



The Gospel of Matthew

Jesus' Fourth Discourse: *"Living Together as Disciples"* Matthew 18:1-32

At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying,
"Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"
And He called a child to Himself and set him before
them,
and said, "Truly I say to you, unless you turn and
become like children, you shall not enter the kingdom
of heaven.
"Whoever then humbles himself as this child, he is
the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

"And whoever receives one such child in My name
receives Me;

"but whoever causes one of these little ones who
believe in Me to stumble, it is better for him that a
heavy millstone be hung around his neck, and that he
be drowned in the depth of the sea.

"Woe to the world because of its stumbling blocks!
For it is inevitable that stumbling blocks come; but
woe to that man through whom the stumbling block
comes!

"And if your hand or your foot causes you to
stumble, cut it off and throw it from you; it is better for
you to enter life crippled or lame, than having two
hands or feet, to be cast into the eternal fire.

"And if your eye causes you to stumble, pluck it
out, and throw it from you. It is better for you to enter
life with one eye, than having two eyes, to be cast
into the fiery hell.

"See that you do not despise one of these little
ones, for I say to you that their angels in heaven
continually behold the face of My Father who is in
heaven.

"What do you think? If any man has a hundred
sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not
leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go and
search for the one that is straying?

"And if it turns out that he finds it, truly I say to you,
he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine
which have not gone astray.

"Thus it is not the will of your Father who is in
heaven that one of these little ones perish."

Matthew 18:1-14
(NASB)



"Little Ones" & the Kingdom

1. Paradox of Kingdom Greatness

- lowliness is the necessary path of entrance
into the kingdom of heaven
- lowliness is the ongoing characteristic of
kingdom greatness



"Little Ones" & the Kingdom

2. Application of Kingdom Greatness

Q: *Who are the "little ones"?*

- not children in general but those who have become like children (i.e. disciples)
- implicit reference to those disciples who are outwardly unimportant or lowly



"Little Ones" & the Kingdom

2. Application of Kingdom Greatness

a) we are to receive all such "little ones"

- welcome, show hospitality to, spiritually care for, and do not despise
- to receive such little ones is to receive Jesus Himself!



"Little Ones" & the Kingdom

2. Application of Kingdom Greatness

b) we must not cause little ones to stumble

- death would be better for us than causing spiritual damage to a little one
- "cause to stumble" – hinder another's faith or relationship to Christ



"Little Ones" & the Kingdom

Causes of Stumbling

- not welcoming or accepting
- lack of spiritual/pastoral care
- tempting or leading one to sin
- not dealing with our own sin
- failure to forgive