

“Kingdom People” – Week 26

SUNDAY, MARCH 22, 2026 - MICHAEL BOWERS



Summary - “Relationships led by the Grace and Mercy of Christ”

In the previous week we walked through Matthew 18 and the teachings of Jesus in vs. 1-9. In doing so we examined three key truths: e examined these truths. 1.) Kingdom people walk in humility, 2.) Kingdom people protect one another, and 3.) Kingdom people take sin seriously. In this we also that our sin does not happen in seclusion, and the reality that the payment for our sin was expensive. Jesus Christ took the wrath of God and the sins of all humanity upon himself on the cross, but Jesus rose from the grave and conquered sin and death forever. As Paul David Tripp writes, “When we appropriately view the weight of our sin, then and only then do we grasp the power of the cross. He willingly took the collective weight of all of our sins to the cross. The eternal one, Jesus Christ, was willing to die so that we could live forever.” It is because of this truth that we are able to walk through verses 1-14 with great hope, joy, and peace. When we begin to truly see the cross for what it is, the wrath that Christ endured upon it that we deserved, and the length at which Christ goes in order to rescue sinful man, we are truly humbled and able to enter into verses 15-20 with the right heart and mindset. Verses 1-14 are filled with lessons that stand on the foundation of humility. Humility is recognizing who God is, which leads to freedom from self-centeredness and a reliance on the Holy Spirit rather than self-deprecation. The teachings of Jesus emphasize that humility is the essential foundation for Christian godliness, allowing believers to surrender to God's purpose. Why is a quick reminder of humility so crucial to cover for our discussion of Matthew 18:15-20? Because without it, the instructions on confronting sin, seeking forgiveness, and restoration are simply impossible without humility and surrender.

Scripture - Matthew 18:15-20

“If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. ¹⁶ But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. 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 be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed^[a] in heaven. ¹⁹ Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. ²⁰ For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.”

Key Terms - meaning of “agree” in vs. 19

Agree: *symphōneō* (soom-fo-neh'-o) - to be harmonious, accordant, agreeing, thing agreed upon, compact

Key Apps, Websites, and Online Tools for Further Study

- <https://www.blueletterbible.org/>
- <https://www.biblegateway.com/>
- <https://biblehub.com/>
- <https://www.youversion.com/>
- <https://www.bibleref.com/>
- <https://bible.org/>
- <https://netbible.org/>
- <https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/>
- <https://www.desiringgod.org/>
- <https://www.gty.org/>
- <https://www.gotquestions.org/>
- <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/>
- <https://carm.org/>
- <https://dwellapp.io/>

Further Scripture Study

Psalm 32 and 51; Isaiah 53:1-6; Micah 6:8; Matthew 18:1-9; Galatians 6:1-3; Ephesians 4:2 & 5:21; Philipians 2:3-4; Colossians 3:12

As you study the scripture verses provided for this week, study for right context and right questions...

Right Context:

- The verse itself and key word(s) that stand out in the verse (meanings)
- The verses around the verse, the section of scripture, the chapter, the book, old/new testament, and relation to the rest of scripture
- Author and Date (Who wrote the book and when?)
- Audience (Who is the book written to? Main characters in the story and/or text?)
- Main points and overall purpose of the book
- Historical background, cultural significance, setting, people, rulers, etc.
- Scripture references; let scripture interpret scripture as much as possible

Right Questions:

- What does this passage say?
- What does this passage mean to its original audience?
- What is this passage teaching me about God?
- What does this passage tell us about man?
- What does this passage demand of me? (Is there a command to obey? Is there a promise to claim? Is there a sin to avoid? How is this applicable to me?)
- How does this passage change the way I relate to people? (What actions must I take in response to this passage?)
- What does this passage prompt me to pray? (For God, for others, for my community, for family, etc.)

Key Thoughts

Kingdom people believe and practice forgiveness and restoration. (Matthew 18:15-20).

This passage of scripture is powerful and beautiful, yet without humility and prayer, it can be abused and cause great damage to our relationships and the unity of the church. We must look at it through the lens of humility as Paul says in Ephesians 5:21, "submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ."

Humility gives us a clear view of our sin, our Savior, and how His grace and mercy should guide us in our daily lives. Remember that Jesus starts this entire passage in 18:3-4 where He states, "Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven."

We practice forgiveness and restoration from a childlike faith and a humble childlike submission.

Kingdom people prayerfully and humbly seek restoration with other believers.

We live in a world of conflicts everywhere. We have been trained by all forms of media to grab our views on a host of topics, grab all the online arguments and ammunition we can get, then we get down in a bunker, hiding, waiting, to toss an anger-filled argument into the fray with people we don't know, don't have relationships with, and then we walk away. Zero solution. Zero peace.

Jesus is not talking about online arguments or someone on TV that we think has "wronged" us. No, Vs. 15-20 are talking about real life, face to face contact that is built upon the basis that there is a valuable relationship between two people, and/or a group of people. Jesus is talking to his disciples about fellow followers who have sinned against them personally.

Ignoring the sin and brokenness caused by another believer cannot be ignored. If you have to sit down with someone else to share how you have been wronged by another believer, yet do not want to follow Jesus' teachings to bring about restoration, then you are ultimately also sinning in the process.

Kingdom people must first consider attitude before action.

Humility is our guide. Mercy is our directive. Grace is our example.

Key Thoughts

If we ignore animosity and brokenness with another believer, then we are ignoring the command and teachings of Jesus. If we go to another believer in anger and seek to win the battle rather than humbly seek restoration, we impact our relationship with this believer and also the body of Christ, the church.

We are not called to approach conflict as a police officer trying to arrest a criminal, but rather a doctor seeking to heal and restore.

We are not called to be a skunk or a turtle in biblical restoration:

- When a skunk is approached and threatened, it becomes upset and sprays its stench on anything and everything around it.
- When a turtle is approached or threatened, they pull everything inside their shell and hide.

Kingdom people confront confidentially and compassionately.

The main reason we balk at or pause to address sinful actions toward us from other believers is simply this: the Biblical model for handling conflict is often ignored and rarely practiced.

We confront because we care, not to condemn. We confront to restore, not to win an argument. We confront to deepen a relationship, not to sever one. We compassionately and confidentially handle conflict because it is the model Jesus has given us.

Silence and time do not heal. The truth is, the longer you wait, the more impatient you become, and the more impatient you become, the more likely it is that anger will surface. When anger takes hold, reconciliation is much harder to attain.

It is the role of the followers of Jesus to prayerfully and humbly approach other believers with the goal of vs. 15: gaining a brother. (See also Galatians 6:1-3)

According to Jesus and later Paul, one-on-one, confidential and compassionate, face-to-face conversations with a prayerful expectation are the biblical command.

Kingdom people handle conflict with truth, humility and grace, in order to grow a relationship with another believer and to grow in our walk with Christ, however, this may not always lead to immediate reconciliation (vs. 18:16)

Key Thoughts

If the conversation does not end in healing and humble reconciliation, then you return to the conversation with another believer as a witness (vs. 18:16). Christ-centered communities and followers of Jesus seek accountability in conflict. (See also Proverbs 18:17)

We must choose people to step into these situations who are mature in the faith, who will have ears to hear, who are slow to speak and quick to listen, who are compassionate, and who desire healing. Again, picture three people in a circle, working toward unity, not two vs one, desiring to stay on our sides and win.

Jesus gives even further direction if there is still no relational movement or forgiveness in verse 17. In these moments (which should be rare if prior steps of vs. 15-16 are followed), we must continue to work towards redemption. We must desire more to resolve a conflict than to dissolve a relationship.

Rarely do relationships need this level of church care, but there are moments when it is necessary, biblical, and part of the kingdom culture Jesus has established. Jesus uses this phrase, "whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." Quick translation in light of this passage: Any authority we have in these moments is from the LORD, and if followed with the right attitude and action, then the authority has been given for a group of believers to carry out. Again, this is based on humility, on the realization of the magnitude of our sin and the forgiveness we have through Jesus Christ.

Kingdom people are called to have redemptive conversations.

The word "agree" in vs. 19 is the Greek word "symphoneo", which we get our word "symphony" from. This is a metaphor taken from a number of musical instruments set to the same key, and playing the same tune: here, it means a perfect agreement of the hearts, desires, wishes, and voices of two or more persons praying to God.

This passage (vs. 15-20), built on humility, compassion, and surrender, is designed to guide the individual believer in their personal life and in their conflicts with other believers, yet it is also powerful for the entire body, the ekklesia, the church.

Where do biblical and redemptive relationships lead and land us? It opens our fellowship to the presence and movement of God. And when we are in agreement, in purpose and practice, then our words in the community, the sound we make, the impact we have on those without Christ, the example we set, is a beautiful symphony that is absent in our world today.

Reflect & Respond

When you think about moments in your life where you are in conflict with someone else, do you typically enter into dealing with that conflict with the mindset being to “win your brother”, or are you typically more interested in winning the argument?

When someone sins against you do you typically aim to pursue restoration or are you more likely to seek justice?

The false wisdom of our culture and our world often tells us, “Time heals all wounds.” Have you found this to be true in your life or not? What has time alone ever done to help restore relationship for you?

Do you have a relationship where you have held onto sin and pride and need to prayerfully seek forgiveness and restoration?

Do you weigh their sinful actions (gossip, lies, or other sinfulness) with a greater weight than if they were your own? Are you judging others more harshly than you judge yourself (see Matthew 7:3-5)

Do you want to follow the example of Jesus for restoration and healing, or the world's example of unending conflict and divisiveness? Why do you think following the example of Matthew 18:15-20 is so hard and so rarely seen in today's world?

Do we realize when we flee conflict that we are fleeing the opportunity for God's grace and mercy to be poured out and modeled in a broken world? How can you step into conflict this week using this model and coming with a heart of humility?

Additional Resource:

How to Have That Difficult Conversation: Gaining the Skills for Honest and Meaningful Communication, by Dr. Henry Cloud and Dr. John Townsend.

<https://www.amazon.com/Have-That-Difficult-Conversation-Communication/dp/0310342562>