



Finding Resolution

Heritage Christian School

A guide to resolving conflicts and concerns and maintaining relational integrity within our school.

Understanding the Task At Hand

Resolving conflicts, differences and concerns has proven to be one of the most difficult tasks for Christians through-out the centuries. This is evident by the multitude of denominations and church splits. Nevertheless, it is critical that we become skilled in how we address issues with one another.

The Scripture teaches with respect to relationships and communication:

"I don't want anyone strolling off, down some path that goes nowhere. And mark that you do this with humility and discipline - not in fits and starts, but steadily, pouring yourselves out for each other in acts of love, alert at noticing differences and quick at mending fences. You were all called to travel on the same road and in the same direction, so stay together, both outwardly and inwardly. You have one Master, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who rules over all, works through all, and is present in all. Everything you are and think and do is permeated with Oneness. " (Eph. 4:3-7 The Message)

In order to maintain this level of relational integrity we must follow the guidelines outlined in Matt. 18 (see below).

Here at Heritage Christian School we have five different people groups involved in the process of providing education:

- Children
- Parents
- Teachers
- Administrators
- School Committee & Church Leadership

Each of these people groups has a different perspective and often different goals for the school. Crossing these people groups can often seem intimidating and formidable. It takes courage and skill to effectively communicate concerns and resolve conflict. If we will always work hard to value the process then we will maintain a level of relational integrity that will promote the love of Christ in all we do.



Student to Student

When two students cannot resolve a conflict that is school related or school based (i.e. disagreement on the playground, argument or name calling on the mezzanine) then it is their responsibility to go to their teacher or supervising authority to find resolution.

- Certainly, students have the freedom to involve their parent but the parent must do all they can to respect the teacher's role in the process of resolution.
- Parents should avoid directly addressing the other student.



- As difficult as it may seem, the parent will find the best results when they approach the situation as the role of the second person (see the Matt. 18 Principle). You are there to provide objectivity. If a parent cannot maintain that level of objectivity they should allow the school authority to work through the solution.
 - If resolution cannot be found then it needs to go to the principal.
 - When students have serious conflicts outside the school then the parents need to do all they can to resolve it and may need to bring the school principal into the solution.

Student to Teacher or Teacher to Student

When a student or teacher cannot resolve a conflict then it is the student's or teacher's role to involve the parents in the resolution of the conflict.

- Keep in mind that the teacher needs to establish their role as a position of authority in the life of the student. It is important to understand that the teacher has that authority because the parent has placed their child under that authority. Parents need to uphold the teacher's authority and be careful how they question that authority, particularly in the presence of their child.
- If the conflict cannot be resolved at that level then either the teacher or the parent should involve the principal.
- The teacher may need to involve the principal independent of the parents in which case the parent may be contacted by the principal rather than the teacher.

Parent to Teacher or Teacher to Parent

When a conflict cannot be resolved between the parent and the teacher either the parent or the teacher should bring the issue to the school principal.

- Keep in mind the unique relationship that the principal has to both the parent and the teacher. They supervise the teacher (employer to employee) but their role in the life of the family is one of authority in the life of the child conferred by the parents. As in the previous situation his/her role of authority must be treated carefully, particularly in the lives of the students.

Parent to Administration or Administration to Parent

When a conflict cannot be resolved by a parent to administration or vice-a-versa then the school committee can be appealed to, first in writing then in person.

- The committee's role is to help serve as an objective group of decision makers. Their decisions are binding upon administration.
- They work as a delegated arm to the society's board.



Conflicts Outside of These Parameters

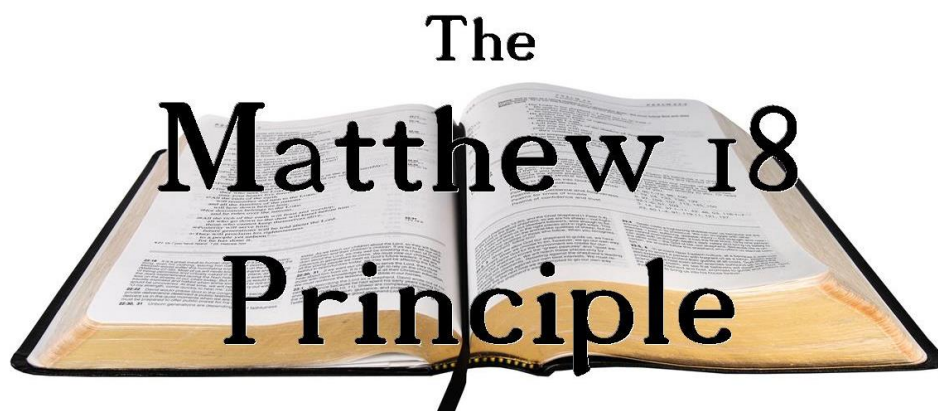
Occasionally any one of the five people groups will have concerns on a broader scope concerning the school:

- Always try to address the issues to the level of authority at which they can be resolved.
- Work hard to communicate factually - ask the necessary questions to insure that the facts are straight.
- If you are not satisfied that one level of authority has brought the situation to resolution then you have the freedom to take it to the next level.

Broader issues regarding policy and school procedures need to be addressed to the School Committee and the Society Board.

Personal issues with those in authority need to be addressed first with them and then with their immediate supervisor.

Always try to take into consideration the Matthew 18 Principles no matter how big or small the issue.



"And if your brother sins, go and reprove him in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother. But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every fact may be confirmed. And if he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax-gatherer."

Though the context here deals directly with issues of "sin" the principles remain the same for dealing with issues that may not be considered "sin," such as differences of opinion, conflicts or ways of handling situations, etc.

Steps to Conflict Resolution:

1. When you are wronged by someone else then it is your responsibility to go directly to that person and speak to them personally. Things to remember:
 - a. Be careful to try and hear their side of the story. Many times the situation is only a misunderstanding. There are always two sides to every conflict.
 - b. As much as possible deal with facts and not feelings. Try to set aside your own hurt enough to inquire and communicate about the actual facts.

2. After you have communicated one-on-one with the individual whom your concern is with and you are not satisfied that they "listened" (this implies hearing, agreeing and taking steps to resolve the matter) then we are to bring someone else into the situation.

- a. The purpose of the other person is to help with objectivity not to gang up on the one whom we are trying to address.
- b. Let the other person mediate in the conversation – be willing to change your own position based upon their input.
- c. Often it is helpful to bring someone in when you are still emotionally troubled over the issue in order to help you both communicate and listen to the other side.

3. If the individual in question still does not "listen" to you and the other person then you must take it to the next level of authority. In the Matthew 18 example the issue is directly related to spiritual issues; therefore, the appropriate authority is the Church Leadership. Generally the next level of authority will be able to help resolve the issue in conflict.

- a. If satisfaction is not found with the next level of authority then the issue needs to go up the ladder to the next level of authority.
- b. All the principles in the above point #2 apply here as well. Often the next level of authority may disagree or have a different perspective on the issue under examination.
- c. If the authorities responsible disagree or don't see the issue in the same light as you then you need to reassess the issue or reassess your relationship with the organization ("church" in the Matt. 18 context) or authority structure.



Throughout the entire process the underlying motives must be to seek the truth and to bring resolution, forgiveness and restitution. This will never be achieved unless Christ's love governs your heart and intentions.