

Command #16: Protect the body by dealing with sin radically.

Matthew 18:6-20 // Jerry Barber

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⁶ “If anyone causes one of these little ones—those who believe in me—to stumble, it would be better for them to have a large millstone hung around their neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea. ⁷ Woe to the world because of the things that cause people to stumble! Such things must come, but woe to the person through whom they come! ⁸ If your hand or your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life maimed or crippled than to have two hands or two feet and be thrown into eternal fire. ⁹ And if your eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into the fire of hell.

¹⁰ “See that you do not despise one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven. ¹² “What do you think? If a man owns a hundred sheep, and one of them wanders away, will he not leave the ninety-nine on the hills and go to look for the one that wandered off? ¹³ And if he finds it, truly I tell you, he is happier about that one sheep than about the ninety-nine that did not wander off. ¹⁴ In the same way your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should perish.

¹⁵ “If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. ¹⁶ But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that ‘every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.’ ¹⁷ If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector.

¹⁸ “Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. ¹⁹ “Again, truly I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything they ask for, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. ²⁰ For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.”

Condensed Version

Read Matthew 18:6-20 and discuss these questions with your disciple(s):

1. Why does Jesus use such strong figurative language in verses 6-9? What are some ways that someone might lead a disciple astray?
2. Verses 15-20 are pretty straightforward in telling us what to do when we see a brother or sister sin; go talk to them personally. What are some of the improper ways we sometimes respond, rather than doing this?
3. Read John 10:1-21. What do you admire about Jesus from this passage?

Study (answers follow below)

1. Context—read Matthew 18:1-5 before reading Matthew 18:6-20. How do Jesus' words on humility and dependence in verses 1-5 relate to what he says in verse 16-20?
2. Why does Jesus use such strong figurative language in verses 6-9?
3. What are some ways that someone might lead a disciple astray?
4. In Luke 15:3-7, Jesus told a similar parable to that found in verses 10-14, focusing on seeking the lost. Does Matthew 18:10-14 address seeking after believers or unbelievers? Why, and why is this important?
5. Verses 15-20 are pretty straightforward in telling us what to do when we see a brother or sister sin: go talk to them personally. What are some of the improper ways we respond sometimes, rather than doing this?
6. Read Matthew 18:6-20 one last time and try to tie together the three sections and come up with one sentence that summarizes it.

Answers:

1. In Matthew 18:1-5, Jesus promoted child-like humility and dependence as necessary to enter the kingdom of heaven and the essence of discipleship. Now he is continuing to talk about the "little ones"—i.e., his followers, and warns about those who might cause them to stumble (6-9), how we should reach out to those who stray (calling them "little ones") (10-14), and if they start straying, what the body should do (15-20).
2. To show how important it is to prevent people from leading his disciples astray.
3. Among others: Promoting false doctrine, questioning the validity of the Bible (e.g. university professor), persecuting Christians for their beliefs to tempt them to renounce Christ
4. The context of this passage is what is happening IN the church, and the "little ones" in verse 10 are Jesus' humble followers. It is important that we continue to seek after believers if they start straying from Christ, in addition to our seeking the lost.
5. Ignore their behavior, tell someone else (gossip), or get angry or disgusted, among others.
6. My summary is as follows: To have a healthy church body, we must deal with sin radically.

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Worship

1. Read John 10:1-21. What do you admire about Jesus from this passage?
2. Write out a prayer of worship to Jesus, focusing on the way he is a Good Shepherd.

Answers:

1. Many possible answers, but here are some: I admire the way he sacrifices for his sheep; I admire the way he protects and meets the needs of his sheep; I admire the way he knows his sheep.

Obey

What does obedience to this command require? Think about it and add your own answers to those below:

Answers:

- Be alert to those around us in the body of Christ, rather than just focusing on our own lives and problems;
- Take responsibility for the spiritual well-being of fellow Christians; and
- Do the right thing, the hard thing, of confronting someone when they sin, rather than ignoring the issue or gossiping about them.

Train:

How to help disciple others:

1. Study Matthew 18:6-20 yourself, ask your disciple(s) to study it, then discuss it and pray about it together.
2. Pray for your disciples.
3. Care for other believers IN PARTNERSHIP WITH those you are discipling.