

10. How do passages such as Psalm 141:5, and Proverbs 27:6 challenge us to see reproof from others in a positive light?

Lesson 6

Saying You Hurt Me

Matthew 18:15-20

11. Let's say that efforts to bring about restoration were successful. Scripture then says, "*bear fruit in keeping with repentance*" (Matthew 3:8). How will continuing to do this aid in reconciling ourselves to the one(s) we've wounded?

Last Word: By God's grace, many conflicts between Christians (and non-believers as well) can be resolved by simply talking personally and privately with someone who has wounded us. However, when personal efforts do not succeed, Jesus has given us a simple yet effective process for involving others who can promote understanding and agreement.

Remember, when our endeavors are carried out with prayer, wisdom, and reliance on the power of God's grace, the Father is pleased to use our efforts to promote peace. Do you have unresolved conflict from your past or present? Seek to honor God today by going to your brother or sister and by God's grace gain back your friend.

Prayer: Ask God to give you the courage to go to those who sin against you – and the humility to go with grace. Also, for the courage to admit our wrongs – and the humility to seek restoration.

How do you typically handle disagreements or conflicts with another person? Are you the type who avoids conflict at all costs, unhealthily burying your emotions, while others go about their sinful ways? Or to the other extreme, are you the type of person who leaps at every opportunity to lash out at any and all offenders who dare cross your path. While these extreme approaches may be the norm with some, they resolve nothing and only make conflicts worse.

The Lord Jesus clearly calls for something much more loving and redemptive than timidly avoiding all confrontation or antagonizing others with a list of their wrongs. The main text for our study is Matthew 18:15-20. Unfortunately this passage is often associated only with the topic of church discipline. However, in the preceding five verses (vv. 10-14), we find Jesus' wonderful metaphor of a loving shepherd who goes to look for a wandering sheep and then rejoices when it is found. Thus, our passage is introduced with a theme of restoration, not condemnation.

So great is our Savior's concern for the matters of forgiveness and reconciliation, He has given us specific instructions about how to confront people who wound us – and what to do if they refuse to admit they're wrong. The challenge for us is to love people enough to confront them over their sins. *Read Matthew 18:15-20.*

1. First, let's note the wisdom statement of Proverbs 19:11. From your point-of-view, what is this maxim saying?

2. What guidelines would you use to counsel a friend on when it is wholly appropriate to *“overlook an offense”* committed against them?

 3. When an offense can't or shouldn't be overlooked, what does Jesus first advise the offended to do? (v. 15)
 - Matthew 7:1-5 –

 - Colossians 3:12-14 –

 - James 5:19-20 –

 4. The restoration of our sinning brother or sister is the goal of our one-on-one discussion. What insights do the following verses provide to help us achieve our aim?
 - Matthew 7:1-5 –

 - Colossians 3:12-14 –

 - James 5:19-20 –

 5. When our first attempts at reconciliation are unsuccessful, Jesus says to *“take one or two others along with you.”* What do you perceive to be the benefit(s) of involving others? (v. 16)

 6. If all other efforts fail, what will hopefully be accomplished by taking the extreme measures of v. 17?

 7. Jesus' words, *“If your brother sins against you”* (v. 15) directs His teaching to issues between Christians. Which of these principles might help us resolve issues with non-Christians?

 8. According to vv. 18-20, what promises does Jesus make to those who are faithful in areas of pursuing reconciliation and resolving conflicts?
- Now let's turn our attention to the other person in this equation... the one who has done wrong.
9. What is your typical response when someone confronts you over your faults?