

## **SLIDE CLOTHING DRIVE**

### **INTRODUCE MATTHEW SLIDE**

Well, if you have your Bibles, and I hope you do,

- please grab them and turn to Matthew chapter 18.
- You can open a phone or a tablet to Matthew 18,
- or you can use one of the hard-backed black bibles
  - under every single chair.
  - You'll find Matthew 18 on page **823**.

### **INTRODUCTION: RECAP**

So, we are right in the middle of our summer series in Matthew. And for the last month we've been in chapter 18.

At the beginning of the chapter the theme of greatness came up. The disciples are asking: who is the greatest in God's kingdom?

And the answer Jesus gave...

- was to illustrate by bringing up a child, and saying,
  - *"You wanna be great?*
  - *Then you've gotta become like this child.*
  - *You need to be dependent, humble, and growing...*
  - *childlike!"*
- That's the type of disciples Jesus is looking for.

Greatness is actually the opposite of how we might think.

And then Jesus shifts FROM the illustration of a child...

- TO the idea of *little ones*...
  - Which is not the same idea!
  - It's an expansion of the child-like illustration.
- *Little ones* are those who humbly follow Jesus...
- with a child-like faith.

So, we might use these words synonymously: Christian and *little one*.

Well, last week,

- the text moved to a *little one*...
  - a Christian...
- who wanders.

And Jesus tells the parable about a shepherd with 100 sheep.

- One of his sheep has gone astray.
- And the shepherd leaves the 99 sheep on the mountain
- to go and search out the one that went astray.

And if you missed last week's sermon from Eric, please go listen to it.

It was so good!

But remember what he said:

- this is a Christian...
  - a little one...
- who wanders.

This isn't someone who isn't a Christian. No!

- The lost sheep...
  - the one who has gone astray...
  - the wandering one...
- IS A CHRISTIAN!

And this theme of **SLIDE THE WANDERER**...it's all through the Bible!

## EXPLAIN: PROGRESS NOT PERFECTION

You see, the Christian life is about PROGRESS...not PERFECTION.

The entire counsel of the New Testament is that:

- you are not where you should be...
- you are not who you should be...
- you are not there yet.

And the man or woman...

- who is submitted to Jesus Christ as Lord...
- is a work-in-progress towards the goal...
  - of becoming who they're meant to be.

It's PROGRESS...not PERFECTION.

And I love that!

- I love that he never stops working on me.
- I love that I never arrive.

Because that explains to me how slow I seem to grow...

- 'cause listen, y'all...it feels slow.
  - Can I get a witness?
- Doesn't growth with Jesus feel slow?
- I feel like a slow developer.

But this text offers that we are all wanderers. All Christians wander.

- Hey, by a show of hands,
  - how many of you have been following Christ
  - for more than 20 years?
- Come on, put your hands up. This is me!
  - I got saved the summer of 2001,
  - so I'm 22 years into this game.

- Alright, now how many of you with your hands up,
  - how many still continue to drift or wander...
  - from time to time?

Hey, look around, y'all!

No one who's been at this thing for a minute is dropping their hands!

- And it has taken me two-decades into this thing...
  - But now I realize that
    - wandering is actually the norm...
    - not the exception.

Gosh, isn't this what we all sing in one of our favorite hymns?

- *"Prone to wander, Lord I feel it,*
  - *prone to leave the God I love.*
- *Here's my heart, Lord, take and seal it,*
  - *seal it for thy courts above."*

## APPLICATION

So, you've got this logical progression in Matthew's gospel:

- Greatness is NOT found in the way the world defines it.
  - It's ACTUALLY humble, progressive, reliance on Jesus.
- But even Christians who live like that are prone to wander...
  - and the good news is
  - that Jesus is the good shepherd
  - who keeps searching out the lost sheep.

But today we move on to what our role is in the life of a wandering sheep.

What are we to do?

- God's gonna keep chasing.
- God's gonna keep searching.
- God's gonna keep pursuing the one lost sheep.

But what are other Christians to do?

What's our role with wanderers?

## TRANSITION

Well, if last week was all about the wanderer...

- this week is called **SLIDE THE RESTORER**

And Matthew gives us a way

- to carefully
- and compassionately
- and mercifully
- woo and restore wanderers.
  - Whether that wanderer be inadvertent...
    - like stumbling into something.
  - Or even if that wanderer is knowingly and willingly
    - backsliding...
- our text today addresses our role as THE RESTORER.

So, let's go!

Matthew 18, starting in verse 15.

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## MATTHEW 18:15a

[15] "If your brother sins against you,

## EXPLAIN

Now, even right there...six words in...we need to stop and do some work.

First, notice it says that it's a **brother**.

- That's why this is connected to the parable of the lost sheep.
  - This person is a sheep...
  - they're **your brother**...
  - they're a Christian.

So, this is different than if someone sins against you who isn't a **brother**.

- If someone sins against you who isn't a Christian...
- then you aren't trying to restore them...
- you're trying to convince them of the Gospel.
  - THAT is a question of evangelism.
  - THIS is a question of discipleship.

I don't know why the modern church

- expects non-Christians to act like Christians.
  - And it's like we're shocked when non-believers
  - act like they don't believe in Christ!

So, this is a **brother**.

Second, **brother** connotes family.

- These are relational/familial words. Ok?
- AND this brother has sinned **against YOU**.
- This means you are in a relationship with this person.
  - So...this isn't a person on the internet!
  - This isn't a person you've just heard of.
  - This isn't even really an acquaintance.

This is a brother.

This is a sister.

- This kind of restoration is predicated
- on you being meaningfully connected to a church body.

You love this person!

BUT...they sin against you!

So...

## MATTHEW 18:15a

[15] "If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone.

### STEP 1: PRIVATE

Alright. This is step one for THE RESTORER.

- You go to the Christian who sins against you...
- in **SLIDE PRIVATE**

It's between you and him alone.

- Listen, this will revolutionize your relationships...
  - whether you are a Christian or not!
- This would revolutionize our relationships.

You go talk TO the person...rather than talk ABOUT the person.

It starts in PRIVATE.

### ILLUSTRATION: BAD RESPONSES

But gosh, we do all kinds of goofy things...

- RATHER THAN go in private to talk to the person
- who sins against us.

## GOSSIP

Listen, you don't GOSSIP about it!

- You don't post about it.
- You don't share it as a prayer request,
  - "Oh you better be praying for Tammy,
  - cause you know she did..." No!
- You don't talk with others about it.

And hey, real quick:

- we better be really careful about how much "wise counsel"
- we gather concerning a situation.
- I'm afraid all-too-often what we call "seeking wise counsel"
  - is actually a spiritual way of covering over
  - our own sin of GOSSIP.

Man, sometimes people come to me...

- and you tell me all the bad stuff
- that someone has done to you.

And gosh man,

- I listen...
  - for many many seconds...
- but then I'll often interrupt and ask if you've told them that.
  - *Well, no...*

Yo, that's gossip...and we don't do that.

## IGNORE

But also, we don't IGNORE IT!

- Listen, in our conflict-averse culture,
- we will do anything possible not to engage...



- we don't want to ruffle feathers...
- we don't want to stir up the waters.
- So we just try to forget about it.

**We'd rather ignore sin against us than confront the person who sinned.**

But listen to me: that's not loving!

- It is NOT kind,
- merciful,
- or gracious
  - to let someone who is in sin believe that everything's ok!
  - Cause everything's not ok!

## **TRANSITION**

I'm telling you, if we would actually take this first step seriously...gosh...

- But that means we have to engage in conflict!
- And it's just so much easier to gossip and ignore!

But Christian, you are to help me grow in Christlikeness! And I you!

- **While we ARE prone to wander...**

- **it's not OK to wander.**

And this is why we need others who love us enough to help us.

## **ILLUSTRATION: ME**

So, I have seen this done well in my life...

- and I have also had the opposite.

Cause listen, as the pastor of this church...

- I get 45 minutes every week
  - with a face-mic
  - and a live-stream
- to sin against you!

So, yeah, I'm gonna blow it...often!

And man, you can be offended...

- and talk about me to your friends
- or talk about me to your d-group
- or talk about me on your Facebook.

But I would appreciate it if you handled it privately with me.

Listen, if I sin against you...please come to me.

- Now, you don't need to come to me
- nitpicking over every little thing I say...ok?
  - Sometimes I offend you, and it's not sin...
  - you just didn't like what I said.

And guess what...Matthew 18 doesn't apply to that!

Some of y'all need to hear that this morning!

But if I do something out of line...

- from how Jesus would want me to live...
- man, that's sin.

This happened a couple years ago.

- One of our members heard me say something
- that he didn't think lined up with what I really valued
- and didn't reflect well on Christ.

- Hear me...I do that all the time!
- Progress NOT perfection, right?

Well, he reached out to me and lovingly said,

- *“Chris, I just want you to know that when you said that,*
- *it didn’t really need to be said that way,*
- *and in fact, it could really be offensive to some.*
- *I don’t think you meant any harm...*
- *but I wanted you to know.”*

And now, hear me, I was totally oblivious to this.

- But I was like, *“Man, you’re right. Thank you.”*
  - And I made a considered effort
  - to weed that kind of speech out of my vocabulary.
- I even copied that guy on an email to the elders
- so there was built in accountability.

But listen, that’s how you handle it. You start by going in PRIVATE.  
 Alright, 20 minutes in and we haven’t even made it through verse 15!

**BLANK SLIDE**

### **MATTHEW 18:15**

[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.

### **EXPLAIN: ABUSE**

There, do you see the end goal? **You have gained your brother.**

- The end goal is NOT to be right.
- The end goal is NOT about power.
- The end goal IS to restore.

So, if a Christian sins against you, you first go in PRIVATE.

Now, I do want to add one caveat here.

I don't have time to go all into it, but I do want to mention it.

- If you are a victim of abuse...
- you are in a different category.

You, too, need to be a restorer...

- but you do not go back into a private space with your abuser
- where you leave yourself susceptible to being abused again.

Romans 12 says **so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.**

Well, if it is not safe for YOU to go to that person...

Then you get a pass on step one...

- You go to the police,
- or to a pastor or staff member here,
- and we will help you take the steps and help necessary.

Verse 16:

## **MATTHEW 18:16a**

**[16] But if he does not listen,**

### **EXPLAIN**

Hey, did you know that sometimes people don't listen!?!

- Did you know that?
- Sometimes people don't listen to me...
  - I know...it's crazy!

So, you go PRIVATELY to your brother who has sinned against you...

- and you tell him his fault.
  - And sometimes he will listen.

But other times, they will not listen.

- Maybe they scoff at you.
- Maybe they deflect.
- Maybe they justify.

Maybe they pull out Matthew 7:3 where Jesus says,

- *“Why do you see the speck that is in your brother’s eye,*
- *but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?”*
- *You see, while you were talking to me about my sin...*
  - *it really seemed like a speck...*
  - *and you’re the log face here.*
- *So, why don’t we stop talking about my speck...*
- *and talk about that big ole’ log clogging up your head!”*

So, they don’t listen...it escalates. Verse 16...

## **MATTHEW 18:16**

**[16] 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.**

## **STEP 2: PATIENT**

And so, if the first step of the restorer is PRIVATE.

The second step is **SLIDE PATIENT**

- This second part of restoring a wandering brother takes time.
- This takes patience.

Listen to me, if he does not listen...

- you don't cut him out.
- You don't ghost him.
- You don't walk away, *"Well, I've done my part!"*

No! Now you've gotta go and get one or two others.

And I think this serves two purposes.

- You include one or two to CONFRONT...
- but you also include one or two others to CONFIRM.

## CONFIRM

Obviously you bring them along to CONFRONT the one who sinned. BUT you also get them to CONFIRM if you're actually seeing this clearly.

- *"Hey, I was just trying to privately confront my brother
  - about how he sinned against me...
  - and he called me 'log face.'*
- *So, I wanted to check with a couple others*
- *to see if I'm missing something here."*

Now, I don't know about you,

- but every time I engage as a restorer with a brother...
- I find myself convicted for something, too.

In almost every conflict, there is a part of it that's my fault.

Again...shocking!...I know!

- But there is almost always a percentage
- of the conflict and sin between us that is mine.
  - And frankly, I often need help to see that.

So we don't ONLY grab two others to firm up our case...

- but also, to ask for help and clarity...
  - to confirm where there might be a hunk of wood
  - hanging out of our face.

And I always say,

- then you own 100% of whatever percent is yours to own.
  - If the conflict is even 3% your fault...
  - Well, in that next meeting with the wandering brother,
  - you own 100% of your 3%.

And this requires PATIENCE.

## CONFRONT

But there is, eventually, a second CONFRONTATION.

- You've gotta get one or two others to come with you
- to talk again to the person who sinned against you.

This means you involve wise, objective, third parties.

So listen, this isn't just your two buddies who are on your team.

- You don't get to pick one or two others
- who can hold the person down
- while you verbally beat them up.

Listen, I've been there, too.

- *"Hey, well, he thinks you're a jerk.*
- *And she hates you, too!"*

But remember: the heart of this is restoration...not beating the sinner up!

- So, these one or two others
  - should be involved in this individual's life as well...

- they should probably be from the same church...
- and they should also be loving
  - and desirous for repentance and redemption.

My advice is to ask,

- *“Are these the third party mediators that THEY would choose?”*
- *Or are they just MY backup?”*

## TRANSITION

But this is upping the ante to include more members of the church.

And Matthew is drawing on language about “two or three witnesses”

- from Deuteronomy 19,
- essentially making sure that these one or two
- carefully weigh the evidence of an individual’s sin.
  - This isn’t just about feelings...
  - it’s about the evidence.

There is more procedure going on here.

And then verse 17:

## MATTHEW 18:17a

[17] If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church.

## STEP 3: PUBLIC

- So, the restorer starts in PRIVATE...
- is then very PATIENT...
- but if there’s still no response, they go **SLIDE PUBLIC**

How public do you go?



- Well, it's not some whistle-blower...
- Facebook post...
- Written manifesto thing here!

It says, **tell it to the church**.

Now, what does that mean?

- Well, I don't think he means to tell it to the church service.
  - Like some big ole' airing of grievances.
  - Can you imagine that?
    - If after I preached I said,
      - *"hey we respond by taking communion,*
      - *and giving,*
      - *and praying,*
      - *and singing...*
      - *and, Ted, I've seen your Facebook.*
      - *We gotta air some stuff out!"*

Now, some really backwards churches have interpreted this like that...

But I think what Jesus means by **tell it to the church**

- is that you tell it to the spiritual authorities in your community
- so they can help you in the restoration.
  - This is probably pastors, elders, staff, ministers.

So, you go PUBLIC,

- in that it has moved from privately handing it,
- to bringing some third parties,
- to involving the larger church body.

Verse 17...

## MATTHEW 18:17

[17] 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.

### EXPLAIN: UNREPENTANT

If it gets past the last step...you have a member of the church who goes:

- *“I’m a believer in Christ,*
  - *and I’m a member of Fathom,*
- *but I’m going to do this,*
  - *and I don’t care what the Bible says*
  - *or what God commands.*
- *I reject your confrontation.*
- *I reject the third parties.*
- *And I reject the leadership of our church.”*

If that’s what you have.

To that Jesus says:

- **let them be to you**
- **as a Gentile and a tax collector**

Now, this sounds wild.

- And some have taken this and said,
  - *“That’s right! Kick them out of the church!”*
- But that is actually the complete opposite sentiment
  - of what is going on here.

To this unrepentant wanderer, we say:

- *“Based on your response*
- *to our private, patient, and public*
- *pursuit of your restoration,*
- *we don’t think you are a Christian,*
- *and therefore, we cannot treat you as such.”*

Now, do we know for sure that they aren’t a believer?

No! That is only for God to know.

- *“But based on what we see,*
- *we can’t treat you like a member of the church*
- *when what you are doing shows us the opposite.”*

## **EXPLAIN: NOT CHRISTIANS**

You see...

- some of these wanderers are not actually Christians...
- but they think they are.

Even if you were raised in the church, and have never missed a Sunday!

That does not make you a Christian.

- Having Christian parents...
  - does not make you a Christian.
- Getting baptized...
  - does not make you a Christian.
- Being a good person...
  - does not make you a Christian.
- Adhering to some sort of conservative moral code...
  - does not make you a Christian.

The ONLY thing that makes you a Christian...

- is surrendering your whole life to the Lordship of Jesus Christ!

And this wandering person is showing that they haven't surrendered.

You see, some of these wanderers are not actually Christians.

- And we are called to treat them accordingly!

## APPLICATION

So, the last step of THE RESTORER is that we aren't able to affirm that THE WANDERER is actually a believer in Christ.

- But we don't kick them out of church.
- We don't ostracize them.

We treat them **like Gentiles and tax collectors**.

How did Jesus treat the Gentile and the tax collector?

- He loved them.
- He rolled out the red carpet for them.
- In fact, the one who wrote this gospel,
  - Matthew himself,
    - was a former tax collector...

**So, we PREACH TO and PLEAD WITH them to believe on Christ.**

- To repent and turn from sin.
- To surrender all to Jesus Christ.

Verse 18:

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## MATTHEW 18:18

**[18] 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.**

## EXPLAIN

Do you know what this means?

- This means there is a very real eternal impact
  - on how we do this restoring business.
- There is a very real impact in heaven.

Back in verse 15 where it says **you have gained your brother...**

- it really means that!

And for wanderers who, like I just talked about, are not actually Christians.

- Who are confused
- or deceived
- or pretending.

For those, there is a definite eternal impact for how you restore.

James says as much in James 5:

### **SLIDE JAMES 5:19-20**

**[19] My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, [20] let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.**

And Matthew agrees and continues in verses 19-20

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### **MATTHEW 18:19-20**

**[19] 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. [20] For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them."**

## EXPLAIN

So, here are two of the most ripped out of context verses in the Bible.

First,

- verse 19 is not about finding two to agree to ask God...
  - for cash and prizes...
  - for health and wealth...
  - for cotton candy and cadillacs...
- and as long as you get two to agree,
- it's like you've got God in a bind
- and he has to give you what you ask for.

No! That's just dumb!

This is God doing the miraculous work of restoration in someone's life.

Second,

- verse 20 is ripped out of context all the time
- by worship leaders.

You ever heard a worship leader go,

- "Where two or three are gathered.
- Ok church, God is here with us now, so let's sing."

No. That's dumb, too!

- That's why we have a legit worship minister
- who actually reads her Bible
- and doesn't say dumb things like that.

No, these verses are in the context of restoring a wandering brother!

Here's what these two verses are saying:

- when you follow the biblical prescription
- of how to handle a wandering believer
  - PRIVATELY,
  - PATIENTLY,
  - and PUBLICALLY...
    - pleading with them to return...
- when you do that...
  - God shows up.
  - God steps in.
  - God is there.

No matter how impossible the situation may seem!

No matter how broken the relationship may be!

No matter how egregious the sin may have been!

No matter how hard the heart of that person is!

God can and does show up in those instances.

- Now, this is no promise of it working out the way we want it to.
- But it is a promise of God's presence.

## CONCLUSION

Church, we are called to be **SLIDE W/PADS** THE RESTORER

But all I told you was how to do that externally.

- In PRIVATE.
- With PATIENCE.
- And only then in PUBLIC.

Those are the external things that you DO!

And, frankly, I doubt you'll do them. Why?

Cause I've been a pastor for 20 years...

And I've watched very few actually practice this well.

WHY? Because most often we stop with the EXTERNALS.

- Externally I might have given you the steps...
- but what about the INTERNAL motivation?

HOW do we do this internally?

- Because when someone sins against us
  - it hurts us...
  - it costs us...
  - It does damage.

And next week, we get to see the third movement of this progression...

- We move from the WANDERER
- To the RESTORER
- And we become the FORGIVER.

But you'll have to come back for that one.

Let's pray.



## RESPONSES:

Well, every week at Fathom we respond in 4 ways:

- COMMUNION – THE LORD’S SUPPER
- GIVING TITHES & OFFERINGS – [fathomchurch.org/give](http://fathomchurch.org/give)
- PRAYER - [fathomchurch.org/prayer](http://fathomchurch.org/prayer)
- SINGING

So, I’m going to read the Words of Institution from the Apostle Paul, we’ll take communion, and then we’ll sing:

### 1 CORINTHIANS 11:23–26 – WORDS OF INSTITUTION

[23] For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, [24] and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, “This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” **TAKE**

[25] In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” **TAKE**

[26] For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.

Love you church, let’s stand and sing together.

## RESOURCES CONSULTED:

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