

**“Where there are 2 or 3 in my name, I am there among them.”**

*(Matt. 18.15-20)*

### **1. Deconstruction.**

- A. Prayer meeting.
- B. Prosperity Gospel.
- C. Worship Service Numbers.

### **2. Location, Location, Location.**

- a. Church discipline: A church without discipline is not gracious — it's graceless.
- b. Illustration: Church is not an ocean, but a lake with clear shores.

### **3. Blueprint.**

- a. 2 Possible Scenarios: Sins against the Church or Individual.
- b. The good Father: Visible Discipline & Visible Reconciliation.
- c. The threefold guideline.

### **4. Foundation.**

- a. Whatever you “ask:” On our knees, we exercise authority.
- b. “I am there:” Supervision & Empowerment.

### **Conclusion: The builders.**

Why we don't get this right?!

- a. Gossip.
- b. Afraid of confrontation.
- c. People pleasers.
- d. Missing the goal: Reconciliation! “Not a finger to point, but a hand to stand.”

## e. Illustration: Esau and Jacob.

### 1. Deconstruction:

We need to start this sermon by deconstructing things. We all have misunderstood this verse in a certain way:

**Scenario 1: Prayer gathering** — It's time to pray in church, and someone prays, "Lord Jesus, you said that where there are two or three gathered in your name, you would be there."

**Scenario 2: Prosperity gospel** — "Do you want a new car? Let's pray in agreement because Jesus said, 'Where there are two or three gathered in my name, I will be there.' What you bind on earth will be bound in heaven," they say.

**Scenario 3: Sunday worship gathering** — "Let's evangelize! Let's see this building packed!" But someone quickly dismisses the subject by saying, "That's good, but it is not the priority," because Jesus said, "Where there are two or three, I will be there." As long as we have two or three loyal Christians in the building, Jesus is glad.

Is that what this verse means?

### 2. Location, Location, Location:

There are three qualities you need for a property: location, location, and location. In Scripture, that principle holds true as well. The context — a.k.a. location — helps you understand the meaning of the verse. Let's see the verses prior to the one we are examining:

"If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother." (sin, forgiveness, and discipline)

"But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses." (sin, forgiveness, and discipline)

“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.” (sin, forgiveness, and discipline — in this case, excommunication)

Jesus lays out a case scenario. Now he provides the basis:

“Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.”

Now, back to our introduction: when Jesus says, “Where there are two or three gathered in my name, I will be there” —

Does that verse mean you need at least two or three people in order to have quorum for a prayer meeting? Does that verse affirm that you will get a new house if you pray in unity with someone? Does that verse say anything about a minimalist approach to the worship service?

Clearly not. The context has to do with church discipline. Jesus had just talked about the little ones — new believers — in our last sermon, and how we should protect and nurture their faith. Now Jesus is talking about the flip side of church admittance/membership: church discipline. What we must do when someone makes us (or the whole congregation) stumble.

A healthy church has members coming in (little ones) and members being sanctified (discipline, exhortation). Sometimes we treat the church like a huge ocean: people are admitted to the church (membership), but we leave them without discipline, pastoring, and mentorship. Whereas the local church should look more like a lake, where the boundaries are clearly seen, and we all keep each other accountable within the boundaries.

### **3. The Blueprint:**

**Sins against the community:** No family is perfect, including the spiritual one.

Suppose a member of the church, instead of living a godly life, starts living wildly — yet he calls himself a “Christian.” By doing so, he dishonors the name of our Lord and also the whole community. He has now sinned against the whole community.

**Sins against the individual:** No family is perfect, including the spiritual one. Here and there, there are some inevitable arguments. That happens because of sin, obviously. But sin is not the only reason — there are matters of different perspectives as well: different worldviews, opinions, feelings, approaches, histories, and interests. And sometimes these clash.

What would any good father do when his children fight or go astray?

A. **Discipline the children.** God is a good Father! He doesn't leave his children undisciplined.

B. **Reconcile the children.** If you grew up with siblings, you KNOW what I am talking about: Dad ALWAYS makes the fighting brothers apologize and HUG each other!

How does God discipline his children? He does not discipline his church mystically or abstractly. He disciplines his church through leadership and membership:

A. **1 on 1 — Private Reconciliation.** When someone wrongs me, instead of quietly harboring resentment or going to tell a gossip to someone, I should talk to the offender and solve the issue.

B. **1 on 1 + Witnesses — Semi-private Reconciliation.** If 1 on 1 doesn't work, I should bring a witness with me. Pay attention! Jesus doesn't give the criteria for the witness; however, a bit of common sense teaches you that he is talking about someone who is discreet, mature, and a peacemaker. *Trust me, you don't want to have a nosy person as a witness.*

C. **Congregational meeting — Excommunication if needed.** If these two steps didn't work, now it's time to involve the whole congregation, which means the

issue was brought to the leadership team. They will involve the congregation to solve the issue. The hope is restoration! However, if it doesn't happen, there must be excommunication.

#### **4. Foundation: Authority Under Accountability**

**Prayer** — Jesus said, “whatever you ask.” There is prayer implied in every disciplinary decision made by the church. That prevents the leaders from using their authority independently from Christ. The authority Jesus gives the church should not be understood as authoritarianism. Instead, the expression “I (Jesus) am there” means:

A. **Jesus is watching every decision made on behalf of his church.** There is a question that helps us describe this: What would Jesus do if he were the one making the decision?

B. **Jesus is empowering his church.** In other words, we don't need to be afraid to lead and make decisions on behalf of the congregation because Christ is with us.

His presence among us should establish a holy fear in our hearts as we discipline an unrepentant member.

#### **Conclusion — The Builders**

We have deconstructed an old wrong belief because we kept the number one rule when building/buying a house: location (context). We have the blueprint for healthy church discipline. Now the million-dollar question is this: Why don't we follow these easy steps?

We, the builders, need to self-examine our hearts:

**A. Perhaps it's a gossip issue.** If my brother sins against me and I expose his sin to someone else, I am as wrong as him! Gossip hurts my brother's pride; it does not help at all. This approach literally misses the whole point Jesus is teaching us: instead of reconciliation, we end up spreading (increasing) the issue.

**B. Perhaps because we are people-pleasers.** We fear conflict, or we can't articulate our thoughts well, so we just avoid hard conversations altogether.

**C. Perhaps we have the “nice guy syndrome.”** We want everyone to like us; therefore, we don't have hard conversations. That has some roots in pride. It is very self-centered: instead of helping our brother (through discipline), we help/protect our ego.

**D. Perhaps because we miss the goal of this whole thing.** The goal is reconciliation and the honoring of the name of the Lord. We are not Christ's police officers giving tickets to everyone around; we are his ministers of reconciliation. Our hands should not crush our brother but rescue him! What's the gospel? Reconciliation between God and humankind. What's church discipline? Reconciliation between brothers and sisters.

I have a Bible story to encourage us in this matter: Esau and Jacob. You know they had a disagreement that separated them for 20 long years. The Bible then tells us the story of their reconciliation, and it is so beautiful! When Esau forgave Jacob for his wrongdoing, Jacob said, “To see your face and have your favor feels like seeing the face of God.” May the Lord bless us in keeping his word!