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# *The Pastor's Corner Vol. 7*

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## Handling Conflicts



*.... I felt I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith  
that was once for all entrusted to the saints. Jude 1:3 NIV*

## Handling Conflicts

One of the best methods of determining where we are spiritually can be seen in how we handle conflicts. We can look the part of a mature Christian by attending church regularly, dressing appropriately, speaking all the Christian lingo (“too blessed to be stressed”), speaking in tongues, dance in the spirit, giving to the church, attending prayer and Bible study and yet be a babe in Christ when it comes to handling conflicts. Make no mistake, handling conflicts is not my favorite past time and I’m sure this is true for most folks.

Like most folks, I’d rather conflicts just disappear on their own without me dealing with them. Unfortunately, it’s rare for conflicts to disappear on their own, they may be suppressed for a while only to re-surface again later, but they rarely if ever disappear for good unless they are dealt with. Contrary to popular opinion, (I’m being sarcastic) the church nor its members are not perfect. That is to say, that within the walls of every church there always has been and always will be conflicts amongst the saints of God. Does this mean they’re not true Christians or that they lack spiritual maturity? No, conflicts are part of life in and outside of the church, there’s no way around the occasional conflict even if you do your best to avoid them.

A good biblical example of conflict between saints is the conflict between Paul and Barnabas. The conflict between Paul and Barnabas was over John Mark who accompanied them on their first missionary journey but left them and returned to Jerusalem (**Acts 13:13**). Paul felt that since John Mark had deserted them on their first missionary journey, it was not a good idea to take him on their second journey. Barnabas disagreed with Paul and they parted company. **Acts 15:39** says, *“They had such a sharp disagreement that they parted company”*. So there we have it, a conflict between two of God’s anointed. This is not to suggest that conflict is right but just to show us that there will be conflicts in our lives, it’s how we handle them that tell us where we are spiritually.

So, how do we handle conflicts? If we want Bible results (good results), we should first seek God’s will as spelled out in the Bible. **2 Timothy 3:16-17** (NIV) says, *“All scripture is God breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”* With that said, we look at **Matthew 18:15-17**, Jesus himself gives us the correct way to handle our conflicts.

Here are three keys from Jesus himself, to handling our conflicts:

**Key # 1.** (Verse 15) *“If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you.”*

**This means:**

- a. It’s not the Pastors, the deacons, or anybody else’s responsibility to tell the person what they did, it’s our responsibility to go to them and tell them. People are sometimes totally unaware that they have done anything hurtful to us; after all, they’re not mind readers, we must tell them.
- b. The matter is between you and the person that wronged or hurt you, not the whole church. It’s sad when the person who wronged or hurt you is the last to find out about it and the whole church has known from day one.
- c. We don’t take the worldly approach by going to our circle of friends and call for them to choose sides, you deal with the issue.
- d. By doing this, we protect the person from gossip and/or slander.

**Key # 2.** (Verse 16) *“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.”*

**This means:**

- a. Even though you mean well, you’re approach may not be correct and you need an objective person to point it out.
- b. You might be the person that’s wrong and the objective person(s) brought in can help you to see the error of your ways. Most of us have what I call blind spots when it comes to self-evaluations during conflicts. That is to say, we usually don’t see the contribution we make to the conflicts we encounter unless someone else points them out in love.
- c. You have witnesses to confirm your position as well as verify the fact that you made every attempt to resolve the conflict.

**Key # 3.** (Verse 17) *“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.”*

**This means:**

- a. That after all efforts have been made to resolve the conflict, with no success, tell it to the church.
- b. You let the church handle the disciplinary actions.

There are three methods typically used by most people during times of conflict, they are the following:

1. **The Ostrich Method** – (Avoidance)  
They ignore the conflict or avoid the person(s) with whom you have the conflict hoping the conflict goes away.
2. **The Wasp Method** – (Aggression)  
They abuse or attack the person they have conflict with and not the issue.
3. **The Primate Method** – (Address the issue)  
They do the most healthy thing to be done with conflicts, address the issues with a willingness to negotiate and if possible compromise when values will not be lost.

Conflicts will arise as long as we interact with other people. Conflicts will arise in every relationship we have, there is no way to safeguard against them. Every marriage, friendship, family, church family and job related interaction will at some point in time experience conflict. However, the two methods to avoid during times of conflict are: “The Ostrich” (avoidance) and “The Wasp” (aggression). The best method is the “Primate Method” (address the issue), this is what Jesus commands us to do. Finally, there are four things every believer should apply to every conflict they encounter in church or everyday life:

1. We are commanded to live at peace with everyone.  
**Romans 12:18** (NIV) says, “*If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.*” (See also Romans 14:19)
2. We are commanded to forgive.  
**Colossians 3:13** (NIV) says, “*Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.*” **Luke 17:3-4** (NIV) says, “*So watch yourselves if your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him. If he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times comes back to you and says, I repent, forgive him.*” (See also, Luke 6:37; Matthew 6:14 and Mark 11:25-17)
3. We are commanded not to repay evil with evil.  
**1 Peter 3:9** (NIV) says, “*Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing.*”  
**Roman 12:17** (NIV) says, “*Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do*

*what is right in the eyes of everybody.” (See also, Romans 12:19 and Deuteronomy 32:35)*

4. We are commanded to love one another.

**John 15:12** (NIV) says, “*My command is this: **Love each other** as I have loved you.*” Verse 17 “*This is my command: Love each other.*” **John 13:34-35** (NIV) says, “*A new commandment I give you: **Love one another** as I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.*”

Applying these four things to our conflicts does not guarantee us the cooperation or change of heart from those with which we have conflict. However, applying the four things will please God, that’s most important, our aim should always be to please God and not ourselves.

God Bless,  
Pastor D. M. Duncan

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