

When a person in the church sins against you...

How should you respond? Write "Yes" or "No" for each answer.

- _____ A. Punch him in the face.
- _____ B. Embarrass him in an official church board meeting.
- _____ C. Do nothing; let him keep on sinning.
- _____ D. Pay someone else to "get even" with him.
- _____ E. Tell others behind his back; make sure they know how horrible he is.
- _____ F. Silently hold a grudge against him.
- _____ G. Notify the local newspaper or television station.

Read Matthew 18:15-17. What should you do?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

When you do these things (in Matthew 18:15-17), what is your goal?

What is meant by the word "brother"?

When the *Bible* uses the word "Church," what does it mean? [Note the contrast to the way most people use that word, today.]

With the Bible's concept of "Church," what does it mean for a person to *not* be a part of the "church"?

How are we to treat the person who refuses to listen?

Notes and comments -

When a person in the church sins against you...

SOME IMPORTANT NOTES:

- 1) These verses tell us how to deal with sin that has been committed against us. These verses are *commands*, not mere suggestions that we can choose to ignore.
- 2) These instructions apply when *genuine* sin (as defined by the Bible) has been committed. They do *not* apply when it is just a matter of personal opinions or preferences!
- 3) We cannot guarantee that the person who sinned will repent. He may get angry and respond in a sinful manner. But we must remember that on the Day of Justice, we will be held accountable for *our obedience*, not *his disobedience*.

The "Yes" or "No" questions: The answer is "NO" for each of them!

Read Matthew 18: 15-17. What should you do? The answer is found in those verses. Note that steps (2) and (3) are to be followed *only if the person refuses to listen* during the previous step.

- 1) *Talk to the person alone.* If he refuses to listen...
- 2) *Talk to the person with a small group of people present.*
(These people may know something about the sin that occurred, or they may simply be there to witness what happens during the confrontation.) If he refuses to listen...
- 3) *Talk to the person in the presence of the church.*
(The rest of the verse tells us what to do if he *still* refuses to listen. A person who is *unwilling* to deal with his sin is *not* to be treated like a brother or sister in Christ.)

When we do these things (in Matthew 18:15-17), what must our goal be?

Restoration; we want to "win him over."

This seems to be illustrated in 1 and 2 Corinthians. In 1 Corinthians 5, Paul tells the church to expel an unrepentant "brother" who was committing sexual immorality. It is believed that they obeyed, and that the person repented... and that in 2 Corinthians 2:5-11, Paul is telling them to welcome him back.

What is meant by the word "brother"?

A person who claims to be a follower of Jesus. (It can include "sisters," as well.) If the person's actions prove that his claim to be a "brother" is *false*, then we would cease to treat him as a "brother."

To continue to treat him like a "brother" would be nothing more than choosing to live a lie and encouraging him to continue in his sin. It could also have an indirect effect of encouraging others to fall into sin, since they would see that there were no negative consequences for doing so. (People tend to overlook the consequences that will occur at the Day of Justice.)

When the *Bible* uses the word "Church," what does it mean?

It does NOT refer to an institution, a denomination, a building, etc. As used in the Bible, it simply referred to people who claimed to be followers of Jesus - specifically, people who accepted what the Bible says, and whose lives agreed with their claims.

With the Bible's concept of "Church," what does it mean for a person to *not* be a part of the "church"?

He would be considered unsaved (whether or not he *claimed* to be saved). [Note that your answer might be quite different, if you use the *modern-day* definition of the word "church"!]

How are we to treat the person who refuses to listen?

Like any other unsaved person. This would include expressing love toward him - a requirement we have for *all* people. (See Matthew 5:43-48.) However, we must *not* associate with him, in the sense of treating him like a "brother" or "sister." (See 1 Corinthians 5:9-13. The command to not eat with him - v. 11 - would probably refer to "fellowship meals," in which followers of Jesus were gathered together to celebrate their oneness in Christ.)

Additional questions that could be discussed:

What are some of the reasons that people (and churches) are unwilling to obey Jesus in this matter? For each of the reasons (or excuses) given, how would Jesus respond?