

Jesus: No Spin

Matthew Chapter Eighteen: Jesus on Relationships

personal / group study for use with the message of February 7th and 8th, 2009

"In the same way your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should be lost" (Matthew 18:14).

You may have been challenged by last week's study of Jesus' glory on the mountain top to rethink your priorities and give Jesus the honor due Him. This week's lesson will challenge you in your relationships here on earth. The first part of the chapter tells you not to sin against others; the second part teaches you how to react when someone sins against you.

Introduction.

There are seven main principles for human relationships in this section of Matthew. Watch for: humility, sensitivity, self-denial, compassion, tough love, prayer and forgiveness. Jesus' teachings on healthy relationships are helpful still today, no matter who you are or what relationships you are in. The disciple's opening question seems to show their desire to be important. We still look out for "number one" and try to self-promote. Jesus' teachings are upside down from the world's teachings; He says the humble are the greatest in His kingdom. He says those with child-like faith will enter the kingdom of heaven.

Read.

Matthew 18

1At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"

2He called a little child and had him stand among them. 3And he said: "I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. 4Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

5 "And whoever welcomes a little child like this in my name welcomes me. 6But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea.

7 "Woe to the world because of the things that cause people to sin! Such things must come, but woe to the man through whom they come! 8If your hand or your foot causes you to sin cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life maimed or crippled than to have two hands or two feet and be thrown into eternal fire. 9And if your eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into the fire of hell.

10 "See that you do not look down on one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven.

12 "What do you think? If a man owns a hundred sheep, and one of them wanders away, will he not leave the ninety-nine on the hills and go to look for the one that wandered off? 13And if he finds it, I tell you the truth, he is happier about that one sheep than about the ninety-nine that did not wander off. 14In the same way your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should be lost.

15 "If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. 16But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.' 17If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector.

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

19 "Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. 20For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them."

21Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?"

22 Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.

23 "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.

28 "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. 31 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."

**All scripture taken from the New International Version (NIV) unless otherwise noted.*

Questions.

Think About It...

1. Go back to Matthew 7:1-5. What did Jesus teach about dealing with our own sins?
2. Does knowing that your sins are forgiven make it easier to forgive others when they sin against you? Why or why not?

Reflect On It...

3. What is the motive behind the disciple's question?
4. Who does Jesus use as an object lesson? Explain why. How can all people become like little children? In what way?
5. Read Psalm 91:11 and Hebrews 1:14. What do you learn about guardian angels? How does knowing that God knows about the troubles of the weak comfort you?
6. What does Jesus mean when He says, "If your hand or your foot causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away."?
7. In the story of the lost sheep, is the shepherd neglecting the 99 sheep that didn't stray? What does this story teach you about the value of one person in God's economy?
8. How are you to behave toward other believers? What does the teaching about two or three agreeing have to do with getting along in the body of Christ (the church)?

Respond To It...

9. How are you involved in seeking the lost sheep or encouraging the little ones in the faith?
10. Explain how Jesus taught us to be reconciled when someone sins against you?
11. Who is it harder to forgive: a stranger, a family member, or your fellow church members?
12. Why is forgiveness so important? Is there a connection between being forgiving and being free emotionally and spiritually?