

A Restoration Rubric

Jesus gives guidelines for discipline and restoration among his followers. The community/church has the authority and the responsibility of maintaining accountability among its members. In a post-modern world, this isn't always well received, but among followers of Jesus Christ, we find it's the only way to build the kind of community He would have us be.

Matthew 18:15-20

'If another member of the church sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If the member listens to you, you have regained that one. ¹⁶But if you are not listened to, take one or two others along with you, so that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses. ¹⁷If the member refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if the offender refuses to listen even to the church, let such a one be to you as a Gentile and a tax-collector. ¹⁸Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. ¹⁹Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. ²⁰For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.'

For Personal Study

We can't do this on our own.

From the very beginning humankind gave in to temptation and sinned. First Adam and Eve's sin, then Cain murders his brother and lies about it to God. Still God kept working to "fix" the human race. Read Judges 3, you'll see that over and over again the Israelites did evil (sinned) in the eyes of the Lord. Yet God 'fixed' their evil ways, helped them and hoped that they'd learn. They didn't. We can't do this on our own.

Jesus Christ was given to all humankind to 'fix' our sinfulness. We enter into that relationship through our Baptism. We view baptism as a rebirth into a Christ-centered life. Still temptation and sin surround us and we have to daily give ourselves over to our new birth in Jesus Christ. In our world that is measured by how much we can accumulate, in how many activities we can involve ourselves and our families (more being better!), and tempered only by a very loose set of guidelines that we may use to appear "non-judgmental", one fact is very clear: We can't do this on our own.

Sin is too easy, too commonplace. We commit sins against each other

counting on easy forgiveness from one another. Jesus Christ, in today's text does not see it that way. Here he teaches us what is expected of us, both as individual members of His body and as the community of Christ in His church. We can't do this on our own.

Consider the steps that Jesus teaches in Mathew 18 to deal with conflict. How does having that private confrontation with a fellow believer who has sinned against you frighten you? Challenge you? Help you understand the sin against you and how to address it? As we must confront the individual privately it is clear that Jesus is telling us: We can't do this on our own.

Jesus' guidelines for confronting sinners in our community defines the value of the individual relationship and the community to support and care for relationships. As sinners and saints we will likely be on both sides of this lesson in our lifetime. Jesus' promise that even in those private one-on-one talks, when done in His name, He is there with us. We can't do this on our own. The Good News is: we don't have to! Jesus is with us.

Readings & Questions

Monday, September 11

Genesis 4: 1-9. Can you think of times when a perceived offense harmed relationships in your life? How would Jesus' instructions on conflict change the outcome?

Tuesday, September 12

1 Corinthians 6: 1-8. Paul instructs us to first address conflict in private. If there is no response, we are to take another believer back to the person to try again. How does keeping any conflict among believers help Jesus teach you the way to live?

Wednesday, September 13

Jude: 1:22-23. How do Jude's words in this verse guide you as a member of St John to deal with sin?

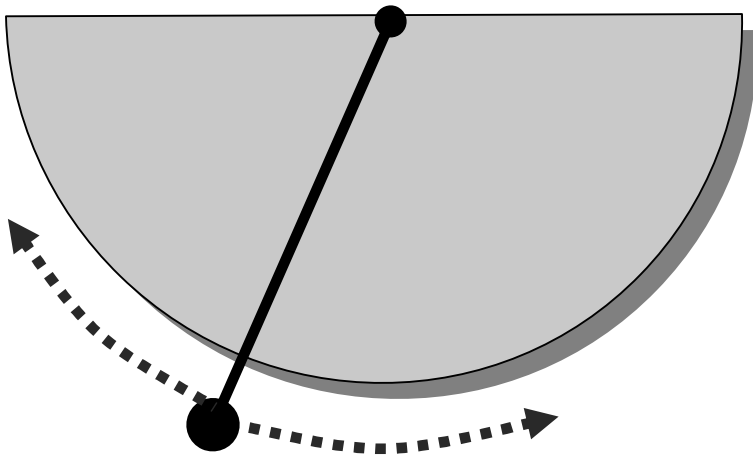
Thursday, September 14

Hebrews 12:4-6. As sinners, we all face the consequences of our sins, both here and in Heaven. How do the words in Hebrews give you encouragement as you face your sins' consequences?

Friday, September 15

Colossians 3: 12-14. How do the words in today's reading define what your thoughts and actions should be regarding judging others? How do they connect you with your own sinfulness and call you to let the Holy Spirit create a clean heart in you?

Do you hunger for a more balanced life?



Help
is on
the way!

“The Balanced Life”

6-Week Congregation-wide Small Group Series
Begins on September 24th

How to find a small group:

- Connect with other parents in your child’s Sunday School class or confirmation group.
- Invite a few friends for coffee and suggest meeting as a group for the 6-week series.
- Get together with neighbors or co-workers. (They don’t have to be part of St. John to benefit from the small group!) Share the link for the sermon podcasts and reflection handout for small group questions.
- Get the kids together for a play group and talk about the small group questions together.
- Have a family group! Set aside time as a family to discuss some of the age appropriate questions or carve out a date night to delve deeper in the Word with your spouse.
- Ask someone you see at worship if they are in a small group that you can join.
- Contact the office or email smallgroups@stjohnmd.org for help to be placed in a group.