

CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN THE LOCAL CHURCH: ATTITUDE CHECKLIST AND FOOD FOR THOUGHT

1. *Godly attitudes are the key to resolving conflict in a local church:* “And so, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. And beyond all these things *put on* love, which is the perfect bond of unity” (Col 3:12–14). If we fail to exercise these godly attitudes in times of conflict, churches are doomed to resolve their problems in the same way the world does—hatchet jobs that hurt feelings, bruise egos, increase tensions, and cause church splits. This is the way corporations operate, not churches. The problem is we seldom look for and apply relevant Scriptures when problems arise. Instead, we do what comes natural and resort to human viewpoint solutions. The way of the Word is much harder, but infinitely better than the way of the world.
2. *Our most valuable assets in resolving church conflict are the fruit of the Spirit:* “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law” (Gal 5:22–23).
3. *Be as gentle as a nursing mother with members of a local church:* “But we proved to be gentle among you, as a nursing *mother* tenderly cares for her own children. Having thus a fond affection for you, we were well-pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives, because you had become very dear to us” (1 Thess 2:7–8). “By forbearance a ruler may be persuaded, And a soft tongue breaks the bone” (Prov 25:15).
4. *Do everything you can to keep the peace:* “I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, entreat you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing forbearance to one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph 4:1–3). “Live in peace with one another” (1 Thess 5:13b). “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God” (Matt 5:9). “If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men” (Rom 12:18). “So then let us pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another” (Rom 14:19).
5. *Sometimes it’s necessary to overlook sins committed against you:* “A man’s discretion makes him slow to anger, And it is his glory to overlook a transgression” (Prov 19:11). Overlooking sin requires an attitude of grace, is beautiful to behold, and brings you glory in the eyes of others.
6. *It’s better to be wronged and defrauded than to insist on justice or getting your own way:* “Actually, then, it is already a defeat for you, that you have lawsuits with one another. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be defrauded?” (1 Cor 6:7).
7. *Put others first:* “Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself; do not *merely* look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others” (Phil 2:3–4).
8. *The prime directive for church management is:* “But let all things be done properly and in an orderly manner” (1 Cor 14:40).