

B. Attitude is vital for this to be effective.

R. T. France: “Within such a community [of Jesus followers] there is opportunity both to harm and to care for others, and the health and effectiveness of the group will depend on the attitudes toward one another that are fostered.”

C. It is important to pursue every opportunity to forgive because when we don't it weighs on us. Then these weights accumulate until we are weighed down, imprisoned by them.

LIVE THE STORY

The following questions are designed for use in our Community Groups as an aid to growth in the Gospel and Community.

- Why might it be important to remember how Jesus transformed the objective of such processes from what Moses taught in the Law?
- How does the context inform the process given in 18:15-17?
- How does the process described in the text reduce the chances of people being held to subjective standards which are outside of Scripture?
- How does the process describe... minimize shame for both parties?
- In what ways does the process outlined maximize opportunities for reconciliation?
- Are there relationships that you have neglected because you haven't followed the instruction of these verses?
- How is this text calling you to engage your brothers and sisters?
- How does it put our flesh to death when we take Matthew 18 seriously?

Advancing the Gospel of the Kingdom: Kingdom Culture – Part 3

Jerry Cisar — March 6, 2022

Text: Matthew 18:12-17

Introduction

R. T. France: “[Matthew 18] is not so much a ‘Manual of Discipline’,... as a *guide to relationships*: it is only in vv. 15-17 that specific procedures are set out, and *those are not so much ‘disciplinary’ as pastoral.*”

Frederick Dale Bruner: “Three self-denial stories are... followed by three other-seeking stories.”

This chapter is less about procedure than the heart that needs to drive the process. Less about church discipline than it is about forgiveness and relationship. Less about removing people from the church, and more about pursuing the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Ian Paul states it clearly: “The whole aim of the exercise is not to win an argument, but to win the person—the opposite of the possibility mentioned in the previous verses that they should be ‘lost’”

I. Modifying the Objective

A. Moses 2.0 (Deut. 18:18)

- i. Vs. 15-17 stand in stark contrast to a very similar procedure established through Moses.
 - a) Deut. 17:2-7
 - b) Deut. 19:15-19
- ii. The two or three witness in Matthew 18 serve a different objective than in Deuteronomy.

- B. If we see Matthew 18 as a means of dealing with troublemakers or unruly believers in the church rather than a means of winning them over, we are still living under the Law and not the Spirit!

II. Minimizing Shame

- A. Following Matthew 18:15-17 minimizes the potential shame of the person suspected of sin.

Martin Franzmann: “He tells the brother first alone; even here, when the little one has sinned, he cannot despise him and dare not risk ruining him by a sharp and pitiless exposure of his sin. He works to win the sinner, not to degrade him.”

- B. Why is it important to minimize shame?

Martin Franzmann: “No sinner shall be needlessly degraded, ... no sinner’s fate shall be committed to the subjectivity of any one man but shall be the concern of the collective love and sobriety of the whole church....”

Difficult Conversations: “Email is a wildly efficient way to keep in touch.... For the day-to-day tasks of keeping up with a friend or moving a project forward, it’s just about perfect.”

“But ask email to do anything even slightly more complicated in a relationship, and you can quickly run into trouble.... Email isn’t dialogue—it’s serial monologue. There’s no opportunity to interrupt for clarification, to see the other’s reaction and correct course, and to test our assumptions about their intentions before locking into our interpretations and emotional reactions.”

“Email doesn’t convey tone of voice, facial expressions, or body language—all of which help us make sense of the sender’s intentions.”

If one must resort to written format due to circumstances, I can recommend no better resource for how to approach that than *The Heart of a Servant Leader* by C. John (Jack) Miller.

III. Maximizing Opportunity

- A. Matthew 18:15-17 maximizes opportunity for repentance and understanding.

- B. The offense doesn’t grow to gargantuan size, and we may realize that love can cover it!

- C. Elders are given the same protections as congregants... which is to say pastors are little ones too (1 Tim. 5:19-20)!

IV. Maintaining a Posture of Forgiveness

- A. The New Covenant newness here which transforms what Moses had given in the Law is that the goal is always forgiveness and reconciliation of the sinner and not condemnation and death.
 - i. Peter seems to have understood this point well (Matt. 18:21).
 - ii. Jesus requires unlimited forgiveness (Matt. 18:21-22).

Martin Franzmann concludes: “Forgiveness is the ground the disciple walks on, and the air he breathes; he exists only on terms of forgiveness. The word of forgiveness which the church hears fills the church with forgiveness.... If [the disciple] violates the fellowship with the brother whom God has placed beside him, he forfeits his fellowship with God.”