

Church Discipline Lessons from a leg lamp

Intro:

- Leg lamp photos
 - real
 - Taylor and Patricia's house
 - Dan
 - Elizabeth Harden
 - Craig and the boys
- Back to the movie...
 - The lamp was "a major award."
 - But it was clearly a "major offense!"
 - There was no communication.
 - No consideration for other people
 - The father was completely self involved
 - What is an offense?
 - any violation of your values, beliefs, or expectations.
 - The offense was not handled in a healthy way.
 - Instead of working it out she "accidentally" broke the lamp.
 - Offense was repaid with offense.
 - tensions rise
 - communication is cut off
 - sides are taken
 - small offenses become triggers
 - Love is lost

John 13:31-35

31As soon as Judas left the room, Jesus said, "The time has come for the Son of Man to enter into his glory... 34So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. 35Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples."

- **This should be our goal!**
- **People should see a tangible difference in the body of Christ.**

But love is lost when our values, beliefs, or expectations are violated. Love is lost when we are offended.

In Matthew 18 Jesus teaches us how to deal with offenses...

Matthew 18 in context

- 1 About that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Who is greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven?" 2 Jesus called a little child to him and put the child among them.

Bring child on stage to color

- 3 Then he said, "I tell you the truth, unless you turn from your sins and become like little children, you will never get into the Kingdom of Heaven. 4 So anyone who becomes as humble as this little child is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven. 5 "And anyone who welcomes a little child like this on my behalf is welcoming me. 6 But if you cause one of these little ones who trusts in me to fall into sin, it would be better for you to have a large millstone tied around your neck and be drowned in the depths of the sea.

- Jesus reset the disciples expectations

- A child would not be welcome in a meeting of political leaders
- A child has no rights.
- A child has power or influence
- A child is completely dependent
- A child learns from their environment
- our integrity is crucial

Verse 7:

- Temptations (Offenses) are inevitable!
 - Eye - what we see
 - Hand - what we do
 - Foot - where we go

Back to the kids...

- 10 "Beware that you don't look down on any of these little ones...
 - We lead (disciple) by serving.

Parable of the Lost Sheep

- 100 sheep (family)
- 1 leaves
- 1 is found and restored
- Restoration is cause for great celebration!
- Verse 14 - In the same way, it is not my heavenly Father's will that even one of these little ones should perish.
 - restoration is available to everyone

How do we restore a lost sheep?

15 "If another believer sins against you, go privately and point out the offense. If the other person listens and confesses it, you have won that person back. 16 But if you are unsuccessful, take one or two others with you and go back again, so that everything you say may be confirmed by two or three witnesses. 17 If the person still refuses to listen, take your case to the church. Then if he or she won't accept the church's decision, treat that person as an unbeliever or a corrupt tax collector.

- Institutional policy vs personal responsibility
 - as the backup pastor I will not discuss institutional policy
 - So let's talk about our personal responsibility...

Step one

- Be an adult - act like big boys and girls
 - remember the kids are watching...
 - How is conflict handled in a kindergarten class?
 - Kids are playing with blocks
 - kid bites kid
 - kid is offended.
 - teacher corrects
 - teacher makes the biter apologize
 - teacher makes the biter forgive
 - the biter is restored into the group
 - kids go back to playing with blocks.
 - done
- 26 And "don't sin by letting anger control you." Don't let the sun go down while you are still angry, 27 for anger gives a foothold to the devil. - **Ephesians 4:26**

Step two

- The goal is still restoration
- The strategy is the same as step one - repentance, forgiveness, restoration.
- Step two is usually necessary because there is disagreement about the facts.
 - The witnesses are there to discern truth and hold BOTH parties accountable to the truth.
 - accountable to biblical principles
 - Are you qualified to be a witness?
 - Galatians 6:1
 - 1 Dear brothers and sisters, if another believer is overcome by some sin, **you who are godly** should gently and humbly help that person back onto the right path.

Step three

- The church as an institution gets involved - Institutional policy
- the goal is still restoration
- Treat them as an unbeliever or a tax collector
 - Matthew was a tax collector
 - How did Jesus treat Matthew?

Two promises

One: 18“I tell you the truth, whatever you forbid on earth will be forbidden in heaven, and whatever you permit on earth will be permitted in heaven.

- God will **back you up** if you **engage** the problem.
- God will **back away** if you **ignore** the problem.

Two: 19“I also tell you this: If two of you agree here on earth concerning anything you ask, my Father in heaven will do it for you. **20**For where two or three gather together as my followers, I am there among them.”

- Restoration is a challenging task.
- Jesus promises to be intimately involved in the restoration process if we let Him.

A final parable...

- If we accept forgiveness from God but refuse to forgive others we are saying...
 - The cross was sufficient for me but it was not sufficient for her.
- If you refuse to forgive God will remove his hand of protection from you.

New Year's Resolution

- Galatians 6:1
 - ...**you who are godly** should gently and humbly help that person back onto the right path.
- Let's resolve, as members of the body of Christ, to accept personal responsibility and become faithful representatives of Jesus that can be trusted.
- James 1:22 - Don't just listen to God's word. Do what it says!