

Why Can't We All Just Get Along? We Don't Have Essential Unity

Matthew 18:18-20

"If your brother sins against you, go & tell him his fault, between you & him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But 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. 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 & a tax collector."

Matthew 18:15-17

Four Foundational Pillars of Conflict Resolution: the **Pillar of a Posture of Humility**, the **Pillar of Pursuing Restoration**, the **Pillar of True Forgiveness** & the **Pillar of Essential Unity** in Matthew 18:18-20.

What is the basis for our Unity?

"...we would rather be away from the body & at home with the Lord."

2 Corinthians 5:8

"Jesus answered, 'My kingdom is not of this world...'" **John 18:36a**

"For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come."

Hebrews 13:14

Loving conflict resolution happens in the context of a church family unified in the belief that it is an **Embassy OF and Ambassador FOR Heaven**.

"But our citizenship is in heaven..." **Philippians 3:20a**

"...you are fellow citizens with the saints & members of the household of God."

Ephesians 2:19b

Main Idea: Loving Conflict Resolution Happens in a Unified Church Family

"Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, & whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. 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. For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them."

Matthew 18:18-20

Three Points of Unity Essential to Conflict Resolution

I. Unified in Heaven's Culture

"Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, & whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." **Matthew 18:18**

"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 & a tax collector."

Matthew 18:17

"It is appalling that the most segregated hour of Christian America is 11 o'clock on Sunday morning." **Martin Luther King, Jr. (1963)**

II. Unified by God's Will

"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." **Matthew 18:19**

"I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, & I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me." **John 17:20-21**

"Behold, how good & pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity." **Psalms 133:1**

"Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." **Matt 6:10**

III. Unified to Enjoy God's Presence

"For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them."
Matthew 18:20

"And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." **Matthew 28:20b**

"Yet you are holy, enthroned on the praises of Israel." **Psalms 22:3**

God's presence:

- **Omnipresence** – God is everywhere, all the time.
- **Indwelling Presence** – God's Holy Spirit lives inside the believer
- **Manifest Presence** – God shows up in an unexpected, special way

"I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility & gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." **Ephesians 4:1-3**

See yourself as a heavenly ambassador who happens to live on Staten Island in the United States, but whose primary allegiance is to your heavenly citizenship. We are fellow ambassadors of God working in the embassy of heaven together to honor the one who sent us!

"No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him." **2 Timothy 2:4**

This could not be more counter-cultural, but it's possible...

"Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good & acceptable & perfect." **Romans 12:2**

We are Unified in Heaven's Culture by God's Will to Enjoy God's Presence

Sources & Further Reading Opportunities:

- *Tyndale Bible Dictionary* – Elwell & Comfort (2001)
- *New American Commentary: Matthew* – Craig Bloomberg (1992)
- *MacArthur NT Commentary: Matt 16-23* – John MacArthur (1988)
- *Exploring the Gospel of Matthew* – John Phillips (2005)
- *Word Pictures in the New Testament* – A.T. Robertson (1933)
- *Commentary on Matthew* – C.H. Spurgeon (2010)
- *The Gospel of Matthew* – William Barclay (1976)
- *The Bible Exposition Commentary* – Warren Wiersbe (1996)
- *Tyndale Concise Bible Commentary* – Huges & Laney (2001)
- *The IVP Bible Background Commentary* – Craig S. Keener (1993)

- *The Peacemaker* – Ken Sande (1991)