

“The Model Citizen – Part IV”

“Oh Brother, Where Art Thou!”

Matt 18:v15-20

Scripture Ref: Gal 6:1; 1 COr 13:4-7; 1 Cor 5:1-5; 2 Thess 3:6; Titus 3:10-11; 2 Cor 2:6-9; 1 Peter 4:7-11

15 "Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. 16 But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that 'by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.' 17 And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector.

1. **As we come to part 4 in our series “the model citizen” - If we look at the first three segments with the heart of the Lord, we see that there is a consistency in the message....**
 - a. **We are to have humility in our hearts**
 - b. **We are to encourage others in Godliness**
 - c. **We are to love and pray for those who are straying from the flock.**
 - d. **In other words there is a heart of love and compassion for one another that should permeate our lives and our fellowship.**
2. **What that does is to create a church environment where people know they are loved and accepted.**
 - a. **The church becomes a safe haven – a place of emotional and spiritual refuge – a place unlike any other place in society!**
 - b. **How awesome is that!**
3. **But then reality hits us – this wonderful place, the church, it’s not the building, it’s the *people* – the church is made up of Christians that are ...not perfect! (gasp!)**
 - a. ***(in other words “the church would be perfect, if it weren’t for all those people messing things up!”)***
4. **See the truth about us Christians is that we are not perfect – just forgiven!**
 - a. **We are *justified* (just as if I had never sinned)**
 - b. **We are *being sanctified* (being changed into the image of Christ)**
 - c. **But we are not *perfectified*! (my word)**
 - d. **And once in a while one of us will do something that hurts one of our brothers or sisters in the Lord!**
5. **I have two boys – they love each other, and for the most part get along pretty good.**
 - a. **But every so often one of them will do something to the other – and it’s WW3!**

- b. One moment their having a great time – the next they're rolling around on the ground like two animals!
 - c. And the people in the church sometimes act like that – one moment we are all getting along great and loving and fellowshiping with one another – the next we're all upset and slinging mud at one another!
6. What do we do with that? How to we handle that?
- a. Well – Jesus gives us a model – a model of dealing with personally relationship issues in the church.

#1 Keep the matter Private

"Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone.

7. It is human nature that when someone wrongs us, the first thing we want to do is tell someone else!
- a. And that is exactly my point – its *human nature* – it is NOT *God's nature!*
 - b. Ever wonder why? I believe it is because we want an advocate – we want someone to agree with us that *we are right* and the other person is wrong.
 - i. We want to tell Mary what Sue said to me, so that Mary can agree with me that Sue is a little busy-body!
 - ii. Or we spiritualize the situation by going to Darlene and asking Darlene to *"pray with me about Sue... I am having such a struggle with it!"*
 - c. Newsflash: Asking one person to pray for my issue with another person is not spiritual – its GOSSIP! It's just "spiritual gossip!"
 - d. Human nature is to start building alliances against the person that offended me, so that I can feel OK about my part, and I can turn others against that person – thus hurting them back!
8. Jesus tells us very plainly – *"if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone"*
- a. Let me translate that for you – that means you don't tell a single other person!
9. OK – so the bible says I should go and talk to that person – but that doesn't mean that I rush over right away...
- a. First I PRAY – I lift that situation and that person up to the Lord –
 - b. See many times God will do a work and we don't have to do anything!
 - c. Another reason to pray is that God will reveal the reason that you are offended.

- i. Logically and literally – nothing anyone says should ever be able to offend the Spirit-filled Christian.
 - ii. Why? Because if I know where I stand with God – He is the only one that matters.
 - iii. If I truly trust God to cover me and take care of me – then who cares what someone might try and do to me?
 - iv. God is my covering and protection!
- d. See - Many times when we are offended, is it because our pride or self-worth has been pricked – or, someone is blocking something that I want.
- e. So prayer can allow God to help me with that part of my heart that was offended – to heal and grow me.
- f. And when I don't react to that offense and escalate it – God can then work in their hearts and bring them to a point of repentance.
- g. That is called “spiritual maturity” – learning to trust God to work the situation out!
10. Second – after I pray – and I feel that the Lord is leading me to confront that person – I must be spiritually prepared to do that.
- a. Confronting a person can be led by God, but if I let my flesh get in the way, I can end up escalating the problem!

Gal 6:1 Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness,

- b. In other words, I must come to that person in a spirit of humility
 - c. (Lets see, I think I remember talking about that! Humility, encouraging others in the Lord, loving and praying for those who are in sin... yes I remember!)
 - d. In other words – I am not coming to ‘win the argument’, but coming to “win my brother”.
 - e. See the word that Paul uses “restore” is the Greek word that means to set a broken bone – in other words we are looking for a healing of the relationship!
11. Here is a principle that my wife and I learned many years ago s– “It is more important for us to be one, than for me to be right!”

1 Cor 13:4-7

4 Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; 5 does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; 6 does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; 7 bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

- a. See, the purpose of “go and tell him his fault between you and him alone” is to reconciliation... *...If he hears you, you have gained your brother.*
 - b. So – we (1) put on humility, (2) speak the truth in love, (3) our purpose is reconciliation!
12. But – what if they don’t hear you – what if they say “go jump in a lake?”

#2 Ask for Godly assistance

13. If the person that offended is not willing to make things right, then we are free to seek Godly assistance.
- a. This does NOT mean to start telling others about what happened – again that is gossip.
 - b. The intention here is to sit down with a few godly people, review the situation, and obtain godly counsel. WHY?
14. #1 – it could be that we are wrong! (I know that is hard to believe, but it occasionally happens!).
- a. Often I find that when there is dispute, there is sin on BOTH sides – and both sides should be open to repentance.
 - b. And - It is important to not bring only one side to this counsel, because then we are bearing false witness – which only matters worse.
 - c. Remember that these same 2-3 witnesses will accompany you to meet this person – it wouldn’t look good if you told a one-sided story!
15. #2 – We can get a sense as to whether this is a situation that should be confronted...
- a. Again – sometimes the best course is to pray, forgive, and move on!
16. Once we have received Godly counsel, and we move forward to talk to that person, there is now accountability –
- a. These 2-3 people will be witnesses to the interaction – people tend to be on better behavior and more open to reconciliation when there are witnesses!
17. And remember – the intent is for there to be reconciliation – unity in the body.
- a. So we “go with Godly counsel”
 - b. Again we “go in love, speaking the truth”
 - c. And again “we go seek reconciliation”
18. But what happens if the 2-3 witnesses get involved, determine that my brother has wronged me, and there is not repentance, what then?

#3 Bring it to the church

19. Church discipline is a neglected ministry these days – not only are churches hesitant to carry it out, but with the number of churches in any town, people tend to just leave when relationships blow up
- a. *(of course – if you leave a church, when you get to the next church, you took yourself with you – and you will probably experience the same problems!)*
20. Remember our purpose here is not “winning the case” but “winning our brother”
- a. The purpose of the church is to “win the lost” – but sometimes it is also “winning the saved!”
 - b. When one person has sinned against another in the body, it must be dealt with – either through repentance and restoration (which is the preferred method!) – or through church discipline.
21. So, what started out as a private matter, then escalated to 3-4 people, is now out in the open for the entire church to see.
- a. While on the one hand, this may make some people uncomfortable,
 - b. But the fact is that - just as discipline is needed in the home, discipline is also needed in the church.
 - c. Paul gave us an example in his letter to the church at Corinth:

1 Cor 5:1-5

It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and such sexual immorality as is not even named among the Gentiles -- that a man has his father's wife! 2 And you are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he who has done this deed might be taken away from among you. 3 For I indeed, as absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged (as though I were present) him who has so done this deed. 4 In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together, along with my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, 5 deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

22. In other words – If a brother or sister refuses to hear from the person they offended, then they refuse to hear the 2-3 witnesses, the next step it to bring the matter to the church.
- a. That person can no longer be treated as a spiritual brother or sister in the church, but is to become an ‘outsider’
 - b. Not hated or shunned, but also not held in close fellowship.

2 Thess 3:6

But we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us

Titus 3:10-11 *Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition, 11 knowing that such a person is warped and sinning, being self-condemned.*

23. To make a comparison, there have been times in my life when I was destructive to those around me. If you were in close fellowship with me, you were sucked into my vortex of problems!

- a. At one point my family had to distance themselves from me.
- b. They didn't hate me, they didn't talk mean about me, I was still a member of the family – just not a 'welcome' member of the family.
- c. I couldn't stay at our home – I could not get support from my family – I was "on my own"
- d. Once I got my life straightened out, my family welcomed me back with open arms.

24. And that is the point of church discipline – not to "rid ourselves of this terrible person" – but to be a part of God's chastisement that is meant to bring a person to repentance.

- a. That is exactly what happened to the unnamed man in the church at Corinth

4 In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together, along with my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, 5 deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus

- b. Paul told them "when you are all together, and the power of the Lord is with you, turn him over to Satan"
- c. In other words – let him go and live in the world, no longer under the spiritual covering of the church, and the Lord.
- d. Let him go and "run with the devil", and once he gets sick of his sin (and he will!), perhaps he'll come back around and return to the Lord, and the church.

25. And when he does return – welcome him back with love:

2 Cor 2:6-9

6 This punishment which was inflicted by the majority is sufficient for such a man, 7 so that, on the contrary, you ought rather to forgive and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one be swallowed up with too much sorrow. 8 Therefore I urge you to reaffirm your love to him.

26. The important message here is: God forgives and restores, and so shall we!

The Power of the Church

18 "Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

19 "Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven. 20 For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them."

27. In other words "church, you have been given the authority to bind and loose"

- a. Where there is sin, deal with it! Bind it in the name of Jesus!**
- b. And when there is repentance, let loose the forgiveness!**

1 Peter 4:7-11

7 But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers. 8 And above all things have fervent love for one another, for "love will cover a multitude of sins." 9 Be hospitable to one another without grumbling. 10 As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. 11 If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Copyright © 2009 Pastor Clay Ritter. This data file is the sole property of Pastor Clay Ritter. It may be copied only in its entirety for circulation freely without charge. All copies of this data file must contain this copyright notice. This data file may not be copied in part, edited, revised, copied for resale or incorporated in any commercial publications, recordings, broadcasts, performances, displays or other products offered for sale, without the written permission of Pastor Clay Ritter. Requests for permission should be made in writing and addressed to Pastor Clay Ritter, c/o Calvary Chapel of Wilmington, 2831 Carolina Beach Rd, Wilmington NC, 28412.