

Honesty

📖 Matthew 18:15-20

👤 Pastor Jeremy Thomas

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🌐 fbgbible.org

📍 Fredericksburg Bible Church

107 East Austin Street

Fredericksburg, Texas 78624

(830) 997-8834

Matthew 18 is the fourth discourse in Matthew's Gospel. It is the Discourse on Kingdom Greatness. There are three sections that detail how one becomes great in the kingdom; humility in 18:1-14, honesty in 18:15-20 and forgiveness of others in 18:21-35. We make those divisions but I don't want you to get the impression that these divisions are hard and fast. This is one discourse and all three sections are tied together and intimate.

The discourse was prompted in 18:1 by the disciples discussing amongst themselves which of them would be the greatest in the kingdom. The fact of the discussion demonstrates that they still held that the kingdom was yet future. They didn't have a concept that the kingdom was the spiritual reign of Jesus in their hearts. That is an idea foreign to the Bible and read into the Bible. The only idea of the kingdom is God's reign in heaven which is to be brought to earth by the Messiah. That is what they expected and they were right. The reason they discussed who would be the greatest was because certain among them, primarily Peter, but also James and John, had already enjoyed special privileges over the others. Was this indicative of things to come? When Jesus asked them what they were discussing the parallel in Mk 9:33 says they were silent, obviously because they were embarrassed to be discussing such issues. But the topic surfaced and so they asked Him, "Who then is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven." For balance, Jesus had earlier taught that John the Baptizer was the greatest in privilege ever born of a woman in this world, but to even be in the kingdom was a greater privilege than John. So just to be in the kingdom is a great privilege but their question relates to degrees of greatness within the kingdom, and they were right about that, there will be degrees of greatness. To show them how to attain greatness in 18:2 Jesus did an astonishing thing and "called a child to Himself," probably one of Peter's children since they were probably in Peter's house. He "set" this child amongst "them" and in 18:3 said, "Truly I say to you, unless you go back and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven with greatness." What commentators and Bible teachers think Jesus is teaching here is very diverse. Some, such as J. Vernon McGee, missed the entire meaning of the passage saying it referred to how Christians treat literal children. Ryrie did the same when he said in his comments on verse 10 that "apparently children have guardian angels." Jesus was not teaching how to treat children, as important as that subject is. What Jesus was doing was using the little child to represent the humility that a disciple must have in order to become great in the kingdom. However, at this point

commentators diverge on what childlike humility means. Unfortunately, some say children trust, are open, are eager to learn, innocent, etc...and Jesus is saying His disciples must trust, be open, be eager to learn and innocent in order to be great in the kingdom. That is completely erroneous. Fortunately, the majority of commentators don't go that route. A child in that culture and time was humble in the sense of his status or position; he had no status or position. So what Jesus was saying in 18:4 was that His disciples had to regard themselves as having no status or position over others, but rather the servant of others. That is the path to greatness. In 18:4, "Whoever then humbles himself as this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven." The humble disciple is not here to be served but to serve others. In the parallel in Luke 9:49 there had been a man who was casting out demons in Jesus' name but the apostles hindered him from doing that work because he was not one of their group. Jesus rebuked them saying, "He who is not against you is for you. Do not hinder him." They had acted with arrogance, they acted as if they were above this other disciple. That is the opposite of what leads to greatness in the kingdom. The truly humble disciple would have recognized the work of another disciple and encouraged and helped him in his ministry. In 18:5, "whoever receives one such child in My name receives Me." Again, a literal child is not in view, the child represents a humble disciple. Jesus has such a close association with His humble disciples that to receive one of them in His name is to receive Him. But by contrast, in 18:6, "whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble" speaking of causing them trouble in their ministry, "it would be better for him to have a heavy millstone" turned by a donkey "hung around his neck, and be drowned in the depth of the sea." We gather it's a very serious thing to hinder the ministry of a humble disciple. In 18:7 the world certainly tries to hinder the ministry of humble disciples but woe to them because they are going to judgment. How much worse then for a Christian to hinder a humble disciple in his ministry? In 18:8-9 the seriousness of the offense is verbalized in fiery words. In 18:10 the disciples are commanded not to despise other humble disciples who are having success in their ministries as they had the man in the Luke parallel. The reason set forth here is that "Their angels in heaven continually see the face of My Father who is in heaven." From this many have concluded that children have guardian angels. If that is so one should wonder with all the mistreatment of children what they are doing to guard them from? In reality, if anyone has guardian angels it is humble disciples who are being represented by the child. They are carrying out ministry in the Lord's name and when they are being hindered God dispatches them to render service for them in order to restore them (Heb 1:14). 18:11 is not in the oldest and best manuscripts and was added by a scribe from Luke 19:10, it disrupts the flow of thought and should be marked out. The possible connection of angels with 18:12ff is severed if it is not marked out. In 18:12 Jesus asked a rhetorical question about the importance of a humble disciple who strays from his ministry. "What do you think? If any man has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go and search for the one that is straying?" Of course he does. The shepherd here represents God, the sheep represent His humble disciples. If one of the disciples goes astray then God sends an angel or angels to try and restore the straying disciple. In 18:13 "If it turns out that he finds it, truly I say to you, he rejoices over it more than the ninety-nine which have not gone astray." In other words, it brings God great joy when a humble disciple is restored to his ministry from

which he had gone astray due to discouragement from the world, other believers or internal stresses. In 18:14, "So it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones go to ruin." Again, the little ones are not children but the humble disciples. It is not the Father's desire that these humble disciples go to ruin in the temporal sense. There is nothing about eternal destiny in view. The world, other believers or just plain old frustration can lead a humble disciple to go astray and give up on the ministry. If this happens they go to temporal ruin. That's not what God wants and we certainly should not be involved in hindering a humble disciple from his ministry. Therefore, according to this passage, who is the greatest in the kingdom? The one who maintains his ministry to others until the end. The one who is servant of all. As the parallel in Mk 9:35 say, "If anyone wants to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all." Service is the path to greatness. So he who reckons himself no status, no position, no privilege, he is great. As the parallel in Lk 9:48 puts it, "The one who is least among all of you, this is the one who is great." The passage has nothing to do with how one treats children, nothing about molestation or abortion. It has to do with one having a proper view of himself and his place in the plan of God as he prepares for the kingdom.

Practically speaking then, greatness in the kingdom requires that the disciple become humble in the sense of not reckoning to himself status and position that merits being served; but rather is servant of all. To be humble in this way is to know one's purpose and place in the plan of God and to use his role, his calling and his gifts in service of others for the glory of God. Such a one recognizes other humble disciples and welcomes them, encourages them and supports them in their purpose and calling. Such a one continually roots out any pride that might have crept in causing him to despise others and recognizes that God loves them so much that if they go astray or are discouraged He even sends forth their angels to help restore them. That is true humility.

Tonight we come to Matt 18:15-20. This is a continuation of the Discourse on Kingdom Greatness and since the kingdom is still future the discourse is explaining how we can prepare now for greatness in the kingdom later. The first characteristic to develop is humility and the second is honesty; honesty with oneself and with others relative to confrontation over a sin issue is necessary to enter the kingdom with great privilege. This falls right in line with the prior passage and grows out of it. So this is a continuation of the same discussion about how we are to humble ourselves. Humility requires that we add honesty in our evaluation of ourselves and others. This is certainly more challenging than one might want to admit.

In 18:15 we read **If your brother sins...**The word **brother** signifies the tone of the confrontation which follows which is initiated by a humble disciple. As Toussaint says, "By using the term *brother* in verse fifteen Christ also emphasizes the concept of humility since one would deal with another as a brother and not as his subject."¹ By the word **sins** Jesus is probably not talking about any and every sin but the specific sin of verse 10, "despising one of these little ones." If a brother despises another brother who is having success in ministry and goes to show him his fault...Remember, this is a connected discourse and these ideas are connected. So while most people take this passage as dealing with church discipline of any sin, in reality the particular sin in view is

despising another humble disciple for his success in ministering to others. In fact, this is exactly what Jesus' disciples had done.

Hold your place in Matthew and turn to the parallel in Luke 9:46. This is the same context. As you can see they were discussing among them as to which of them might be the greatest. But Jesus, knowing what they were thinking in their heart, took a child and stood him by His side, and said to them, "Whoever receives this child in My name receives Me, and whoever receives Me receives Him who sent Me; for the one who is least among all of you, this is the one who is great." It's the exact same context. And what happened next? "John answered and said, "Master, we saw someone casting out demons in Your name, and we tried to prevent him because he does not follow along with us." Why did John bring that up? Because he wanted to know if they had violated what He was teaching. Had they? Yes, they had. They had sinned. They had tried to prevent true ministry. They probably didn't even really know they had done it at the time. But what did Jesus say in verse 50? "Do not hinder him; for he who is not against you is for you." So now they know that they had sinned. And the discussion in Matt 18:15 is revolving around this sin of hindering another disciple in his ministry. Pentecost agreed saying, "The principles here enunciated seem to have arisen out of the fact that the Twelve had offended a believer by refusing to extend fellowship to that one. Their reason was that even though the person had cast out demons in Jesus' name, that one had not become identified with Jesus and the Twelve. These principles were designed to effect a reconciliation and prevent the perpetuation of division among the believers of that day."² If we went around despising other people's ministry all the time, and when we say that we mean true ministry, true gospel, all of that, but if we were to go around trying to hinder them what would we end up with? A lot of division amongst ourselves. As Pentecost said, "Christ now taught the Twelve how these divisions may be reconciled so that the unity of the company of believers would not be broken."³ This section will continue into the following section on forgiveness.

So back to the text, if this happens, **if your brother sins** in this way, what should the offended disciple do? There are four steps. If reconciliation is accomplished at any of the steps it stops at that point. What's the first step? **Go and show him his fault in private.** The word **Go** means that the one offended should go to the offender. So the injured party is to go to the party who injured. People don't always know they have injured us. The disciples did not know at the time that they had injured the man who was casting out demons. Wiersbe says, "There are times when...unconsciously, we offend others and hurt them. Even the Old Testament Law recognized "sins of ignorance" (Num. 15:22), and David prayed to be delivered from "secret faults" (Ps. 19:12), meaning "faults that are even hidden from my own eyes."⁴ Therefore, if we have been offended by someone then we have the responsibility to **go** to them. We are not to sit around and wait for them to come to us. They may have no clue that they did anything wrong. Toussaint said, "The possession of humility is proven not by passively waiting for one to beg forgiveness and then granting it. Rather, it is manifested by actively seeking out the erring brother and attempting to make him penitent."⁵ When you go to him you **show him his fault.** The only parallel in Luke 17:3 says "rebuke him," which sounds rather strong. The word here translated **show** is *ελεγχω* and means "to

convict by casting light on, to expose." The person may not even know what he has done and so you bring to light what it was that offended you. This is very difficult to do with gentleness and respect. Carson said, "... if it is hard to accept a rebuke, even a private one, it is harder still to administer one in loving humility."⁶ Mastering this skill in confrontation is very difficult and the very reason why one who develops it will be great in the kingdom to come. Only when you have learned how to lovingly and humbly reproach a fellow brother do you qualify to be great in the kingdom. This skill, the essence of which is wisdom, takes many years of training in the word of God, learning the sensitivities of people and their quirks and a sense of the importance of maintaining unity and not allowing division. Finally, we comment that this first step is to be done **in private**. It's a private confrontation of a fellow believer in the spirit of brotherly love with the hope that the sinning brother will be restored. The purpose of confronting a sinning brother is always restoration and never lording it over them. If it is reduced to that then, well, you are the sinning brother. As Wiersbe said, "Above all else, go to him with the idea of winning your brother, not winning an argument. It is possible to win the argument and lose your brother. We must have a spirit of meekness and gentleness when we seek to restore a brother or sister (Gal. 6:1). We must not go about condemning the offender, or spreading gossip. We must lovingly seek to help him in the same way we would want him to help us if the situation were reversed. The word *restore* in Galatians 6:1 is a Greek medical word that means "to set a broken bone." Think of the patience and tenderness that requires!"⁷ And **if he listens to you**, guess what? **you have won your brother**. This is a great victory. Two brothers that were out of fellowship are now back in fellowship. This is the whole point. Now their ministries can continue to be in harmony and bear fruit.

However, one does not always win his brother on the first attempt and so 18:16 says a second step is sometimes necessary. **But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that BY THE MOUTH OF TWO OR THREE WITNESSES EVERY FACT MAY BE CONFIRMED.** The quote from the OT is from Deut 19:15. It was a principle under the Law of Moses that you had to have two or three witnesses to confirm someone's word. Jesus' quotation of it does not mean that the Church is under the Law of Moses. However, the same principle operable under the Law of Moses is applicable in the Church. The reason there is great overlap in the Law of Moses and the Law of Christ is because the God of the Law of Moses is the same God of the Law of Christ. God has not changed and so on this issue it was necessary to have two or three witnesses. What were they to be witnesses of? They had not seen the offense so they could not witness it. What could they witness? The sinning brother's reaction to the confrontation. Constable said, "Probably the function of the witnesses is to witness to the erring disciple's reaction to the confrontation. This seems to have been the purpose in the Deuteronomy passage. Their presence would be an added inducement to return to the fold of the faithful. These seem to be witnesses to the confrontation, not to the sin."⁸ Sometimes if we take two or three dependable believers along, those who are humble, it helps the erring brother to come to his senses and be reconciled. If so, then the process stops here.

If not, then a third step becomes necessary and the witnesses from the prior step are now in place for this step. **If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church.** This is the second use of **church** in Matthew. The first was

Matt 16:18 where Jesus said, "I will build My church." Significantly, these are the only two uses of this word in all four Gospels. As I mentioned before, the Greek word is *ἐκκλησία* and means "a gathering, an assembly." It was a word already in their vocabulary. It is used in the LXX of Deut 4:10 of the people of Israel gathering at Mt Sinai. Later it is used by Stephen in Acts 7:38 of the congregation of Israel in the wilderness. It is also used by Luke in Acts 19:32 of a pagan mob assembly. So the word had no technical meaning yet. It simply meant "a gathering, an assembly," and the disciples certainly did not understand it as referring to the Church proper as those who have been baptized into the body of Christ. That was His meaning in 16:18. When we read Christ say, "I will build My church." Jesus was predicting the formation of the church universal, all believers who are baptized into the body of Christ, which began on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2. Here His meaning is slightly different. He is not referring to the universal church but to the local church. Toussaint says, "Here it speaks of the local assembly, a body of believers gathered together as a fellowship. Both times the Lord uses the term He is anticipating the future when the church age would intervene between His first and second comings."⁹ The word church, then, as it takes on a more formal sense in the NT, can refer either to the universal church or to the local church. Here it clearly refers to a local church, **tell it to the local church**. The disciples did not understand what Jesus meant. Constable said, "When Jesus said, "Tell it to the church (assembly)," the disciples probably heard, "Tell it to all the other disciples, not just the two or three witnesses."¹⁰ Today this would be the "local church congregation, the particular collection of disciples of which the wayward brother is a part." Reasonably this is not from the pulpit on any given Sunday. There may be congregants there who have no clue who this person is. There may be visitors who have no business getting this knowledge! Probably what Jesus means is that the two or three should gather a collection of those this brother was close too, who knew him and had intimate acquaintance with him. This would be the most persuasive group to lead him to reconciliation. The goal of church discipline is always restoration and those closest to him or her are the best to do this.

Obviously this is not letting the sin out of the bag for a gossip fest, nor do I think that just any sin is in view, especially those that would lead to a gossip fest. Contextually the sin in view is verse 10, despising a brother. I think that there are certain sins that should never come before the local church and that if they do it only creates harm and confusion. I think this passage has been taken out of context and given too much liberty in its application. I think in many cases it has resulted in the opposite of its original intent. The original intent was to bring about unity but it's misapplication has brought about division. I think we need to think long and hard about these things. On one hand I don't think we have to limit the passage to simply despising a fellow brother but on the other I do think there are limits. These things should be carefully prayed over and thoughtfully considered by the two or three witnesses who went to confirm this believer's response. The bottom line is that knowledge of the sin should never extend further than it has to to effect reconciliation and it should certainly never become the subject of gossip.

But if this third step does not result in reconciliation then a fourth step is necessary. In 18:17, **and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.** In 1st century Jewish culture **Gentiles** were considered unclean and their uncleanness could be transferred by touch. Therefore, Jews did not associate with Gentiles. So what they would hear was that they should not associate with them. In 1st century Jewish culture **a tax collector** was a Jew who was in cahoots with the Romans and had therefore betrayed the Jewish people. Matthew had been a tax collector. Jews stayed far away from **tax collectors**. So what they would hear was that they should stay far away from this brother. Some form of separation or exclusion is in view but just what form is not stated (cf 2 Thess 3:14; Rom 16:17). Constable said, "Neither Jesus nor the apostles specified the exact form this discipline should take (e.g., excommunication, exclusion from the Lord's Supper, social isolation, etc.). Consequently, I assume He intended the disciples involved in such situations to make these determinations on the basis of all the facts in each particular case. However, it seems to be going too far to put the offender in a situation in which it would become impossible for him or her to repent and experience restoration later. The objective of all discipline is ultimately restoration, not exclusion."¹¹ This seems correct since the next verses are about forgiveness and how many times I ought to forgive my brother. It stands to reason that a door for returning to be restored must be kept open at all times.

In 18:18 Jesus says, **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.** These words sound very similar to what Jesus told Peter in Matt 16:19. However, there is a difference. The words in Matt 16:19 use the singular "you" and refer to Peter. Peter would be given the keys of the kingdom so that he could forbid or permit entrance into particular sacred areas probably around the Millennial Temple compound. Here the plural you is used to refer to the group of disciples that makes the decision to exclude the erring brother. It is obvious that their decision took much prayer and thoughtful consideration as to what degree of exclusion would best effect reconciliation. There is not an easy one-size-fits-all answer, but must be dealt with on a case-by-case basis. The terms **bind** and **loose** are truly "forbid" and "permit." Whatever association they would forbid on earth shall have already been forbidden in heaven and whatever association they would permit on earth shall have already been permitted in heaven. That is to say that their decision would be in accord with heaven's decision. To fit the situation, such decisions would have to have been made with great care and prayer. It is not easy to work through such decisions.

In 18:19 the adverb **Again** signals that he is merely repeating the principles of verse 18. **Again I say to you, that if two of you agree on earth about anything that they may ask, it shall be done for them by My Father who is in heaven.** This is not talking about prayer as most people assume. This is talking about the decision that a small group has made relative to the sinning brother and what they may ask of him to do. Jesus is saying God will honor that decision in the sense of taking up their cause, for indeed, it is His cause. Constable is correct when he says, "It should be obvious from the context that this promise does not refer to whatever two or three disciples agree to ask God for in prayer. The Bible contains many promises concerning prayer (cf. 7:7-8; 21:22;

John 14:13–14; 15:7–8, 16; 1 John 5:14–15; et al.), but this is not one of them.”¹² In fact, other NT passages disagree with the idea that two or three gathering to pray makes a prayer more efficacious. Instead it teaches that the number of people praying is not the issue but the character of the person praying is all that matters. One person of righteous character is enough. James 5:16 says, “The energetic prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.” When James says “a righteous man” he is not talking about justification righteousness but sanctification righteousness, a person who is righteous in character and lifestyle. He then gives an example of one such man in 5:17, “Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months.” There is an example of one man getting a tremendous prayer answered. It did not require two or three. It only required that the man, Elijah, be living a righteous life. Elijah was a prophet but James is quick to point out that this is not what made Elijah’s prayer efficacious with God, for he “was a man with a nature like ours.” Two or three would not have helped the situation. And if two or three make the prayer more efficacious then why not 200 or 300? Why not the more people praying the more effective? Because that is not how prayer works. It is the character of the people praying that results in answered prayer. God has His single eye on those believers who are listening to His word and walking with Him. The ones who listen to Him are the ones He listens too. The word translated **ask** in our verse is *αιτεω* and can mean “demand.” It is the best translation here. What Jesus is saying again is a repeat of verse 18. Verse 18 is saying whatever decision you decide to make with respect to this individual on earth will have been the decision that has been made in heaven. And verse 19 is saying, **that if two of you agree on earth about anything that they may demand regarding that individual, it shall be done for them by My Father who is in heaven.** That is to say, it has heaven’s approval. He will be with you in your decision. Constable says, “In the context “anything” refers to any judicial decision involving an erring disciple that the other disciples may make corporately. God has always stood behind His judicial representatives on earth when they carry out His will (cf. Ps. 82:1). This is a wonderful promise.”¹³ In effect God’s judicial decision would be carried out through these human judges on earth.

In 18:20, **For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst.** The **For** is causal adverb giving the reason why the Father will stand behind them. Why? Because **“two or three have gathered together in Jesus’ name.”** What is the significance of having gathered in **Jesus’ name**? When we say **in Jesus’ name** we are not just repeating a formula, we are saying a request that Jesus Himself would make. J. Vernon McGee says, “He will hear any request which is given in Christ’s name—that is, a request that Christ Himself would make. Or, we could say that asking in His *name* is asking in His *will*.”¹⁴ When a truly humble disciple gathers with two or three others to really sort this out in the best interest of the erring brother and they carefully and prayerfully make their decision it will be a judicial decision in the will of Christ. That is why it will be done for them by the Father in heaven. The final part of the explanation is that **I am there in their midst.** This, of course, is to say that He is with them in their decision. But the statement goes further than that because it implies a time when He would depart and not be physically present but spiritually present with them. The period

refers to the period following His ascension when He would be at the right hand of the Father until He is given the kingdom. In this sense Jesus is God with us until the time when He is physically present again at the second coming and the kingdom to come.

In summary, in 18:15 Jesus continues with the theme of becoming great in the kingdom. He had told them that the humble disciple must be the servant of all, recognizing his place in the plan and purpose of God, as well as recognizing other humble disciples and helping them by encouragement and support. The disciples had already failed in this count, trying to prevent a fellow believer from casting out demons in Jesus' name. In that light Jesus said, "If your brother sins," probably referring to the despising of verse 10 that they had showed that fellow brother, then the first step toward reconciliation is that the offended brother should "go and show" the offender his fault in private. To do so requires loving humility and explains why such a characteristic is necessary to be great in the kingdom. If the brother listens to you, you have won your brother. This is a great victory because it brings unity. The goal of all confrontation in such instances is reconciliation and unity. In 18:16 things don't always work out so easily. "If he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every fact may be confirmed." The two or three are taken to confirm the response of the sinning brother to the attempt to reconcile. These two or three would likely be disciples who are very close to the person and not just any other believer; people who would bring to him the seriousness of the nature and communicate their love for him. In 18:17, in some cases this may not be effective and so, "if he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church." This did look forward to what we know as the local church, though the disciples did not yet understand that. They were familiar with the synagogue and discipline within the synagogue and probably thought in those terms. The early church met in homes where groups were smaller than our larger churches today. Therefore, great caution must be exercised in taking something before the congregation. Wisdom dictates that we not take it before the entire congregation since there may be visitors or people unknown to the offender in the audience. The best thing to do is get a large number of those closest to the offender and tell it to them. If this still doesn't work then "let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector." This meant some form of separation or exclusion. To what extent is not stated. Clearly the congregations of disciples would discuss this in detail and decide what would be best for bringing about repentance and restoration of the brother. The goal is always restoration and not lording it over him or using it as an occasion for spreading gossip. In 18:18 Jesus says, "Truly I say to you, whatever associations you forbid on earth shall have been forbidden in heaven; and whatever associations you permit on earth shall have been permitted in heaven. In 18:19 Jesus virtually repeats this concept that heaven gave earth this approval. "Again I say to you, that if two of you agree on earth about any judicial decision that they may demand of the individual, it shall be done for them by My Father who is in heaven." That is to say the Father would have their backs, a great and comforting promise. In 18:20 the explanation for why is revealed, "Because where two or three have gathered together in My name," that is, having decided what I too would have decided, "I am there in their midst" meaning I am with them in that decision. And if Jesus is in agreement then it is in accordance with the Father's will.

In conclusion, what application can we make? First, it is the responsibility of the one offended to initiate a confrontation with the offender. It is not uncommon for an offender to be ignorant that he offended. Too often the offended simply waits for the offender to come and deal with the issue. This is not true humility but false reality. Second, it takes great humility to be able to confront a sinning brother with honesty. Anyone of us who confronts another must have enough honesty to examine his own life and consider that he may be in the wrong. Further, he must be able to speak the truth in love. If he is not humble he cannot speak the truth in love but will use the brother's sin as a weapon to fight with and not as a tool to build with. The result would be greater disharmony, not harmony.¹⁵ Third, while the primary sin in view is the sin of despising a fellow disciple the principle would not be limited to that sin. Any sin may be considered but great discretion should be exercised in bringing any sin before a large number of people. The most likely group to bring conviction and restoration are those closest to the person. Taking it beyond that would probably result in greater disharmony and confusion. Therefore, exercise great caution on such matters. Finally, the passage is not directed toward elders or deacons managing these matters but simply all disciples. Elders or deacons may be the right people to involve but they may not be. The bottom line is stated by Wiersbe, "There is a desperate need for honesty in the church today. "Speaking the truth in love" is God's standard (Eph. 4:15). If we practice love without truth, it is hypocrisy. But if we try to have truth without love, it may be brutality."¹⁶ If the truth is spoken humbly and someone is still hurt remember Prov 27:6, "Faithful are the wounds of a friend..." They have your best interest at heart and you and they will heal and be the better for it. This is the path to greatness in the kingdom. Next time the importance of forgiveness, receiving them with open arms...

¹ Stanley Toussaint, *Behold the King*, p 218.

² J. Dwight Pentecost, *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ*, p 268.

³ J. Dwight Pentecost, *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ*, p 268.

⁴ Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 65.

⁵ Stanley Toussaint, *Behold the King*, p 217.

⁶ Tom Constable, *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003), Mt 18:15.

⁷ Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 65.

⁸ Tom Constable, *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003), Mt 18:16.

⁹ Stanley Toussaint, *Behold the King*, p 218.

¹⁰ Tom Constable, *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003), Mt 18:17.

¹¹ Tom Constable, *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003), Mt 18:17.

¹² Tom Constable, *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003), Mt 18:19.

¹³ Tom Constable, *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003), Mt 18:19.

¹⁴ J. Vernon McGee, *Thru the Bible Commentary: The Gospels (Matthew 14-28)*, electronic ed., vol. 35 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1991), 68.

¹⁵ Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 66.

¹⁶ Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 66.