



Life Impact Ministries

PURSUING PEACE TOGETHER

An Introduction to Alternative Dispute Resolution

By Paul Cornwell

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RE: Pursuing Peace Together as Alternative Dispute Resolution

Many Christians find themselves in a quandary when faced with a dispute that has been irresolvable to date. What do they do? Go to court? One client exclaimed, "But I know I Corinthians 6:1-8 says no, don't do that". What do I do? Are there any options that allows me to obey 1st Corinthians 6 and resolve the dispute?

Life Impact Ministries' answer is 'yes'! We call it 'pursuing peace together' through Christian conciliation.

The obvious question is, "How does pursuing peace together and going to court to have a dispute adjudicated relate?" Here's our input:

Christian conciliation, also known as alternative dispute resolution, involves providing mediation services that allow the parties themselves to discuss and agree how the outcome will be determined. In mediation, they have the opportunity to cooperate with each other to decide the matter themselves.

In both a civil courtroom and in arbitration, another conciliation service we provide, others decide the matter. In a civil court a judge rules. In arbitration, an arbiter determines the outcome as a binding agreement for both parties to the dispute. Both bring a solution.

Alternative Dispute Resolution provides a framework for solution. Many Christians are concerned about going to secular courts. I Corinthians 6:1-8 outlines how this level of dispute can be addressed outside the courts.

Let's fast forward just a bit. What about peace? Will peace result from a court's ruling or an arbitration panel's decision? Maybe. But in my experience and what I hear from my attorney friends, not often.

Please note, there are times when going to civil court or hiring an arbitrator to decide the matter is warranted. Both the courts and arbitration are needed! ADR services are



provided to attempt to resolve the matter before either is necessary. At times, ADR services are entered into instead of going to court or to resolve a current lawsuit. Thus, the term alternative.

Ken Sande, founder of Peacemaker Ministries and more recently Relational Wisdom 360 states in an article titled, ATTORNEYS AS PEACEMAKERS AND CONCILIATORS. (See the article at his website, www.rw360.org.)

Faith-based ADR can often deliver better results than litigation and has been consistently supported by federal and state courts.

He goes on to describe ADR:

Christian ADR, commonly referred to as "Christian conciliation," is a process for reconciling people and resolving disputes out of court in a way that is consistent with Christian values. The process is conciliatory rather than adversarial in nature—that is, it encourages honest communication and reasonable cooperation rather than unnecessary contention and advocacy.

Christian conciliation has been used to resolve a wide spectrum of conflicts, including: contract, business, employment, family and divorce, negligence, probate, intellectual property, sexual misconduct, church divisions and wrongful death.

Obviously, the types of situations that require a lawsuit or an arbitration are serious and complex. Many who consider these means to address the issues have tried many other things before going to court or hiring an arbitrator.

This does not mean the courts should never be used. Our legal system serves many important and essential needs. However, not only are legal processes costly and the courts burdened by overflowing dockets, but Christian mediators can assist effectively. Even when an agreement to resolve a legal issue is the goal, ADR is a good option to consider.

Allow me to outline how Life Impact Ministries employs Biblically based Christian conciliation services as an alternative to going to the courts. While each situation deserves an individually designed process, here is a brief outline of our ADR process.



ADR Services:

1. Consultation discussing the need for ADR services with each party.
2. Conflict Coaching detailing the issues to be resolved and applying Biblical truths in preparation for mediation.
3. Mediation involving each of the parties to the issues.
4. Agreement development, reviewed by the parties and their attorneys, as desired and final approval and signing the agreement.
5. Submitting the signed Agreement to appropriate agencies, as per agreement.

Please note that Life Impact's ADR services are designed to meet the unique needs of the parties, providing a genuine opportunity to achieve resolution. Therefore, our team will customize the ADR process as necessary.

So, let's talk! Life Impact's ADR services may be the path to pursuing peace and resolving your dispute together!

We provide a free consultation to discuss the disputes and help you gain information that, we hope, is helpful as you decide how to resolve the dispute. This conversation with each person is confidential and informational.

Afterward, we pray that how you proceed will lead to resolution of the disputed issues and to relational harmony! In John 14:27, Jesus said, "...My peace I give to you."

Paul Cornwell