

The Gospel According to Luke

REPENTANCE AND FORGIVENESS

PART 9

The Structure to Relationship

READ MATTHEW 18:15-17

INTRODUCTION

Our culture has been very successful at instructing people to take care of themselves through cutting off anyone that has done anything wrong against them. There is little time given to people who have harmed us because we have been taught that they are not worth our time to try and work on the relationship. The Bible takes a different approach in that God gives us instruction on how to heal relationships in multiple locations including this passage in Matthew. Jesus does not ask us to cut off all relationship with someone who has wronged us. Instead, He tells us to go to one another when there was a wrongdoing and confront it in love (Ephesians 4:15) with hopes of restoration of that relationship with our brother or sister.

Jesus gives a practical, step by step process that includes going to the person who has offended me and show him where he has sinned. Hopefully, in an ideal world, that brother will see their error and desire to correct it so that fellowship can be restored. In the case that they do not want to repent and ask for forgiveness Jesus continues on to another step. We are to go to that person with a couple others. Notice that the person who was sinned against is going to the one who has done the offending. We do not sit back and wait for them to come to us but rather, we approach them with a desire to restore the relationship. This is counter cultural.

The goal in all broken relationships in Scripture is restoration. This is God's desire in our relationship with Him as well as our relationships with others around us. If we truly believe that Jesus has forgiven us of all of our sins, we can be sure that He wants us to forgive one another for the things that offend us as well. This is a difficult process and it doesn't always end well. Sometimes, even after following the structure Jesus gives us in Matthew, people don't desire to be corrected and in those cases, Christ tells us to treat that person as an unbeliever. This is a hard thing to confront but necessary when trying to honor God with the intentions of restoring a relationship.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How do you think the secular world would react to a person trying to fix their relationship in the way found in Matthew 18? What about Christians?
2. What is the most difficult thing about forgiving someone who has sinned against you? How do we change our approach to make it something we can find joy in?
3. Do you think that the majority of Christians follow the steps laid out in Matthew 18? Why or why not?
4. Have you ever had to approach a brother or sister and correct them? What worked in that situation and what went poorly?
5. How can we encourage one another in handling disagreements and offenses in a Godly way? What are the steps that we can take to heal relationships?

WRAP UP

God desires restored relationship. He desires it with us as individuals and He desires to see us practicing forgiveness and repentance with one another as well. We have to be on guard that we do not write off those who have offended us to condemnation. We also must be sure that if someone offends, we go to them. Don't sit back and wait for them to see their fault. Go to them in love and work out the relationship so that both of you can glorify God through a relationship that honors Him. .