

Lesson 30: Review of Matthew 18:15-35: "Christian Confrontation and Christian Forgiveness"

You feel the pain of offense nestling deeper into your heart. The words or actions against you just keep rolling in your mind, playing over and over like an old record. Your blanket of love simply isn't big enough to cover the offense against you! What do you do?

Christian confrontation is absolutely necessary when a Christian, after much prayer and introspection simply cannot "let love cover a multitude of sins (1 Peter 4:9)". At stake is much more than *inner peace* or *friendship* but more importantly the ability of the local church to privately or publically exalt the name of the Lord Jesus Christ with a pure heart and clear conscience! You see, the greatest injury is inflicted upon the entire Church because if left to run its course, unresolved conflict in the Church, or unresolved conflict among the children of God will result in division and spiritual paralysis. Matthew 18 provides us with both the principle and the practice of Christian confrontation and forgiveness.

Contextually Matthew 18:15-20 falls under Jesus' call for Christians to "become like little children". Simply put, Jesus is still framing everything under the idea that Christians should be humble, non-scheming, pure in thought, and innocent of evil suspicion. So, when He says, "If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you," he is saying that this confrontation is to be quiet and private, not loud and public. You can't be loud and public and maintain a "child-like" spirit can you? So, the first principle of Christian confrontation is this: **The First steps in Christian Confrontation is to be quiet and private.**

Jesus also says that this quiet and private meeting is intended to "show" or *reveal* "his fault"; NOT FAULTS with the express purpose of "winning your brother over". Not meaning to say to prove that you are right and he is wrong, but rather to win back, or restore the relationship of unity in Christ! This, then, becomes a principle purpose behind Christian confrontation: **Christian confrontation is intended to reveal a real fault of the offender with the express purpose of restoring the love and unity you share together in Christ!**

The next steps are provided in the event that the first step appears to have failed. But it is good to notice that the circle of those involved remains small until it comes before the church, like concentric circles (see 18:16-17). If for some reason these gentle efforts fail, then excommunication takes place with hopes of the **restoration** of the erring brother takes place (see 1 Cor. 5 with 2 Cor. 2:5-11). We cannot, cannot, cannot forget that **the practice of Christian confrontation is to yield restoration and unity in the Church body!**

I would note that Matthew 18:18-20 is interpreted in a very mystical way. But, I believe that the Lord is telling the Church that *she* has a responsibility, given by the Lord, to judge matters outlined in the preceding verses. The prayerful, Christ exalting local fellowship will literally carry out the Lord's will on earth through her humble and prayerful judgments. In this way, we show the mind of Christ. The danger is, of course, when leaders in churches judge in a non-biblical and arrogant manner. Jesus' frames the manner in which Church judges an erring brother with the words, "In My Name." In other words, the Church that functions properly in judging an erring brother is a church in which all are **beholding the glory of God in the person of Jesus Christ!** If our eyes are on anything other than Christ, Church discipline is ugly and unjust.

In Matthew 18:21-35 Peter leads out with the question of "how many times must I forgive?" That's easily answered by Jesus within the context of His Gospel. He says in effect, "Forgive the repentant brother repeatedly without *keeping score!!!* That is the essence of true forgiveness: to forgive is to love the other person by refusing to keep a record of wrong (see 1 Cor. 13:5). Forgiveness doesn't mean *forgetfulness* but it does mean that you will make every effort **never to dig where the sin and offense has been buried!** I've heard it put like this before: When that sin is forgiven we must put out a "*No Fishing!*" sign.

Jesus parable of the Unforgiving Servant perfectly illustrates what should be our attitude toward forgiving any and all offenses committed against us by our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ. He begins by showing the enormous, insurmountable debt of the servant called to give an account before the King. This is our sin debt owed to God. Then, Jesus gladdens the hearts of the listener by showing the mercy of the great King toward the debtor. This illustrates the mercy shown us. But, what a turn of events when Jesus turns the tables: the servant forgiven of the impossible debt immediately makes a ridiculous demand for restitution of a debt owed him. Mind you, the debt owed him is pennies compared to his former impossible debt.

Doesn't that make you do some comparative thinking? God in Christ has forgiven you ALL the debt you owed him (Rom. 8:1; Col. 1:12-14, etc, etc) yet we are easily resistant to the notion of being quick to forgive the offense of others against us. This must not be!

The parable doesn't teach that you lose your salvation until you forgive someone who has offended you, but it does seem to indicate that the Great Savior King Jesus will *wear you out*, and *break you down* until you forgive your brother and are restored to love and unity together in Christ!

Let me ask you, Has someone offended you? Can your blanket of love cover it? What will you do?

Questions for Matthew 19:1-15: “The Christian Household: Marriage, Being Single and Children”

1. From the notes on page 1, **A)** what impressed and/or helped you? **B)** Explain “A”.

Introduction to Matthew 19:1-15: The question in Matthew 19:3 should interest us. The religious leaders asked if it is okay to get a divorce. Why did they not ask how to make their marriage better? Christians often ask glass-half-empty questions too. Chapter 19 is often referred to as the “divorce” chapter in Matthew. Instead I think we should view it a chapter to help “households under the cross”. In this chapter Jesus honors marriage, the life of singleness, and children.

2. Read Matthew 19:1-9. “Jesus Honors Marriage”: **A)** What was the reason the religious leaders came to Jesus? **B)** With Whom does Jesus begin His defense of marriage? Why do you think this is so? **C)** “Male and Female”: How should this be interpreted in the 21st century when it comes to marriage? **D)** Read Genesis 2:24 with Matthew 19:5-6: What do these verses tell us about the permanence of marriage? Is it what God intended? What words describe this? **E)** Read Duet. 24:1-4 with Matt. 19:7-9. Did Moses “prescribe” divorce or “permit” divorce? What is the difference? **F)** Does adultery demand a divorce? Why or why not? **G)** Is divorce forgivable or unforgivable? Why or why not?

3. Read Matthew 19:10-12: “Jesus Honors Singleness” **A)** After Jesus’ prescriptive view of marriage is stated, what conclusion did the disciples reach? Why do you think this was the case? **B)** Is singleness a gift? Why or why not? **C)** What is gained by *singleness* (see 2 Cor. 7:8,32,33,35)? **D)** Jesus lived in singleness. What do the following passages tell us about His spiritual offspring? Isaiah 53:10; Is. 54:1; John 1:12; John 3:3. **E)** How well do we honor singleness in our churches? **F)** How could these verses help us to better honor people gifted with singleness? (I Cor. 4:14-15; 2 Thess. 2:7; I Cor. 7:32-35)

4. Read Matthew 19:13-15: “Jesus Honors Children” **A)** What were the parents desiring for their children? What did the disciples do? Why do you think they did what they did? **B)** What did Jesus demand of the disciples? **C)** What does Jesus infer could result from the unjust rebuke of the disciples? **D)** “...for the kingdom belongs to such as these”. What does He mean? Why would He say that to the disciples? **E)** Look at 19:14-15. Try to list three important principles for ministering to children from these verses.