

## *SITTING AT THE FEET OF JESUS*

Humility, Reconciliation, Forgiveness    Matthew 18:1–19:15

*"In the same way your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should be lost."*  
Matthew 18:14

**Day 1: Read Matthew 18:1-14; 19:13-15.**

1. Children in those days had no status, no power, no greatness, and no voice, yet Jesus says that "the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these" (19:14). What do you think Jesus means when he says we must become like them (18:3)?
  
2. Between Jesus' gentle images of little children and sheep comes some pretty harsh language. In verses 8 and 9 Jesus certainly isn't advocating the mutilation of our bodies, but he is exhorting us figuratively to cut things out of our lives that lead us into sin. Is there anything in your life that causes you to sin? Consider in prayer how Jesus might "cut it off" (v. 8) or "gouge it out" (v.9).

**Day 2: Read Matthew 18:10-14.**

3. The image of the shepherd and his sheep goes back to the Old Testament. Read Ezekiel 34:1-16.
  - a. What do bad shepherds, or leaders, look like? (Ezek. 34:2-6)
  
  - b. What does the LORD promise his people, who have suffered under such bad shepherds? (Ezek. 34:10-12)
  
  - c. Jesus is the "Chief Shepherd" (1 Pet. 5:4) who brings the ultimate fulfillment of God's promise. How do we know that this shepherd, like the one in today's passage, takes the welfare of his flock very seriously indeed? (Mt. 18:6, 12-14; Jn. 10:11-14; Ezek. 34:11-16)
  
4. In 1 Peter 5:2 Peter exhorts the elders of the church, "Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care." What responsibility do you think we, as members of Christ's church, have in ensuring that "[none] of these little ones should be lost" (v. 14; Heb. 3:12, 13; 1 Thess. 5:14)?
  
5. How does Jesus' picture of the searching (and finding) shepherd encourage you as you consider your own wandering heart, or the hearts of your children or other loved ones?

**Day 3: Read Matthew 18:15-20.**

6. What is the situation in verse 15a? Describe the model Jesus gives for handling such a situation.
  
7. Consider this passage in light of Jesus' parable of the sheep. What is the purpose here of confronting a believer who has sinned? (Jas. 5:19, 20)

8. How should you prepare before setting out to speak to a brother or sister who has sinned? (Mt. 7:3-5; Gal. 6:1, 2; Jas. 1:5)
9. What promise does Jesus make in verse 20?

This promise comes between the teaching about restoration and reconciliation, and the next passage on forgiveness and mercy. Why would this promise be especially powerful in these situations?

**Day 4: Read Matthew 18:21-35.**

10. Rabbis taught that a person could be forgiven three times, so Peter's suggestion of seven times probably seemed quite generous to him. What do Jesus' response and parable show us is really the right answer to Peter's question? (1 Cor. 13:4, 5; Eph. 4:32)
11. The first servant owes the master a fantastic amount of money—at least several million dollars. The servant's plea for a chance to pay it all back is absurd.
- How does the master's action in verse 27 exceed even the servant's wildly unrealistic request?
- How does this unlooked-for action reflect God's treatment of you in Christ? (Col. 2:13, 14)
12. The sum owed by the second servant is a real debt, but nothing in comparison to the first servant. What does a comparison of these two debts tell us about God's forgiveness of us, and our forgiveness of others?
13. Who comes before the master in distress to tell him what has taken place? Why?
14. How does Jesus sum up the application of this parable? (v. 35)

**Day 5: Read Matthew 19:1-12.**

15. Jesus avoids the Pharisees' intended trap by focusing on the Creator's original intent for marriage. What is God's intent for marriage?
16. What does the disciples' reaction tell you about where Jesus is setting the bar for marriage?
17. In this week's passage Jesus teaches a lot about how his followers are to relate to one another. Take a moment to pray about a relationship in which you might need to forgive someone, to ask forgiveness of someone, to pursue someone who has wandered—or all of the above.