

For Further Growth, or Group Study

What does James 2:1-9 say about the perils of playing favorites, showing partiality? How do we do it? What is God's view of it? What is the remedy?

Remind yourself of the kinds of people God often calls into His Kingdom. Make a list and find yourself in 1 Corinthians 1:26-31.

The command to esteem ourselves properly (Romans 12:3) has a powerful context. Read Romans 12:1-8 and see if you can find any themes from Matthew 18:1-14.

Matthew 25:41-46 contains an ominous, counter example. Note the fruit of not serving the least. Who are we really ignoring? How can you serve these various ones in need?

A Discipleship tool of Christ Community Fellowship (an EFCA)
Our Mission is to be and make disciples of Jesus
who love God and others to HIS glory.

Kerry S.Doyal—Pastor
www.ccffriends.org

GOD'S LOW ROAD TO GREATNESS

Learn from the Least—the "Little Ones"

How much vanity and hubris does it take to want to know your greatness rank in God's kingdom? If Jesus' closest followers needed some humbling correction about their ambitions and arrogance, we probably do too. Hear our humble King point us to the path to proper prominence:

"At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Who, then, is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" 2 He called a little child to him, and placed the child among them. 3 And he said: "Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. 4 Therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. 5 And whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me.

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

10 "See that you do not despise one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven. [11]

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

(Matthew 18:1-14—NIV)

Lessons from “Nobodies” for Aspiring “Somebodies”

Jesus’ path to position, power and prominence is not what we might think, or want. To get big, get little, go and stay lowly. Jesus’ disciples were seeing more clearly that He was establishing His heavenly Kingdom. They wanted the inside scoop on how to get the best seats at the table. Who better to ask how to rise in the ranks than the King? Jesus scuttles their selfish scheming for bigness, using a nobody—a socially insignificant child. Allow me to paraphrase:

“If you want in My Kingdom, repent of reaching for rank and esteem. Live in littleness, lowliness, like looked-over lads. Humility is what marks greatness in My Realm. Drop your self-advancement so you can take the hand of the humble. It is the same as joining hands, identifying with, Me.

“Little nobodies are big somebodies to God! In fact, it is preferable to hurl yourself in the sea, bound to a boulder, than to hurt or mislead them. Do anything you can to protect them! Get radical! Do not in any way allow sources of temptation to be a source of stumbling or sin—to you or them. Don’t dare disdain or disrespect them. Their personal angels will personally report you to God! God goes to extreme means to make sure the little ones aren’t damaged, destroyed. He celebrates them like no others.”

Want Greatness? Repent. Get Small.
Value, Protect, Rescue “Lessors.” God Does.

Imitate the Humility of the Little, Least (vs.1-5)

- Children had few, if any rights. Forget social standing or power.
- Kingdom greatness is found in humility, meekness.
- Such self-imposed lowliness is not natural. So, Change!
- Jesus will welcome those who welcome Him this way.

Jesus listed some “least of these” in Matthew 25

“For I was hungry and you gave me food,
I was thirsty and you gave me drink,
I was a stranger and you welcomed me,
I was naked and you clothed me,
I was sick and you visited me,
I was in prison and you came to me.’ . . .

And the King will answer them, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.’”

(Matthew 25:35-36, 40–ESV)

Some More “Littles”:the poor, non-connected, unborn, less attractive, non-influential, handicapped, people with a history, minorities, immigrants, awkward, the overlooked, ignored, outsiders . . . Who would you add?

Beware Spiritually Hurting, Hindering Little Ones (vs. 6-9)

- Death is preferable to spiritually harming them
- Ways to wander are inevitable, but woe to the sources
- Ruthlessly eliminate Any, All potential causes of stumbling
- Self-deprivation now is far better than hell-bound pleasures

Value, Hold High the Least—God Does! (vs. 10, 12-14)

- Don’t despise, step on or over Little Ones
- Their “Guardian Angels” (messengers) keep God current
- Best, earliest manuscripts do not have vs. 11 (see Luke 19:10)
- God seeks out and celebrates the rescue of wanderers (2 Peter 3:9)