

# Biblical Conflict Resolution Class: Week 1

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## Matthew 18:15-35

**A.** The theme of Matthew 18 is God's great concern for the spiritually broken, lost, and needy:

1. God deeply cares about the powerless
2. God deeply cares about those who have been victimized by sin
3. God deeply cares about those who have victimized others

**B.** If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother. 16 But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every fact may be confirmed. 17 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. 18 Truly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven. 19 "Again I say to you, that if two of you agree on earth about anything that they may ask, it shall be done for them by My Father who is in heaven. 20 For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst." 21 Then Peter came and said to Him, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" 22 Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.

Then beginning in v. 23 we have the account of the Merciful King and the Wicked Slave. The King forgave the Slave a multimillion dollar debt, but the Slave would not forgive a fellow Slave a debt of a few thousand dollars. The highlight of this account is found in v. 33: "Should you not also have had mercy on your fellow slave, in the same way that I had mercy on you?"

**C. Takeaway:** The church is to be a place where sinners are mercifully restored, and the church is to be a place where people are

quick to forgive, quick to seek reconciliation, and quick to seek restoration.

**D.** Matthew 18:15-35 is divided into three sections – each with a one-word descriptor...

**1.CLARITY (vs. 15-20)**

**2.FORGIVENESS (vs. 21-22)**

**3.MERCY (vs. 23-35)**

**E.** We could also view these as CLARITY (or a clear process) in the context of FORGIVENESS and MERCY (this is why it's helpful to look at the whole chapter in order to identify the full context)

**F.** One at a time...

### **1. Vs. 15-20: CLARITY**

**a.** Step 1 – one on one (v. 15) “If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother.

**b.** Step 2 – Go in two's (v. 16) But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every fact may be confirmed.

**c.** Step 3 (v. 17) 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.

**d.** The NT describes three categories of sins that reach this level of seriousness 1 :

**a) Major doctrinal error (e.g., 1 Tim 1:20)**

**b) Major moral failure (e.g. 1 Cor 5)**

**c) Persistent divisiveness (e.g., Titus 3:10)**

**e.** The Westminster Confession (30.3) explains: “Church censures are necessary, for the reclaiming and gaining of offending brethren, for deterring of others from the like offenses, for purging out of that leaven which might infect the whole lump, for vindicating the honor of Christ, and the holy profession of the gospel, and for preventing the wrath of God, which might justly fall upon the church, if they should suffer His covenant, and the seals thereof [the ordinances] to be

profaned by notorious and obstinate offenders.”

**f.** The purpose of church discipline in all its forms is not to punish for punishment’s sake, but to call forth repentance in order to recover the straying sheep.

**1)** Ultimately, there is only one sin for which a church member is excommunicated — an unwillingness to repent. When repentance (and the fruit thereof - see Matt 3:8 and Acts 26:20) is apparent, the church is to declare the sin forgiven and receive the offender into fellowship once again.

**2)** We can think of the fruit of repentance as an arc.

**g.** Matthew finishes these thoughts by emphasizing the need for church discipline to be exercised in the context of continuous forgiveness and extravagant mercy...

## **2. Vs. 21-22: FORGIVENESS**

## **3. Vs. 23-35: MERCY**