

PLOT TWIST

"1% COMMITTED"

MATTHEW 18:10-14

This Week's Core Competency

Humility – I choose to esteem others above myself. Philippians 2:3-4, *Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.*

Mark 8:31-10:52, at the center of Mark's Gospel, revolves around three predictions of Jesus' death (8:31; 9:31; 10:33-34). Following the first one, Peter rebukes Jesus. Mark tells us that Jesus "spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him" (8:32). Evidently, Peter protested because Jesus' prediction undermined his personal hope for future greatness. That's what the following two incidents suggest. After the second prediction in Galilee, the disciples argued about which of them was the greatest. Mark tells us Jesus questioned them regarding their argument after they arrived in Capernaum, but they avoided answering him. Mark explains, "they kept quiet because on the way they had argued about who was the greatest" (9:34). Jesus, sensing a teachable moment, seized the occasion to tell them, "If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last, and the servant of all" (v. 35), and then stood a child in front of them to illustrate his point. Whoever wants to be first, must serve the very least, those with neither position nor privilege,

*The Father most highly esteems
the most humble of his children.*

– Stuart K. Weber

neither power nor persuasiveness. After the third one, James and John asked Jesus for the right to sit at his right hand and at his left hand in his glory (10:37). And again he told them all, for all twelve were involved in the incident (v. 41), "whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many" (43-45).

Clearly the disciples were ambitious; they sought preeminent positions of power and influence in Christ's kingdom. The noun *ambition* occurs eight times in the New Testament (Rom 15:20; 2Co 12:20; Gal 5:20; Php 1:17; 2:3; 1Th 4:11; Jas 3:14, 16). In all but two instances, it is accompanied by the adjective *selfish*. However, in Romans 15:2 Paul writes, "It's always been my *ambition* to preach the gospel where Christ was not known," and in 1 Thessalonians 4:11 he writes, "make it your *ambition* to lead a quiet life." So ambition is a good thing, but *selfish* ambition is not. The context of the disciples' remarks suggests that they suffered from selfish ambition for which Jesus offered the cure—humble service.

The incident in Matthew 18:1-14 looks a lot like the one in Mark 9:33-37. One commentator remarks: "The disciples' question revealed a serious misconception about the kingdom of heaven. They assumed God's kingdom would be like any other kingdom on earth—one in which rank, status, power, and authority were the marks of greatness. Jesus' discourse corrected this error" (Stuart K. Weber, *Matthew*, HNTC, 286). However, it's humble service that matters in Christ's kingdom. It takes

cont. pg. 2

humility to get into the kingdom. One must set aside pride in his or her good works and believe in Jesus, the King, in order to gain entrance (v. 6). And once in, humility, considering others better than yourself, is the measure of greatness. One must neither cause little ones, unpretentious childlike disciples, to stumble, nor look down on any who may stray from the fold. In fact, every effort must be made to restore them to Christ's community because the Heavenly Father is not willing that any of them should be lost.

day **1** **ENCOUNTER** – read God's word to put yourself in touch with him.

Matthew 18:10-14

10 "See that you do not look down on 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.

Cf., another translation

10 "Take heed that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that in heaven their angels always see the face of My Father who is in heaven. 11 For the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost.

12 "What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them goes astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine and go to the mountains to seek the one that is straying? 13 And if he should find it, assuredly, I say to you, he rejoices more over that sheep than over the ninety-nine that did not go astray. 14 Even so it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish. (NKJV)

EXAMINE – what the passage says before you decide what it means.

- * Circle "look down on" in v. 10.
- * Underline "these little ones" in vv. 10, 14.
- * Circle "their angels" in v. 10.
- * Put parentheses around v. 11 in NKJV.
- * Bracket "What do you think?" in v. 12a.

- * Highlight the *rhetorical* question in v. 12b.
- * Circle "if" in v. 13.
- * Box "in the same way" indicating *comparison* in v. 14.

day 2

EXPLORE – the answer to these questions to better understand what the passage means.

Consult the explanation of the message and the notes to follow if you need help.

1. Read Matthew 18. What is Jesus' fourth discourse about?
2. Jesus refers to "these little ones" in verse 10—*children* or *childlike* disciples? What makes you think so?
3. Do you believe in *guardian* angels? Explain why or why not.
4. Put what "always *see the face* of my Father in heaven" means in your own words.
5. In verse 12a, "What do you think?" is *rhetorical*. Describe its rhetorical effect.
6. *Compare* and *contrast* the parable in verses 12-14 with the one in Luke 15:1-7.
7. "Happier" over finding the *wandering* sheep. How can that be?
8. Explain the *comparison* in verse 14.
9. **Discussion:** Talk about sheep-on-sheep discrimination within the community of disciples.

The Parable of the Lost Sheep in Matthew 18:10-14 is embedded in Jesus' Fourth Discourse and therefore must not be taken out of context. On the structure and theme of the Master's teaching, one commentator writes:

"This discourse falls into two main sections, each prompted by a question from the disciples (vv. 1 and 21). Apart from the insertion of the second question, however, ch. 18 runs as a continuous discourse, like those of chs. 5-7, 10, and 24-25, rather than being punctuated by repeated narrative introductions as in ch. 13. While it is convenient to divide the text into sections for the purpose of commentary, apart from the second question which divides the discourse at v. 21 all other such breaks are relatively arbitrary (see especially comment on v. 6) and should not be allowed to obscure the connected flow of the discourse as a whole.

"The theme of this discourse is not so much individual discipleship (though several of the examples and instructions are expressed in the singular) as the corporate life of those who are joined by their common commitment as disciples, with special attention being given to the strains and tensions to which such a life is exposed through self-concern and lack of care for fellow disciples, through bad examples and errant behavior, and through an unwillingness to forgive as we have been forgiven. These are dangers which concern every disciple" (R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, NICNT, 672).

And while the church, the body of Christ, did not exist prior to Pentecost, clearly a community of Christ followers, which later became the church, did. So at the same time Jesus is speaking to these pre-Easter disciples, he is, in fact, also speaking past them, as it were, to address the future church (see Jack Dean Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story*, 109).

Before interpreting Matthew 18:10-14, a comment or two on parables is in order. First, parables are not all alike; they range from the *simple* to the *complex*. For example, The Good Samaritan is an example of a *complex* parable, what some call "a true parable" (Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, 157). It's a relatively complex story with a skillfully designed plot, detailed setting and dialogue, and subtle characterization. The parables of the Mustard Seed and the Yeast, on the other hand, are what might be called *similitudes* that point to some likeness the kingdom of heaven bears to a mustard seed and yeast. Sayings like "You are the salt of the earth," sometimes called parables or

parabolic sayings, are in reality not parables at all but metaphors. The story of the lost sheep in verses 10-14 is a simple parable. Second, while some would say parables are allegories (Leland Ryken, *How to Read the Bible as Literature*, 145-51, 199-203) and others would argue they are not (Fee and Stuart, 157), all would agree they include allegorical features, i.e., "a substantial number of [their] details have a corresponding 'other' meaning" (Ryken, 145). For example, the man who leaves his ninety-nine sheep to find the one that wandered off refers to God the Father (v. 14).

In reply to the disciples' question, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" (v. 1), Jesus answers, the one who humbly enters the kingdom by faith and humbly serves those childlike disciples who also believe in him (v. 6). Warnings then follow—a warning against causing "one of these little ones who believe in me to sin" (v. 6) and a warning against looking down "on one of these little ones" (v. 10a)—referring in both cases not to children per se but to any in the kingdom regardless of age.

"For" (v. 10b) then introduces Jesus' two-fold rationale behind his warning: (1) the lowliest of his disciples, even the wayward ones, are cared for by angels, who enjoy access to the very presence of God (v. 12); and (2) the Heavenly Father wants to see every childlike disciple who goes astray restored to community (v. 14).

On the "guardian angel" issue attached to the first rationale, one commentator explains: "Many interpreters believe that the last part of verse 10 teaches that God has guardian angels who take special care of small children. However, the context of verse 10 is not talking about small children, but disciples who need to be as humble as small children. Furthermore, the 'angels' in this passage are 'continually' beholding God's 'face in heaven,' not watching the movements of small children on earth. Evidently the angels in view are the supernatural messengers (the normal meaning of 'angels') who assist God's people (Heb. 1:14)" (Thomas L. Constable, "Notes on Matthew," 2017 ed., 308, www.sonicligh.com).

To his first rationale, Jesus adds a second by telling the story of a man and a lost sheep. The parable is similar to one in Luke 15:1-7, but the differences in wording (Luke's sheep is lost; Matthew's wanders away and is straying) and in context (Luke's parable is addressed to Pharisees to justify Jesus' outreach to sinners; Matthew's is addressed to disciples to

encourage them to care for one another) suggest that Luke's parable is *evangelistic* while Matthew's is *pastoral*. Jesus makes the point of his parable obvious in verses 10 and 14 read jointly. One commentator puts the story's details together nicely this way: "The straying sheep represents one of God's 'little ones.' The shepherd in the story is apparently the owner of the flock, not a hired helper—John 10:11-15 draws out the importance of the distinction. So each sheep is important to him, not as a matter of sentimentality but as a financial asset, and to lose one would be serious. One that has wandered off becomes an easy prey to wolves or thieves, and so he takes action to recover it before it is too late. We are not told how he secures the rest of the flock 'on the hills' while he goes off: perhaps by leaving them with a colleague or by enclosing them in a sheepfold? [It's a story, and this detail not germane!] The greater joy over the one recovered

sheep than over the ninety-nine 'good' sheep emphasizes God's pastoral care: it is caused by the recovery, rather than by any inherent superiority in the sheep itself . . . The practical implication of the story will become clear from the verses that follow: if one member of the disciple community is in spiritual danger, action must be taken to 'win' them back (v. 15). To do so is to share the pastoral care of God, the true shepherd of his people. The imagery is thus of an insider who has to be kept from straying outside the fold rather than (as seems to be the primary intention of Luke 15:4-7 in context) of an outsider to be brought in" (France, 687-88).

Verse 14 says it all: "your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should be lost" and clearly, neither should we.

The Message of the Passage

Don't look down on any sheep in Christ's flock, especially those prone to wander, because angels care for them and your Heavenly Father wants to keep them in the fold.

day **EMBRACE** – how God spoke to you in his word.

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James teaches in James 1:22. Reflect on 3 *living questions* to apply what you have learned this week.

- **Journal your answers to the following *living questions*:**

–How is God making himself known to you?

–How does God want to change you?

–How is God calling you to change your world?

notes STUDY – the commentaries to answer the questions.

On chap. 18

"Five times throughout Matthew's story the reader encounters the stereotyped formula: 'And it happened when Jesus finished these words [these parables; instructing his twelve disciples] . . . ' (7:28; 11:1; 13:53; 19:1; 26:1). Each time this formula occurs, it calls attention to the termination of a speech Jesus has delivered. With this formula as guide, one can readily distinguish the five great speeches, or discourses, of Jesus. They are: the Sermon on the Mount (chaps. 5-7); the missionary discourse (9:35-10:42); the discourse in parables (13:1-52); the ecclesiological discourse (17:24-18:35); and the eschatological discourse (chaps. 24-25) . . . The theme that underlies the ecclesiological discourse (18:1-35) is 'life within the community of the church' (18:18-20). The two broad sections that make up this discourse are: (I) On True Greatness as Consisting in Humbling Oneself so as to Serve the Neighbor (18:1-14); and (II) On Gaining and Forgiving the Errant Disciple (18:15-35)" (Kingsbury, 105, 112).

v. 10 **look down**

Cf., "disdain" (NET); "despise" (ESV). "**Look down on** means 'to think little of' or 'to despise.' How might someone be in danger of looking down on one of Jesus' 'little ones'? From the context of the discourse, it might be through causing the believer to sin (18:5-9); by failing to confront a brother's sin or by confronting with a vengeful motive (18:15-20); or by failing to forgive a brother (18:21-35). The Father views all of these actions as 'child abuse,' and he will not tolerate them" (Weber, 289).

v. 10 **little ones**

"It is uncertain whether the little ones are children or lowly disciples (his 'common people'). Either makes good sense, and the following reference to angels does not clear it up. Perhaps we should understand Jesus to be speaking first of the children that started him on this section of teaching [v. 2], but now to be using words that have relevance to all this lowly followers" (Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 464). "The expression 'little ones' here are disciples who have humbled themselves to be like powerless children (cf. 18:2-6), although there may be dual attention paid to literal children among the disciples" (Michael J. Wilkins, *The NIV Application Commentary: Matthew*, 615).

v. 10 **their angels**

Cf., Heb 1:14. "It is possible that here guardian angels are meant (NEB translates 'guardian angels'), with a particular angel watching over each little one. But if this were meant, it would point to something so significant that we would expect references to guardian angels elsewhere, and we do not find them. Calvin regards the suggestion that guardian angels are in mind as 'weak' and prefers the idea that 'to the angels is committed the care of the whole Church and that they succor individual members so far as their necessity and situation demands' (II, p. 218)" (Morris, 464). "Carson cites approvingly B. B. Warfield's view that the 'angels' of the 'little ones' are the spirits of deceased believers after death who are always in the presence of the heavenly Father ('Matthew,' 401). But the majority of commentators rightly emphasize that the context speaks of disciples and their protection by angels in this present life (cf. Morris, Matthew, 464-6; Davies and Allison, Matthew, 2:768-72)" (Wilkins, 615; see France, 686-87).

v. 11 **see NKJV**

"The Son of Man came to save what was lost" is omitted from most important manuscripts (see margin). The NIV(c)2011 includes the verse number in brackets [11] with the note, "Some manuscripts include here the words of Luke 19:10."

v. 12a **what do you think?**

Lit., "what does it seem to you?" Jesus invites the hearers to reflect on his parable. "What do you think? Was a common way for a Jewish teacher to start his students' minds working over a mental problem, as he introduced a new concept of teaching (17:25; 21:28; 22:42)" (Weber, 289).

v. 12b **will he not . . .**

"The rhetorical question implies an affirmative response in the Greek: of course that is the way one would act" (Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew*, NAC, 276).

v. 12 **hundred sheep**

"Since shepherds often worked with one another as their sheep grazed the hillsides, to leave the ninety-nine is of no real concern, since other shepherds would keep an eye on them. A hundred sheep is an average size for a flock, easily cared for by a shepherd . . . Note that the similar parable in Luke 15:3-7 has the lost sheep representing unsaved sinners, while here it implies a believer who has gone astray" (Wilkins, 617).

v. 13 **if**

"If" in v. 13 introduces a third-class condition, which allows for the possibility that the shepherd will not find the sheep" (Blomberg, 277). "Some straying believers will return to the path of righteousness and the fellowship of the community (18:15-17a), but some will continue their own way, away from the community, away from the Father, into self-destruction (18:17b)" (Weber, 290).

v. 13 **happier**

"The reality of human existence is that greater joy often does follow the recovery of those who had previously caused greater distress" (Blomberg, 277).

v. 14 **lost**

I.e., no longer belong to the community of disciples.

Family Talk

Encouragement from one parent's heart to another

There are many ways to teach our kids humility. I like this list from www.allprodad.com: (1) Modeling. Teach by consistent example. (2) Build them up. This comes from a position of belief, strength and self-assurance. (3) Encourage and help them to be the very best they can be. Humility works best when your child has actually achieved something. (4) Make sure they understand where their real value comes from. (5) Never humiliate or bully your kids. (6) Expose your child to great teachers and their stories. Jesus is our greatest example of humility. (7) Teach them to serve people they know and don't know. (8) Coach them on how to respond. Teach them to say, "please" and "thank you." (9) Teach them how to apologize. The well-timed and sincere apology is a key component of humility. (10) Teach them to give thanks. A genuinely grateful heart is a key building block for humility. (<http://www.allprodad.com/10-ways-to-teach-your-children-humility>) In Matthew 18, Jesus responded to the question of "who is the greatest" by teaching His disciples some principles of humility. Jesus compared humility to childlikeness. A child, in that culture, would not have been vying for attention or status. He also described humility as a shepherd looking for His one lost sheep. Every sheep has value and a humble shepherd will not overlook one in need. There are many character traits we desire our kids develop as they grow. However, humility should be close to the top of the list—a rare and Christlike quality indeed!

What Does The Bible Say

Weekly Verse: Read Mt 18:10-14

1. Who is speaking in this passage? To whom is He talking (v.1)?
2. What question does Jesus ask in verse 12?
3. How does He answer it in verse 13?

What Do You Think

Read verse 14. How is Jesus like the shepherd?

What R U Going To Do

Humility causes us to think about others before we think of ourselves. Think of a way you can bless someone this week and not expect anything in return. Do it and then tell your small group how it goes next Sunday.

Core Comp

Humility - I choose to make others more important than me.

Memory Verse

Psalm 119:9 - *How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word.*

KIDPIX COUPON

I memorized my verse _____, completed *Scrolls* _____, brought Bible _____, brought a friend _____.

Series Discipleship Challenge located in KidPix Store.

Child's name _____ Grade _____ Parent's signature _____

Earn 1 token by completing the PantegoKids Bible study and another token by reciting the memory verse.

Questions: Kids@pantego.org

30 CORE COMPETENCIES

10 CORE BELIEFS

Trinity 2 Corinthians 13:14

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Salvation By Grace Ephesians 2:8-9

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

Authority of the Bible 2 Timothy 3:16-17

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Personal God Psalm 121:1-2

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Identity in Christ John 1:12

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Church Ephesians 4:15-16

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Humanity John 3:16

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Compassion Psalm 82:3-4

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

Eternity John 14:1-4

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

Stewardship 1 Timothy 6:17-19

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

10 CORE PRACTICES

Worship Psalm 95:1-7

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

Prayer Psalm 66:16-20

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Bible Study Hebrews 4:12

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-mindedness Matthew 6:33

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts Romans 12:4-6

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Biblical Community Acts 2:44-47

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Giving Away My Time Colossians 3:17

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Money 2 Corinthians 8:7

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Faith Ephesians 6:19-20

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Life Romans 12:1

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

10 CORE VIRTUES

Joy John 15:11

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace Philippians 4:6-7

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

Faithfulness Proverbs 3:3-4

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Self-Control Titus 2:11-13

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Humility Philippians 2:3, 4

I choose to esteem others above myself.

Love 1 John 4:10-12

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Patience Proverbs 14:29

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness 1 Thess. 5:15

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

Gentleness Philippians 4:5

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Hope Hebrews 6:19-20

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

About the Authors

Tom Bulick (M.A. in Educational Leadership, Eastern Michigan University, Th.M. in Old Testament, and Ph.D. in Bible Exposition, Dallas Theological Seminary). For more than forty years, Tom has served as pastor, faculty member, and administrator. Tom was Vice President for Student Life and Associate Professor of Religious Studies at Trinity Western University (Vancouver, B.C.) for twelve years before accepting the position of Spiritual Formation Pastor at Pantego Bible Church in 1998. He and his wife Ruth have one son, Zach.

Wendy Hollabaugh (B.S.W. University of Texas at Arlington) is the Children's Minister at Pantego Bible Church. Wendy has over ten years of experience in Children's Ministry. She has a passion for leading families to connect with God and each other. She enjoys creating compelling environments where kids fall in love with God and His Truth. Wendy and her husband, Greg, are also involved in their own personal youth ministry as they are training their three teenagers, Hannah, Aaron and Noah.



8001 Anderson Blvd.
Ft. Worth, TX 76120
1-866-PANTEGO
Fax 817-275-6403
www.pantego.org

The mission of THE SCROLLS is to help you Belong, Become, and go Beyond as follower of Jesus Christ through your own active reading of the Bible. Send any questions or comments you may have about this lesson to Tom Bulick. His e-mail address is tbulick@pantego.org.