

Matt 18:15-17

15 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.

KJV

The ultimate solution to all of the sins mentioned in the letter that was sent to you on September 10 is Matthew 18:15-17

“If thy brother..

Both God and the world expect Christians to demonstrate a special loyalty toward each other. In fact...

“We ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.”(I John 3:16).

We are to, “do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.”(Galatians 6:10).

The world’s test of whether we are genuine disciples is if we have love one for another. When our brother sins, whether or not we love God or our brother is revealed by whether or not we follow the commands of Christ in Matthew 18:15-17.

John 14:15

15 If ye love me, keep my commandments.

KJV

We are deceiving ourselves if we say we love God and our brother but we will not follow these commands!

“Shall trespass against you...

The word which is translated trespass comes from the verb harmartano. The Greek tense used normally indicates a specific act of sin. It means to miss the mark, to cause one not to share in the prize.

The words “against you” do not appear in some manuscripts. In a basic sense, though, whenever a Christian misses the mark he not only damages the reputation of Christ but offends everyone else called by His name. When David sinned, the prophet said..

“Thou has given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme.”(II Samuel 12:14).

The immediate response when we see a brother missing the mark is to think..

“He hasn’t actually offended me, therefore, I’m not responsible.”

But Scripture makes it every Christian’s responsibility when another Christian stumbles. When one member of the body hurts, the whole body suffers.(Romans 12:5)

Rom 12:5

5 So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.

KJV

1 Cor 12:26

26 And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.

KJV

If the offense cannot be overlooked because of the injury that it does to relationships or to the name of Christ, we must go to our brother.

“Go To Him...

Going to an offending brother to restore him has been and always will be God’s greatest test of genuine love!

It is easy to pass judgment in our mind and then forget it. That is not love. Also, most of the time, we do not forget. We end up whispering about our brother and casting doubt on our brother. That is not love. It is also easy to tell someone else in a spirit of genuine concern and hope that they’ll do something about it. That is not love.

Matt 22:39

“Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.”

If it appears to us our brother has sinned, it is wrong for us to go to anyone else before we have gone to our brother.

To go to our brother we must go in the spirit of Galatians 6:1.

Gal 6:1

6:1 Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.

KJV

This requires some very painful preliminary steps. First, we must examine ourselves to see if we have failed in a similar area in our own life. Perhaps we have failed in our example to him.

“Thou that judgest doest the same things.”(Romans 2:1-3)

Perhaps we have failed this brother by lack of consistent prayer for him-

“God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you.”(I Samuel 12:23)....

We cannot go to our brother if we have failed to follow the commands of love we are wanting him to follow.

Once we have done this, we must work out steps of correction. The very idea of restoring a brother assumes that we have steps of action to suggest to him so that he can get from where he is to where he should be.

“Tell him his fault...

The one who would follow Matthew 18 is now faced with an even more difficult question. What do I say when I approach my brother? What valid reason can I give him for talking about something he probably doesn’t want to discuss? How can I avoid

giving him the idea that I am intruding in his private business, especially if his offense was not directed against me?

The answer is to approach him with the following statement.

“I always want to give a good report about you to anyone who asks. For this reason I wonder if you could explain something that I’m not sure I understand.”

This kind of statement and approach assures him that you are loyal to him, that you have not already judged him based on something that you heard about him or based on something that you may have misunderstood. It shows him that you love him because you are giving him the benefit of the doubt or believing the best about him.

If his offense was directed against you personally, you might say,

“Is there something that I have done to cause you to react to me in this way?”

We are given precise instruction by our Lord that we will only see clearly how to take the splinter out of our brother’s eye after we first take the beam out of our own.(Matthew 7:3-5).

Matt 7:3-5

3 And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?

4 Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye?

5 Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.

KJV

The most powerful way to tell someone else their fault is to point out your own. In fact, this is in harmony with God’s way of doing things which is opposite our natural inclinations. The more we humble ourselves, the more He is able to minister grace through our lives to others.(II Cor. 4:12).

If there is there is an offense on our part which has contributed to a brother’s offense, we cannot follow the steps of Matthew 18. We must instead follow the steps of Matthew 5:23-24.

Matt 5:23-24

23 Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee;

24 Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.

KJV

“Between you and him alone...”

If we tell anyone else about an offending brother before talking to him, we create three problems.

1. First, we prove to God and the ones we tell that we don’t love the offender and, in a deeper sense, we also prove that we don’t love the Lord himself who said...

“If ye love me, keep my commandments.”(John 14:15).

2. Second, we tempt the listener to take up an offense against our brother and may even destroy a strong friendship that might have existed between them.
“A whisperer separateth chief friends.”(Proverbs 16:28).
3. Third, we destroy the sincerity of our approach to him and hinder the potential of restoring him. It is for these reasons that Scripture warns..
“Debate thy cause with thy neighbor himself; and discover not a secret to another.”(Proverbs 25:9).

To give a bad report about a brother before you have approached him in love is to speak evil of him.(James 4:11, 12).

James 4:11-12

11 Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge.

12 There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another?

KJV

“If He shall hear you, you have gained your brother...”

The very structure of these words reinforces the spirit in which we should go to our brother that has offended us or others. God assumes that we wanted to win or gain our brother rather than condemn him. Our heart toward our brother is revealed by whether we follow the commands of Christ in dealing with every offense.

If we would follow these commands, it would stop all uncharitable judgments, whispering, and casting doubt in our church.

Jesus said..

John 14:15

15 If ye love me, keep my commandments.

KJV

John 14:23-24

23 Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.

24 He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me.

KJV

If we do not follow these commands, we do not love God. The way we treat our brother reveals whether or not we love God.

1 John 4:20-21

20 If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?

21 And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.
KJV

Have you told God that you love Him but you have not followed these commands? Have you been a hypocrite before others by acting like you love God and love them but you have not followed these commands?

God is ready to forgive if you will repent. If you will not repent, God is going to bring circumstances into your life to humble you to motivate you to repent. God will not tolerate hypocrisy. He will not allow us to be a fraud and make everyone think that we love Him when we will not keep His commands. He will discipline us. He will humble us because He is God.

Our congregation needs to establish a standard based on this command and the commands that follow this verse. To do this we need to corporately renounce the sins of uncharitable judgments, whispering, and casting doubt and ask God to forgive us for these sins. We need to corporately humble ourselves and call one another to humility before God by committing ourselves to keep this commandment in Mathew 18:15.

If you are personally guilty of not keeping this commandment, you need to be willing to do whatever you need to do to make things right your brother and others that you have injured. This would include anyone that you have whispered.

At this time you may feel the need to make a public confession that you have not loved your brother by keeping this commandment. Before I give you that opportunity, I want us to pray. If you then feel the need to make a public confession, I want you to make your way to the front row until I call upon you.