



Matthew 18:15-20

DISCIPLESHIP TRAINING: RESOLVING CONFLICTS

This passage is a beautiful instance of the mingled wisdom and tender consideration of our Lord's teaching. What a knowledge it shows of human nature! Nothing does so much harm to the cause of religion as the quarrels of Christians. No stone should be left unturned, no trouble spared, in order to prevent their being dragged before the public. What a delicate thoughtfulness it shows for the sensitiveness of poor human nature! Many a scandalous breach would be prevented, if we were more ready to practice the rule of "between you and him alone." Happy would it be for the Church and the world, if this portion of our Lord's teaching was more carefully studied and obeyed. Differences and divisions there will be, so long as the world stands. But how many of them would be extinguished at once, if the course recommended in these verses was tried.

—J. C. Ryle (1816-1900)

THE CHIASTIC STRUCTURE OF MATTHEW

- A. Demonstration of Jesus' Qualifications as King (1-4)
- B. Sermon on the Mount: Who Can Enter the Kingdom? (5-7)**
- C. Miracles and Instruction (8-9)
- D. Instruction to the Twelve: Message for Israel (10)**
- E. Opposition: Israel's Rejection of Jesus (11-12)
- F. Parables of the Kingdom (13)**
- E'. Opposition: Israel's Rejection of Jesus (14-17)
- D'. Instruction to the Twelve: Message for Church (18)**
- C'. Miracles and Instruction (19-23)
- B'. Olivet Discourse: When Will the Kingdom Come? (24-25)**
- A'. Demonstration of Jesus' Qualifications as King (26-28).

One of the biggest challenges in the church is dealing with conflict. When we are in relationship with other people, we will both offend and be offended, sin and be sinned against.

- Conflict is to be _____.
- Conflict resolution is _____.
- Conflict is an _____ to grow.

So how do we resolve conflicts in the local church?

1. Have a heart of _____ (cf. 18:1-14).

Pride only leads to arguments, but those who take advice are wise. (Proverbs 13:10; cf. James 4:1).

Few things are sapping the strength of the church of Jesus Christ more than the unreconciled state of so many believers.

—Jay Adams

Why is it that you harbor strife, bad temper, dissension, schism, and quarreling? Do we not have one God, one Christ, one Spirit? ... Your schism has led many astray; it has made many despair; it has made many doubt; it has distressed us all. Yet it goes on!

—Clement of Alexandria (150-215)

Divisions in the church always breed atheism in the world.

—Thomas Manton (1620-77)

You will not do a good job of confronting and correcting others unless you first forgive them in your heart. If you don't forgive first, then you will overreach in your confrontation. You will be seeking not justice or change but only to inflict pain. Your demands will be excessive and your attitude abusive... Only when you have lost the inner need to see the other person hurt will you have any chance of actually bringing about justice, change, and healing.

—Timothy Keller

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.

2. Distinguish sin from _____.

3. See them as your _____ or _____ in Christ.

4. Go first in _____.

5. Seek _____.

But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.'

6. Bring _____ or _____ witnesses, if needed.

If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. If he refuses to listen to the church, treat him like a Gentile or a tax collector.

7. Inform the _____ as a final means of appeal.

8. _____ out and _____ for those who are unrepentant.

Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will have been loosed in heaven. Again, truly I tell you, if two of you on earth agree about any matter that you pray for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, I am there among them.

9. Realize that God's stamp of approval is on loving discipline.

He that is not a son of peace is not a son of God.

—Richard Baxter (1615-91)

The Bible repeatedly warns us not to be eagerly looking for opportunities to point out the faults of others. In fact, anyone who is eager to go and show a brother his sin is probably disqualified from doing so. —Ken Sande

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 and talk to the other person about it in a loving and constructive manner.

—Ken Sande

Jesus won't allow the unreconciled condition to continue among believers. In Matt. 5, if another considers you to have wronged him, Jesus says you must go. In Matt. 18, He says that if the other person has done something wrong to you, you must go. There is never a time when you can sit and wait for your brother to come to you. Jesus doesn't allow for that. It is always your obligation to go.

—Jay Adams

Discipline in the church is not punishment. It is discipline and discipline is designed to train and restore. —J. Hampton Keathley

There are three things that necessitate church discipline: 1. Major moral issues, 2. Major doctrinal issues and 3. Major lawlessness characterized by divisiveness.

—D. A. Carson