



Raising our hand in class . . . because we think we know the answer!

-- When we didn't know, we slunk down in our seats.

-- But, when we were pretty confident, we wanted credit . . . so we raised our hand and perhaps went, "Eww, Eww, pick me" (under our breath).

-- When we weren't picked, we said to ourselves, "I knew that one, too!"

-- What a horrible moment though, when we've raised our hand, been picked, confidently asserted what we were sure was the right answer . . .

-- . . . and then were corrected, schooled, because our answer was wrong.

TR: That's, in a sense, what happened to Peter . . .

Then Peter came up and said to (Jesus)
“Lord, how often will my brother sin
against me, and I forgive him? As many
as seven times?”

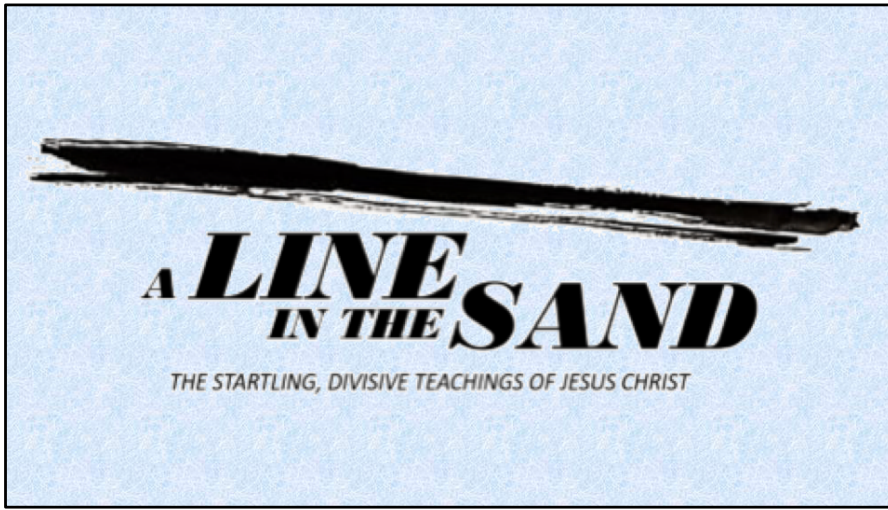
ESV

Responding to Jesus’ teaching about care-fronting a sinning brother, he goes on to the logical question of forgiveness.

-- READ SLIDE

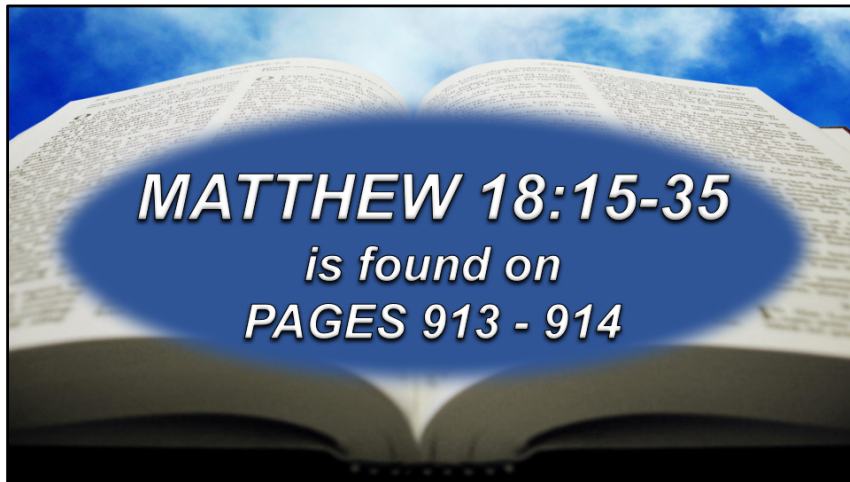
-- Peter believes he is going the extra mile . . . most Jewish teachers would have said that we need to forgive up to three times to show that we indeed have a forgiving heart.

TR: Jesus’ response to Peter is nothing other than a . . .



. . . line in the sand.

TR: It is also a line in the sand for us, and we have to decide which side to stand on, as we read through some of the most startling, divisive teachings of Jesus in . . .



. . . Matthew 18

-- Sermon Notes

-- We must deal with Jesus today . . . as almost all the texts we look at today have quotation marks around them and would be in red letters in Bibles that mark off Jesus' words that way. Being in red doesn't give them greater authority but it does force us to recognize we are dealing with Jesus and not Gary deBock.

TR: Let's use the image of raising our hand in class to frame our thoughts today and let's see how Jesus schools us with a line in the sand.

SCHOOLING THE CONFUSED

We begin by looking at what happened BEFORE Peter raised his hand.

-- Matthew records Jesus teaching about the temptations to sin and our radical response to them,

-- then, the parable of the lost sheep, and God the Father's will and action to leave the 99 and seek the one that went astray.

TR: And then, the immediate context prior to Peter's "Eww, Eww" in teaching the confused about . . .

SCHOOLING THE CONFUSED

Confused by infected conflict

. . . infected conflict.

-- I call it “infected” because conflict by itself does not have to deal with sin. We can have a scheduling conflict or a conflict of limited resources, but that isn’t necessarily about sin.

-- Rather, these non-infected conflicts are about the wise use of time, money and energy.

-- But, Jesus specifically talks about conflict that has been infected by sin.

-- Remember, we can have sinful attitudes about what should be non-infected conflicts. Once the judgment of love has been compromised, something sinful is happening.

TR: Look in your Bibles at Matthew 18:15 . . .

Matthew 18:15-16

“If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. ¹⁶But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses.”

ESV

READ SLIDE

- Note: the witnesses are not necessarily those who have observed the sin but are those who help to establish the charge. I think of them as mediators who try to clean up the infected communication and get to the heart of the matter.**
- They are the ones who can help the one who feels wronged to see that they are being overly sensitive . . .**
- . . . or help the accused see their responsibility for their methods, even if these motives were pure.**
- But, when the accused refuses to listen, the urgency level of the conflict is raised.**
- Most hate to bring anyone into the situation . . . but refusing to do so violates Jesus' teaching and is therefore**

sinful.
TR: Verse 17 . . .

Matthew 18:17-18

“If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. ¹⁸Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”

ESV

READ SLIDE

- The “church” is the gathered assembly of believers, who have entered into a covenant with each other by means of their shared covenant with Jesus, their Savior.**
 - The goal in all the steps of heightened urgency is reconciliation between the parties.**
 - It seems that this step allows for there to be an authoritative conclusion to the matter. That is certainly suggested by verse 18’s “binding and loosing.”**
- TR: Verse 19 underlines this . . .**

“Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. ²⁰For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.”

ESV

READ SLIDE

-- Unresolved conflict is not our Lord's will for His called out community.

-- This is not about “forgiving someone in our hearts” because we are told to “go and tell him his fault.”

-- It is so important that sin not divide us, that it even becomes a public matter.

TR: Jesus teaches these principles in numerous settings, including Luke 17 . . .

Luke 17:3-4

“Pay attention to yourselves! If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him, ⁴and if he sins against you seven times in the day, and turns to you seven times, saying, ‘I repent,’ you must forgive him.”

ESV

READ SLIDE

-- Forgiveness, here, is tied to whether the other person says they repent.

-- That is, they own their part of the mess and are willing to turn away from it.

-- It is not just “in our hearts” . . . suggesting that we can obey Jesus without ever dealing with the other party.

TR: Peter’s “Eww, Eww,” reflects what I think was his interaction with Jesus’ teaching about infected conflict and . .

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SCHOOLING THE CONFUSED

Confused by infected conflict

Confused by expected love

**. . . Peter's confusion about the love Jesus expects us to show to others, especially other believers.
TR: Peter certainly would have picked up Jesus' strong teaching about love, as seen in John 13 . . .**

John 13:34-35

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. ³⁵By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

ESV

READ SLIDE

- Our standard of love is not a feeling captured in some love song, but the very love of Christ for His followers.**
- It is love in action not just an “in our hearts” action. As John would write in 1 John 3:18, “let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.”**
- People will know that we are Christ’s “learners” or disciples, His students, IF we have the same love for each other.**
- How many people have left church because of the unloving hypocrites there . . . but then showing themselves to be no more loving because they aren’t willing to stay and work through the pain of healing a broken relationship. After all,**

love always bears up, always believes, always hopes and always endures. (1 Cor 13)

TR: Peter certainly would have heard Jesus talking along these themes, like that captured in John 15 . . .

**“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.
13Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.”**

ESV

READ SLIDE

-- Jesus' commandment, what He calls a “new” commandment, is the old commandment to love our neighbor as ourselves but now deepened and transformed by His example to even love our enemies.

-- Here Jesus further defines what it means to love when He said, “just as” in the John 13 text – to be willing to lay down our lives for.

-- Many of us believe ourselves to be loving people . . . but it is in the conflicts, especially the ones that get infected, that we see how deep our love runs.

TR: Peter had heard all this, or at least a good measure of it and he thought he understood, so he said, “Eww, Eww” . . .

Matthew 18:21-22

Then Peter came up and said to him, **“Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?”** ²²Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you seven times, but seventy-seven times.”

ESV

“Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?”

TR: But, Jesus does praise Peter’s largess, rather . . .

SCHOOLING THE CONFUSED

**A LINE IN THE SAND
... "still not on Jesus' side"**

... he draws a line in the sand and helps Peter understand that he is **STILL NOT ON JESUS' SIDE OF THE LINE.**

-- Seventy times seven OR seventy-seven times, however we translate it, it is talking about the kind of love that does not add up a record of wrongs.

-- When we have a list of grievances that we use to establish our case, we have added up a record of wrongs, which 1 Corinthians 13's description says love does not do.

-- Peter imagines that he is being incredibly generous when he is willing to forgive up to seven times ... but the standard is Jesus.

-- And, Jesus asks us to do what is impossible to do without the Spirit's help ... to love and forgive as He loves and forgives.

TR: Jesus then takes the focus off of Peter a bit, and tells a kingdom story ...

SCHOOLING THE CONFUSED

**A LINE IN THE SAND
... "still not on Jesus' side"**

SCHOOLING THE HARD-HEARTED

... and schools the hard-hearted.

-- Over time we will either be like Lamech who said "If Cain's revenge is sevenfold, then Lamech's is seventy-sevenfold" (Genesis 4:24),

-- OR like God, Who loved us even while we were still sinners.

TR: Beginning in verse 23 we read ... (vv. 23-31 in Bible)

"Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants."

ESV

23 "Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants. 24 When he began to settle, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. 25 And since he could not pay, his master ordered him to be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made. 26 So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.' 27 And out of pity for him, the master of that servant released him and forgave him the debt. 28 But when that same servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii, and seizing him, he began to choke him, saying, 'Pay what you owe.' 29 So his fellow servant fell down and pleaded with

him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you.' 30 He refused and went and put him in prison until he should pay the debt. 31 When his fellow servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their master all that had taken place.

-- The debtor assumed his ability to pay . . . he is looking for some grace and receives the offer of great grace.

TR: Verse 32 then gives the Master's, the King's response . .

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Matthew 18:32-33

“Then his master summoned him and said to him, ‘You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. ³³And should not you have had **mercy** on your fellow servant, as I had **mercy** on you?’”

ESV

READ SLIDE

-- Forgiveness is about releasing someone from their debt.
-- Forgiveness is about showing mercy and not giving someone the consequences they deserve. Verse 27 said it was “out of pity for him” that the master released him.
TR: But forgiveness in the kingdom of heaven is tied to our forgiveness . . .

“And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers, until he should pay all his debt. ³⁵So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, **if you do not forgive your brother from your heart.”**

ESV

- . . . even as verse 34 and following show us . . . READ SLIDE**
- In a sense, the master “un-forgives” the wicked servant. God doesn’t “un-forgive” us because He knows what is truly in our hearts. Yet, we may “un-forgive” someone when their verbalization of repentance never becomes the visible fruits of repentance in practical change.**
 - So, this kingdom story underlines Jesus’ teaching that our unwillingness to offer forgiveness and seek reconciliation where possible is an indicator that we have never received His forgiveness.**
 - To forgive FROM our hearts is not just to forgive IN our hearts, but to offer forgiveness from the center of one’s reason, emotions, and will.**

TR: This is not an outlier in Jesus' teaching. When He taught the sample prayer that we often call The Lord's Prayer . . .

Matthew 6:14-15

“For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, ¹⁵but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”

ESV

. . .saying, “forgive us our debt as we also have forgiven our debtors.”

**-- He then underlined His point by saying . . . READ SLIDE
TR: Or Mark 11 . . .**

Mark 11:25

“And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.”

ESV

READ SLIDE

-- This text seems more like the “offer forgiveness” or “extend the hand forgiveness” rather than actually completing forgiveness by taking the hand of a repentant person.

TR: Or Luke 6 . . .

Luke 6:37-38

“Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; **forgive, and you will be forgiven;** ³⁸give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you.”

ESV

READ SLIDE

-- The measure we use is what will be used. The measuring cup we use is the one we receive from.

-- Jesus' mercy is so immense, that we don't have to worry about having to finish paying things off by spending time in purgatory.

-- But, His teaching is so startling, because if we don't forgive and love as He does, then we will have to go to the jailers until we've paid off our unpayable debt.

TR: I've been like Peter, raising my hand because I think I've figured it out. But often I've only figured out how to have standards I can keep and be a good little Pharisee rule-keeper

...

Luke 7:44-45

Then turning toward the woman he said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she has wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. ⁴⁵You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not ceased to kiss my feet."

ESV

I've been more like Simon the Pharisee . . . to whom Jesus said in Luke 7 . . . READ SLIDE

-- Jesus had been invited to dinner but no expressions of politeness, let alone love, were shown.

TR: Jesus continues . . .

Luke 7:46-47

“You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. ⁴⁷Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven—for she loved much. **But he who is forgiven little, loves little.**”

ESV

READ SLIDE

- Simon the Pharisee was being schooled.
 - Simon Peter witnessed things like this and thought he had audited the learning from Jesus confronting others.
- TR: But, as is so often true, we think we get it until we actually experience it and it becomes painfully obvious that we don't.



Peter got it wrong so often, but he had the heart of a learner . . . and he kept trusting the Teacher to teach.

-- When confronted, because the answer, that we were so confident of, falls short of the measuring line . . . how do we respond?

-- Jesus draws a line in the sand.

-- In my experience, the line of loving and forgiving others is the most difficult point of obedience of all of Jesus' teaching.

-- It is the line that no one can cross without the Holy Spirit's work. It is the line that separates us from just being rule-keeping Pharisees.

TR: The scariest prayer in all the Bible is . . .

**Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those
who sin against us.**

READ SLIDE

- Is how we are forgiving others the way we want God to forgive us and then treat us?**
- If not, perhaps it is time to stay after school for some spiritual detention . . . and seek Jesus for His mercy so that we can extend mercy . . .**
- . . . to seek His forgiveness so that we can love much, and not in word or talk . . .**
- . . . to love much by not adding up a record of wrongs, but by bearing up, believing, hoping and enduring.**
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