

# Conflict Resolution 3

## Principles for All Conflict

### Conflict Resolution Tools

#### 4 G's of Conflict Resolution

- 1) Glorify God - the Goal
- 2) Get the Log Out - Preparing the way
- 3) Gently Rebuke - Drawing out a brother
- 4) Go and Be Reconciled - Priestly work accomplished for the ability to share in knowledge and work and enjoyment.

#### 7 A's of an Apology

##### Rules to govern to whom and how

- 1) Address all of the parties involved
- 2) Avoid weasel words - if, but, maybe

##### Steps in the Apology

- 3) Admit wrong doing specifically
- 4) Acknowledge harms caused (especially things that can be restored - this is a precursor to accepting consequences of restoration)
- 5) Accept the consequences (offer to restore harms where possible in the way that God requires in His law)
- 6) Alter - commit to put off sinful attitudes, words, and behaviors and put on righteous attitudes, words, and behaviors (be specific, not wide ranging)
- 7) Ask for forgiveness

#### 4 Promises of Forgiveness

- 1) I will restore our fellowship as brothers in Christ (and other relationships if appropriate) and I will not allow this issue to prevent us from doing our duties to each other.
- 2) I will not dwell on this incident without a duty to do so.
- 3) I will not bring this up again to you without a duty to do so.
- 4) I will not bring this up again to others without a duty to do so.

#### Acceptable Conclusions on any point of offense:

- 1) Choosing to **interpret** ambiguities charitably.
- 2) Choosing to **overlook** things that you think are clear but minor offenses.
- 3) Choosing to Accept a **Just defense** resulting in charitable interpretation.
- 4) Choosing to Accept **external repentance**.
- 5) Choosing to **escalate** to the next level of Matthew 18 until resolution by either (a) **reconciliation** or (b) **removal** from the fellowship ends the friendship unless and until the guilty party repents.

## Unity, Attitude, Method & Matthew 18

**John 7:51** - Does our law judge a man before it hears him and knows what he is doing?

**Proverbs 18:17** - The first one to plead his cause seems right, Until his neighbor comes and examines him.

**Matthew 18:1-14** - Humility, Fear of God, Love of neighbor

Humility

**18:1** At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, “Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?”

**2** Then Jesus called a little child to Him, set him in the midst of them, **3** and said, “Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. **4** Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. **5** Whoever receives one little child like this in My name receives Me.

Fear of God

**6** “But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea. **7** Woe to the world because of offenses [stumbling blocks, enticements to sin, scandals]! For offenses must come, but woe to that man by whom the offense comes!

**8** “If your hand or foot causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you. It is better for you to enter into life lame or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet, to be cast into the everlasting fire. **9** And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you. It is better for you to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell [Gehenna] fire.

Love of Neighbor

**10** “Take heed that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that in heaven their angels always see the face of My Father who is in heaven. **11** For the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost.

**12** “What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them goes astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine and go to the mountains to seek the one that is straying? **13** And if he should find it, assuredly, I say to you, he rejoices more over that sheep than over the ninety-nine that did not go astray. **14** Even so it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.

The Duty of the offended to come to the offender - **Matthew 18:15-20**

**15 “Moreover 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. 16 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.’ 17 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.**

**18 “Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.**

**19 “Again, assuredly,<sup>1</sup> I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven. 20 For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.”**

## **Matthew 5**

**Matthew 5:17-20** - the importance of the Law

**17 “Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. 18 For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot [Gr. iota, Heb. yod, the smallest letter] or one tittle [The smallest stroke in a Heb. letter] will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. 19 Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. 20 For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.**

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<sup>1</sup> TR removes assuredly

The duty of the offender to come to the offended - **Matthew 5:21-26**

**21 “You have heard that it was said to those of old [in ancient times], ‘You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.’ 22 But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, ‘Raca!’ [Lit., in Aram., Empty head] shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, ‘You fool!’ [Gr. More (root of moron)] shall be in danger of hell fire [Gr. Gehenna pyr]. 23 Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, 24 leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. 25 Agree with your adversary quickly, while you are on the way with him, lest your adversary deliver you to the judge, the judge hand you over to the officer, and you be thrown into prison. 26 Assuredly, I say to you, you will by no means get out of there till you have paid the last penny.**

## Process

### Step 1 - Private Meeting - Discussion of the involved parties alone

**15 “Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone.**

- 1) Step 1 is the individual or parties involved in the dispute meeting with no witnesses.
  - a) Step 1 can include a witness when decency (talking to another person’s wife or charge in private), order (swift action to prevent worse disorder), safety (persons present for protection), weakness, lack of skill, or
- 2) **Charges should remain at the level of publicity of the offense or lower unless difficulty, danger, or the severity of the situation calls for escalation.**
  - a) Offenses that the Bible defines as criminal may (and sometimes must) immediately proceed to public process in the church and sometimes also the state - sexual crimes or violent crimes should proceed to the state and church courts immediately unless the victim chooses to not exact criminal justice.
  - b) Physical sexual acts toward another person or serious or nonrepairable physical wounds or murder must proceed to public reporting of the crime at minimum and public trial if evidence be sufficient to allow for trial and if protection of the innocent allow the innocent to report the crime.

- c) In time of a settled civil order, justice, and peace, we are obligated to protect the innocent, those who profess innocence and behave peaceably through public process, and those who profess guilt and behave peaceably through public process from the sword until guilt is determined through public process of judicial trial by the state for civil punishment & the church for ecclesiastical discipline.
  - d) The resolution needs to be as public as the offense or as public as the awareness of the conflict - whichever is higher.
- 3) Talebearing / Gossip - A Trap for Disorder & Waste
- a) Talking about a matter when (A1) it is not positively honoring the party being discussed, (A2) it is not your business, and (A3) you are not helping to solve the problem.
    - i) The best counselors are people who are:
      - (1) already a party to the business at hand,
        - (a) This alone makes a person a useless partner.
        - (b) Being a party makes involvement your duty.
      - (2) apparently desirous to help,
        - (a) This alone makes a person a busybody.
        - (b) Desiring to help is love, but desire to help without desire to know how to help is useless. Study the law.
      - (3) and are apparently able to help.
        - (a) This alone makes a person a miser of time.
        - (b) Apparent ability & desire to help is minimally necessary for a person to be a useful counselor / helper in resolving conflict.
  - b) OR (B1) When the matter is generally positive, but it is lawfully private, and there is no good reason to discuss the matter (especially when a request is given to keep the matter confidential even if no agreement has been formed).
  - c) OR (C1) When the matter is generally positive, but it is lawfully private, and there is an agreement formed to keep the matter confidential and there is no positive duty to discuss the matter.
  - d) **Revealing that an act is bad vs revealing that an act has happened**
    - i) It is not gossip to express that an act is evil when other parties know about the act already.
      - (1) It may be evil suspicion - Believing or Expressing Uncharitable Interpretations as true without taking sufficient

account of possible charitable interpretations.

(2) It may be Slander - spreading false negative information when you know it is not true. **Slander - A trap for Hatred and Dishonor**

- ii) When a matter is uncertain/unclear or when a matter is clearly bad but it is unclear how bad and the level would matter or how you would deal with the problem, then we should inquire about the situation.
  - (1) What is going on here?
  - (2) Is this X?
  - (3) Are you doing X?
  - (4) This looks like X, what is going on?
- e) **Revealing that an Act already known of is a Bad act** - If a matter is known to have occurred by two parties, then it is not gossip to discuss the act for the sake of coming to agreement about how to judge it and how to proceed.
- f) **Revealing that an Act has happened** - There is no reason to reveal an event that would bring negative attention to a person unless that person is helping to resolve the problem or the matter is public.
  - i) If you reveal a matter to another, then you have a duty to reveal the conclusion as well.
- g) **As the revealer** - Ask yourself the following questions before giving information to others to avoid it being gossip/talebearing:
  - i) Why are you involving this person?
  - ii) Do they have an interest in the matter in a more than general way where they may have a duty to act?
  - iii) Is there evidence that they would desire to help rather than just enjoy gossip?
  - iv) Is there evidence that they have the ability to help?
  - v) Is there a better person available to go to (lowest resource use with a reasonable basis for belief that resolution can be reached with this person's involvement)
  - vi) Is the benefit of involving this person worth the cost of their time and the relational harm of increasing the number of persons involved?
    - (1) If you know how to deal with things you do not need counsel
    - (2) If you do not know, then seek to learn quickly

- (3) If you do know, but are unskilled, then seek to practice and develop the skill
  - (4) If you are weak or the situation is difficult, then get help for this time and seek to grow in strength
  - (5) Safety/unreasonableness/disorder, decency, get help - make plain the reason with the other party there so it can be discussed as a part of the problem if needed (safety, fear of unreasonableness/repetition/disorder) or simply acknowledged as right (decency).
  - (6) Not an excuse - Fear of unreasonableness
- h) **As the hearer** - If you are helping to solve the problem, then you will be:
- i) counseling the speaker on how to proceed according to the law of God rather than according to man's opinions,
  - ii) going with them to meet the other party to bring about resolution of conflict, or
  - iii) helping to rescue them from the other party.
  - iv) It becomes your duty to either send the person immediately or to go with the person. It is no disorder for you to be present. It was a disorder for you to be told and your presence is clearing that up - **OR** - else it was right for you to be involved and thus for you to be present.
- 4) Where to start the process:
- a) We should always start at step 1, unless:
    - i) the **original offense was more public** than just the parties involved in the dispute,
    - ii) **Complexity** of the situation or **Weakness** of one of the parties - one or both parties may require help to go to the next step - a messy situation that has been mishandled or a child or new believer that is unsure or unfirm in how to proceed is an obvious example.
      - (1) This may result in the process being a modified step 1 with help or an immediate step 2.
      - (2) Both parties can agree to jump to step 2 if the matter is obviously difficult after a brief exchange.
      - (3) Either party can raise to step 2 if the matter seems beyond their ability to manage.
      - (4) No private matter may proceed to step 3 without 2 or 3 witnesses willing to bring charges and testify on a matter

with a willingness to have punishment fall on them eye for eye tooth for tooth as what would fall on the charged.

- iii) **Decency** - if the conflict is with a person of the opposite sex or is with a person under special care like a child or person with mental disability, then others may need to be involved.

(1) This is a modified step 1 unless both parties agree to add another witness.

- iv) **Danger** - if the person fears for safety in private conflict
- v) **Severity** - if the grievousness / criminality of the offense obviously requires immediately requires involvement form others

5) **How to deal with things being raised in publicity in a disorderly manner:**

- a) Unless it is to step 3, simply proceed and have the warning issued to amend behavior in the future.
- b) If a private party raises from step 1 to step 2 wrongly, then simply raise teh concern. If the two parties do not agree, then proceed with step 2 and then the witnesses should also advise on whether the raising of the situation to step 2 was warranted or not.
- c) Deal with disorderly raising of the matter as with all sin.
- d) If the matter is raised to level 3 wrongly, then the court must refuse to hear the matter and require a step 2 meeting.
- e) Unlawful spreading of information or slander can become the basis for some sort of recompense or consequence that involves duties of restoration in money or time by service.

6) **Summary**

- a) Ordinary Order
  - i) Private Offense
  - ii) Immediate Questioning, Comment of Concern, or Rebuke
  - iii) Private Resolution
- b) Who can be involved?
  - i) Parties in conflict - Charged / Offended / Witnessed / People involved
    - (1) Wise counselor / Peacemaker
    - (2) Relevant Authority / Necessary person for propriety
    - (3) Already involved - orderly or disorderly
      - (a) If orderly no problem
      - (b) If disorderly, then resolve that as part of the dispute.  
This is probably the last thing to be dealt with once another is involved.



**Westminster Directory of Private (Family) Worship<sup>2</sup>** - underline added for emphasis

XII. Seeing the word of God requireth that we should consider one another, to provoke unto love and good works; therefore, at all times, and specially in this time, wherein profanity abounds, and mockers, walking after their own lusts, think it strange that others run not with them to the same excess of riot; every member of this kirk ought to stir up themselves, and one another, to the duties of mutual edification, by instruction, admonition, rebuke; exhorting one another to manifest the grace of God in denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, and in living godly, soberly and righteously in this present world; by comforting the feeble-minded, and praying with or for one another. Which duties respectively are to be performed upon special occasions offered by Divine Providence; as, namely, when under any calamity, cross, or great difficulty, counsel or comfort is sought; or when an offender is to be reclaimed by private admonition, and if that be not effectual, by joining one or two more in the admonition, according to the rule of Christ, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.

XIII. And, because it is not given to every one to speak a word in season to a wearied or distressed conscience, it is expedient, that a person (in that case,) finding no ease, after the use of all ordinary means, private and publick, have their address to their own pastor, or some experienced Christian: but if the person troubled in conscience be of that condition, or of that sex, that discretion, modesty, or fear of scandal, requireth a godly, grave, and secret friend to be present with them in their said address, it is expedient that such a friend be present.

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<sup>2</sup> In the large teal “Westminster Confession” Book or Accessed on 2023/11/18 @ <https://www.apuritansmind.com/westminster-standards/directory-of-family-worship/>

**Church of Scotland First Book of Discipline - Ch 7 - Drafted by John Knox - AD 1560 -**  
underlining added for emphasis

First, if the offence be secret or known to few men, and rather stands in suspicion than in manifest probation, the offender ought to be privately admonished, to abstaine from all appearance of evill, which if he promise to doe, and declare himselfe sober, honest, and one that feares God, and feares to offend his brethren, then may the secret admonition suffice for his correction. But if he either contemne the admonition, or after promise made do shew himselfe no more circumspect then he was before, then must the Minister admonish him, to whom if he be found inobedient they must proceed according to the rule of Christ, as after shall be declared. If the crime be publick, and such as is heynous, as fornication, drunkennesse, fighting, common swearing, or execration, then ought the offender to be called in presence of the Minister, Elders and Deacons, where his sinne and trepasse ought to be declared and aggregated [aggravated, emphasized] so that his conscience may feele how farre he hath offended God, and what slander he hath raised in the Kirk. If signes of unfaigned repentance appeare in him, and if he require to be admitted to publick repentance, the Minister may appoint unto him a day when the whole kirk convenes together, that in presence of all he may testifie his repentance, which before he professed. Which if he accept, and with reverence confesse his sinne, doing the same, and earnestly desiring the Congregation to pray to God with him for mercy, and to accept him in their societie notwithstanding the former offence: Then the Kirk may and ought to receive him as a penitent. For the Kirk ought to be no more severe, then God declares himselfe to be, who witnesses that in whatsoever houre a sinner unfainedly repents, and turnes from his wicked way, that he will not remember one of his iniquities. And therefore ought the Kirk diligently to advert that it excommunicate not those whom God absolves.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Accessed 2023/11/18

[https://www.truecovenanter.com/kirkgovt/scotland\\_kirk\\_books\\_of\\_discipline\\_1621.phtml#scotland\\_kirk\\_books\\_of\\_discipline\\_1621\\_book1\\_head7](https://www.truecovenanter.com/kirkgovt/scotland_kirk_books_of_discipline_1621.phtml#scotland_kirk_books_of_discipline_1621_book1_head7)