

If one party says, "I misunderstood you," but in fact, purposefully distorted the message for some impure reason, the problem is quite a different one. In such cases, the problem centers in dishonesty and ulterior motives and not mere misinterpretation of symbols. How can you tell whether it is one or the other? Most of the time it is impossible to know absolutely. Christian love dictates that the parties approach the problem thinking the best of one another and not the worst, (1 Cor. 13:4-7) until the facts prove otherwise.

The resolution of the conflict

1. Acknowledgement

When the stone altar was seen, the leaders of Israel acknowledged that there was a serious problem that needed immediate attention (verses 11, 12). The battle for the land had just ended and Joshua and the other leaders of the nation might have been inclined to ignore the threat posed by a pile of stones. It is possible that the pressure of a busy ministry could tempt Christian leaders today to ignore internal problems which threaten their staffs. If the problem is real it should be acknowledged and taken care of as soon as possible.

2. Containment

In this case, the act was public and threatened the whole nation and so the whole assembly is involved. There are situations similar to this today. Suppose a team member is accused of teaching false doctrine publically and everyone is aware of the situation.