

Dealing with Your Brother's Sin

Matthew 18:1-35

Part Two

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I. Dealing with our own sin relentlessly

A proper understanding of our *identity* as children of God who are wholly *dependent* upon Him and *called to obey* Him is the path to greatness in the kingdom of God. Such humility leads us to deal with our own sin *relentlessly* and our brother's sin *compassionately*.

II. Despising vs. Loving our brother

When our brother sins, we are to long for his restoration to fellowship with God and with us. We are not to _____ him but to _____ him as God explains in Leviticus 19:16-18.

16 You shall not go about as a talebearer among your people; nor shall you take a stand against the life of your neighbor: I am the LORD. 17 You shall not hate your brother in your heart. You shall surely rebuke your neighbor, and not bear sin because of him. 18 You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD.

- Gossip (16a) –
- Malice (16b) –
- Pride (17a) –
- Revenge (18a) –
- Bitterness (18b) –

Even as a loving parent is called to discipline his son when necessary (Pr 13:24), so a loving church is called to discipline her members. True love pursues an erring brother.

III. Dealing with our brother's sin compassionately

A. Step One: Private Confrontation (15 cf. Pr 20:19; Lk 17:3-4; Gal 6:1)

In step one, we are (1) to confront the brother in sin (2) privately in an attempt to bring repentance and reconciliation. First, Jesus insists that we are to _____ the brother in sin. *Go and tell him his fault...* Second, we are to go _____: *go and tell him his fault between you and him alone.* True love confronts privately.

Jesus' exhortation assumes that the matter is worth addressing in the first place. There are times, Peter tells us, when *love covers a multitude of sins* (1 Pet 4:8).

- Before confronting, ask, "Have I examined myself yet?"
- Before confronting, ask, "How sure am I that I am right?"
- Before confronting, ask, "How important is this?"
- Before confronting, ask, "Does this person show a pattern of this kind of behavior?"
- Before confronting, ask, "What do wise people counsel me to do?"
- Before confronting, ask, "What else is going on in the other person's world?"

B. Step Two: Confirmation of the Allegation (16 cf. Dt 19:5; 2 Cor 13:1)

If the sinning brother does not repent, then we are to bring two or three witnesses along to help resolve the matter. The two or three witnesses should be folks who can actually assist in resolving the matter. The point of witnesses is to establish (1) that the brother has sinned and (2) that he is unrepentant. It would be unjust to tell the church a mere accusation of unrepentant sin. There must be corroboration.

C. Step Three: Suspension (17a cf. 2 Thes 3:6, 13-15)

If sin is confirmed and the brother refuses to repent, Jesus informs us that *we are to tell it to the _____* (17a). Paul helps us to understand what this step looks like:

6 But we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us... 13 But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary in doing good. 14 And if anyone does not obey our word in this epistle, note that person and do not keep company with him, that he may be ashamed. 15 Yet do not count him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother. (2 Thes 3:6, 13-15)

If someone *does not obey the apostolic word* (14), the church is to (1) *note that person* and (2) *not keep company with him*. In 1 Corinthians 5:11 Paul specifically applies this to table fellowship. Suspension is redemptive. He is *a beloved brother* and we want him to repent lest he destroy himself.

D. Step Four: Excommunication (17b-20 cf. Titus 3:10-11)

If he will not listen to the Church, then he is to be to us *“like a heathen and a tax collector”* (Mt 18:17b), removed from the covenant community. He is no longer to be considered a _____ in need of correction but an _____ in need of evangelism.

We call this final stage of formal church discipline *excommunication*. As a covenantal rite, *excommunication* is the counterpart to baptism. *Baptism* incorporates the individual into the church, marking him out as a member of Christ and His people; *excommunication* separates the individual from Christ and His people.

Rightly administered, discipline speaks God’s own Word to the sinner (18:18). The voice of the church ratifies that which God has already declared in His _____. Discipline is an application of the Word to a specific situation which is why witnesses are needed (19-20). The church’s sentence is Jesus’ sentence.

Excommunication is the sober announcement that God takes unrepentant sin seriously. We cannot claim the name of Jesus and be living in unrepentant sin (1 Cor 6:9-11; Gal 5:19-21).

III. Conclusion