

## **The Power of Invitation**

I am confused over two positions I often hear among believers. People tell me they want to restore broken relationships, but then they add, “Not now.” Excuses range from: I am not ready, they are not ready, it is not the right time, coming together will only make things worse, conflict will take care of itself, or time heals all wounds.

Here’s another excuse. I received an email from a pastor who experienced conflict with a few church elders. The elders eventually left the church. The pastor invited them to come together to discuss the conflict. The elders stated they had “prayerfully considered the suggestion for further discussion and collectively agreed that the cause and testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ in the community would be impacted in a negative manner by any more discussion.” Instead, the ex-elders started another church. Actually, reconciliation would have had the bigger impact in the community.

Frankly, there is a huge disconnect in what we say we believe and what we do. This is particularly true in our approach to resolving conflict. We know what the Scriptures teach: “go” to the other party whether we are the offender or the offended (Matthew 5:23, 24; 18:15-20); reconciliation of relationships is a prerequisite to worship (Matthew 5:23, 24); deal with today’s anger today (Ephesians 4:26); live in peace (Ephesians 4:3); and seek agreement (I Corinthians. 1:10). We know Jesus is especially with us during the process of reconciling relationships (Matthew 18:20). We even know that peacemakers in God’s Kingdom are blessed and identified with the Most High God of Peace (Matthew 5:9). There is no logic to this disconnect between what we know to be true and how we actually live.

Dr. Jerry Sheveland, President of the Baptist General Conference, makes an important point regarding the best time to resolve conflict. He simply asks, “Why wait for a harder moment than this one to begin a process of honesty and grace . . . ?”

Now is the time for reconciliation. Don’t wait for a more difficult opportunity. There is no hope of reconciliation until someone invites the other party into a process of restoring the relationship. Someone has to do the work of invitation. Why not now?