

Jacob's Well



Lesson Title: Conflict—Call in the Body



Key Concept: Conflict is inevitable, but as disciples of Jesus we are called to handle it differently. When two people can't resolve their conflict, it's time to turn to the body for help and submit to the body's decision.



Scriptures:

¹⁶But if you are unsuccessful, take one or two others with you and go back again, so that everything you say may be confirmed by two or three witnesses. ¹⁷If the person still refuses to listen, take your case to the church.
(Matthew 18:16–17 *New Living Translation*)

And further, submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.
(Ephesians 5:21 *New Living Translation*)

Context Scriptures: Matthew 18:15–20; 20:26



Lesson Thoughts:

What do we do when conflict doesn't work? Not everyone handles conflict in a healthy manner. But as Christians, we're told to engage in conflict with each other directly and honestly. So what happens when we are honest and vulnerable, bringing our conflict to the other person involved, and they reject us?

The world's responses to this problem are mostly dysfunctional. If two people can't resolve their issues, they may ignore it, become antagonistic, or choose from a myriad of other unhealthy behaviors. To borrow a quote from Jesus, however, "among you it will be different" (Matthew 20:26). When two Christians can't come to a resolution, there is still more to do, more steps to take.

The core of why we take the next steps comes down to our identity. The world works only for itself, each person doing what is good for them. The church,

Jacob's Well

however, works for the good of all. This means that when two people can't resolve their issues, it's time to call in the body.

First, one or two people should be brought in. Their role is to help bring resolution and restoration. After all, sometimes an outside perspective is all that's needed to find the middle ground in an argument. If this still doesn't work, then it's time to turn to the church as a whole. This may be a specific group, or it may be everyone in the congregation, depending on what's appropriate for the situation. Regardless of the details, the body is meant to step in and help.

When we're involved in conflict, following this process can be challenging, because it's not all about us. The body may not make a decision we like. It may say we're wrong or out of line. And it's hard to accept that the decision is not in our control anymore. But this is Jesus' model.

Among us, it must be different than in the world. The world's message is to never give up your power, even to those who would help. In contrast, the church must practice submission. It's not all about us and what we want. If we're going to serve Jesus as he instructed, we have to recognize this fact. The body is meant to help, and it will help, but for the body to do its job, we have to accept it. When we can't resolve our conflict, we have to call in the body, even if we don't like the result.

**Discussion Questions:**

- 1) How can we decide which "one or two" people to involve in our conflict?
- 2) When consulting the larger body, how do we decide which group makes sense to bring our issues to?
- 3) Why do you think we often don't follow these two steps of Jesus' conflict resolution plan?
- 4) How does submission to the body benefit you?
- 5) What are other ways our conflict should be different from the world's?

Next Lesson: Treat Them Like a Pagan

Jacob's Well

Notes and Reflections

- 1) Consider how we can build up our ability to submit. What attitudes can we cultivate that will help us act in a way that's not all about us?

- 2) Why do you think Jesus gave us this set of instructions about conflict? Why not just let us figure it out on our own?

Jacob's Well

Notes and Reflections, cont.