

## FAITH SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON

January 29th, 2012

### **The Followers Lifestyle**

**Focal Passage:** Matthew 18 (ESV)

**Cross References:** Matt 25:31-46, Rom 1:18-32, Lk 9:56, Lk 19:10, Jn 3:17, Jn 12:47, Matt 28:19-20, I Tim 2:1-6, II Pet 3:9, Gal 6:1-2

**Central Idea:** Eerdman's Handbook to the Bible says "God's kingdom operates by totally different standards from the world's. Status-seeking is out (1-4). So is the policy of 'the weakest to the wall'. On the contrary, the spiritually weak are the special responsibility of the strong (5-14). In the new community wrongdoing matters; every effort must be made to set the defaulter right (15-20). Unlimited forgiveness is expected from those whom God has forgiven (21-32).

**Lesson Idea:** What is our hearts intent for the things we do? Are we looking for the glory of God and His Kingdom? Or are we looking for our own interests? Do we seek reconciliation with believers? Or do we seek revenge? Are we forgiving or are we grudge-bearers?

**Background:** J. Vernon McGee says "The next few chapters do not seem to further advance the movement in Matthew, but they do fill out many of the dark corners which have arisen because of the sudden digression in the kingdom of heaven, due to the rejection of the King. Matthew 13 has given us the overall outline of the Kingdom of Heaven in this age, but there are still questions to be answered. These chapters are helpful in answering many of them." Arthur Robertson says "This chapter presents another beautiful unit of Matthew's collection of Christ's teaching directly concerning the conduct of His disciples in the Kingdom of Heaven. Background for this discourse is found in Mark 9:33-34, where we read that the disciples argued over who would be the greatest in Christ's kingdom. Possibly the prominence of Peter (cf. chaps. 14-17) prompted the question. Greatness in the community will require humility (vv. 1-6), caring for the weak (vv. 7-14), correcting the wayward, (vv. 15-20), and continually forgiving one another (vv. 21-35). Fellowship with the King and His servants will be based on those qualities."

We have to remember that the ways of Jesus are not the ways of man. His process, while it may seem, is harder, always has the best results, and it always brings about His glory! When we choose to not follow Christ's method, when we choose our own, it will bring pain, destruction, and a lack of joy. Doing things Christ's way always brings about fruit and joy!

#### Matt 18:1-5 Humility

Also Mark 9:33-37, Luke 9:46-48

<sup>1</sup> At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"<sup>2</sup> And calling to him a child, he put him in the midst of them<sup>3</sup> and said, "Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven."<sup>4</sup> Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

<sup>5</sup> "Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me,

#### DISCUSSION:

- Notice the question of the disciples. How often is this our question? Maybe not verbalized, but our hearts thought? What can we do to fight against this fleshly desire to be first?
- What does Christ mean when he says "turn and become like children"? Why does He state that if we don't do this "you will never enter the kingdom of heaven"?
- How do we humble ourselves like a child? What does that mean? What does it look like?
- How do we "receive one such child" in Christ's name? Why does this cause us to receive Christ? Read Matt 25:31-46.

#### Matt 18:6-10 Punishing offenders

Also see Mk 9:42-48

<sup>6</sup> but 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.

<sup>7</sup> “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!<sup>8</sup> And 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.<sup>9</sup> And 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.

<sup>10</sup> “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.

#### **DISCUSSION:**

- Read Romans 1:18-32. Pay close attention to Vs. 32. Compare with Vs. 6-7. What is the punishment for causing sin? Why is the punishment so great? Why are people tempted to “share” in sin?
- What are Vs. 8-9 telling us? Is this a commendation for self mutilation to achieve heaven or holiness? What principle is Christ teaching here?
- What does he mean when he says “See that you do not despise one of these little ones”?
- The MacArthur commentary says this about Vs. 10. “*this does not suggest that each believer has a personal guardian angel. Rather, the pronoun is collective and refers to the fact that believers are served by angels in general. These angels are pictured ‘always’ watching the face of God so as to hear His command to help a believer when needed. Treating any fellow believer with contempt is extremely serious since God and the holy angels are so concerned for their well-being.*”
- In what ways do we despise fellow believers? What needs to be done to stop this?

#### **Matt 18:11-14 The Lost Sheep**

**Also see Luke 15:4-7**

<sup>11</sup> For the Son of Man came to save the lost. <sup>12</sup> What 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? <sup>13</sup> And if he finds it, truly, I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went astray. <sup>14</sup> So it is not the will of my Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.

#### **DISCUSSION:**

- Vs. 11 is not in all manuscripts, therefore it may not be in some of your Bibles. But compare this verse with Luke 9:56, 19:10, John 3:17 and 12:47. What does this tell us about the first coming of Christ? What does this tell us our mission or goal should be? How well do YOU fulfill this? Read Matt 28:19-20, how well do you fulfill this command?
- What do Vs. 12-13 tell us about God and man?
- Compare Vs. 14 with I Tim 2:1-6 and II Pet 3:9. What other verses tell us about God’s desires for our salvation? What does this tell us about God?

#### **Matt 18:15-20 The Offended Brother (Church Discipline)**

<sup>15</sup> “If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. <sup>16</sup> But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. <sup>17</sup> If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. <sup>18</sup> Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. <sup>19</sup> Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. <sup>20</sup> For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.”

#### **DISCUSSION:**

- What is the process that is laid out in this passage? Why would Jesus give us a process like this?
- What is the purpose of confronting believers with sin? How does Galatians 6:1-2 tell us to confront another with sin?
- Why is there a point when the church gets involved in this process? How are we to treat someone who doesn’t repent?
- What is the purpose of “church discipline”? Look at Vs. 15 and Gal 6:1-2 again.
- As we look at Vs 18-19 it is in context to the church discipline that has been laid out in the previous verses. This is dependant upon the believers following and acting in a Biblical model.
- Vs. 20 is a verse of encouragement for those gathering together. Jewish tradition required at least 10 men to make a synagogue, and even to hold public prayer. Here Christ is telling them that it doesn’t matter how many are there, it is still a gathering with Him.

#### **Matt 18:21-35 Forgiveness**

<sup>21</sup> Then Peter came up and said to him, "Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?" <sup>22</sup> Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you seven times, but seventy-seven times.

<sup>23</sup> "Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants. <sup>24</sup> When he began to settle, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. <sup>25</sup> And since he could not pay, his master ordered him to be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made. <sup>26</sup> So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.' <sup>27</sup> And out of pity for him, the master of that servant released him and forgave him the debt. <sup>28</sup> But when that same servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii, and seizing him, he began to choke him, saying, 'Pay what you owe.' <sup>29</sup> So his fellow servant fell down and pleaded with him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you.' <sup>30</sup> He refused and went and put him in prison until he should pay the debt. <sup>31</sup> When his fellow servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their master all that had taken place. <sup>32</sup> Then his master summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. <sup>33</sup> And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?' <sup>34</sup> And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers, until he should pay all his debt. <sup>35</sup> So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart."

#### **DISCUSSION:**

- Peter is trying to be generous in his "7 times" question. The rabbi's taught that you only need to forgive 3 times (citing several verses from Amos, 1:3, 6, 9, 11, and 13, saying that since God forgave Israel's enemies only 3 times) and that it was presumptuous and not necessary to forgive more than that.
- Christ uses an illustration of a generous king and a greedy servant. In what ways do we act like the greedy servant?
- Read Eph 4:31-32, what does this tell us about our response to others?
- What warning is given to us in Vs. 35? What does this tell us about the modern idea that there are some things you don't need to forgive?

#### **APPLICATION**

- What have you learned this week that you need to apply?
- Who do you need to forgive this week?
- Ask your class to hold you accountable to these things this week.