

# “The Kingdom and Humility”

## Matthew 18:1-14

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**Intro** Humility is not an easy virtue to acquire. Benjamin Franklin once wrote: "There is perhaps no one of our natural passions so hard to subdue as pride. Beat it down, stifle it, mortify it as much as one pleases, it is still alive. Even if I could conceive that I had completely overcome it, I should probably be proud of my humility".

Jesus came to seek and save the lost. Jesus' disciples are to love the least and the lost. What we need is humility. We discover our level of humility in how we treat the least and the lost, and how we deal with our sin.

**Subject: The Kingdom and humility**

**Object: Love the least and the lost**

**Context:** The kingdom and faith: the healing of the demon possessed boy, and provision of the temple tax. Theme: trust God's power, promises, and provision

### **A. Love of the least [1-9] 3 truths about humility**

**1. Humility required [1-4]** At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, “Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” <sup>2</sup> Then Jesus called a little child to Him, set him in the midst of them, <sup>3</sup> 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. <sup>4</sup> Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. The disciples were arguing among themselves as to who was the greatest among them [1] [Lu. 9:46]. Their attitude reflects the problems of pride and coveting prominence. Jesus placed a young child in their midst [2]. Mark tells us that Jesus held the child [Mk. 9:3]. In that culture children were considered insignificant or the least of society. Jesus explains the requirement of humility to enter God's kingdom [3-4]. Young children understand that they are dependent, and choose to submit. The attitude of humility is contrary to our flesh. We cannot climb a ladder to heaven, but humble yourself and then God will lift you up.

#### **a. God's kids understand they are dependent upon Him and choose to submit**

i. Pride is revealed by our sense of superiority, or desire to be seen as superior

The opposite of the virtue of humility is pride. Pride is an ugly sin that causes disharmony, division and sadness. Humble people are people filled with Christ's joy and peace. Humble people know how to build community and be team players. Humble people are wonderful to be with because they are forgetful of themselves. Humble people are kind and compassionate to all those around them.

## Ja. 4:10 **Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.**

ii. Jesus is our example as He humbled Himself to the Father's will [Ph. 2:3-8]; and declared kingdom greatness is found in serving others [Mk. 9:35, 10:44-45].

iii. Our desire for greatness and significance appeals to the flesh but is contra Christ.

Who are the least of your culture? Anyone you look down at as less than you.

*One of the great blessings of being part of NG has been confronting my pride, and growing in humility. And growing in love and respect for my neighbors.*

**2. Humility received [5] Whoever receives one little child like this in My name receives Me.** Jesus is not saying that the way to salvation is through receiving a child.

### **a. Those who love the least for Jesus' sake have received Him.**

i. Love goes beyond sympathy and receives people in humility, as Jesus receives us.

ii. Humility flows from coming to Christ and growing in Christ by His Spirit.

iii. Humility is revealed in our attitude towards those who are unlikely to benefit us.

*In my NG, and in my neighborhood, there are people that I wouldn't naturally be drawn to. But as I have learned to love neighbors better, I'm encouraged that I see Christ working in me.*

**3. Humility realized [6-9]** <sup>6</sup>“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. <sup>7</sup> Woe to the world because of offenses! For offenses must come, but woe to that man by whom the offense comes! <sup>8</sup> “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. <sup>9</sup> 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.

*Jesus seeks to protect the least by warning of the danger of corrupting them:*

Better to be cast into the sea and drowned with a millstone (large stone for grinding grain) around your neck [6]. The first woe [7] reveals the Lord's sadness the second [7] is a warning. “Offense” [3x v.7] refers to throwing off course.

### **a. Jesus' disciples remove sin that keep others from following Him [8-9]**

If something that you are doing (or not doing) causes another to sin or stumble, you need to deal it even though it is painful and difficult [Matt. 5:29-30]. Not literal, but a call for dramatic action. “Everlasting fire” [8] and “hell fire” [9] refer to eternal judgment.

i. Those who continue to sin without regard for their own rebellion against God and the influence upon others may not be saved.

ii. The humble acknowledge, confess, and repent of their sin.

*\*\* My responsibility to my children, and the least generally.*

## **B. Love of the lost [10-14] The Parable of the Lost Sheep**

<sup>10</sup> “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. <sup>11</sup> For the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost.

<sup>12</sup> “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? <sup>13</sup> 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. <sup>14</sup> Even so it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.

### **1. Jesus came to seek and save the lost [10-11]**

Jesus warns His followers to be careful not to despise or be indifferent to the least and the lost [10]. They are cared for by God’s angelic host [10] and thus should be cared for by Christians. Jesus’ mission is to seek and save the lost [11] (Some manu. omit v.11) [Lu. 19:10]. The lost are important to God. In Luke 15, in a series of three parables, God’s love for the lost is displayed. The lost sheep reveals the Son’s love, the lost coin reveals the Holy Spirit’s love, and the prodigal son reveals the Father’s love for the lost.

### **2. Jesus’ disciples are to love the lost [12-14]**

A shepherd will expend effort to keep seeking a lost sheep. And when it is found he rejoices over the one that is found even more than those who are found [12-13]. God does not want the lost perish [14] (i.e. experience God’s judgment), but be saved. Jesus’ disciples want to see the unsaved and the backslider restored in relationship with God. Especially the unsaved, because heaven is real because of God’s love, and hell is real because of God’s justice. And the choice is real.

*Participating in a NG reinforces and encourages the values of loving God and neighbors better. We are encouraged to befriend and build relationships with neighbors where we live, work, study, and play. We are more likely to seek the lost.*

**Conc.** We need to humble ourselves before Christ. Our humility will be revealed in our attitudes and behaviors towards the least and the lost. NG are a great way to grow in our love for God, the least and the lost. [Invite people who have never received Christ or have strayed back into relationship with Jesus and his people].

## **Study Guide Qs**

- 1. How does pride hinder people from coming to Christ and growing in Christ?**
- 2. Why is humility such an attractive virtue, and what are some of the benefits it produces? Why is humility necessary to receive Christ?**
- 3. What makes loving the least and the lost difficult?**
- 4. How can rediscovering the Great Commandments (to love God supremely and to love neighbors as yourself) help us to love the least and the lost?**