



19-Minute Bible Study

Matthew 18

Jesus introduced his teaching on church discipline with the Parable of the Lost Sheep. In that parable Jesus expressed the deep love and concern God and his people have for a believer who wanders from God's flock and goes astray. It's a love and concern that moves God's people to *go to look for the one that wandered off* (Matthew 18:12). In the following verses of Matthew 18, Jesus instructs us about the right way to deal with a Christian who has wandered off.

¹⁵"If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. ¹⁶But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.' ¹⁷If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector. ¹⁸I tell you the truth, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."

1. Why would the following responses to a fellow Christian who has gone astray and is living in impenitence be considered improper?

- Silence—"I don't want to get involved or come off like I think I'm better than he is."
- Sharing the matter with your pastor—"Pastor, you should know what's happening in Tyler's life. He's . . ."

2. Put into your own words the four steps of church discipline outlined by Jesus that serve as guidelines for us.

- a)
- b)
- c)
- d)

3. What do you hope to achieve in each of the four steps of church discipline (see verse 15)?

VERY IMPORTANT CHAPTERS

Genesis 1	Creation
Genesis 2	Marriage
Genesis 3	Fall into Sin
Genesis 4	Cain and Abel
Genesis 6-9	The Flood (2)
Genesis 11	Tower of Babel
Genesis 12	Abraham
Genesis 19	Sodom and Gomorrah
Genesis 22	Abraham Tested
Genesis 28	Jacob's Ladder
Genesis 37	Joseph's Coat of Many Colors
Genesis 41	Joseph Rules
Exodus 2	The Baby Moses
Exodus 3,4	The Burning Bush
Exodus 12	The Passover
Exodus 20	The Ten Commandments
Joshua 6	Jericho's Walls Come Tumbling Down
1 Sam. 17	David and Goliath
2 Sam. 11,12	David and Bathsheba (2)
1 Kings 3	Solomon's Wisdom
2 Kings 2	Chariots of Fire
Psalms 23	The "Good Shepherd" Psalm
Psalms 121	The "Hills" Psalm
Isaiah 53	Christ Our Substitute
Matthew 5-7	The Sermon on the Mount (2)
Matthew 18	Church Discipline
Luke 2	Christmas
Luke 10	The Good Samaritan
Luke 15	The "Lost" Chapter
Luke 19	Palm Sunday
Luke 22,23	Maundy Thursday/ Good Friday (2)
Luke 24	Easter
John 2	Jesus' First Miracle
John 17	Christ's High-Priestly Prayer
Acts 1	Ascension
Acts 2	Pentecost
Acts 9	Saul's Conversion
Acts 16	Paul in Philippi
Romans 3	Righteous through Faith
Romans 8	More than Conquerors
Romans 13	Government
1 Corin. 13	"Agape Love" Chapter
1 Corin. 15	Paul's Great "Resurrection" Chapter
Ephesians 5	Marriage
2 Thess. 2	The Antichrist
Hebrews 11	Heroes of Faith
2 Peter 3	Christ's Second Coming
Rev. 21	Heaven

4. What two things may happen that will bring the process of church discipline to an end?

5. What thoughts do the following passages add to this lesson?

- *“When I say to a wicked man, ‘You will surely die,’ and you do not warn him or speak out to dissuade him from his evil ways in order to save his life, that wicked man will die for his sin, and I will hold you accountable for his blood. But if you do warn the wicked man and he does not turn from his wickedness or from his evil ways, he will die for his sin; but you will have saved yourself”* (Ezekiel 3:18,19).
- *“If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him”* (Luke 17:3).
- *Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently* (Galatians 6:1).
- *“Whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save him from death”* (James 5:20).
- *“In the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you”* (Matthew 7:2).

6. What authority and confidence do we receive from verse 18?

7. What do you think? If more people of our congregation followed Jesus’ instruction in Matthew 18, our congregation would be (a) better off; (b) worse off; (c) about the same.

Closing Prayer:

Lord Jesus, you have given us the words of Matthew 18 for the good of your church. Lead us to understand, accept, live by, and follow your commands found there, to the glory of your saving name. Amen.

At home

- Read Luke 15.
- Try to commit to memory the list of V.I.C.s on the front of this page.

Helps
(1) Responding with silence, regardless of our motives, is a sin of omission; it is a failure to lead our brother to repentance. Sharing the matter not only constitutes the sin of gossip but most likely involves the failure to understand and carry out our Christian responsibility to our fellow Christian. (2) It is important to remember that the three steps that may end in excommunication are guidelines to be followed out of love for a brother. The steps may be repeated as often as is deemed necessary. (3) The goal is to lead our brother to repentance. (4) Repentance will interrupt the process of church discipline (which is what we hope will happen), or a refusal to be disciplined will also interrupt it. (5) Ezekiel 3:18, 19—God holds us accountable when we fail or refuse to discipline a fellow Christian; Luke 17:3—We must assure the repentant sinner of forgiveness; Galatians 6:1—God tells us to deal gently and lovingly with our fellow Christian; James 5:20—Impenitence leads to damnation; Matthew 7:2—Be careful not to judge one’s motives or heart. (6) Our pronouncement of forgiveness to the penitent and our withholding the pronouncement of forgiveness from the impenitent is as valid as if it were made by Jesus himself. (7) Adherence to God’s Word always brings blessings.