

## Ignoring Problems

### CONNECT

Share a time when you ignored a problem—big or small.

### DISCUSS

Have someone read Matthew 18:15–22. As you listen, are there any words or phrases that especially strike you? What questions come to your mind about what it says? Is there anything that is confusing? Encouraging?

<sup>15</sup> If another member of the church sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If the member listens to you, you have regained that one.

<sup>16</sup> But if you are not listened to, take one or two others along with you, so that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses. <sup>17</sup> If the member refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if the offender refuses to listen even to the church, let such a one be to you as a Gentile and a tax-collector. <sup>18</sup> 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. <sup>19</sup> Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. <sup>20</sup> For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them. <sup>21</sup> Then Peter came and said to him, “Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?” <sup>22</sup> Jesus said to him, “Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times.”

1. Christian identified three strategies we employ for ignoring our problems:
  - Distraction: TV, internet, reading, cleaning, etc. Distractions can be good or bad things.
  - Distortion: These are the narratives our mind produces which justify our habit of ignoring our problems by distorting reality.
  - Dissociation: We cut ourselves off from what’s really happening, dissociating ourselves from reality.

Which of these are you more likely to utilize for ignoring a problem?

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2. This passage lays out steps for us to not ignore our problems:
  - Name the problem: This is in his first words: when someone “sins against you.” Sin is when someone does something that is against God’s design; when there is a real problem.
  - Go toward the problem. The second step in the approach Jesus advocates here is in this single word: “Go.” Jesus teaches the disciples that when that happens, you should go to that person directly to talk to them about what happened.
  - Be tactful in your approach. “Point out the fault when the two of you are alone.” Jesus is thoughtful, kind, and practical, too. You don’t wait until there is a big group of people around to bring up a problem.
  - Bring help. “But if you are not listened to take one or to others along with you.” Only after trying to work it out together, are you to bring others in. And only then with the goal of restoring and not humiliating.

### **PRAY AND PERSONALIZE**

1. Consider a problem you have been ignoring, then ask God to help you address it in a loving and grace-filled way.
2. Pray for those around you for the same thing.