

Settle It

Psalm 133:1 says, "*Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!*" As you might imagine, the opposite of this verse would be terrible. One of the worst problems a congregation can have is brethren who cannot talk to each other because of unresolved conflicts.

In dealing with conflict, there are two dangers. The first is ungodly attitudes. One attitude is anger, which is seen in the case of Cain (Genesis 4:5-8), King Saul (2 Samuel 20:30-33) and Moses (Numbers 20:7-12). Another ungodly attitude is bitterness. Hebrews 12:14-15 warns, "*Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled ...*" David and Michal are an unfortunate example of bitterness (2 Samuel 6:16-23). The second danger is the damaging impact on others. As noted in Hebrews 12:15, bitterness can defile the one in whom it resides. Also, as with all sin, "*Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump*" (1 Corinthians 5:6). Conflict in a congregation produces an uneasy tension which can produce even more conflicts!

Thankfully, the Bible tells us how to settle problems. When you are at fault, follow Matthew 5:23-24, which directs you to go to that person and settle the difference. When the other person is at fault, follow Matthew 18:15-17, which directs you to go to that person and tell them their fault. Additional instructions are given if the person does not listen. The matter is so grave that it must involve other brethren and even the entire congregation if the other person does not repent.

Finally, the Bible admonishes us to act quickly. Matthew 5:23-24 certainly implies immediacy. If need be, you "*leave thy gift before the altar.*" Ephesians 4:26-27 says, "*Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: Neither give place to the devil.*" Problems that are allowed to fester will only get worse as resentment grows over the months or years.

God's plan fails, not because He lacks wisdom (Psalm 147:5), but because men are stubborn and rebellious in implementing it (Proverbs 17:11). Conflict can bring disaster for churches and eternal condemnation for those who refuse to settle their differences.

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