

Week 3: Relationships among believers in the church (Part 1)

As we in the church are conformed over time to the image of Jesus, conflicts will occur among members. In His infinite wisdom, Jesus teaches us how to resolve them.

Part 1: (Personal) In your opinion, who are some model believers in the Christian life, and what characteristics do they have?

How does Jesus answer this question in Matthew 18:1-3?

What characteristic stands out to Jesus in Matthew 18:4?

How far does a child's importance extend according to Matthew 18:5?

Going back to Matthew 18:3, what happens to someone who does not become like a child?

(Personal) Based on these verses, do you think that Jesus is looking for self-confident, talented people who can develop impressive agendas in His church? Or does He prefer to build a church among people with few resources, talents and abilities of their own but a willingness to submit to Him?

Remember that when Jesus talks about children in Matthew 18, He's not just talking about children in age but about people of any age who have a childlike faith and humbly submit to His Word. Remember too, that when Jesus says, "Woe!" to someone, it refers to a strong and painful condemnation. To whom does He say, "Woe!" in Matthew 18:6-9?

According to Matthew 18:6-9, what is preferable to causing a person with humble, childlike faith in Jesus to stumble?

According to Matthew 18:10, what must we keep in mind if we feel the temptation to look down on another believer in the church, even though he may seem very insignificant?

Therefore, according to Matthew 18:4-10, the church cannot put down or drive away any believer with a humble faith in Jesus Christ; instead, receiving him is like receiving Jesus Christ. In Matthew 18:11, what is Jesus' attitude toward those who have left the church?

According to Matthew 18:12-13, what is His attitude in looking for them?

In Matthew 18:14, is it the Father's will that someone distance himself from Jesus and the church?

Part 2: Sometime people leave the church because of their own sin rather than sins of others against them. In Matthew 18:15, if another Christian sins against you, what must you do?

Is Jesus giving us a suggestion in this verse or a command?

In 1 Peter 4:8, should we rebuke another for **every** sin he commits against us? With what will we cover the vast majority of sins against us?

In 1 Peter 4:8 and Matthew 18:6-14, we understand that the obligation to rebuke another for his sin exists when 1) it damages another Christian or causes him to fall, or 2) causes the believer himself to withdraw from the church. In these situations, we rebuke another for his sin out of love and a desire to protect him.

Read Proverbs 15:28. What should our reaction be when someone offends us or sins against us?

What else does James 1:19-20 teach us about our reaction to offenses other commit against us?

Read Matthew 7:3-5, too. What must we do first before we rebuke another for his sin?

Read Galatians 6:1, too. When we go to another to speak of his shortcomings and sins, what is our purpose? And with what attitude do we approach him?

Now return to Matthew 18:15. To summarize everything we've studied here, what attitude should we have when we speak to another person about his sin?

Look again at Matthew 18:15. With whom must you speak about another's sin? And with whom must you not speak?

Also in Matthew 18:13 and 15, what happens if he listens and repents?