

# MATTHEW 18 GUIDELINES FOR CONFLICT RESOLUTION

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Dear Friend,

Wouldn't it be wonderful if we lived in a world where everyone loved God and each other so practically that we could all live in peace and harmony? Ultimately this is exactly what heaven will be like but for now a realistic assessment indicates this is not possible because we live in a fallen world.

Even the redemptive community known as the church is made up of fallen people whose choices and actions often cause discomfort for others. We cause it to happen to others and at times others cause discomfort for us.

The Bible tells us that "Love covers a multitude of sins", in short; as Christ followers empowered by the Holy Spirit we often cut our fellow believers some slack and choose to overlook many small and sometimes larger things. 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 your church is to help you grow to be more like Jesus through the ins and outs of daily living. To help you do this the following action guide has been developed. This form is based on Jesus teaching from Matthew 18: 15-17 in which Jesus gives us clear instruction about how to conduct ourselves in times of relational stress.

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 attached Conflict Resolution Flow Chart 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!

Occasionally it is the pastor or one of the elders that have become the focal point for our discomfort. When this happens we are obligated to follow the basic instructions for resolving personal difficulties as outlined in Matthew but before taking the matter to the larger context of the church (in this case the district office) we must honour another text, which states:

*"Do not entertain an accusation against an elder unless it is brought by two or three witnesses. Those who sin are to be rebuked publicly, so that the others may take warning". 1Timothy 5:19-20*

If you feel the necessity of bringing a complaint against your pastor or one of the elders you will need at least two other people who will corroborate your concern. Obviously this is a serious matter.

**ACTION GUIDE FOR  
RESOLVING RELATIONAL CONFLICT**

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Please write the name of the person here:

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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)

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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 in a Biblical fashion appears daunting and we'd rather not follow through. We then are obligated to hold the matter in question to ourselves without discussing it with others or trying to persuade others to take action on our behalf. Should this not be possible I agree to either follow this action plan or be subject to a disciplinary process myself.

SIGNATURE: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

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**OR**

3. If you wish to proceed, please set up a meeting with the above individual.

Date of meeting #1: \_\_\_\_\_

OUTCOME:

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**IF THE MATTER WAS NOT RESOLVED PLEASE COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING:**

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

*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.'*

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:

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**Signatures:**

Your signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Witness 1: \_\_\_\_\_

Witness 2: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**IF THE MATTER WAS STILL NOT RESOLVED PLEASE COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING:**

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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:

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

Your next step is to ask the church leadership to become involved. Because an accusation against a church leader is such a serious matter there is a higher standard for proceeding. You will need to have at least two other credible people with the same concern of their own (other than those you asked to witness the above proceedings) to take the next step.

In keeping with the Biblical mandate of 1 Timothy 5:18 which states:

*"Do not entertain an accusation against an elder unless it is brought by two or three witnesses".*

If your concern is with an elder please submit your forms to your pastor. If your concern is with the pastor himself you should submit your forms to your Elder Board chair. If necessary the Western Canadian District Congregational Effectiveness Coach may become involved.

Please complete the following:

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

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

SIGNATURE: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_