

The Greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven

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

² He called a little child to him, and placed the child among them. ³ And he said: “Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

⁴ Therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

⁵ And whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me.

Causing to Stumble

⁶ “If anyone causes one of these little ones—those who believe in me—to stumble, it would be better for them to have a large millstone hung around their neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea.

⁷ Woe to the world because of the things that cause people to stumble! Such things must come, but woe to the person through whom they come! ⁸ If your hand or your foot causes you to stumble, 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. ⁹ And if your eye causes you to stumble, 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.

The Parable of the Wandering Sheep

¹⁰ “See that you do not despise one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven. ¹¹ *for the Son of Man came to save what was lost.*

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? ¹³ And if he finds it, truly I tell you, he is happier about that one sheep than about the ninety-nine that did not wander off.

¹⁴ In the same way your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should perish.

Dealing With Sin in the Church

¹⁵ “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. ¹⁶ But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that ‘every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.’ ¹⁷ If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector.

¹⁸ “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.

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

QUESTIONS:

- 1. Why do you think that the disciples asked Jesus about who was the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? (It may be helpful to read this account in Mark 9:33-37 as well.)**

- 2. How does Jesus answer their question?**

- 3. Why do you think Jesus used the example of a child? What characteristics of childhood should be imitated in our discipleship?**

- 4. What does Jesus mean by “receiving or welcoming a child”?**

- 5. What does Jesus’ warning about causing one of these little ones to stumble mean? What is he warning the disciples about?**

- 6. What is Jesus’ warning about “despising” one of these little ones?**

- 7. What is the message of the parable Jesus offers about the lost sheep?**

- 8. How does Jesus address the problem of those who go astray in the church in verses 15-20?**

- 9. What is the procedure Jesus prescribes for dealing with unrepentant sinners in the Church setting?**

- 10. What is the significance of binding and loosing in heaven and where two or three are gathered saying that Matthew concludes these instructions with?**