

OPEN BIBLE CHURCH

Phil O. Waldo  
Lead Pastor



1224 Hancock Drive  
Boone, Iowa 50036

Phone: 515 432-3329

Website: [www.booneopenbible.com](http://www.booneopenbible.com)  
E-mail: [office@booneopenbible.com](mailto:office@booneopenbible.com)  
[pastor@booneopenbible.com](mailto:pastor@booneopenbible.com)

**SERMON TITLE** If You Love the Lord, part 2

**SERIES**

**DATE** 1/14/2024

**KEY SCRIPTURE** Matthew 5:23-24; Ephesians 4; Matthew 18

**SYNOPSIS** If you really love the Lord, you will keep his command of reconciliation.

**HIGHLIGHTS**



## ☞ If You Love the Lord

**John 14:15**

**If you love me, you will keep my commandments.**

**Love is more than just an emotion. True, real love, will be demonstrated. To demonstrate your love for the Lord, you will obey him.** If you say, “I really love Jesus, but I just don’t want to do what he says,” you’re fooling yourself. If you love the Lord, you will keep his commands.

Last week we saw that the first and perhaps most important command he gave was “repent.” Think differently about your sin; be more than just sorry; stop it and turn around. Change your mind, change your behavior, change your life. Then, partner with the Lord, becoming more and more like Jesus so that you glorify God and bring others to him.

☞ Now, today we start in **Matthew 5:23-24** which says, “Therefore, if you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, 24 leave your offering there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering.”

☞ **If you love the Lord, be reconciled with people.** Everyone of us has had conflict with somebody, sometime. The Lord wants our relationships restored. And, he puts the obligation on you. If you know there’s a conflict or something unresolved, it’s on you to take the first step. Too often, we want to wait for the other person to initiate. Sometimes we think, “they’re the one with the problem, so they need to reach out to me.” Or, “they did me wrong, they have to apologize, so, I’ll just wait for them to make it right.” But that’s not the way Jesus sees it.

In fact, Jesus seems to be saying it’s more important to reconcile than it is to go to church. In essence, he says, “Don’t bother coming to God before you’ve attempted to heal those broken relationships with people.” This is a big deal... drawing near to God is of the utmost importance, but Jesus says we should repair broken relationships first.

So, how do you do that? Well, first, we need to decide how much of a problem this is and we may need to just let it go, since we are called to bear with each other.

Ephesians 4:1-3

I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. 2 Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. 3 Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.



The Apostle Paul embeds the thought of unity into the calling you have received. We often think of our calling as something we preach or some ministry we do, which is true. However, in context, to be worthy of the calling requires that we bear with each other, or **put up with each other**. He says we should **make every effort to keep the unity**.

In thinking of a relationship that is broken, have you made every effort? Some translations say, "endeavor." This effort or endeavor means to work hard, to do something with intense effort and motivation, and it also includes the concept of doing it promptly. Have you made every effort? Have you worked hard, with intensity to restore that relationship? Or have you let things wallow too long and get worse?

Jesus came into this world to bring reconciliation between God and humanity, which cost him his life. He literally suffered for it. Now, he calls us to the ministry of reconciliation. (2 Corinthians 5:18-19) Reconciliation begins right here at home.

Colossians 3:12-14 echoes the message of Ephesians 4... as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. 13 Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. 14 And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

Patience, gentleness, and humility are supposed to be like the clothes we wear. Without them, we are walking around naked. So, let's start with this idea... you don't *have* to point out everyone's flaws. Neither should you complain every time somebody rubs you wrong. You are called to be patient and bear with each other. That literally means to **put up with each other, which requires humility and gentleness**.

There's a meme floating around online which says, **"be kind to people; you never know what they are going through."** Not bad. That's what compassion looks like... showing kindness even when you're not receiving it, because you understand that often, hurtful behavior is caused by something going on behind the scenes. As they say, "hurt people, hurt people." If you're loving and compassionate, you won't always be conflicting with each other in the first place.

However, there are times when it's just too much and the relationship is suffering, so you need reconciliation. So, how do you do that? Fortunately, Jesus gives us some guidance on that as well... In Matthew 18:15 he says, **"If another believer sins against you, go privately and point out the offense. If the other person listens and confesses it, you have won that person back."** Here Jesus lays out a step-by-step guide for handling conflict in a constructive way, in an effort to restore broken relationships, and it doesn't include airing grievances on FaceBook.



☞ **Confront in private first.** This confronting in private clearly indicates some forethought. In fact, the word “reconcile” in Matthew 5:24 means to change and renew a friendship with someone, and it includes the meaning “to reason.” There is supposed to be some forethought before you confront someone. You don’t just blow up on the spot when someone hurts you. You compose yourself and talk together privately. It’s supposed to be a healthy exchange of thoughts which brings change. The truth is, they may not even know that they wronged you. So, talk privately and with tact.

Proverbs 15:1 says, “A gentle answer turns away wrath, But a harsh word stirs up anger.”

☞ Ephesians 4:15 says, “...**speaking the truth in love**”

If you go into a conversation with guns blazing, you’re only asking for a fight. People will get defensive. But if you can start the conversation with gentleness, showing love, you can make tremendous breakthroughs.

An important part of maturity is to be able to express your concerns or hurts without flaring up into anger. When you get to the point that you can calmly say, “that makes me angry,” and then go on to explain why, rather than blowing up, you are finally showing some signs of maturity. So, you shouldn’t get so upset in the first place, letting every little thing get under your skin. And, a ☞ spiritually mature person will handle frustrations **with gentleness and tact.**

But even then, the conflict may still remain, so then, what? In Matthew 18, Jesus goes on to say ☞ that if the private conversation doesn’t work, then **get some help** from other believers. There’s a place for a mediator to hear both sides and guide a conversation so that those in conflict can be reconciled. And, be ready to make some adjustments yourself, since those others may see another side to the situation.

It’s important to remember that the objective is reconciliation, not proving yourself right. The point of this kind of conversation is restoration of relationship. Now, you don’t have to pretend you weren’t hurt, but you cannot keep on holding that hurt against them. You have to “let it go.” 🎵 🎵 🎵

☞ **Then, forgive.** Not long after this instruction in Matthew 18, Peter comes to Jesus and asks him, “*How many times should I forgive a person, 7 times?*” I’m sure Peter thought he was being generous, since the popular teaching at the time was to forgive up to three times. But Jesus ☞ responds surprisingly with, “*Seventy times seven,*” by which he actually meant **there should be no limits to how often you forgive someone.**

The most basic meaning of the word “forgive” here is like a debt that is owed, but now is waived. They don’t owe you anything anymore. There’s no more penalty for their hurtfulness. You let them off the hook without consequence.



Jesus goes on with a parable of the kingdom. The king (God) forgave a huge debt, so we also should show mercy and forgive each other. After all, our debts to each other are far less than the debt we owe to God, and he freely forgives us.

*--Warren Wiersbe... Jesus put no limit on forgiveness, for true forgiveness comes from a heart of love, and love keeps no record of wrongs (1 Corinthians 13:5). Christians who cannot forgive others have forgotten what Christ has done for them on the cross.*

So, when can you “be done” with someone? Ultimately, the answer to that is, never. But, what if you’ve tried all these things and still cannot get reconciliation? Well, Jesus has something to say about that, too. He says to keep trying for resolution by taking it to a bigger group yet. (Matthew 18:17).

By now, you should have made all your own adjustments so the relationship can be restored, but if the other person refuses to reconcile, then others can weigh in. If you’ve done all you can and others agree that you’ve done your part, BUT the other person still refuses to repent and reconcile, then you are finally released to stop pursuing restoration. And, in that case, it should be a significant number of people agreeing that this is the right course of action, and, they should all break off their relationships with that person. It has to be really big deal before you are free to just walk away.

Ultimately, the idea is still for restoration, though. If the unrepentant person is losing friendships left and right, hopefully they will catch on and make amends and adjustments so that they can be restored. That’s the goal of what Jesus is instructing.

**☞ Remember, it’s not about being right, it’s about restoration of relationship.**

But what about setting boundaries? Yes, you can set boundaries. Nowhere does Jesus suggest that we just turn a blind eye to hurtful behavior and keep on being run over again and again. But if there is true repentance with evidence of change, the possibility of restoration remains.

Ultimately, God sets the example. When we repent and change, he forgives and restores us. And that’s what he wants for our relationships as well. He wants us to repent of our wrong-doing and work at reconciliation, so that our relationships can be restored. Now, since we don’t have God’s perfect knowledge of the other person’s heart, we will need some time for full restoration, but we will want to work toward that end. It’s not going to be easy, and I certainly have not mastered this, but it is what I believe the Lord is saying today.

**☞ If you love the Lord, you will keep his command and work at reconciliation with others.**