

## Sermon Notes

**Series: How to Be A Peacemaker**

**Date: January 17<sup>th</sup>, 2010**

**Title: “Step 8: Get Help From the Church”**

**Text: Matthew 18:15-20**

To get help from the church Jesus tells us to...

### 1) TALK TO THE SINNING BROTHER PRIVATELY (v. 15)

- a) **So before we actually get help from the church, there’s something important we should do.**
- i) We should first talk to the sinning brother privately.
  - ii) Now verse 15 doesn’t say what this sin was.
    - (1) So we don’t know how the one brother wronged the other.
    - (2) So does Jesus want us to go to our brother every time he sins against us?
      - (a) Well, I don’t think so.
      - (b) Because sometimes Jesus calls us to overlook sin.
    - (3) But there are times when Scripture says we must go.
      - (a) First, we need to go to our brother when his sin against us brings serious harm to himself or his relationship with God. (cf. James 5:19-20)
      - (b) We also need to go to our brother when we’re unable to overlook his sin against us. (Pro:19:11)
      - (c) And then of course, we also need to go to our brother when his sin creates a wall in our relationship. (Eph 2:13ff)
  - iii) And when you go you **are to** actually address their sin.
    - (1) As verse 15 says, you are to “tell him his fault”
  - iv) But notice also in this verse that this is to occur between “you and him alone.”
    - (1) Basically, we are to talk to the sinning brother privately.
      - (a) So when we get offended, we shouldn’t announce our brother’s sin to the whole church... to our SS class... to our friends.
- b) **Now it’s at this point that we often come up with reasons why we shouldn’t do this.**
- i) And the reason I’ve heard the most is this: “I’m not going to go to my brother about his offense because I don’t want to hurt him.”
    - (1) But that’s not what the Proverbs say. (cf. 27:5-6)
    - (2) That’s also not what the Psalms say either. (cf. 141:5-6)
  - ii) If we’re required biblically to address our brother’s sin...than addressing that sin is never hurtful in and of itself.
    - (1) And it’s true, we can be hurtful when we go to our brother and tell him his fault... but we don’t have to be.
      - (a) After all, we should be going to him in the Spirit and with gentleness.
      - (b) We should be going to him in order to restore and bear his burdens.

- (2) And as long as we do those things, going to our brother and telling him his fault is loving... it's helpful.

2) **TAKE ONE OR TWO OTHERS ALONG AS WITNESSES. (v.16)**

- a) **So, if our brother does not listen... if he does not respond properly with repentance - we are to take one or two others along.**
- i) And this is the first thing we do to get help from the church... we start by involving one or two other believers in the situation.
  - ii) But should we do this immediately?
    - (1) I mean... Should we come home after addressing our brother privately and immediately get on the phone and call these individuals to go and give it a second try?
    - (2) Well, to be honest, our text doesn't tell us.
  - iii) In fact there are a lot of things this text doesn't tell us, so we have to be very careful about being too dogmatic.
- b) **Let's consider the role of these "one or two" that verse 16 refers to.**
- i) The reason these "one or two" come along initially is to participate in the reconciliation process.
    - (1) They are there to help lead the two parties toward repentance and forgiveness.
    - (2) They are there to serve as a mediator or arbitrator of sorts.
  - ii) And if it the sinning brother refuses to repent, then they fill the role of witnesses.
    - (1) As our text says "take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses."
- c) **And one of the things I think we need to recognize here is how important the role of their witness is.**
- i) Their testimony is **necessary** for a charge to be established.
    - (1) And this isn't something new here to Matthew 18.
    - (2) This is consistent with the law throughout the Old Testament. (cf. Duet 19, etc.)
  - ii) So just because you have a problem with your brother isn't enough.
    - (1) You can't establish a charge on one witness alone.
    - (2) Instead you need one or two others so that together with you the charge can be established by two or three witnesses.
  - iii) And I really believe this is a gracious provision from Jesus here.
    - (1) After all, sometimes having one or two brothers come along helps us to see things more accurately.
  - iv) For example.. they may sit down with you and the sinning brother and say...
    - (1) "You know what **offended brother**... We think you're making a mountain out of a molehill. You probably should have overlooked your brother's sin. Why don't you forgive him right now?"
    - (2) "You know what **offended brother**, I think you misunderstood what he's saying. Let's help the two of you talk through this."
    - (3) "You know what **sinning brother**, you have caused offense. And this is something you need to repent of. Let us help you understand your sin..."

- v) But its only in that last situation that the charge is established by two or three witnesses.
  - (1) And because the “one or two others” we take along serve as witnesses, they need to remain as unbiased as possible.

### 3) **TELL THE CHURCH WHAT’S GOING ON.**

#### a) **And again, Scripture doesn’t offer a time table on this.**

- i) But eventually as verse 17 says, “If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church...”
  - (1) And when Jesus says “church” he’s looking ahead to a time when his disciples, his family of faith, will be called the “church”.
  - (2) And given that Jesus says we are to bring this matter before the entire church, he’s probably referring to a **local** family of faith.. to a **local** church.
- ii) So to paraphrase, Jesus is saying: “If your brother remains unrepentant after meeting with these witnesses, then you need to share this matter before the church.”
  - (1) You and these witnesses need to go and tell your local church what’s going on.

#### b) **Well, how do we do this?**

- i) Well, unfortunately, Jesus doesn’t give us a lot of details on this.
- ii) And this is one of the reasons that churches, including ours, have documents such as bi-laws.
- iii) Those bi-laws help us to agree on some of these lesser details so that we can be united and on the same page.

#### c) **Well, what happens if the church meets and appeals to this brother and he still fails to repent?**

- i) Jesus says, “If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.”
- ii) And to be treated as a Gentile and a tax collector means to be treated as an unbeliever...to be treated as someone outside the covenant.
  - (1) And sometimes treating people like this is the only way to help them understand their sin.
  - (2) And this can be accomplished in a lot of ways...
    - (a) This may be accomplished by withdrawing various privileges such as communion, or holding a church office, or teaching Sunday School.
    - (b) And ultimately if they remain unrepentant, it can be accomplished by revoking their membership status.

#### d) **We know God’s wants us to be at peace and experience His reconciliation.**

- i) And that’s why we are to get help from the church.
- ii) That’s why after going privately we are to take along witnesses.
- iii) And that’s why after talking witnesses along, we are to tell the church.
- iv) But again I ask: Will we do this?
  - (1) Will we as a church obey Jesus’ words here in Matthew 18...