

Devotional Guide
Spiritual Spot Remover
July 20-26

Monday

Ephesians 5:26 - 27

God's purpose for the church is spelled out in Ephesians 5:26-27– to sanctify the church and present it to Himself with no stain, spot, or wrinkle. We are to share and act on this purpose. We need to be wary of less worthy motivations– a desire to expose sin (rather than forgive it) or to judge and condemn (in order to exalt ourselves above the other.) If we act from impure motivations when seeking to cleanse the church, we are bound to produce a reaction of defensiveness in the offender.

Think about it: Do I agree with and pursue God's purpose for the church? Where do I need to begin applying God's purpose?

Prayer: For pure motivations in myself and a desire for purity in our church.

Tuesday

Matthew 18:15 - 18; John 13:35

Jesus establishes the protocol for confronting sin in others within the church in Matthew 18:15 - 18. The first principle of that protocol is recognizing that the church is family. "If your *brother*" Jesus says. Being part of God's family implies a commitment to act out of a motivation of love.

Think about it: What are possible consequences if I fail to regard my fellow Christians as "family?" Do I regard my fellow church members as family?

Prayer: Thank God for the privilege of calling Him "Father." Pray for the grace to regard my fellow Christians as brothers and sisters.

Wednesday

Matthew 18:15 - 18; 1 Corinthians 12:18 - 26

The second principle of Jesus' protocol for confronting sin in others in the church is to recognize sin and the personal responsibility to confront it. Any sin by a Christian is a sin against the body of Christ, since what affects one member affects all. But behavior we find offensive is not necessarily sinful. Sometimes the problem may be in the one who takes offense.

Think about it: What would be an example of behavior that would qualify as "irritating but not sinful?" What kinds of problems can result if I see sin in the church but refuse to confront it?

Prayer: For greater patience and tolerance regarding non-sinful differences in others; for the ability to appreciate differences rather than be made uncomfortable by them.

Thursday

Matthew 18:15 - 18; Luke 17:3; Galatians 6:1

If I have identified real sin in the church, it is my responsibility to confront it. The first step is to go to the offender privately and tell him his fault. The goal is not to expose and punish sin, but to bring about repentance and restoration.

Think about it: If I fell into sin, wouldn't I want others to take this approach with me? What should my attitude and demeanor be like as I confront sin in someone else? Have I ever experienced this type of loving rebuke, as either a giver or receiver?

Prayer: For boldness to confront real sin when I see it; for the grace to make that confrontation in humility and love.

Friday

Matthew 18:15 - 18; Luke 15:11 - 32

Jesus said that if we rebuke our brother and he listens to us, we have won our brother. The purpose of confronting sin is to bring repentance and restoration, to unify the church in purity.

Think about it: In the parable of the Prodigal Son, who does the father represent, and what is his attitude towards the repentant son? What is the attitude of the elder brother towards his repentant brother? Are my attitudes more like the father or the elder brother?

Prayer: That my heart may be like my heavenly Father's heart, longing for sinners to repentant, and rejoicing when they "come home."

Saturday

Matthew 18:15 - 18; 16:19

What if I confront sin and am met with denial and rejection? The next step is to take one or two others to join in the confrontation. The circle of awareness offense continues to grow until there is repentance. If two or three witnesses cannot bring about repentance, then it is time to tell it to the whole church. Jesus has granted to the church His authority to deal with sin.

Think about it: Who needs to know about an individual's sin if he is willing to repent? Who needs to know about that sin if he is not willing to repent?

Prayer: That I will always be open to repent when rightfully rebuked, and to forgive when I am asked to forgive.

Sunday

Matthew 18:18; 1 Corinthians 5:5; 2 Corinthians 2:6 - 8; 11; Hosea 2:5 - 7

Discipline for sin by the church is passive. The sinner is to be treated as a tax-gatherer or Gentile. Jews treated Gentiles with respect, but would not eat with them— they were not "family." Even today few people would volunteer to be audited by the IRS. We don't spend any more time with the tax-gatherer than we have to. Paul's prayer regarding the sinner in Corinth is aggressive spiritually, but leaves the sinner's fate in the spiritual realm.

Think about it: What resulted from the discipline applied by Paul? What was the nature of God's discipline on the Jews according to Hosea? What would constitute a "hedge of thorns" in a person's life today?

Prayer: For spiritual sight to recognize any hedge of thorns God puts in my way; for wisdom to find my joy and satisfaction in God.