



## **WnL CONNECT GROUPS**

### **Restoration in the Church**

Matthew 18:15-35

#### **MAIN POINT**

Belonging to the body of Christ means taking on the responsibility for others.

#### **INTRODUCTION**

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

- Do you tend to gravitate toward conflict or avoid it? Why do you think that is?
- How might our life experiences affect the way we deal with conflict?
- What words come to mind when you hear the word “servant”? What are some common assumptions that we make or hear about serving?

Conflict in the church is unavoidable—it is going to happen, and when it does, we need to be biblically equipped to handle it in a way that honors Christ and protects the unity of the church. One of the keys to dealing with conflict is learning to put the needs of others ahead of our own. If we will learn to serve each other by laying aside our personal preferences, we will experience more fully the joy of living in Christian community.

#### **UNDERSTANDING**

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

**Have a volunteer read Matthew 18:15-17.**

Addressing conflict is never a simple endeavor. It can be a relational minefield of difficulties. Yet Jesus provided a clear process of resolution for those courageous enough to forge ahead. In four steps, Jesus detailed how believers can resolve conflict.



- How does Scripture instruct us to approach the one who sins against us?
- How many conflict situations do we discuss openly with someone not in the conflict before ever speaking to the offending spouse, friend, or fellow believer? What does this say about our motives and fears?
- In contrast to speaking publicly, what benefit does a private discussion offer for both parties?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses in applying the second step of conflict resolution, outlined in verse 16?
- What qualities would you need to look for when choosing these witnesses (v. 16)?
- What did Jesus mean when He commanded believers to “tell the church” (the third step) in verse 17?
- have a volunteer read Matthew 18:18-20.
- What does verse 18 have to do with the conflict resolution steps outlined in the previous verses?
- What encouragement do verses 19 and 20 offer believers as we seek to resolve conflict? What encouragement does this Scripture offer for a unified church body?

Following steps three and four, which include the church, these verses affirm a church’s effort to restore a fallen member, reflecting heaven’s joyful participation in such an effort. Verse 20 also promises, however, a special sense of Christ’s presence in the midst of two or three who are gathered in His name. A unified group of believers gathering in His name is one of the greatest God-honoring actions we can take.

Have a volunteer read Matthew 18:21-34.

- Why is it so important that we keep on forgiving (v. 22)? What happens when we do not forgive?
- How has God’s forgiveness in your life motivated you to be more forgiving?
- How would you describe the servant’s response to the king’s decree (v. 26)?
- How did the king answer (v. 27)? What does the king’s response reveal about his character?
- What does the king’s response tell us about how we should forgive others?

The king has compassion on the servant, forgives his debt, and releases him. This tells us that when we forgive others, we must truly forgive them. We like to tell people that we forgive them just so that things are no longer awkward between us while in reality we are still holding a grudge against them. When we do this, we are simply delaying future conflict. If we have experienced Christ’s forgiveness, we must actively choose to no longer hold the sins of others against them, otherwise we may compromise the unity of the church.

- How did the second servant respond when the first servant came for collection?
- What would you expect the first servant to do? Why?
- How might forgiving one another this way help protect the unity of the church?



## **APPLICATION**

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

- For you, what is the worst thing that could happen in seeking reconciliation? What positive things might happen?
- When is the last time you felt overwhelmed by the mercy God showed in forgiving you? How can you make that a more frequent part of your life?
- Is there anyone in your life that you need to forgive right now? What is keeping you from giving forgiveness?

## **PRAYER**

Thank God for giving us Jesus as a faithful example of humble self-sacrificial service. Pray that we model the gospel to one another by putting others needs ahead of our own and that our love for one another would be a testimony of the gospel to the lost.

