

# Deal With It!

**Y**ou can't worship this Sunday. Make other plans. You're not ready, and God doesn't want to hear it. Why, you ask? Because you've got an issue with someone on your team and you haven't resolved it yet. And until you do, God isn't really interested in having you on the platform.

Conflict resolution within ministry is one of the areas where we, all too often, see just how human we are. Most tend to avoid conflict of any type and let issues fester too long. Worse yet, many choose to talk to their friends about the issue, but not to the person it directly involves.

There are also two types of conflict issues that must be distinguished. I try and teach my staff and volunteers (not always successfully!) about how to recognize certain forms of conflict and how to deal with them biblically. One form is "personal conflict," where someone does something that directly offends you—maybe an unkind word, or an act of disrespect. The other I'll call "protocol conflict." This is when something occurs that may not be a direct affront to you personally—perhaps a church employee appears to be swiping office supplies or a volunteer band member is breaking some established rule. In this instance, it may be more appropriate to go to a leader first (not a buddy so you can have your indignation confirmed, but a leader who has authority over the situation). After all, there may be an agreement between them you don't know about.

## TYPE A

"Personal conflict" is the one we usually handle badly, often by talking to others first (which is, quite simply, "gossiping"). Matthew 5 and Matthew 18 are very clear directives on how we are meant to handle personal conflict, but they are often swept under the carpet.

Matthew 5 offers pretty clear language that God wants you to deal with personal conflict *now*, before you come to the altar in worship.

"But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment... Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift... Settle matters quickly with your adversary... (22-25 NIV)."



By Tony Guerrero

## GUIDELINES

What are you waiting for? Instructions on how to do it? Here you go.

In Matthew 18:15-17, we see clearly that when someone offends us, we are to first go to them directly to give them a chance to fix it, apologize or even defend themselves. If that doesn't solve it (and it usually does!) then bring a second or third person as a witness. If that still doesn't solve it, then a meeting with church leaders may be in order. And if that doesn't work, the Scripture says to treat them as a pagan or tax collector! Yikes! A tax collector?!? Harsh.

Even in areas that don't seem like real conflict, these principles apply. When I teach on leading a band, I inevitably get questions related to personnel issues: "I have a guitar player who plays too many notes." "My drummer is always too loud." "How can I get my bass player to show up on time?" My first response is always, "Have you spoken to them about it?" I am still amazed at how often the answer is "no."

## UNDER THE SURFACE

Trying to "fix" someone by osmosis is never the answer. First, as the leader, you need to be setting the examples you wish for your team to follow, and secondly, you need to be having good, honest, sometimes difficult face-to-face conversations with them. Many times issues like the examples above (lateness, overplaying, showing off, jockeying for the spotlight) are *spiritual* issues—areas where spiritual discipline is required—and Matthew 18 does apply. Go to them; give them a chance to change. If they don't go to them again with another leader, give them a second chance. If it goes further and further with no resolve, you simply may have to remove someone from your team. (I never said it was easy!)

How we long for peace in our ministries. Yet, broken, sinful people are always going to bring their sin and brokenness to the table, so we will always have conflict to deal with. Thankfully, God provides solutions. But like many spiritual issues, it is up to us to utilize His solutions and handle the problem. Do it now. Before your next visit to the altar.

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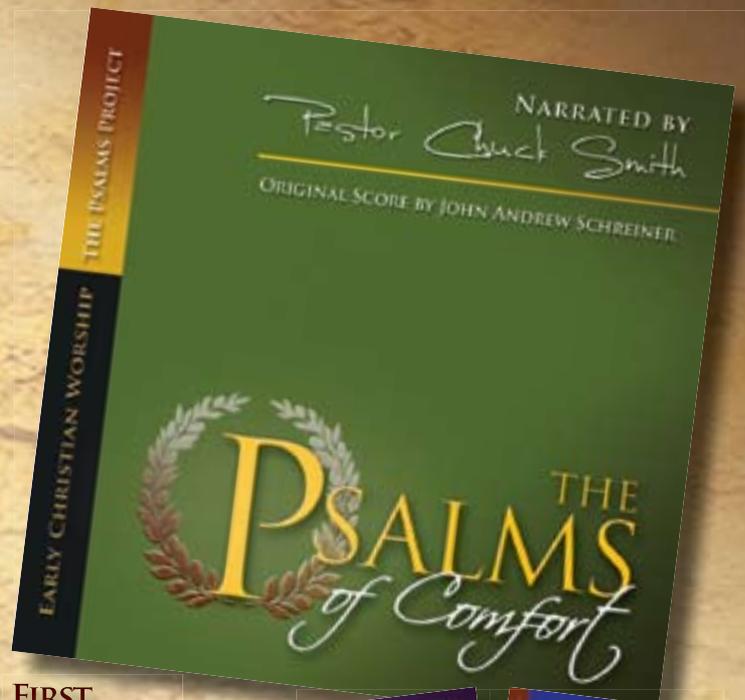
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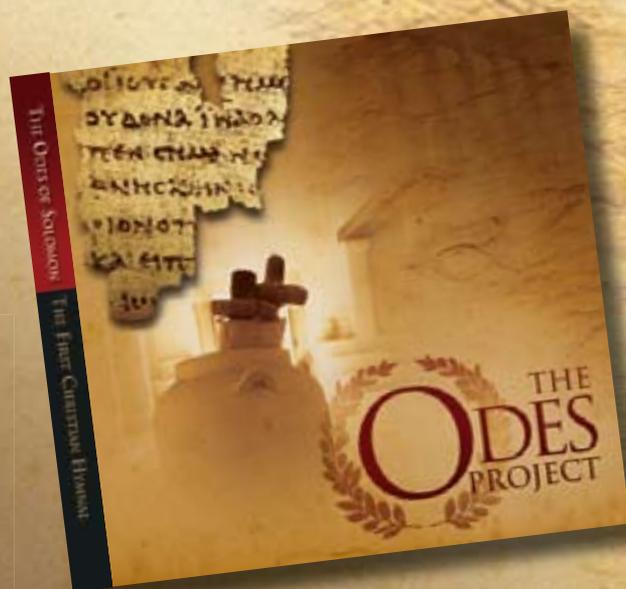


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