

CONFLICT RESOLUTION PROCESS

How many of us have wished for a world without conflict? Even being removed from conflict would seem like an answer to prayer. Yet international, tribal, workplace, family and religious conflict continues to abound. God's Word tells us that because of our fallen nature we will face 'wars and rumours of wars' until we reach heaven.

While no one of us has the capacity to erase conflict we are called as followers of Christ to become peacemakers in the midst of troubled times. We are to be at peace, and to make peace, no easy tasks in one's own strength. Yet we have been entrusted with specific resources that are intended to enable us to become peacemakers. For example, the resources of the new life we have through faith in Jesus Christ, the wisdom and conviction of God's Word, and the power at work in us through the Holy Spirit, all are intended to allow us to resolve conflict.

The redemptive community, known as the church, is not immune to conflict. Clashes are to be expected for three reasons – 1. We are shaped by unique backgrounds and experience that lead us to see things from different perspectives, 2. The church is made up of fallen people whose conscious and unconscious choices/actions can bring discomfort to others. 3. We are engaged in, as Job discovered, a spiritual battle that is far bigger than what we imagine. For these reasons we should not be surprised to see conflict in the church. As church members adhere to the aforementioned resources, we can thank God there is hope in the midst of conflict.

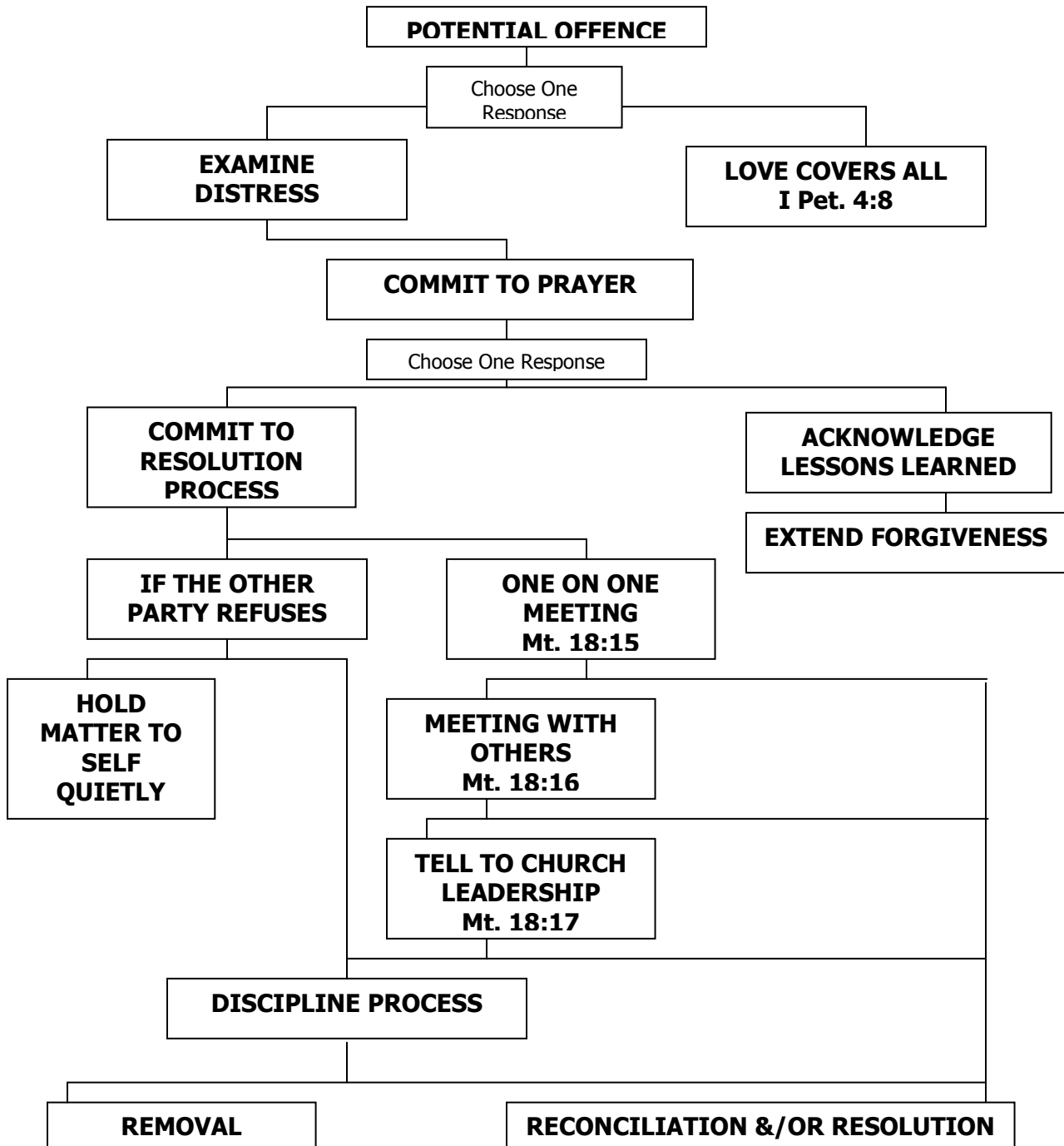
The Bible tells us, "Love covers a multitude of sins." (1Peter 4:8) In short, as Christ followers empowered by the Holy Spirit, we are encouraged to cut our fellow believers some slack and choose to overlook many small and at times even larger matters. Periodically however we find ourselves offended to such a degree that we seem unable to just 'love and leave it.' The Bible does not shy away or condemn this reality but gives directions for how to process moments like this in Godly fashion.

One of the tasks of church leaders is to help the congregation grow to be more like Jesus in the ins and outs of daily living. To help you do this the following resolution sheet has been developed. This form is based on Jesus teaching from Matthew 18:15-17 in which Jesus offers clear instructions about how to conduct ourselves in times of relational stress. The goal of course is reconciliation between people and resolution to the matters that have caused trouble.

Please take time to prayerfully read this passage listening to what God may say to you and then follow the steps outlined as you seek to resolve the concern you have. The *Flow Chart For Conflict Resolution* below will give you an overview of this process.

Be open to the fact that God may lead you at any point in this process to trust Him in a deeper way and extend forgiveness to the one who has offended you. May you know the participation of the Holy Spirit as He "Leads you into truth" just as Jesus promised!

FLOW CHART FOR CONFLICT RESOLUTION



Worksheet For Resolving Relational Conflict

Please write the name of the person you are concerned about here:

If you believe this person has violated the Biblical standard of Christian Behaviour, please outline in specific detail the circumstances, as you understand them. (Feel free to attach other pages if necessary)

SIGNATURE: _____

DATE: _____

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In keeping with the Biblical mandate of Matthew 18:15 which states:

"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".

Your next step is to schedule an appointment to speak personally and privately with this person.

At This Point Three Options Present Themselves:

1. As we pray about these kinds of things God shows us how to allow His love to overcome the difficulty through personal forgiveness. We then have the obligation to avoid gossip or slander so the evil one gains no advantage over us, or the rest of the church.

Here is the step you need to take in response to the above.

I have decided to rely on the Holy Spirit to enable me to forgive this matter completely and will not mention it to anyone else as I exercise my right to allow love to cover whatever offence I previously perceived.

SIGNATURE: _____

DATE: _____

OR

2. Occasionally the responsibility to resolve difficult matters biblically can be overwhelming. We can choose not to bring the matter to a conclusion right away. In such cases we are obligated to pray for sensitivity and direction from the Lord. We must hold the matter to ourselves without discussing it with others or trying to persuade others to act on our behalf. Should this not be possible I agree to either follow actions 1 or 3 of this Action Plan or be subject to a disciplinary process myself.

SIGNATURE: _____

DATE: _____

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If The Matter Was Not Resolved Please Complete The Following:

In keeping with the further directives of Matthew 18:16 which states:

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.'

Your next step is to schedule another meeting with this person and this time to ask one or two other believers to accompany you so there will be resolution and or a larger perspective.

Date of meeting #2: _____

Please enter the names of those who have agreed to participate with you.

Name of witness 1 _____

Name of witness 2 _____

Outcome of meeting:

Signatures:

Complainant: _____

Witness 1: _____

Witness 2: _____

Date: _____

If The Matter Was Still Not Resolved Please Complete The Following:

Having followed the Biblical mandate for resolving conflict and having been unable to bring closure to this matter and in keeping with the further directive of Matthew 18:17 which states:

If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church ...

Your next step is to ask the church leadership to become involved. Please complete the following and present it along with your completed documentation to your Pastor.

I hereby formally request the Church Leadership become involved to bring resolution to this matter.

I agree to participate fully with the Pastoral staff and appointed leadership in their stewardship of this matter. I agree to live by the decisions rendered.

SIGNATURE: _____

DATE: _____