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### **How People Change – Part XII**

**Pastor Ty Blackburn**

**Matthew 18:12-20**

**March 20, 2016**

Young people, you are dismissed for your classes now. May the Lord bless you, and cause you to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ. May you understand what it means to be washed white as snow in the blood of our Savior.

Please turn with me now in your Bibles to Matthew 18. We come to our last passage that we're going to be looking at under this title, 'How People Change', Matthew 18:12-20. We've been saying that the way that we change in the body of Christ, we don't change often because we don't pursue change rightly, and the way we need to pursue change rightly, according to the New Testament, is through relationships, and redemptive relationships. Relationships where we help one another to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Last time we talked about our need to be in a particular type of redemptive relationship. That is a relationship with our shepherds, Elders, that we all need leaders, we all need shepherds in our lives. We need to be under those who are looking after us. The implication is we are all sheep. We all have the capacity of wandering away from the Good Shepherd, and so that we need one another, we need particularly Elders overseeing us. But since we all have the capacity to wander, this natural proclivity to wander, to drift, we need one another as well. We need to shepherd one another because we are all sheep. That phrase, '*one another*', is such an important phrase in the New Testament, occurring about 50 times. Well, the particular Greek word that is translated '*one another*' occurs about 50 times in the New Testament. We are told to love one another, to care for one another, to serve one another, to be devoted to one another, to pray for one another. But a couple of particulars I want to mention as a lead-in to our message, we are also called to encourage one another. Twice, 1 Thessalonians 5:11, Hebrews 2:13, we are told to encourage one another. Now, '*encourage*' in the Greek means literally '*to call alongside*'. Now you think about that, what is happening, a flock of sheep, we are God's flock, we're His sheep, and sheep are to stay together. So if one of the sheep begins to wander, and so encouraging means, "Hey, come back over here," '*to call alongside*', to '*parakleto*', '*to call beside you*'. That is, encourage one another.

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Admonish one another takes it to another level. Admonish one another, Romans 13:14, Colossians 3:16. It means *'to set the mind right'*. It is a little more emphatic that the sheep is wandering, and he is not thinking correctly, and so that is why he is wandering, and so we are called to one another, to each other, in this way, to go talk to them, and set their mind right. "What are you thinking? You are a sheep. Why are you over here by yourself? This is crazy!"

And so we come to a passage today which continues to show that need to be 'one-anothered', and to be confronted sometimes. In our culture, confrontation like this is not something that is popular. You can tell somebody anything except they are wrong in our culture. You can't even think they are wrong, apparently. Now, that is apparently what so many are lobbying to see. You can't even maintain the position that someone is wrong. Tolerance has been redefined. Tolerance used to mean that though you disagree with someone, you treat them kindly. Now it means you can't disagree with them. That is not tolerance, that is oppression, intellectual oppression. That is not freedom. But in that culture, it is hard then to, we are in a climate that makes it seem that when you come and talk to someone about a problem they have, that you just get, "Who do you think you are?" But the New Testament pictures us as people who need that in our lives.

In fact, the Old Testament does too. It is so instructive that the second commandment, not the second commandment in the ten, but the second great commandment. Remember, Jesus was asked, "What is the greatest commandment?" "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength." He quoted Deuteronomy 6:5. Then He said, "And the second great commandment is like unto it, you shall love your neighbor as yourself." Then He quoted Leviticus 19:18. "You shall love your neighbor in the same way you love yourself." It is instructive that the verse immediately preceding that, where He says, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," says this: "You shall not hate your neighbor, you will surely reprove him." That is, that to not reprove your neighbor is to hate him. To see him in danger spiritually, and to not speak to him, is to hate him.

We come to a passage of Scripture where this becomes even more clear. This is a passage on church discipline, and the title of the message, 'How People Change – Part XII', we need to change through 'Being Under Church Discipline'. We all need to be under, that is, an environment where we will be disciplined. You know the word *'discipline'* is very closely related to the word *'disciple'*, the root is the same. Disciples follow Jesus, and to follow Jesus you need to be disciplined. That

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is why David said, “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.” Later he says in that same psalm, “Your rod and Your staff they comfort me.” Now the rod and the staff weren’t there for like just little love taps. Well they really were there for love taps, but they didn’t feel like a love tap when the sheep got it. The rod and the staff were there to remind the sheep to stop going the wrong way, and to come back. And David says how good it is that we have a God who loves us enough to shepherd us, and that comforts me to know that He will do that.

Matthew 18:12-20 is basically just saying that same thing, that our God is a shepherding God who will shepherd us, and the means that He uses, His rod and His staff, are other Christians in our lives. We need to be under and involved in a church where church discipline is practiced. This is something that has been misunderstood in our day through a couple of different extremes. On the one hand, people have misused it, abused it. I remember reading an article about churches that abuse, some years back. Where Scriptures like this are taken and twisted, and just really used to inflict pain upon people. It is almost cultish kind of behavior that some Christian churches have engaged in. But on the other hand, what is really more prominent than that, or prevalent today, is the neglect of this important command.

I remember when I was early on in my ministry here at the church, I had just been here maybe a couple of years, and I had the opportunity to have lunch with an older pastor who was from a very successful church, I thought. It was a church that was just thriving, growing, and it was a large church. So in talking, we had a great time together. He was so encouraging throughout the meal, and then at the end I said, “I have a question for you. I am dealing with a situation in our church where a man is leaving his wife, and he is not listening, he is not hearing. We’ve gone to him, and we’ve gone to him in a group, and we’ve said, ‘You need to realize you have no biblical grounds to divorce your wife. You’ve got to work toward reconciliation. I’m sure there are problems that she has too, but you need to work on this. You can’t leave her, according to the Scriptures, if you are a Christian.’” Anyway, so I told him about that. I said, “You know, we are at the place where we are supposed to tell it to the church,” which we are going to see in this passage. “What do you tell? Do you simply say that he is just not listening to the word, or do you say that he is abandoning his wife, and he is committing adultery?” That pastor, who I respected so much said to me, “We don’t do that.” I was asking him a practical question, “What does it mean to tell it to the church? Do you give specific details or not? How much do you tell so that the church can effectively go after him?” And he said, “We don’t do that. We’re too big.” I remember my heart just

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sank. I thought to myself, “How can you just ignore the clear command of Jesus Christ?” It is inconvenient so we don’t do it. And so because of this neglect in so many churches, and because of the abuse in a few, it is very hard for us to have a proper view of church discipline, but the Bible really presents it in the most positive light, and with amazing balance when you see it in context. Look with me at Verses 12-20 of Matthew 18.

***Matthew 18:12-20 ~ “What do you think? If any man has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go and search for the one that is straying? 13 If it turns out that he finds it, truly I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine which have not gone astray. 14 So it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones perish.***

***15 “If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother. 16 But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that BY THE MOUTH OF TWO OR THREE WITNESSES EVERY FACT MAY BE CONFIRMED. 17 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. 18 Truly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.***

***19 “Again I say to you, that if two of you agree on earth about anything that they may ask, it shall be done for them by My Father who is in heaven. 20 For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst.”***

Let’s pray together.

*Father, we ask that You might open our spiritual eyes, and give us Your truth. That You might send forth Your light, and Your truth, and let them lead us to Your holy hill, to the place of Your habitation. We pray this in Jesus’ name, Amen.*

Now I want to consider this subject, church discipline, under three headings. They all being with a P, or at least the main word starts with a P. The first is, *The Purposes of Church Discipline*. Three points, the first is *The Purposes of Church Discipline*. Then we are going to look at *The Process*, but now *The Purposes of Church Discipline*, and there are two purposes that I think we see in the passage.

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### 1) The Purposes of Church Discipline:

And the two purposes are this: *The Good of the Wayward Individual*, and *The Glory of God*. Those are *The Purposes of Church Discipline*— *The Good of the Wayward Individual* and *The Glory of God*. So let's look first at *The Good of the Wayward Individual*.

#### A) The Good of the Wayward Individual:

We are asking, why does God call us to discipline one another? And it is for our own good. It is for the good of the wayward individual, Verses 12-14, the context of Verses 15-20 are so important to read. It doesn't just start off, Jesus doesn't just start a dialogue by saying, "If your brother sins, go." It comes out of a context and a flow of thought, and it is so important for us to see that. In fact, I really wish that they, the translations, the NASB that I am reading was revised I think in like '98, and they took out a word that really is there in the Greek, and all the translations have done this. I don't really know why, but Verse 14, it says like this:

***Matthew 18:14-15 ~ So it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones perish. (And...) 15 "If your brother sins,...***

Before that was in the NASB, "And if your brother sins,..." because there is a conjunction in the Greek that is not translated. Sometimes, you know, when you move from Greek to English, that's okay, but here it takes something away because the flow is missed. It is really a conjunction there, "And if your brother sins, go..." I've just been talking about sheep, wayward sheep that are gone astray, and the shepherds desire to go after that one, and leave the 99, *and* if your brother sins. Do you see? If your brother is caught in sin, go after him, like a shepherd that would leave the 99 in the fold, and go and search for the one. So the purpose of church discipline is the good of the wayward individual. There is a desire to bless, there is a desire to restore. It is really, in a sense, a search and rescue operation.

You know, we hear about these from time to time, someone is lost in some park, or some nature preserve, and they have not been heard of for some period of time, and what happens? They mobilize the rangers, and those that are trained for search and rescue, and they go, and they try to rescue them. Or someone is lost at sea, they had an accident out in the ocean, and what happens? The Coast Guard goes on a search and rescue operation. This is really what is the spirit of church discipline. It

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is a search and rescue operation. It is that which is done for the benefit of the person that is struggling. Now they don't see it that way often, when they are in their sin and they're wandering. Remember, we are sheep. We don't know we are in danger when we are in danger. But God says, "This is how I see it, you're going after that wandering sheep."

I mean, think about how helpless a sheep is away from the shepherd, outside the fold. What chances does he have? I mean, sheep are so dumb, he doesn't know how to get back where he was going. You've never seen a movie about the amazing journey of a sheep that traveled across the country to find its way home. Dogs, cats, maybe, but not a sheep. A sheep has no idea where he is going, and he has nothing to defend himself at all. All he can do is alert predators by, "Baa...baaaaaaa....lunch...come and get it!" So a sheep on its own is just imminent death. So the urgency of the shepherd to go get him, that is the heart behind this, these commands. A wandering Christian, and you see this in the repetition of the phrase '*gone astray*', '*straying*', if one of them has gone astray, Verse 12, *...search for the one that is straying?* The end of Verse 12. Verse 13:

***Matthew 18:13 ~ ...he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine which have not gone astray.***

It means '*to wander*', and just to get lost, and the idea actually is to be deceived. It is often used of what false teachers do, they deceive, and lead astray. So often Christians will be deceived. Like the gentleman I mentioned earlier, he was convinced that God wanted him to be happy, and so that he could have an affair with this other woman, and marry her, even though he was committed by covenant to another woman. How did that happen? It was his own deceitful mind, it was the world lying to him, it maybe was that woman also, or some of the false teaching he had listened to. Whatever it was, he was wandering from the truth.

When you look at the broader context even, you see God's great concern for His people. He uses right before this, we didn't read this passage, but in Verses 1-11, he uses the metaphor of a child. He says that believers, the one who believes in Him, is like a little baby, like a little child, like a toddler. The disciples actually, if you look at how it comes up, they are arguing over who is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven. They had a lot of discussions about this. You would have thought they would have learned, but anyway, they are arguing again about who is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven, probably at Peter's house, and Jesus calls a child to Him. Probably a toddler, from the Greek word, a child that is able to walk,

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and able to come to Him, and able to understand, but it is a little child. It is certainly not a child in school, it is a child between probably two and four. He calls the child to Him, He places him in front of them and says, “This is what you must become like to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.” Then, “If you do not become like this, you will not enter the Kingdom of Heaven.” That is, that you have to have childlike faith. You have to realize, to be saved, you have to realize that you can’t do anything to earn your salvation.

Just like a little child, you know, you don’t see little three-year-olds making out a list of all the things they have to do that day. You know, “What are we going to eat for lunch? I think I’m going to fix macaroni and cheese. I need to go shopping.” No, what do they do? They just wait until someone gives them what they need. They may cry, that’s all they can do. “Help me.” They don’t usually say, “Help me,” but they are basically saying that through other ways, right? So He says, “Spiritually, to be saved, you must be like that. You must acknowledge that you are impoverished spiritually, and that you are as dependent upon God to save you as a little child is to have his mother pick him up, feed him, protect him, care for him. That is the essence of salvation.

A lot of times people take these verses out of context and say that when Jesus says it is not His will for any little one to perish, He is talking about how much He loves little children. He does love little children, but He is talking here about little Christians, and He is likening them to children. He says, “Listen, who is greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven? I’m going to tell you something, I love every single child in the Kingdom of Heaven with such fervent love.” This is His message in context, and He goes on to say, “Listen, you are worried about who is greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven, I love every child, every spiritual child who comes to me like this little child. If they come spiritually to Me, they are precious to Me, and let Me tell you, you better not mess with them.” That is what He basically says from Verses 6-11.

He talks about stumbling blocks. He uses the word ‘*stumble*’ or ‘*stumbling blocks*’ six times in that passage, really from Verses 6-9. A stumbling block was a trap. It is actually the Greek word ‘*skandalizo*’, or ‘*skandalon*’. Our English word ‘*scandal*’ transliterates that Greek word. The ‘*skandalon*’ was the trigger of a trap, it was that, you know the trigger that caused the snare to fall, or the trigger that caused the trap to spring, the scandal, the ‘*skandalon*’. So the idea of being scandalized, in this idea of the Greek word, was to be trapped, and to have the subsequent effect of being trapped emotionally, and also conduct-wise. The idea

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would be to be trapped in sin, and then to be led into greater sin. And Jesus says that is something He feels very strongly about, every single child of His. So that is the context leading up to when He goes to sheep. Then He says, “Go after the lost sheep. See, I don’t want my children trapped, scandalized. I don’t want My sheep lost. Go after them!” It is the good of the sheep, it is the good of His precious children, it is the good of the individual.

One of the key words actually in the first 11 verses is the word ‘one’. It occurs over and over again, Verse 6, or actually Verse 5:

***Matthew 18:5-6 ~ ...And whoever receives one such child in My name receives Me; 6 but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble,...***

And on, and on, and on. He is looking at the one, and He is looking at the one sheep there in Verse 12.

***Matthew 18:12 ~ and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go and search for the one that is straying?***

So *The Purpose of Church Discipline is The Good of the Wayward Individual.*

### B) The Glory of God:

But it is also, there are two purposes under this first main point, *The Purposes of Church Discipline, The Good of the Wayward Individual*, and secondly, *The Glory of God*. When we look at the broader context, we really see the heart of God. I’ve begun to explain that, even in what we just were talking about. That when He talks about, in fact, the phrase He uses three times in the passage is ‘one of these little ones’. One of these little ones, Verse 6.

***Matthew 18:6 ~ but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble,...***

Verse 10.

***Matthew 18:10 ~ “See that you do not despise one of these little ones,...***



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Verse 14.

***Matthew 18:14 ~ So it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones perish.***

God loves each little one. Look at His heart. He sees us, though we are a body, and we've been talking about that a lot, we are a corporate body, and we are to see ourselves more that way, and it's not just that way. There is the individual and the many, and God looks at the individual, his heart. You see His earnestness when He says, "Listen, if you want to cause them to be scandalized, it would be better for you, if you are going to lead one of My little ones into sin," Verse 6, "It would be better for you, rather than to do that, go ahead and tie a millstone around your neck, and go jump in the water and drown. That would be a better alternative than messing with one of My little ones." And then He says, Verse 7:

***Matthew 18:7 ~ "Woe to the world because of its stumbling blocks! For it is inevitable that stumbling blocks come; but woe to that man through whom the stumbling block comes!"***

God is pronouncing judgment on the one that causes a little one of His to stumble. Look at the imagery in Verse 8:

***Matthew 18:8 ~ "If your hand or your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off..."***

"Listen, if your hand or foot is causing a stumbling, cut it off." God is so earnest, "Pluck out your eye. Don't mess with My little ones." Then as a shepherd, He goes after the one. And what do we see? We see in this passage the glory of God, we see the affection of God, the concern of God, the determination of God. And so when church discipline is practiced, what is happening? Not just the good of the individual, but the glory of God. God is being reflected, He is being made known. Our God is a God who cares about the individual. Our God is a God of affection, and concern, and determination. Our God is a God of love. The Gospel is on display. Verse 11:

***Matthew 18:11 ~ [For the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost.]***

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When we go after the one who is lost, we are visibly testifying that the Son of Man came to save that which was lost. That is the Gospel. Jesus came into the world, was born as true man, to seek the lost. He didn't come to help those who were doing all right, just to give them a boost. He came to make the sick well, to make the dead alive, and He did that through the blood of His cross. So church discipline, rightly done, is truly for the good of the individual, and for the glory of God.

Now, let me ask you this. The application we need to all look at is if we are finding ourselves in a situation where we are going to a brother to deal with their sin, what is my purpose? What are my purposes? Is my heart really motivated for their good, and His glory? Or, am I wanting to get some vengeance because I've been hurt? "I want you to know how much you hurt me, and I want you to repent and confess it." That's not the heart of God. That's not the heart that we're supposed to have with church discipline. If you're still feeling that way, you haven't gotten the log out of your own eye. So Matthew 7 you need to read and work through before you practice Matthew 18. But by God's grace it can be that we can really be motivated out of the good of the other person and the glory of God. So the purposes of church discipline, the two purposes, we covered that. The second point is the process of church discipline.

### 2) The Process of Church Discipline:

And there's a four-fold process that we see unfold for us in Verses 15 to 18. And you see the four pieces of the process, really there are five imperatives in Verses 15 to 18, and the first two are part of one step, and then the next three of those five are each another step in church discipline. So the imperatives really lay out for you the process. The first step in the process is seen in Verse 15 with the two imperatives *go* and *show*.

***Matthew 18:15 ~ "If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private;..."***

That is that we are to make the effort to go. You can't just wait and hope that the sheep comes back. You're to go and to show in private. Now, the way you apply this, if you realize that a person's in a situation where they're really in need, you go after them, and like I said, a lot of times we get mixed up, because we think they're in need because we really just have a need to vent. That's not biblical church discipline. That's sin on our part. "Vengeance is Mine," says the Lord.

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We're not to take revenge. We're to deal with our offenses, and to go and to restore peace. Yes, we're to go and make peace, and we need to forgive, and they need to confess, yes, but the heart is to bless. And there's a time where you overlook. Proverbs 19:11 says it's the glory of a man to overlook an offense, and most of the time we overlook, because we offend each other. If you're around people, they're going to offend you. We're all going to offend one another. We're going to forget things. We're going to say things we shouldn't say. Or a lot of times people offend us because we misconstrue what they meant and we jump to conclusions. "If I had said that, I would have meant this," and we take offense. And there are places where you go not just, "Hey, what you said is sinful and what you said is..." but no, you go and you ask questions. "Hey, you know, you said something earlier. What did you mean by that?" with that kind of a tone. Not like, "HEY! You said something earlier, and I want to get this worked out!" You're just doing more damage. They're going to have to come to you and, "Hey brother, I know I sinned yesterday, but you're really sinning in a big way right now." Well, that'll be good. If you can start talking that way, maybe it would all get worked out. But the issue is there's a place where we overlook and there's a place where we go, and the motivation to go is the good of the individual and the glory of God.

If those things we see are part of the process, then we go. And when you go, you show. That is, you try to clearly show the person their fault, the Scripture says. And one of the good ways of doing that is to ask questions. A lot of times when you make declarations, you sort of cause people's defenses to come up, but if you ask a question, it helps them really examine themselves. And one of the most striking things to me, and it's really mind blowing if you think about it, is that Jesus was always asking questions of people. Now, just think about that. The omniscient one was always asking questions. The rich young ruler comes up and says, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" and Jesus says, "Well, how do you read the Scriptures?" and He keeps asking him questions. He doesn't answer his question directly. He asks questions.

And this is what He does when He talks to people to bring them into restoration. "What's going on?" He asks questions. Now, it's not because He needs the answer. It's because we need the answer, but He didn't. But He knew that the best way to get to the heart is to ask a question to get the person to think about the situation themselves. So that's a good way to go, to go and to show, to ask questions. But the goal is to come to the truth. Maybe it was a misunderstanding. Maybe there's a real problem. Maybe there's a pattern here. "I just want to talk to you about that. How can I help?" Privacy is important. Do you see that? When He says in Verse

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15, "...show him his fault in private..." literally in the Greek it says, "...show him his fault with you and him alone." So privacy, keep the circle as small as possible. And then I think it's also important to note that it requires patience. The only verb in the passage in Verses 15 to 18 that is in the present tense is the verb *go*. All the rest are aorist, which are a more punctiliar action. Show, tell, let him be, are all aorist tense. But *go* is in the present tense, and that is, remember Greek present isn't time, but it's the kind of action. The Greek present is continuous action rather than a point in time action. And so when it says *go and show*, the idea is that you're willing to go more than once. You don't expect that the first time you go and you show, then you move immediately to step two. "Hey, I want to talk to you about a problem. This is the situation, and do you see it? Do you agree with me? Okay, I'm calling up some friends right now. I'll be right back with you." And you go on with step two. No, you put the truth out there and you allow the Lord to work, because the goal is restoration. The goal is not to be proved right. But there's that idea that maybe there's going to be some time that you allow, and you go again, "Hey, have you thought about what we talked about the other day? I've been praying about it. Have you thought about it?" And realizing that when we go and show, we should do it like Jesus did in John 13 when He gives us a model of how to forgive one another or how to confront one another by washing feet. I think that's a picture of how we're supposed to deal with one another's dirty sin. He says, "Wash one another's feet in the same way that I did." To wash somebody's feet, you become like their slave. You don't come at them like this, you come at them like this. It's a great passage to meditate on before you go. So the first step is go and show, and the second step, if they don't listen to you, he says:

***Matthew 18:15 ~ ...if he listens to you, you have won your brother.***

Verse 16 is the second step:

***Matthew 18:16 ~ But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you,...***

The next step is to take. Take one or two brothers with you for the purpose of restoration. Not to embarrass, but if this brother is convinced he's going in a direction that, like I said, this brother I was talking about before that was convinced God wanted him to be happy. He had prayed about it. He was sure that God was good with him leaving his wife, and he was convinced of it. Well, it wasn't enough just for me to talk to him. We had to go in a group to say, "Listen, here's a few brothers telling you I know there are a lot of problems. We're not

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saying everything's just magically going to be okay, but we're saying that to go the way you're going is to walk away from Christ. The way is going to be hard to come back but God will be with you in it."

The reason I think he says, "Take one or two with you," first of all is to persuade, because he says: *...so that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every fact may be confirmed.* The first part of that is when you talk to the brother, what you're saying is confirmed by other people. Yes, this is the truth. And then if he continues not to listen, then you have also on the other hand, two or three can confirm that he's still not listening. That's the second step. The third step is in Verse 17, the first part. It's in the next imperative: *tell.*

### ***Matthew 18:17 ~ If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church;***

This normally would mean to tell it to the Elders first, who then after investigation, they may need to tell it to the congregation. The idea here is a public call to expand the search and rescue mission. Remember this is a search and rescue mission. We see this often reported on the news. Someone's lost and what's happened? They gather up volunteers and they fan out, and they search an area. That's kind of what's happening when you tell it to the church. You're saying spiritually, "You didn't know about this situation because it's been kept quiet, because a brother was dealing with it one-on-one, and then a circle was dealing with it, but you now need to know about it, because he hasn't heard. He hasn't listened after a period of time. And so now the way you can be involved in the rescue is to pray and to look for opportunities of how you might directly speak to that person."

You don't have to know all the circumstances to help. You can say, "John," or, "Jim," or whoever the person is, "I know that there are problems going on in your life that apparently there are some real issues. I just encourage you to trust the Lord Jesus and trust His word. I care about you." What you're doing is you're looking at that sheep and saying, "Come back." You're encouraging. You're admonishing.

This is one of the reasons actually, this idea of telling, an important part of the process that Jesus says, "This is the way that I work to bring back My wayward sheep." It's an important part of the process that in recent decades in America it's become clear that the church has to act with wisdom in this area. Something that we've talked about in some of our business meetings is that for us to really help hold one another accountable in this way, and I believe we all need to be this, I need to be under discipline, so that if I start wandering, you'll come after me and

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you'll do this process with me. And if you're a believer you should want that for the same reason, because Jesus says you need that. Well, for us to do that in this day in America, it's become clear that we have to have what's called informed consent, that is, that you have to be an adult. Remember we talked about church members that got saved before they were 18 had to go through the membership process again? It's not that we were saying that they're not already members of the Kingdom of Heaven, but to be under discipline in the church, they have to give as an adult conformed consent. "Yea, I understand the terms of membership and I agree. I put myself under the discipline of this church."

We realize that for many of us who have been members for a long time, we never did that officially. In fact, you're looking at one of them. When I joined the church we didn't have this informed consent. We didn't submit to discipline. Now, I tell you today that I'm submitted to this, but legally if I were to go off the deep end and you guys came after me, and you told it to the church, "Ty's just lost his mind," no, you wouldn't say that. You'd say, "Ty's not hearing. Ty's in trouble. We need to pray for him." I could sue the church for liable, slander. You publically slandered me, and the courts would find for me against the church, because there was no informed consent. So we understand that God's standard is higher than any law of man, but the Bible also tells us in Romans 13 that we should obey every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, so we realize that legally if we get everyone to give informed consent, we can then abide by the laws of the state and do what God has called us to do in His word. We're going to do what He calls us to do in His word whether we abide by the laws of the state or not, but where we can abide by the laws of the state, God wants us to do that. Does that make sense?

So you'll be receiving emails. In fact, we're going to send one to everybody, which you're going to receive an email that's going to say, "I ask you the membership vows, and do you affirm them?" If you're a member of the church you'll receive that. And by sending it back, you are legally giving us a written record of your informed consent. We believe that's the right thing to do even though it's a little bit tedious. It's kind of different. We're trying to obey the Scriptures, and so I'm going to be sending mine in along with you, because we need to be under authority. And now having said all that, then the fourth step—that's the tell it to the church—but the fourth step, if they won't listen after you've expanded the community into the rescue operation, where there are more people praying and more people reaching out maybe through email, or text, or calling, possibly going to see—if that person still won't listen, Jesus says the fourth step is in the imperative in Verse 17, the second half: *...let him be to you...*

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***Matthew 18:17 ~ ... let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.***

That is that we as a body of Christ, when this happens, we are to then make a judgment. We don't know the person's soul. We can't see in their heart. That why He says, "Let him be as..." Only God know those who are His and those who are not. But He's saying based on the fruit that you see, you are to make a determination and you are to treat this brother or sister now as a Gentile or a tax gatherer. That is, a person outside of Christ. It means that after thinking through all that's happened, this person is not listening—in fact, another key word in the passage is the word *listen*. It occurs four times.

***Matthew 18:15 ~ ...if he listens to you, you have won your brother.***

***Matthew 18:16 ~ But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you,...***

***Matthew 18:17 ~ If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church,...***

Do you see? It's listening. Are you listening to the word of God? We're going to see Jesus telling us that when we speak to one another like this, Jesus is speaking to that wayward sheep. Jesus Himself is speaking. He says, "My sheep know My voice, and another they will not follow." So if Jesus is speaking to this person again, and again, and again, and again, and he won't listen, what are you to conclude? It looks like this person may not be one of Jesus' sheep. And so with brokenness and a heavy heart, we say, "I'm no longer to regard you as a brother. I'm now regarding you as someone who needs to be saved." There's no change. You love them. It's just that the nature of the relationship has changed. Before, it was the love of a brother in Christ. Now it's the love of a lost person. Only God knows if they're really saved. They may be, but we're called to treat them as an unbeliever. Now, those are the four steps in the process. We talked about the purposes of church discipline, the process of church discipline, and now in Verses 18 to 20, the power of church discipline.

### 3) The Power of Church Discipline:

These Verses 18 to 20 are other verses that are often misapplied, misunderstood, taken out of context, Verse 20 particularly:

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***Matthew 18:20 ~ For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst.”***

That’s used so often to speak of why we should still have a prayer meeting if only two or three of us are here, right? Where two or three are gathered... And strictly speaking that’s true, but the passage is talking about discipline, and we’ll see this in a moment. The power of church discipline, first of all there are two aspects of the power of church discipline. First of all, church discipline exhibits the power of binding and loosing. Verse 18, again, we’re reading these words right out of what has come before. After Jesus says this four-fold process, He says:

***Matthew 18:18 ~ Truly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.***

The verb tenses are quite instructive. The English conveys them pretty well. Whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound. Whatever you loose on earth (in the present) shall have been loosed. The first is actually the idea of whatever you bind presently shall be found (in the future) to have been bound in heaven. Do you see what I’m saying? So that He’s saying that it’s not that what we do makes God do something. What He’s saying is that the verdict of the church that’s acting biblically will be found to have been the verdict already decreed in Heaven. So there is great power in church discipline. When a church says to someone, “When we look at your life, we look at your responses, we see no reason to believe that you’re a believer. We don’t have confidence that you’re a Christian. We’re concerned for your soul.” That is power being displayed by the Shepherd upon that wayward sheep.

Now, it’s redemptive power. It’s restorative power, but it is not something to be scoffed at or looked down upon. It is serious business. In this same passage Jesus is saying something very similar to what He said in Matthew 16:18 just a couple chapters before, when Peter made the great declaration, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Jesus says, “You’re Peter, and upon this rock I’m going to build My church. The gates of hell shall not prevail against it. I tell you I give you the keys of the kingdom, and whatsoever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven. Whatsoever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” Basically the keys and binding and loosing are basically saying that the preacher of the Gospel, the preacher himself, the Christian who proclaims the Gospel, God has given you the keys of the Kingdom. When you preach the Gospel and someone responds,



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they're let into the Kingdom. They're loosed from their sins and let into the Kingdom. When you preach the Gospel and they reject it, they're bound in their sins and they're kept out of the Kingdom. Incredible power. He takes that same image and says this is what happens in church discipline. It's about the entrance to the Kingdom and the removal.

Now, it doesn't mean strictly speaking that we actually ultimately put somebody out of Heaven, but it's saying that the action that we do is something very close to that, that God has already done. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 5:5, and I think what's happening is the believer, a lot of times it's genuine believers who are basically removed, put outside of the protection of the church. They may genuinely be saved, but God removes all of the blessings that are theirs in Christ. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 5:5, there's a sinner there, where he says, "There's a type of sin among you that not even here among the Gentiles. A man has his father's wife." There was a Christian there who was living with in a romantic way a woman who used to be married to his father. Paul says, "This is appalling. Put the man out of your midst." He said, "I've already judged him. I've already turned him over to Satan for the destruction of his flesh. I'm telling you that when the Spirit is with you, put him out." What that means is you determine just what Matthew 18 says. "We don't see reason to believe that you're a believer. So in brokenness, if you won't repent, we must tell you that you're no longer a member of the church." Paul says that's akin to turning a person over to Satan for the destruction of their flesh. Now even that, as serious as that is, is redemptive, turning him over to Satan for the destruction of his flesh that his soul may be saved. That's what Paul says, and in 2 Corinthians 2, you find out that that guy, they turned him over to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, and then in 2 Corinthians 2, Paul says, "He's come back and he's confessed. Now forgive him and love him." The rescue operation worked.

He says the same kind of thing in 1 Timothy 1:20. He's turned the false teachers over to Satan. There's some sense in which when the church renders this verdict about someone's soul, God has already done that and He's placing them in a very serious state of discipline. That's something that we should handle carefully, humbly, with brokenness. But if you find yourself or if I find myself on the other end of the staff, we should not despise it. It's serious business. And the last thing is it's not just the power of binding and loosing, but it's the power of the presence of Jesus. What He's saying in Verse 20 when He says, "For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst," what He's saying is, "When those two or three came to you and they said, 'Repent,' and you didn't, and they said, 'Please repent,' and you didn't, you were denying Me to My face."

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That's what Jesus is saying. "I was there in their midst." And that is a high view of the calling that we have as Christians. It is a serious calling, but it's a wonderful, gracious calling. God is saying, like He said in the first part of the chapter, "Don't mess with My little ones. My wayward sheep are precious to Me, and I have given the resources of Heaven to reclaim them." It's His amazing love on display. He loves us so much that though we might let go of Him, He'll never let go of you. And it's exhibited when we practice this kind of biblical obedience. And when that happens, when someone is restored, there is joy more over the one that's come back than the 99 that are still here. It's like the angels in Heaven are rejoicing. We're to have hearts like that.

Listen, it's so wonderful when we don't have situations that need this. Isn't it joyful when we walk together? And we just start wandering, and we need to get better at calling one another back quickly. "Hey, get back over here with the flock." Encourage one another. Admonish one another. "Stop eating that stuff over there and come over here." But when it gets to the point where we have to go, we have to be willing to go. And I thank God that He has given me people in my life in this church that will come after me. Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.

Let's pray together...

*Father, we ask that You would continue Your glorious work in the hearts of everyone who believes in this room, in Your body here at Providence. We pray for those that don't yet believe, that You would grant them salvation, repentance and faith, to trust in the Good Shepherd, the Lord Jesus Christ, who laid down His life for the sheep. Help them become like little children who know they can't do anything but ask Him to save them, to ask Jesus to do for them what they could never do for themselves, to pay for their sins and to give them a perfect righteousness. And for those who belong to You, Lord, may we all become more and more like our great Savior. Help us to be more obedient, more attuned to Your voice, to follow You as we hear You speaking to us through Your word, as we hear You speaking Your word to us through one another, and may we be a flock that is blessed and built up. May we be a flock that loves one another with the same love that You love us with. And may we see Your glory manifest in our corporate witness in a way that starts radically impacting those around us. We pray this for the glory of Your Son, that great Shepherd of the sheep. We pray in His Name, Amen.*

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“How People Change – Part XII”

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