

The Talmid



Talmid תלמיד a Hebrew word that means "a true disciple who desires to be what the Rabbi Jesus is."

Whoever claims to live in Him must walk as Jesus did. 1 John 2:6 (NIV)

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THE STEPS TO CORRECTING OFFENDING BROTHERS

Matthew 18:15-20

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THE MESSIAH'S DISCIPLES AND THEIR BEHAVIOR TOWARD ONE ANOTHER

[Matthew 18:1-35](#)

The Steps to Correcting Offending Brothers, [Matthew 18:15-20](#)

(Matthew 18:15-20) Introduction— Division— Church Discipline: sinning against a brother is a matter of great concern to God. It is so serious that if the offending brother refuses to rectify the matter, he is to be severely disciplined ([Matthew 18:17](#)).

However, when dealing with discipline, **two critical points are to be noted.**

1. The sinning brother *is a brother, a genuine believer*. He sins against another brother. The breach is between two genuine believers who are *in the church*.
2. The trespass is a personal offense; that is, the wrong and harm are done against another person. A fellow Christian believer is injured, hurt, and damaged in some way.

God has one great concern: He wants peace restored. He wants peace between

the brothers, and He wants peace within the church. The disturbance caused by two offending brothers is so damaging that God lays down very specific steps as to how the matter is to be handled; and if the sinning brother refuses to be reconciled and to rectify the wrong, *God says the disturbance is not to be tolerated any longer.*

[Step 1: attempt reconciliation \(v.15-16\).](#)
[Step 2: discipline the brother \(v.17-18\).](#)
[Step 3: the essential step—bathe the matter in prayer \(v.19-20\).](#)

[Believers, Sin Against— Reconciliation: the first step in correcting an offending brother is to attempt reconciliation \(Matthew 18:15-17\)](#)

(See Deeper Study #1 on page 3 for more discussion).

Note when a brother disturbs or offends us, we do not wait on the *offending brother* to come to us. We are to go immediately to him.

There are [three specific steps to be taken.](#)

1. Go to the brother alone and **"tell him his fault."** This seems to indicate that he may not know that he has done wrong and offended us. If we do not go to him, he

may never know or be able to correct his behavior. If he does know he has offended us and we do not approach him, then the breach remains, and the guilt of the sin continues. The division and damaging effects of the division can only grow and deepen.

Something else can happen: our own heart and mind can brood, be poisoned, become resentful, even bitter and grudging and revengeful. We desperately need to do all we can to resolve the matter.

1. He is to be approached alone. We are not to share the matter with anyone else, nor are we to openly rebuke him. This only deepens and hardens the feelings and division, and causes bitterness and hostility.

2. The words "**between thee and him alone**" hint at how he is to be approached:

a. humbly; searching our own heart (to see if we did anything to cause the offending behavior—knowing that we too can offend others ever so easily).

b. being soft spoken and gentle.

c. expressing our desire for understanding and straightening out the matter so that we may be reconciled.

"Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift" ([Matthew 5:24](#)).

"Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves" ([Phil. 2:3](#)).

"Of these things put them in remembrance, charging them before the Lord that they strive not about words to no profit, but to the subverting of the hearers" ([2 Tim. 2:14](#)).

"And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient" ([2 Tim. 2:24](#)).

Thought 1. When a brother offends us, our response becomes critical to Christ.

There are four responses common to human flesh that we are to guard against with all diligence.

a. **A *self-centered response*:** acting babyish, innocent, or as a martyr; brooding, hatching, and pondering the evil and hurt done to us; being consumed with the wrong done; keeping our minds on the personal injury until the whole divisive affair poisons our hearts and minds. Remember: this is common to human flesh, a tendency among us all.

b. **A *withdrawing response*:** avoiding the brother; being apprehensive, perhaps even fearing to face or associate with him; showing displeasure or getting back at him by ignoring or neglecting him.

c. **A *gossiping response*:** a self-justifying sharing; a self-vindicating sharing; a tendency to share hurt and evil and wrong done, to share with close friends in order to picture ourselves as blameless. The problem with sharing the division with others is that Christ says we are to go to the person first. Then if he does not respond to our appeal, we are to seek loving and wise counsel.

d. **A *retaliating response*:** becoming embroiled in the divisiveness and wrongdoing ourselves; reacting and lowering ourselves to the level of the wrongdoer; getting back at the wrongdoer.

Thought 2. When a brother offends us, the most important response (after prayer, of course) is to go to the brother alone. There is great wisdom in this instruction, wisdom that teaches both brothers to subject the flesh and to give prominence to the spirit.

a. **Wisdom for the *offended brother*.** Human nature tends to react, brood, share the evil, and seek retaliation—whether simply withdrawing or attacking. Christ demands that we conquer the urges of the flesh to react and that we control the situation through the Spirit. We are to keep quiet and pray and then go to the brother and discuss the matter, seeking reconciliation. Simply put, we are to be spiritually minded.

b. **Wisdom for the *offending brother*.** Human nature avoids and is slow in admitting wrong. A humble, loving, and caring visit to seek reconciliation is *an encouragement* for a brother to confess, apologize, and be reconciled.

Thought 3. Note just how wise the Lord's instruction

really is. Just think what enormous lessons and qualities are learned and developed by three brothers sitting down to seek reconciliation, **the very qualities of the Spirit's fruit.....**

- ◆ Love
- ◆ Joy
- ◆ Peace
- ◆ Longsuffering
- ◆ Gentleness
- ◆ Goodness
- ◆ Faith
- ◆ Meekness
- ◆ Self-control

Thought 4. Think what a different world this would be if this step alone was practiced by all: the difference in human relationships personally, nationally, and internationally; the difference in health emotionally and physically (ulcers, blood pressure, heart attacks, etc.).

2. Go to the brother with witnesses. Some Christian brothers are stubborn; others are immature; still others are gripped by selfish and sinful motives and behavior. Therefore an offending brother may not be willing to be reconciled nor willing to admit his wrong. In such cases one or two loving and wise brothers are to be taken with us to the offending brother.

This act does several things.

- a. It shows the brother that there is deep concern; a number of people do care and want to help.
- b. It also shows that the offense is known by more than one or two people. At least several know.
- c. It also provides objective and wise counsel between the two differing parties. Agreement and reconciliation are more likely to arise from this.
- d. It helps to prevent bias, selfish reaction, and partial interest.

Thought 1. This step should never be taken until the brother has been approached alone. We are not to talk about or share a brother's wrong with anyone else—not ever—not until we have sat down with him personally in the love of Christ. However, this step *is* to be taken if he persists in his divisiveness. But it is always to be done in a spirit of humility, love, care, and personal unworthiness.

Thought 2. There is sometimes a tendency to give up after a divisive brother refuses reconciliation—to let him suffer whatever punishment follows. However, Christ says, **"Keep on; stay after him. Don't give up."** Note: this is the demand of Christ throughout the whole course of discipline. Christ never gives up reaching out to the sinning brother. Therefore, the church is never to give up (see [Deeper Study #2—Matthew 18:17](#) see [page # 9 for more discussion](#)). The divisiveness of the Galatian church and its personal attack upon Paul are prime examples of this fact. Paul was constantly reaching out to those who were so imperfect and ever failing (cp. [Galatians 4:19](#)).

(See Deeper Study #2 on page 4 for more discussion).

3. Go before the church

Continued in next edition...



DEEPER STUDY #1

BELIEVERS, SIN AGAINST RECONCILIATION (Matthew 18:15)

([Matthew 18:15](#)) **Believers, Sin Against—Reconciliation:** how does a Christian brother trespass or offend another brother? There are many ways.

1. By his behavior and Christian liberty: doing that which is allowed but is offensive and misunderstood by a weaker brother. (Cp. [Romans 14:1-23](#); [1 Cor. 8:12](#).)
 - a. Offending his conscience
 - b. Grieving his spirit
 - c. Being a stumbling block
 - d. Being a bad example
2. By confronting him face to face.
 - a. Insulting
 - b. Abusing
 - c. Humiliating
 - d. Degrading
 - e. Arguing
 - f. Showing disrespect
 - g. Showing bitterness
 - h. Being angry
 - i. Being hostile

3. By tearing him down behind his back.
 - a. Talking about d. Murmuring
 - b. Lying e. Criticizing
 - c. Gossiping f. Spreading rumors
4. By encroaching on his rights or property.
 - a. Deceiving d. Lying
 - b. Cheating e. Envy
 - c. Stealing f. Bypassing

DEEPER STUDY #2

DISCIPLINE, CHURCH

(Matthew 18:17)

([Matthew 18:17](#)) **Discipline, Church:** the outlines and preceding notes of this Scripture should be read before reading this note in order to have a complete picture ([Matthew 18:15-20](#)).

A brother who has a personal quarrel with another brother is to be disciplined **if three things exist**.

1. If he continues in open rebellion against the Lord.
2. If he continues to be gripped by the selfishness, covetousness, and worldliness of this earth.
3. If he refuses reconciliation with his brother after three attempts at reconciliation have been made as spelled out by Christ.

What is the discipline? The divisive brother is to be treated just as he is acting: as an outsider—just as a heathen and a publican. The heathen or sinners and publicans were the very people for whom Christ reached out. They were outside the fold, but they were reachable. The divisive brother is acting as an outsider: he will not listen and respond to the humble and loving appeals for reconciliation. Therefore, he is to be left alone and not bothered until he is ready to listen and be reconciled. He is refusing reconciliation and living as an outsider, just as the lost live. Accordingly, the church can do nothing but treat him as an outsider.

1. The offending brother himself made the choice not to be reconciled. He stood at the crossroads of reconciliation on three specific occasions. He is personally responsible for his decision.

2. The church reached and reached out for the dear brother. It made every attempt to lead the brother to stop the divisiveness and to be reconciled.
3. The life the brother has chosen to live is his discipline. It is his decision to be an outsider instead of being reconciled to his brother and his church. It is his decision to live in the world of "*sinners and publicans*" instead of living in the presence and reconciliation of God's people.
4. The discipline of the brother is a discipline which allows the church to continue to reach out for the backslidden brother. *Sinners and publicans* are the very people to whom Christ went and to whom the church is to go. The discipline of the brother is: "Let him be unto thee as a heathen and a publican." Apparently Christ is saying this: the church is to continue seeking after him *as it deems wise*, just as they seek after all outsiders. Realistically, however, the attempts at future reconciliation would probably be much less often. The dear brother's heart will have fewer opportunities to be stirred by those who love and care for him so deeply.

"And whosoever shall offend one of these little ones that believe in me, it is better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea" ([Mark 9:42](#)).

"Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling block or an occasion to fall in his brother's way" ([Romans 14:13](#)).

"But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died" ([Romans 14:15](#)).

"It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak" ([Romans 14:21](#)).

"Giving no offence in any thing" ([2 Cor. 6:3](#)).

"He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him" ([1 John 2:10](#)).