

step. Some of which may include:

- * Making the situation public helps prevent unbalanced, one-sided, and divisive stories from spreading.
- * It demonstrates the church's adherence to the Word of God.
- * It can help minimize congregants from "picking sides".
- * This approach can help illuminate God's position in such matters of conflict. He is Holy and ungodliness should not be tolerated.
- * etc.

Step 4 - Treat the Offender as a Heathen

At this final step, God reveals how seriously He abhors disunity in the Body of Christ. After exhausting the previous steps, God's Word tells us to treat the offensive brother as a HEATHEN! We are told to treat him as a PUBLICAN!

Heathen in this case is a pagan. One aspect of this "heathenism" includes: "...alien to the worship of the true God..."

A publican was of course, a tax collector for Rome. Most likely the publican would have been more looked down upon than the heathen.

This is very serious, why would God tell us to treat such a "brother" as a pagan?

Likely this is to prevent the leaven this person embraces from spreading throughout the congregation. This "brother" is stubborn and willful. He refuses to be corrected by the Word of God. He values his own "rightness"... his own

definition of his "trespass" over that of the Bible and over right relationships with other members of the Body of Christ. The Body of Christ will be negatively impacted if this "brother" is embraced while in his rebellion.

Observations and Thoughts:

- * This is applicable to those within the household of faith; brothers.
- * This must involve a legitimate "trespass". This would not apply to "nit-picking" or personal preference issues.
- * This must be Spirit-led and prayerfully entered into.

Conclusion:

God's desired outcome is restored fellowship and unity in the Holy Spirit. We need to follow His methods in order to achieve His results.

How are these steps working in your church?

Transformed Living Messages by Pastor Marr
ChristLife
PO Box 1033, Niagara Falls, NY 14304
Ph: (716) 622-7320
E-mail: Christlife@Christ-like.net
Visit us at www.Christ-like.net



By: Robert Dallmann

Matthew 18:15-17

*15 Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, **go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone**: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.*

*16 But if he will not hear thee, **then take with thee one or two more**, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.*

*17 And if he shall neglect to hear them, **tell it unto the church**: but if he neglect to hear the church, **let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican**.*

Your Brother Trespasses Against You

It is important to recognize that this approach to correcting wrongs amongst people is designed to be valid with Christians. Notice that it is our "brother" who has trespassed against us, and this has as its goal reconciliation. The final step in this process is that the offending "brother" be revealed unto the "church". Clearly, this is not intended to be a remedy between unbelievers.

CHURCH DISCIPLINE - STEP-BY-STEP

Another important consideration is that Christian "brothers" would presumably be in agreement with the standards and teachings of the Bible. This should make reconciliation possible and more probable.

Step 1 - Go Alone

In verse 15 we find the first step in this reconciliation process is that the offended brother should go alone and have a one-on-one conversation with the brother who sinned against him. The two should have a conversation in which the offense is made known, and prayerfully that will be the end of the matter. If the offensive brother HEARS you (i.e. he listens to you and understands the problem) then you have GAINED your brother (essentially restored fellowship).

Observations and Warnings:

Routinely we find that a church congregant will approach the pastors, or spiritual leaders, to report a problem with another person in the church. At this point the leader should STOP the report and inquire as to whether the complainant has spoken with the offender yet?

If the two parties have not yet discussed the matter (prayerfully and Scripturally) then the spiritual leader SHOULD NOT yet get involved! The leader should teach this person the proper Biblical protocols for addressing the issue. They should pray together about the problem and that God would intervene. But the offend-

ed person must first go to the other "brother" and talk it over with that person, alone.

Potential Problems:

If the pastor listens to the complaint without having this first step in place, he risks hearing a one-sided explanation of what took place. In such a scenario, it is entirely possible that the offensive "brother" may be completely unaware of the existence of the issue. The offense may have been unintentional and not even recognized as problematic.

Often, the complainant is not willing to address the issue directly with the other party. This could be for a variety of reasons. Perhaps they are timid. Maybe they are unwilling to face confrontation. It could be that they think the proper thing to do is to go to the leadership first. Whatever the reason, it is not appropriate to address such issues if the two parties have not yet had a conversation.

The bottom line is that this passage is included in the Bible for good reason. We must seek to follow this guidance from God.

Step 2 - Go with One or Two Witnesses

This step is patterned after the Law and provides protections and validations for the parties involved. In the Law that God gave to Moses, no testimony was valid unless it was established by two or three witnesses (minimally). This is similar to this church discipline scenario.

"One witness shall not rise up against a man for

any iniquity, or for any sin, in any sin that he sinneth: at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established." (Deuteronomy 19:15)

In this second step, the offended brother is to take one or two others with him in order to verify and establish every word of this subsequent discussion. This step accomplishes a number of things, including the following...

- * It provides corroboration with regards to the details of the discussion... for BOTH parties.
- * It limits any changes to the accounts offered by BOTH parties.
- * It helps to eliminate the "my word vs. your word" tensions.

Most importantly, it is the next step in the Biblical process.

It is at this stage that a pastor or leader can become involved. The pastor can be one of these additional witnesses if it has come to this stage. Prior to this stage, if the pastor has become aware of the problems, he should be involved in the capacity of prayer.

Step 3 - Tell it to the Church

This next step, sadly becomes necessary, when the offensive brother refuses to acknowledge his trespass. After a private conversation with the offended brother and a small group discussion with one or two others, if reconciliation cannot be achieved... it must be brought to the church.

Why should this be brought to the church? There could be a number of purposes for this