LVC 18/08/2019 **If your brother wrongs you** MTT 18:15-35

1. “The ministry would be wonderful if it wasn’t for the people”…Not long to realise that the Pastor was included as ‘people’. But, CHURCH is people – ALL partially transformed – spiritually reborn but still becoming like Jesus.
2. All of us have past hurts, sensitivities, self-centredness, and pride issues. - All potentials for conflict with others.
3. Yet, the church, God’s people - light to the world and an example of love, acceptance, and forgiveness. So we MUST learn to deal with conflict in a way that does not hurt the church. If we don’t the church suffers and so do we all.
4. This problem of conflict is as old as the church itself:
   1. Greek vs Aramaic over food distribution ACTS 6 (wisdom and spirit?)
   2. Paul and Barnabas’ ‘sharp disagreement’ and split ACTS 15
   3. Two ladies who couldn’t see eye to eye PHIL 4
   4. Believers suing each other 1 COR 6
5. Therefore the Lord Jesus gave them, and us, a way to deal with these things: MTT 18:15-35 [Read vs 15-20]
6. Today is not a ‘preach’, but a Bible study – no examples, not even hypothetical.
7. Vs 15(a) *‘If your brother sins against you’*
   1. BROTHER – Fellow believer in church
   2. SINS – trespasses, offends, wrongs
   3. AGAINST YOU – Not in some early manuscripts, making it about church discipline BUT vs 21 Peter’s question about forgiving negates this.
8. Vs 15(b) ‘*Go and show him his fault, just between the two of you*.’
   1. GO – Physically meet, not by phone, and definitely not by email etc.
   2. SHOW – Explain your point of view, and how the offence affects you.
   3. TWO OF YOU – One-on-one, nobody else present, no group even if a group is affected.
9. Vs 15(c) ‘*If he listens to you, you have won your brother over’*
   1. LISTENS – hears, grasps, acknowledges. This is a 2-way conversation – understand motivation, circumstances, and attitude… and hear apology if offered. Rather than assumptions, partial info, hearsay.
   2. WON OVER – **The goal is to restore relationship and unity** (affects the whole church).. if not resolved it alienates individuals and groups.
   3. Also can help the offender to learn and change and become more like Jesus.
   4. 90% never have to go beyond this 1st stage.
10. Q Why do we so seldom follow this Jesus process? Rather, we go to everyone other than the one who has wronged us – talk, email, and social media!
11. Could we be more concerned with justifying ourselves, expressing outrage, and even punishing… than we are concerned with unity and the best interests of the church and the offending person?
12. STEP 2: Vs 16(a) ‘*But if he will not listen, take one or two others along.’*
    1. WILL NOT LISTEN – grasp and acknowledge and apologise
    2. ONE OR TWO – Mature believers or witness to the offense. Why? To reason with BOTH of you… and in case the 3rd step is necessary.
    3. The prospect of taking others with you causes you to consider (i) how important is this matter actually, (ii) Should I not just forgive and move on as Jesus teaches in vs. 19-35
       * Vs 22 Forgive 77 times Cain avenged x7 and Lamech x77 GEN 4:24
       * Vs 25-35 the story of the unforgiving servant. WE have been forgiven much so MUST forgive little.
13. Vs 16(b) ‘*So that every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.*’

DEUT 19:15 to establish TRUTH and prepare if necessary for the 3rd step in the process.

1. STEP 3: Vs 17(a) ‘*If he refuses to listen to them tell it to the church.’*
   1. REFUSES – stubbornly resists and refuses to acknowledge and apologise
   2. THE CHURCH – Depending on form of church government. In LVC it’s the Elders.
2. Vs 17(b) ‘*And if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or tax collector’*
   1. YOU… TREAT – Not the ‘church’; not excommunication, although the Elders may decide themselves that this is necessary in best interest of the church. But this is a different process.eg TIT 3:10
   2. UNBELIEVER – treat with respect and civility but withhold intimate fellowship, trust, and commitment.
3. Steps 1-2-3 The only times that this process sometimes needs to be shortened is if (a) there is real threat of physical or emotional harm, and (b) if the offending brother is a church leader, in which case you still need to go to him one-on-one but might then need to take the matter straight to the elders.
4. Lastly, Vs 18-20 regarding binding and loosing in agreement – same as for church doctrine & practice.
   1. Tense is will already have been… in heaven.
   2. If we do what Jesus instructed then He backs up our final decision in the matter.
   3. Conversely, if we do not follow His process then He does not approve and we do not have His blessing and authority.
5. **Never forget that the objective of this Jesus Conflict Resolution Process is RECONCILIATION and UNITY – an opportunity to express LOVE, ACCEPTANCE, and FORGIVENESS… for this is our reasonable response to our loving, accepting, and forgiving saviour**.