

## Matthew 18:20

*For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.*

Everyone knows this verse and quotes it all the time, including pastors from the pulpit. Yet they are actually quoting it out of context, because the rule of thumb is to read 10-20 verses before and after a verse to make sure you are quoting it in its correct context.

Now before I go on any further, I understand the heart and intent of what people say when they quote this verse, so don't shut me out.

So with that in mind, let's read this verse in its context. One note, this is the only place in the bible where it says "*where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them*".

† **Matthew 18:15-20** *"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. But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that 'by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.' And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector. Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them."*

As we just read in the bible, you see that it's talking about judging, and in the Old Testament it even refers to judging someone, and it says that no one is found guilty on the testimony of one person.

† **Deuteronomy 19:15** *One witness shall not rise against a man concerning any iniquity or any sin that he commits; by the mouth of two or three witnesses the matter shall be established.*

And when you read what Jesus is saying, this is in regard to that law given by God. But when people quote this verse, referring to having two or more people pray for someone or someone, I always wonder, "So, does that mean that if you are praying alone God does not hear or Jesus is not there with that person?" because if you think about it, no one ever says, if you pray Jesus will be with you, but they are always saying two or more.

Also note this is not a formula for praying and how to get God to answer your prayers, because there is no formula. God does what He wants to, when He wants to, and how He wants to, we simply want to pray according to His will so that we can be a part of what God is doing.

That's why we come together and pray, being like minded in the Lord and praying God's will, not man's. Now the bible does give us instructions on how to pray for others.

† **James 5:14 & 16** *Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.*

Notice for the sick it says to call for the elders (plural) because if only one man prays for someone and they get healed, the focus will be on the one man, and not God. But if many are praying, then no one knows whose prayer healed the person. But the truth is that no one particular person's prayer actually healed that person, but God did. But if no man can be said to have prayed for that person and they are healed, then the glory must go to God alone and not man.

But also notice that James did not quote Jesus here either, James did not say, "If any are sick, then Jesus said that '*where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them*' so let's join together in prayer." No, James said "*call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.*" It's a reminder that when someone is sick or in need, that yes, multiple people can pray together for that person and the Lord is there listening to their prayers for others.

But also when it comes to sin in the church, we are to join together with two or more to judge that sin and the Lord is there in the midst of that judgment. Because if you have just one person, he or she can say that this person is in sin, when they actually are not in sin, but the person is judging based upon their own preference. But if you have multiple, Godly people, in the mix, then if someone is judging based upon their like and dislikes and not God's word, then the others will confirm whether someone is in sin or not, it's no longer a preference but God's word being followed.

† **Proverbs 20:27** *The spirit of a man is the lamp of the LORD, Searching all the inner depths of his heart.*

So, yes, have others pray with you for someone in need and the Lord will be with you all when you do. But if someone has a need and you are praying for him or her on your own, the Lord is there with you as well.

† **Romans 8:34** *Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.*

† **Romans 15:5-6 (NLT2)** *May God, who gives this patience and encouragement, help you live in complete harmony with each other, as is fitting for followers of Christ Jesus. Then all of you can join together with one voice, giving praise and glory to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*