

“How Should You and the Church Respond to Someone’s Sin?”

Text: Matthew 18:15-17

(p. 799)

Today, we are going to look at how we **should** handle the sin of others as Christ taught us over 2,000 years ago. Sadly, it is NOT the way things typically get done in the church today. If it were, many, many, many problems and conflicts in the church would be prevented from ever establishing their destructive and wicked fruit in the hearts and lives of God’s people.

FOCUS: There is a Right and a Wrong progression of action to be taken in the face of sin in the Church.

1. The First Step Is a _____.

- God (i.e. Jesus) calls us to a better way. He calls us to seek an answer to the sin(s) that separate us by meeting **privately** together so we can discuss the issue without others **interfering or taking additional offense**.
- Another reason to go privately is to explain to the offending party what he or she has done (**vs. 15**) - “point out their fault...” before others can add fuel to the fire.
- Handled privately, respectfully and honestly, one has a good opportunity to *win them over* (**vs. 15**).
- That is the goal: NOT punishing or shaming, but repentance, forgiveness and reconciliation.
- This is about LOVE (and relationship), NOT about vengeance.

2. The Second Step Is to Take a _____ With You.

What would be the temptation here? ANSWER: to **STACK THE DECK IN OUR FAVOR!**

What would be the *right path* here? ANSWER: To select those who are genuinely spiritual in Christ, sharing His heart and mind; those who are fair and can be objective. The purpose is to find **help to heal and reconcile!**

3. The Third Step Is to Address It _____.

- It may be more appropriate to limit this to the Pastor(s), Elders and Overseers.
- NOTE: this is most assuredly where we do NOT **begin**, but where we end up if necessary.
- And if the offending party still refuses to respond to this accountability, then we are called of God to “treat them as you would a **pagan or a tax collector**.”
- Now, we need to understand that this would refer specifically and only to an **unrepentant pagan or tax collector!**
- **And then of course there is Forgiveness - a Forgiveness exemplified by Jesus Christ from the Cross:** “Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing.”
- Jesus prayed this for a world as yet unrepentant, and so should we.