

July 23rd, 2023

Avoiding Spiritual Pitfalls

Review:

- “*But I Tell You...*”
- Jesus, several times in the book of **Matthew**, makes a comparison between the way people thought about their world and the new Kingdom He was offering them.

Pitfalls: A Greatly Ignored Teaching of Jesus

Matthew 18:1-14 (ESV) *At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, “Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?”² And calling to him a child, he put him in the midst of them³ and said, “Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. ⁴Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.”*

⁵“Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, ⁶but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea.”

⁷“Woe to the world for temptations to sin! For it is necessary that temptations come, but woe to the one by whom the temptation comes! ⁸And if your hand or your foot causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life crippled or lame than with two hands or two feet to be thrown into the eternal fire. ⁹And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into the hell of fire.”

¹⁰“See that you do not despise one of these little ones. For I tell you that in heaven their angels always see the face of my Father who is in heaven. ¹²What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go in search of the one that went astray? ¹³And if he finds it, truly, I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went astray. ¹⁴So it is not the will of my Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.”

Warnings from Jesus:

- If you wish to enter into God’s Kingdom, you must become like a child (**Matthew 18:2-4**).
- Don’t cause children to sin (**Matthew 18:5-6**).

Big Idea: Every Christian can heed Jesus’ warning by avoiding these pitfalls:

Pitfall #1—Outgrowing Humility and Teachability.

- The word that Jesus used for child is the Greek word “*paidion (pi-dee-on)*” which means a little child in training.
- **John 15:4 (ESV)** *Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me.*
- **Matthew 19:13-15 (ESV)** *Then children were brought to him that he might lay his hands on them and pray. The disciples rebuked the people, but Jesus said, “Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven.” And He laid his hands on them and went away.*

Pitfall #2—Trusting a False Gospel.

- **First Stumble**—Believing a Gospel that is different than the **ORIGINAL**.
 - **Galatians 1:6-12 (ESV)** *I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed. For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ. For I would have you know, brothers, that the gospel that was preached by me is not man’s gospel. For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I*

taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.

○ **The Original Gospel**

- **John 3:16 (ESV)** *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.*
- **1 Cor. 15:1-8 (ESV)** *Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me.*
- **Ephesians 2:8-9 (ESV)** *For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.*
- Other verses to consult: **1 Timothy 1:15; Romans 5:9-10; Romans 10:9-10; Mark 16:16; Acts 4:8-12.**

● **Second Stumble**—Living a False Gospel.

- **Matthew 23:25-28 (ESV)** *Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and the plate, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people's bones and all uncleanness. So you also outwardly appear righteous to others, but within you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.*
- **1 John 2:3-4 (ESV)** *And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. Whoever says "I know him" but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him.*
- **Proverbs 20:7 (ESV)** *The righteous who walks in his integrity, blessed are his children after him!*

Final Thoughts:

- **John 3:3 (ESV)** *Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."*
- For more of Jesus' teaching on causing people to stumble and sin:
<https://www.gotquestions.org/seven-woes.html>

TO DISCUSS IN LIFE GROUP OR WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS:

Opening Question: What stood out to you the most from the sermon this week?

Main Point: Every Christian can heed Jesus' warning by avoiding the above pitfalls.

Read: **Matthew 18:1-6; Luke 9:48; Matthew 19:14; 1 John 2:1 (NIV).**

1. What does it mean to be "*humble like a child*?"
2. What would have to change in you to become "*like little children*?"
3. What is it about little children that God wants us to strive for?
4. From this passage, what do you think God cares about?
5. Do you believe your life is a good example to others based on what you say and do? Why do you believe that?
6. How have you been convicted on how you represent Christ to the world?