

## Mutual Accountability

In God's loving plan to redeem sinners, He has called out His Church to live in loving community—to become the new humanity in a world of broken relationships. In our studies we have seen that all believers must join a local church and, in this new community, they must care for each other, serve each other, and forgive each other.

There is something else that believers must do in their churches: we must share responsibility for each other's moral and spiritual lives. In our membership vows at Second Presbyterian we promise to seek to live a godly life (vow 3), and to seek the purity of the whole church (vow 5). Americans, in particular, do not naturally do this. We are perhaps more individualistic than any people on earth; but Jesus clearly commands it.

### Read Matthew 18:10-20

We might ask ourselves, "In a large church, how are we supposed to take the responsibility for thousands of people's moral and spiritual lives?" Here is Christ's answer:

#### 1. Lovingly pursue the wandering members you know. (v.10-14)

We are responsible to seek to help gather absentee members of the flock. Notice the profoundly theological motivation for our pursuit of every single member: the Father loves every one of them, He has provided guardian angels for each one, and He rejoices when each stray is brought home.

Since He loves them, we dare not despise them; and, as we pursue His wandering sheep, we must be gentle with them:

- Express genuine affection toward them;
- Ask them questions before giving advice;
- Clearly state your concern;
- Persevere.

#### 2. Lovingly confront the erring members you know. (v. 15-17a)

We are responsible to help correct each other in our sin. None of us can, or should try, to correct everybody; but as we get to know each other in Congregational Communities, in small groups, and on various ministry teams, we can lovingly correct and be corrected by the people we know in the church. Here's how Jesus teaches us to do this: in the case of sin that offends us or endangers a member or the church, spiritually,

- We go privately to the erring brother or sister,
- If he/she does not repent, we bring along one or two others in the family,
- If he/she does not repent, we report the matter to the church (in our case, through the elders).

If these steps fail to effect true repentance, we must continue the process.

#### 3. Lovingly discipline the unrepentant members you know. (v. 17b-20)

We have all seen difficult and extreme cases in families in which a grown child must be threatened with having to leave the house because he will not cease and desist from destructive behavior. Sometimes when this happens, the son will subsequently repent and return to his family. Jesus is saying that the same is true of God's family. (Look also at I Corinthians 5; II Thessalonians 3:6, 14; II John 10,11) Notice these principles in the text:

- We never give up on people – if they no longer are members of the church, we still love and evangelize them. (v. 17b)
- We are given Christ’s authority to discipline each other. (v. 18) “Authentic community” is impossible without godly authority.
- We don’t do this alone. (v. 19)
- We seek God in prayer. (v. 19)
- Christ is always with us. (v. 20)

In fact, this is all, ultimately, about Christ—His will, His Name, His presence, His joy, His Church. The Church of Christ is a saving community, and every member is responsible to care for his brother and sister.

### Discussion Questions

- 1) How do most of us need to change our lives to conform to Matthew 18:10-20
- 2) What are the motives for obeying Matthew 18:10-20?
- 3) Why is Matthew 18 important in our witness to the world around us?
- 4) What is the connection between church discipline and salvation?

### Digging Deeper

Is there a person you need to pursue or confront?  
Develop a strategy to do so.

### Read this Week

[Dealing with Conflict Successfully](#)

by *Second Presbyterian Church*

### Helpful Resources

#### BOOKS

[Managing Conflict God’s Way](#)

by *Deborah Smith Pegues*

[The Peacemaker](#)

by *Ken Sande*

[When You Don’t Agree](#)

by *James Fairfield*

[Managing Conflict Creatively](#)

by *Donald Palmer*

#### WEB RESOURCES

[Peacemaker Ministries](#)

[Website Resources](#)

by *Peacemaker Ministries*

[Conflict Resources at](#)

[Monergism.com](#)

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