

Matthew 18:15-20: If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. ¹⁶ But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. ¹⁷ If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. ¹⁸ Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. ¹⁹ Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. ²⁰ For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.

Intro: This chapter is about how to relate to one another in the church – how to love one another in the church – how do deal with offenses and sins and temptations in the church – how to forgive one another in the church.

Verses 1-6: Jesus calls us to humility: we are small & utterly dependent on God, like little children are on parents.

Verses 7-9: Jesus calls us to turn away from sin in our own lives and to turn away from tempting others to sin.

Verses 10-14: Jesus calls us to love the straying/lost brother or sister like Jesus & our Father in heaven love them.

Vs. 15-20: Jesus shows us how to pursue the straying brother or sister in love & for their own good/glory of God

Last week, we saw that Jesus is the God-Man & Good Shepherd Who came to save that which was lost so that we will not despise one another, & we are motivated not to despise one another because our Father in heaven deeply loves us & will never let us perish. One of the ways the Father ensures that we will never perish, one of the ways the Father has ordained that straying & lost sheep are brought back into the fold, is through us pursuing them when they stray or fall into sin: we go after the lost sheep like Jesus & His Father go after them! Today, we see:

Jesus Christ, the God-Man, loves His people so much that He calls us to pursue the one caught in sin, just like He and His Father do, so that the lost or straying might be rescued, restored, & redeemed from the road to destruction.

In Matthew 18:15 We See The First Step To Take When A Fellow Christian Sins Against You

Matthew 18:15: If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother.

a. Christian brothers and sisters still sin against each other: V. 15: “If your brother sins against you”

1 John 1:8-2:1: If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰ If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us. ^{2:1} My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. GOSPEL

b. These steps Jesus commands us to take are done in order to gain our brother: V. 15: “you have gained your brother” We take these actions because we love our brothers and sisters in Christ! We want them to be gained! We want them to repent of sin and turn to Christ! We want them to grow in Christ! We want them to be more holy! We want them to know more joy and delight and satisfaction in Christ! We want them to grow in maturity in Christ!

This step is not so we can feel better about ourselves; So we can build up our hurt egos; This is not mainly because we’ve been hurt, & we have our rights, & we want to point out what is wrong in others! We don’t do this because we want revenge or we want to put them in their place! No! Those are all selfish reasons! No, we do this out of love for the glory of God & because we love this person who has sinned against us!

Proverbs 27:5: Better is open rebuke than hidden love.

c. We ought to be the kind of people who invite this kind of confrontational, tough love: We love Jesus most! We want to follow Him and obey Him, so we want other brothers and sisters to confront us when we are being disobedient to Jesus! (Man seeking church membership ask the pastor: “What if I commit adultery?”)

Proverbs 12:1: Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but he who hates reproof is stupid.

d. Jesus command here is for dealing with sin: This is not for every little thing your brother or sister does that gets on your nerves or irritates you. Now you may talk to them about that too! But sometimes we need to just get a thicker, Christian skin and overlook certain offenses or irritations in our lives. The Bible commends this:

- **Proverbs 19:11:** Good sense makes one slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook an offense.
- **1 Peter 4:8:** Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins.
- **Ephesians 4:2:** Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.
- **Colossians 3:13:** Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.

Ken Sande: In many situations, the best way to resolve a conflict is simply to overlook the personal offenses of others . . . When we overlook the wrongs of others, we are imitating God's extraordinary forgiveness toward us: "The LORD is compassionate & gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. He will not always accuse, nor will he harbor his anger forever; he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities" (Ps. 103:8-10). Since God does not deal harshly with us when we sin, we should be willing to treat others in a similar fashion. This does not mean that we must overlook all sins, but it does require that we ask God to help us discern & overlook minor wrongs. Overlooking offenses is appropriate under two conditions. First, the offense should not have created a wall between you & the other person or caused you to feel differently toward him or her for more than a short period of time. Second, the offense should not be causing serious harm to God's reputation, to others, or to the offender. Overlooking is not a *passive* process in which you simply remain silent for the moment but file away the offense for later use against someone. That is actually a form of denial that can easily lead to brooding over the offense & building up internal bitterness & resentment that will eventually explode in anger. Instead, overlooking is an *active* process that is inspired by God's mercy through the gospel. To truly overlook an offense means to deliberately decide not to talk about it, dwell on it, or let it grow into pent-up bitterness. If you cannot let go of an offense in this way, if it is too serious to overlook, or if it continues as part of a pattern in the other person's life, then you will need to go & talk to the other person about it in a loving & constructive manner.

e. If a brother sins against you, you go to him privately in a loving, helpful way: V. 15: If your brother sins against you, go & tell him his fault, between you & him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother.

1) Go to him privately: "between you and him alone" We should keep the confrontation private. Sometimes advice from godly counselors is needed, but in most cases no one else should know except the two of you.

Ken Sande (*The Peacemaker: A Biblical Guide To Resolving Personal Conflict*)

2) Bring hope through the Gospel: "go and tell him his fault"

When you go and speak to others about their sin, come with the hope of the Gospel! They can be forgiven! They can be changed! There is hope! Jesus is their Savior! He will help them!

Jesus was patient & merciful toward His sinning disciples: Author: They failed to understand. They received Jesus' strong rebuke in [Mark] 8:14-21, where [Jesus] openly suspects them of hard hearts, unperceiving eyes, & stopped ears. They lacked faith. They responded to Jesus' second & third death predictions with remarkable insensitivity: by competing with each other for glory & spiritual honors. Jesus' steady loyalty to his disciples in return will encourage [you]. In Mark 14, the disciples failed completely in the very self-denying obedience that Jesus made essential for eternal life . . . for in Mark 14 Peter denied Jesus, & the rest abandoned Jesus, all in order to save their own lives. Yet throughout this increasing failure by the disciples, Jesus remained faithful to them.

Ken Sande writes about Paul: The apostle Paul had a similar approach, even when he had to deal with serious sin. In his first letter to the Corinthians, he had to address divisions, immorality, lawsuits, food sacrificed to idols,

and the misuse of the Lord's Supper and spiritual gifts. But before addressing these terrible sins, Paul's gracious greeting held out hope for forgiveness and change by reminding the Corinthians of what God had already done for them through Christ: **1 Corinthians 1:2-9**: To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints . . . ³ Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ⁴ I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus, ⁵ that in every way you were enriched in him in all speech and all knowledge - ⁶ even as the testimony about Christ was confirmed among you - ⁷ so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ, ⁸ who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹ God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Ken Sande: "I don't think you deliberately set out to hurt Bill, but your words may have damaged his reputation. The good news is that Jesus died to deliver you, me, & Bill, all of us, from our sins. God has given us a warning & a wonderful promise: If we conceal our wrongs, he will continue to discipline us until we repent, but if we confess our sins, he will forgive us & restore our relationships. There is such hope because of what Jesus has done for us! If you ask for his help & deal with this the way he teaches, the whole incident can be completely wiped away."

3) Be quick to listen: James 1:19: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger

- Pay attention: **Proverbs 18:13**: He who answers before listening – that is his folly and his shame. Listen before you speak; don't plan what you'll say while others are speaking; keep eye contact; avoid distractions

- Clarify: "Are you saying?" "Tell me more about" "Can you give me an example?" "Is this what you are saying?"

- Agree: Find common ground; what do you agree on? Maybe you did contribute to the problem, so admit it

4) Breathe grace: Galatians 5:22-23: But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

1 Thessalonians 5:14: And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle,¹ encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all.

5) Make charitable judgments: We should always seek to believe the best about people.

Ken Sande: If people sense that you have jumped to conclusions about them and enjoy finding fault in them, they are likely to resist correction. If, on the other hand, they sense that you are trying to believe the best about them, they will be more inclined to listen to your concerns.

6) Speak the truth in love: Ephesians 4:15: Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ.

7) Talk from beside, not from above: We are all sinners; we all need the grace, mercy, & forgiveness of Jesus. We have most likely done the very same thing at some point before that the person we are confronting has done.

1 Corinthians 15:9-10: For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. ¹⁰ But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me.

8) Help others examine the desires of their hearts: James 4:1-3: What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? ² You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask. ³ You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.

Heart questions: What are you trusting in? What's your greatest desire? What do you fear? What must you have?

9) Choose the right time and place: Avoid times where they're tired/bad mood; choose a private, quiet place

10) Talk in person whenever possible: Facial and body language and tone are important.

11) Engage the heart rather than declare: People can get really defensive when you declare. Ask questions: why did you do this? What were you thinking? Do you realize what God's Word says about this?

Use stories: when Nathan confronted David about his sin – he used a story about a pet lamb.

Ken Sande: When I need to talk to my son about failing to do his chores, I will often use a military metaphor. He admires soldiers, so when I appeal to his ideals of military discipline and respect, he listens more carefully.

12) Communicate so clearly that you cannot be misunderstood: Ken Sande: It is not good enough to communicate so that you can be understood. You should communicate so clearly that you cannot be misunderstood

13) Plan your words: Proverbs 14:22: Do not those who plot evil go astray? But those who plan what is good find love and faithfulness.

14) Use "I" statements: Help the person you speak to about their sin understand how their actions harmed you.

Ken Sande: I was hurt when you made fun of me in front of other people, because it makes me feel stupid and foolish. As a result, I am getting reluctant to go places with you when others may be around.

Ken Sande: "I" statements can accomplish three things: 1) they tell the other person how his or her conduct is affecting you; 2) this kind of statement identifies what the other person has done that you are concerned about; 3) An "I" statement can explain why this issue is important to you and why you would like to discuss it.

15) Be objective: Talk about the facts of the situation (truth!), not your feelings or perceptions or suspicions. Avoid "always," "never," and "every time."

Say, "Twice this week you lost your temper & called me lazy." rather than, "You're always angry & calling me lazy!"

16) Use the Bible carefully: Use the Bible! You should be able to point out the sin according to God's Word.

Ken Sande: 1) Don't quote the Bible to tear others down, but only to build them up in the Lord; 2) Use the Bible in context and according to its proper meaning/interpretation; 3) Encourage the person to read the verses in the Bible for themselves; 4) Know when to stop – give them time to consider what you've shown them.

17) Ask for feedback: Ken Sande: 1) "I'm not sure I've said this clearly. Would you mind telling me what you think I've said?"; 2) "Have I confused you?"; 3) "Have I explained myself clearly enough?" 4) "What are you thinking about the meeting?"; 5) "What have I said that you would agree with? What would you disagree with?"

18) Recognize your limits: You cannot change a person's heart only God can!

Ken Sande: Finally, whenever you are trying to show someone his fault, remember that there are limits to what you can accomplish. You can raise concerns, suggest solutions, and encourage reasonable thinking, but you cannot force change. God may use you as a spokesperson to bring certain issues to the attention of another person, but only God can actually penetrate the other person's heart and bring about repentance.

2 Timothy 2:24-25: & the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, ²⁵ correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth

19) “If he listens to you, you have gained your brother.”: This is the goal! The gaining, restoration, repentance, sanctification, growth in the holiness of your brother! You want to get him back for Jesus!

Galatians 6:1: Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.

There is one Man Who has lived that you will never need to go to in order to confront Him about His sin against you! Because He has never & will never sin against you or anyone else! The LORD Jesus Christ! He has always loved you perfectly! He has always loved God perfectly! He has always loved everyone perfectly & has never sinned! Yet He took upon Himself all of our sins. The Father heaped upon Him & Him alone all of our faults & sins, though He knew no sin! & God went to Him & Him alone in wrath, anger, & judgment, & cursed His own Son in our place on that cross where Jesus died. & then He rose up from the dead so that all who repent & believe in Him shall be gained back for God – shall be saved, redeemed, justified, & adopted into God’s family forever!

Jesus Christ, the God-Man, loves His people so much that He calls us to pursue the one caught in sin, just like He and His Father do, so that the lost or straying might be rescued, restored, & redeemed from the road to destruction.

Do you know a brother or sister in Christ that you need to pursue, in love, so that they might be restored?

Christ Jesus’ Love Is Tough And Right
He Disciplines His Church To Fight
Against All Sin And Evil Blight
So She’ll Be Pure In His Clear Sight
He Died For Sinners, Took God’s Fright
And Bore God’s Everlasting Smite
Then Rose Alive, The World’s True Light
He Rules His Church With Gentle Might
Calls Her To Bind And Loose Contrite
We’ll Be Like Him, Pristine And Bright
These Thoughts With Joy Do Excite
For He’s Our All, Our Great Delight!