

## Doctrine of Church Discipline

### Matthew 18:15-20

*“Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. 16 But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. 17 And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican. 18 Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. 19 Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. 20 For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.*

1. What is the case supposed in Matthew 18? Notice first that the case supposed is an offense by a brother. *“If thy brother trespass against thee.”*
2. Notice second, the offense is personal. *“If thy brother trespass against thee.”* Proverbs teaches Christians not to take offense for someone else.

*Proverbs 26:17 He that passeth by, and meddleth with strife belonging not to him, is like one that taketh a dog by the ears.”*

3. A lot of trouble in the church would be immediately resolved if God’s people did not jump into a situation they do not really comprehend – even though they might think they do – especially if they will not bother to hear a balanced view. A person who will not listen to a full account of a matter is described in Scripture as both shameful and foolish.
  - *Proverbs 18:3. “He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him.”*
4. Matthew 18 does not allow for personal matters involving others to be brought up for discussion.
5. This is a private affair. So what is to be done in this case? We have here, the rules prescribed in Matthew 18: 15-17. Individuals are to proceed in this method. *First, “Go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone.”*
6. Once the person is approached, tell him his fault, remind him of what he has done, and of the evil of it, and show him his abominations.
7. Now observe in verse 15, *“If he shall hear thee”* – which means if he shall *“heed thee”* – [if he responds in a positive way to the reproof and truly repents], it is well, thou hast gained thy brother; thou hast helped to save him from sin and ruin, and it will be thy credit and comfort (James 5:19-20).

8. Sadly, if private confrontation does not prevail, then the believer is to take one or two more people as a witness (Matt. 18:16). The principle here is that the Christian must not be weary of well-doing even though at first there does not seem to be any success.
9. Take one or two more people and for these reasons.
  - To assist you.
  - For dramatic effect.
  - To be a witness of private conduct in case the matter should afterward be brought before the church.
10. No one should be presented to the Church as an obstinate and heartless person until it is proved that they are so. To make someone out to be impenitent who has displayed sorrow for sin is to bring needless pain and shame.
11. It is the will of the Lord that only after there has been private rebuke with no private or public display of gospel repentance is the next step to be taken.
12. *If* – and that is an important condition—if he neglect to hear and will not be humbled, then tell it to the church, (Matthew 18:17).
13. It is not the will of the Lord to press a matter beyond boundaries. And so the Lord instructs those who have been offended to accept the repentance and not press on in a spirit of retaliation.
14. There are some occasions when the church must receive the complaints of the offended, and rebuke the sins of the offenders, and judge between them, after an impartial enquiry is made into the merits of the cause.
15. However, if the church must be told about a matter it is only on the basis that there is no sign of remorse and no ownership of the transgression taken. Any other procedure becomes a matter of sin in and of itself and worthy of condemnation and righteous judgment.
16. The objective in following Matthew 18 is so that private matters may not become a public scandal and cause more harm than good to the body of Christ.
17. It is the will of the Lord to stop matters from escalating out of control, which is usually what happens when people violate their conscience to hurt someone who has repented according to gospel terms.