

"Imagine a symphony orchestra, gathered on stage, poised to play a beautiful, complex piece of music.

- The conductor raises his baton, and the musicians begin. But instead of the rich, harmonious sound you expect, a chaos erupts. The violins are playing a different key than the cellos, the trumpets are rushing ahead, the flutes are lagging behind, and the drums are entirely out of rhythm.
- But when every instrument plays in sync, following the conductor's lead, a magnificent harmony emerges.

The church, the body of Christ, is much like that orchestra.

- If we ignore our Conductor's guidance, we create discord. But if we listen, follow the direction of the Divine Conductor, if we adjust, and play together, we create a beautiful symphony for God's glory."
- If we are to live in harmony is not merely about avoiding conflict, but about actively pursuing reconciliation, humility, and forgiveness, all rooted in the immense grace and love God has shown us through Christ, and taught by Jesus in Matthew 18

Title of the Message is Living in Harmony

- It's a call to reflect the very character of God in our relationships with one another.
- Jesus said in **Matthew 5:9** - "Blessed *are* the peacemakers, Not peace keeper / peace fakers, but peace makers, For they shall be called sons of God."

Four Ways to Live in Harmony with One Another!

We Protect One Another - We Value One Another

We Restore One Another - We Forgive One Another

(David Platt, *Exalting Jesus: Mt.*, KL 4436)

We Protect One Another – Mt. 18:6-9

Matthew 18:6-7 - "But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea. ⁷ Woe to the world because of offenses! For offenses must come, but woe to that man by whom the offense comes!

Who are the "little ones" (we must back up ...)

Jesus called a little child to illustrate salvation (kingdom citizenship)

- Matthew 18:3 – Jesus said "Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and ***become as*** little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. ⁴ Therefore whoever ***humbles himself as*** this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. ⁵ Whoever receives one little child like this in My name receives Me.
- **"...become as..." / "...humble as..."** – Figure of speech – ***simile-direct comparison***
- You must come like... This is a characteristic of conversion / salvation – Childlike reliance / humble dependence.

- We get to this warning in verse 6, certainly would apply to causing a child to sin
- But Jesus equates all followers as sons and daughters
- This warning likely more fully refers to believers, especially those who are to the faith

Blank Live - Matthew 18:6 - "But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea.

We Protect One Another by a selfless concern about each other's holiness.

We live with caution so as not to cause brother / sister to stumble

1. Exercising Christian Freedom Without Consideration

- Participating or talking about things in your life, where we may have liberty – in other words, the Bible does not expressly forbid, but could be stumbling block to others.
- Certain types of music, entertainment, social media
- Alcohol – You can make the argument that the Bible does not expressly forbid the use of alcohol – Should not lead to drunkenness (that's forbidden), addiction, or cause another believer to stumble.
- We believe it is wise and beneficial to abstain for the sake of personal holiness, witness, or weaker brother and sister in the faith.

2. Hypocrisy or Poor Example

- Living in a way that contradicts your profession of faith...Being **dishonest** in business dealings while claiming to follow Christ. **Gossiping** or **slandering** others openly.
- Fosters division – stirring up disputes over non-essential matters

3. Tempting Someone to Sin:

- Hey, Smoke this, Watch this, listen to this – We often associate this with young people – The Temptations they face...
- When you as tempt others to sin, You are debilitating multiple generations
- I heard this a few days ago – When you disciple men, you impact generations
- The opposite is true – When you cause someone to stumble, you debilitate generations to come
- **Matthew 18:7** - Woe to the world because of offenses! "To cause a believer to stumble is to invite God's gravest judgment."

4. **Failing to Forgive** - Refusing to extend forgiveness to someone, which can lead to bitterness and a stumbling block for others and last for years, even decades! Holding grudges openly, discouraging others from seeking reconciliation. Setting an example of resentment instead of restoration!

Others...**Materialism or Worldliness, Harsh Judgment or Legalism, Discouraging Someone's Faith, False Teaching or Misleading Doctrine**

In order to Protect One Another,

We must be Selflessly Concerned about each other's holiness.

We must be Radically Committed to our own holiness.

Matthew 18:8-9 - ⁸ "If your hand or foot causes you to sin, cut it off and cast *it* from you. It is better for you to enter into life lame or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet, to be cast into the everlasting fire. ⁹ And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast *it* from you. It is better for you to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire.

Notice again the use of figurative language – Not saying to do actual bodily harm

- This should characterize our attitude toward the battle against sin
- If something is leading you to sin, get rid of it, destroy it
- Paul said in **Colossians 3:5** - "Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.
- **Galatians 5:22-24** - But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. ²⁴ **And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.**

These truths are interconnected

- David Platt, "...when we are zealous about holiness in our own lives, we will be zealous about protecting one another from sin. In turn, when we are zealous about protecting one another from sin, we will be all the more careful about sin in our own lives. If we're casual about our own sin, on the other hand, we will lead others to be casual about their sin. This is why we must be intentional about protecting one another." (Platt, David. *Exalting Jesus: Mt. KL 4518*)

We Value One Another – Mt. 18:11-14

Matthew 18:10-14 - ¹⁰ "Take heed that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that in heaven their angels always see the face of My Father who is in heaven.

In other words, "Earnestly cherish, treat one another with honor, respect, and deep care, recognizing their immense worth in God's eyes

In light of the Father's angelic provision for His children.

Matthew 18:10 has been used as a proof text for Guardian Angels – Possible / Not definite

- Figure of Speech – "little ones" – This most likely is just referring to God's Children – (Saved-repent and believed in Jesus)
- Bible has a lot to say about Angels. They are glorious spirit beings created by God to primarily worship Him, serve as His messengers, and execute His will, often ministering to and protecting believers (Psalm 148:2, Hebrews 1:14).
- You may wonder why the Bible's teaching on angels matters. Consider this:
 - if the Father **appoints** heavenly servants to care for and protect His children, how much more should we love and care for one another?
 - If God **values** His people enough to send angels to minister to them, how can we remain indifferent to the needs of our fellow believers?

In light of the Father's individual pursuit of His children.

Matthew 18:1-14 - ¹¹ For the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost.¹² "What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them goes astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine and go to the mountains to seek the one that is straying? ¹³ And if he should find it, assuredly, I say to you, he rejoices more over that *sheep* than over the ninety-nine that did not go astray. ¹⁴ Even so it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.

This is a similar story that Jesus tells in Luke 15 – Shephard leaves 99 for the 1

Let's just take a moment and thank the Lord that He pursued us

We love Him because He first loved us – We love one another because Jesus pursued us

We have seen how the church protects one another and loves one another, now we will see how we are to ...

Restore One Another – Mt. 18:15-19

This is fundamental to understanding church discipline and restoration, which is essential to church health – This should be understood in light of parable of lost sheep – Goal is restoration

Matthew 18:15-17 - "Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. ¹⁶ But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that 'by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.' ¹⁷ And if he refuses to hear them, tell *it* to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector.

Pastor Mark Dever writes, Imagine this church:

- It is huge and is still growing numerically. People like it. The music is good. The people are welcoming. There are many exciting programs, and people are quickly enlisted into their support. And yet, the church, in trying to look like the world in order to win the world, has done a better job than it may have intended. It does not display the distinctively holy characteristics taught in the New Testament.
- Imagine such an apparently vigorous church being truly spiritually sick, with no remaining immune system to check and guard against wrong teaching or wrong living. Imagine Christians, knee-deep in recovery groups and sermons on brokenness and grace, being comforted in their sin but never confronted. Imagine those people, made in the image of God, being lost to sin because no one corrects them. Can you imagine such a church? Apart from the size, have I not described many of our American churches? (Dever, *9 Marks of a Healthy Church*, p. 186)

The process of church discipline and restoration.

Private Correction:

Matthew 18:15 - ¹⁵ "Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him **alone**. If he hears you, you have gained your brother.

The Goal is not confrontation, or even correction: It is Restoration!

- **Matthew 7:1-5** - "Judge not, that you be not judged. ² For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you. ³ And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? ⁴ Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me remove the speck from your eye'; and look, a plank is in your own eye? ⁵ Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.

Keep the Circle as small as possible as long as possible!

- Our first tendency is to run tell someone else – "Do you know what so and so did to me?"
- We find ourselves in sin if we talk about a brother or sister in Christ in a way that does not build up.
- **Ephesians 4:29-31** - Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. ³⁰ And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. ³¹ Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. ³² And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.

We're not talking about bringing the hammer down on someone for every sin. This passage addresses a situation where a brother sins against you and doesn't seek forgiveness, or is caught in sin and refuses to turn from it. In those moments, love calls us to act. Love them enough to go privately and address the sin. Love them enough not to broadcast it to others. Love them enough not to sit back while they drift deeper into it. And when they respond rightly, Jesus says, "you have won your brother" (v. 15). The result is not only restoration, but often an even deeper fellowship in Christ.

Love doesn't ignore sin or expose it—it pursues restoration. Go privately, speak truth, and aim to win your brother.

Small Group Attention:

Matthew 18:16 - ¹⁶ But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that 'by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.'

If he does not listen, Bring it to the attention of other brothers / sisters

- Jesus cites the Old Testament requirement for 2 or 3 witnesses
- Keep the Circle as small as possible as long as possible!
- These believers lovingly speak with gentleness and humility...
- Ephesians 4:15 – "but, speaking the truth in love..."
- Proverbs 11:14 - Where *there is* no counsel, the people fall; But in the multitude of counselors *there is* safety.

Church Admonition:

Matthew 18:17 - ¹⁷ ***And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church.*** But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector.

- **Galatians 6:1-2** - Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who *are* spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. ² Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.

Gathering of the Saints – if the sin persists, this becomes a church matter

- Not to ostracize, criticize, but to restore – That is the point of this process
- It's saying, "We love you! We care about you! We want you to come back into right fellowship with Christ"
- God loves us so much that if we are caught in sin, He will send an entire army of believers to us as a demonstration of His love and mercy. (Platt, *Exalting Jesus: Mt*, KL 4601)

If the sin persists, then the next step is

Church Excommunication:

Matthew 18:17 - ¹⁷ And if he refuses to hear them, tell *it* to the church. *But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector.*

Paul deals the unrepentant sinner in I Cor. 5

If they refuse to repent...even after confrontation by the entire body, consider this person as an outsider...like an unbeliever

This may sound extreme – Purpose is restoration; Purification is the priority – Sin spreads

God's promises amid church discipline and restoration.

Matthew 18:18 "Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

¹⁹ "Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven. ²⁰ For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them."

Jesus assures us of His Authority extended to the church

- What you bind (prohibit) or loose (permit):
- Similar language to Matthew 16 - What Jesus is teaching is that the church declares on earth what God has already willed in heaven – This is not to command heaven, but to obey it!
- This is not the church declaring to Heaven what is to be done, but it is affirming what God has already declared
- We don't decide forgiveness—we declare what Christ has already said: unrepentant sin remains, but turning to Him brings full forgiveness and freedom.
- John MacArthur said, "Never is the church more in harmony with heaven and operating in perfect accord with her Lord than when dealing with sin to maintain purity" (MacArthur, 1 Corinthians, 126).

We Forgive One Another

Peter asks Jesus – How many times should I forgive – Rabbis taught 3...Peter over achiever

- **70 times 7 – innumerable amount**

This is the passage we studied in Sunday School –

Let us be reminded – All have sinned – None Righteous – Our Righteousness are like filthy rags

- In Christ, we have received extravagant grace.
- As Christians, we now extend extravagant grace.

We show our love for one another as we protect, value, restore and forgive.

Jesus said, John 13:34-35 - A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. ³⁵ By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

"The church is not just an orchestra playing in harmony; It's more than that!

- It's a spiritual family. In a healthy family, we don't despise a struggling sibling; we cherish them, seek them out when they stray, and forgive them from the heart, just as Jesus commands in Matthew 18.
- In a truly healthy and loving family, what do you see? You see patience, grace, forgiveness, and a deep commitment to one another. When one child strays, the parents and siblings don't despise them; they go looking for them, just as our Heavenly Father seeks the lost sheep (Matthew 18:12-14). When there's a disagreement, they don't ignore it or let bitterness fester; they talk, they seek understanding, and they extend forgiveness, because the bond of family is too precious to break (Matthew 18:15-17, 21-35).
- By living out these principles – humility, active reconciliation, and radical forgiveness, we aren't just following rules; we are building a genuine family.
- We are demonstrating what it truly means to be brothers and sisters in Christ, united not by blood, but by the infinitely more powerful blood of Jesus. This is how the church truly becomes a beacon of God's love and grace, a family that cherishes every member, reflecting the very heart of our Heavenly Father."

Let me ask...

- Have you truly given your heart to follow Jesus?
- Are you causing, leading, or enabling a brother or sister to sin?
- Are you guarding, protecting, and nurturing your own personal holiness?
- How can you more closely express the love of the Father to the church around you?
- Is there anyone you need to humbly confront concerning sin for their good and for the Father's glory?
- Are you harboring any bitterness or unforgiveness toward someone else?

Tony Merida, ***Love Your Church***, pp. 6-7, "We are an "already-but-not-yet" community of brothers and sisters transformed by our elder Brother and King, Jesus; that is, we experience true salvation now (the "already"), but we await final and full salvation in the future (the "not yet") with all God's people throughout all of time. As an already-but-not-yet community, we show the world what our King is like, and what the kingdom to come will be like, through our shared life and our mission of word and deed in the world.

Great Quotes:

John MacArthur, "(Matthew 18 is considered by some to be "... the single greatest discourse our Lord ever gave on life among the redeemed people in the church. (MacArthur, *Matthew 16-23*, p 94)

Tony Merida – What is a Church

The word "church" (ekklēsia) generally means "gathering" or "assembly," but the church is more than a gathering. The church is a local community of believers who gather for worship and scatter for witness. They share life together centered on Jesus for the good of one another and for the good of the world. This idea of community is everywhere in the New Testament; the Bible knows nothing of "lone ranger" Christianity. I love how Titus says that Jesus "gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works" (Titus 2 v 14, my emphasis). Did you catch that? He gave himself not just for me individually (though that's true!) but for us collectively, to purify a people for himself. (Merida, *Love Your Church*, p. 11-12)

Church Family:

We love one another unconditionally

We serve one another frequently

We weep with one another sympathetically

We rejoice with one another exuberantly

We care for one another deeply

We bare one another's burdens patiently

We comfort one another compassionately

We encourage one another lovingly

We prefer one another selflessly

We accept one another joyfully

We pray for one another fervently

We honor one another humbly

There we celebrate together through the joys of life; • There we weep together through the pain that life brings; • There we confess sin and fight for holiness; • There we serve one another as we meet needs and bear burdens; • There we encourage one another to follow Christ no matter the cost.

This is the kind of love we all need, and this is the kind of life for which we were all designed. Life in community. The kind of community where we can share and listen, teach and learn, laugh and cry. The kind of community where we're able to sincerely hurt and genuinely help. The kind of community where any one of us can belong and all of us will be loved. The kind of community where every single

one of us can experience the joy of knowing our Creator while thriving in the purpose for which He created us. In other words, the kind of community God has created us to find in Christ and His church alone.

Great Truth that needs to be repeated:

Tony Merida, ***Love Your Church***, pp. 6-7, "We are an "already-but-not-yet" community of brothers and sisters transformed by our elder Brother and King, Jesus; that is, we experience true salvation now (the "already"), but we await final and full salvation in the future (the "not yet") with all God's people throughout all of time. As an already-but-not-yet community, we show the world what our King is like, and what the kingdom to come will be like, through our shared life and our mission of word and deed in the world.

Seen this way, the local church is like a little embassy of the greater kingdom of God, living under the gracious rule of Christ. We are situated outside of our homeland (as sojourners and exiles, 1 Peter 2 v 11), so our life and actions are different from others. We are here so that the outside world would look at us and see something different and ask, "You guys aren't from around here, are you?" No, we aren't. Our citizenship is in heaven, and we're waiting for our Savior to come from there to here and make all things new (Philippians 3 v 20). (Merida, *Love Your Church*, p. 7)

EXAMPLES OF WAYS BELIEVERS MIGHT CAUSE OTHER BELIEVERS TO STUMBLE:

1. **Tempting Someone to Sin:** Encouraging or pressuring a fellow Christian to engage in behaviors that go against their conscience or biblical principles, such as drinking alcohol with someone who struggles with past addiction or watching inappropriate content with someone who is trying to guard their purity or even suggesting dishonest actions, such as cheating on taxes or lying.
2. **Exercising Christian Freedom Without Consideration** - Participating in activities that may be permissible for you but harmful for another believer's conscience or faith, such as eating food offered to idols (in Paul's context, [1 Corinthians 8:9-13](#)). Insisting on personal preferences (e.g., certain styles of music, entertainment) in ways that cause others discomfort or confusion. Failing to consider the spiritual maturity of those around you when exercising your freedoms.
3. **Hypocrisy or Poor Example** - Living in a way that contradicts your profession of faith, which can confuse or disillusion other Christians, especially newer or younger believers. Being dishonest in business dealings (of course these might only be nominal Christians) while claiming to follow Christ. Gossiping or slandering others openly.
4. **Harsh Judgment or Legalism** - Imposing strict, extra-biblical rules on someone and making them feel condemned or inadequate in their faith. Criticizing someone for not following your traditions or cultural norms (e.g., dress codes, worship styles). Judging someone for areas of freedom where the Bible allows individual conscience ([Romans 14:1-3](#)).
5. **Discouraging Someone's Faith** - Using words or actions that diminish someone's enthusiasm for Christ or discourage their spiritual growth. Mocking or dismissing someone's spiritual goals or efforts ("You are being a bit too radical giving out Christian tracts to everyone you meet!") Failing to support or encourage a struggling believer when they confide in you (and even feeling superior because of their weakness). Overloading a new believer with expectations, making faith feel like a burden rather than a joy ("You need to spend 1 hour in Quiet Time every morning").
6. **False Teaching or Misleading Doctrine** - Teaching or promoting ideas that are inconsistent with Scripture, leading others astray. Preaching a prosperity gospel that distorts biblical truth such as the "health and wealth gospel" (Woe to those preachers who are rich now! They will rue the day they preached a false gospel). Promoting self-help philosophies that diminish reliance on the sufficiency of Christ and His Word. Even willfully misinterpreting Scripture to justify your sin ("Well that was only applicable to those in the Old Testament").
7. **Fostering Division** - Creating or perpetuating division within the church or Christian community, one of the most effective (and sinful) ways being by spreading gossip or stirring up disputes over non-essential matters ("We need a beige carpet not a red carpet in the sanctuary!" This one has caused churches to split!) Aligning with factions or cliques that exclude others (You've never seen this in churches have you?!). Disrespecting church leadership in a way that undermines unity, constantly manifesting a critical spirit attitude.
8. **Failing to Forgive** - Refusing to extend forgiveness to someone, which can lead to bitterness and a stumbling block for others and last for years, even decades! Holding grudges openly,

discouraging others from seeking reconciliation. Setting an example of resentment instead of restoration!

9. **Materialism or Worldliness** - Encouraging others to prioritize worldly success or possessions over spiritual growth. Boasting about wealth or material achievements in a way that stirs envy or misplaced priorities. Modeling a life that emphasizes materialism over spiritual contentment.
10. **Insensitivity to the Weaker Believer**: Acting without regard for the spiritual struggles or sensitivities of others. Speaking flippantly about sensitive topics like suffering or sin. Making jokes or comments that trivialize someone's convictions or struggles.