

LESSON 11:

RESTORE ONE ANOTHER

True love and concern among God's family is focused on each one's spiritual well-being above everything else (Matthew 16:24-27). While this love is often expressed through such things as encouragement, patience, compassion, etc., true love also involves correction and discipline whenever souls are in danger because of sin. Therefore, members of God's family must understand their responsibilities involved in restoring one another.

GALATIANS 6:1

Members of God's family can be overtaken by and get caught up in sin (Galatians 5:16-26). If any member of God's family stumbles and falls into deceitful things that contradict God's will, responsibility falls on those who are spiritually-minded to help restore such a one. The concept of restoration implies bringing the one in sin back to the state God desires him/her to be in (like fishing nets that are mended or dislocated bones that are set back in place). But, how this attempt is made is also critical. First, it must be done in the spirit of gentleness. Even when rebuke and correction are needed, you must keep your strength under control to maintain the proper demeanor and Christ-like spirit that is focused on winning the soul (not just getting someone "told," 2 Timothy 2:24-26). Second, it must be done with self-awareness to recognize that you also can and do fall prey to sin so you are not hypocritically judgmental (Matthew 7:1-5), and consider how you would want another to restore you (Matthew 7:12).

JAMES 5:13-20

This passage seems to address both physical and spiritual sickness and the prayer that should accompany both. Regarding sin, notice the responsibility to confess sin to one another (perhaps sin that is not private). Then, James addresses the

scenario in which a brother or sister strays from the truth (in belief and/or practice). The responsibility of Christians who have not strayed from the truth is to make some effort to turn the ones who have strayed back to the way of truth. This will certainly be done through rebuke concerning the error and correction through Bible teaching. The goal is to turn the erring one back to the truth so that his/her soul is saved from spiritual death and the sins are covered through the blood of Christ (1 John 1:8-2:2)!

MATTHEW 18:15-20

Here are specific instructions regarding a situation when a brother or sister sins directly against you (after Jesus taught a parable about a sheep straying, vv. 10-14). Though there are certainly many ways this could happen, being sinned against is not the same as having your feelings hurt or holding a different opinion about a matter of liberty. The one who has been truly wronged is under an obligation to seek reconciliation with the offending brother/sister. This should involve going directly to the offender and identifying the fault so it can be corrected (not gossiping about it to others). If the offender repents, you have gained your brother/sister and are reconciled. However, if the offender will not repent, one or two other brothers/sisters are to be taken to the offender to be witnesses and help resolve the situation. If the offender still will not repent, the congregation should be informed and that one is to be viewed as one who is not right with God rather than accepted as being in fellowship with God and the church.

JUDE 1:20-23

Jude had been addressing false teachers who could lead Christians astray. Now, he encouraged the Christians to keep themselves in the faith (v. 3). Verses 22 and 23 give a variety of responses to the different situations the erring Christians may find themselves in. First, some may show signs of beginning to waver and doubt in the truth. These should be shown mercy, kindness, and patience in helping to bring them to a solid position in the truth. Second, some have fallen away from the truth and live contrary to God's truth. These should be

snatched out of the Hellfire they are headed toward with greater urgency and efforts to restore the one who has been lost. Third, some are even more influenced by falsehood (perhaps even including those who advocate the falsehood). These should also be shown mercy out of concern for their souls, but should also include fear and hatred of their influences that can defile you and others so you proceed with caution so you do not get pulled into their false and deceitful ways (Romans 16:17-18; 2 John 1:9-11). So, God expects His people to be mindful of how they respond to people in various circumstances (e.g. contrast Acts 18:24-28 and Galatians 2:11-14).

1 CORINTHIANS 5:1-13

The situation in this passage shows a Christian man among the church in Corinth who was living in sin (adultery) and would not repent. This was not permitted to go unchecked. For, unchecked sin in a congregation is like leaven that impacts the whole batch of dough. Whenever a member of God's family lives in sin and refuses to repent, the other members of God's family must not associate themselves with him/her – not even eating with such a one (e.g. not sharing meals or interacting socially like nothing is wrong). Instead, the one who is engaged in evil must be removed from the congregation (2 Thessalonians 2:13-15; 3:6-15). However, this action of keeping away from brothers and sisters who are like soldiers out of line and refuse to obey Jesus must never be done out of hate or animosity; but out of love for their souls so they might be ashamed and return to the Lord (2 Thessalonians 3:14-15)! For, losing the connection with members of God's family should cause them to be ashamed and repent!

CONCLUSION

The love between the members of God's family must run so deep that they should be concerned whenever they see one of their brothers and sisters straying off the path of truth God has revealed. However, each one must be careful in how the sin of others is handled to help the soul be restored to God. Ultimately, if an erring brother or sister refuses to repent, more drastic actions must be taken out of love to address the sin.

DISCIPLESHIP QUESTIONS

Why does love in God's family occasionally involve correction and rebuke?

What does it mean to restore another person who has sinned against God?

How must you conduct yourself when attempting to restore another?

What happens whenever someone who has strayed from the truth is brought back?

How should matters regarding personal sin be addressed in God's family?

How should different situations of restoration be handled differently?

What is the danger of allowing sin among God's family to go uncorrected?

What actions must be taken by God's family when a brother/sister refuses to repent?

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Written by Eric Krieg

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