

SCRIPTURAL PROBLEM SOLVING

We are to be in the world, but not of the world (II Corinthians 10:3). The school is dedicated to proclaiming “kingdom values” and to witnessing to them in its daily life. This means that the school community should have a different spirit from that of the secular world. This spirit is one of love and respect between brothers and sisters in Christ. It should permit God-honoring procedures for working through the inevitable differences and misunderstandings that come up in any community.

Therefore, the ECA Board, Administration and faculty are committed to honoring and respecting students and families when they bring sincere and well-founded suggestions and differences of opinions. Parents should, likewise, honor and respect the decisions and authority of the school.

Harmony built on the basis of love and respect can be arrived at by following those principles and steps given by our Lord Jesus as recorded in Matthew 18:15-19. We expect all to implement these principles as we deal one with another.

Principle One: Keep the matter confidential. The very pattern of sharing the problem only with those directly involved establishes the principle of confidentiality. The Bible has much to say about those who gossip or malign others with their words. *“With his mouth the godless destroys his neighbor, but through knowledge the righteous escape.” Proverbs 11:9*

Principle Two: Keep the circle small. *“If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you.”* The first, and often the only, step needed in solving a person-to-person problem is for one of the two people involved to initiate face-to-face dialogue. Most problems are solved at the two-person level.

Principle Three: Be straightforward. Restoration and improvement can only come when the issues are lovingly, yet clearly, presented. *“Wounds from a friend can be trusted. . .” Proverbs 27:6*

Principle Four: Be forgiving. *“If he listens to you, you have won your brother over.”* This implies that once the matter is resolved we should wholeheartedly forgive and restore the person whose fault has offended us.

Process Levels

Level One: Most school problems are resolved at the two-person level. Often what seems to be a disagreement is simply a misunderstanding. This is the level in which the people involved initiate a face-to-face dialogue. Forgiveness and restoration is the normal, happy conclusion. If the individual will not “hear” you or disagrees with your version of the problem, it will be necessary to progress to level two.

Level Two: The individuals involved should agree to share the matter with the principal. At this stage, the counsel of Jesus would be *“...take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.”* Both individuals should share their version of the issue with the school’s administration. Each person should come to the meeting in a spirit of prayer and humility, willing to submit to the Lord’s will in the matter and also willing to submit to reproof and correction if needed. An open and honest discussion among people who are sensitive to godly principles will most often reach an amiable solution.

Level Three: If the problem is still unresolved, the next step is to contact the Chairman of the Board. This level will be used in only the most serious situation. If the problem is complex, the Executive Committee of the Board may be involved. The goals of this high-level meeting are: (1) understanding the problem clearly in the context of school policy and procedures; (2) solving the problem; (3) reproof and correction if necessary; and, (4) forgiveness and wholehearted restoration of those who have made amends.

In summary, the Matthew 18 principle requires that the problem first be shared only with the people involved. If unresolved at the two-person level, the matter is prayerfully and in an orderly fashion moved upward in the school organizational structure. This is the Lord’s way of solving people-to-people problems.

*Based on *The Matthew 18 Principles for Solving School Problems* by Dr. Paul A. Kienel.