

THE ONE YEAR BIBLE CLUB

WITH TEACHING COMMENTARY BY NICK BOORK

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January 27 – Matthew 18:1-20

At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, “Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?”² Then Jesus called a little child to Him, set him in the midst of them,³ and said, “Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.⁴ Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.⁵ Whoever receives one little child like this in My name receives Me.⁶ “Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea.⁷ Woe to the world because of offenses! For offenses must come, but woe to that man by whom the offense comes!⁸ “If your hand or foot causes you to sin, cut it off and cast *it* from you. It is better for you to enter into life lame or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet, to be cast into the everlasting fire.⁹ And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast *it* from you. It is better for you to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire.

¹⁰ “Take heed that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that in heaven their angels always see the face of My Father who is in heaven.¹¹ For the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost.¹² “What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them goes astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine and go to the mountains to seek the one that is straying?¹³ And if he should find it, assuredly, I say to you, he rejoices more over that *sheep* than over the ninety-nine that did not go astray.¹⁴ Even so it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.¹⁵ “Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother.¹⁶ But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that *‘by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.’*¹⁷ And if he refuses to hear them, tell *it* to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector.¹⁸ “Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.¹⁹ “Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven.²⁰ For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.”

OKAY, HERE’S MY COMMENTARY

Today I want to focus in on the process of reconciliation Jesus gave to his disciples in Matthew 18:15-20. This is unique to Matthew's Gospel. One of the only two places in the New Testament where Jesus uses the word church is found in this chapter and it's in the context of maintaining unity among believers in the Christian community, the local church. The wonderful thing about the Gospel is that it brings salvation and reconciliation between God and man.

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In John chapter 17 Jesus prayed to the Father that his disciples be made one that the world would know that God had sent Jesus. How does this work practically? Let me give you an illustration. When you open the door at some churches it's like you're opening a freezer because it's so cold. When you open the door at other churches it's like an oven because you can feel the heat of God's presence and his love and where there is love there is unity. When people come into a church they should feel such love, harmony and unity among Christians that people should be amazed and acknowledge that only God could cause this kind of love and oneness through Jesus Christ.

The apostle Paul said in Ephesians 4:3 that we are to endeavor to guard the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace among fellow Christians. What happens when somebody offends another Christian? How are we supposed to deal with problems in relationships in the church? What should pastors do when someone becomes determined to divide or destroy a local church? Jesus gave us the answers in this portion of Scripture. Here we find instructions on how to deal with offenses. Jesus gives us a step-by-step process how to bring reconciliation to damaged relationships and guard the unity of the local church.

Step 1 – One-to-one meeting

If someone offends you then Jesus says, you're supposed to go to the person who offended you and talk to them privately in an effort to reconcile the relationship. The person who hurt you needs to know what it was they did that caused you to be offended. If the person who offended you refuses to listen to you and you're unable to reconcile the relationship, then you need to go to the next step.

Step 2 – Ask one or two other people to meet with both parties

However, don't tell them anything about that issue except that you need someone to serve as a witness that you're making the effort to reconcile with the person that offended you. If the person who offended you refuses to meet or becomes hostile unwilling to reconcile then you go to the next level. Many times the presence of another believer listening to the issues can act as a peacemaker and help reconcile both parties. The goal is reconciliation of relationships.

Step 3 – Involve church leadership

If the person who caused the offense won't listen to the individual after the 1st meeting and after seeking to reconcile in the presence of witnesses at a 2nd meeting then Jesus said tell it to the church. At this point the pastor and or elders of the church should meet with both parties and any witnesses that were at the 2nd meeting. Good shepherds will listen to both sides and seek to get the person that caused the offense to repent and ask forgiveness if necessary and get the person that was offended to forgive the person that offended them and reconcile their

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relationship. Remember the goal is always to reconcile and restore relationships and maintain the unity of the church.

Step 4 – Removal from church fellowship

Jesus said if the offender refuses to hear the church the person is to be considered like a heathen or tax collector. What does this mean? First of all, God's love never changes for the offender or the offended. However, a person who refuses to submit to spiritual authority and do what's right should no longer be allowed to serve in any capacity in the church. Additionally, if a person becomes divisive and destructive after being confronted by church leadership to be restored they should be asked to leave the fellowship of the local church.

In the context of church discipline, Jesus said whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. What does this mean? In my opinion, it means that through prayer, senior church leadership have the authority to bind and loose spiritually. An example of this is found in 1 Corinthians 5 where the apostle Paul led the church in bringing spiritual discipline to a man that was a member of the church and yet refused to repent of living in the sin of incest openly. This man's sinful lifestyle was public knowledge and if the church allowed him to continue in his sin it would bring reproach and disgrace upon the church and Jesus Christ.

The apostle Paul said this person should be turned over to Satan for the destruction of his flesh that his spirit may be saved. This means that through prayer, the spiritual protection of God was being removed from this man and that divine discipline would be coming on him. The apostle Paul instructed the leaders of the church to remove the man from the fellowship of the local church until he repented. The good news is that this man did repent from the horrible sin he was living in and then Paul instructed the church at Corinth to restore this man by forgiving him and allowing him to be part of the fellowship of the church once again.

A wise pastor once said, if you cannot cast the devil out of the man you must cast both the man and the devil out of the church! The Lord Jesus Christ, expects his church leaders, to not allow those that would destroy his church to continue without being confronted. This is the process Christ has instructed his church to deal with offenses and disruptive people. Let's commit to guard the unity of our church and find the courage follow Christ commands to confront each other in a sincere effort to reconcile and heal our relationships and not give the devil an advantage through un-forgiveness. Let's commit to bring glory to God by being peacemakers and reconciler's in Jesus name. Thanks for listening and being a part of the One Year Bible Club.

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