

1. Legal action

Principle –Legal action amongst Christians is a sign of failure, and even when dealing with the world, it is to be a last resort.

Key Scripture:

1 Corinthians 6: 1-8 If any of you has a dispute with another, dare he take it before the ungodly for judgment instead of before the saints? Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if you are to judge the world, are you not competent to judge trivial cases? Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more the things of this life! Therefore, if you have **disputes** about such matters, appoint as judges even men of little account in the church! I say this to shame you. Is it possible that there is nobody among you wise enough to judge a dispute between believers? But instead, one brother goes to law against another--and this in front of unbelievers! The very fact that you have lawsuits among you means you have been completely defeated already. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be cheated? ⁸ Instead, you yourselves cheat and do wrong, and you do this to your brothers.

Matthew 5:25 Settle matters quickly **with** your **adversary who is taking** you **to court**. Do it while you are still with him on the way, or he may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison.

Matthew 5:40-41 And if someone wants **to sue** you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles.

Comment

Scripture acknowledges that because of the flesh and living in a fallen world, Christians may become involved in disputes. If these are with other Christians then forgiveness and reconciliation should be possible without ever involving non-Christians – and especially the courts. Even if wrongly accused, we are challenged to leave it in God's hands and not seek revenge or other entitlement. Unity among believers and our testimony to the unsaved is more important than our own sense of indignation. Lawsuits amongst Christians is a sign of failure! If someone is taking us to court, we should be attempting to reconcile before ever arriving there.

Application in daily life??

- ♦ How we settle differences and disputes says much more about the state of our heart than the validity of the arguments (ie whether we are right or wrong).
- ♦ I believe there are situations where Christians may need to take legal action against a fellow believer to confront another with the reality of their sin (part of handing them over to the world once they have refused the discipline attempts of the Church - Matt 18:17). Similarly, responding to the sinful action of someone in the world may be for their long-term benefit and possibly the protection of others.
- ♦ Christians taking other Christians to court is a sign of failure - by one or both sides.
- ♦ Suing is often said to be about principle rather than revenge or money, but rarely do we see people forego the money once the principle is upheld. Suing (for the Christian) is generally about taking matters into our own hands rather than trusting God for our needs (or revenge). Whether we have a case or not, it is unlikely that Christ will be glorified by such action.
- ♦ If for some reason we are being taken to court, there should be a testimony on or part for trying to settle the issues before ever reaching court.

Our example?? Do our lives exemplify a trust in God that emphasises forgiveness and tolerance rather than a focus on revenge and self-defence?