

Lord, open our hearts and minds by the power of your Holy Spirit, that as the Scriptures are read and your Word proclaimed, we may hear with joy what you say to us today. Amen.

Just ponder this question for a minute...Who do you consider to be your brothers and sisters? What memories do you have with your siblings?

Today, Jesus speaks about brothers and sisters. I was raised in a family of 9 nine kids, 5 girls and 4 boys, they are my brothers and sisters. We had played together in the yard. Sat gathered around the table for meals, or doing homework. Vacations camping up in Erie, Pennsylvania. Watching for UFO's from the beach with a cloudless sky.

I served 9 years in th Navy on submarines with 150 men, whom I trusted my life with, they are my brothers. I served through two shipyard periods. Working, studying and qualifying. Attending training, performing drills, keeping everyone safe.

I attend this church, and see you every week. You are all my brothers and sisters in Christ. Coming together to pray to God and Jesus, enjoying the fellowship of being together. Not a checkmark for an hour sitting on hard pews for an hour.

Your brothers and sisters are more than blood. It is family, coming together for the same belief. It is people coming together. To help, listen and ask for help when needed. What Jesus is building on is relationships, relationships with God.

Just as any family, brothers and sisters will disagree on things. When this happens, we need to remember that Jesus does not want us arguing, but understanding and coming to a resolution that everyone can agree on.

In the gospel, Jesus states a four part method when brothers and sisters have a disagreement. Each step involving more brothers and sisters to help look objectively.

The first part is **Private** meeting.

Go to the person alone to discuss the fault privately, which prevents gossip and misunderstandings from starting. Being open about feelings and why they disagree. Looking for a way to resolve the issue.

The second part is **Bring witnesses**

If there's no resolution, bring in two or three others, so the matter is verified by objective witnesses. Each discussing their point and looking for common ground to resolve the issue. Jesus id referring to the evidence of two or three witnesses following the court proceedings in the book of Deuteronomy. Moses declares " on

the evidence of two or three witnesses the death sentence shall be executed. A person must not be put to death on the evidence of only one witness.

If that does not resolve it, **Involve the church**

If there's still no resolution, bring the issue before the broader church community

If all else does not resolve the dispute, the **Final step**

If they reject the community guidance, they are treated as an outsider or tax collector, signifying a break in fellowship while still leaving the door open for grace and repentance. This implies a status outside of Jesus believing community. These expulsions are meant to be temporary separation pending successful reintegration.

Jesus wanted harmony and love, not division. If you have a grudge against a person, that grudge will stay with you in heaven. But if you forgive and lose the grudge, it is lost in heaven. Lose the resentment and you are free from resentment. Love your brother and sister, that will provide unity.