



## **Class 7. Just between the Two of You**

- Repentance - Self-Examination - Confession - Change
- **Matthew 18:15**
- Conflict presents unique opportunities to serve other people
- Conflict presents the opportunity to show the love of Christ and to practice mercy and forgiveness
- The most challenging way to help others in the midst of conflict is to help them see where they are wrong and need to change
- Many offenses can and should be overlooked
- But, some problems are so harmful that they must be discussed
- Today we'll discuss some basic guidelines on when and how to talk privately to another person about their contribution to a conflict
- Too often we tend to think ONLY about Matthew 18:15 in regards to a conflict
- Read only by itself, Matthew 18:15 seems to teach that you always have to use direct confrontation to force others to admit that they have sinned
- If you read it in context, you'll see that Jesus had something much more flexible in mind than simply going toe to toe with someone
- **Matthew 18:12-14**
- Matthew 18:15 is introduced with a theme of restoration, not condemnation
- Jesus says in verse 15 that the goal is to "win your brother over"
- He continues with the restoration theme again when he continues with the parable of the Unmerciful Servant to remind us to be as merciful and forgiving as God is

- Matthew 18:21-35
- Our goal is to help the person be restored to God
- Although this sometimes requires direct confrontation, the Bible teaches better ways to approach people
- The Bible rarely uses words like Confront, instead more often uses words like: Teach, Instruct, Correct, Warn, Encourage, Correct, Reason With, Show, Admonish, Rebuke
- We are also warned not to let disagreements with others degenerate into Quarrels, Arguments or Controversies
- God wants us to adjust the intensity of our communication to fit the other person's position
- The Bible also gives us many examples of approaching others indirectly instead of bluntly describing their wrongs
- When Jesus talked to the Samaritan woman at the well, he didn't directly confront her, he approached the issue indirectly by engaging her in assessing her own life
- Jesus frequently used stories as a roundabout way to help people see their sins
- Paul didn't hit the men from Athens head on about their idolatry, instead he engaged them on a point of common interest and moved gradually to the one true God
- Esther holds the record for the indirect approach, taking two days and two banquets to get to the point of telling the king about the injustice being done to her people
- We need to let go of the idea that showing someone their fault always requires direct confrontation
- Although that approach is appropriate in some circumstances, it shouldn't be our first approach
- Ask God to help us find the most effective way to approach a person in a way that opens them up for reconciliation
- Then KEEP YOUR EYES OPEN for the opportunity that God provides
- Another misunderstanding of Matthew 18 is to think that you have to meet personally with the person before you can involve others
- The Bible gives us multiple examples of involving other people before trying to personally meet with someone

- Abigail is praised for intervening between David and Nabal
- Joab helps out David when he is estranged from Absalom
- Barnabas spoke to the apostles on Paul's behalf and appealed for reconciliation
- There are many biblically legitimate ways to approach someone with whom we have a conflict
- Personal conversations are often best, but in some cases involving other people right away might be better
- Some examples:
  - When going to someone personally is likely to make them lose face in the sight of others
  - When you are dealing with someone from a culture where it is customary to resolve problems through others
  - When either party might feel intimidated by the other person, because of a difference in verbal skills or differing positions of authority
  - When one person was abused by the other, and the abuser will likely manipulate the person into silence
  - When there is a third party who has a much closer relationship than you do and is willing to help
- Remember: These cases are RARE
- The Bible teaches that a face-to-face meeting is usually essential to genuine reconciliation
- This principle is presented in three ways in the Bible:
  - 1) Most passages related to restoring relationships clearly contemplate a direct conversation
  - 2) The Bible provides many examples of reconciliations that came about after a personal meeting
  - 3) The Bible also gives examples of disastrous results when the involvement of intermediaries avoided genuine confession and forgiveness
- If you learn that someone is upset about you, then God wants you to take the initiative
- Even if you don't believe that you have done anything wrong
- If you think that the other person's complaints are unfounded or that the misunderstanding is entirely their fault, you still have to take the initiative
- **Matthew 5:23-24**

- If you are honestly trying to examine yourself to find any sins that you might have so that you can deal with them...
- THEN you should look for the opportunities to talk to others about what they think you may have done
- You shouldn't be trying to defend yourself and assuming that their opinions of your actions are unfounded
- You should also have love and concern for your Brother's well being...
- Bitterness and anger are serious sins in God's eyes
- If your Brother is upset with you, then that can separate them from God
- If you love them, you should help them get past those feelings so that they are rejoined to God

- **Ephesians 4:30-32**

- This may require either confessing your faults, or helping them to see that there is no basis for the complaint
- It probably will require patience and repeated attempts
- God also commands us to go and talk to a person about a conflict if that person's sins are too serious to overlook

- **Luke 17:3**

- The hard part is determining if their sin is so serious that you need to talk about it
- Here are some examples:
- Is it Dishonoring God?
- When someone is behaving in such a way that others think less of God or His Word
- Is it Damaging your Relationship?
- If you are unable to forgive an offense - If your feelings, thoughts, words or actions towards the other person have been negative for a short period of time - then the offense is too serious to overlook
- Even minor things can damage a relationship if they are repeated
- Is it Hurting Others?

- A disagreement is too serious to overlook when it results in significant harm to you or others
- If they are setting an example that will encourage others to behave in a similar manner you should talk to them
- When people start to take sides, and the Unity of the Ecclesia is threatened, then it needs dealing with
- Is it Hurting the Offender?
- Sin needs to be addressed when it is seriously harming the offender
- Either by direct damage - Substance Abuse
- Or by impairing their relationship with God
- Don't be fooled by the world's view that everyone should be allowed to *"do their own thing as long as they don't hurt anyone"*
- **Leviticus 19:17**
- **Proverbs 24:11-12**
- **Galatians 6:1**
- **James 5:19-20**
- These verses are all strong endorsements of confrontation, but they don't give us license to be a "busybody"
- That word appears in four different verses condemning it
- Anyone who is EAGER to show a Brother his sin is probably disqualified from doing so
- That is usually a sign of pride and that cripples your ability to minister effectively to others
- At the other extreme are those who are unwilling to talk to others under any circumstances
- These people point to Matthew 7:1 - "Do not judge, or you too will be judged"
- Notice how verse 5 does show you that if you follow Christ's instructions, you will *"see clearly to remove the speck from your Brother's eye"*
- We are not to seek vengeance against those who wrong us, but that doesn't mean we shouldn't address them

- The verses in Galatians really helps us see it clearly
- Galatians 6:1
- Restore a Brother “Caught in a Sin”
- The Greek Word PROLAMBANO means “overtaken” or “surprised”
- This is someone who is taken off guard
- Their problem has become so serious that they may not be able to save themselves
- “Restore Him Gently”
- The Greek Word KATARTIZO means to “mend”, “repair” or “complete”
- This has the idea of making someone useful for their intended purpose