

## **ADULT SPIRITUAL FORMATION WEEK ONE: GATHERING SERIOUSLY**

**Sunday, September 19, 2021**

### **MATTHEW 18:15-20**

<p><sup>15</sup>“If another member of the church sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If the member listens to you, you have regained that one. <sup>16</sup> But if you are not listened to, take one or two others along with you, so that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses. <sup>17</sup> If the member refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if the offender refuses to listen even to the church, let such a one be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. <sup>18</sup> Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. <sup>19</sup> Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. <sup>20</sup> For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.”</p> <p>(New Revised Standard Version)</p>	<p><sup>15</sup> “If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. <sup>16</sup> But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. <sup>17</sup> 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. <sup>18</sup> Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. <sup>19</sup> Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. <sup>20</sup> For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.”</p> <p>(English Standard Version)</p>	<p><sup>15</sup> “If another believer sins against you, go privately and point out the offense. If the other person listens and confesses it, you have won that person back. <sup>16</sup> But if you are unsuccessful, take one or two others with you and go back again, so that everything you say may be confirmed by two or three witnesses. <sup>17</sup> If the person still refuses to listen, take your case to the church. Then if he or she won’t accept the church’s decision, treat that person as a pagan or a corrupt tax collector. <sup>18</sup> “I tell you the truth, whatever you forbid on earth will be forbidden in heaven, and whatever you permit on earth will be permitted in heaven. <sup>19</sup> “I also tell you this: If two of you agree here on earth concerning anything you ask, my Father in heaven will do it for you. <sup>20</sup> For where two or three gather together as my followers, I am there among them.”</p> <p>(New Living Translation)</p>
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Conflict is unavoidable - it is an inevitable characteristic of our lives and has been throughout human history. The Bible is littered with examples of conflict, from Adam and Eve<sup>1</sup> blaming each other and the serpent for their disobedience, Cain murdering his brother Abel in an act of violent jealousy<sup>2</sup>, the Hebrew people complaining to God and Moses as they meandered through the wilderness<sup>3</sup>, the story of David’s adulterous affair with Bathsheba and subsequent murder of her husband Uriah<sup>4</sup>, to the religious leader’s accusations against Jesus<sup>5</sup> and Judas and Peter’s betrayal of Jesus<sup>6</sup> in the New Testament. The list can go on, and on, and on ... To be human is to experience conflict. While we cannot escape it, unresolved conflict can have profound negative implications including “lower self-rated health, greater functional limitations,

<sup>1</sup> Genesis 3.

<sup>2</sup> Genesis 4.

<sup>3</sup> Numbers 11:1, 4; 14:1-4; 16:3.

<sup>4</sup> Second Samuel 11.

<sup>5</sup> Mark 2; Matthew 9:11; Luke 5:30; 15:1-2; 19:7, et. al.

<sup>6</sup> Mark 14:10-12, 26-31, 43-51, 66-72; Matthew 26:14-16, 30-35; Luke 22:3-6, 47-62; John 13:2, 27-30.

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and a higher number of health conditions.”<sup>7</sup> Understanding that conflict is unavoidable and can be detrimental to us, Jesus teaches us to be a reconciling community.

### **Discussion Questions:**

1. How does a reconciling community resolve conflict?
2. The NRSV and NLT translations of Scripture discuss conflict between “church members” whereas other translations (NIV and ESV) use “brother(s) and sister(s).” How, if at all, does this linguistic choice influence your interpretation of the text?
3. In what ways have you heard verse 20 used by the church? What is the verse’s significance when connected to reconciliation?
4. What does Jesus mean when he says, “<sup>17</sup> If the member refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if the offender refuses to listen even to the church, let such a one be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector”?
5. The Presbyterian Church (USA) Book of Order says, “the church is to be a community of love, where sin is forgiven, reconciliation accomplished, and the dividing walls of hostility are torn down.”<sup>8</sup> Where in your life are there opportunities to seek personal and societal reconciliation? How can the Church walk alongside you to achieve this? What is your role in being an agent of reconciliation?
6. What do you think Jesus means when he says, “whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”?

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<sup>7</sup> Newsom J, Mahan T, Rook TL, KS, Krause N. [Stable negative social exchanges and health](#). *Health Psychology*. 2008;27(1)78-86.

<sup>8</sup> PCUSA Book of Order (2019/2021), F-1.0301