

APPROACHING SOMEONE WHO HAS OFFENDED YOU

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.
—MATTHEW 18:15

[Read the section in chapter 14 titled "Approaching Someone Who Has Offended You."]

MANY PEOPLE APPLY MATTHEW 18:15 IN A DIFFERENT SPIRIT than the one Jesus intended. If hurt, they confront the offender in a spirit of revenge and anger, using the verse to justify their condemnation of the one who has hurt them. But they have misunderstood the reason Jesus instructed us to go to one another. It is not for *condemnation* but for *reconciliation*. Jesus does not want us to tell our brother how rotten he has been to us. We are to repair the breach that prevents the restoration of our relationship.

This is the way God uses to restore us to Himself. Though we have sinned against God, He "demonstrates His own love toward [and for] us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8). Are we willing to lay down our self-protection and die to pride in order to be restored to the one who has offended us? God reached out to us before we asked for forgiveness. Jesus decided to forgive us before we even acknowledged our offense.

Carefully read Romans 5:6–11, and then respond to the following statements:

My condition when God reached out to me was Jesus
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