

## Biblical Instruction on Christian Conflict

God's word is perfectly clear on the matter of how conflicts should be handled between fellow Christians.

*<sup>15</sup> "If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. <sup>16</sup> But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.' <sup>17</sup> If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector. Matthew 18:15-17 NIV*

Matthew 18:15-17 provides the biblical pattern for settling conflicts within the church:

1. Go directly and privately to the brother or sister to discuss the problem.
2. If he or she will not listen, take one or two witnesses.
3. If he or she still refuses to listen, take the matter to the church leadership.
4. If he or she still refuses to listen to the church, expel the offender from the fellowship of the church.

Christians are obligated by God's word to handle conflict in the manner outlined above. Notice that the first step is to keep the matter private. When we fail to handle conflict in this manner or when we take our complaints to other people, we are in direct disobedience of God's instruction. This generally leads to hurt feelings and damage to the Church that most likely could have been avoided.

*As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. <sup>2</sup> Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. <sup>3</sup> Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. <sup>4</sup> There is one body and one Spirit— just as you were called to one hope when you were called— <sup>5</sup> one Lord, one faith, one baptism; <sup>6</sup> one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. Ephesians 3:1-3 NIV*

God's desire is that we live in unity of spirit and peace. We are brothers and sisters in Christ. Our desire should be to lift up one another and promote the work of Christ through our congregation. Each believer must do everything possible to resolve conflict in a manner that is pleasing to God and beneficial to the body of believers.

If we are to preserve the unity of the body of believers, we must each exercise grace, patience, forgiveness and obedience.

**We need to have each others back!**