

5 Ways to Resolve Offense

Matthew 18:15 spells out the clearest call in all of Scripture for us to walk in reconciliation: “If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother” (NKJV). When it’s time to clear up a conflict, following the rules in this verse will keep us from falling.

1. The Law of Sensitivity. Jesus began by saying, “If your brother sins against you.” This is a call to assess if we’ve truly been sinned against or are just being oversensitive. Sin means someone has violated Scripture and offended God. The fact that we don’t approve of someone’s actions doesn’t mean he’s actually sinned. Let’s allow the Word to set our sensitivity levels (see Ps. 119:165).

2. The Law of Honesty. Jesus said, “Go and tell him his fault” because we need to be honest with ourselves and with those who have offended us. It is both dishonest and dangerous to pretend that we are not offended. If a valid issue has come up, we should approach our offender (see Prov. 27:5). Ignoring him only creates a hothouse of pent-up emotions in which bitterness and unforgiveness can germinate.

3. The Law of Privacy. Jesus said the problem is to be solved “between you and him alone.” We need to keep others out of it. Gossip and talebearing may masquerade as something more refined, such as “sharing” or a prayer request, but they’re both still sinful (see 2 Cor. 12:20). Violating the law of privacy may be a greater sin than the original offense because it multiplies the problem throughout the local body of believers and opens the door to division.

4. The Law of Responsibility. The words “If he hears you” raise the issue of our responsibility to listen when we’re confronted. Everyone’s healing depends on it. Ideally,

forgiveness will be extended between the parties and the relationship will be saved. If your words are ignored, take the situation to God in prayer and try another approach. But don't forget: We are responsible to be active listeners in our relationships (see Matt. 5:23-25).

5. The Law of Victory. Jesus defined a successful resolution with the words, "You have gained your brother." The goal of honest confrontation is to regain the relationship, not further damage it. Aim for win-win outcomes so that no one walks away from the encounter shamed or rejected. Victory is not putting someone in his place. It's winning him back as a brother by speaking the truth in love (see Eph. 4:15).

David Cannistraci *is the senior pastor of GateWay City Church in San Jose, California, and a frequent contributor to Charisma magazine. He travels as a speaker and has written Apostles and the Emerging Apostolic Movement and God's Vision for Your Church (both by Regal). For more information, visit .*