

Alêtheia Christian Fellowship

May 24, 2020

“It’s His Body”

Sunday school at 8:30, in-person Services at 9:15 & 10:45 with King’s Kids (Video live-taped sermon online by Monday afternoon).

NEWS

Welcome back, or welcome remotely, either way welcome - may the Lord be blessed.
Church camp at Little Bitterroot Lake, August 14-16.

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MATTHEW 18:15-20 ~

What does that mean... to sin against you personally? What is it that this other church member is guilty of, and why is it a sin?

(I Corinthians 5:6 & Matthew 5:23&24).

That’s Jesus’ point here - a change of perspective... You may be the one vexed, but your precious sibling in Christ is in deep danger because of it... As are you.

What’s the easiest way to help them?

Why are you annoyed?

Fill out the other side, detach this part of the page, and place it in the offering plate or the prayer/suggestion box in the lobby or with an Elder or Deacon of the church.

God Bless You!

Upon reflection... Aren't you are a child of God fully accepted by Him no matter how anyone else treats you?

We need real unity, not artificial unity. Sometimes it is something that must be addressed.

Just remember, at each of the three steps the goal is restoration, never revenge and retribution.

We get to the third stage and church leadership takes over. It is the church that has the authority to interpret the Bible for the church.

Study, counsel, prayer.

Where two or more church leaders are gathered in submission to Christ to determine a way forward in a church unity matter - Jesus will be with them.

Matthew 18:21&22 ~

Verse 21 confirms that it is a brother sinning against you and the question is... Regarding forgiveness, surely there must be a limit!"

Matthew 18:23-35 ~

Write a brief note – detach and place in the offering, or the prayer box, or give it to a Deacon/Elder

Name _____ Address _____

Phone _____ Email _____

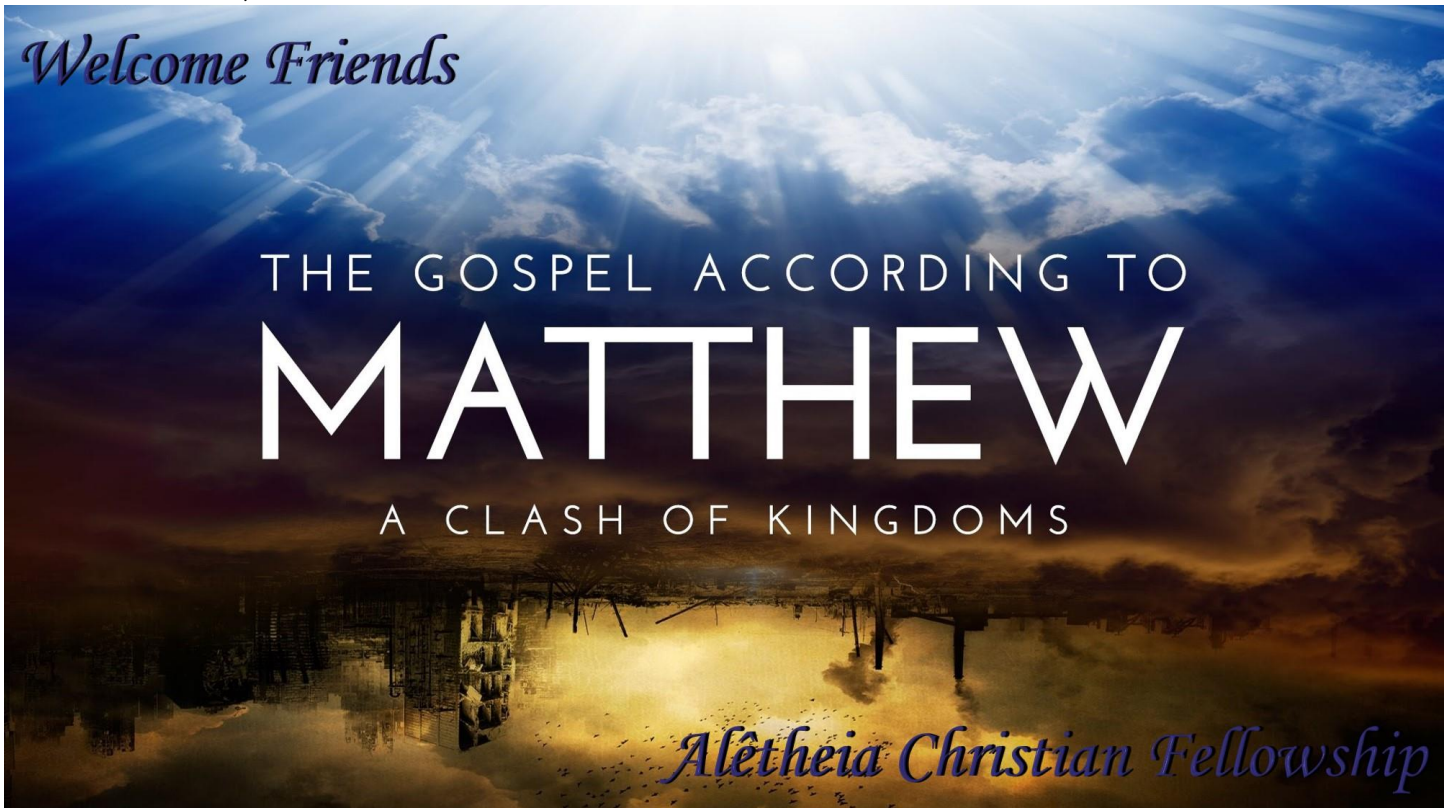
Alêtheia ~ Matthew 18d ~ 052420
“It’s His Body”



Flathead: 5 ½ weeks. 3 hospitalized in the state.



Mike and Kathy Zinser. Joe and Mindy Marshall. Joey, Michaela, James & Mollie.





Matthew 18:15-20NASB, 15“If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother. 16“But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every fact may be confirmed. 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. 18“Truly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven. 19“Again I say to you, that if two of you agree on earth about anything that they may ask, it shall be done for

them by My Father who is in heaven. 20“For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst.”

Last week we saw the proper way you and I are to respond to a fellow Christian, who is sinning against us personally...

Let's dig a bit deeper and let me put it to you directly. What does that mean exactly - to sin against you personally? What is it that this other church member has done, or is doing, to you, and why is it a sin?



They are, by act, or omission, vexing you in some way.

They are scandalizing you, which means that through them, because of them, you are stumbling...

Their sin... Is tempting you to sin. It can be an overt encouragement to get you to do what is wrong, but usually, it is a behavior of some type, an offensive word or deed, a failure to perform some duty, or a shirking of some responsibility, basically, a gesture, comment, look, or demeanor that annoys you.

What is your stumbling in this sense? You are sinning. How much are you sinning because of them? Perhaps only a little, but "A little leaven is enough to leaven the whole lump of dough" (1 Corinthians 5:6).

What, pray tell, is the sin that you are guilty of in this matter? It is the sin of Moses... It is "Despising one of these little ones." An example... A brother slurps his Communion juice annoyingly - at least, as far as you're concerned. Or a sister wears a top that is too revealing - at least, as far as you're concerned. Or a kid doesn't show enough respect - at least as far as you're concerned. It's all irritating, but it doesn't seem too bad, really.



Yet, even in such small, relatively inconsequential interactions, what has actually transpired is another Christian has caused you to evaluate them critically, render a final verdict as to their conduct, and to think less of them as a Christian.

That process reveals a certain arrogant superiority. As a minimum, you feel justified in judging a fellow Servant of Christ and thinking less of them... It is a sin... They are, to you, the medium "Through whom the stumbling block comes!"

Their sin is that they have encouraged your sin. Can you see how we are inextricably linked - how one

cannot sin without others sinning? We are one Body and what happens to one of us affects the whole. The net effect is that you're both sinning.



Jesus said in Matthew 5:23&24NASB, 23“Therefore if you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, 24leave your offering there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering.” Please note... Jesus didn't say, “If you have something against your brother.” It goes without saying and it goes further... If someone's conduct has caused you to look down on them and they discover that, do you think they might have

something against you? Again, one body, interconnected. Sin goes around and around, entangling everyone, getting everywhere, saturating the whole group, just like yeast in a lump of dough.

Now, if you love God as He commands you to, you would be just as grieved as He is that there is dissension in the ranks - that there is sin in the camp.

Beyond that, if you love your fellow Believer as He commands you to, you would be grieved that your brother or sister has vexed you... Not because you are vexed, but because they are in danger because you are vexed.

We just saw in verse 6 of this chapter that it would be better for that other Christian through whom you stumble to "Have a heavy millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea." We just saw that it would be better for her to lose, hand, foot, or eye, than to be guilty of such a thing.

If you love them, you'd be deeply concerned for them. Beyond that, you'd be alarmed that you are sinning by "Despising" them... And then realize that they will likely despise you for despising them adding to their sin!

Finally, you'd be grieved to the very core of your Holy Spirit infused being, that now, your sin - the mutual sin of you and your "Stumbling block" is spreading to others. It is as inevitable as the sun going down.

Please think about how you'd react if that other Christian was your own precious child. Your son or your daughter... You knew that they would be in tremendous danger with God - eternal jeopardy because you allowed them to annoy you enough to sin because of them. What wouldn't you do to prevent such a fate from befalling them? Wouldn't you rather have the millstone around your neck, lose your hand, foot, or eye, than to have them "Be cast into the fiery hell."

That's Jesus' point here - a change of perspective... You may be the one vexed and scandalized and tempted to sin, but your precious sibling in Christ is in deep danger... Help them! If you don't have enough love in your heart for that... Lord help you... At least have enough love for Jesus that you'll help your sibling in Christ for His sake.



What's the first, easiest way to do that? Come on think about it... What is the simplest way to ensure that your precious sibling is not in danger of the fiery hell? How can you prevent them from causing you to sin?

How about not allowing the trivial differences in them be a cause of your stumbling... How about that? How about being less arrogantly superior and more humbly grateful? I love people who detest the arrogant... What ironic arrogance. Turn the baloney detector around and point it at yourself!

How about having the maturity to overlook the broken garden gate and focus on the beautiful flowers

beyond? There is not a Christian on the planet that isn't messed up in some way... A broken garden gate. And yet, there isn't a Christian on the planet who isn't filled with beautiful flowers planted by God. Look beyond what is wrong to what is right. Focus on the good.



Negative is more powerful than positive. Yoda was wrong, the dark side is stronger. You fly from Seattle to New York and back again. The distance is 2,400 miles each way. Your plane flies at 600 miles per hour, no wind, this is two, 4 hour-long flights. Let's add the exact same wind for both legs - 150 miles and hour from the West. Groundspeed to New York is 750 miles per hour. Groundspeed back, is 450 miles per hour. It will take 5

hours and 20 minutes to get to Seattle, but we should make up for it with our tremendous speed of 750 miles per hour going the other way. Seattle to New York in only 3 hours and 12 minutes. Add the two times and it must equal 8 hours, right? No, the negative effect of the headwind hurts you more than the positive effect of the tailwind. Your total flight time is 8 hours and 32 minutes. You lost more than a half hour of your lifespan because negative is easier, more seductive, and actually more powerful.



It is always harder to build than to tear down. I've mentioned it before. In a fighter squadron you have regular guys and you have instructors and you have

evaluators. That's the progression. You can't be an instructor until you have a lot of experience being a regular guy and you can't be an evaluator until you have a lot of experience being an instructor.

Even so, very few become instructors and far fewer of those are good instructors. Why? It's difficult enough to fly a jet, but to teach someone else is to build something. It is difficult and most lack the character, work ethic and patience for it. Instructors build a positive outcome. Evaluators merely judge.



They sit back and apply tremendous pressure to see if they can get a pilot to make a mistake and then they pounce. They build nothing, they look for any

weakness and once found they destroy, like finding a tiny imperfection in the edge of wallpaper, they begin to pick until there's a tear and then they pull and before you know it we need to replace the wallpaper. It is an entirely negative endeavor and although the job is given to the most senior people, it is the easiest job in the squadron - anyone, and I mean anyone, can tear someone else down. Lieutenant, first day on the job, dippy doodle can apply pressure and criticize the dumb show to follow.

Anyone can critique, anyone can render a negative opinion. it takes no skill, no character, no talent, but to build, ah that requires your best.

It's the same in this body. Any dipstick can ridicule and find fault... What takes a Holy Spirit filled Christian is to see where help is needed and without condemnation step up and sincerely help.

Let's just review a bit to get things really solid here... As this is so incredibly important to Jesus, perhaps it should be important to us...



Why are you annoyed with your fellow Christian? You see their action as detrimental to you and, or offensive to your sensibilities. You believe that they have wronged you, or have transgressed your sense of right and wrong. They are stealing cookies from the cookie jar after mom said no more cookies and you are scandalized by that. You take it personally and you want to tell mom, so that she will stop the villainous activity and punish the vile offender and then shower a bountiful cookie reward on you for your stellar character. Sounds rather childish doesn't it?

Well, Scott, Jesus just told us we need to be like children! Yes, in our approach to Him, but in our actions

as His, we are to be mature. As Paul said in, I Corinthians 14:20NIV, 20Brothers and sisters, stop thinking like children. In regard to evil be infants, but in your thinking be adults.



Most of the time, we choose whether to take offense, or not, and beyond that, we choose to what degree the offense will scandalize us. One day I’m not bothered by someone passing me when I’m doing the speed limit, but on another day, it irritates me, and I hope they get a ticket... Or worse.

Someone is snotty to you - maybe they snub you - you walk into the church, say a big hello with enthusiasm

and gusto, but they turn away as though you weren't even there. You feel disrespected... You feel unaccepted... You are embarrassed and your feelings are hurt.

You then play the scene over and over in your mind to work out what happened and why. Each time you do you emotionally relive the incident and get just a little more invested, a little more upset, a little more certain that it was a significant and intentional abuse of your good, kind, and noble Christian character.

You tell others about the blatant attack and as you do the incident gets blown completely out of all reasonable proportion and you now have others who agree with you that the evil wrongdoer is, in fact, despicable and may, in fact, not be a Christian at all.

We could talk about the foolishness of taking offense in the first place, we could talk about stewing on it, we could talk about gossiping about it afterward, we could talk about the character assassination of the offender that is lightyears worse, than their initial scandalizing behavior. What I'm saying is we could talk about your role and your sin in the matter, but the most important point for our passage - the point Jesus is most

concerned about here, is the disunity - the division in His church... And for what? Because someone was too distracted to reciprocate your greeting?

I flew a trip and about halfway to our destination our lead flight attendant came to the cockpit to report a bad situation. A lady in the back intoxicated and causing quite a scene. We worked the problem and found out that she was travelling alone to go and identify and collect the bodies of her husband and her son. They were both killed in a car accident. Her doctor had given her some medication for the trip and when it wasn't having enough of an effect the lady ordered and drank a single adult beverage. Coupled with the medication, it caused a significant reaction. The flight attendants moved her to the front of the plane and were able to get her under control, so we continued to our destination. Once we got to the gate, the lead flight attendant had the lady remain in her seat by the main cabin door so she could personally hand her off to one of our agents who would then escort her to her ground transportation. As was my normal routine, I stood at the cockpit door and thanked the passengers as they deplaned. Every one of them shot the lady in the front row a look of disdain, disapproval, disgust - they all "Despised" her. She had scandalized them, but none of

them cared about her even enough to consider for a moment the why of her behavior. That's an unacceptable level of selfishness in the Kingdom of Heaven.

Even if someone is a jerk to you and there's no good excuse for it, you have to ask yourself... Is this a real problem, or not? Should it emotionally impact you and wreck your day? Well, it's very difficult to control your initial reactions to things - we all get that. But upon reflection... You are a child of God fully accepted by Him no matter how anyone else treats you - you are His for all eternity... Just how important is a temporary snubbing on earth, by a person who is as imperfect as you are?

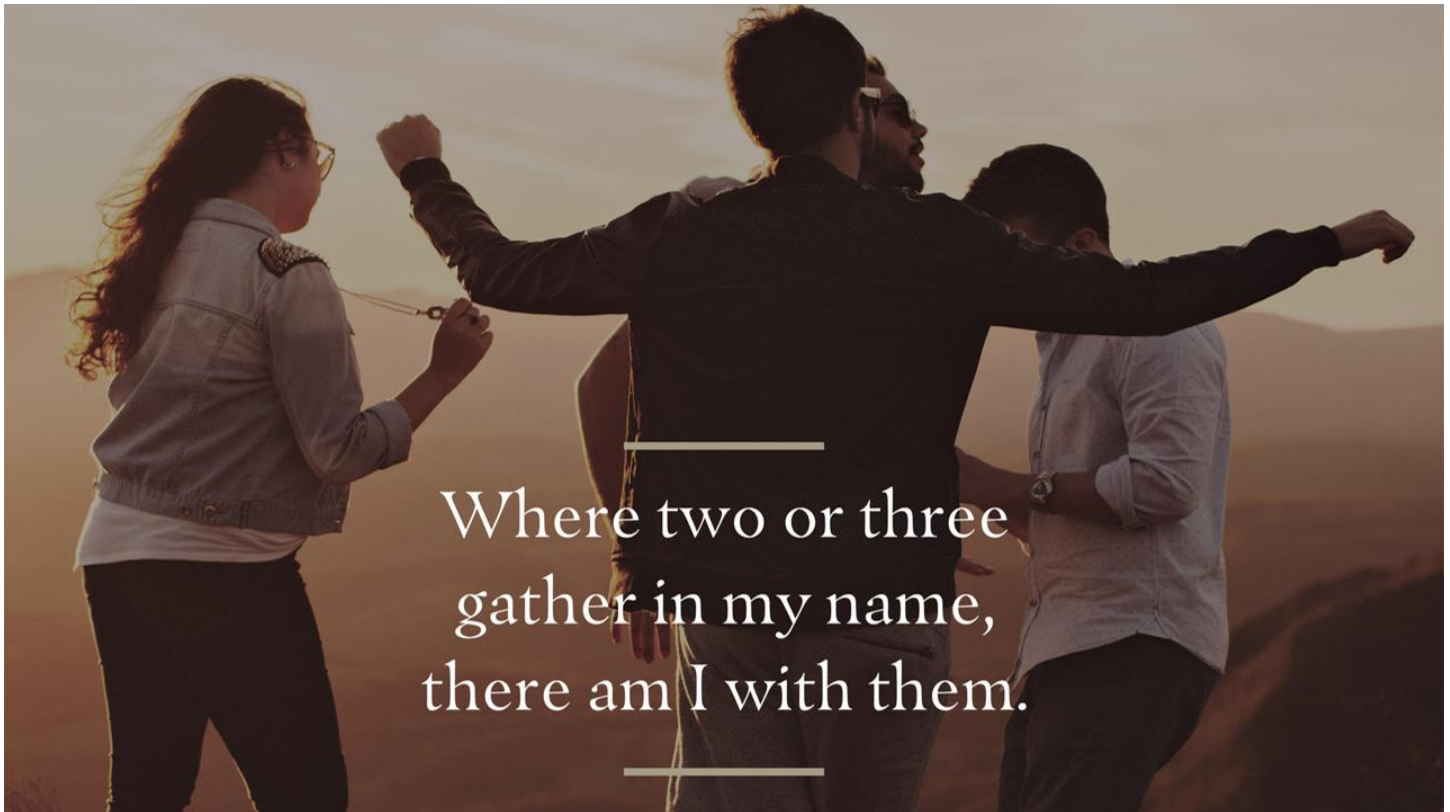
We need real unity, not artificial unity. You may remember the genocide in the former Yugoslavia. For decades, the mostly Muslim Bosniaks and the mostly Christian Bosnian Serbs coexisted in complete harmony... That is, while they were under the iron fist of Soviet rule. The moment the Communist Empire began to crumble, war erupted, and genocide ensued.

We have no use for a false peace in the Body of Christ. It must be real. The only way we can achieve true

harmony is by taking ourselves far less seriously than we take the unity of the church. That means we take our physical comfort, psychological happiness, emotional well-being, personal prejudices, and private agendas, as less important than obeying Jesus' clear command and plain teaching on getting along in His Body.

It's His Body - He can demand it be whatever He wants it to be and He has demanded that it be a place of love and acceptance, of forgiveness and fellowship. We cannot reasonably call ourselves His disciples if we refuse to be His disciples.

So, let's relax and have a cream soda... Is this going to matter in a hundred years? Is this a hill to die on? Now, sometimes it is something that must be addressed and when that's the case we saw the procedure for working the issue. Just remember, at each of the three steps the goal is restoration, never revenge and retribution.



Where two or three
gather in my name,
there am I with them.

We get to the third stage and Jesus said, 18“Truly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven. 19“Again I say to you, that if two of you agree on earth about anything that they may ask, it shall be done for them by My Father who is in heaven. 20“For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst.”

What do these three often misunderstood and misapplied verses actually mean? As we saw in Matthew 16:19, where Jesus gave Peter the “Keys to

the Kingdom of Heaven” with the two supporting clauses about “Binding and Loosing.”

We saw that the “Keys” are less about power, authority and status than about role. “Keys” both lock and unlock and so they both open and close - they “Bind” and they “Loose.” In this case, the “Kingdom of Heaven” on earth.

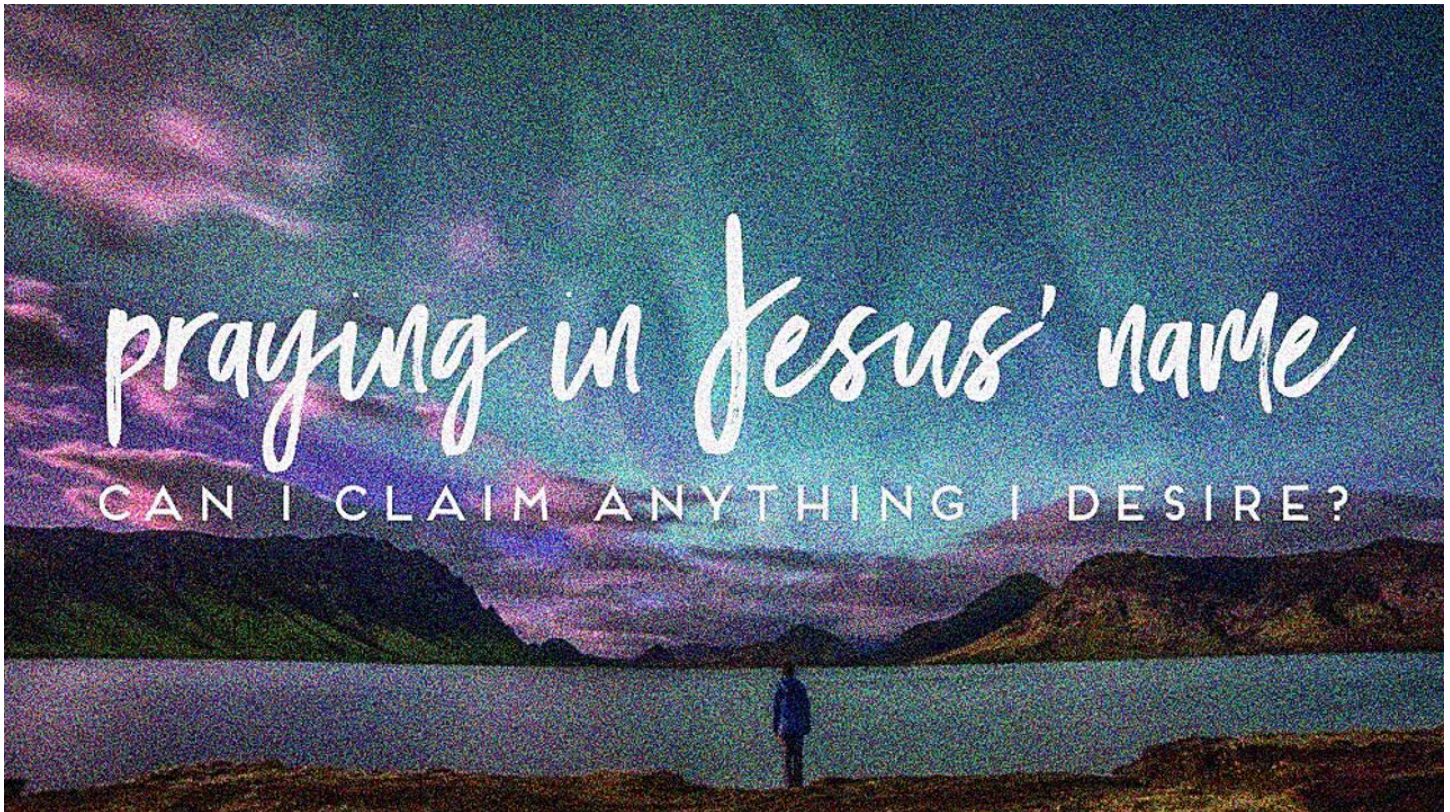
Remember, that’s not a realm, but a reign – not a place, per se, but an existence where everything and everyone is in complete harmony and unity with God.

Specifically, “Binding and Loosing,” in the Bible, means that a person, or a council, has the authority to make decrees about what is acceptable and what is unacceptable. It always has to do with the parameters of what is permitted and what is forbidden. Due to context, it is setting the boundaries of what constitutes acceptable faith and practice within the church – within Christianity – within the Kingdom on earth. For us today, it is what’s codified in the Bible.

Church leadership - the third level of intervention in the matter - Biblically has the authority to interpret the Bible for the church.

That's done through great study of the Word, along with Godly counsel, but most importantly with a surrender to Christ... The proper Christian leader isn't interested in anyone's human opinion, even his own, He's interested in Jesus' opinion on the matter and so fervent prayer is required... Jesus promised here, to be available to church leaders for that purpose.

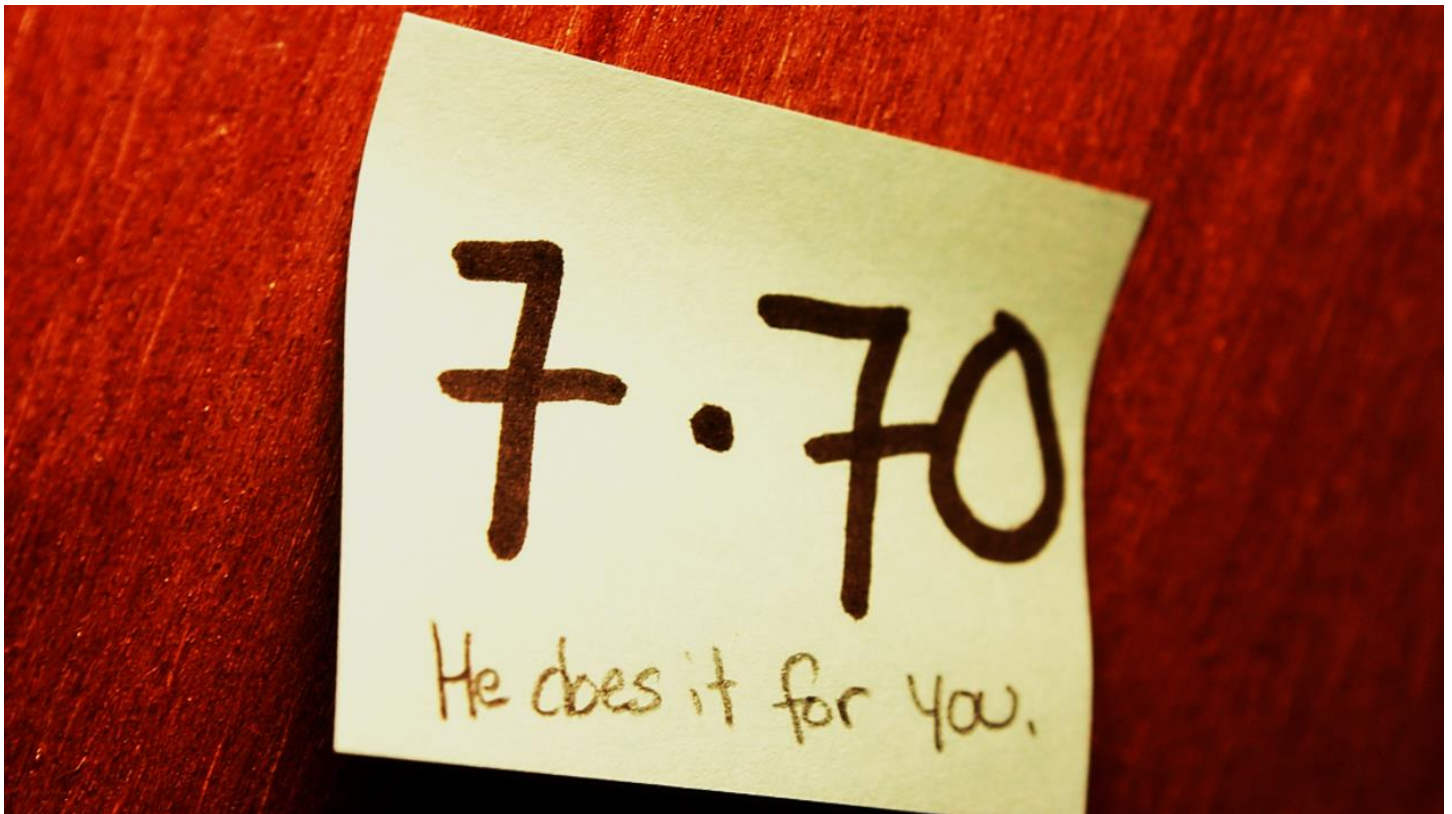
That's the true meaning of verse 20. Where two or more church leaders are gathered in submission to Christ to determine a way forward in a church unity matter - Jesus will be with them.



The addition here is really verse 19 and it's the verse that leads people to the erroneous idea that God will be their genie and grant whatever outrageous, self-serving request they might have as long as they follow the formula... Get at least one other person to agree and close your prayer with the phrase, "In Jesus' name, Amen."

God ordained and appointed leaders working to serve Christ's Body as He Himself would... You see what I mean? Men who are under-shepherds in the employ of the Shepherd, who are trying to lead His sheep on His behalf can ask anything of God for the Good of the sheep that the True Shepherd Himself would ask.

Now, my dear friends, because we have done all this preparation over the last few weeks, we can read the parable of Jesus that comes next and actually understand it just the way He intended... Get the flow and overall feel of it and then move on... It's a parable, a story, an analogy, an example to make a single point - there's just one point my friends, one point.



Verse 21&22 set the stage. Matthew 18:21&22NASB, 21Then Peter came and said to Him, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" 22Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven."

Verse 21 confirms that it is a brother sinning against you and the question is... “Jesus, I understand you want me to forgive such an insult or personal attack, but surely there must be a limit!” Jesus said, “No, there is no limit,” and why is there no limit?

Matthew 18:23-35NASB, 23“For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. 24“When he had begun to settle them, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him. 25“But since he did not have the means to repay, his lord commanded him to be sold, along with his wife and children and all that he had, and repayment to be made. 26“So the slave fell to the ground and prostrated himself before him, saying, ‘Have patience with me and I will repay you everything.’ 27“And the lord of that slave felt compassion and released him and forgave him the debt. 28“But that slave went out and found one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and he seized him and began to choke him, saying, ‘Pay back what you owe.’ 29“So his fellow slave fell to the ground and began to plead with him, saying, ‘Have patience with me and I will repay you.’ 30“But he was unwilling and went and threw him in prison until he should pay

back what was owed. 31“So when his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were deeply grieved and came and reported to their lord all that had happened. 32“Then summoning him, his lord said to him, ‘You wicked slave, I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. 33‘Should you not also have had mercy on your fellow slave, in the same way that I had mercy on you?’ 34“And his lord, moved with anger, handed him over to the torturers until he should repay all that was owed him. 35“My heavenly Father will also do the same to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart.”

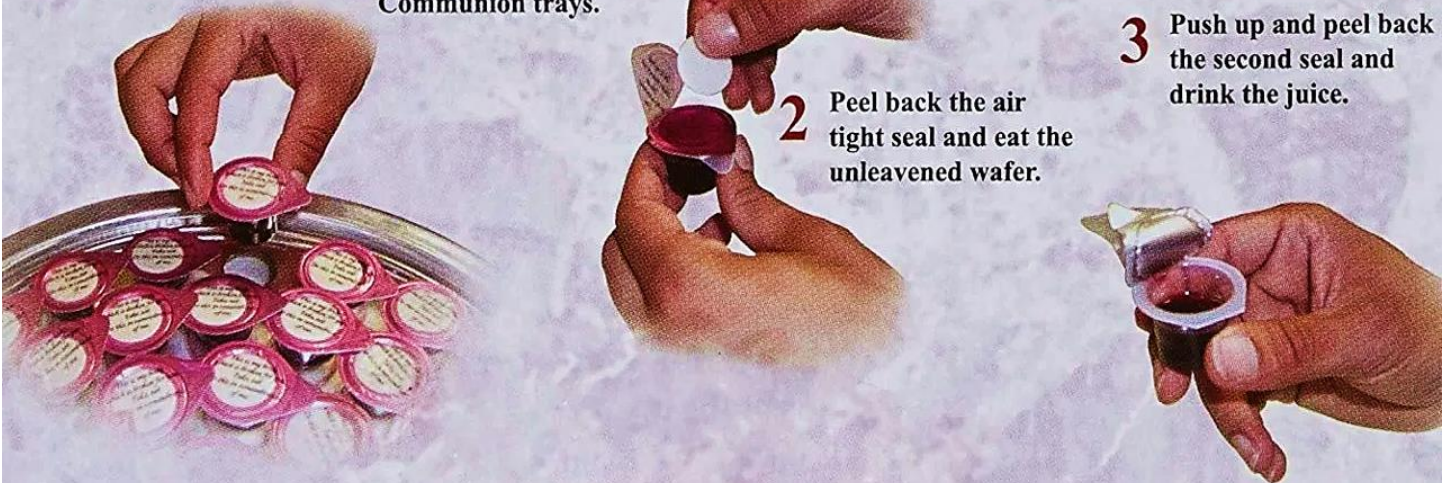
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Communion:

