

Building Honest Relationships

Matthew 18:10-22

Dr. Sandy Willson

I. We Cherish One Another (vv. 10-14)

¹⁰"See that you do not despise one of these little ones. For I tell you that in heaven their angels always see the face of my Father who is in heaven. ¹²What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go in search of the one that went astray? ¹³And if he finds it, truly, I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went astray. ¹⁴So it is not the will of my Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.

II. We Confront One Another (vv. 15-16)

A. We First Confront Privately (v. 15)

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.

See also Matthew 5:23, 24

RESOLVING CONFLICT:

1. Talk to the person with whom you have a conflict, not about him/her to someone else.
2. Go with the attitudes enjoyed in the Scriptures:
 - a. a humility that focuses primarily on our own failings;
 - b. a sincere desire for the welfare and good reputation of the other person;
 - c. a hopeful spirit; and
 - d. a determination to leave final judgment with God alone.
3. Keep "short accounts" – don't let offenses pile up.
4. Schedule a time and place to talk that is mutually agreeable and conducive to uninterrupted deliberate discussions for as long as are needed.
5. Spend time alone with God before talking with others.
6. Thank the other person for taking the time to meet with you and express your goal of solving what you perceive to be a conflict and of strengthening your relationship.
7. Explain that you would like to:
 - a. explain the conflict as you see it;
 - b. acknowledge where you think you were wrong; and
 - c. explain where you think the other person may have been wrong; and
 - d. listen to the other person's perspective.

8. State the problem or conflict as you see it and understand it.
9. Confess honestly your own shortcomings or failures that contributed to the conflict and ask for forgiveness; also state your own weakness which make the other person's behavior difficult for you to handle.
10. State your concerns and/or grievances honestly and respectfully while also acknowledging your common ground and the positive aspects of the other person's position and behavior.
11. Listen to the other person's response to your definition of the problem and your statement of concern/grievance and be sure you understand what he/she is saying. (Try restating his/her position back to him and ask him/her if that is correct.)
12. Respond first by telling him/her the ways in which he/she has changed your mind; secondly tell him/her you forgive him/her for the items he/she confessed; thirdly state where you still see the differences and ask if he/she agrees with your definition of the problem.
13. If the remaining conflict can be happily dismissed, then do so; otherwise return to step 7.
14. If resolution cannot be accomplished satisfactorily to both parties, then ask that another mutually acceptable person help resolve it.
15. If the other person is unwilling to take the steps in number 14 above, then you take the steps in number 14 above unilaterally or happily drop the issue.
16. If you cannot happily drop the issue, then the issue may be taken to a head elder or pastor to help reconcile the issue and the relationship.
17. Close the meeting with thanks for the other person's time, a statement of your perspective, a promise to follow through on your commitments, a pledge to communicate about any further intended actions, and prayer.

B. We Recruit a Mature Third Party if Needed (v. 16)

¹⁶But 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.

C. We Tell It to the Church if Needed (vv. 17-20)

^{17b}If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church.

OUR LEADERS MUST CENSURE CONTUMACIOUS BROTHERS (vv. 17b-20)

17^bAnd 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. 19Again 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. 20For where two or three are gathered in My name, there am I among them."}

THE PURPOSE OF CHURCH DISCIPLINE

1. The Glory of God – Joshua 7:19
2. The Edification of the Church – Dt. 13:5; 17:7,12; 21:21; 22:21,22,24; 1 Cor. 5:6,7
3. The Restoration of the Member – 1 Cor. 5:5

THE SCOPE OF CHURCH DISCIPLINE

Church Discipline		
Form of Discipline	Mode of Discipline	
	Encouragement	Correction
Informal Matthew 18:15	Informal Encouragement	Informal Correction
Formal (Matthew 1 8:16-20)	Formal Encouragement	Formal Correction (Judicial Process)

THE APPLICABLE CHURCH CENSURES

1. Admonition
2. Suspension from the sacraments
3. Excommunication from the church
4. Deposition from office

III. We Forgive One Another (vv. 21-22)

21Then Peter came up and said to him, "Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?" 22Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you seven times, but seventy-seven times."