



THE COMPELLING COMMUNITY
ADDRESSING SIN IN THE CHURCH | MARCH 15, 2026

INTRODUCTION

We seek a church culture where it is _____ for people to have deep and honest conversations about their spiritual lives. Where people are willing to ask that one last question that, while awkward, saves a brother from a difficult dynamic in his marriage.

We calibrate our conversations according to how we can best help others _____ Christ. We “speak the truth in love,” varying our approach “as fits the occasion” with the ultimate goal of “giving grace to those who hear” (Ephesians 4:15, 29).

EQUIPPING TO ADDRESS SIN IN PRIVATE

In the book of Matthew, the church is presented as Christ’s chosen vehicle to _____ His people until He comes again. In a fallen world, waves of sin will inevitably break over our church. Matthew 18:15-17 offers crucial guidance for how our congregation should respond.

1. Recognize that addressing sin is _____ responsibility.

Notice in verse 15 that Jesus gives primary responsibility for addressing sin to each _____ of the congregation.

If your brother sins against you (Matthew 18:15), _____ must seek to win him back. And if your brother perceives that you have sinned against him (Matthew 5:23), pursuing him is still your responsibility. No matter “who started it,” it is always your job to initiate reconciliation.

So when Joe comes to tell you about the hurtful thing Sally said to him, what’s your first response? “Before you talk with me, have you talked with _____ about it?”

With few exceptions, conversation about another’s sin should either be _____ (e.g. confessing my poor response when I was wronged) or collaboration (e.g. talking together about how we can encourage that person toward godliness).

We should make ourselves _____ to this correction. After all, if we hide our sin, how can any of us do what Jesus commands here? Following this portion of Jesus’ instructions goes a long way toward embracing a God-given responsibility to rescue each other from sin and deception.

2. Keep the circle _____.

At first, the conversation is just you and your brother: “between you and him alone.” If that fails, it is “one or two others” who accompany you to win the sinner over. With our own sin, we should be open and transparent; with the sin of others, we should be _____.

Self-promotion and self-righteousness want the circle of those who know of someone's sin to be as _____ as possible. But when my goal is the exaltation of Christ through the restoration of a brother, I will keep the circle as small as possible for as long as possible.

3. Be _____ to judgment.

Taking one or two others along with you follows the precedent set in Deuteronomy 19:15 that conviction for a crime must be established by at least _____ witnesses.

Jesus assumes that sometimes we are _____ about a brother's sin — and that others will help sort out and clarify the facts. Having the humility to recognize the limitations of our own judgment can take a culture that's rightly serious about sin and fill it with grace as we give each other the benefit of the doubt.

4. The goal is to _____ your brother.

Our goal is not merely to discharge a duty, or to get it off our chest. It is certainly not to punish. Our goal is _____ (Matthew 18:15).

SEEK UNITY AS YOU ADDRESS SIN PUBLICLY

The grace of God at work in small, private conversations leads to repentance and restoration. But on occasion, we must read further in Matthew 18 because unrepentant sin has risen to a level that requires action by the _____.

1. "If he refuses to _____ to them, tell it to the church."

When a person remains _____ through the first two steps of Matthew 18:15-16, when the sin is serious enough that we cannot overlook it, and when its existence is demonstrable, we must bring it to the church.

- (1) **Making sin public underscores sin's _____ and deceitfulness.** Men and women who struggle privately see that hiding sin is like hiding a time bomb.
- (2) **Making sin public underscores the possibility of _____.** One lie Satan feeds us about sin is that change is impossible.
- (3) **Making sin public teaches your congregation how to address sin _____.**
A biblically rooted, sober conversation as a church about unrepentant sin will provide a good model for the congregation.

2. "An if he refuses to listen even to the church..."

The church hears the matter, it speaks of its concern to the unrepentant sinner, that sinner has opportunity to listen, and then if he does not, the church _____ him from fellowship.

3. "...Treat him as a Gentile and a tax collector."

To excommunicate someone isn't to say that he is definitely not a Christian, nor that we can see into his heart (as only God can). Rather, it is a "no confidence" vote on his profession of faith based on the evidence of no _____.