

Teen Bible Study Notes: Friday, December 7, 2018

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The Life and Teachings of Jesus Christ – Lecture #18

Book & Chapter: Matthew – Chapter 18 & Introduction to Chapter 19

MATTHEW 18

Who Is the Greatest?

V1 At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, “Who then is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?”

V2 And Jesus called a little child to Him, set him in the midst of them,

V3 And said, “Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.

V4 Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

V5 And whoever receives one little child like this in My name receives Me.

Here we see Christ calling a little child into the midst of the disciples and using him as an object lesson in humility. He admonished all those who would be great in the Kingdom to become humble, “as this little child.”

To become like a child. To approach God’s Kingdom with the humility of a young child. Christ was showing that those who sought His Kingdom must look to a child to see that their traits and characteristics are representative of true Christianity. The obvious importance of becoming like a child is plain with even a casual reading of the scriptures.

Christ did NOT mean that a person should become childish and revert in his or her maturity to fulfill this principle. The Apostle Paul wrote: “Brethren, do not be children in understanding; however, in malice be babes, but in understanding be mature” (**I Corinthians 14:20**). Paul was saying not to be foolish and immature, but to combine the wisdom of age with the benign kindness of a young child.

Children have many traits that help us understand what Christ meant. **Let’s briefly examine some of these characteristics so we can grasp what Jesus meant “to become as little children.”**

(1) Children are TRUSTING. Children trust their parents. They accept without doubt virtually anything a parent tells them. If they are promised a gift or reward for their conduct, then as far as the child is concerned, it will be delivered. The child knows that the parent’s word is good.

This trusting attitude extends to all parts of the child’s world. They feel little concern or worry for the comforts of life because they know that dad or mom will always provide for them. In a close-knit family where the parents have woven a bond of intimacy, the sudden and abrupt

changes such as dad losing his job or being transferred, may not adversely affect the children. They still know that dad will come through.

This is the attitude Christ tried to instill in His followers during His Sermon on the Mount. He told them not to be overly concerned about food, drink or clothing. After all, He asked, isn't there more to life than what we eat or wear? If God designed the beautiful plants of the field, cannot He adequately provide for His human children?

The plants grow and die with the cycle of the seasons, but we continue on with a far more enduring destiny. Christ taught us to seek the Kingdom of God and His righteousness – and He would ensure that we would have the necessities of life (**Matthew 6:25-33**).

We've recaptured a lost trait of childhood when we approach God with that kind of trust.

(2) Children are TEACHABLE. They want to learn. Their minds are like sponges, absorbing everything in their environment. Given the opportunity and time from a parent a child will be eager to learn. They want to be taught by their parents. Parental example and influence is the strongest factor in a child's early years.

The question to consider is, are we teachable? When it comes to spiritual principles that guide our lives, do we have the teachable attitude of a child?

It has been said that before a person can learn the truth of God, he must first have his mind swept clear of a lifetime of error and false teaching. Then there exists an uncluttered mind capable of learning and holding the truth as revealed by God's Spirit. Peter addressed this point directly: "Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy and all evil speaking, as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word that you may grow thereby..." (**I Peter 2:1-2**).

We must be careful not to lose our "first love" for the truth after being in the Church for some time. We must always be eager to learn the truth. No matter how long we have been members of God's Church, we can always be taught. We must, in order to be continually growing in grace and knowledge.

(3) Children are FORGIVING. Do you take correction as easily as your children? Children have to be corrected from time to time in order to learn proper behavior. Parents, do you find your kids bearing grudges against you as a result? Probably not.

How easily do you forgive and forget? We all must go through times of correction, and for most of us it isn't easy. Our normal reaction is to become self-defensive. More than likely we may not be so forgiving as a child would be either.

God says that He chastens those whom He loves and that correction is good for us (**Hebrews 12:5-11**). To receive correction without allowing a grudge or vindictive spirit is to grow marks a childlike attitude – an attitude that God desires in us.

(4) Children are IMITATORS. Children love to imitate mom and dad. This is one of the earliest methods of learning for a child. The parent is the central figure in a child’s mind. Anything a parent does is okay as far as a child is concerned. This puts a big responsibility on a parent to set the best possible example for their children.

In – **I Corinthians 11:1** – Paul expressed this trait when he was inspired to write: “Imitate me, just as I also *imitate* Christ.” Just as children copy their physical parents, we should follow the example set by our spiritual Father.

This entails knowing the character, life-style and personality of God as revealed in the Bible. Coming to intimately know God will allow us to know what to imitate. The desire to imitate God in every part of our life should be central to our experience.

(5) Children are LOVING. Children can be very loving. A child’s honest displays of affection demonstrate a humbling reminder of the feelings we often suppress as adults.

In **I John 4:11** we read: “Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.”

Conclusion: Christ used children to symbolize the essence of humility – one of the necessary characteristics of a disciple. A humble attitude is trusting, teachable, forgiving, desirous of imitating Christ, and full of love!

Jesus Warns of Offenses

V6 But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea.

These little ones – those who are babes in Christ – “believers.”

Causes one...to sin – literally means to put a snare, trap, or stumbling block in someone’s way.

A **millstone** – was a heavy grinding stone, so large that it had to be turned by a donkey.

V7 Woe to the world because of offenses [*margin – enticements to sin*]! For offenses must come, but woe to that man by whom the offense comes!

Luke 17:1-2: V1 “Then He said to the disciples, ‘I is impossible that no offenses should come, but woe *to him* through whom they come!

V2 It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones.”

Woe to him – Jesus warned that judgment awaits those who cause others to stumble. The severe form of the warning suggest that false teaching, or leading someone into apostasy, has serious consequences!

V8 And if your hand or foot causes you to sin, cut it off and cast *it* from you. It is better for you to enter into life lame or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet, to be cast into the everlasting fire.

V9 And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast *it* from you. It is better for you to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire.

If your hand or foot causes you to sin – Similar scriptures can be found in **Matthew 5:29-30** and **Mark 9:43-48**.

By way of review – Christ did not intend that this instruction be taken literally. The eye, the hand, or the foot cannot sin of and by themselves. Sin originates in the mind. A person who is totally blind, for example, or one who is missing a limb can still sin.

Jesus was simply using parts of the body to illustrate an important principle. He was explaining that a Christian should not tolerate sin as an integral part of his, or her, life. If, for example, an individual has a sinful habit, he ought to totally eradicate that habit even though the process may be as painful as losing an arm or a leg. These verses describe a person who has a lifestyle of sinning and needs to take drastic measures in order to change. What Christ is saying is that it would be far better to give up a sinful pleasure than to lose out on salvation (**see also Colossians 3:5-17**).

The Parable of the Lost Sheep

V10 Take heed that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that in heaven their angels always see the face of My Father who is in heaven.

V11 For the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost.

V12 What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them goes astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine and go to the mountains to seek the one that is straying?

V13 And if he should find it, assuredly, I say to you, he rejoices more over that *sheep* than over the ninety-nine that did not go astray.

V14 Even so it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.

These little ones – refers back to those who believe. The Father watches over each of His little ones.

Dealing with a Sinning Brother

V15 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.

V16 But if he will not hear you, take with you one or two more, that *'by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.'*

V17 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.

It's going to happen sooner or later – someone is going to be offended – get his or her feelings hurt because of what someone else does or says.

Offenses can destroy loving relationships and create long-lasting enmity and hard feelings. Even seemingly insignificant misunderstandings can, unless handled properly, fester into deep wounds that permanently divide people.

Offenses that go unresolved between two Christians can adversely affect the spiritual development of both. Notice the importance God places on resolving interpersonal differences:

Matthew 5:23-24: V23 “Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you,

V24 Leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.”

Your relationship with God depends on your obedience to this command. You can actually cut yourself off from God because of your failure to show love for another person in the manner God prescribes (**I John 4:20-21**).

I John 4:20-21: V20 “If someone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?

V21 And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God *must* love his brother also.”

When you are offended, or when you offend someone else, how do you handle the problem? Do you confront it or avoid it? If you deal with the situation, how do you do so? Do you know how to handle offenses?

If you have been offended **STEP #1**

A major key to handling problems between people is found here in – **Matthew 18:15-17**.

Matthew 18:15 “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.”

While this command of God – and it is a *command* – applies specifically to members of God’s Church, the principle is clear: God wants people to do something about offenses, not ignore them. He doesn’t want real or imagined barriers between people.

How should we go to our brother? We must make sure our attitude is right beforehand. It’s important to draw close to God in prayer about the situation. Evaluate the hurt you feel. Has the person really wronged you or are you overreacting? Don’t let your pride get in the way.

When we approach a person that has offended us, we must show respect for that person. The other person may offer many justifications for his or her actions, but we must give them a chance to tell their side of the story (**Proverbs 18:13**).

Proverbs 18:13 “He who answers a matter before he hears *it*, it *is* folly and shame to him.”

We might even discover that we have been wrong in feeling offended!

Be sure to choose your words carefully (**Proverbs 25:11-12**).

When we’ve been offended – we must not let the hurt we have suffered ruin our communication. It’s important to restrain your emotions, that we consider the other person’s point of view, and to objectively present the problem.

Approaching another person with a proud, demanding and harsh attitude can keep him from seeing the situation clearly. And they will likely become defensive and start accusing you rather than examining themselves.

As **Proverbs 15:1** says “A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.”

It is critical that the situation be handled with tact, sincerity and concern for the other person.

God wants us to keep the dispute between the two of you at its point – in the hope that it can be resolved without adversely affecting others, and so that we don’t destroy their reputation.

Proverbs 25:9 “Debate your case with your neighbor, and do not disclose the secret to another.”

So, it is important that we exercise restraint – and not spread the matter to others.

We should NOT desire revenge or blow out of proportion our role as the wounded party. And, we must be willing to admit our own faults too. Our humility is tested when we need to admit that we are wrong, but admitting our own error is a major part of solving interpersonal problems.

When the problem has been resolved, it is important that we forgive and forget about it. We must not harbor resentment about it or bring it up later. We must avoid developing bitterness over the situation (**Hebrews 12:15**). Remember that God forgives us, according to how we forgive others (**Matthew 6:14-15**).

What if you cause offense?

Healing a relationship that has been damaged is not easy. And if we have CAUSED the offense it is important that we seek to reconcile, and offer a sincere apology (**Proverbs 18:19**).

Proverbs 18:19 “A brother offended *is harder to win* than a strong city, and contentions *are* like the bars of a castle.”

It is important to “have the mind of God” when we go to our brother (**Colossians 3:12**). If we are wrong, an apology is vital to restoring the relationship.

Colossians 3:12 “Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering.”

What if it doesn't work? STEP #2

What if our efforts fail? If we go to our brother as God has instructed, but the problem isn't resolved or the person reacts in a hostile manner. Should we quit trying to solve the problem?

What does God say?

Matthew 18:16 “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.*”

Now is the time to include others. Choose these individuals carefully.

STEP #3

If you have taken the first two steps and your efforts fail, then, in the case of a dispute within God's Church, you will need to involve God's ministry.

The church then is to do everything possible to convince the believer who has sinned to be reconciled or to right the wrong. If the erring one will not respond, that person is to be disciplined by being cut off from the fellowship. Such a loss would be extremely painful to the offender – but is necessary in such a case.

Romans 16:17 “Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them.”

As Christians we should avoid being offensive (**I Corinthians 10:32-33**), and that if we have offended someone or have been offended that we care enough about those broken relationships to take the necessary steps to repair them. This is what God requires of us as Christians!

V18 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.

Remember as discussed in **Matthew 16:19** – God’s true ministers have been given the authority to bind, or loose, that which is agreement with God’s laws and which, in reality, would be bound by God. The decisions of the Church are based on the Scriptures. In this way, they are led to make the right judgments in accordance with God’s will.

Binding – refers to things that are not permitted.

Loosing – refers to things that are permitted.

V19 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.

V20 For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.”

The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant

V21 Then Peter came to Him and said, “Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?”

Up to seven times – Actually Peter assumed he was being very generous in his willingness to forgive ***up to seven times***.

V22 Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.

Up to seventy times seven – The point is not to keep count at all, but to always be willing to forgive.

V23 Therefore the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants.

V24 And when he had begun to settle accounts, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents.

Ten thousand talents – was enormous sum. A denarius was one day’s wage for a laborer (**Matthew 20:2**). A talent was worth about six thousand denarii. Ten thousand talents would be sixty million day’s wages, a sum that would be impossible to repay. Thus Jesus graphically portrayed this man’s hopeless predicament.

V25 But as he was not able to pay, his master commanded that he be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and that payment be made.

V26 The servant therefore fell down before him, saying, ‘Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all.’

V27 Then the master of that servant was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave the debt.

V28 But that servant went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii; and he laid hands on *him* and took him by the throat, saying, ‘Pay me what you owe!’

V29 So his fellow servant fell down at his feet and begged him, saying, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you all.’

V30 And he would not, but went and threw him into prison till he should pay the debt.

V31 So when his fellow servants saw what had been done, they were very grieved, and came and told their master all that had been done.

V32 Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, ‘You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me.’

V33 Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?

This parable reiterates the principle that we should forgive others because God forgives us (**Matthew 6:12, 14-15**).

V34 And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him.

V35 So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses.”

This verse is a warning of the penalty for not forgiving others (see **I Corinthians 11:30-32; Hebrews 12:5-11**). All of a Christians sins can be forgiven and forgotten forever (**Psalms 103:12; Jeremiah 31:34; Hebrews 8:12**).

Psalms 103:12 “As far as east is from the west, *so* far has He removed our transgressions from us.”

Jeremiah 31:34 “No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.”

Hebrews 8:12 “*For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.*”

But this parable illustrates the Christian duty to forgive others (**II Corinthians 2:10; Ephesians 4:32**). If our forgiveness should be indirect proportion to the incredible amount that we have been forgiven (**verse 22**), then we must always be willing to forgive.

CHAPTER 19

Marriage and Divorce

Question: What does the Bible say about marriage and divorce?

Answer: God instituted marriage when He made a wife for Adam (**Genesis 2:18**).

Genesis 2:18 “And the LORD God said, *‘It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him.’*”

God instructed that a man ought to leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife, and that they should become one flesh (**verse 24**).

Genesis 2:24 “Therefor a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.”

God intends that marriage endure for life, with each partner loving, honoring, caring for and cleaving to the other just as Christ loves and cares for His Church (**Ephesians 5:22-23, I Peter 3:1-7**). The Bible teaches the sacredness of marital vows.

But today, we live in an imperfect world beset by human weakness, hardness of heart, irresponsibility and every kind of sin, unfaithfulness and wickedness. People sin. Divorce occurs even though God “hates divorce.”

Malachi 2:16 “For the LORD God of Israel says that He hates divorce...”

The Bible makes it plain that when one repents and turns to Christ, all his past sins are forgiven (**Acts 2:38**). Thus, any divorce in the past is forgiven upon conversion, and it need not stand in the way of a happy marriage afterward. Paul wrote that those who have been “loosed” – divorced – from an unbelieving mate do not sin if they marry (**I Corinthians 7:27-28**).

Paul was inspired to write that converted people must not divorce mates who are pleased to dwell with them (**I Corinthians 7:10-13**). God wants our marriages to last for life. To divorce a faithful mate and marry another is adultery (**Matthew 19:9**).

The unconverted world cannot receive Christ’s teaching, but all who are His ought to obey Him implicitly, not only in refraining from divorce but also in doing all within their power to build a truly loving relationship, as explained in **Ephesians 5:22-23** and **I Peter 3:1-7**.