

January 27th – Biblical Conflict Resolution

“If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that ‘by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.’ And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector.”
(Matt. 18:15-17)

Today’s verses lay out the process of what is typically called church discipline. Really, they are guidelines for biblical conflict resolution. What am I supposed to do if someone has wronged me – talked behind my back, betrayed my confidence, etc.? First, you are to “go and tell him his fault between you and him alone.” Don’t go gossip to someone else - that’s usually the worst thing you can do! 99% of conflicts get out of hand because people don’t talk directly to one another.

If you attempt to resolve your differences with your brother and he will not listen, only then do you need to enlist the help of others. “One or two more” can serve as witnesses and aid in the resolution of the conflict. If your friend refuses to hear the witnesses, as a last resort the matter is to be brought before the church. This should only be a last resort as fallen humans tend to take sides, rather than considering the Scripture. The church should adjudicate every matter based on the Bible.

If your brother will not receive the correction of the church, then he is to be disciplined by the church, which usually means he is disfellowshipped. The breaking of fellowship with an unrepentant sinner is not for a vindictive purpose, but so the brother can come to the end of himself and be encouraged to repent (1 Cor. 5:5). Why is this so important? Most major conflicts would be avoided if believers would learn to settle their differences with one another rather than gossiping to someone else.