



Jesus Makes Us Forgivers, Not Tattletales

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[Jesus said] “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.” Matthew 18:15

How many brothers and/or sisters do you have? Whatever that number is—whether zero, one, two, or five—Jesus adds to that number. In today’s Gospel reading, Jesus talks about your brothers and sisters. But he is not talking about the children in your earthly family. He is talking about your spiritual family—your fellow Christians.

Why are Christians your spiritual siblings? Because, just like you, God has made them his children through faith in Jesus. You share the same heavenly Father and the same Savior. Jesus is your brother. That makes you family.

In your earthly family, perhaps you have a rule against tattling. Tattling means spreading the news about something wrong another person did—not because someone needs protection, but because you want to get that person in trouble.

Jesus does not want Christians to tattle on each other. Simply telling other people what someone did wrong does not solve the problem. It can hurt that person and divide God’s family even more.

So, Jesus gives us a powerful tool to use. Jesus knows that earthly families will sin against each other. He also knows that members of his spiritual family will sin against each other. So, Jesus gives us the power and authority to forgive sins! He teaches us to speak lovingly and privately with someone who has sinned—perhaps even against you. Jesus gives every Christian the right to approach that person and say, “What you did was wrong and sinful. It hurt someone else.”

That’s not the same thing as tattling. We do not approach the person to embarrass or defeat them. We want to “win them over”—to restore a brother or sister. It’s like welcoming them back as family. The goal is to hear them confess their sin, so that we can say, “I forgive you! And God forgives you, too!”

Tattling pushes people away. Forgiveness sends sin away and welcomes people back—like family! Because Jesus has forgiven you and made you a part of his family, you can lovingly help restore a brother or sister.

Questions to Consider

- Who are some people in your church family?
- What wonderful words can you say when someone is sorry for hurting you?
- What is the difference between tattling and asking a trusted adult for help?
- Why does Jesus want us to speak privately and lovingly with someone who has sinned against us?
- What might tempt you to tell other people about someone's sin before speaking with that person?
- If someone asked, "What gives you the right to forgive my sins?", how would you explain the authority Jesus gives his believers?