

Matthew 18:15-20

Introduction: Today as we continue our series on “The Life of Jesus: Matthew Edition” we remain in Matthew 18 but are moving down a few verses to Matthew 18:15-17. In this section Jesus teaches his disciples what to do if someone in the church sins against you. Unfortunately this question is extremely relevant to the church today. I say unfortunately because when you read the letters of Paul to the churches he ministered to he continually emphasized unity within the body John wrote about how we as Christians should be known for our love for one another yet we continually see people face rejection, spiritual abuse, unwarranted judgment, and hypocrisy in our churches. It would be great to say that once you join a church there will be no bullying or conflict but unfortunately we still live in a broken world and we are still sinners in need of a savior.

So the sad reality is if you have not experienced conflict in a church you either are very lucky or you have not stayed around long enough. While we should admit that we are imperfect and conflicts will arise we also cannot throw our hands up in surrender but instead we should protect one another from the negative impact of our own imperfections by obediently following the words of Jesus and lovingly reflecting his heart. So as we look at Matthew 18:15-17 today I want us to keep two questions in mind. 1. What is the eternal principle that we should embrace and 2. How should we apply this principle in our own lives and as a church?

With those two questions in mind let's pray and then dive into the text.

Matthew 18:20

- Before the practical teaching we should know why this is so important
Read the passage
- There is something sacred about the community of believers coming together.
 - Baptism
 - Communion
 - Washed their feet
 - Shared a meal
- Created to have deep loving relationships with others and with God
 - Themes throughout the whole Bible
 - Adam and Eve
 - Sin destroys relationships
 - Cain and Abel
 - Noah and Ham's son Canaan
- Jesus takes reconciliation serious because he is present in a special way when we gather together and he has created us to love and serve God and love and serve our those around us.

Transition:

In order to apply the reconciliation that Jesus talks about in 15-17 it requires courage and discomfort so we need to keep the reason that its worth it in mind. Its worth it to pursue reconciliation because by showing love for each other we reflect the love God has shown us and we live as we were created in life in deep meaningful relationships with God and with each other. So with that in mind lets look at verse 15.

Matthew 18:15

Read the Word:

"If another member of the church sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If the member listens to you, you have regained that one."

Ask the Questions:

- What kind of conflict is Jesus talking about here?
 - One person at the church sins against you and its not obvious that they are aware of the damage it did.
 - Go to them alone
 - Point out the fault
 - Important
 - Gross public sin
 - Abuse
 - Keep it out of the courts
 - Jesus is talking about sins that someone commits against you
- So what is Jesus saying should be the first step
 - Go to them in private
 - Don't make a big scene
 - Don't gossip
 - Don't send an email to the pastor
 - Post about it on social media
 - Give the person the benefit of the doubt
 - We all do dumb stuff
 - They may not know how what they did hurt you
 - The goal is to make sure that light is brought to the situation
 - Give you an opportunity to be heard
 - Give them an opportunity to understand and repent
 - What reconciliation means to regain that loving bond between brothers and sisters in Christ
 - St Augustine
 - For our rebuke should be in love, not eager to wound, but anxious to amend. If you pass it by, you are become worse than he.
 - Did not just talk the talk the walked it as well
- Why do we usually skip this step?
 - This takes courage
 - Value the other person more then the comfort of just ignoring it.

Transition: But lets say it goes horrible and the person becomes defensive or denies any fault or worse justifies they actions instead of acknowledging the hurt. Then you have to move to step 2.

Matthew 18:16:

Read the Word:

“But if you are not listened to, take one or two others along with you, so that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses.”

Ask the question:

- What do you do if step one doesn't work?
 - Take one or two others with you
 - Duet 19:15
 - A single witness shall not suffice to convict a person of any crime or wrongdoing in connection with any offense that may be committed. Only on the evidence of two or three witnesses shall a charge be sustained.
 - Because: then you have a two or three others who are able to give an unbiased account of what's going on
 - So smart
 - You could always be wrong
 - Lack of communication
 - Avoid a he said she said situation
- Again the whole goal is not to build a case
 - Restore them
 - Come to a point were both people are heard
 - Repentance is made
 - Relationships are mended
- Notice that this whole process contains the conflict to those who are invested in reaching reconciliation
 - People who aren't invested are often give cheap advice

Transition: So hopefully the conflict is resolved and the relationship is resorted but if it isn't then there is two final step...

Matthew 18:17

Read the Word:

Paint the Picture:

- Sinned against you
- Went to them privately
 - let them know what they did
 - They don't repent
- So you bring one or two others
 - Still don't repent
- Two more steps
 - Bring it to the Church
 - finally treat them like a Gentile or a tax collector

Ask the Question:

- What does it mean to bring it to the church?
 - Depends on how the church is structured
 - Stand up=weird
 - Home church
 - Larger leadership board
 - The representative body of the church
 - End goal does not change
 - Final call for repentance and reconciliation
- If they still don't listen what does it mean to treat them like a Gentile or tax collector
- Why Gentile and tax collector
 - Gentile: did not know God and followed after other God's
 - Tax collector: people who were in service of Rome and often times had turned against their own community to serve the empire
 - John Chrysostom and Augustine
 - Jerome
 - Jesus
 - Centurion
 - Tax collectors: Matthew
 - You set aside the reconciliation and focus on pointing them back to Jesus
 - Not making a statement about their salvation
 - But they have gotten to the point where they need to be called back to Christ before they can be called to restoration
 - Practically
 - No leadership
 - Not serving
 - They don't need to focus on serving the community they need to get right with Jesus
 - Then and only then does reconciliation come back into view

Conclusion:

The eternal principle:

- I have been in situations
 - No sense of victory
 - People are precious
 - Leaving the 99
- What is the eternal principle
 - Value people like God values them
 - Make sacrifices to reach reconciliation
 - When all that fails set aside the reconciliation and just focus on point them towards Jesus
- People matter to God relationships matter to God and they need to matter to us.

How should we apply this to our lives and in our church?

- Be courageous
- Value others enough
- Got talk to them
 - Don't let it brew
 - Don't just withdraw or leave
 - Seek reconciliation
- If they don't listen
 - Bring one or two more
 - Leadership team
 - Ask me
- If that still doesn't work come talk to me or someone else on the leadership team and we will meet with you both.
- You are valued
- You have a right to be heard
- We have a desire and command to see healthy relationships
- We are called to be a community of people who love God and love others
 - We are willing to do the hard work to seek reconciliation

Reconciliation is not easy but its important to God because he love people and he has created us to have deep loving relationships.

The command is to value people enough to deal with conflict in a healthy way.
And the hope is to love God and reflect is love by our love for eachother

Lets pray