CIC (10 Dec 2006)/Mao Baptist Church, Imphal, Manipur (6 Mar 11) Dr. Rick Griffith

WOLBI (22 May 11), SBC (23 May 2012) Single Message

NIV 40 Minutes

How to Restore Relationships

Title

*Matthew 18:15-20*

Topic: Discipline

Theme: Why must we restore sinning Christians properly?

Thrust: We act on God’s behalf.

Purpose: The listeners will confess any sin in their lives worthy of church discipline and help others do so.

Meditation: God is a restoring God

Reading: Matthew 18

Song: “Make Us One” or “Holy Spirit” (Getty) or “Blessed Be the Tie That Binds” or “They Will Know We Are Christians by Our Love” or “Bind Us Together”

# Introduction

### Interest: [“Kay” and I overcame relational issues through loving confrontation.]

#### Some 30 years ago this month I sang on a music team of seven musicians called Crossroads. We shared the gospel in China and eleven other countries and—praise God—we reached over 600 people per concert! In fact, we saw over 10,000 people trust Christ as indicated in comment cards at our 269 concerts.

Crossroads

Ministry Map

China

#### If you know anything about spiritual warfare, it is that the enemy of our souls concentrates his efforts on believers who are having an impact for Christ. Satan doesn’t worry about ineffective and carnal Christians, as they are no threat to his little kingdom. But ministries that are pushing back the darkness receive all that he can throw at them.

Black

#### In our team, the opposition came from within—relationships that were a challenge. On that team was one particular woman named Kay. She was a godly woman but in terms of preferences, styles, and the like we didn’t see eye-to-eye at all. In fact, many times she felt that I just a “mister-know-it-all.” (And of, course she was right as I *did* know it all.) She didn’t like my mannerisms, my clothes, or my insights in our group Bible studies. She avoided being around me and it seemed that I could do nothing right! She saw me as really arrogant.

#### So what do you do when you are forced into a working relationship with someone who just plain does not like you? I found that I couldn’t really avoid Kay. After all, every day we had four hours of music practice with the team. I had to sing in harmony with her—literally! But discord often reigned. Then we had a concert to give and *had* to work together.

#### God ministered to me then through two texts in Matthew that became “relational pillars” that I want to share with you today. These texts literally changed my life. They enabled Kay and me to reconcile our differences—so much so that three years after our initial differences Kay actually said “yes” to marrying me! Yes, Kay is her middle name. Her full name is now Susan Kay Griffith.

Pillars

Romance

Susan

### Need: Have you ever had a problem with another believer? (If you say “no,” then I wonder which planet you have been living on!) Are you in fellowship with every Christian that you know now—your family members, your work colleagues, your neighbors and friends? If you’re not in harmony, what should you do?

Matthew

### Issue #1: If you hurt the other person, Matthew 5 tells you what to do. [Read Matt. 5:23-24.] God places the responsibility to reconcile on *you* if you are the *offender*.

• Offender

• General

#### The last time I checked, believers weren’t offering up sacrifices at the altar. So what does the “altar” refer to today?

Lord’s Supper

Offended

4 Directions

“at the altar”

Matt 5:23-24

#### At the very least, it refers to the Lord’s table—a sign of our fellowship & unity.

### Issue #2: However, in some situations, you are the *offended*. The other person is guilty of sin. Every church eventually encounters problems with believers living in sin. In these cases a loving body will restore them to God’s holiness.

### Intro MPI: So *how* do we restore sinning Christians properly? (This issue is addressed in your sermon outline.) When someone goes astray from God’s will, what process do we use to bring that person back? This doesn’t just refer to marriage, nor to serious sins—it's any kind of sin that can hurt *any* relationship among believers.

Other Relationships

How restore?

### Background: Why I am talking about resolving relational problems now?

Black

#### Well, I’ve heard through the grapevine… no, just kidding! I’ve thanked God countless times that this is not an issue here at present.

#### I just know that issues surface in *every* relationship, including ours. At some point, I am going to offend you and you will offend me. So what should we do?

### Text: Today we’ll find the way to restore relationships in Matthew 18.

#### The context of Matthew 18 is the value of one—one child (1-9), one sheep (10-14), one sinner (15-20), one debtor (21-35). At the heart of this chapter is verses 15-20…

Matthew 18

• 1 • 1 • 1 • 1

#### In Matthew 18:15-20 Jesus provides God’s plan for loving church discipline. Let’s read it together [read 15-20.]

Read 15-20

### Preview: This text has two main teachings on restoring Christians in sin. Verses 15-17 give *how* to restore them and verses 18-20 give *why* to restore them.

• How

• Why

### Transition: Let’s first see *God’s way to restore believers in sin and that is to*…

# I. Keep the matter as private as possible (15-17).

MP

[God’s strategy to bring sinning Christians back is to involve as few people as you can.]

## The desired end is restoration, not punishment or excommunication.

Restoration!

### The goal of discipline is behavior change to bring the wayward one back. Unfortunately, too many churches “excommunicate” to punish rather than restore.

### Restoration is God’s goal for a wandering saint in the sheep image of verses 10-14.

### Restoration is the explicit teaching of this text in verse 15b.

### Restoration is the goal of church discipline in other passages like Galatians 6:1.

Gal. 6:1

## God’s restoring process has four steps that progressively tell more and more people about the sin (15-17).

4 Steps

### Talk to the person by yourself (15).

Step 1

#### What’s our human tendency here? It is to tell *others* about the problem instead of the one involved, but God commands us to keep the issue as private as possible.

#### This differs from Matthew 5 in that you’re not an *offender*, but the *offended*.

Offended

#### Note also that in Matthew 5 sin may not be in the picture, but Matthew 18 deals specifically with a believer living *in sin*. This does not refer simply to differences of opinion on debatable matters.

#### Earlier we saw from Matthew 5:23-24 that God places the responsibility to reconcile on *you* if you are the *offender*. Now whose job is it to initiate if you are the *offended*? Yes, again the responsibility is *yours*! You say, “That’s not fair! Why is it my job in *both* situations? Whether I am the *offender or the offended* I still have to make the first move?” Well, if relationships are not resolved between believers, it has to be through the fault of both—as *both* have the command of God to resolve it!

• Initiative

• You

•You

#### While letter writing was very popular in the time of Christ, our Lord specifically says to deal with these sensitive matters face-to-face. Today this means confrontation should never be handled via letter, phone calls or emails. It also prohibits the cowardice of anonymous communication.

Go in Person

#### Our family has tried to do this since our three sons were young—not to let them do the “Mom! Dad! So-and-so did such-and-such to me!” We just told him, “Matthew 18, bud. If you can’t solve it, we’ll be step 2…” They rarely came back to us!

Brothers

1996

#### Now that they are older, they solve the problems among themselves without our intervention. Some friends were amazed that Kurt and Stephen moved to the US for college and decided to stay as roommates—now for almost 4 years!

#### However, most of the time believers don’t keep issues private—or we don’t address them at all. Why do *you* think don’t we confront others? Tell the person next to you why! (Small groups for 1 min.) Why don’t we confront?

Why don’t we?

• ignorance

• doubt  
• failure

• fear

• excuses

• impurity

• unsocial

• ignorance of what God commands here?

• doubt that it will work?

• failure of past confrontations that didn’t work?

• fear that we might look bad?

• excuses that we can’t get together?

• impurity in our own life?

• unsocial in that we just don’t care enough to risk it?

Step 1

(So… you should talk to the person by yourself. But what if the offender does not repent? We need step 2 where we…)

### Take one or two others along (16).

Step 2

#### Who should these 1-2 others be? These persons should be individuals whom the offender respects as they will best help restore him/her. They should *not* go *instead of* the offended believer, but *along with* this person.

Who?

Deut 19 Heb

• Why?

Deut 19 Eng

#### Why take 1-2 others along? The OT law prohibited conviction of crimes based on only one person’s testimony (read Deut. 19:15). The NT teaching is the same, protecting the offender from an easily offended or lying accuser.

(What if the offender *still* does not repent? Go to step 3…)

### Expose the sin to the entire church (17a).

Step 3

#### The church leadership certainly must be involved at this point before the matter is brought to the congregation. They also must see the issue isn’t just a difference of opinion between two parties; the biblical basis for the offender living in sin must be clearly shown with specific passages.

#### Bringing the matter to the entire church is vital, since without it the sinning person will be able to find fellowship in other smaller groups within the larger church who do not know of his/her sin. Such gossip situations inevitably bring disunity, which lead to factions that can split the body.

Why whole church?

(What, then, should the entire church do once discipline has been determined? Step 4…)

### Treat this person as an unbeliever (17b).

Step 4

#### Sometimes this step has been misinterpreted to mean “excommunication” where the errant person is never contacted again.

EXCOMMUNICATE!

#### But Jesus said to “treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector.” Jesus treated pagans with love and kindness, but he didn’t ask them to evangelize the lost as part of his team. You shouldn’t be ugly or ungodly, but…

How to

##### In some ways you treat this person like an unbeliever:

• Unbeliever

###### Don’t refer to him/her as a Christian. (ILL: I have done this with my former brother-in-law who divorced my sister to marry another woman.)

• Non-Chr

###### Evangelize this person.

• Evangelize

###### Don’t let him/her take the Lord’s Supper.

• Communion

###### Remove the person from membership.

• Membership

###### Remove this person from church roles (ILL: My friend Paula was asked to leave her church kitchen ministry once her adultery was discovered.)

• Roles

##### But in other ways it is more serious than how we treat unbelievers:

• More Serious

###### We must “deliver over to Satan” one in sex sin (1 Cor. 5:5). Years ago a friend named John left his wife and two small boys for another woman. My church disciplined him, but an elder kept up with him to restore him. After 5 years, he showed up at church—but he looked 20 years older!

• Deliver over

###### Don’t eat with him/her (1 Cor. 5:11).

• Don’t eat

###### Should we prohibit the person from attending church? Some say they, like unbelievers, should be welcomed in services without taking the Lord’s Supper; but in most discipline cases this is not even an issue as few disciplined believers seek to return to the assembly until repentant.

• Attendance?

(So that’s God’s 4-step process—to keep the matter as private as possible.

MPI

The goal in each of the four steps is to achieve *restoration*.

4 steps

Intro Subject: But *why* must we do all this? What right do we have to discipline our members? Why must we restore sinning Christians properly? Because…)

Why?

# II. Our church extends the authority of God Himself (18-20)!

MP

# [God’s right to judge is actually delegated to us!]

## We act in the place of the Father when we seek to restore someone (18-19).

Father’s Place

### Too often today’s churches act as if they have no authority under God, and yet “binding” here refers to disciplining (a guilty verdict) while “loosing” refers to releasing from discipline (an innocent verdict).

### But does heaven follow our decision? No. God has *already determined* what we announce as guilt or innocence (18).

NIV

#### “Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven” (NIV, NAS, KJV) is a periphrastic future perfect passive verb. It is better rendered “shall already have been permanently bound,”[[1]](#footnote-1) meaning, “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” (NAU, NIV text note).

• NAU

#### Thus, what Jesus is saying is that, when a local body follows biblical procedure in love toward restoration, the decision of the church in the matter has already been preceded by heavenly dictate!

“2 or 3” (18:19)

### We should trust that our prayerful judgments are God’s will (19). Ps. 82:6 has a similar idea where Israel’s rulers are called “gods” in that they rule others.

Ps 82:1

(Why should we trust this process in discipline situations? Verse 20 says that…)

Authority of Christ

## When we seek to restore someone, we act in the presence and authority of Christ (20).

20

### The “two or three” refers to the witnesses whose testimony enacted discipline (v. 16).

### The point of Christ being “in their midst” is that local church discipline acts with the presence and authority of Christ Himself.

(So how can we sum up this passage in one sentence? I’d say it this way…)

Conclusion

### Main Idea: Restore sinners because you act for God.

MI

### Restate: When sheep stray, we shepherd them back as loving hands of God’s grace.

Pillars

### God expects each of us to take the initiative—and to do so as far as possible, as Romans 12:18 says [read]. This verse is a great encouragement to do all we can even if others are not responsive. This verse is a great overall principle in relationships.

Rom 12:18

### God desires us to truly live out the chorus “Make Us One, Lord”:

Make Us One

Banner

Make us one, Lord, make us one  
Holy Spirit, make us one;  
Let your love flow so the world will know

We are one in You.

### Matthew 18 relates to us in at least three ways:

God saying?

#### To be a member of this church you must submit to its authority under God.

• Submit

##### This means that we will lovingly seek to restore you should you fall.

##### The leaders also want you to realize in advance as we take in more new members that submission to discipline is a requirement for membership

#### Is there sin in you worthy of discipline? Clean it up now to avoid pain for us all!

• Your Life

#### Do you know anyone who needs a private confrontation? Romans 12:18 encourages you to do everything possible to be at peace with all people, so do it!

• Help Others

### Let’s bow, close our eyes, and have some time for prayer. (1 minute) If you will submit to the authority of this body, would you please stand?

Black

### Prayer & sing “They Will Know We Are Christians By Our Love.”

 The Tablecloth

The brand-new pastor and his wife, newly assigned to their first ministry, to reopen a church in suburban Brooklyn, arrived in early October excited about their opportunities. When they saw their church, it was very run down and needed much work. They set a goal to have everything done in time to have their first service on Christmas Eve.

They worked hard, repairing pews, plastering walls, painting, etc, and on December 18 were ahead of schedule and just about finished.  On December 19 a terrible tempest - a driving rainstorm hit the area and lasted for two days.  On the 21st, the pastor went over to the church.  His heart sank when he saw that the roof had leaked, causing a large area of plaster about 20 feet by 8 feet to fall off the front wall of the sanctuary just behind the pulpit, beginning about head high.

The pastor cleaned up the mess on the floor, and not knowing what else to do but postpone the Christmas Eve service, headed home.  On the way he noticed that a local business was having a flea market type sale for charity so he stopped in. One of the items was a beautiful, handmade, ivory colored, crocheted tablecloth with exquisite work, fine colors and a cross embroidered right in the center. It was just the right size to cover up the hole in the front wall. He bought it and headed back to the church.

By this time it had started to snow. An older woman running from the opposite direction was trying to catch the bus. She missed it. The pastor invited her to wait in the warm church for the next bus 45 minutes later.

She sat in a pew and paid no attention to the pastor while he got a ladder, hangers, etc., to put up the tablecloth as a wall tapestry. The pastor could hardly believe how beautiful it looked and it covered up the entire problem area.

Then he noticed the woman walking down the center aisle. Her face was like a sheet. "Pastor," she asked, "where did you get that tablecloth?"

The pastor explained. The woman asked him to check the lower right corner to see if the initials, EBG were crocheted into it there. They were. These were the initials of the woman, and she had made this tablecloth 35 years before in Austria. The woman could hardly believe it as the pastor told how he had just gotten the tablecloth. The woman explained that before the war she and her husband were well-to-do people in Austria.  When the Nazis came, she was forced to leave.  Her husband was going to follow her the next week. He was captured, sent to prison and she never saw her husband or her home again. The pastor wanted to give her the tablecloth; but she made the pastor keep it for the church.

The pastor insisted on driving her home. That was the least he could do. She lived on the other side of Staten Island and was only in Brooklyn for the day for a housecleaning job.

What a wonderful service they had on Christmas Eve. The church was almost full. The music and the spirit were great.

At the end of the service, the pastor and his wife greeted everyone at the door and many said that they would return.  One older man, whom the pastor recognized from the neighborhood continued to sit in one of the pews and stare, and the pastor wondered why he wasn't leaving. The man asked him where he got the tablecloth on the front wall because it was identical to one that his wife had made years ago when they lived in Austria before the war and how could there be two tablecloths so much alike. He told the pastor how the Nazis came, how he forced his wife to flee for her safety and he was supposed to follow her, but he was arrested and put in a prison. He never saw his wife or his home again all the 35 years in between.

The pastor asked him if he would allow him to take him for a little ride. They drove to Staten Island and to the same house where the pastor had taken the woman three days earlier. He helped the man climb the three flights of stairs to the woman's apartment, knocked on the door and he saw the greatest Christmas reunion he could ever imagine.

True Story - submitted by Pastor Rob Reid

<https://www.snopes.com/fact-check/the-gold-and-ivory-tablecloth/>

Accessed 22 Sep 2019

# The Gold and Ivory Tablecloth

[David Mikkelson](https://www.snopes.com/author/snopes/)

**Claim:**   A war-separated couple was reunited by a tablecloth.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | LEGEND |

**Example:**   *[Schade, 1954]*

At Christmas time men and women everywhere gather in their churches to wonder anew at the greatest miracle the world has ever known. But the story I like best to recall was not a miracle — not exactly. It happened to a pastor who was very young but his church was very old.

Once long ago it had flourished. Famous men had preached from its pulpit and prayed before its altar. Rich and poor alike had worshipped there and built it beautifully. Now the good days had passed from the section of town where it stood. But the pastor and his young wife believed in their run-down church. They felt that with paint, hammer, and faith they could get it in shape. Together they went to work.

However late in December a severe storm whipped through the river valley and the worst blow fell on the little church — a huge chunk of rain-soaked plaster fell out of the inside wall just behind the altar. Sorrowfully the pastor and his wife swept away the mess but they couldn’t hide the ragged hole. The pastor looked at it and had to remind himself quickly, “Thy will be done!” But his wife wept, “Christmas is only two days away!”

That afternoon the dispirited couple attended an auction held for the benefit of a youth group. The auctioneer opened a box and shook out of its folds a handsome gold and ivory lace tablecloth. It was a magnificent item, nearly 15 feet long; but it, too, dated from a long vanished era. Who, today, had any use for such a thing?

There were a few halfhearted bids. Then the pastor was seized with what he thought was a great idea. He bid it in for $6.50. He carried the cloth back to the church and tacked it up on the wall behind the altar. It completely hid the hole! And the extraordinary beauty of its shimmering handwork cast a fine, holiday glow over the chancel. It was a great triumph. Happily he went back to preparing his Christmas sermon.

Just before noon on the day of Christmas Eve as the pastor was opening the church, he noticed a woman standing in the cold at the bus stop. “The bus won’t be here for 40 minutes!” he called and invited her into the church to get warm. She told him that she had come from the city that morning to be interviewed for a job as governess to the children of one of the wealthy families in town but she had been turned down. A war refugee, her English was imperfect.

The woman sat down in a pew and chafed her hands and rested. After a while she dropped her head and prayed. She looked up as the pastor began to adjust the great gold and ivory cloth across the hole. She rose suddenly and walked up the steps of the chancel. She looked at the tablecloth. The pastor smiled and started to tell her about the storm damage but she didn’t seem to listen. She took up a fold of the cloth and rubbed it between her fingers. “It is mine!” she said. “It is my banquet cloth!” She lifted up a corner and showed the surprised pastor that there were initials monogrammed on it. “My husband had the cloth made especially for me in Brussels! There could not be another like it.”

For the next few minutes the woman and the pastor talked excitedly together. She explained that she was Viennese and that she and her husband had opposed the Nazis and decided to leave the country. They were advised to go separately. Her husband put her on a train for Switzerland. They planned that he would join her as soon as he could arrange to ship their household goods across the border. She never saw him again. Later she heard that he had died in a concentration camp. “I have always felt that it was my fault — to leave without him,” she said. “Perhaps these years of wandering have been my punishment!” The pastor tried to comfort her and urged her to take the cloth with her. She refused. Then she went away.

As the church began to fill on Christmas Eve, it was clear that the cloth was going to be a great success. It had been skillfully designed to look its best by candlelight. After the service, the pastor stood at the doorway. Many people told him that the church looked beautiful. One gentle-faced middle-aged man — he was the local clock-and-watch repairman — looked rather puzzled. “It is strange,” he said in his soft accent. “Many years ago my wife — God rest her — and I owned such a cloth. In our home in Vienna, my wife put it on the table” — and here he smiled — “only when the bishop came to dinner.”

The pastor suddenly became very excited. He told the jeweller about the woman who had been in church earlier that day. The startled jeweller clutched the pastor’s arm. “Can it be? Does she live?”

Together the two got in touch with the family who had interviewed her. Then in the pastor’s car they started for the city. And as Christmas Day was born, this man and his wife who had been separated through so many saddened Yule tides were reunited.

To all who hear this story, the joyful purpose of the storm that had knocked a hole in the wall of the church was now quite clear. Of course, people said it was a miracle; but I think you will agree it was the season for it!

**Variations:**

* The Internet-circulated version of this tale adds many additional details not present in the original: the setting is Brooklyn, the tablecloth features an embroidered cross at its center, the woman identifies the tablecloth by her crocheted initials in one of its corners, the woman mentions that she had made the tablecloth 35 years earlier (which places the story in the mid-1970s), and the account is attributed to a “Pastor Rob Reid.”
* A January 2011 version circulated by e-mail which begins “The brand-new Rabbi and his wife were newly assigned to their first congregation to reopen a Shul in suburban Brooklyn” changes the religion of everyone involved.

**Origins:**   True or not, this is one fabulous story, containing many of the elements that make glurge so compelling: A lonely couple, separated by that greatest of evils (i.e., the Nazis), each unaware of the other’s fate, is brought together again on the holiest of holidays by a man of the cloth. The key to their reunion is an ordinary object that no one else valued, and the chain of events unfolds due to an amazingly serendipitous series of circumstances. If only a storm hadn’t knocked a hole in the church wall, if only someone else had bought the tablecloth, if only the woman hadn’t happened to be standing

outside the church at just the right moment, if only her long-lost husband hadn’t coincidentally been a member of that particular church, the couple might never have found each other again. Of course, to those of us who believe in miracles, all of this was no mere coincidence; it was purposefully directed through the actions of a loving God.

What do we know of this tale? It’s called “The Gold and Ivory Tablecloth”; it was written by the Rev. Howard C. Schade, pastor of the First Reformed Church in Nyack, New York; it was published in the December 1954 issue of *Reader’s Digest*; and it was anthologized in Alice Gray’s *Christmas Stories for the Heart* in 1998. Since the story is undated, there is no way of telling how long the separated couple reunited by the tablecloth had been apart. The few details contained in the tale seem to indicate that the couple separated sometime after the German annexation of Austria (also known as the Anschluss) in 1938, which means that since their story had been written by 1954, they could not have been split up for more than sixteen years. Certainly sixteen years is a tragically long time to be separated from one’s spouse, but if this story had taken place in the 1970s (as presented in the Internet-circulated version), the couple would have been apart for nearly forty years!

As for verifying the truth of this remarkable tale, there’s precious little to go on. Its author, the Rev. Schade passed away in 1989 and therefore can’t provide additional information, and the story as presented is remarkably devoid of detail for a supposedly “real-life” drama: it includes no dates, no names, no locations — no starting point whatsoever that would prove useful in verifying it. And perhaps the oddest factor of all is that apparently no one other than the Rev. Schade — not another writer, not the pastor who reunited the tragically separated spouses, not the couple themselves — ever chronicled this amazing story or identified its subjects.

**Last updated:**   7 January 2011

# Introduction

### Interest: [The media reported in Feb 2011 that Barbie & Ken made up after 7-years <http://www.pedestrian.tv/mobi/m320/article.php?id=34921&page>=] Jenn Glass noted last month,

Barbie & Ken

#### “Well, it’s Facebook official. Barbie and Ken have reconciled their iconic relationship in time for Valentine's Day. Young girls all over the world will be breathing a sigh of relief to hear that Ken and Barbie are deciding to give love a second chance after unexpectedly breaking up on Valentine’s Day 2004 in order to go their own ways. So after 7 years apart – what brought the two back together again in a romantic twist of fate?

#### For Barbie, maybe it was just becoming too hard to juggle a celebrity lifestyle, maintain several careers, look after the finances on multiple cars, homes and vacations and raise her beautiful daughter Kelly without a man in her life? For Ken, maybe [he realized] there is no-one quite like Barbie, made worse by seeing Barbie with another man – bronzed Aussie surfer, Blaine? Or maybe it was their romantic reunion while on set filming the latest Toy Story 3 film?

#### Some cynics may suggest their reunion is thanks to Mattel’s social media campaign including the launch of a ‘Sweet Talking Ken’ and a website called barbieandken.com, which asked the public whether the dolls should be reunited. The impending date of Valentines Day may or may not have provided the campaign with an added intensity and completely coincidental act of fate.

#### Whatever the catalyst for this long-awaited reunion, the chemistry is back and sparks are flying between the former lovers. "Ken and I were made for each other," Barbie tells USA TODAY. "Our love is grander than any dream house."

#### To celebrate this exciting news of the couple’s reunion, the manufacturer behind the two love birds, Mattel, plan on launching a limited edition “Together Again” gift set. The set will include both Barbie and Ken ready for a romantic date in Malibu, conveniently provided with glowing sun-kissed complexions and a wardrobe of retro 1960’s swimsuits inspired by their nostalgic past.

#### It’s reported that the couple even have plans to merge their Facebook pages. Forget sharing the TV remote, joint Facebook accounts? Now that’s commitment.”

#### Hmmm, what about *marriage* now that they have a young daughter? And did they *right* the wrongs done? Is *this* how relationships get restored?

### God desires us to truly live out the final verse of “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel”:

O come, Desire of nations, bind  
All peoples in one heart and mind;  
Bid envy, strife and quarrels cease,

Fill the whole world with heaven’s peace

### [Story of Mike & Teri]

#### While I was in seminary, Susan and I mentored a younger couple. Mike and Teri were $30,000 in debt from credit cards, but they managed to pull out of it and God did a great thing. After a long bout with infertility we rejoiced to see them adopt a baby boy. Mike even left his banking job, went to seminary, and joined the pastoral staff of our church! After that, Susan and I came to Asia as missionaries.

#### But soon we heard that Mike found another woman, left the pastorate, he divorced Teri, and lived with this other woman for 18 months. Our church followed the 4-step process of Matthew 18 and God did a miracle—Mike left the woman, remarried Teri, and their lives were put back together. God’s process does work!

# Study Questions (Step 1)

# Context: What did the author record just prior to this passage?

### Christ is teaching his disciples (18:1) concerning the importance of dealing with sin. He has just told them to never be a stumbling block to others (18:5-9) and emphasized that God himself seeks to restore people when they do sin (18:10-14). In the section following (18:15-20) the thought shifts to how believers should respond when they have knowledge of *someone else* who sinned.

# Purpose: Why is this passage in the Bible?

### Jesus knew that the church would have problems so he gave us instructions in advance on how to resolve them.

# Background: What historical context helps us understand this passage?

### Middle East culture typically used mediators instead of addressing matters directly.

### The OT law mandated that suspected murderers could not be punished on the basis of only one witness (Duet. 19:15). This prevented one person from taking revenge on his enemy.

# Questions

VERSE 15

### Is “against you” in the original?

### Who is the “brother”? Is it a literal brother or fellow believer?

### Can this refer to a “sister” too?

### How to deal with a sinning brother?

### How should I show him his fault?

### Why should I show him his fault?

### Why should we keep the matter just between us?

### Where should I talk to him—his place or mine?

### What faults could be considered sins (15)?

### Why should the brother listen or refuse?

### What does him listening to you mean?

### What does winning your brother over mean?

VERSE 16

### What does “he will not listen” mean?

### Why should we go again and again (16)?

### Why take 1-2 others along?

### Which 1-2 people should we bring?

### What does it mean for the matter to be “established”?

### Why must the matter be “established”?

VERSE 17

### What is “the church”?

### Is this the whole church?

### --including children?

### --or just members?

### How could Jesus say take to the church?

### What does it mean to treat the person like a tax collector?

### How do we summarize the steps of this process?

VERSE 18

### Who is the “you”?

### Is “you” singular or plural?

### Why does verse 18 translate the future perfect passive as a simple future (“will be bound” NIV) rather than the correct past sense of “will have been bound”?

#### Toussaint notes that the error began with Jerome’s 4th century Latin translation that allowed for sacerodotal authority (p. 206).

#### However, Blomberg says “will have been bound” was true of Classical Greek but Hellenistic Greek allowed for a simple future (p. 255).

VERSE 19

### Is this a reference to prayer?

### Who are the “two of you”?

VERSE 20

### Is this a reference to prayer?

VERSES 15-20 NIV

If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. 16But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.' 17If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector. 18I tell you the truth, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. 19Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. 20For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them.

# Possible Illustrations (Step 6)

### Susan and I had to learn how to confront.

### John (FCC)

### Mike Thatcher (CCBC)

<http://www.pedestrian.tv/mobi/m320/article.php?id=34921&page>=



Valentine Day 2011—

Well, it’s Facebook official. Barbie and Ken have reconciled their iconic relationship in time for Valentine's Day. Young girls all over the world will be breathing a sigh of relief to hear that Ken and Barbie are deciding to give love a second chance after unexpectedly breaking up on Valentine’s Day 2004 in order to go their own ways. So after 7 years apart – what brought the two back together again in a romantic twist of fate?  
  
For Barbie, maybe it was just becoming too hard to juggle a celebrity lifestyle, maintain several careers, look after the finances on multiple cars, homes and vacations and raise her beautiful daughter Kelly without a man in her life? For Ken, maybe it was the realization that there is no-one quite like Barbie, made worse by seeing Barbie with another man – bronzed Aussie surfer, Blaine? Or maybe it was their romantic reunion while on set filming the latest Toy Story 3 film?  
  
Some cynics may suggest their reunion is thanks to Mattel’s social media campaign including the launch of a ‘Sweet Talking Ken’ and a website called barbieandken.com, which asked the public whether the dolls should be reunited. The impending date of Valentines Day may or may not have provided the campaign with an added intensity and completely coincidental act of fate.  
  
Whatever the catalyst for this long-awaited reunion, the chemistry is back and sparks are flying between the former lovers. "Ken and I were made for each other," Barbie tells USA TODAY. "Our love is grander than any dream house."  
  
To celebrate this exciting news of the couple’s reunion, the manufacturer behind the two love birds, Mattel, plan on launching a limited edition “Together Again” gift set. The set will include both Barbie and Ken ready for a romantic date in Malibu, conveniently provided with glowing sun-kissed complexions and a wardrobe of retro 1960’s swimsuits inspired by their nostalgic past.  
  
It has been reported that the couple even have plans to merge their Facebook pages. Forget sharing the TV remote, joint Facebook accounts? Now that’s commitment.  
  
*Written By Jess Glass*

# Possible Applications (Step 6)

### Text

Outlines

The Value of One

*Matthew 18:15-20*

Exegetical Outline (Steps 2-3)

# Exegetical Idea (CPT):

Prologue: Christ is teaching his disciples (18:1) concerning the importance of dealing with sin. He has just told them to never be a stumbling block to others (18:5-9) and emphasized that God himself seeks to restore people when they do sin (18:10-14). In the section following (18:15-20) the thought shifts to how believers should respond when they have knowledge of *someone else* who sinned.

Exegetical Idea: The reason the church should restore a sinning Christian correctly is because this restoration is carried out as an extension of God’s authority.

# I. (15-17) The manner in which the church should correctly restore a sinning Christian is by keeping the matter as private as possible.

## (15) A private sin should be dealt with only between those directly involved so as to make restoration of the offender easier.

## (16) Unrepentant sin after a private confrontation should be exposed only to one or two more persons in order to facilitate restoring the sinner.

## (17a) Unrepentant sin after a small group attempt at restoration should be brought before the entire church body as a deterrent to continued sin.

## (17b) Unrepentant sin after exposure to the church should result in requiring each church member to relate to the sinner as an unbeliever (this includes removal from membership).

# II. (18-20) The reason the church can restore or excommunicate errant believers is because it acts as an extension of the authority of God Himself.

## (18-19) Churches that prayerfully restore or excommunicate sinful believers act in the place of the Father.

### (18) The church must announce guilt or innocence based upon what God has already determined.

### (19) Church leaders who prayerfully make a judgment can have confidence that they have acted according to God’s will.

## (20) Churches that restore or excommunicate sinful believers act in the presence of Jesus Christ.

Homiletical Exposition (cyclical inductive form) Sermon Title: “When We Don’t Agree”

Purpose or Desired Listener Response (Step 4)

The listeners will confess any sin in their lives worthy of church discipline and help others do so.

Homiletical Outline (Cyclical inductive form)—Steps 5-6

# Subject: Why should we lovingly restore believers living in sin?

10 December 2006 Rick Griffith

The Value of One

*Matthew 18:15-20*

Introduction

1. Kay and I had to overcome relational problems by loving confrontation.

2. Have you ever had a problem with another believer? Are you in fellowship with every Christian that you know now? What should you do?

3. Issue #1: God places responsibility to reconcile on *you* as the *offender* (Matt. 5:23-24).

4. Issue #2: However, in other situations, you are the *offended*. The other person is guilty of sin. Every church eventually encounters problems with believers living in sin. In these cases a loving body will restore them to God’s holiness.

5. Our First Question Today: But *how* do we \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_restore sinning Christians properly?

6. Background:

a. Is this an appropriate message for Christmas time?

b. The context of Matthew 18 is how one who cares seeks that which is lost

7. Text: In Matthew 18:15-20 Jesus provides God’s plan for loving church discipline.

8. Preview: This text has two main teachings on restoring Christians in sin. Verses 15-17 give *how* to restore them and verses 18-20 give *why* to restore them.

I. Keep the matter as \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_private as possible (15-17).

A. The desired end is restoration, not punishment or excommunication.

B. God’s restoring process involves four steps that progressively tell more and more people about the sin (15-17).

1. Talk to the person by \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_yourself (15).

2. Take \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_one or two others along (16).

3. Expose the sin to the entire \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_church (17a).

4. Treat this person as an \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_unbeliever (17b).

(But why can we do all this? What right do we have to discipline our members? Because…)

II. Our church extends the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_authority of God Himself (18-20)!

A. We act in the place of the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Father when we seek to restore someone (18-19).

1. Too often today’s churches act as if they have no authority under God.

2. However, God has already determined what we announce as guilt or innocence (18).

3. We should trust that our leaders’ prayerful judgments are God’s will (19; cf. Ps. 82:6).

B. We act in the presence and authority of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Christ when we seek to restore someone (20).

1. The “two or three” refers to the witnesses whose testimony enacted discipline (v. 16).

2. The point of Christ being “in their midst” is that local church discipline acts with the presence and authority of Christ Himself.

Conclusion

1. Main Idea: We must \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ restore sinning members properly since we act on God’s \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_behalf.

2. Matthew 18 applies in at least three ways to us:

a. As a member of this church you submit to its authority under God. This means that we will lovingly seek to restore you should you fall.

b. Is there sin in you worthy of discipline? Clean this up now and avoid pain for us all!

c. Do you know anyone who needs a private confrontation? What will you do?

# Discussion Questions:

1. Why don’t churches lovingly discipline believers much today?

2. Should discipline be practiced on those who are not members of a church?

# A Look Ahead:

17 Dec Babies Don’t Rule, Do They? (Isa. 9:1-6)—Rick Griffith

24 Dec Worship Irony (Matt. 2:1-12) —Rick Griffith

31 Dec Finishing Well (2 Tim. 4:6-13) —Tom Chandler

6 March 2011 Rick Griffith

How to Restore Relationships

*Matthew 18:15-20*

Introduction

### What should you do when you have a problem with another believer?

### Issue #1: God places responsibility to reconcile on *you* as the *offender* (Matt. 5:23-24).

• Offender

• General

### Issue #2: But what do you so when you are the offended? A loving body will restore the person in sin to God’s holiness.

### But how do we \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ sinning Christians properly?

### Preview: Verses 15-17 give how to restore them and verses 18-20 give why to restore them.

I. Keep the matter as \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ as possible (15-17).

A. The desired end is restoration, not punishment or excommunication.

B. God’s restoring process involves four steps that progressively tell more and more people about the sin (15-17).

1. Talk to the person by \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (15).

2. Take \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ others along (16).

3. Expose the sin to the entire \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (17a).

4. Treat this person as an \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (17b).

(But why can we do all this? What right do we have to discipline our members? Because…)

II. Our church extends the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_authority of God Himself (18-20)!

A. We act in the place of the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ when we seek to restore someone (18-19).

1. Too often today’s churches act as if they have no authority under God.

2. However, God has already determined what we announce as guilt or innocence (18).

3. We should trust that our leaders’ prayerful judgments are God’s will (19; cf. Ps. 82:6).

B. We act in the presence and authority of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ when we seek to restore someone (20).

1. The “two or three” refers to the witnesses whose testimony enacted discipline (v. 16).

2. The point of Christ being “in their midst” is that local church discipline acts with the presence and authority of Christ Himself.

Conclusion

1. Main Idea: We must \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ sinning members properly since we act on God’s \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

2. Matthew 18 applies in at least three ways to us:

a. As a member of this church you submit to its authority under God. This means that we will lovingly seek to restore you should you fall.

b. Is there sin in you worthy of discipline? Clean this up now and avoid pain for us all!

c. Do you know anyone who needs a private confrontation? What will you do?

1. Nigel Turner, *Grammatical Insights into the New Testament* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1965), 80. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)