

Why Do Churches Need Mediation?

Churches are made up of people and people are destined to have conflict in this world. Jesus said, “. . . in this world you shall have tribulation” (John 16:33.) Therefore, the issue is not whether conflict exists in church, but how is it being handled? In most cases, conflict is either ignored or escalates. If it escalates it usually leads to divorce, broken relationships or a lawsuit. None of these alternatives are biblical and all fail to achieve reconciliation which should be the hallmark of a believer’s life. Mediation allows people to openly discuss the issues in a peaceful and supportive environment and the results of the mediation are confidential.

Example of Paul and Barnabus

A quick story from the New Testament:

“Some time later Paul said to Barnabus, ‘Let us go back and visit the brothers in all the towns where we preached the word of the Lord and see how they are doing.’ Barnabus wanted to take John, also called Mark, with them, but Paul did not think it wise to take him, because he had deserted him in Pamphylia and had not continued with them in the work. They had such a sharp disagreement that they parted company, Barnabus took Mark and sailed for Cyprus.”

(Acts 15:36-40.)

Paul and Barnabus were two of the greatest figures in the early church. Paul is responsible for the majority of writings of the New Testament and next to Jesus was the ultimate peacemaker. (For example, Paul wrote, “If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.” Romans 12:18) Barnabus’ very name means “son of encouragement”! Yet, so heated was their disagreement that Paul and Barnabus broke up their dynamic missionary work and went in different directions. However, the subject of their dispute, a young convert named John Mark whose faithfulness was in question, was later reconciled to Paul and described as one who is “helpful to me in my ministry” (Paul writing in 2 *Timothy* 4:11). If Paul had not been open to reconciliation, or if John Mark held a grudge, Paul would have lost a useful companion and the world may have lost the gospel of Mark. This is one example of the importance of reconciliation in the Bible.

Reconciliation is Biblical

Apostle Paul described his ministry as a ministry of reconciliation. (2 Corinthians 5:18.) Believers who fail to reconcile their disputes quickly find themselves outside of God’s will. Believers are told they must *first be reconciled to your brother*, then you may bring your gift (or prayer) to God. (*Matthew*, Chapter 5,

Verses 23-24.) The implication is that the gift (or prayer) will not be received until there is reconciliation with an offended brother or sister. This is a high price to pay for pride.

Also, in the Parable of the Unforgiving Debtor, Jesus tells of a man who was forgiven a very great debt and later fails to forgive a very small debt owed to him. When the man was confronted by his master, the master said, "I cancelled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you? *In anger his master turned him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed.*" (*Matthew 18:32-34.*) After this Parable is a warning: "This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart." (*Matthew 18:35.*) This story reveals the harsh consequences of unforgiveness.

Jesus Prayed for Reconciliation

Jesus' dying on the Cross for the sins of mankind was the ultimate act of reconciliation bringing man back into fellowship with God. Before Jesus went to the Cross, he prayed for all mankind to be reconciled to one another, as follows:

"My prayer is not for them [the apostles] alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, *that all of them may be one*, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me."
(***John 17:20-21.***)

Unresolved conflict causes division, damages relationships, hardens peoples' hearts toward one another, thus making working together to accomplish a common goal impossible. The only way for the Great Commission in *Matthew 28* to be accomplished is for all believers to work together, which means they must work out their differences.

Warning Against Lawsuits

In 1 Corinthians 6, the Apostle Paul gives a strong warning against resorting to lawsuits to resolve disputes between believers. Paul said:

"Now therefore, it is already an utter failure for you that you go to law against one another. Why do you not rather accept wrong? Why do you not rather let yourselves be cheated? But you do wrong, and defraud, and that your brothers."
(***1 Corinthians 6:7-8.***)

This is one of the clearest guidelines in the Bible about how believers are to treat one another. One reason this warning exists is due to the incredible riches that are available through swift and effective conflict resolution. When people meet together to resolve a common problem they are suddenly empowered to make a change that can completely transform their relationship and world around them. Without a doubt, the parties in a dispute are the most knowledgeable and motivated about finding a solution to the problem. Therefore, solutions that are developed by the parties themselves are always superior to those imposed by a Court or third party.

Reconciliation is Wise

James 3:17 describes wisdom that comes from heaven as “first of all pure, then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, willing to yield to others and sincere.” Therefore, the decision to pursue peace is a decision to follow “wisdom from heaven.” The very next verse in James 3:18 reads as follows: “Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness.” Further, Matthew 5:9 reads as follows: “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called the sons of God.” Thus, anyone who wants to be wise and blessed will seek peace and not continue in conflict.

A Call to Unity

I hope these Scriptures are encouraging and motivate you to seek out resolution of conflicts instead of run from them. One final Scripture verse is a favorite: “How good and pleasant it is when brothers [and sisters] dwell together in UNITY.” (*Psalms* 133:1.) There is so much to be gained by resolving your conflict, I would consider it a privilege and blessing to assist in any way possible.

For more information or to schedule mediation, please feel free to [Contact Us](#).