

Bible Stories for Adults

The Faith of Children

Matthew 18:1-14

Opening

- Gathering: How can the faith of children serve as a good model for our faith?
- Today's Focus: Jesus uses the example of trusting children to show how to live as God's children.
- Key Verses: *Unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.* Matthew 18:3
- Whoever welcomes this little child in My name welcomes Me; and whoever welcomes Me welcomes the one who sent Me.* Luke 9:48

Opening Prayer

Lesson

Highs and Lows (*Matthew 17*)

- What significant event of Jesus' ministry preceded these stories?
Luke 9:29-31
- How did the disciples react to this event?
Matthew 17:4-8
- How were the disciples quickly brought back to earth from this spiritual mountaintop experience?
Matthew 17:14-18
- Why were the disciples unable to help the boy while Jesus was away?
Matthew 17:19-20
- But they had cast out demons before. Why was this one so resistant?
Mark 9:28-29
- What lesson did Jesus teach next that would lift their spirits?
Matthew 17:24-27

The Disciples Argue (*Mark 9:33-35*)

- How did the disciples react to this spiritual roller-coaster?
Luke 9:46
- How did Jesus deal with their argument?
Mark 9:33-34
- How did Jesus show them that He already knew?
Mark 9:35

The Object Lesson (*Matthew 18:2, 5, 10*)

- What object lesson did Jesus add to strengthen His point?
Luke 9:47-48
- Was Jesus serious in saying that welcoming a child welcomes Him?
Matthew 18:10
- Does God really send out "guardian angels" to protect His children?
Psalm 34:7
- Was Jesus' point that we should specifically serve children?
Matthew 25:34-40

Bible Stories for Adults

The Faith of Children

Page 2

A Warning (*Matthew 18:6-7*)

What warning did Jesus add to His instruction to welcome God's children?

Matthew 18:6

The Greek used for millstone (*mulos onikos*) refers to one turned by a donkey

Typically 3-4 ft in diameter, hundreds of pounds

Depths of the sea should be *far out in the open sea* - Jews feared the sea and drowning

Revelation 21:1

With so many other people in the world, does God really care if one of His children turns away?

Matthew 18:12-14

Is this word of warning strong enough to keep people from leading others into sin?

Matthew 18:7

The Fires of Gehenna (*Matthew 18:8-9*)

How careful should we be to not cause anyone to sin?

Matthew 18:8-9

Why does this teaching sound so familiar?

Matthew 5:27-30

Hell in Greek is *Gehenna*

Gehenna was the valley of Hinnom, a valley on south side of Jerusalem

How did Gehenna get its reputation for being the fires of hell?

2 Chronicles 28:1-3

What did Josiah, the reforming king of Judah, do about the sacrifices in Gehenna?

2 Kings 23:10

What prediction did Jeremiah make that was obviously true by Jesus' time?

Jeremiah 7:30-32

Body Parts (*1 Corinthians 5:1-13*)

What other body parts could Jesus be telling us to keep pure?

1 Corinthians 12:27

Would Jesus really tell us to cut off a sinful church member and send them to hell?

1 Corinthians 5:4-7

Are we to stay away from everyone in this world who is openly sinful?

1 Corinthians 5:9-13

(See also Deuteronomy 17:7; 19:19; 21:21; 22:21, 24; 24:7)

Wouldn't it be easier and better to just let people stay members?

1 Corinthians 12:26

What process did Jesus give on how to handle members of the Body caught up in sin?

Matthew 18:15-17

Little Ones (*1 Corinthians 3:1-2*)

If Jesus was referring to His body, the church, what would He have meant by "little ones"?

1 Corinthians 3:1-2

What example did Paul give to the early Christians of a topic that could cause *little ones* to sin?

1 Corinthians 8:4, 7-9

How could exercising your God-given freedom be a stumbling block and lead others to sin?

1 Corinthians 8:10-13

Bible Stories for Adults

The Faith of Children

Page 3

Freedoms Around Little Ones (*Romans 14*)

Should we then keep baby Christians and each other from using these freedoms?

Romans 14:1-6

So we should then feel free to exercise our freedoms openly?

Romans 14:13-16

What is the important thing to remember through this confusing discussion?

Romans 14:17-19

So should we drink beer or wine around our Baptist friends, or not?

Romans 14:20-22

What should we do about freedoms we aren't so sure about?

Romans 14:23

One More Key Lesson (*Matthew 18:1-4*)

What lesson did this story begin with that covers all of the rest of the lessons we've discussed?

Matthew 18:1-3

Was Jesus telling us to change from being so serious and become more childish?

1 Corinthians 14:20

What did Paul mean that we should be adults in our thinking?

Ephesians 4:13-15

So in what way are we to become more like children?

Matthew 18:4

Humility (*Philippians 2:1-11*)

Humility - *When you know you have it, you've lost it.*

Humility thinks of others, not of self.

True humility is not thinking meanly of oneself; it is simply not thinking of oneself at all.

How did Paul define humility?

Romans 12:3

How did Peter describe humility?

1 Peter 5:5-6 (James 4:6-10)

Where can we find an even better example of humility than a child?

Philippians 2:3-11

Jesus Teaches in Humility (*Mark 9:30-32*)

What was Jesus getting ready to do that further taught this lesson on humility?

Matthew 17:22-23

What priority did Jesus and His disciples have for this last trip to Jerusalem?

Mark 9:30-31a

How ready were the disciples to receive and understand this mature "solid food"?

Mark 9:31b-32

How much time was the group able to get to be by themselves for this training?

Mark 10:1

Bible Stories for Adults

The Faith of Children

Page 4

Top Priority Lessons Only (*Mark 10:13-16*)

How did the disciples handle these interruptions to Jesus' limited important lessons?

Mark 10:13

Mothers often brought their babies to be blessed by a rabbi

How did Jesus feel about the disciples protecting their limited and valuable time together?

Mark 10:14

What did He mean that *the kingdom of God belongs to such as these*?

Mark 10:15

What did Jesus then do about the babies?

Mark 10:16

Dependence (*1 Corinthians 12:3*)

How is a child-like dependence critical for receiving the kingdom of God?

1 Corinthians 12:3

How did Martin Luther state this in his explanation to the Third Article of the Apostles' Creed?

*I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength
believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him;
but the Holy Ghost has called me by the Gospel,
enlightened me with His gifts;
sanctified and kept me in the true faith.*

How does the Spirit call us by the Gospel?

1 Corinthians 2:10-16

Can't we receive the kingdom by being as good as we can? Do we have to be dependent?

Ephesians 2:8-9

Children greatly trust their parents to take care of them. Who are we to trust?

John 14:1

Closing Prayer

Response - Consider and meditate on one each day this week

1. When have I ever done anything that led someone to sin?
(*Matthew 18:6-7; 6:13; 23:3; 1 Kings 12:26-33; Romans 13:9-13; 14:20-21; 1 Corinthians 10:31-33*)
2. What human desires continue to lead me into temptation and sin?
(*Matthew 18:8-9; 5:27-30; Romans 7:15-25; 8:5-9; Galatians 5:16-25; 6:7-8; 1 Peter 2:11*)
3. What stumbling blocks to faith have I placed before others?
(*Romans 14; 1 Corinthians 8:4, 7-13; 10:23-33*)
4. What man-made rules have I placed as stumbling blocks before myself?
(*Matthew 23:13; Mark 7:1-13; Acts 10; Colossians 2:8*)
5. How well do I follow Jesus' example of humility?
(*Matthew 18:4; John 13:1-17; Romans 12:3; 1 Corinthians 1:26-31; Galatians 6:12-14; Philippians 2:3-11; Titus 3:1-2; 1 Peter 5:5-6; James 4:6-10*)