

# What Part of 'Go' Don't You Understand

by James Jennings

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*This sermon emphasizes the importance of obeying two great commissions from the Bible: reconciling with others and resolving offenses in relationships. It highlights the urgency and immediate action required to maintain clear consciences and unity within the church. The speaker shares personal experiences and insights to encourage listeners to prioritize love, forgiveness, and humility in their interactions with others.*

**Scripture:** Matthew 5:23, Matthew 18:15, Proverbs 16:28, 1 Peter 3:7, Proverbs 18:19, Psalm 139:23, Ephesians 4:26, James 4:17, Proverbs 16:6

**Topics:** "Reconciliation", "Unity in the Church"

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## Description

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## Transcript

Well, go ahead. Open your Bible to the book of Matthew. I'll tell you a chapter in a moment.

Let me tell you my title. And my title will not be what it sounds like it's about. The title of my sermon is What Part of Go Don't You Understand? Now what would you assume I'm going to speak on based on that title? Right.

But I'm not. But I am and I'm not. Years ago, I heard Paul Washer say in reference to Matthew 28, he said what part of go don't you understand? Matthew 28 being the Great Commission.

He said how many missions conferences do we have to have before someone gets a clue that you either go down in the well as a missionary or you hold the rope? Now leave and go do it. That's a rather strong statement that Paul made. But that go often gets the most air time.

But there are some other gos, there are some other commissions from your king, from my king, that don't get enough air time. They don't get enough sermons preached on them. Or when we do, these are actually in many ways more difficult gos to live out.

And so I want to look at two great commissions, not the great, referring to Matthew 28. And I'll tell you this, if these two gos are not lived out, it doesn't matter whether you're going to your children, your neighbor, or

the nations with the Gospel, it will be ineffective. And so let me show you those two gos.

The first one is in Matthew 5. Just briefly read these verses. Then consider them. We'll look at this more in its context in a minute, but this first go, look at verse 23 of Matthew 5. If you're offering your gift at the altar, and there, remember, your brother has something against you.

What should my response be? Leave your gift there before the altar and go. Go. First, be reconciled to your brother.

Then, come and offer your gift. Then go to Matthew 18. This is where we find the second go.

Matthew 18. 15. 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. So there you see it. I would call those great commissions, commands from our King, right? Explaining to us conduct of ours in the midst of His kingdom.

And what really hit me, and let me read this example right here at the start. This sermon felt like it came to me and I should speak on this after something Evan had sent out. I know he sent it to his grace group, so some of you have already read this.

But listen to this. Listen to this. This came out of a book where it's talking about a revival in north China in 1932.

Miss Bertha Smith was a long-time Southern Baptist missionary. And this is what she said. She said that the mission's problems have grown to such proportions that during mealtimes in the mission house, they agreed not to discuss all of the headaches.

So that's the type of interpersonal relationships these people are having. The work in the churches was dead. And evidence of sin among the Christians was everywhere.

There were only three students in their Bible institute, and when they graduated, they voiced all sorts of complaints as to where they would work and how they could possibly live on the salary they were to get. It was at this point that the wife of the missionaries began losing her eyesight. She was taken to a specialist who told her husband that the infected eye would soon damage the other one and she would be totally blind.

Her husband could not bear the thought of his wife being blind for the rest of her life. He believed that God was able to prevent it if they prayed. So it was that he invited others of the missionary body who believed as he did to straighten up their spiritual lives.

So he's saying let's make sure our lives are straightened up. And let's join him in prayer for his wife at the end of the week. He's saying let's come with a clear conscience to pray.

When the day arrived, there were five or six of them in the group. They had the lady sit in the chair in the center of the room. And the plan was to place their hands on top of the head.

You guys have seen us do that up here. We anoint their head with oil and lay our hands on the head. The plan was to place their hands on the top of her head and to pray for God to intervene in her case.

Miss Smith said that as she reached out her hand to put it on the others, she saw that her hand would rest on one of her colleagues whom she had offended deeply some years ago. You picture that? They're there on the chair. This lady's going to put her hand and she sees my hand is going to touch someone I've deeply offended years ago.

Instantly, she knew that if she prayed with that sin between them, she would spoil the effort of the group. So just there where she stood, she's going to live out this go, two years late, but better two years in than not at all. So just there where she stood, she summoned all of her courage and humbly asked the other lady to forgive her.

When the problem had been settled, they all placed a hand on the lady's head and prayed. Brethren, that's what those verses are speaking about. There's something there in an interpersonal relationship, some sin in the heart towards someone else, and here they're going to pray and God just puts it on her mind.

And you know what? This woman was on the mission field. These verses are more difficult to live out than the command to go to all the nations, right? It's very difficult to live these texts out in these two go's that we saw. And praise God that God's hand was on the woman as she was about to put her hand on another person, but the Lord's hand was on her, crushing her with a sense of conviction that you've got to resolve this.

If you don't resolve it, it's like having an acorn in the camp and it grieves the power of God. And sure enough, in a very short time, she goes on, each one of them in the group sensed a blessed assurance that God was going to answer their prayers. Almost at once, they all began to praise God and to shout and laugh for sheer joy. It was then only a matter of days until the lady's eyesight was completely restored and remained that way.

This experience of just living out one of these go's served to unite the missionary body in prayer for revival in their mission work. Ms. Smith did not say how long they prayed nor how many of them participated, but apparently it was not long before God answered and revival came. This first effect was a cleansing of all of the churches.

It's living out these two go's and there's a cleansing, there's a clearing of the conscience. Those who were living in sin could not stand the conviction of the Holy Spirit and they withdrew. But immediately the churches filled to ten times their former number.

There were so many applicants for entrance in their Bible Institute, they basically had 150. From two to 150 by the end of it. But you heard it.

She went to rest her hand on one of her colleagues whom she offended deeply some years before. Have you ever had that happen? Maybe that's happening today. Maybe there's someone here that you in some subtle way are seeking to avoid or have something against.

Two years ago it might have happened. And so I want to look at what Christ is calling us to do. Because we saw when you live out these passages, what does it say in Matthew 18? What happens? You gain your brother.

You're gaining someone. And then in Matthew 5, when you live it out, what happens to your gift? When you go back to offer the gift at the altar, it's acceptable to the Lord. So if you don't live these go's out, do you gain the brother? No.

Does the gift become acceptable? Does spiritual worship to the Lord? No, it doesn't. It doesn't. So these are big items at stake.

And honestly, the unity of a local church can stand or fall on whether we live out these two go commands. I mean, our own church can crumble in a moment if you don't live out these two go's. And these two go's are very difficult.

It's easy for that lady to go to the mission field and be a bunch of pagan nations. But you know what was difficult for her to do? It took her two years to resolve something in her heart that she had against another sister in the church. Isn't that incredible? So first, Matthew 5. So go back to Matthew.

Matthew 5. In Matthew 5, Christ, He shows the seriousness of anger and He gives two illustrations showing so. It says you have heard, verse 21, you have heard that it was said to those of old, you shall not murder, and whoever murders will be liable to the judgment. So what judgment? He's basically talking about Exodus 21, whoever strikes a man so that he dies shall be put to death.

So you murdered someone physically, you would be killed. And Christ says in verse 22, but I say to you, everyone who is angry with his brother, and don't limit the word brother to a male sibling, that's not His point, will be liable to judgment. So what did Christ just do? Did He just up the seriousness of anger? He says, look, the man murdered someone and he got killed in the Old Covenant.

Well, in the New Covenant, you get anger with your brother. That's the same punishment that is deserved. Well, how is that punishment fulfilled? One who continues on in anger towards someone else, what's the ultimate punishment Christ is speaking about? What's going to happen? They're going to be cast away.

Those who have fits of anger as Craig looked at, what does Paul say about them? Do they inherit the Kingdom of Heaven? No, he says they don't. He's showing the seriousness. You might think murder's bad.

Look at how bad anger is before the Lord. This is really, really serious. And he says you'll be liable to the judgment.

Whoever insults his brother will be liable to the counsel. And whoever says you fool, or raka, or calling someone an imbecile, a blockhead, he says you will be liable to the hell of fire. And so the same punishment due for this external action under the old covenant, he's saying it deserves the same punishment in the spiritual realm for the internal act in your heart.

Isn't that what Christ is doing even in the Sermon on the Mount? He's showing us this true standard of righteousness that we are called to live out. Now, why do I look at that? Well, if you look at the text, what comes right after this? What's the first word in v. 23? And what's the soul doing? What should that make you think in your mind? What's a synonym of soul? Some versions might render it with what? Yeah, therefore, or in view of this. In view of what I just said.

Right? So we've got to look at what He just said if we're going to get the heat. The heat meaning the pressure right on what Christ is saying. V. 23, so in view of this, in view of this reality of how the Lord views anger, if you're offering your gift at the altar and there you remember, you remembered something.

I mean, as I'm studying this the other day, you know what I'm doing? You know what happened two times? What do you think happened while I'm preparing to preach this to you guys? I remembered. At least two people came to my mind. I remembered something from nine years ago and I sent the person an email

and they already responded.

You know, God brought something to my mind that wasn't on my radar, and the Lord brought it to my mind. Not the devil, but God. So He says, let's read the rest of this passage, if you're offering your gift at the altar and there you remember your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go.

First, be reconciled to your brother. Then come and offer your gift. Then it seems He goes into some different imagery.

Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you're going with him to court, lest your accuser hand you over to the judge and the judge to the guard and you be put in prison. Truly I say to you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny. Clearly, He's ending this verse again with a serious tone of judgment.

Look, it might bother you the way Jesus talks. Talking about people going to hell because of anger and refusing to resolve things. That's just Christ here, brethren.

This isn't me. This is what Christ is saying. And so, He says to go.

And the motivation here to go, it's not an unreached native tribe. You know how they throw up pictures of these unreached people, and rightly so. And you see that and you get convicted about their need for the Gospel.

And you have a desire to go. Has that ever happened? Well, He's holding the picture up too. What's on the slides? Is it a picture of a bunch of people who need the Gospel? He's holding up a picture of the seriousness of judgment and what you will be liable for if you refuse to obey this go.

Is that what He's holding it up? And then He says, so in view of this picture I've just held up before you, this is how I want you to conduct yourselves and respond to what I'm putting on you. He wants us to leave the gift. Do something.

He shows you how hideous your impatience and anger is and what judgment it deserves. Right? So, in view of this, and He basically creates this imagery of a Jew in a temple. He says right there, verse 23, if you're offering your gift at the altar and there you remember your brother has something against you.

I mean, you're literally in the act of doing something. You're right in the middle of it. And He doesn't want you to wait and say, well, I've got to finish what I'm doing.

I mean, that would practically mean for me right now, if as I'm preaching, something comes to my mind that I didn't remember yesterday, what would my right response be? If I'm going to take Christ at His Word, what should I do? I should literally get out of this pulpit. Is that not what He's saying? I feel like we make all these exceptions for the words of Christ. We turn it into something that it's not.

It's like having that sharp knife and you just dull the blade. That'd be a right response. I mean, parallel to this Jew offering the gift in the temple, my spiritual worship right now is trying to deliver the sermon to you.

And so if in the act of that, I remember, then I should leave what I'm doing and go. And first be reconciled to my brother. To my brother.

You see that? Right? This is a commission. This is a great commission. A great command from the Lord.

It's a great command. And He says right here, if you're in the act and you remember, you remember, and what do you remember specifically? That your brother has something against you. So what he hits on isn't that I'm here and I remember necessarily some sin I did to someone, but that my brother has something against me.

Someone out there has a problem with me and I've not taken initiative to go and to seek to reconcile with that individual. That's what he's saying. Christ really wants us to change how we worship the Lord.

I think, you know what? A lot of us, the way we worship the Lord in this way is we offer things to the Lord and we don't feel the heat of the priority to stop what we're doing in our lives and go and clear the conscience. I mean, that missionary lady took two years, brethren. Two years.

Two years. So our response should be to leave the gift. Leave the ministry that we're in the niche of.

Or even like John Piper did years ago when he realized something wasn't the best in his marriage, he stepped out of the ministry. He took a leave. He realized I can't offer a sermon from the pulpit if things are not well with my wife.

I've got to resolve that. And he took drastic actions. I mean, that's what Christ expects of us.

And the urgency of it, I thought of this imagery. This isn't maybe the greatest illustration, but you know you're checking out in the store? You've got the whole cart prepared. You've got everything in the cart.

And what did you realize you forgot? My wallet. I mean, what do you do? You leave and you go outside and you get your wallet and then you come back in and you purchase all the goods that you're seeking to do. I mean, without your wallet, the transaction of purchasing is not going to go through.

And I'm saying the same way, your worship that you're offering to the Lord, if you, so to speak, don't have your wallet, if you got something against you from someone else, your worship is not going to be received by the Lord. This is exactly what he's saying here. So this, you could look at this.

This is about priorities, right? Look at verse 24. He says, first be reconciled. You hear that? First.

Christ wants you to prioritize in your life based on what He views as a priority. And to Him, this is a major priority. He wants you to first be in a right relationship with your brother.

Does He say here attempt to be reconciled? What does He say? First be reconciled. Where else does the Bible talk about be reconciled? Can you even think of a verse that actually says it just like that? Be reconciled? We implore you on behalf of the Lord to be reconciled to God. When you implore somebody to be reconciled to God, does that sound like you're giving them a lot of options? I mean, you're really giving them a clear command.

They're either going to reject coming to Christ or they're going to receive coming to the Lord. You know what? Some people, they might refuse the reconciliation that you sought to do, but you've made an attempt. But it's amazing to me here, what does Christ not go on to do in this text? Does He go on to give a list of exceptions? Does He go on to explain, well, maybe if this happens, you do this and you do that.

But even me preparing this sermon, that can be a tendency. It's kind of like, well, people could misunderstand what I'm saying. But wait, could Christ be misunderstood here? If He could, why didn't He have the wisdom then, because He has all wisdom, to then add a list of that after what He says? Why do you think He wouldn't do that? Well, what happens sometimes when you add a whole list of exceptions? That some of them might be legitimate.

What do those exceptions tend to do? Well, you do this, except in this case, and except in that case, and except in that case. What ends up happening? You don't even live out the very command. Because you always just fill it.

Well, I fit the exception here. I don't need to step out of this pulpit and go do that because this is a different situation. You basically make the verse not apply to your heart.

You weasel out of it. But you know what this also tells me? You know what this also really encourages me with? That He doesn't give any exceptions? You know what this means? Christ looked at it as a very hopeful thing that you could go to your brother and what would happen? You'd be reconciled. Right? I find hope in that.

He didn't add, well, it's probably not going to happen and you know how stubborn people are. No, He didn't add any of that. It's like there's this hope there that Christ gives.

If He had a list of 20 exceptions, that would kind of diminish your hope. It would kind of make you feel like, well, I hope this is the one time that it's actually going to work. Well, Christ looks at it like, no, this is going to work.

God uses this. It's not like it rarely works. And then, I don't want to spend a whole lot of time on it, but He switches imagery here in v. 25.

And I guess at the end of v. 24, just to make sure you've seen this, first be reconciled. That's the priority, right? And we'll get into a little what does it mean to be reconciled, but you're trying to make this relationship right and work through what offense has happened. And then He says, "...and then come, offer your gift." I mean, the Lord still wants you offering the gift.

But He wants you to resolve something first. Prioritizing, right? Prioritizing based on the Lord. And then, this next section here, v. 25 has the same type of language.

Come to terms quickly with your accuser. I mean, when you read this section, doesn't it feel like the Lord wants you to act like now? Right? So don't take that edge off of it. That woman who waited two years, what if they would have resolved all of that two years earlier? God sent revival after they worked through all of that.

What if they would have worked through it at an earlier point? Who's going to ascend the hill of the Lord? Who's going to ascend? He who has clean hands and a pure heart. He doesn't lift His voice and speak ill to His brother. May that be so among us.

I preached on this a while back, but Ephesians 4 talks about not letting the sun go down on your anger. Why should you not let the sun go down on your anger? Because you give an opportunity for the devil. That woman was given an opportunity to Satan to divide and devour for two years of her life because she'd rather obey the command to go to the nations but not the command to go to her sister and resolve a

problem.

You see, this is where you really see who the bold Christians are. It's not going to the nations. It's going to your brother here who you have an offense with and working through that interpersonal offense and seeking to resolve it.

That takes incredible boldness. That takes great risk. So, turn to Matthew 18.

Let's look at this second go. In this section, Christ really deals with your attitude towards other believers. Matthew 18.

We should read Matthew 10. Again, the ESV, I realize it has those headings, but I know we looked at Matthew 18 a year and a half ago. This whole chapter is dealing with forgiveness and interpersonal relationships.

It's incredible what he said. But verse 10, See that you do not despise. That's disdain, one of these little ones.

For I tell you that in heaven there are angels who always see the face of My Father who is in heaven. So the Lord is watching over how you treat His people. What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go in search of the one who went astray? And if he finds it, truly I say to you, he rejoices over it more than the other ninety-nine who never went astray.

So it is not the will of My Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish. So incredible, the Lord goes after the one who went astray to win the sheep. And the Lord doesn't just wish the little one should perish? Why is He sharing this? How should that affect you, the example of Christ right here? He wants you to be like that.

Because He's about to go talking about you going and seeking for the person who's gone astray. He wants you to be shepherdly just like Him. He wants us to have that same caring attitude, not despising one of the little of these, but valuing them and taking joy in seeing restoration.

So He goes on in verse 15, If your brother sins against you, that is, he goes astray, go and tell him his fault. Meaning, leave the ninety-nine for this one. Follow Christ's example.

Don't despise this one and do nothing. By doing nothing, you're despising the person. They're going astray, they've sinned against you, and it's just like, well, you know, oops, there's no heart to go after them, and there's no joy in seeing restoration.

Go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. Meaning, the straying sheep, they come home.

So this first passage we looked at, Matthew 5, He shows your brother has something against you. Well, here what does Christ say? Here you know you have something against them because of some offense that has happened between you guys. And so He's seeking to say, this is how I want you to deal with unresolved offenses, actual sins against one another.

And He says, this is how I want you to respond. And is this go command? How complicated is this? I mean, how complicated? He says right there, if your brother sins against you, okay, I realize that one

complication here is this sin. Should I go to them? Is this minor? I mean, okay, I get that.

Then what do you do? You go and tell them it's fault. Is that an easy go command to obey? I mean, you haven't been a Christian a long time, do you know, is that easy? Is that easy to go tell them it's fault? Is that easy to come and tell me my fault? I mean, is that just, you know, easy to do? If it's easy to do, that would be concerning, right? You could just be really judgmental and hyper hyperly critical, right? It could just show that it's so easy for me to make judgments, it can manifest some pride. It's difficult, it's difficult, right? Kind of like the new parent, you know, did I spank my kid for this? Do they know what's happening? I mean, you don't want to be the parent who wrongly spansks the child for something they should have been spanked for.

Well, the same way, I don't want to wrongly rebuke someone and correct something for something that maybe... But you know what? You go talk to them. You can't go talk to your kid, but you can go talk to your brother. You can't talk to the toddler, that is, they're not gonna be able to communicate with you.

You go talk to your brother, your sister, you seek to resolve it. You go and tell them the fault alone. And some versions even mention that it renders that you go and tell them it's fault, you go and reprove them.

You go and reprove him in private between you and him alone. And that's what makes this command difficult. This would not be as difficult if you scratched out which part of the text between you and him alone.

I mean, let's scratch that out and then let's change go and tell him and let's scratch the him out. Let's change that. Go and tell anyone the fault of the other person.

And then let's remove between you and him alone. I mean, would that be easy to talk about what's happened? You know what I'm saying? That'd be easy. We can all do that.

But this makes it very difficult. Go and tell him between you and him alone. You see, I mean, things can escalate in our interpersonal relationships to get to a very bad point in a very short amount of time by not doing something right or having a misunderstanding with someone and not going to the right measures to resolve it.

And so the great failure that often happens in this is people wrongly involve others. That's how this commission fails. It fails because people wrongly involve others.

And I'm not saying there isn't a time when it could be necessary, but I am telling you this, does Christ go and show that time when it's necessary? He does. When is that time? When do you go and tell others? What's it say in the text? After what's happened. Between him and you alone, if he listens to you, you have gained your brother, but if he does not listen, take one or two others.

So the Lord does at some point want you to get something involved, but it happens after you've gone to yourself. People tend to switch that. Well, I'm going to go to some other two first, and then I'll go directly to the brother.

That's not what Christ is saying. You go right to him. If that fails, then you go get some others, and then you have that conversation.

And what I'm trying to show you is if we don't obey these commands to go, I mean, this could be something between us and revival. Reviving of the Spirit of God in our own midst. Just like that example that Evan sent me.

I mean, this is really essential, brethren. And Christ likens all of... He talks about judgment in Matthew 5. This isn't a petty thing. This is pretty major.

We all face this test, brethren. I've not passed it perfectly. I've not obeyed Matthew 18 with perfection.

There's times I have failed to go and obey this command from my King as I ought. Someone comes to you with an issue. You find out briefly in the conversation.

They have not gone to the person. And what do we at times sadly do? We continue to listen to them. We don't stop them mid-sentence.

We hear what they have to say. If it's important enough for them to bring it to me, then it's important enough for them to bring it to who? The very person that it happened against. Right? Proverbs 16, a whisperer separates close friends.

And I would argue that the whisperer who separates close friends, you could interject that to be the person who skips this step. That's often what it leads to in many different situations. So what happens? You hear the person out.

Rather than shut them down, what do you think then happens to the person who came to you? They just came to you with some big concern rather than going directly to the person who offended them. By you hearing them out, does that make it easier for the person to now go to the person or more difficult? Say again? If it makes it more difficult, why does it make it more difficult? You know one of the reasons I think it makes it more difficult and I've seen this in my own life in certain situations? It makes it more difficult now because by hearing them out, they're glad they got to talk to someone about it, so they don't feel the heat from the Lord as they should to go directly to the person. So then it's easier now to make excuses.

Well, yeah, I talked to them and they agreed with me and they had the exact same concern. Well, that'd be great if they were the one or two who were in the meeting. But you haven't even gone to the initial person.

Right? And now it makes it easier. I don't need to go to the person. I don't have to go to them.

It takes away that pressure from the Lord. What if I validated their concerns and they've not even spoken to the offender? And then when they finally speak to the offender, they realize that both of us got it wrong in what we understood the person did. And that's happened before.

But He does give a next step of getting more involved. And those people, they might hear everything. They might help you drop the matter.

They might help you guys pursue it not further and work out whatever misunderstanding. That's a great step if it needs to get to that point. But Christ wants you and me to go to the person alone.

Like I said, what about the exceptions? Well, if Christ doesn't deal with those Himself, I figured I shouldn't either. Who am I to read a text where Christ doesn't give exceptions and then I go and add my whole list of exceptions? I think I'd wrongly be taking the edge off of His words. And so I was close to doing that because I don't want people maybe to misunderstand or in a difficult spot where you're uncertain.

But brethren, it'd be better to err on the side if you just go to the person. What have you got to lose by just going to them? And this might not be the greatest illustration, but I was thinking of children. You give a child a command and they kind of ask, well, could I do it after I read this book? Well, okay, that's reasonable.

Well, what tends to happen in the future if you've established that with the child? What might they do the next time you give them some command? Oh, I'm reading the book. You know, they run to that to get what they want. You know what I don't like? Conflict.

Is it easy to go to people and tell them they're false? Is it easy for me? These two emails I sent yesterday to two individuals, is that easy? No, that's not easy. It's difficult. It's hard.

At least for me. Maybe I'm the only one who finds these things difficult. So let me deal practically first with some thoughts to consider prior to going to someone.

Second thing, some excuses people give for not going to the person. Okay? So, say you have a fault against someone. Alright? And you're even thinking as I'm preaching something is coming to your mind.

You should first think, is it truly a fault or an offense? Or am I overly sensitive and just getting hurt by something that I really shouldn't consider an offense? You should wrestle with that. But you know what? If you can't move on from whatever happened and it keeps coming to your mind, what do you need to do about it? You've got to go to the person. If I offend you today and you know what, by tonight you don't even remember it, it was real minor, okay, that's one thing.

Proverbs talks about covering offenses. But if three weeks from now, you're still thinking about something I said in this pulpit and it's bothering you and you haven't gone to me, is that going to help your spiritual life and your unity in this church? No, it will make it crumble. It will shred it just like that.

You know the text says if he listens to you, you have gained your brother. Isn't that an interesting word? Listens. Are you a good listener? Who thinks they're a good listener here? I don't know, probably not.

We're all making an effort to listen. Well, you know what this means? What if you're on the receiving end of someone coming to tell you you're at fault? Are you a good listener? Do you listen to what they have to say? Or do you tune them out after they have said something because it bothered you in some way? Are we good listeners when people come to us? A third thing, before we go to others, have we examined ourselves? What's Jesus say shortly after Matthew 5? He talks about a man who walks around with what in his eye? Yeah, a log or a speck. Well, how does that get removed? Does it just randomly go away? The Lord designed someone in the body to notice it and they come to that individual and they help remove the speck.

So what if the person coming to you is a really, really good optometrist and they're seeing something that you don't recognize and they're discernment and they're trying to help you remove that? If you're not a good listener, what's going to happen? The speck's going to stay in the eye and you're just going to continue on with something in your eye that's affecting your spiritual life. Proverbs 16, all the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes. Who weighs the Spirit? Who weighs what's going on in here? The Lord weighs that.

How sure am I that I'm really right? What if I'm wrong? And since pride is self-deceiving, what if I've self-deceived myself about a situation because of my pride? Another question to ask before going to

someone. How important is this? We kind of already looked at this, but you or I could fall into being overly sensitive where we're easily hurt and offended by things that we constantly make an issue where it's really smothering people in a wrong way of living out this verse, where we really need to grow in our own heart to where we don't want to become too nitpicky. And at the same time, you don't want to accuse someone of being nitpicky when they come to you with something valid.

Right? Because that could happen in this situation. Another question to ask. How consistent is this problem in their life? Is this a one-time thing? Does this keep happening? What else are they going under in their life? Maybe they sinned against me when they were under immense pressure.

Well, what should my response be? The last thing I want to do is go to them and beat them over the head when I already know they have immense pressure in their life and that's part of why they responded how they did. I want to be very, very sensitive to that. Because what's the whole goal in going to them? To gain my brother, to help them, to be a benefit to them.

To make sure there's nothing clogging our relationship channels. You know what? If we don't consider some of those questions, we might make that which is not major blow up into something that causes more additional damage and problems. And I remember one brother saying years ago with this whole nothing to do with our church, but how their concern wasn't the issue, it was how a man responded to the issue.

The issue was so minor, but the person overly responded and it just caused all this damage and split an entire church. So are we going to people wanting with a heart really to forgive them? I mean, if you're still in Matthew 28, what's the very next thing that he says? As he works through this, you get to verse 21, Peter came and said to him, Lord, how often will my brother sin against me? And I forgive him. And he has this idea seven.

You know, is it going to be seven times? And Jesus said to him, I do not say to you seven times, but seventy-seven times. Now that could be a little discouraging. Why is that discouraging? Repetitive sin and offenses, it seems like Christ is saying that's going to happen.

I mean, that's just part of living in the Christian life. You offend someone, faults happen. But again, what's hopeful and encouraging? You go and you get reconciled and there's this ongoing forgiveness.

I mean, anyone who's married has experienced that. How many times has my wife had to forgive me? It's been more than seventy-seven times since we've gotten married. I imagine that's something, maybe something really, really minor where we've had to work through that.

Well, that same thing carries over into our relationships with everyone in the local church because we're all one body and we're trying to maintain unity in the body and not let things get in that affect us. And so forgiveness. You know, you're committed to graciously pardon the forgiven person.

It doesn't mean you do away with consequences. There still are consequences for what has happened. But someone wrote this, a guy named Ken Sandy.

He said, I will not dwell on this incident. Right? He's going and seeking to be reconciled. I won't dwell on the incident.

I will not bring up the incident again and use it against you. I will not talk to others about the incident. I will not let this incident stand between us or hinder our personal relationship.

By making and keeping these promises, you can tear down the walls that stand between you and your offender. You promise not to dwell on or brood over the problem or to punish them by holding the person at a distance. You clear the way for your relationship to develop unhindered by memories of past wrongs.

This is exactly what God does for us and it is what He calls us to do for others. That's a high standard, brethren. And that takes us loving the Lord Jesus Christ to be able to go love others in this way.

Well, secondly here, what are some excuses why people don't go? What are some excuses or reasons? The first ones I think are implied in these passages. It's not like it explicitly says it, but I think it's implied. So the first is this, people don't go because they have wrong priorities of what is pleasing to God.

Where do I get that? Remember, first be reconciled. Someone doesn't go because they're in the midst of some ministry opportunity and they feel like they believe that's more important to the Lord than them going and being reconciled to their brother. Well, according to Christ, which is more important? And it's going and being reconciled, and then you can go offer the gift to your brother.

Right? So people don't go. They have a wrong sense of priorities. They don't understand what the Lord really prioritizes.

Same thing with husbands, right? If I don't live with my wife in an understanding way, what happens to my prayers? 1 Peter says they're hindered. God doesn't hear me because He's saying go and talk to your wife. Stop being proud.

Second reason, we don't go because we lack love for the person. Right? Matthew 18, 13, some don't go to find the brother who strayed because they don't rejoice over their fellow Christian being restored. They don't put a right premium on the joy that will come from seeing restoration happen in that relationship.

You know, as one brother said, they'll say, well, I got the 99 other brothers and sisters, what does it matter if that one comes back or not? Really? Is that how Christ treated them? We'll just stay with the 99 and ignore the one? Apathy towards people strained because you lack love for them and not rejoicing over them is the reason that people won't go and obey these verses, these commissions from the King. The third reason, we don't remember. Right? One reason you don't obey the verse is you don't remember something that's happened.

So, if that's possible, what if that's possible for someone else? What if there's someone you think is remembering an offense they did to you, but they don't remember it, and if you brought it up to them today, they'd say, oh, I didn't even know that had happened. Right? We want to be really gracious with people. They might assume that you have it on the forefront of their mind or it's on theirs.

You might be making assumptions about what I'm saying right now as I preach. You might be reading something into something I'm saying that's not even true. You know how you're going to find out if your assumption is right or not? You're going to talk to me, right? You talk.

We talk about it. Communication. Wow! Who would have thought? Proverbs 18 and all these places emphasizing a huge premium on communication and the urgency of doing such.

It's absolutely incredible. May God help us as a church. The fourth reason, they lack a fear of God.

You know why they don't go to you? They don't fear what the Lord said in Matthew 5. They don't think that this issue of anger makes someone liable to judgment. My brother has something against me. He's angry with me.

Eh, he'll get over it. Is that what Jesus says in Matthew 5? He'll get over it? What's going to happen to that brother who's in his anger that I need to go to? What's he liable to now? Where could he end up? What does Jesus say? Where could he end up? In hell. Does that not give you any love for the person to go to the person? Like that could be used to help the wanderer come back.

I read a book and it had these two women. They had an incredible relationship. They're in the same church.

They live two blocks apart. They had children who were raised together. And they had an offense happen between one another.

And a pastor wrongly told one of them, and went to the one lady to try to reconcile, and the lady blew up. And then she went to the pastor saying, well, I need to get two or three. And he said, oh, you know, it's going to cause too many problems in the church.

And so, you know, we don't want to do that. He ignores Christ's commands. What was their relationship like after that? They're walking on pins and needles and trying to ignore one another.

And then you know what happened in their life? What might happen in your life to make you get over the really nitpicky things? What might happen? A tragedy. The lady who stormed out who would not listen, her daughter was killed in a car accident. Upon hearing, this other lady was broken.

She sobbed. She remembered holding the child in the hospital. I mean, they're best friends.

She couldn't imagine how her estranged friend was dealing with this. You see what the tragedy did? What's tragedy tend to do? It puts things back into what? Perspective. The minor things that cause you to lose, you just lose concern for them.

It's like, why was I making that such a big deal? But this author pointed something out that I think is an incredible insight. The author pointed out, he said in Matthew 18, we see she should have had the same level of urgency before the tragedy of the death of the daughter. Or you go to Matthew 5. Should you have had the same urgency? Yes.

Because the person is on a path that makes them liable to hell because of their conduct. And so Christ is saying you should fear for their souls. So should it take a tragedy for you to go to the person? No.

Because it already is a tragedy that there's some unreconciled issue in your relationship with the person. Fifth reason. We don't go.

We don't go because we think we're wiser than God. We figured things out in 20-23. We don't have to really have... especially the immediacy.

James, I don't like how these passages, you're talking about them and it's just like you immediately go in Matthew 18 and Matthew 5. I just don't like that. I want time to think about it. What happens when you take time to think about it? And you might say, well, James, you take time to think about it and you realize it's not as big as it was and you love the person and you cover them.

That's great if that's what happens. But what tends to happen when you take time to think about it? Yeah, it festers. And before you know it, well, where did that wound come from? I don't understand.

It wasn't there a week ago and now it's here. Because you didn't immediately obey this and go to the urgent care, meaning the person, and get it resolved. Or make an attempt to.

You know what, brethren? I thought, why would He be so immediate in these verses and call us to do it quickly? That feels like a burden. But get this, who's going to bear your burden as you seek to obey these commands to go? Christ. Right? He's going to help you.

Is He giving you something that is beyond your ability to live out? Is this just too high? No. He's giving you something that through His power, He will help you and me to live out. So don't lose heart at how direct He is.

He knows your frame. He made you. He's given you a command.

He who knows you, and He's going to give you the power to live it out. So don't lose heart. Don't feel like, oh, this is overwhelming, and I'm just having this burden put on me by James right now as he preaches.

No, this is Christ putting something on you that should be on you. And you know what? If you want the nearness of the Lord in your life, you will live these two commands to go out. Someone said mere Christianity is keeping a clear conscience between me, God, and the brethren.

It's walking, as Paul said, always taking pains to have a clear conscience before God and man. Here are other examples briefly. They're not implied in the text.

But why do we not go? We make false assumptions. I already know. They won't listen to me.

They're proud and against me, so why even go to them? That won't stand. Fear of man. It's not easy.

It's just terrifying. No, that's not going to be a good one. Other wrong reasons.

It's going to take care of itself. It's just going to have to be that way. It's going to create more problems than it will solve.

By you not going, it's going to create more problems. Right? There's too many differences between us to get it to work. Okay, I get it.

Look, we're talking about offenses here, not differences. Are there going to be differences between brethren? Yes, there are, but that's different than some fault and sin and offense that you're unwilling to resolve. Certain doctrinal differences, it's not like this is Christ calling us to sit down and resolve until we all think 100% alike about a certain doctrine.

That's not what He's saying. So brethren, living out these two goals is a direct connection on the health of our church, on even God reviving our own souls, as I read there at the beginning. Do you see this? I want you to feel the weight of this.

I felt the weight of this the other day as I'm studying this and thinking about it. I thought I'd hear another example. I've briefly mentioned this, but it would be worth sharing.

2012 Fellowship Conference. A young preacher was there. A real gifted man.

Ryan Fullerton. He got up. He spoke.

This was kind of at the height of everything with Mark Driscoll that was happening. And in this young preacher's sermon, he had different jokes. It reminded me of Driscoll.

I got bothered in my heart. I didn't want to put the sermon up on the Internet. I came back.

I wanted to keep a clear conscience, right? I felt like the sermon was not honoring the Lord. I was real sensitive with everything going on with Driscoll. I remember being out in Tim's front yard and he was trying to reason with me like, brother, you're making a statement to this brother by not throwing that up on the Internet.

Well, let me read what I eventually wrote to this brother. Because you know what happened? I get engaged and I'm going up to see Bethany because we got engaged on the phone. It wasn't in person.

I'm going up to see Bethany and guess who happens to be there that week in preaching? Oh, Ryan Fullerton. I remember I have an offense against him. Oh no, I'm cornered! God's got me cornered.

I mean, I can't push through this. And I say it in a joking way, I should have been terrified. To push through that and go up there and not seek to resolve that? That's terrifying.

Judgments. God's judgments on that individual. So I had read this email, and I pulled up my email too.

I thought it would be edifying to read my email and his response. February 20, 2012. This is James from San Antonio.

It's been almost a year. So it was a year. You know how it is.

Something happens and you're away from the person, so it's easy to escape it in your mind. Right? That's the scary thing. That's why I think he says even remember.

It's like the Spirit of God has a way to bring things back to your mind. It's been almost a year since that conference last year. I'm convicted that I've not truly cleared my conscience of a wrong I've committed against you.

I'm about to head up to Kirksville this upcoming weekend, and one thing that had me unsettled was knowing that you would be there. And I realize the reason I was unsettled is because I haven't fully cleared my conscience. I realize that I dare not let my pride get in the way and keep me from doing that.

I humbly ask for your forgiveness because I was too quick to speak, was very judgmental at the humor that was in your sermon from the conference, and I let my mouth run afterwards. Rather than praise God for such a needed message, I was nitpicky and fault-finding and tore it down in my mind and with my words. That sure is not the way of love.

I remember when you came in the sound booth and I got to meet you and you asked me if I planned on putting the message up on the Internet. And I mentioned how my conscience was not clear and I was troubled by the jokes. Beloved demands that I should have looked over that and praised God rather than tear down the sermon over something minor.

I even remember in my heart despising some people who were blessed by your sermon because I knew that meant I was wrong. Isn't that crazy? Where is that? I even remember in my heart despising some people who were blessed by your message because I knew that meant I was wrong. Oh, the wickedness of all of this.

I handled that very poorly. I was proud and judgmental and that disgusts me. My judgmental spirit was by far more disgusting than anything in your jokes.

So please do forgive me for the sin against you. I rejoice to be able to send you this email because I now know that when I'm up in Kirksville, I'll be able to learn and grow and be taught from your sermons that the Lord has given you and that I won't find myself having a hard time listening to you due to issues in my own heart that are undealt with. If there is any way in which I've offended you that I have not put in this email, please forgive me for that.

So that was my email. Ryan's response, all caps, Brother, you are forgiven. I can't wait to see you in Kirksville and to get to give you a big hug.

At different times in my life, I've been guilty of every sin you mentioned in your email, and it is a joy to forgive you. Above all, it is a joy to be in better fellowship with a brother who so many I love, love. The most encouraging thing about your email is that the reminder that it gives me that the Spirit is at work.

You see, if I go up there and I don't reconcile, the Spirit of God is not at work in my heart. I'm in a terrifying spot. Ryan goes on, not that I was waiting for Him to work in you, but it is so encouraging to be reminded that He can change us, speak to us, and conform us, and bring fellowship where there was alienation.

Praise the Lord that He can do that even after a year. You should know my heart towards you is no offense. I was hurt last year, but I trusted that you and Matt Haney were making your decision from a desire for a good conscience.

I did not agree, but I know that is what you want, a pure conscience. I respected that in the Lord. Anyway, all hurt is gone now.

And then look at this. He says this, I've tried to think if I sinned against you, and I'm still thinking about it, but I asked a few brothers who knew the situation if they felt I had sinned against you. No one said I had, but I continue to test my own heart in light of your gracious apology.

Thanks so much for creating a context where it is even easier to test my own heart. Now, okay, that interaction. What did I go up there with now that I wouldn't have had earlier? Not just a clear conscience.

I had joy. And I remember seeing Him. And He had some tears and I hugged Him and it was joy.

Isn't that what we read about when you see someone come back? Joy. So obeying these two commands should produce greater degrees of joy in your life as a Christian. By not obeying them, trust me, it doesn't produce joy.

It produces misery, anxiety, false assumptions. You end up getting more of a critical heart, bitterness, festering in your own heart. Some of you will remember, one of the most powerful sermons ever preached in this church was by Matt Tomlinson.

But you know why the sermon was the most powerful that was ever preached in the church? Because it was exactly what I needed. Right? It was for me. He came here.

I don't know how. He must have hacked my emails. He was staying at my house, so he probably did.

Everything he said was for me. It was called having every relationship right. He even started it out saying every relationship you have within your church is every one of them right.

That there's not a single brother or sister in your church that you cannot look at them in the eye or I would say put their hand on them when you're praying over someone to be healed. That you look them in the eye and you know that things are right with them. And that you know that you have no walls between you and them.

No unforgiven sin. No barriers. No offenses.

No bitterness. This very area is the main thing that robs churches of sweet fellowship. And so he's preaching this.

And you know who visited that Sunday? A guy I had offended, I think it was like two years earlier. And this guy happens to visit our church that Sunday. And you know where he happened to sit? Right in front of me.

So I got that guy and I got Mac. I kid you not. I'm in the middle of hearing Mac's sermon.

And I'm convicted about I need to talk to this guy. And then my thought in my head is, well, it happened so long ago. You know what the very next thing Mac said? He said, some of you are sitting there right now thinking to yourself, it happened so long ago.

I kid you not, I was terrified. My Heavenly Father was in the room with the rod to get me because He loves me. And I left there a changed person because of that.

The Lord used that. So you see, brethren, as Mac said, it's like car maintenance. Get it fixed or you're going to have more problems down the road.

And so some of you, you might need to get something minor on your car fixed. Christ calls you to deal with it. Not to put it off.

Not to look at the sticker on the dash and say we're going to put a sticker up there. We'll get it changed in two weeks. He puts an immediacy.

To do it all in love. D.E. Host, he said, if you fail to love one, you'll certainly fail to love others. It's so easy to say people are so trying.

I should get along so nicely and grow in grace so much more if only so-and-so were not rubbing up against me. Oh, wait a minute, that so-and-so rubbing up against you is like what? Iron on iron. But so-and-so, Host says, is the greatest means of grace you have.

So brethren, these are two great commissions. I hope you're obeying them. We can talk about missions in the church, but if you can't obey these two ghosts, not only shouldn't you go anywhere, because you're going to just bring a grieved Holy Spirit over there.

But if we can't live this here, if we can't work through these issues in our relationships here, brethren, we're going to miss out on the power of God. And so yeah, are there unreached people? Are there people you have an offense with that you need to go to that they're on the map? You know, it's kind of far away. You're sitting there and they're sitting way back there.

I'm not saying you have an offense against anyone. But you know, it takes effort. It takes intentionality.

Don't you see Christ talking about the immediacy of it? Why take the edge off of that? Why? I don't want to be the preacher who does that. Because I don't think Christ's Word will affect us as it should. Let's pray.

Lord, Father, in some ways, it's just amazing thinking back on some of these seasons in my own life where You hunted me down to resolve an issue in a relationship. And Lord, it just produced some of the seasons of the greatest joy. Lord, deliver us from the lie that all these things are so difficult and the person isn't going to hear.

Lord, all of that stuff. Father, deliver us from the lie. Lord, we stay in misery when we could be over there rejoicing with restoration.

Lord, give us the humility to listen. Father, even, Lord, I've wanted to live this sermon out. And Father, I want to continue to try to be a good listener, Lord, with different people, Lord, who have brought faults to me over the years.

Lord, help me. Help me with these offenses, Lord, to really hear people out, to grow. Lord, we do want to grow.

Lord, I thank You even that ten years ago, Ryan, even turning it around and looking at it as an opportunity to see if He had sinned in His own heart. Lord, it's just amazing to see You at work in those ways. Lord, I pray You would be at work in those ways in our own church.

Lord, I trust You already have been. But Father, maybe there's some way, there's someone going to lay the hand on the head of another to pray, and they're ignoring the fact that they have a sinful tension in their heart towards someone. Lord, You know.

And Lord, we honestly... Father, I stand here today realizing my own ways might be right in my own eyes. But Lord, what am I not seeing? Lord, our kids are memorizing Psalm 139. Search me, O God, and try my heart, and try my ways, and see if there be any grievous way in me.

And lead me in the way everlasting. Lord, we want to be led in the way everlasting. Lord, we want to take Your Word by faith.

We want to live out Your promises. We want to do that which honors You. Lord, we want to have offerings that are being acceptable to You.

Lord, we don't want to have something unresolved, and we're just trying to go and offer something, and we're not listening to You. Lord, we don't want that to be said of us. Lord, if that's happening, Lord, even in my own life, if there's something that You've yet to show me, that You've yet to pierce my heart and reveal it to me, Lord, I pray You'd do that very thing.

Father, I pray You'd grow me in a deeper way. Lord, we ask You that we might grow. We're just saying that.

Father, I pray You'd work that in our hearts. Lord, grow us. Make us more like Jesus Christ.

Lord, give us greater unity. Give us greater joy with one another. Please, Lord, here we are.

Father, we're Your children. Lord, help us. Lord, please help us.

In Christ's name, amen.

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