

What to Expect in Mediation

To help prepare you for mediation, this form describes the mediation agenda, private meetings, role of advisors, ground rules, and preparation.

Agenda

The mediation agenda will include:

- **Greetings and ground rules** – The mediator(s) will introduce parties to the process and establish some ground rules based on the Scriptures to guide your discussions. After this, the mediator(s) will begin with an opening Scripture reading and prayer.
- **Opening statement** – Each party will be asked to give one or two sentences in answer to the question, “What are your hopes and expectations for our meeting together?”
- **Story telling** – Each party will have the opportunity to share his/her specific concerns about substantive issues as well as personal (relationship) issues.
- **Problem identification and clarification** – The mediators will facilitate the parties in identifying both substantive and personal issues that are causing the most concern. In many cases, the parties have not identified or discussed these with one another in ways that have resulted in resolution and reconciliation. Note that personal issues include such things as lack of trust, speculation on others’ motives, anger, bitterness, and the need for confession and forgiveness.
- **Explore solutions** – Once issues have been identified and clarified, the mediators will assist the parties in exploring solutions for each area.
- **Lead to agreement** – With God’s help, the parties will reach agreement on the various issues, which will be documented in a memorandum of understanding. The mediator(s) and parties will discuss how to address any remaining issues that were identified but not resolved in the mediation.

Private Meetings

During the mediation, any party or mediator may request a private meeting. Such a meeting may take place between the mediator(s) and a party, between a party and the party’s advisor, between parties, between mediators, etc. Some of the issues that should be discussed may be more appropriately dealt with privately between the two parties or in a smaller group.

Role of Advisors

A spouse, pastor, personal friend, or professional advisor (e.g., attorney, accountant) may be asked by a party to attend the mediation as an advisor to the party. Advisors must agree to abide by the same *Rules of Procedure*, agreements of confidentiality, and Ground Rules as parties. While advisors are encouraged to participate in proposing solutions, the advisors’ primary role is to advise the party that has asked them to attend. Parties need to speak for themselves. Advisors may ask the reconciler(s) to speak as needed from time to time during the mediation. Often the support and counsel of advisors prove to be very helpful to parties. If a party desires to have an advisor present, prior notice must be given to the reconciler(s) and the other party.

Ground Rules

Ground rules will be established to help provide a safe environment in which parties may communicate freely and openly. Based on Ephesians 4:29-5:2 and other Scriptures, ground rules include:

- Communicate respectfully (Ephesians 4:29, 32).
- Open and honest communication.
 - “Let your yes be yes” (Matthew 5:37).
 - “Speaking the truth in love” (Ephesians 4:15).
 - Being honest about one’s own contribution to the conflicts, including sin (1 John 1:9; James 5:16).
- No interruptions, except for the mediators (Matthew 7:12; James 1:19).
- When in a private meeting without all parties present, conversations will focus on those present in the private meeting. Any new accusations about someone not present will be brought back and shared so that the individual spoken about may respond (Matthew 18:15).
- No assuming motives (1 Corinthians 13:7), for only God truly knows another person’s heart (Psalm 44:21; 94:11).
- Anyone may request a break anytime (without being disruptive).
- Other ground rules? You will be given opportunity to suggest other ground rules if you believe it necessary.

Preparation

1. Remember to review the *Rules of Procedure for Christian Conciliation*.
2. Complete reading assignments and questions prepared by your Reconciler. These are intended to prepare you for the mediation.
3. Prepare your opening statement in writing. In one or two sentences, describe your hopes and expectations for this mediation.
4. Prepare to tell your story. Organize your thoughts and notes as you discussed with your Reconciler.
5. Pray for God’s guidance and blessing.

Thank you for your participation in this mediation. In the words of the Apostle Paul:

“May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ . . . May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope” (Romans 15:5-6, 13 ESV).