



Resolving Offences and Issues

“... if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone...” (Matthew 18:15).

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It has often been said that a problem-free life is an illusion or a mirage! However, the secret to success, happiness and fulfilment in life is the ability to resolve offences speedily, before they become crippling issues of life.

“Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. 16 But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. 17 And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican” (Matthew 18:15-17).

Maintaining good relationships and forgiving offences are so vital that God commanded:

- 1) “Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; 24 Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift (Matthew 5:23-24);
- 2) “But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” (Matthew 6:15);
- 3) “So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses” (Matthew 18:35).

The principles of resolving offences and issues advocated by Jesus in this teaching, are predicated on the willingness to:

- 1) See things from God’s perspectives and live in alignment to His word;
- 2) Rationally evaluate the situation;
- 3) Value and prioritise good relationships over personal preferences;
- 4) Seek solution, not creating obstacles;

“But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established” (Matthew 18:16).

- 5) Take initiative to begin at a personal level, with the aim of restoring the broken relation and regaining your “brother”;
- 6) Communicate with the other party. Keep the communication lines open. The objective of the communication is not to blame, find fault nor embarrass, but to find constructive ways to resolve issues;
- 7) Listen to the other person, weigh up the facts, and consider if there are grounds for you to change your mind / viewpoints without compromising the scriptures;
- 8) Following God’s pathway - first individual talk, followed by taking an impartial friend before escalating to the church. In all these aim at issue resolution not because you want ‘supporters’ for your viewpoints or to publicly disgrace the other person;
- 9) The above require collaboration and co-operation in an atmosphere of respect, love, humility, sobriety and self-restraint;
- 10) Draw on and depend upon the grace of God.

Christ is coming back soon. It is time for us to check up our spiritual standing and be really very sure that we have satisfied God’s condition for entering the kingdom of heaven. With God, there are not “buts” or “ifs” when it comes to satisfying the condition for eternal life. In Acts 24:6, Paul declared “And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void to offence toward God, and toward men”. This is the standard that God expects of all Christians in their conduct and relationships; and it takes the exercise of our faith to achieve it.