

When God Says “GO”

Matthew 18:15

INTRODUCTION

How many of us have ever misunderstood someone? How many of us have ever concluded that somebody disliked us... only to later discover we were completely wrong?

How many of us have ever said, *"If he really cared, he should have come to me first"*?

Or perhaps you have been the one saying, *"If she has a problem with me, let her come."*

How many broken friendships...How many broken families...How many broken marriages...How many broken ministries...How many divided congregations...began, not because someone planned to destroy a relationship, but because two people simply stopped talking to each other the right way?

Think about that.

Many relationships do not die because of hatred. They die because of assumptions.

They die because pride became louder than love.

They die because people began talking **about** one another instead of talking **to** one another.

And sometimes, they die because well-meaning third parties unknowingly make the situation worse.

Many Christians know **how to pray**. Many know **how to worship**. Many know **how to preach**. Many know **how to quote Scripture**.

But very few have deliberately learned **how to communicate like Christ**.

Yet Christianity is not only measured by how we speak to God. It is equally measured by how we speak to one another.

That is why John writes: *"If someone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar..." (1 John 4:20)*. That is a very strong statement.

God is saying that our relationship with Him cannot be separated from our relationship with His children. And that brings us to the words of Jesus.

JESUS DID NOT GIVE ADVICE—HE GAVE GOD'S METHOD

Listen carefully to what Jesus said: ***"Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother."***

Brethren, every word in this verse carries divine wisdom. Jesus did not waste words. Let's walk through it together.

"Moreover..."

Jesus is saying, *"What I am about to tell you is important."* This is not an optional life skill. This is Kingdom living.

"If..."

Notice that Jesus did not say "when" as though conflict should become our expectation. But He acknowledged that because we are human beings, misunderstandings and offences will happen.

Even among sincere Christians. Even among elders. Even among preachers. Even among husbands and wives. Even among biological brothers and sisters. Even among song ministry members. Even among welfare ministry members. Even among teaching ministry members. Even among people who genuinely love God.

The issue is not whether conflict comes. The issue is **how disciples of Christ respond when it comes.**

"...your brother..."

Jesus could have simply said "a person." But He deliberately said **your brother**. Why?

Because before you see an offender...God wants you to see family. Before you see a problem...See a relationship. Before you see an enemy...See someone Christ also died for.

That one word—**brother**—changes the atmosphere.

Because you do not approach family the same way you

approach strangers. You seek restoration. Not destruction.

"...sins against you..."

Jesus does not pretend offences do not exist.

Sometimes people really hurt us. Sometimes words are spoken that should never have been spoken. Sometimes promises are broken. Sometimes trust is violated. Sometimes people genuinely make mistakes.

Jesus is not denying the pain. But He is teaching us what to do with the pain.

"...go..."

Brethren...This may be the hardest word in the whole verse - the conversation that Satan fears most.

Go. Not "wait." Not "avoid." Not "post indirectly." Not "tell your closest friends." Not "gather supporters." Not "pray that God should punish them." Jesus simply says, **Go.**

Can you imagine how many church crises would end if believers simply obeyed that one word?

How many marriages would still be healthy? How many friendships would still exist? How many ministries would still be united? How many families would still be together?

One word. **Go.**

"...tell him his fault..."

Notice that Jesus did not say, "Condemn him." He did not say, "Embarrass him." He did not say, "Humiliate him."

He said, **"Tell him."**

Communication. Honest.
Respectful. God-controlled
communication. Not emotional
outbursts. Not accusations. Not
character assassination.

Simply explaining what
happened from your
understanding.

Many quarrels continue
because neither person has
actually explained what hurt
them.

Both are defending
themselves against words that
were never spoken.

**"...between you and him
alone."**

Brethren...This may be one of
the most ignored instructions in
modern Christianity. Jesus did
not say, "Call five people first." He
did not say, "Seek public
opinion." He did not say, "Create
camps."

He said, **Between you and
him alone. Do you know why?**

Because every unnecessary
listener has the potential to
become another injured party.

Every additional opinion can
complicate what might have been
a simple misunderstanding.

Sometimes the greatest act of
spiritual maturity is refusing to
involve others until you have
sincerely tried to understand
your brother.

"...if he hears you..."

Notice that Jesus assumes
something beautiful.

That people can listen. That
people can change. That people
can repent. That people can
understand.

Brethren, never approach a
conversation believing it is
already hopeless. Approach
believing that God can work in
both hearts.

**"...you have gained your
brother."**

Now this is the heartbeat of
the verse.

Notice what Jesus did **not** say.

He did not say, *"You have won
the argument."* He did not say,
"You have proved you were right."
He did not say, *"You have exposed
him."*

He said, **"You have gained
your brother."**

That means the goal of every
difficult conversation is not to
produce a loser. The goal is to
restore a relationship.

Because in God's
Kingdom...**relationships are
more valuable than
arguments.**

Brethren...Imagine if every
difficult conversation in our
homes, our ministries, our
families, and our congregation
began with one prayer:

*"Lord, I am not going to win
today. I am going to gain my
brother."*

Wouldn't our conversations
sound different? Wouldn't our
tone change? Wouldn't our
attitude change? Wouldn't our
homes become different?

Wouldn't our church become stronger?

Because when God says, "**Go**," He is not merely sending you to have a conversation.

He is inviting you to become the kind of disciple through whom He restores relationships.

And that brings us to a very important question. If Jesus' instruction is so simple... **Why do so many Christians struggle to obey it?**

WHY IS THIS SO DIFFICULT?

Why many sincere Christians struggle with God's method of restoring relationships

Brethren...Did you notice something? Jesus gave only one instruction.

"Go."

Only one word.

Yet for many Christians, it is one of the hardest words in the Bible to obey.

It is interesting that we find it easier to pray for someone than to sit down with that person.

We find it easier to tell God what someone did than to include "lovingly tell the person".

We find it easier to tell five other people than to tell the one person involved. **Why?**

If we claim that Jesus is our Lord...Why do we struggle so much with one simple instruction?

The answer is because this is not merely a communication problem.

It is a **heart problem**.

The conversation begins in the mouth...but it is won or lost in the heart.

Jesus said, *"...out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks."*
(Matthew 12:34)

So before God changes our words...He first wants to change our hearts.

Let us look honestly at some of the enemies of godly communication.

ENEMY NUMBER ONE: PRIDE

How many times have we said, "If he has offended me...let him come first."

Isn't that how many of us think?

"I didn't do anything wrong." "I won't call." "I won't greet first." "I won't apologize." "If she values this relationship, let her come."

Brethren...Do you know what pride sounds like?

It always says, **"Why should I?"** But love asks, **"What would Jesus do?"**

Pride waits to be pursued. Love chooses to pursue.

That is exactly what Christ did. **Romans 5** tells us, *"While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."*

Who offended whom? We offended God.

Yet who came? God came.

Who took the first step? God did.

If Jesus had waited for us... none of us would be here today.

Perhaps the greatest evidence that Christ lives in us...is not that we speak in public...but that we are willing to make the first move in private.

ENEMY NUMBER TWO: ASSUMPTIONS

Brethren...Assumptions have destroyed more relationships than facts.

Many times, we are not reacting to what actually happened.

We are reacting to **what we think happened.**

Suppose one brother walks past you after service without greeting you.

Immediately, your mind begins speaking.

"He ignored me." "He is proud." "He thinks he is important." "He has changed."

Really? Did he tell you that? No. Your mind told you that.

Now imagine another possibility.

Perhaps he had just received a phone call that his mother had been rushed to the hospital. Perhaps he was praying silently. Perhaps he simply did not see you.

How many nights have people lost sleep because of a story they created in their own minds?

The Bible says, "***Love believes all things...***"
(1 Corinthians 13:7)

That does not mean love is foolish. It means love gives room before reaching conclusions.

Love says, "*I don't yet know everything.*" That is maturity.

ENEMY NUMBER THREE: THE FEAR OF AN HONEST CONVERSATION

Many Christians are afraid of difficult conversations.

Not because they hate people. Because they fear the outcome.

"What if he shouts?" "What if she rejects me?" "What if things become worse?"

So instead...they avoid each other. Months become years. Years become decades.

Then one day...people discover two brethren have not spoken for ten years.

Ten years.

Not because the original offence was too serious. But because neither person had the courage to obey one word.

Go.

Brethren...Avoiding conflict rarely solves conflict. It usually allows it to grow.

ENEMY NUMBER FOUR: EMOTIONAL REACTIONS

Not every conversation should happen immediately.

Sometimes the right conversation...at the wrong emotional moment...becomes the wrong conversation.

There are people who obey **Matthew 18**...but disobey **Proverbs**.

They go...while angry. They go...already prepared to fight. They go...not to understand...but to win. That is not what Jesus meant.

Notice something. Jesus said, **Go**.

He did not say, Go immediately while your blood pressure is rising.

Sometimes wisdom says, Go home. Pray. Sleep. Calm down.

Ask God to examine your heart. **Then go**.

Brethren...Never enter a conversation that your emotions are controlling.

Enter only the conversation that the Holy Spirit is controlling.

James says, *"Everyone should be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to become angry."* **(James 1:19)**

That order is important.

Quick to hear.

Slow to speak.

Slow to anger.

Many of us reverse it.

Quick to speak.

Quick to anger.

Slow to hear.

And then we wonder why relationships become difficult.

ENEMY NUMBER FIVE: PRAYING AFTER THE DAMAGE HAS BEEN DONE

How many of us have sincerely prayed before confronting someone? Not after. Before.

Many believers spend two hours preparing what they will say...and two minutes praying.

Sometimes we rehearse speeches more than we seek God's wisdom.

Imagine beginning a difficult conversation with this prayer:

"Father...Search my heart first. If I am wrong...show me. If I misunderstood...correct me. If I contributed to this misunderstanding...help me admit it. If my brother is hurting... help me see beyond his words. Lord...don't let me win an argument and lose a relationship."

Brethren...Do you think God would answer that prayer? Of course He would.

James says, *"If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God..."* **(James 1:5)**

Every difficult conversation needs wisdom.

ENEMY NUMBER SIX: WE TALK ABOUT PEOPLE MORE THAN WE TALK TO PEOPLE

This may be one of Satan's greatest victories in the church.

One sister hurts another. Instead of going to her...she tells her closest friend. That friend tells her husband. The husband

tells another brother. Another brother shares it "as a prayer request."

By Sunday...people are praying about a problem the two sisters have never discussed.

Brethren...Notice Satan's strategy.

The offence was between two people. Now twenty people are emotionally involved.

The original problem has become almost impossible to solve.

Jesus knew this. That is why He said, **"Between you and him alone."**

Not because others can never help. But because private conversations preserve dignity.

A REAL-LIFE LESSON

Years ago, two elders in a congregation had a misunderstanding over a decision concerning church administration.

The congregation began noticing they were no longer speaking freely.

Some members quietly chose sides.

One group believed Elder A. Another group defended Elder B.

People started interpreting every announcement through suspicion.

Attendance at meetings reduced. The atmosphere changed.

Then, one wise older Christian suggested something very simple.

"Before anyone says another word...let the two elders sit down alone."

No audience. No debate. No supporters. No interruptions. Only prayer. Scripture. Listening.

After nearly two hours...both men discovered something remarkable. Neither of them intended to offend the other.

One had misunderstood the motive behind a decision. The other had misunderstood the silence that followed.

Both apologised. They prayed together. The following Sunday they stood before the congregation side by side.

One said, *"My brother never became my enemy. We simply stopped understanding each other."*

Brethren...The church breathed again. Unity returned. **Why?**

Not because somebody won. Because two godly men chose understanding over assumption.

That is what Jesus meant by, **"You have gained your brother."**

A REFLECTIVE PAUSE

Is there someone whose story you have never heard?

Someone you judged too quickly? Someone whose silence you interpreted? Someone whose

actions you explained without asking?

Someone you have avoided because of what somebody else told you?

Perhaps today's sermon is not about them. Perhaps it is about us. Perhaps God is saying, "My child...before I restore that relationship...I first want to restore your heart."

Because when God changes our hearts...He changes our conversations.

And when He changes our conversations...He changes our relationships.

And when relationships are healed...the Church becomes a clearer reflection of Jesus Christ.

But there is another danger that may be even more destructive than pride and assumptions.

Sometimes...people who are not directly involved in the disagreement unknowingly become the greatest obstacle to reconciliation.

How should a mature Christian respond when invited to take sides in someone else's conflict?

HOW TO HAVE A GOD-CONTROLLED CONVERSATION

Don't overload them.

Give only one memorable framework. I would call it P.E.A.C.E. Easy to remember.

P Pray first. Never begin with emotion. Begin with God.

E Ears before mouth. James says, Be quick to hear. Slow to speak. Ask, "Help me understand." Not, "Explain yourself."

A Avoid assumptions. Never judge motives. Clarify. Ask. Listen.

C Choose restoration. Don't ask, "How do I prove my point?" Ask, "How do I preserve this relationship?"

E End with grace. If possible...pray together. Forgive. Shake hands. Move forward.

ONE STRONG ILLUSTRATION

A husband comes home unusually quiet. His wife concludes, "He no longer loves me."

She becomes cold. He becomes quieter. The children notice. Three days later they finally talk.

The husband says, "I lost my job today. I didn't know how to tell you." She begins crying.

Brethren...There was never a marriage problem. There was only a communication problem.

One conversation restored what silence almost destroyed.

How many Christian friendships are exactly like that?

CONCLUSION

Perhaps this week...God is not asking you to preach.

Perhaps the greatest sermon you will preach this week will not be from a pulpit. It may not be heard by hundreds. It may never be recorded.

It may simply be spoken across a dining table...Perhaps He is asking you to make one visit. One phone call. One apology. One conversation. One act of humility. One step toward peace.

Because perhaps the greatest miracle God wants to perform this week...is not the healing of a body. It is the healing of a relationship.

Remember...The Cross was God's greatest conversation with humanity.

We sinned. God came. We ran. God pursued. We deserved judgment. God offered reconciliation.

If God came looking for us...how can we refuse to go to our brother?

So before next Lord's Day, I want every one of us to ask God one simple question: *"Lord, who do You want me to go to?"*

And when He brings a name to your heart...don't ignore Him.

Pray. Go. Listen. Speak with love. Seek understanding. Seek restoration.

And don't go to win an argument. Go to gain your brother.

May God help every one of us to become believers whose conversations build bridges instead of walls, whose words heal instead of wound, and whose relationships make the world see Jesus Christ. Amen.

SUNDAY MORNING SERMON

"Silence is Killing Us" By Charles Itseghosimhe ©

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