

Matthew 18 Commentary

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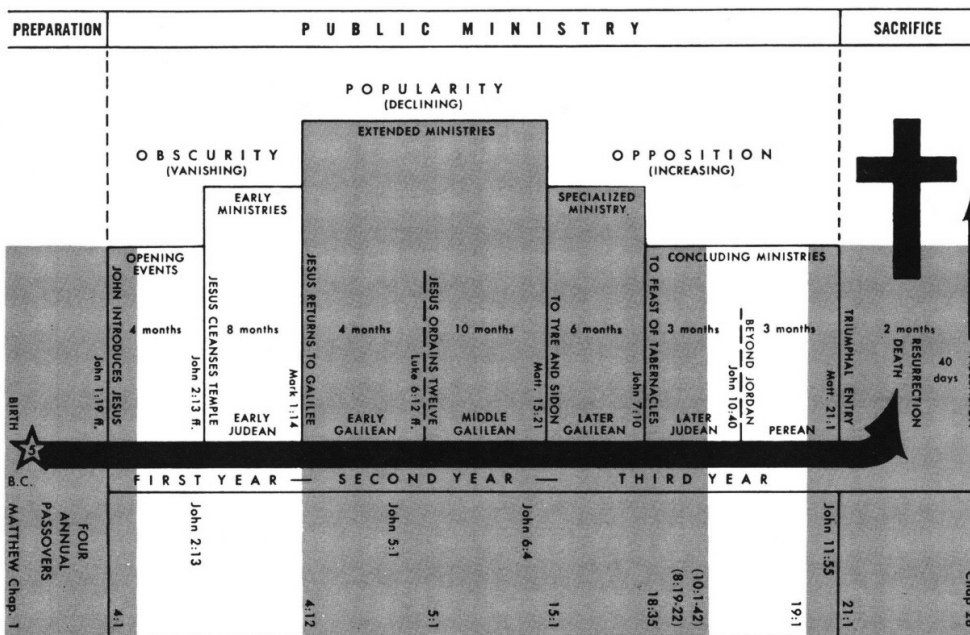
[Matthew 18:35](#)

MATTHEW CONTAINS 15 PARABLES 20 MIRACLES KEY VERSES: 1:1 "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham." 2:2 "Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him."

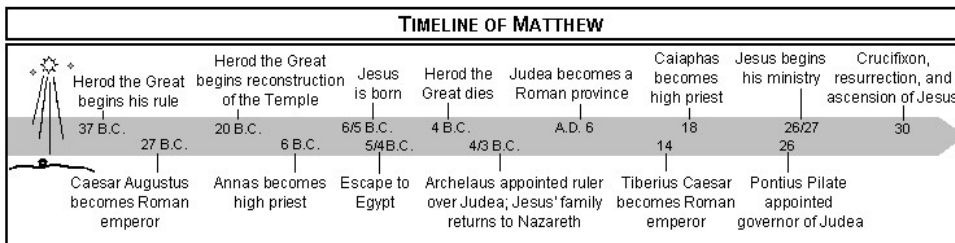


Click chart to enlarge
 Charts from Jensen's Survey of the NT - used by permission
 Another Chart from Swindoll

THE LIFE OF JESUS AS COVERED BY MATTHEW (shaded area)



Click chart to enlarge



Source: Borrow Ryrie Study Bible

PLEASE NOTE - THIS PAGE IS INCOMPLETE AND IS UNDER CONSTRUCTION - JULY, 2024 EXPECTED TO BE COMPLETED IN 2024

Matthew 18:1 At that time the disciples came to Jesus and said, "Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"

- the same: Mk 9:33-37
- Who: Mt 20:20-28 23:11 Mk 9:34 10:35-45 Lu 9:46-48 22:24-27 Ro 12:10 Php 2:3
- in: Mt 3:2 5:19,20 7:21 Mk 10:14,15

At that time the disciples ([mathetes](#)) came to Jesus and said, “Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?”

Matthew Henry Concise - Mt 18:1-6. Christ spoke many words of his sufferings, but only one of his glory; yet the disciples fasten upon that, and overlook the others. Many love to hear and speak of privileges and glory, who are willing to pass by the thoughts of work and trouble. Our Lord set a little child before them, solemnly assuring them, that unless they were converted and made like little children, they could not enter his kingdom. Children, when very young, do not desire authority, do not regard outward distinctions, are free from malice, are teachable, and willingly dependent on their parents. It is true that they soon begin to show other dispositions, and other ideas are taught them at an early age; but these are marks of childhood, and render them proper emblems of the lowly minds of true Christians. Surely we need to be daily renewed in the spirit of our minds, that we may become simple and humble, as little children, and willing to be the least of all. Let us daily study this subject, and examine our own spirits.

Disciples (3101) [mathetes](#) from [manthano](#) = to learn which Vine says is "from a root *math*, indicating thought accompanied by endeavor". Gives us our English = "*mathematics*" - see [matheteuo](#)) describes a person who learns from another by instruction, whether formal or informal. Another sources says *mathetes* is from from **math**- which speaks of "mental effort that thinks something through" and thus describes is a learner; a follower who learns the doctrines and the lifestyle of the one they follow. Discipleship includes the idea of one who intentionally learns by inquiry and observation (cf [inductive Bible study](#)) and thus **mathetes** is more than a mere pupil. A **mathetes** describes an adherent of a teacher. As discussed below **mathetes** itself has no spiritual connotation, and it is used of superficial followers of Jesus as well as of genuine believers. The Lord calls everyone to grow as a disciple (a learner of Christ; cf. also Mt 11:29,30), one who lives in faith, who lives in and by His Word in the power of the Holy Spirit.

QUESTION - [Who is greatest in the kingdom?](#)

ANSWER - The greatest person in [the kingdom](#) will of course be Jesus. After that, ranking the greatest is full of surprises. Matthew 18:1–5 records, “At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, ‘Who, then, is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?’ [Jesus] called a little child to him, and placed the child among them. And he said: ‘Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me’” (see also Mark 9:35–37; Luke 9:46–48).

This incident occurred after the Transfiguration and after Jesus’ second prediction of His death. Jesus had also just spoken about paying temple taxes, essentially claiming exemption as the Son of God yet miraculously providing for both Peter’s tax and His own so as not to cause offense. Too, Jesus had healed a demon-possessed boy whom His disciples were unable to heal (Matthew 17:14–21). Jesus’ power was evident, and the disciples recognized Him as Messiah and King. Evidently, they were interested in what their roles would be in Jesus’ kingdom. Rather than provide qualifications for the greatest or talk about a hierarchical structure, Jesus said those who became like children—humble—were the greatest (Matthew 18:4).

Interestingly, after Jesus talks about the greatest being like a child, John tells Jesus that he had tried to stop others who were casting out demons in Jesus’ name (Mark 9:38; Luke 9:49). Apparently, the lesson had not quite sunken in, or perhaps John was convicted by Jesus’ words and chose to confess his mistake. Jesus explained that what mattered was not who was doing the works but the Name in which the works were being done. It is God who deserves the glory, not an elite group of His followers. We also see in Matthew 20 and Mark 10 a request from John and James to sit with Jesus in His kingdom. Jesus replied by asking them if they were able to suffer as He was going to suffer. He then said, “To sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared by my Father” (Matthew 20:23). Being great in God’s kingdom is not about prestige or privilege. Rather, it involves responsibility and sacrifice. Jesus told His disciples, “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it. What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father’s glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what they have done” (Matthew 16:24–27). To be great is to serve self-sacrificially. Being great in God’s kingdom is about giving oneself for the sake of God’s glory and for the benefit of others.

Luke 22 tells about another dispute among the disciples about who was the greatest, this time during the [Last Supper](#). Jesus said to them, “The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves Benefactors. But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves. For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves” (Luke 22:25–27). This is the same night Jesus performed the service of the lowest of servants by [washing His disciples’ feet](#). John 13 tells us Jesus did this because of His love for the disciples and also fully knowing His own relationship with

the Father. Again, we see that the greatest is not the one with power or prestige, but the one who is secure in the Father's love and willing to serve.

Consistent in Jesus' teaching is that His kingdom is not like the kingdoms of this world. Humans tend to be concerned with social status, political clout, and pecking order. We tend to rank people according to how things look to us in this world, but Jesus warned that using earthly criteria will never give us an accurate picture of rank in God's kingdom. Human judgment will give way to God's some day: "Many who are first will be last, and many who are last will be first" (Matthew 19:30).

Rather than strive to be the greatest in this world, we should simply trust in Jesus and serve others, thereby serving Him. Positions of power are meant to be positions of service. Rather than lord power over others, we are to use any influence or resources we have to serve others. The greatest in the kingdom are those who have the humility of a child and the meekness of Jesus. "Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth" (Matthew 5:5). What is valued in God's kingdom is loving the way He loved us—selflessly.

Matthew 18:2 And He called a child to Himself and set him before them,

- Mt 19:13,14 1Ki 3:7 Jer 1:7 Mk 9:36,37

And He called a child ([paidion](#)) to Himself and set him before them,

Child ([3813](#)) **paidion** diminutive of pais = child) is a little child of either sex, ranging from an infant (Mt 19:13, 14; Mk 10:13-15; Lk 18:16, 17, etc) to children who are older (Mt 11:16; Mt 14:21; 15:38; 18:2-5, etc) **Paidion** is used repeatedly of the infant Jesus in Matthew (Mt 2:8-9, 11, 13-14, 20-21) **Paidion** is used as a term of comparison, Jesus making the point that we are to become like a little child (Mk 10:15 Lk 18:17), the implication of course being that this is not an infant but a child old enough to express saving faith in the Messiah!. **Paidion** stresses the need for moral training and guidance. As a term of address, **paidion** occurs in the NT only in 1John 2:14, 18 and John 21:5.

Barclay - teknion indicates a child young in age and paidion a child young in experience, and, therefore, in need of training and discipline.

Another has said that teknion emphasizes more the relationship, the dependence or weakness of the infant, the community of nature and kinsmanship between parent and child, while paidion stresses the immaturity of the child, the need to be under instruction or direction.

QUESTION - [Does the Bible instruct us to have childlike faith? SEE VIDEO](#)

ANSWER - Unquestionably, [faith](#) is the essence of the Christian life. Faith is exhorted throughout the Bible and is presented as an absolute necessity. In fact, "without faith, it is impossible to please God" (Hebrews 11:6). The entire chapter of Hebrews 11 is about faith and those who possessed it. Faith is a gift from God, as we see in Ephesians 2:8-9 and not something we come up with on our own. All Christians have received the gift of faith from God, and faith is part of the armor of God—the shield with which we protect ourselves from the "flaming arrows of the evil one" (Ephesians 6:16).

The Bible never exhorts us to have "childlike" faith, at least not in so many words. In Matthew 18:2 Jesus says that we must "become as little children" in order to enter the kingdom of God. The context of Jesus' statement is the disciples' question, "Who, then, is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" (verse 1). In response, Jesus "called a little child to him, and placed the child among them. And he said: 'Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me'" (verses 2-5).

So, as the disciples focus on what constitutes "greatness" in heaven, Jesus provides a new perspective: the way "up" is "down." Meekness is required (cf. Matthew 5:5). Jesus exhorts the disciples (and us) to seek to possess a childlike modesty in addition to their faith. Those who willingly take the lowest position are the [greatest](#) in heaven's eyes. A young child is destitute of ambition, pride, and haughtiness and is therefore a good example for us. Children are characteristically humble and teachable. They aren't prone to pride or hypocrisy. Humility is a virtue rewarded by God; as James says, "Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up" (James 4:10).

Although faith is not mentioned in Matthew 18:1-5, we know that it isn't just humility that ushers a person into heaven; it is faith in the Son of God. A humble, unpretentious faith could rightly be called a "childlike faith." When Jesus wanted to bless the children, He said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Truly I tell you,

anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it" (Mark 10:14–15). How does a child receive a gift? With openness, honesty, and unbridled joy. That type of happy authenticity should be a hallmark of our faith as we receive God's gift in Christ.

Of course, children are easily fooled and led astray. In their artlessness they tend to miss the truth and be drawn to myths and fantasies. But that is not what is meant by having a childlike faith. Jesus promoted a humble, honest faith in God, and He used the innocence of a child as an example. Emulating the faith of children, we should simply take God at His Word. As children trust their earthly fathers, we should trust that our "Father in heaven [will] give good gifts to those who ask him" (Matthew 7:11).

Related Resources:

- [Is the inner child a biblical concept?](#)
- [Why do so many people struggle with a lack of faith?](#)
- [Can faith really move mountains?](#)
- [What does the Bible say about faith?](#)

Matthew 18:3 and said, "Truly I say to you, unless you are converted and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.

- **Truly:** Mt 5:18 6:2,5,16 Jn 1:51 3:3
- **Unless:** Mt 13:15 Ps 51:10-13 131:2 Isa 6:10 Mk 4:12 Lu 22:32 Ac 3:19 Ac 28:27 Jas 5:19,20
- **and become:** Mk 10:14,15 Lu 18:16,17 1Co 14:20 1Pe 2:2
- **enter:** Mt 5:20 19:23 Lu 13:24 Jn 3:5 Ac 14:22 2Pe 1:11

CHILDLIKE FAITH GAINS ENTRANCE TO KINGDOM

Truly ([amen](#)) I say to you, unless you are converted ([strepho](#) - voluntary turn from sin) and become like children ([paidion](#)), you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.

Henry Morris - as little children. One does not receive salvation by bargaining or arguing, although the prior clearing of obstacles to faith is helpful and often necessary. In the last analysis, however, we are saved through faith--unconditional faith--like the unquestioning trust of a little child.

Believer's Study Bible - Childlikeness, not childishness, is essential to conversion and hence to entrance into the kingdom of God. Children are normally characterized by simplicity, profound trustfulness, and honesty. Such qualities in a man lead him to Christ and conversion.

NET NOTE - The point of the comparison become like little children has more to do with a child's trusting spirit, as well as willingness to be dependent and receive from others, than any inherent humility the child might possess.

Converted (return)(4762) [strepho](#) means to turn, to turn about. The first use is here in Mt 5:39 where a literal turning of the cheek signifies an act of non-retaliation. Jesus made several literal turns (in fact most of the literal uses in the NT describe Jesus turning), some so dramatic we can picture them in our mind (See Mt 9:22, 16:23, Lk 7:9, 44, 9:55, 10:23, 14:25, 22:61, 23:28, Jn 1:38). Jesus used strepho figuratively to refer to conversion (Mt 18:3 = turning of one's heart to Jesus, the antithesis is seen in Acts 7:39!). Strepho describes Judas' return after remorse but his return was too late for conversion (Mt 27:3, cp Jn 12:40). In Acts 7:39 we read of the Hews in the OT after coming out of Egypt "in their hearts **turned back** to Egypt!" Strepho then describes God turning away from His rebellious people (Acts 7:42, cf Isaiah 63:10) Of Mary seeing Jesus after His resurrection (Jn 20:14, 16). Paul and Barnabas when repudiated by the Jews said "we are **turning** to the Gentiles" or taking the Gospel to them. In Rev 11:6 the two witnesses "have power over the waters to turn them into blood." (cf "the staff that was turned into a serpent" in Ex 7:15)

Strepho - 21v - Matt. 5:39; 7:6; 9:22; 16:23; 18:3; 27:3; Lk. 7:9,44; 9:55; 10:23; 14:25; 22:61; 23:28; Jn. 1:38; 12:40; 20:14,16; Acts 7:39,42; 13:46; Rev. 11:6

QUESTION - [Why did Jesus say, "Let the little children come to me"?](#)

ANSWER - At one point during Jesus' earthly ministry, some [children](#) were brought to Him so that He could lay hands on them and pray for them (Matthew 19:13). The disciples tried to turn the children away, but Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and

do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these" (verse 14). Mark 10:14 (KJV) adds that Jesus was "much displeased" with His disciples for their actions. He then blessed the children (Matthew 19:15).

There are two potentially puzzling elements to this story. First, why did the disciples try to keep the children away from Jesus? Also, what did Jesus mean when he said, "Let the little children come to me . . . for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these"?

It is important to remember that children in Jesus' time were not necessarily regarded as special or particularly endearing, except to their own parents. Many cultures today look on children as especially sweet, innocent, and even wise. Jewish culture in that day probably did not see children in such optimistic terms. The disciples most likely rebuked those bringing the children to Jesus because they felt bringing children to Jesus was socially improper or because they thought the children would bother Jesus. It is likely that their move to hinder the parents from bringing their children to Jesus was motivated not by unkindness but by a desire to respect Jesus' position as a teacher. But Jesus wanted the children to come to Him. He said, "Let the children come," because He wanted to bless them.

It is wonderful to think of Jesus interacting with a child. Children are needy and dependent, and they know almost nothing about life. They function mostly on emotion rather than reason. Yet Jesus said, "The kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these" (Matthew 19:14). Scripture often compares believers to children (e.g., Luke 10:21; Galatians 4:19; 1 John 4:4). In fact, Jesus told those following Him, "Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:3-4; cf. Mark 10:15).

Jesus' command to "let the little children come to me" reveals several truths: 1) Children need to be blessed by the Lord. 2) The Lord wants to bless children. 3) Parents should be encouraged to bring their children to Jesus at an early age and teach them His ways. 4) Jesus has regard for the weakest and most vulnerable among us. 5) No matter how compassionate Jesus' followers are, Jesus Himself is more compassionate still. 6) Those who come to Christ must do so in childlike [humility](#), [faith](#), and simplicity.

Like children who implicitly trust their parents, believers trust God. Faith is not about knowing everything or doing everything right. It is about knowing that, no matter what happens, our Father will take care of us. That trust in Him, even when life is terrifying and sad and makes no sense, is what makes a believer like a child. "All those the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away" (John 6:37). God loves His children.

Related Resources:

- [How did Jesus interact with children?](#)
- [What does it mean that Jesus loves the little children?](#)

Matthew 18:4 "Whoever then humbles himself as this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven."

- humble: Mt 23:11,12 Ps 131:1,2 Isa 57:15 Lu 14:11 1Pe 5:5 Jas 4:10
- greatest: Mt 18:1 20:26,27 Mk 10:43 Lu 9:48

Whoever then humbles himself as this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven

Ryrie - humbles himself. The sense is "whoever humbles himself until he becomes as this little child--exhibiting trust, openness, and eagerness to learn." These are the childlike qualities that constitute greatness.

Matthew 18:5 "And whoever receives one such child in My name receives Me;"

- receive: Mt 10:40-42 25:40,45 Mk 9:41 Lu 9:48 17:1,2
- receiveth: Mk 9:37 Jn 13:20 Ga 4:14

And whoever receives ([dechomai](#)) one such child in My name receives Me - In context "receives" equates with believes in Jesus.

NET NOTE - This verb [dechomai](#), is a term of hospitality

Receives (1209) [dechomai](#) = [middle voice](#) of a primary verb) means to to receive something offered or transmitted by another (Luke

2:28). To take something into one's hand and so to grasp (Luke 2:28, 22:17). To be receptive to someone (Mt 10:14, 40). To take a favorable attitude toward something (Mt 11:14). **Dechomai** means to accept with a deliberate and ready reception of what is offered, to receive kindly and so to take to oneself what is presented or brought by another. It means to welcome as a teacher, a friend, or a guest into one's house. The word describes accepting persons with open arms, minds, and hearts, even going beyond normally expected gracious hospitality. The term was often used of welcoming honored guests and meeting their needs with special attention and kindness.

Matthew 18:6 but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him to have a heavy millstone hung around his neck, and to be drowned in the depth of the sea.

- offend: Ps 105:15 Zec 2:8 Mk 9:42 Lu 17:1,2 Ac 9:5 Ro 14:13-15,21 Ro 15:1-3 1Co 8:9-13 10:32,33 2Th 1:6-9
- little: Mt 18:10,14 Zec 13:7 Lu 17:2

Related Passages:

Mark 9:42+ "Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe to stumble, it would be better for him if, with a heavy millstone hung around his neck, he had been cast into the sea.

DON'T STUMBLE OVER THIS WARNING AGAINST STUMBLING

But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble ([skandalizo](#)) (NET = "causes to sin")

it would be better for him to have a heavy millstone hung around his neck, and to be drowned in the depth of the sea.

Henry Morris - Any person who tries to undermine the faith of young believers, or seeks to lead a child into sin or unbelief is in grave trouble. "Woe to that man!" (Matthew 18:7).

NET NOTE - "the millstone of a donkey." This refers to a large flat stone turned by a donkey in the process of grinding grain. The same term is used in the parallel account in Mark 9:42. The punishment of drowning with a heavy weight attached is extremely gruesome and reflects Jesus' views concerning those who cause others who believe in him to sin. **Depth** - The term translated "open" here (pelagei) refers to the open sea as opposed to a stretch of water near a coastline. A similar English expression would be "the high seas."

QUESTION - [Who are the "little ones" in Matthew 18:6?](#)

ANSWER - In Matthew 18:6, Jesus issues a stern warning to those who cause others to sin: "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" (see also Mark 9:42 and Luke 17:1–2). The "little ones" are true disciples of Jesus, whether young or old, who are identified by their [childlike trust](#) in God. This interpretation is substantiated by the immediate and wider context of the Gospel of Matthew.

Matthew 18 begins with the disciples asking, "Who, then, is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" (Matthew 18:1). After placing a child among them (verse 2), Jesus answers, "Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me" (verses 3–4). Jesus used the child as a visual aid to illustrate His point about humility and faith. So, the text is not necessarily about children, although it could be. Instead, it is about becoming *like* children and entering the kingdom of heaven. It is about being a true disciple of Jesus.

The wider context also substantiates this interpretation. In Matthew 10:42, Jesus says, "If anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones who is my disciple, truly I tell you, that person will certainly not lose their reward." True disciples show kindness and hospitality to one another (cf. Galatians 6:10), even in small ways such as offering a cup of cold water. This act of kindness may seem insignificant, but Jesus promises that it will not go unnoticed or unrewarded.

Just as there are positive rewards for whoever shows kindness and hospitality to other disciples, there are also grave consequences for whoever causes one of these little ones—those who believe in Christ—to stumble. The punishment is severe and graphic. Jesus says that it would be better for that person to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea.

A [millstone](#) is a large, heavy, circular stone that was used in ancient times to grind grain into flour. The milling process used two stones: a bed stone and a runner stone. The bed (or base) stone remained stationary, while the runner (or top) stone was turned by an animal, such as an ox or donkey, walking in a circle around the lower stone.

The image of someone sinking to the bottom of the sea with a millstone around his neck is a call to take this warning seriously. If we lead others astray and cause them to sin, we do great harm to them and to ourselves. Jesus promises that such an offense will not go unnoticed or unpunished. In fact, the punishment would be so terrible that it would be better to drown in the sea than to face it.

As Christians, we should be mindful of how our actions impact others, especially those who are in the household of God. It is our responsibility to be a positive influence in their lives, helping them to [grow spiritually](#) and avoid anything that could cause them to sin. If we do cause others to sin, we should confess our wrongdoing and seek forgiveness, both from God and the ones we wronged. In doing so, we demonstrate that we are true disciples of Jesus (John 13:35).

Stumble (4624) [skandalizo](#) from [skandalon](#)= a trap = put a snare or stumbling block in way; English = scandalize = to offend the moral sense of) means to put a snare (in the way), hence to cause to stumble, to give offense. To entrap, trip up, or entice to sin, offend. So here in Mt 5:29-30 **skandalizo** is used in the active sense which conveys the idea to cause to do wrong, to entice to commit sin. In the passive sense it means to be led into sin, to be caused to do wrong. In the passive some uses mean to be offended (Mt 11:6), the idea being that one is taking offense at Jesus and/or refusing to believe in Him. Finally, [skandalizo](#) can mean to furnish an occasion for some to be shocked, angered, or offended (Mt 17:27). **Skandalizo** is derived from [skandalon](#) which refers to stick in a trap on which the bait is placed and which springs up and shuts the trap at the touch of the careless, unwary animal. It follows that the idea is to put a stumbling block or impediment in one's way, upon which another may trip and fall. Jesus' point is that anything or anyone that morally traps us (by our senses, visual, touch, and by expansion not excluding the other senses such as hearing), and causes us to fall into sin should be eliminated, radically and quickly. If we do not make every necessary effort to control our surroundings, what we watch and read, who we keep company with and speak with, etc, then those things will control us. If you cannot control something, it needs to be "jettisoned" to keep the boat afloat so to speak.

Swindoll - The original and most literal meaning is "to spring back and forth" or "to slam closed," as with a spring-loaded animal trap. Therefore, the verb generally means "to close something in." The figurative use of this word is rare outside of Jewish and Christian writings, but not altogether absent. One Greek playwright describes an unjust accuser dragging innocent men into court and "laying traps" with his questions. (Aristophanes, *Acharnenses* 687) Paul frequently used the corresponding noun ([skandalon](#)) to describe Jesus as an intellectual and moral trap for any who oppose God and think themselves righteous (Rom. 9:33; 11:9; 1 Cor. 1:23; Gal. 5:11). (Borrow [Insights on John](#))

Matthew 18:7 "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!"

- unto: Ge 13:7 1Sa 2:17,22-25 2Sa 12:14 Lu 17:1 Ro 2:23,24 1Ti 5:14,15 6:1 Tit 2:5,8 2Pe 2:2
- for: Mk 13:7 Ac 1:16 1Co 11:19 2Th 2:3-12 1Ti 4:1-3 2Ti 3:1-5 2Ti 4:3,4 Jude 1:4
- but: Mt 13:41,42 23:13-28 26:24 Jn 17:12 Ac 1:18-20 2Pe 2:3,15-17 Jude 1:11-13 Rev 2:14,15,20-23 19:20,2

Woe to the world because of its stumbling blocks ([skandalon](#))! For it is inevitable that stumbling blocks come; but woe to that man through whom the stumbling block ([skandalon](#)) comes

Matthew Henry Concise - Mt 18:7-14. Considering the cunning and malice of Satan, and the weakness and depravity of men's hearts, it is not possible but that there should be offences. God permits them for wise and holy ends, that those who are sincere, and those who are not, may be made known. Being told before, that there will be seducers, tempters, persecutors, and bad examples, let us stand on our guard. We must, as far as lawfully we may, part with what we cannot keep without being entangled by it in sin. The outward occasions of sin must be avoided. If we live after the flesh, we must die. If we, through the Spirit, mortify the deeds of the body, we shall live. Christ came into the world to save souls, and he will reckon severely with those who hinder the progress of others who are setting their faces heavenward. And shall any of us refuse attention to those whom the Son of God came to seek and to save? A father takes care of all his children, but is particularly tender of the little ones.

Stumbling (4625) [skandalon](#) (from a root meaning jump up, snap shut) was originally the piece of wood that kept open a trap for animals. Outside the Bible it is not used metaphorically, though its derivative [skandalethron](#) (e.g. a trap set through questions) is so used. The English word **scandal** is derived from the noun via the Lat. **scandalum**. Thus [skandalon](#) was literally, that movable part

of a trap on which the bait was laid, and when touched caused the trap to close on its prey. **Skandalon** thus came to mean any entanglement of the foot. Figuratively, as used most often in Scripture, [skandalon](#) refers to any person or thing by which one is drawn into error or sin. (but see more detailed notes below)

Skandalon is used 15 times: **KJV** (15) - occasion of stumbling, 1; occasion to fall, 1; offence, 9; stumbling block, 3; thing that offends, 1; **NAS** (15) - cause for stumbling, 1; hindrances, 1; offense, 2; stumbling block, 7; stumbling blocks, 4 Matt. 13:41; 16:23; 18:7; Lk. 17:1; Rom. 9:33; 11:9; 14:13; 16:17; 1 Co. 1:23; Gal. 5:11; 1 Pet. 2:8; 1 Jn. 2:10; Rev. 2:14

QUESTION - [What does it mean to be a stumbling block to someone else?](#)

ANSWER - In the midst of a series of laws regulating the treatment of others, we find “Do not curse the deaf or put a stumbling block in front of the blind, but fear your God. I am the LORD” (Leviticus 19:14). Obviously, putting a rock or brick in front of a blind person is cruel, but the New Testament takes the practical adage and turns it into a spiritual metaphor.

After Peter rebuked Jesus, denying the crucifixion would take place, Jesus said, “Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God’s interests, but man’s” (Matthew 16:23). Peter, under the influence of Satan, tried to distract Jesus from what He had come to do. He tried to make Jesus “stumble” in His path to the crucifixion. Paul reiterates the idea: “...but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness” (1 Corinthians 1:23). The idea that the Messiah would be crucified was a stumbling block to the Jews—something that tripped up their beliefs of what the Messiah would be like.

But most of the time, a “stumbling block” refers to something or someone who keeps another from a relationship with God. In Matthew 18:5-7, Jesus says, “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 would be better for him to have a heavy millstone hung around his neck, and to 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!” Just as it would be better to chop off one’s hand than to sin (Matthew 18:8), in the Kingdom perspective, it would be better to drown than lead a child into sin. Similarly, in Romans 14:13, Paul points out that God alone judges; we are not to judge others but be concerned that we are not the ones leading them into the sin we’re so concerned about.

Stumbling blocks also arise when the path is a little more ambiguous. The mature Christian life allows some freedoms that seem contrary to an obedient, disciplined faith. The Corinthians were concerned about eating meat sacrificed to idols. Modern issues include drinking alcohol in moderation or dancing. “But take care that this liberty of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak” (1 Corinthians 8:9). Our liberty is not worth another’s walk with God. If something God allows would lead another to sin, we need to avoid it. We are given great freedom as Christians, but the greatest is the freedom to consider others’ welfare over our own.

Refraining from being a stumbling block means not leading another into sin. How we accomplish this depends on the situation and the hearts of those around us. The security we have in God’s love and provision, both now and eternally, allows us to show concern to those who are weaker—those who need specific encouragement to understand who God is. In some situations, that means living in those freedoms to exemplify that God is a God of grace. In others, it means disciplining ourselves to building up weaker believers and not pushing them into a liberty they’re not ready for. But, always, it means not encouraging another to act in a way the Bible specifically identifies as sin.

QUESTION - [What does it mean that we are not to cause others to stumble?](#)

ANSWER - The concept of not causing others to stumble is found in Romans 14 and 1 Corinthians 8. In these chapters, Paul talks about personal convictions and our responsibility to our fellow believers in Christ. He highlights several topics over which believers have disagreements—food, drink, and sacred days. In Paul’s time, the disagreements were mostly concerning Jewish law versus the new freedom found in Christ. We experience much the same type of disagreements today, even over the same topics, to which we could add things like body piercings, tattoos, clothing style, movies, video games, books, and alcohol/tobacco. These are all areas for which the Bible does not provide specific instruction and yet are areas in which many feel conviction. Some of these things can lead to worldliness, sin, impurity or even just become an obsession/idol. But, on the flip side, legalism and avoidance of anything the world has to offer can also become an idol.

Paul tells the Romans, “So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God. Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brother’s way . . . So whatever you believe about these things keep between yourself and God. Blessed is the man who does not condemn himself by what he approves. But

the man who has doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith; and everything that does not come from faith is sin” (Romans 14:12-13, 22-23). Paul is telling us to enjoy our freedom in Christ, but along with that freedom comes the responsibility to protect those around us who have doubts about that freedom.

The example of alcohol is relevant here. Alcohol is not inherently evil, and the biblical prohibitions are not against drinking but against drunkenness. But someone who tends toward alcoholism very often knows he must not drink at all and believes others shouldn't drink, either, even in moderation. If a Christian has a friend who is convinced drinking is wrong, then drinking around that person may cause him/her to “stumble” or trip up. The Greek word for “stumble” gives the sense of stubbing one's toe. As Christians, we are forbidden to do anything that may cause our brothers and sisters in Christ to stub their toe, spiritually speaking. Stubbing the toe can cause a person to fall in the spiritual sense, or to damage or weaken his faith. In all things, the important lesson is to “make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification” (Romans 14:19). In this way, God is glorified, believers are edified, and the world sees in us “righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit” (Romans 14:17).

Related Resources:

- [Why is Jesus called the stumbling stone in Matthew 21:43-44?](#)
- [How can I avoid enabling someone else's sin?](#)

Matthew 18:8 “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 to have two hands or two feet and be cast into the eternal fire.

- if: Mt 5:29,30 14:3,4 De 13:6-8 Mk 9:43-48 Lu 14:26,27,33 18:22,23
- and cast: Isa 2:20,21 30:22 Eze 18:31 Ro 13:12 Php 3:8,9
- maimed: Mt 15:30,31
- everlasting: Mt 25:41,46 Isa 33:14 Mk 9:48,49 Lu 16:24 2Th 1:8,9 Rev 14:10 Rev 20:15 21:8

Related Passages:

Matthew 5:29-30 (THE DANGER OF SIN) “If your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. 30 “If your right hand makes you stumble, cut it off and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to go into hell.

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 to have two hands or two feet and be cast into the eternal fire.

NET NOTE - In Greek there is a wordplay that is difficult to reproduce in English here. The verb translated “causes ... to sin” (σκανδαλιζω, skandalizō) comes from the same root as the word translated “stumbling blocks” (σκάνδαλον, skandalon) in the previous verse.

Matthew 18:9 “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 to have two eyes and be cast into the fiery hell.

- to enter: Mt 19:17,23,24 Ac 14:22 Heb 4:11 Rev 21:27
- rather: Mt 16:26 Lu 9:24,25

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 to have two eyes and be cast into the fiery hell (lit = “Gehenna of fire”).

QUESTION - [Did Jesus mean we should literally pluck out our eyes?](#)

ANSWER - In the [Sermon on the Mount](#), Jesus says something that must certainly have seized His hearers' attention: “If your right eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell” (Matthew 5:29–30). Jesus repeats the admonition in Matthew 18:8–9, except there He adds the need to dispense with a foot as well as a hand and an eye.

The graphic word pictures of Matthew 5 and 18 still grab attention today, and they raise the question of how literally we should take Jesus' commands in these passages. Does Jesus actually mean to say that we should pluck out our eyes or sever a hand if we are prone to sin? It may be of comfort to know that Jesus' instructions in these particular verses are not meant to be taken literally. We need not mutilate our bodies as a punishment for our sin. Rather, Jesus means that we should be prepared to make exceptional sacrifices if we want to follow Him (see Matthew 16:24).

Jesus had just warned His audience against using their eyes for lustful purposes (Matthew 5:28), so His prescribed remedy for lust—to pluck out an eye—makes sense, in a radical sort of way. But it is the radical nature of His statement that makes it so memorable.

When Jesus advises us to pluck out a sinful eye or cut off an unruly hand, He is employing a figure of speech known as hyperbole. Hyperbole is an obvious exaggeration or an intentional overstatement. Examples of hyperbole in modern speech would include statements like “This bag of groceries weighs a ton,” “I’ve been waiting forever,” and “Everyone knows that.” The apostle Paul uses hyperbolic language in Galatians 4:15. Hyperbole, like other figures of speech, is not meant to be taken literally.

Jesus' purpose in saying, hyperbolically, that sinners should pluck out their eyes or cut off their hands is to magnify in His hearers' minds the heinous nature of sin. Sin is any action or thought that is contrary to the character of God. The result of sin is death, from which Jesus wants to preserve us (see Hebrews 2:9). Jesus warns of [hell](#) because He doesn't want people to go there (Matthew 5:29–30).

Sin takes people to hell (see Revelation 21:8), and that makes sin something to avoid at all costs. Jesus says that, whatever is causing you to sin, take drastic measures to get that thing out of your life. “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. . . . It is better for you to enter life with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into the fire of hell” (Matthew 18:8–9). *Nothing* is worth missing heaven for. *Nothing* is worth going to hell for. Nothing.

God takes sin seriously—seriously enough to sacrifice His only begotten Son to destroy it. We must take sin seriously as well. A lack of repentance is a crime punishable by eternal death. It is better to deny our flesh—to pluck out an eye or cut off a hand, as it were—than to risk sinning against God. God demands holiness (1 Peter 1:15), but we naturally tend to pamper ourselves and excuse our sin. That is why we need Jesus' shocking, radical hyperbole to wake us from our spiritual complacency.

Matthew 18:10 “See that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that their angels in heaven continually see the face of My Father who is in heaven.

- heed: Mt 18:6,14 12:20 Ps 15:4 Zec 4:10 Lu 10:16 Ro 14:1-3,10,13-15,21 Ro 15:1 1Co 8:8-13 9:22 11:22 16:11 2Co 10:1,10 Ga 4:13,14 6:1 1Th 4:8 1Ti 4:12
- their: Mt 1:20 2:13,19 24:31 Ge 32:1,2 2Ki 6:16,17 Ps 34:7 91:11 Zec 13:7 Lu 16:22 Ac 5:19 10:3 12:7-11,23 27:23 Heb 1:14
- behold: 2Sa 14:28 1Ki 22:19 Es 1:14 Ps 17:15 Lu 1:19

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

QUESTION - [Do we have guardian angels? WATCH VIDEO](#)

ANSWER - Matthew 18:10 states, “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.” In the context, “these little ones” could either apply to those who believe in Him (v. 6) or it could refer to the little children (vs. 3-5). This is the key passage regarding guardian angels. There is no doubt that good angels help protect (Daniel 6:20-23; 2 Kings 6:13-17), reveal information (Acts 7:52-53; Luke 1:11-20), guide (Matthew 1:20-21; Acts 8:26), provide for (Genesis 21:17-20; 1 Kings 19:5-7), and minister to believers in general (Hebrews 1:14).

The question is whether each person—or each believer—has an angel assigned to him/her. In the Old Testament, the nation of Israel had the archangel (Michael) assigned to it (Daniel 10:21; 12:1), but Scripture nowhere states that an angel is “assigned” to an individual (angels were sometimes sent to individuals, but there is no mention of permanent assignment). The Jews fully developed the belief in guardian angels during the time between the Old and New Testament periods. Some early church fathers believed that each person had not only a good angel assigned to him/her, but a demon as well. The belief in guardian angels has been around for a long time, but there is no explicit scriptural basis for it.

To return to Matthew 18:10, the word “their” is a collective pronoun in the Greek and refers to the fact that believers are served by angels in general. These angels are pictured as “always” watching the face of God so as to hear His command to them to help a

believer when it is needed. The angels in this passage do not seem to be guarding a person so much as being attentive to the Father in heaven. The active duty or oversight seems, then, to come more from God than from the angels, which makes perfect sense because God alone is omniscient. He sees every believer at every moment, and He alone knows when one of us needs the intervention of an angel. Because they are continually seeing His face, the angels are at His disposal to help one of His "little ones."

It cannot be emphatically answered from Scripture whether or not each believer has a guardian angel assigned to him/her. But, as stated earlier, God does use angels in ministering to us. It is scriptural to say that He uses them as He uses us; that is, He in no way needs us or them to accomplish His purposes, but chooses to use us and them nevertheless (Hebrews 1:7). In the end, whether or not we have an angel assigned to protect us, we have an even greater assurance from God: if we are His children through faith in Christ, He works all things together for good (Romans 8:28-30), and Jesus Christ will never leave us or forsake us (Hebrews 13:5-6). If we have an omniscient, omnipotent, all-loving God with us, does it really matter whether or not there is a finite guardian angel protecting us?

Matthew 18:11 ["For the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost.]

- Mt 9:12,13 10:6 15:24 Lu 9:56 15:24,32 19:10 Jn 3:17 10:10 Jn 12:47 1Ti 1:15

["For the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost.]

NET NOTE - TECHNICAL NOTE - The most important MSS (א B L* Θ* f1, 13 33 892* pc e ff sy sa) do not include Mt 18:11 "For the Son of Man came to save the lost." The verse is included in D Lg W Θc 078vid lat sy, but is almost certainly not original, being borrowed, as it were, from the parallel in Luke 19:10. The present translation (NET) follows NA27 in omitting the verse number as well, a procedure also followed by a number of other modern translations. (**NET** = "See that you do not disdain one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven.")

Matthew 18:12 "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?"

- How: Mt 21:28 22:42 1Co 10:15
- if: Mt 12:11 Ps 119:176 Isa 53:6 Jer 50:6 Eze 34:16,28 Lu 15:4-7 Jn 10:11-21 1Pe 2:25
- into: 1Ki 21:17 Eze 34:6,12

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

NET NOTE - This individual with a hundred sheep is a shepherd of modest means, as flocks often had up to two hundred head of sheep. **Look for the one that went astray.** The parable pictures God's pursuit of the sinner. On the image of Jesus as the Good Shepherd, see John 10:1-18.

QUESTION - [Why would God leave the 99 to find 1?](#)

ANSWER - Both Matthew 18 and Luke 15 record Jesus' parable about a shepherd who leaves 99 sheep in the fold to go in search of one that had wandered away. Jesus gave this illustration in response to the Pharisees who were incensed that Jesus "welcomes sinners and eats with them" (Luke 15:2). The religious leaders in Jesus' day had structured their system to exalt the self-righteous and exclude anyone who did not live up to their often arbitrary standards (Matthew 23:28). They had added so many rules and regulations to God's law that no one could keep them all, including the ones who drafted them. When Jesus came along, His methodology confused them. He seemed to be from God, yet He rebuked the outwardly righteous and welcomed the wicked. How could this man know God?

So Jesus told them [a story](#), as He did many times in order to explain spiritual truths: "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? 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. In the same way your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should perish" (Matthew 18:12-14). The people of Jesus' day understood the relationship between shepherds and sheep, but the significance of a shepherd going in search of one lost sheep is sometimes lost on us. It seems strange that a shepherd would leave his flock to search for one missing sheep.

We might consider the shepherd leaving the 99 to find the 1 this way: a father and his five children are asleep in their home when the smoke detectors go off. The father awakens to find his house filled with smoke and the sound of flames and crackling timber coming nearer. Panicked, he races to his children's bedrooms and begins to rouse them. Calling to some and carrying others, he stumbles down the stairs and out the front door. He deposits the sleepy children on the grass a safe distance away and then turns. Gasping for air, he squints through the smoke to count kids: "Tim, Sally, Angel, Jojo—where's Lilly!" He is missing his youngest, three-year-old Lilly. Four children are safe, one is not. What will this father do?

God is a Father. He counts His kids. He rejoices that some are safely [in Christ](#), prepared for eternity and nestled near His heart. But some are missing. Where's Karen? Where's Abdul? Where's Jose? The Father sent Jesus on a rescue mission "to seek and to save the lost" (Luke 19:10). God does not abandon the 99. They are already safely in His kingdom, attended by His angels, and guided by His Holy Spirit (Romans 8:14; Hebrews 13:5). But His heart aches for those not yet in the fold.

So the [Good Shepherd](#) pursues the lost sheep, woos them, calls to them, and allows circumstances into their lives designed to make them look up. It is often in the bleakest of circumstances that we finally surrender our demands to have our own way. We finally submit to our Shepherd, who carries us back to the fold (Luke 15:5). In John 10, Jesus again refers to Himself as the Good Shepherd, saying, "I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd" (verses 16–17). Then in verses 27–29 He says, "My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand." The 99 are still important to Him, but He knows the flock is not complete without the lost sheep. And a good shepherd always goes after the lost sheep.

In Luke's gospel, two other parables follow the one about the one lost sheep, and both of them reinforce Jesus' main point, which is the value of individuals. The parable of the lost coin (Luke 15:8–10) and the [parable of the lost son](#), also known as the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11–32), continue the theme of God as a pursuer of lost people. We were all lost at one time, and the Lord came after us. If He had not taken the initiative, no one could be saved (John 6:44). So, when our Good Shepherd wants to pursue another lost lamb, the 99 who are in the fold can joyfully support the rescue.

Matthew 18:13 "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."

- he rejoiceth: Ps 147:11 Isa 53:11 Jer 32:37-41 Mic 7:18 Zep 3:17 Lu 15:5-10,23,24 Jn 4:34-36 Jas 2:13

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

Matthew 18:14 "So it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones perish."

- it is: Lu 12:32 Jn 6:39,40 10:27-30 17:12 Ro 8:28-39 Eph 1:5-7 1Pe 1:3-5
- your: Mt 5:16 6:9,32
- one: Isa 40:11 Zec 13:7 Jn 21:15 1Co 8:11-13 2Ti 2:10 Heb 12:13 2Pe 3:9

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

QUESTION - [Who will go to hell? WATCH VIDEO](#)

ANSWER - [Hell](#) has become a controversial subject in recent years, even among Christians. However, the controversy is entirely man-made. The rejection of the reality of hell stems from a human inability to reconcile the love of God with eternal punishment or from an outright rejection of God's Word. Even some professing Christians have come to unbiblical conclusions. Some have tried to redefine hell, create an intermediate state not found in Scripture, or deny hell altogether. In doing so, they are ignoring Jesus' warning in Revelation 22:19, "If anyone takes words away from this scroll of prophecy, God will take away from that person any share in the tree of life and in the Holy City, which are described in this scroll."

Hell is mentioned 167 times in the Bible, sometimes called Gehenna, Hades, the pit, the Abyss, or everlasting punishment (Proverbs 7:27; Luke 8:31; 10:15; 2 Thessalonians 1:9). Jesus spoke of heaven and hell as real places (Matthew 13:41–42; 23:33; Mark 9:43–47; Luke 12:5). The story Jesus told about the rich man and Lazarus was an actual event that demonstrated the reality of the two

eternal destinations (Luke 16:19–31). Heaven is the dwelling place of God (2 Chronicles 30:27) where Jesus has gone to “prepare a place” for those who love Him (John 14:2). Hell was created for “the devil and his angels” (Matthew 25:41). But because every human being is a sinner, every person past the age of accountability has already been condemned to hell (Romans 3:10; 5:12; John 3:18). We all deserve hell as the just punishment for our rebellion against God (Romans 6:23).

Jesus was clear that “no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again” (John 3:3). He was also clear that hell is an eternal punishment for those who do not obey Him (Matthew 25:46). 2 Thessalonians 1:8–9 says that in the end God “will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might.” John the Baptist said about Jesus, “His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor, gathering his wheat into the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire” (Matthew 3:12).

John 3:18 explains in the simplest terms who will go to heaven and who will go to hell: “Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son.” So, those who go to hell are specifically those who do not believe in Jesus’ name. To “believe” goes beyond a mental recognition of the truth. To believe in Christ for salvation requires a transfer of allegiance. We stop worshiping ourselves, we forsake our sin, and we begin to worship God with our heart, soul, mind, and strength (Matthew 22:36–37; Mark 12:30).

God desires that every person spend eternity with Him (Matthew 18:14; 2 Peter 3:9), but He honors our decision to accept or reject Him (John 4:14). Anyone who so desires can go to heaven (John 1:12). Jesus already paid the price for our salvation, but we must accept that gift and transfer ownership of our lives to Him (Luke 9:23). Heaven is perfect, and God cannot take anyone there who insists on holding on to his or her sin. We must allow Him to cleanse us of our sin and make us righteous in His sight (2 Corinthians 5:21). John 1:10–12 shows us the problem and the solution: “He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.”

We can choose to trust in Jesus’ payment for our sin, or we can choose to pay for our sins ourselves—but we must remember that the payment for our sin is eternity in hell. C. S. Lewis said it this way: “There are only two kinds of people in the end: those who say to God, ‘Thy will be done,’ and those to whom God says in the end, ‘Thy will be done.’”

Related Resources:

- [How is eternity in hell a fair punishment for sin?](#)
- [Where is hell? What is the location of hell?](#)
- [Is hell literally a place of fire and brimstone?](#)
- [What was Jesus’ teaching on hell?](#)
- [Why does God send people to hell?](#)

Matthew 18:15 “If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother.

- if: Mt 18:35 Lev 6:2-7 Lu 17:3,4 1Co 6:6-8 8:12 2Co 7:12 Col 3:13 1Th 4:6
- go: Lev 19:17 Ps 141:5 Pr 25:9,10
- thou hast: Pr 11:30 Ro 12:21 1Co 9:19-21 Jas 5:19,20 1Pe 3:1

If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother.

Believer’s Study Bible - Mt 18:15-17) Here and in 16:18 are the only references to “the church” in all of the four Gospels. Government is charged with jurisprudence in civil matters. In the ecclesiastical arena, each local congregation must assume the exercise of its own discipline. Jesus provided a program whereby the local assembly could protect its own sanctity and admonish an erring brother. The system involved three possible encounters with a brother overtaken in a fault. After the individual approach by one brother, one or two additional brethren are to be taken to confront the wayward brother. Only if this failed was the matter to be brought before the entire congregation. Furthermore, this last action involved two steps, the first being an appeal and admonition from the church, and the second, the exercise of the ban. The entire procedure is designed to prevent this exclusion from the church. Few cases would ever proceed beyond the first and second provisions. Even when a case demanded the ultimate drastic action of exercising the ban, the intent was redemptive. The disbarment from fellowship would hopefully awaken the rebellious person. On the other hand, the reputation of God’s people would be protected if no disposition for repentance was forthcoming in the erring brother (cf. 1 Cor. 5:1-13; 2 Cor. 2:5-11; Gal. 6:1, 2).

Matthew Henry Concise - Mt 18:15-20. If a professed Christian is wronged by another, he ought not to complain of it to others, as is often done merely upon report, but to go to the offender privately, state the matter kindly, and show him his conduct. This would generally have all the desired effect with a true Christian, and the parties would be reconciled. The principles of these rules may be practised every where, and under all circumstances, though they are too much neglected by all. But how few try the method which Christ has expressly enjoined to all his disciples! In all our proceedings we should seek direction in prayer; we cannot too highly prize the promises of God. Wherever and whenever we meet in the name of Christ, we should consider him as present in the midst of us.

NET NOTE - The Greek term “brother” can mean “fellow believer” or “fellow Christian” (cf. BDAG 18 s.v. δελφός 2.a) whether male or female. It can also refer to siblings, though here it is used in a broader sense to connote familial relationships within the family of God. Therefore, because of the familial connotations, “brother” has been retained in the translation here in preference to the more generic “fellow believer” (“fellow Christian” would be anachronistic in this context). **TECHNICAL NOTE** - † The earliest and best witnesses lack “against you” after “if your brother sins.” It is quite possible that the shorter reading in these witnesses (λ B, as well as 0281 f1 579 pc sa) occurred when scribes either intentionally changed the text (to make it more universal in application) or unintentionally changed the text (owing to the similar sound of the end of the verb μαρτήσ [hamartēsē] and the prepositional phrase ες σέ [eis se]). However, if the MSS were normally copied by sight rather than by sound, especially in the early centuries of Christianity, such an unintentional change is not as likely for these MSS. And since scribes normally added material rather than deleted it for intentional changes, on balance, the shorter reading appears to be original. NA27 includes the words in brackets, indicating doubts as to their authenticity.

QUESTION - How should sin in the church be handled?

ANSWER - The Bible is clear about God’s desire for us to reflect His holiness (1 Peter 1:15), and it is clear about the need for church discipline to deal with sin in the church. Since one of the jobs of the church is to demonstrate the goodness and holiness of God, a church with a member who persists in sin must take steps to address the state of that person’s soul as well as protect the church body from being corrupted by unchallenged sin in its membership.

Jesus gave us an outline to follow when we must confront another professing Christian: “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. 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.’ 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” (Matthew 18:15–17). So the first step in handling sin in the church is for someone with knowledge of the situation, often the pastor or an elder, to confront that person in love, expressing concern and explaining the spiritual ramifications if the sin continues.

If the sinning member refuses to [repent](#), a second step must be taken. The one who originally confronted the person needs to take along other godly people and visit the sinning member again. The presence of others may serve to induce the sinner to repent; if not, there are witnesses to all that is said and done, preventing any false claims or denials later. This interview needs to include Scripture-based reproof and opportunities for restoration. Verses such as 1 John 3:3–10, 5:18, Luke 14:25–27, Matthew 7:16–23, and Ephesians 5:3 may be helpful at this time.

If, after the second step, the church member still refuses to repent of the sin, Jesus says to “tell it to the church” (Matthew 18:17), an action that would bring even more pressure to bear. If that fails, then the offending member is to be removed from the church and considered an unbeliever (cf. 1 Corinthians 5:9–13). This process shows the seriousness of sin in the church and the need to strive for reconciliation. The steps that Jesus outlines to protect the purity and reputation of the church should not be sidestepped or ignored.

What kinds of sins should a church confront? Since everyone is a sinner, including the pastor and elders, where do we draw the line between the sins everyone commits and those worthy of confrontation? The answer seems to be the lifestyle sins committed by those who will not inherit the kingdom of God (see 1 Corinthians 6:9–10 and Galatians 5:19–20; see also Titus 3:10–11). These are public, ongoing sinful choices that are differentiated from those sins we commit in our hearts because we live in the flesh. For example, a Christian struggling with impure thoughts or personal jealousies is not defaming the name of Christ as he wrestles with those sins. They are private and unwanted. They are sins for which the person needs repentance, but they are not lifestyle choices. However, a professing Christian who lives in open, unrepentant adultery, sexual immorality, drunkenness, or any of the other sins on Paul’s lists must be confronted.

Sin in the church must be handled properly, that is, in a biblical manner. Church leaders who choose a sinful path are not exempt from discipline: “Those elders who are sinning you are to reprove before everyone, so that the others may take warning” (1 Timothy 5:20). Unfortunately, many churches today never practice church discipline, even in glaring instances of impropriety and obvious sin. The result is that the ministry of the church is undermined and the legitimacy of its message cast in doubt. If the Bible says that Christians don’t do X, but there are assumed Christians in our church who are doing X, with no consequences, then outsiders are

right to wonder whether we take the Bible seriously.

God spoke to Israel words that still echo through the church: “If my people, which are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and forgive their sins, and heal their land” (2 Chronicles 7:14). Imagine the healing that would take place in the world if all churches would follow the biblical pattern for handling sin in their midst.

QUESTION - [How should Christians handle disputes \(Matthew 18:15-17\)?](#)

ANSWER - Christians have often turned to the principles of Matthew 18 for guidance in handling disputes. There Jesus says, “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. 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.’ 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” (verses 15–17). From these verses, several guidelines can be found for resolving conflicts between Christians.

First, a Christian who has a conflict with another Christian is called to address the matter with the other person personally. When matters are handled privately, misunderstanding can be addressed, and there is great potential for the other person to respond positively. In addition, a private meeting helps to avoid the problem of gossip that can occur when a matter is taken to others instead of the person involved.

Second, if a private discussion does not solve the issue, a Christian is to take one or two other believers and meet with the person with whom they have conflict. The clause “that every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses” refers to the Old Testament law that required a charge to be supported by two or more witnesses to be valid. In the case of personal conflict, this principle allows for additional witnesses to observe the matter firsthand and help determine the proper course of action.

Third, when there is no resolution after steps one and two, the matter is to be taken before the local church. Only in rare cases will a Christian seeking to follow the Lord refuse to resolve conflict when the entire congregation is involved.

Finally, if the person in the center of the conflict refuses to respond positively even when the entire congregation is involved, then that person is to be considered as “a pagan or a tax collector.” This simply means to excommunicate the person, removing the negative influence from the congregation.

In 1 Corinthians 5, the apostle Paul speaks of a believer who had been sexually immoral, apparently with his stepmother. Rather than condemning the act, the Corinthian Christians had tolerated the behavior. Paul taught they should remove this person from their church family (1 Corinthians 5:3). Later, in 2 Corinthians, this same person had turned from this lifestyle, and Paul advised the Corinthian believers to accept him again. The goal of discipline is not to be mean or cold-hearted but to condemn sinful behavior and issue a call to change. In 2 Corinthians 2:8, Paul writes, “I beg you to reaffirm your love for him” (ESV).

Christians are called to handle disputes in love, with a goal of restoration. Conflict should be handled according to the steps listed in Matthew 18. This style of conflict resolution is based on a desire for holy living and love for the person who has committed wrong.

QUESTION -[What does the Bible say about church discipline?](#)

ANSWER - Church discipline is the process of correcting sinful behavior among members of a local church body for the purpose of protecting the church, restoring the sinner to a right walk with God, and renewing fellowship among the church members. In some cases, church discipline can proceed all the way to [excommunication](#), which is the formal removal of an individual from church membership and the informal separation from that individual.

Matthew 18:15–20 gives the procedure and authority for a church to practice church discipline. Jesus instructs us that one individual (usually the offended party) is to go to the offending individual privately. If the offender refuses to acknowledge his sin and repent, then two or three others go to confirm the details of the situation. If there is still no repentance—the offender remains firmly attached to his sin, despite two chances to repent—the matter is taken before the church. The offender then has a third chance to repent and forsake his sinful behavior. If at any point in the process of church discipline, the sinner heeds the call to repent, then “you have gained your brother” (verse 15, ESV). However, if the discipline continues all the way through the third step without a positive response from the offender, then, Jesus said, “let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector” (verse 17, ESV).

The process of church discipline is never pleasant just as a father never delights in having to discipline his children. Sometimes, though, church discipline is necessary. The purpose of church discipline is not to be mean-spirited or to display a holier-than-thou attitude. Rather, the goal of church discipline is the restoration of the individual to full fellowship with both God and other believers.

The discipline is to start privately and gradually become more public. It is to be done in love toward the individual, in obedience to God, and in godly fear for the sake of others in the church.

The Bible's instructions concerning church discipline imply the necessity of [church membership](#). The church and its pastor are responsible for the spiritual well-being of a certain group of people (members of the local church), not of everyone in the city. In the context of church discipline, Paul asks, "What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Are you not to judge those inside?" (1 Corinthians 5:12). The candidate for church discipline has to be "inside" the church and accountable to the church. He professes faith in Christ yet continues in undeniable sin.

The Bible gives an example of church discipline in a local church—the church of Corinth (1 Corinthians 5:1–13). In this case, the discipline led to excommunication, and the apostle Paul gives some reasons for the discipline. One is that sin is like yeast; if allowed to exist, it spreads to those nearby in the same way that "a little yeast works through the whole batch of dough" (1 Corinthians 5:6–7). Also, Paul explains that Jesus saved us so that we might be set apart from sin, that we might be "unleavened" or free from that which causes spiritual decay (1 Corinthians 5:7–8). Christ's desire for His bride, the church, is that she might be pure and undefiled (Ephesians 5:25–27). The testimony of Christ Jesus (and His church) before unbelievers is important, too. When David sinned with Bathsheba, one of the consequences of his sin was that the name of the one true God was blasphemed by God's enemies (2 Samuel 12:14).

Hopefully, any disciplinary action a church takes against a member is successful in bringing about godly sorrow and true repentance. When repentance occurs, the individual can be restored to fellowship. The man involved in the 1 Corinthians 5 passage repented, and Paul later encouraged the church to restore him to full fellowship with the church (2 Corinthians 2:5–8). Unfortunately, disciplinary action, even when done correctly and in love, is not always successful in bringing about restoration. Even when church discipline fails to bring about repentance, it is still needed to accomplish other good purposes such as maintaining a good testimony in the world.

We have all likely witnessed the behavior of a youngster who is always allowed to do as he pleases with no consistent discipline. It is not a pretty sight. Nor is the overly permissive parent loving, for a lack of guidance dooms the child to a dismal future. Undisciplined, out-of-control behavior will keep the child from forming meaningful relationships and performing well in any kind of setting. Similarly, discipline in the church, while never enjoyable or easy, is necessary at times. In fact, it is loving. And it is commanded by God.

QUESTION - [What is excommunication in the Bible?](#)

ANSWER - First, we should note that the Bible never uses the word *excommunication*. It's a word that has been adopted by some religious groups, especially by the Catholic Church, to denote the formal process of removing someone from membership and participation in the church, from relationship with the church community, or, in the Catholic view, even from the family of God.

While the Bible does not teach that a Christian can lose his salvation, it does describe the process of [church discipline](#) in several passages. The final step of church discipline is excommunication—a removal from the local church.

In Matthew 18:15–17, Jesus teaches His disciples about excommunication. The Lord details a multi-step approach for responding to sinful offenses in the church community:

Step 1: Go to the person privately, tell him how he has sinned against you, and be reconciled if he is willing. If the offending person repents, no more action is required.

Step 2: If he won't listen, go back with two or three witnesses to have the conversation again, establishing the facts and the evidence.

Step 3: If he still refuses to listen and repent from his sinfulness, bring him before the full church body and make the case against him.

Step 4: If there is still no repentance, the church is to excommunicate the sinner. Jesus' words are "let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector" (Matthew 18:17ESV).

The Jews saw both groups Jesus mentions—[Gentiles](#) and [tax collectors](#)—as outsiders. Gentiles were pagan idolaters, and tax collectors were in collusion with Rome. In Jesus' day, religious Israelites would not associate beyond what was strictly necessary with Gentiles or tax collectors. They would not have meals with them, for instance, or invite them to social gatherings. So, when Jesus says to view the [unrepentant](#) sinner in the church as "a Gentile and a tax collector," He is instructing the church to officially and with clear communication stop having close fellowship with the unrepentant sinner; the sinner is to be put out of the close-knit community of Christians. This is excommunication.

What is the purpose of excommunication? The dismissal of an unrepentant, defiant sinner from the community of believers is not about public shaming or judgment. It's about loving that person enough to do what is best for him or her and about doing what is best for the church as a whole.

We have an example of excommunication and its aftermath in two passages from Paul. A man in the church in Corinth was having sex with his step-mother, a sin so egregious "that even pagans do not tolerate [it]" (1 Corinthians 5:1). Paul rebukes the Christians in Corinth for accepting this man's incest. Apparently, the Corinthians had misunderstood the grace of God so badly that they had come to believe all sin should be tolerated, maybe even celebrated proudly, as evidence of God's grace and forgiveness (verse 2).

Paul says, "No way." Sin in the church must be dealt with. He instructs the Corinthians to come together for the purpose of excommunication. The local body of believers was, under [apostolic authority](#), to turn this man over to Satan for "the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord" (1 Corinthians 5:4–5). Evidently, in this particular case, there was a physical affliction of supernatural origin associated with the excommunication; it was excommunication with an added apostolic curse.

Scripture does not indicate that every excommunication is followed by physical consequences. The general principle, however, is that excommunication lets the sinner experience the full, painful consequences of his sinful choices so that he will repent, submit to God, and be saved from spiritual ruin. The motive for excommunication is not punishment or vengeance but reformation and spiritual health.

Paul's second letter to the Corinthians deals with the follow-up to excommunication. In 2 Corinthians 2:5–11, Paul seems to be talking about the very same person he had instructed the church to excommunicate. The sinner had repented, and Paul writes, "The punishment inflicted on him by the majority is sufficient. Now instead, you ought to forgive and comfort him, so that he will not be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. I urge you, therefore, to reaffirm your love for him" (verses 6–8). As soon as the excommunicated believer repents, he should be welcomed back into warm relationship with the church community. Once repentance has been established, the excommunication should be fully reversed. The goal has been accomplished.

So, who is eligible for excommunication? The Bible is clear that excommunication is only for church members (not unbelievers) and only in response to obvious and ongoing sin from which a person refuses to repent despite multiple exhortations: "I am writing to you that you must not associate with anyone who claims to be a brother or sister but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or slanderer, a drunkard or swindler. Do not even eat with such people" (1 Corinthians 5:11).

Five important things to remember about excommunication:

1. The Bible never instructs individual Christians to decide on their own or even in a small group to "excommunicate" another believer. Excommunication is meant to be a formal action taken by the local church as a whole.
2. Excommunication is primarily about relationship. Those in the church are specifically instructed to stop sharing meals with the unrepentant person (1 Corinthians 5:11), to limit their contact with him.
3. This process of excommunication is for believers, for those who declare themselves to have sincerely trusted in Christ for their salvation. Excommunication is the church's response to one who says, "Yes, I'm a Christian, and, no, I will not turn from this sin."
4. The process of excommunication is not meant for someone who admits his sin and is repentant but continues to struggle to break free of it. If a believer sins and, when confronted, says, "Yes, that was wrong. I'm sorry. I want to start again," he is to be forgiven—even if he has sinned in the same way repeatedly (Matthew 18:21–22). In such a case, Scripture doesn't suggest that person's sin should be exposed to the full church as a kind of penalty, unless he chooses to reveal it himself.
5. The goal of excommunication is restoration. According to Jesus, the whole process of removing a member from the church is to be gradual, deliberate, and cautious. If at any point in the process the sinning person repents, then "you have gained your brother" (Matthew 18:15), and the fellowship is restored.

Related Resources:

- [How should sin in the church be handled?](#)
- [What is disfellowshipping?](#)

- [Why is it sinful for a church to cover up abuse?](#)
- [What does the Bible say about shunning?](#)
- [When is it necessary to rebuke another believer?](#)
- [What does the Bible mean when it says, "Do not judge"?](#)

Matthew 18:16 "But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that BY THE MOUTH OF TWO OR THREE WITNESSES EVERY FACT MAY BE CONFIRMED.

- that in: Nu 35:30 De 17:6 19:15 1Ki 21:13 Jn 8:17 2Co 13:1 1Ti 5:19 Heb 10:28 1Jn 5:7,8 Rev 11:3

But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that BY THE MOUTH OF TWO OR THREE WITNESSES EVERY FACT MAY BE CONFIRMED

Matthew 18:17 "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.

- tell: Ac 6:1-3 15:6,7 1Co 5:4,5 6:1-4 2Co 2:6,7 3Jn 1:9,10
- let: Ro 16:17,18 1Co 5:3-5,9-13 2Th 3:6,14,15 1Ti 6:5 2Jn 1:10,11
- a heathen: Mt 6:7 Ezr 6:21 Eze 11:12 2Co 6:14-17 Eph 4:17-19 5:11,12
- a publican: Mt 5:46 11:19 21:31,32 Lu 15:1 18:11 19:2,3

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

NET NOTE - To treat him like a Gentile or a tax collector means not to associate with such a person. The tax collectors would bid to collect taxes for the Roman government and then add a surcharge, which they kept. Since tax collectors worked for Rome, they were viewed as traitors to their own people and were not well liked.

Matthew 18:18 "Truly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.

- Mt 16:19 Jn 20:23 Ac 15:23-31 1Co 5:4,5 2Co 2:10 Rev 3:7,8

Truly I say to you - Note "you" is plural so clearly the charge bind and loose was for all the disciples, not just Peter (Mt 16:19).

whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven

QUESTION [What does the Bible mean by binding and loosing? SEE VIDEO](#)

ANSWER - The concept of "binding and loosing" is taught in the Bible in Matthew 16:19: "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." In this verse, Jesus is speaking directly to the apostle Peter and indirectly to the other apostles. Jesus' words meant that Peter would have the right to enter the kingdom himself, that he would have general authority symbolized by the possession of the keys, and that preaching the gospel would be the means of opening the kingdom of heaven to all believers and shutting it against unbelievers. The book of Acts shows us this process at work. By his sermon on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:14-40), Peter opened the door of the kingdom for the first time. The expressions "bind" and "loose" were common to Jewish legal phraseology meaning to declare something forbidden or to declare it allowed.

Peter and the other disciples were to continue Christ's work on earth in preaching the gospel and declaring God's will to men and they were armed with the same authority as He possessed. In Matthew 18:18, there is also a reference to the binding and loosing in the context of church discipline. The apostles do not usurp Christ's lordship and authority over individual believers and their eternal destiny, but they do exercise the authority to discipline and, if necessary, excommunicate disobedient church members.

It's not that the apostles were given the privilege of changing God's mind, as if whatever they decided on earth would be duplicated in heaven; rather, they were encouraged that, as they moved forward in their apostolic duties, they would be fulfilling God's plan in heaven. When the apostles "bound" something, or forbade it on earth, they were carrying out the will of God in the matter. When they "loosed" something, or allowed it on earth, they were likewise fulfilling God's eternal plan. In both Matthew 16:19 and 18:18, the syntax of the Greek text makes the meaning clear: "Whatever thou mayest bind upon the earth shall be having been bound in the heavens, and whatever thou mayest loose upon the earth shall be having been loosed in the heavens" (Matthew 16:19, Young's Literal Translation). Or, as the Amplified Bible puts it, "Whatever you bind [forbid, declare to be improper and unlawful] on earth will have [already] been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose [permit, declare lawful] on earth will have [already] been loosed in heaven."

Jesus taught that the apostles had a special task on earth. Their words of authority, as recorded in the New Testament epistles, reflect God's will for the church. When Paul declared an anathema on those who pervert the gospel, then we know that anathema was already declared in heaven (see Galatians 1:8–9).

Matthew 18:19 "Again I say to you, that if two of you agree on earth about anything that they may ask, it shall be done for them by My Father who is in heaven."

- **That if:** Mt 5:24 21:22 Mk 11:24 Jn 15:7,16 Ac 1:14 2:1,2 4:24-31 6:4 Ac 12:5 Eph 6:18-20 Php 1:19 Jas 5:14-16 1Jn 3:22 5:14-16 Rev 11:4-6
- **it shall:** Jn 14:13,14 16:23

Again I say to you, that if two of you agree on earth about anything that they may ask, it shall be done for them by My Father who is in heaven

NET NOTE - Grk "if two of you ... agree about whatever they ask, it will be done for them by my Father who is in heaven." The passive construction has been translated as an active one in keeping with contemporary English style, and the pronouns, which change from second person plural to third person plural in the Greek text, have been consistently translated as second person plural.

QUESTION - [What are the keys of the kingdom?](#)

ANSWER - The biblical passage that makes reference to the "keys of the kingdom" is Matthew 16:19. Jesus had asked His disciples who people thought He was. After hearing several of the more popular opinions, Jesus aimed His question directly at His disciples. Peter, responding for the twelve, acknowledged Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the Living God. After this great confession, Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matthew 16:17–19).

Keys are used to lock or unlock doors. The specific doors Jesus has in mind in this passage are the doors to the [Kingdom of Heaven](#). Jesus is laying the foundation of His church (Ephesians 2:20). The disciples will be the leaders of this new institution, and Jesus is giving them the authority to, as it were, open the doors to heaven and invite the world to enter. At this point it is important to understand how, biblically speaking, one enters the Kingdom of Heaven.

Jesus said that, unless one is [born again](#), he will not see the Kingdom of Heaven (John 3:3). One is born again as the Holy Spirit works through the Word of God to bring about new life in a dead sinner. The content of the message is the substitutionary death of Christ and His subsequent resurrection (Romans 10:9–10). So the faithful preaching of the gospel is the key to the kingdom.

In Matthew 16:19, Jesus is specifically addressing Peter, so it is significant that, in the book of Acts, Peter figures prominently in the "opening of doors" to three different groups of people so they can enter the Kingdom. In Acts 2, it is Peter who preaches in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost; about three thousand Jewish people are saved that day. Peter's preaching had "unlocked the door" of heaven for the Jews. Later, in Acts 8, the Samaritans believe the gospel and receive the Holy Spirit; again, Peter (and John) was present for this event. Peter had "unlocked the door" for the Samaritans. Then, in Acts 10, Peter brings the gospel to a Roman centurion's household, and they, too, receive the Holy Spirit. Peter had "unlocked the door" for the Gentiles. The "keys" that Jesus had given him worked in each case.

Of course, keys can be used to lock doors as well as open them. Part of the gospel message is that faith is necessary. Without faith

in Christ, the door to heaven is shut and barred (see John 3:18). As the apostles preached the gospel, those who responded in faith and repentance were granted access to the Kingdom of Heaven; yet those who continued to harden their hearts and reject the gospel of God's saving grace were shut out of the Kingdom (Acts 8:23).

The context of Matthew 16 also refers to a ["binding and loosing."](#) To better understand this concept, we turn to Matthew 18:15–20, where Jesus gives the guidelines for church discipline, using the same "binding and loosing" language we find in Matthew 16. The apostles were not to usurp Christ's authority over individual believers and their eternal destiny, but they were to exercise authority to discipline erring believers and, if necessary, excommunicate disobedient church members. Based on God's Word, believers today can declare an unrepentant sinner to be unsaved ("bound") and a repentant believer in Jesus Christ to be saved ("loosed"). The binding or loosing, based on one's rejection or acceptance of the gospel, reflects heaven's perspective on the matter. In heaven, Christ ratifies what is done in His name and in obedience to His Word on earth.

God's will is that sinners be granted access to heaven through the righteousness of Christ. Consider Jesus' warning to the Pharisees: "But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut the kingdom of heaven in people's faces. For you neither enter yourselves nor allow those who would enter to go in" (Matthew 23:13). If the gospel message is distorted or ignored, or if unrepentant sin is not adequately disciplined, the doors to the Kingdom of Heaven are being shut in people's faces.

Matthew 18:20 "For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst."

- two: Ge 49:10 Jn 20:19,26 1Co 5:4 1Th 1:1 Philemon 1:2
- there: Mt 28:20 Ex 20:24 Zec 2:5 Jn 8:58 Rev 1:11-13 2:1 21:3

For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst.

QUESTION - [What is the meaning of "where two or three are gathered"](#) [SEE VIDEO](#)

ANSWER - Matthew 18:20 is often used to give legitimacy to a small prayer meeting or church service. The pastor might say something like "There are just a few of us here tonight, but we are glad that we don't have to have a huge crowd for God to listen to us. After all, Jesus promises, 'Where two or more are gathered in my name, I am there.'" This sounds comforting until it is analyzed and taken to its logical conclusion. What if there are not two? What if there is only one who is praying in isolation? Does that mean Jesus is not there? If the answer is "no," then we come back to asking, "What does Matthew 18:20 really mean?"

We will take a look at the context of "where two or three are gathered." The NIV groups Matthew 18:15–20 together as one paragraph. The paragraph divisions, of course, are not an inspired part of the text, as the originals were written without any spaces. However, the NIV paragraph division is based on the content of the passage and seems to be right on target in this case.

Matthew 18:15–17 tells how to deal with sin in the church; it is a passage on what is commonly called ["church discipline"](#): "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. 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.' 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."

Verse 18 then gives assurance that, when this process is followed, God is working in it: "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."

And then, verses 19–20 give a final assurance: "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. For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them."

The context of "where two or three are gathered together in my name" (Matthew 18:20, KJV) has to do with church discipline and the confrontation of the wayward sinner. In verse 16, the principle has been invoked of needing "two or three witnesses" in making an accusation (cf. Deuteronomy 19:15). It seems that the mention of "two or three" in verse 20 echoes that principle; the "two or three" are confronting sin in the church.

Jesus cites the Old Testament Law that said an accusation from a single individual is insufficient to bring action in a criminal case. However, two or three witnesses who agree are sufficient to establish a matter. The law in Deuteronomy regulated a human court. Jesus applies this to the "heavenly court." When the erring brother or sister in the church is confronted by "two or three witnesses" and refuses to repent, these witnesses bring the matter before the church. Jesus assures us that, when this happens, it is not just

the witnesses who are bringing action against the wrongdoer, but He is there with them. Church discipline is sanctioned by both the Father and the Son. This is important because we live in an age when it is not fashionable to confront or “judge” anyone’s lifestyle as sinful. Those who do step forward to call out sin in the church can take heart in the fact that they are not acting alone; Christ is with them in the endeavor.

The process of church discipline calls for “two or three,” and this seems to be the best application for this verse. The two or three who gather in Jesus’ name are not coming together in a prayer meeting or a worship service but in a matter of church discipline. The two or three witnesses have confronted the sinner in a spirit of humility (see Galatians 6:1), and the sinner has not repented. So the two or three take the matter to the Lord in prayer and then confidently move forward with the process outlined in Scripture, knowing that they are not being bullies or busybodies, for God endorses their efforts—Jesus is “with them.”

Matthew 18:21 Then Peter came and said to Him, “Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?”

- till: Mt 18:15 Lu 17:3,4

Then Peter came and said to Him, “Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?”

NET NOTE - Here the term “brother” means “fellow believer” or “fellow Christian” (cf. BDAG 18 s.v. δὲλφός 2.a), whether male or female. Concerning the familial connotations, see also the note on the first occurrence of this term in v. 15.

Matthew Henry Concise - Mt 18:21-35. Though we live wholly on mercy and forgiveness, we are backward to forgive the offences of our brethren. This parable shows how much provocation God has from his family on earth, and how untoward his servants are. There are three things in the parable: 1. The master’s wonderful clemency. The debt of sin is so great, that we are not able to pay it. See here what every sin deserves; this is the wages of sin, to be sold as a slave. It is the folly of many who are under strong convictions of their sins, to fancy they can make God satisfaction for the wrong they have done him. 2. The servant’s unreasonable severity toward his fellow-servant, notwithstanding his lord’s clemency toward him. Not that we may make light of wronging our neighbour, for that is also a sin against God; but we should not aggravate our neighbour’s wronging us, nor study revenge. Let our complaints, both of the wickedness of the wicked, and of the afflictions of the afflicted, be brought to God, and left with him. 3. The master reproveth his servant’s cruelty. The greatness of sin magnifies the riches of pardoning mercy; and the comfortable sense of pardoning mercy, does much to dispose our hearts to forgive our brethren. We are not to suppose that God actually forgives men, and afterwards reckons their guilt to them to condemn them; but this latter part of the parable shows the false conclusions many draw as to their sins being pardoned, though their after-conduct shows that they never entered into the spirit, or experienced the sanctifying grace of the gospel. We do not forgive our offending brother aright, if we do not forgive from the heart. Yet this is not enough; we must seek the welfare even of those who offend us. How justly will those be condemned, who, though they bear the Christian name, persist in unmerciful treatment of their brethren! The humbled sinner relies only on free, abounding mercy, through the ransom of the death of Christ. Let us seek more and more for the renewing grace of God, to teach us to forgive others as we hope for forgiveness from him.

QUESTION - [What did Jesus mean when He said that we should forgive others seventy times seven? WATCH VIDEO](#)

ANSWER - Jesus said we are to forgive others “seventy times seven” in response to Peter’s question, “Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?” (Matthew 18:21-22). To fully understand what Jesus was saying, we must look at the context of the whole chapter, for Jesus was speaking not only about forgiving one another but about Christian character, both in and out of the church. The admonition to forgive our brother seventy times seven follows Jesus’ discourse on discipline in the church (Matthew 18:15-20), in which He lays down the rules for restoring a sinning brother.

Peter, wishing to appear especially forgiving and benevolent, asked Jesus if forgiveness was to be offered seven times. The Jewish rabbis at the time taught that forgiving someone more than three times was unnecessary, citing Amos 1:3-13 where God forgave Israel’s enemies three times, then punished them. By offering forgiveness more than double that of the Old Testament example, Peter perhaps expected extra commendation from the Lord. When Jesus responded that forgiveness should be offered four hundred and ninety times, far beyond that which Peter was proposing, it must have stunned the disciples who were listening. Although they had been with Jesus for some time, they were still thinking in the limited terms of the law, rather than in the unlimited terms of grace.

By saying we are to forgive those who sin against us seventy times seven, Jesus was not limiting forgiveness to 490 times, a number that is, for all practical purposes, beyond counting. Christians with forgiving hearts not only do not limit the number of times they forgive; they continue to forgive with as much grace the thousandth time as they do the first time. Christians are only capable of

this type of forgiving spirit because the Spirit of God lives within us, and it is He who provides the ability to offer forgiveness over and over, just as God forgives us over and over.

Jesus' [parable of the unforgiving servant](#) follows directly after His "seventy times seven" speech, driving home the point that if we are forgiven the enormous debt of sin against a holy God, how much more should we be eager to forgive those who sin against us, who are just as sinful as they? Paul parallels this example in Ephesians 4:32 where he admonishes us to forgive one another "even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you." Clearly, forgiveness is not to be meted out in a limited fashion but is to be abundant, overflowing, and available to all, just as the measureless grace of God is poured out upon us.

Related Resources:

- [List of links related to forgiveness/unforgiveness](#)
- [Multiple illustrations and quotes related to forgiveness/unforgiveness](#)
- [Exposition of "Forgiveness" in Ephesians 4:32](#)
- [Exposition of "Forgiveness" in Colossians 3:13](#)
- [Exposition of "Forgiveness" in Matthew 6:12](#) and [Matthew 6:14-15](#)

NT words for forgive/forgiveness:

- Forgiveness ([859](#)) [aphesis](#)
- Forgive (send away from, cancel the debt, release, let go) ([863](#)) [aphiemi](#)
- Forgive (grant, freely give, bestow) ([5483](#)) [charizomai](#)

Excellent 5 Part Sermon Series on Forgiveness by Dr Ray Pritchard:

- [1\) Forgiveness Healing the Hurt We Never Deserved](#)
- [2\) Forgiveness and the Lord's Prayer](#)
- [3\) Judge Not!](#)
- [4\) Is Total Forgiveness Realistic](#)
- [5\) The Final Step-Blessing Your Enemies](#)

Matthew 18:22 Jesus *said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.

- but: Mt 6:11,12,14,15 Isa 55:7 Mic 7:19 Mk 11:25,26 Ro 12:21 Eph 4:26,31,32 5:1 Col 3:13 1Ti 2:8

Jesus *said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven -The product 490 is clearly not calling for a literal number of times of forgiveness, but calling for forgiveness without any set limits, an unlimited number of times! So if you are offended the 491 time you should still gravitate to forgive the offender! As an aside, this is not naturally possible (i.e., in our fallen flesh) but requires dependance on a supernatural source, the Holy Spirit!

QUESTION - [What does the Bible say about unforgiveness? WATCH VIDEO](#)

ANSWER - The Bible has quite a bit to say about forgiveness and unforgiveness. Perhaps the most well-known teaching on unforgiveness is Jesus' parable of the unmerciful servant, recorded in Matthew 18:21-35. In the parable, a king forgives an enormously large debt (basically one that could never be repaid) of one of his servants. Later, however, that same servant refuses to forgive the small debt of another man. The king hears about this and rescinds his prior forgiveness. Jesus concludes by saying, "This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart" (Matthew 18:35). Other passages tell us that we will be forgiven as we forgive (see Matthew 6:14; 7:2; and Luke 6:37, for example).

Do not be confused here; God's forgiveness is not based on our works. Forgiveness and salvation are founded completely in the person of God and by Jesus' redeeming work on the cross. However, our actions demonstrate our faith and the extent to which we understand God's grace (see James 2:14-26 and Luke 7:47). We are completely unworthy, yet Jesus chose to pay the price for our sins and to give us forgiveness (Romans 5:8). When we truly grasp the greatness of God's gift to us, we will pass the gift along. We have been given grace and should give grace to others in return. In the parable, we are appalled at the servant who would not forgive a minor debt after having been forgiven his unpayable debt. Yet, when we are unforgiving, we act just as the servant in the parable.

Unforgiveness also robs us of the full life God intends for us. Rather than promote justice, our unforgiveness festers into bitterness. Hebrews 12:14-15 warns, "Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one falls short of the grace of God and that no bitter root rises up to cause trouble and defile many." Similarly, 2 Corinthians 2:5-11 warns that unforgiveness can be an opening for Satan to derail us.

We also know that those who have sinned against us – whom we may not want to forgive – are held accountable by God (see Romans 12:19 and Hebrews 10:30). It is important to recognize that to forgive is not to downplay a wrongdoing or necessarily to reconcile. When we choose to forgive, we release a person from his indebtedness to us. We relinquish the right to seek personal revenge. We choose to say we will not hold his wrongdoing against him. However, we do not necessarily allow that person back into our trust or even fully release that person from the consequences of his sin. We are told that "the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). While God's forgiveness relieves us from eternal death, it does not always release us from the death-like consequences of sin (such as a broken relationship or the penalty provided by the justice system). Forgiveness does not mean we act as if no wrong has been done; it does mean we recognize that grace abundant has been given to us and that we have no right to hold someone else's wrongdoing over his head.

Time and again, Scripture calls us to forgive one another. Ephesians 4:32, for example, says, "Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you." We have been given much in the way of forgiveness, and much is expected from us in response (see Luke 12:48). Though forgiveness is often difficult, to be unforgiving is to disobey God and to depreciate the greatness of His gift.

Related Resource:

- [What does the Bible say about forgiving yourself?](#)

Matthew 18:23 "For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves."

- is: Mt 3:2 13:24,31,33,44,45,47,52 25:1,14
- which: Mt 25:19-30 Lu 16:1,2 19:12-27 Ro 14:12 1Co 4:5 2Co 5:10,11

ILLUSTRATION OF GOD'S FORGIVENESS

For this reason - This begs the question "what reason?"

the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves

NET NOTE - Though *doulos* is normally translated "servant," the word does not bear the connotation of a free individual serving another. BDAG notes that " 'servant' for 'slave' is largely confined to Biblical transl. and early American times ... in normal usage at the present time the two words are carefully distinguished" (BDAG 260 s.v. 1). The most accurate translation is "bondservant" (sometimes found in the ASV for *δοῦλος*) in that it often indicates one who sells himself into slavery to another. But as this is archaic, few today understand its force.

QUESTION - [What is the meaning of the Parable of the Unforgiving/Unmerciful Servant?](#)

ANSWER - We find the Parable of the Unforgiving Servant only in Matthew 18:23-35. The Apostle Peter had asked how many times one should forgive, "Till seven times?" and Jesus answered, "Not seven times but seventy times seven" (Matthew 18:21-22). The context of this passage is Jesus teaching His disciples about the "kingdom of heaven." We can take some very important principles from this parable and apply them to our lives today.

The servant whose lord forgave him much, ten thousand talents, equivalent to several millions of dollars, was unwilling to forgive another servant who owed him a hundred denarii. A denarius was a day's wage and was worth approximately sixteen cents. Therefore, compared to what the first servant was forgiven, this was a very small amount. The principle here is, "the one forgiven much should forgive much." In other words, the principle of forgiveness is that grace or forgiveness to another is without limit. The disciples are not to count the number of times they forgive. Rather, as the parable teaches, they are to forgive much because God has forgiven much.

In the Parable of the Unforgiving Servant, Jesus is presenting a new principle that is similar to the basis of the forgiveness command

for believers found in Ephesians 4:32, "And be ye kind to one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." Jesus is teaching His disciples pre-cross, and therefore in the pre-church age, but the basis for forgiveness is the same. Because God has forgiven us, we are to forgive each other. Therefore, because we have received much grace, "while we were yet sinners Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8), we are commanded to give that same grace to others. In the Parable of the Unforgiving Servant, the first servant's debt was forgiven, and he was not required to repay until his unforgiving nature was discovered. In contrast, our sin debt was paid in full by Christ and is the only basis for God's forgiveness. We cannot repay our debt to God or earn our salvation. It is a gift of grace (Ephesians 2:8-9).

Therefore, in the Parable of the Unforgiving / Unmerciful / Unjust Servant, Jesus is teaching His disciples, and us by extension, that forgiveness should be in like proportion to the amount forgiven. The first servant had been forgiven all, and he then should have forgiven all. In like manner, a child of God by faith through Christ has had all sins forgiven. Therefore, when someone offends or sins against us we should be willing to forgive him from a heart of gratitude for the grace to which we ourselves are debtors.

Matthew 18:24 "When he had begun to settle them, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him.

- owed: Lu 7:41,42 13:4 *marg: Lu 16:5,7

When he had begun to settle them, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him

NET NOTE - A talent was a huge sum of money, equal to 6,000 denarii. One denarius was the usual day's wage for a worker. L&N 6.82 states, "a Greek monetary unit (also a unit of weight) with a value which fluctuated, depending upon the particular monetary system which prevailed at a particular period of time (a silver talent was worth approximately six thousand denarii with gold talents worth at least thirty times that much)."

TSK NOTE - a myriad of talents, the highest number known in Greek arithmetical notation. According to Prideaux, the Roman talent was equal to 216#; ten thousand of which would amount to 2,160,000#. If the Jewish talent of silver be designed, which is estimated by the same learned writer at 450#., this sum amounts to 4,500,000#.; but if the gold talent is meant, which is equal to 7200#., then the amount is 72,000,000#. This immense sum represents our boundless obligations to God, and our utter incapacity, as sinners infinitely indebted to Divine justice, of paying one mite out of the talent. 1Ch 29:7 Ezr 9:6 Ps 38:4 40:12 130:3,4

Matthew 18:25 "But since he did not have the means to repay, his lord commanded him to be sold, along with his wife and children and all that he had, and repayment to be made.

- commanded: Lev 25:39 2Ki 4:1 Ne 5:5,8 Isa 50:1

But since he did not have the means to repay, his lord commanded him to be sold, along with his wife and children and all that he had, and repayment to be made

Matthew 18:26 "So the slave fell to the ground and prostrated himself before him, saying, 'Have patience with me and I will repay you everything.'

- worshipped him: or, besought him
- have: Mt 18:29 Lu 7:43 Ro 10:3

So the slave fell to the ground and prostrated himself before him, saying, 'Have patience with me and I will repay you everything

NET NOTE - Grk "falling therefore the slave bowed down to the ground." The redundancy of this expression signals the desperation of the slave in begging for mercy. **TECHNICAL NOTE** - The majority of MSS (x L W 058 0281 f1, 13 33 it syp,h co) begin the slave's plea with "Lord" (κύριε, kurie), though a few important witnesses lack this vocative (B D Θ 700 pc lat sys,c Or Chr). Understanding the parable to refer to the Lord, scribes would be naturally prone to add the vocative here, especially as the slave's plea is a plea for mercy. Thus, the shorter reading is more likely to be authentic.

Matthew 18:27 “And the lord of that slave felt compassion and released him and forgave him the debt.

- moved: Jdg 10:16 Ne 9:17 Ps 78:38 86:5,15 145:8 Ho 11:8

And the lord of that slave felt compassion and released him and forgave him the debt

Matthew 18:28 “But that slave went out and found one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and he seized him and began to choke him, saying, ‘Pay back what you owe.’

- an hundred: Rather, "a hundred denarii," as our penny does not convey one seventh of the meaning. This would amount to about 3#. 2s. 6d. English; which was not one six hundred thousandth part of the 10,000 talents, even calculating them as Roman talents.
- pence: "The Roman penny is the eighth part of an ounce, which after five shillings the ounce is sevenpence halfpenny." Mt 20:2
- and took: De 15:2 Ne 5:7,10,11 10:31 Isa 58:3 Eze 45:9

But that slave went out and found one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and he seized him and began to choke him, saying, ‘Pay back what you owe.’

Matthew 18:29 “So his fellow slave fell to the ground and began to plead with him, saying, ‘Have patience with me and I will repay you.’

- Have: Mt 18:26 6:12 Philemon 1:18,19

So his fellow slave fell to the ground and began to plead with him, saying, ‘Have patience with me and I will repay you

Matthew 18:30 “But he was unwilling and went and threw him in prison until he should pay back what was owed.

- but: 1Ki 21:27-29 22:27

But he was unwilling and went and threw him in prison until he should pay back what was owed

Matthew 18:31 “So when his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were deeply grieved and came and reported to their lord all that had happened.

- they: Ps 119:136,158 Jer 9:1 Mk 3:5 Lu 19:41 Ro 9:1-3 12:15 2Co 11:21 Heb 13:3
- and came: Ge 37:2 Lu 14:21 Heb 13:17

So when his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were deeply grieved and came and reported to their lord all that had happened

Matthew 18:32 “Then summoning him, his lord *said to him, ‘You wicked slave, I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me.

- O thou: Mt 25:26 Lu 19:22 Ro 3:19

Then summoning him, his lord *said to him, ‘You wicked slave, I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me.

Matthew 18:33 Should you not also have had mercy on your fellow slave, in the same way that I had mercy on you?’

- even: Mt 5:44,45 Lu 6:35,36 Eph 4:32 5:1,2 Col 3:13

Should you not also have had mercy on your fellow slave, in the same way that I had mercy on you

Matthew 18:34 “And his lord, moved with anger, handed him over to the torturers until he should repay all that was owed him.

- and delivered: Mt 5:25,26 Lu 12:58,59 2Th 1:8,9 Rev 14:10,11

And his lord, moved with anger, handed him over to the torturers until he should repay all that was owed him

NET NOTE - Grk “handed him over to the torturers,” referring specifically to guards whose job was to torture prisoners who were being questioned. According to L&N 37.126, it is difficult to know for certain in this instance whether the term actually envisions torture as a part of the punishment or is simply a hyperbole. However, in light of the following verse and Jesus’ other warning statements in Matthew about “fiery hell,” “the outer darkness,” etc., it is best not to dismiss this as mere imagery.

Matthew 18:35 “My heavenly Father will also do the same to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart.”

- do: Mt 6:12,14,15 7:1,2 Pr 21:13 Mk 11:26 Lu 6:37,38 Jas 2:13
- from: Pr 21:2 Jer 3:10 Zec 7:12 Lu 16:15 Jas 3:14 4:8 Rev 2:23

My heavenly Father will also do the same to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart

NET NOTE - Here the term “brother” means “fellow believer” or “fellow Christian” (cf. BDAG 18 s.v. δελφός 2.a), whether male or female. Concerning the familial connotations, see also the note on the first occurrence of this term in v. 15.