of God were not given to him because of his own merit, but because of the GRACE of God. It is almost COMICAL how the story of Abraham unfolded after Lot left Abraham's side and disappeared down the hill toward the fertile green fields near Sodom: **Genesis 13:14-15 NIV**

14 The LORD said to Abram after Lot had parted from him, "Look around from where you are, to the north and south, to the east and west. 15 All the land that you see I will give to you and your offspring forever.

I do not know HOW God will do this for you, but I know that he WILL faithfully do it. FINISH the story of my dad and the man who cheated him out of \$10,000. Esp. share dad's perspective: **"If he can live WITH it, I can live WITHOUT it!"** – Sam Sayger

I think the spirit seen in Abraham, and in my dad, is what God blesses in us today. Will you fight to get your way and have your desires met, or will you trust God and humbly rest in his provision? **In the New Testament, we are actually told to not only DIE to**

our rights; we are instructed to fight for the rights of OTHERS, and to willingly suffer harm at the hands of others without striking back at them! This is radically different from society. You bet! It is much more like . . . JESUS CHRIST!

1 Peter 2:21-23 NIV

21 To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. 22 "He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth." 23 When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.

This is how we are CALLED to live in this broken world. Suffering for doing good is exactly what Jesus did, and we share in his suffering (and in his rewards) when we do this! I believe that trusting in God ALWAYS pays greater dividends (in this life and in the next!) than getting what you want through arguments and fights, mainly because honoring God in this way DISPLAYS the HEART of Jesus Christ, and brings glory to God!

Let's pray.

OB FACILITATION GUIDE
1 CORINTHIANS – WEEK 9
Why . . . and Why Not?

START TALKING:

What was the biggest fight you ever got into as a kid?

START THINKING:

Why should we expect to have disagreements with other believers from time to time?

START SHARING:

Read [1 Corinthians 6:1-8](#). Does this passage teach that Christians in our day should not go to court? What key principles do you see in this passage?

What are some practices that all believers should use when living in close relationships with each other? [Accountability, Clear Communication, etc.]

Discuss the idea of allowing church leaders helping believers work out disagreements instead of going to court with each other. How do you feel about this? Why do church members not often do this?

Read [1 Corinthians 6:7-8](#) and [Genesis 13:7-15](#). Why is it wrong for believers to sue one another? How do lawsuits between Christians affect our testimony? How does Abraham's story demonstrate his FAITH? How would accepting loss demonstrate grace and faith in your life?

Read [1 Peter 2:21-23](#). How did Jesus model suffering? How does this passage teach us to suffer like Christ, and why?

START PRAYING:

Pray for someone who has wronged you in your past, and forgive them if you still hold bitterness toward them.

START DOING:

Memorize [1 Peter 2:21-23](#).