

The Sermon on the Mount: Settling Out of Court

Matthew 5:23-26

📖 Matthew 5:23–26 (NIV) “Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, ²⁴ leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift. ²⁵ “Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still with him on the way, or he may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison. ²⁶ I tell you the truth, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny.”

Take the initiative in reconciliation.

📖 Matthew 5:23–24 (NIV) “Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, ²⁴ leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift.”

1. Listen.
2. Go.
3. Reconcile.
4. Return.

📖 1 Corinthians 11:28–29 (NIV) “A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. ²⁹ For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself.”

📖 1 Samuel 15:22 (NLT) “But Samuel replied, “What is more pleasing to the LORD: your burnt offerings and sacrifices or your obedience to His voice? Listen! Obedience is better than `sacrifice, and submission is better than offering the fat of rams.”

Move quickly to deescalate a situation.

📖 Matthew 5:25–26 (NIV) “Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still with him on the way, or he may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison. ²⁶ I tell you the truth, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny.”

📖 Matthew 5:7 (NIV) “Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.”

📖 Matthew 18:23–27 (NIV) “Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. ²⁴ As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him. ²⁵ Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt. ²⁶ “The servant fell on his knees before him. ‘Be patient with me,’ he begged, ‘and I will pay back everything.’ ²⁷ The servant’s master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go.”

📖 Matthew 18:28–30 (NIV) “But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii. He grabbed him and began to choke him. ‘Pay back what you owe me!’ he demanded. ²⁹ “His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, ‘Be patient with me, and I will pay you back.’ ³⁰ “But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt.”

📖 Matthew 18:31–35 (NIV) “When the other servants saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed and went and told their master everything that had happened. ³² “Then the master called the servant in. ‘You wicked servant,’ he said, ‘I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. ³³ Shouldn’t you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?’ ³⁴ In anger his master turned him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed. ³⁵ “This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart.”

📖 Romans 12:18 (NIV) “If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.”

Digging Deeper— In both of Jesus’ illustrations, we are the one in the wrong. In your life, do you think that it’s you, or those around you, that is most often wrong? What does that belief say about you? Why is it so hard to go to people that we’ve hurt and apologize? Why do we find it so difficult to overlook an offense? Why do we refuse to make things right with people that have hurt us? If we have been forgiven for so much, why is it so hard to forgive others? Can you name a few prisons that don’t require bars and/or walls to keep people in? Of those prisons, have you been confined in any of them? Why does Jesus care so much about relationships?