

Matthew: You Have Gained Your Brother

Discussion Guide for June 6 and 7, 2026

Summary

In Matthew 18:15–20, Jesus gives His followers a practical process for handling conflict in the church – and the whole thing is driven by one goal: reconciliation. Go to the person privately first. If that doesn't work, bring one or two others. If still nothing, involve the church. At every step, the heart behind it is love. Do the hard, uncomfortable work of confronting sin, not to win, but to win back a brother.

Ice Breaker

Think of a time when a hard conversation actually strengthened a relationship. What made you finally willing to have it?

Key Verses

1. Matthew 18:15-22
2. 1 Thessalonians 5:14
3. Deuteronomy 19:15
4. Corinthians 5:18–19

Discussion Questions

1. Jesus opens with "if your brother sins against you" – but the pastor pointed out the Greek really means when, not just if. Why do you think Jesus treats conflict in the church as inevitable? Does that framing change anything for you?
2. The very first step Jesus gives is to go directly and privately to the person. No venting to your community group, no processing it publicly first. What makes that so hard? What tempts you to skip it?
3. D.A. Carson said, "If it is hard to accept a rebuke, even a private one, it is harder still to administer one in loving humility." Have you ever had to confront someone about a sin? What made it difficult – and what, if anything, made it easier?
4. The pastor kept coming back to this: the goal at every single stage is reconciliation. How does keeping that goal in mind shape how you'd approach the conversation? What happens when the goal shifts to something else – being right, getting justice, or just venting?
5. The phrase "church discipline" can be triggering for people who've been hurt by leaders misusing their position. Has that been part of your story? How does today's passage either challenge or affirm that experience?

Life Application

Is there a conversation you've been avoiding? Think of someone who sinned against you — or someone you may have sinned against. This week, take one real step: send a text asking to meet, pray for them by name, or talk to a mentor to help you prepare. Don't just decide to be nicer. Do something.

Key Takeaways

- 1.** The goal is always reconciliation. Every step Jesus lays out — going privately, bringing witnesses, involving the church — is an act of love aimed at restoring the relationship, not winning it.
- 2.** Go first, and go privately. Jesus doesn't add qualifiers or give you an out. The smaller the audience, the better the chance of real reconciliation.
- 3.** The church doesn't act alone. When leaders humbly follow God's word through this process, Jesus promises His presence. You're not figuring it out on your own.
- 4.** Forgiveness isn't a transaction. Keeping score — at 3, 7, or 77 — misses the point entirely. Jesus is calling us to a posture of ongoing, uncountable forgiveness.
- 5.** Our reconciliation with each other points to something bigger. God's deepest heart is to reconcile us to Himself. The way we pursue each other in conflict is a reflection of what He has already done for us through Christ.