

## The Way of the Lord

### 43. Mutually Living With Jesus As LORD (Part 2)

We told you in our last segment that a *love-based motivation* is essential for you as a family and fellowship family to live with Jesus as LORD of your lives. We want to pursue the topic of love further—especially how to respond when love *stops* being your motivator. In Matthew chapter 18, Jesus lists the steps of righteous response if someone in your fellowship family *refuses* to love Jesus enough to repent of their sin. This passage not only offers insight into your *own* relationship with Jesus, but also what's necessary for you to do when the motive of love is *absent* from your close relationships.

Matthew 18:15-17 gives you steps to take with a person who doesn't love you enough *to hear*:

1. "If your brother sins, go and reprove him, between the two of you alone. If he HEARS you, you have gained back your brother.

2. But if he will NOT HEAR, take with you one or two more, that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word (*rhema*) may be established.

3. If he REFUSES TO HEAR them, tell the called-out ones; and if he REFUSES TO HEAR even the called-out ones, let him be to you as a heathen or a tax collector" (literal translation).

Sin *violates* the love-based relationship anyone has with our Lord. The sin itself isn't the problem; it's the unwillingness of the person to *repent* that breaks fellowship. The person who sinned but refuses to repent is by their *resistance* incriminating themselves. They're defying the *rhema*, the revealed will of God that two or three agreed upon, and substituting their *own rationale* for their sin.

Notice that the person who has sinned *refuses to hear*. In the Bible, to HEAR means to listen with the intent to OBEY. Jesus used this hearing and obedience connection repeatedly for those who have "ears to hear"! So when someone is unwilling to *hear* you, whether individually, with one or two others, or with your collective fellowship family, fellowship is broken until he *does* repent. And when he repents, you're to receive him in full forgiveness and restoration (2 Corinthians 2:6-8).

What characterizes an intimate, love-based relationship? Whether it's with Lord Jesus or with another person, you intentionally look for ways to *please* the one you love. When you discover you have a behavior or attitude that *hurts* the one you love, you readily stop it (Galatians 5:13). When you love someone, you openly show your affection in ways that uplift their dignity and worth (1 Thessalonians 2:7,8). They realize that you honor them *above yourself* (Romans 12:10). Your love for them, especially the love of *Jesus in you* for them, magnifies their joy and peace in your relationship (Romans 14:17). And being loved by you makes them feel they're precious to you (1 Peter 1:22).

Let's connect the dots. Why does our Lord hold *you* accountable to confront a fellow Jesus follower about unconfessed sin? It's because of *love*. When someone goes on sinning, they break fellowship with our Lord, Who *personifies* love (1 John 1:3). They're loving their sin *more* than they love their Lord, and violating the most precious relationship they can have: intimate fellowship with a God who loves them beyond all understanding (Ephesians 3:17-19). Sin ruptures that relationship, much like a grievous insult does to a human relationship. But when it's made known to a person that they've *hurt* a relationship, they can restore it through repentance. If they value the relationship, they'll be pained over the harm they've done, and are prepared to change whatever caused the offense.

*Authentic biblical fellowship* is foundational to our relationship with our Lord and with those who are His family.

Matthew 18:15 lesson: Anyone who has hardened himself to *stop* seeking what pleases our Lord is holding on to sin that hurts their relationship with Him. Our Lord is calling *you* to confront that person so that fellowship may be restored with Him and with your faith family.

Matthew 18:16 lesson: If someone in your faith family is *unconcerned* that their sin has hurt their fellowship with Jesus and has pained you, they need to be confronted by one or two others who know them well and love them enough to speak up. The quality of a love-based relationship significantly diminishes when the other person *refuses to stop* what you've told them hurts you. They may even make you feel like *you* have the problem, *they* don't.

If you have to *pressure* someone to stop their harmful behavior, your own dignity is assaulted. It hurts when you realize how *little* you mean to that person. Even with the help of others, they may refuse to repent and restore fellowship. Or, in the same light, they may refuse to stop hurting you. Either way, you must take the next step.

Matthew 18:17 lesson: You need to remove that person from relational fellowship until they *do* repent. When they come to their senses and feel the hurt they've caused either in their fellowship with our Lord or in their relationship with you, that's the time to *restore* them. Removing someone from the warmth and acceptance of relational fellowship is very painful, and rightly so. It's painful because you *do* care. But the separation has come about because of their *refusal to repent* of their sin or to stop their harmful behavior against you.

Anchor this truth for yourself: When you cut off relationship with an unrepentant person, you're *taking yourself* out of the way so God can accomplish HIS purpose. We're warned that "*It's a DREADFUL THING to fall into the hands of the living God*" (Hebrews 10:31). When you've followed Jesus' commands for dealing with an unrepentant person or with someone who refuses to stop hurting you, then it's *God's turn* to intervene. Make sure neither you nor anyone else involved in the process holds a bad attitude against the person. That's *not* our Father's will. Instead, with loving compassion, continue to *pray on their behalf*. Over the course of our years of following Jesus, we've seen this process at work a number of times. When you *remove yourself* from an unrepentant person and *pray for him*, you'll be amazed how God brings him to his senses.

Please, go over this segment with those close to you. Make sure you *all* fully understand the process Jesus made clear. When someone fails to *love* enough to want to please our Lord, or when they refuse to *stop* behaviors that hurt their relationship with you, you need to act. If you're unwilling to separate yourself from that person, you may find *yourself* also facing the consequences our Father intends for *them*. When all other human intervention has failed, step aside and watch God work. Again, you're not rejecting the person. You've confronted him and he refused to change. Now you need to trust God and what only HE can do to bring him to that point.

If you *refuse* to follow the steps God has given, you'll find yourself trapped in the fear and apprehension that characterize a *co-dependent relationship*. When you don't follow the biblical steps prescribed by our Lord, you're affecting all the other people in this relationship with you. And when you fear further hurt, you'll never experience the love of Jesus between you. It's your relational responsibility *together* to help each other share love-based fellowship with our LORD *and* a love-based relationship with one another. That's the foundation to *mutually* living the way of the Lord.

### **For Further Study**

- Book: *Growing Relationships Through Confrontation*
- Hebraic Article: *Freeing People From Co-dependency*
- Teaching E-mail 19. *Replacing Apprehension With Love*

Each is a free download on our website: <restorationministries.org>