

Where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them?

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The HUGE problem with that verse out of context...

When you have a small bible study group and only one person shows up, (instead of a crowd) you will hear it sooner or later:

The bible says: “Where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them”, so its OK and a blessing that we have this church meeting.

This verse comes from Matthew 18:20, but when used in that context, there is a HUGE problem with that... let me explain it with couple of other verses:

Matthew 14:23

And after he (Jesus) had dismissed the crowds, he went up on the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone,

1 Kings 19:4-21

But he (Elijah) himself went a day's journey into the wilderness and came and sat down under a broom tree. And he asked that he might die, saying, “It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life, for I am no better than my fathers.” And he lay down and slept under a broom tree. And behold, an angel touched him and said to him, “Arise and eat.” And he looked, and behold, there was at his head a cake baked on hot stones and a jar of water. And he ate and drank and lay down again. And the angel

of the Lord came again a second time and touched him and said, "Arise and eat, for the journey is too great for you." And he arose and ate and drank, and went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights to Horeb, the mount of God. ...

Why its false in that context:

When looking through the bible, there are a LOT of bible verses where people were alone, and prayed to God, worshiped Him, talked with Him and got answers from Him.

How is that possible when Matthew 18:20 says two or three people are needed?.... Those people were alone... one, one person and God was there.

They were not alone:

No they were not. The Holy Spirit was in them, Jesus was in them. They were never alone.

Ephesians 1:13

In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise,

1 Corinthians 3:16

Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?

So to say that you need two or three (or more) people gathering and then God is there, that's false and not biblical. God hears every prayer and is also with you when your alone. Thank God He is!

So what is Matthew 18:20 all about then?

Lets see whats the context of that verse, and in order to do so, we read everything surrounded by that verse:

Matthew 18:15-20

15 "If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over.

16 But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.'

17 If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector.

18 "Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

19 "Again, truly I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything they ask for, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven.

20 For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them."

This is all about:

Dealing With Sin in the Church

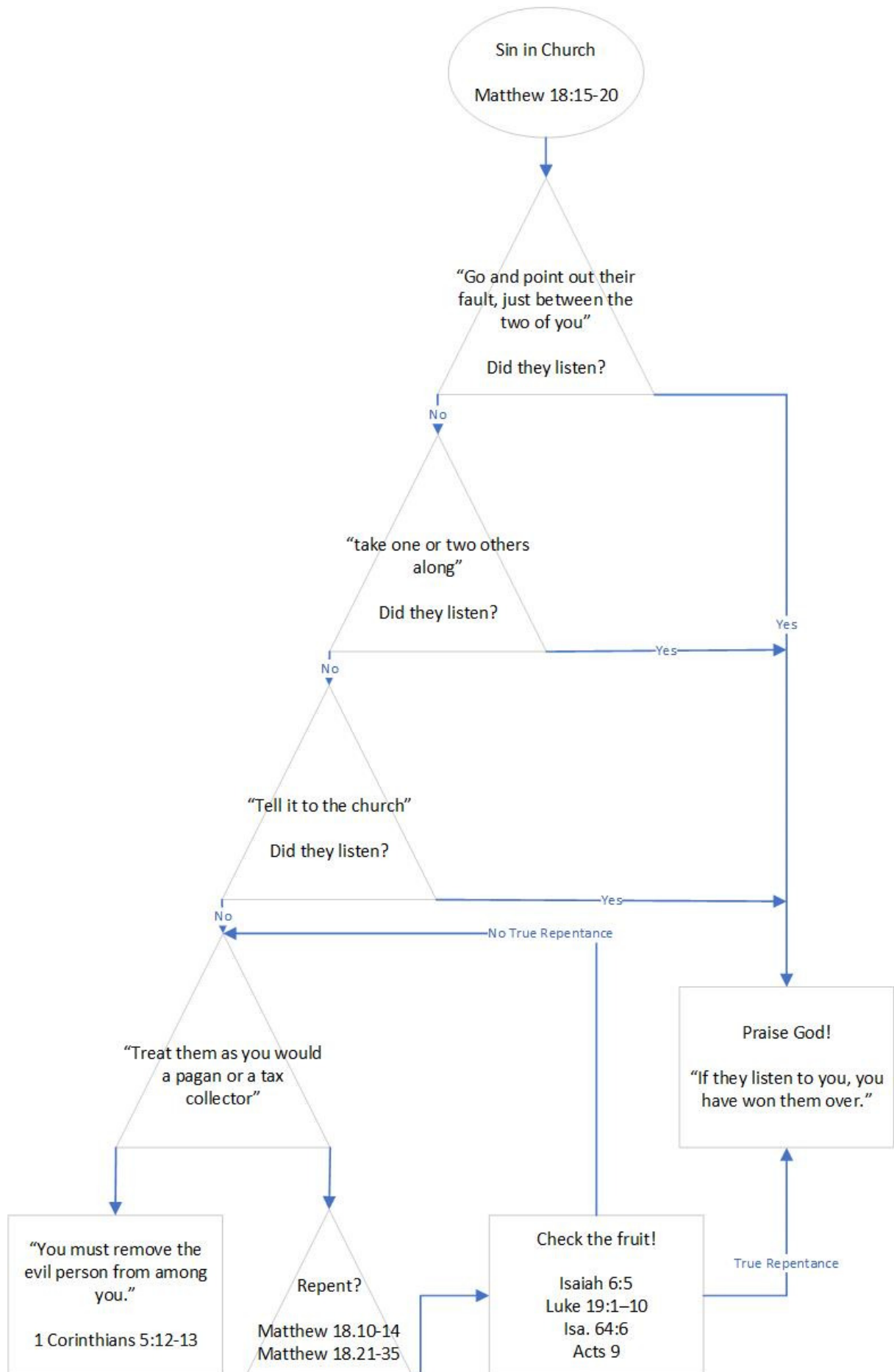
When you look through the passage, you see in that context it should be used.

If somebody is doing something sinful, you don't walk straight to the pastor, no, you first approach the sinner yourself(!), if that worked: praise God.

If not, take one or two others along, so you have witnesses that the conversation did happen in a biblical way. No way around to say “it didn’t happen / it didn’t happen in that way”, you’ve got witnesses. If that worked: praise God.

And only, if they still didn’t listen, only then(!) you’ll go to the church with them, and they will have the third conversation. If that worked: praise God.

If they still don’t listen after three conversations, then its time to: “treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector”.



What do we need to do, if nothing worked?

Lets look at some bible verses:

Matthew 18: 17b

and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector.

1 Corinthians 5:12-13

It isn't my responsibility to judge outsiders, but it certainly is your responsibility to judge those inside the church who are sinning. God will judge those on the outside; but as the Scriptures say, "You must remove the evil person from among you."

That does mean they are not welcome anymore in the church.

There is forgiveness, if(!) they repent.

Matthew 18.10-14

the Parable of the Lost Sheep

Matthew 18.21-35

the Parable of the Unforgiving Servant

But until then:

1 Corinthians 5:12-13 "It isn't my responsibility to judge outsiders, but it certainly is your responsibility to judge those inside the church who are sinning. God will judge those on the outside; but as the Scriptures say, "You must remove the evil person from among you."