

“Kingdom People” – Week 25

SUNDAY, MARCH 15, 2026 - MICHAEL BOWERS



Summary - “Kingdom Culture”

For twenty-five weeks, we have been walking through the gospel of Matthew in the New Testament. During this time we have seen multiple passages where it is very clear that Jesus is the master teacher. At various points in Matthew, and in other Gospel accounts, we read that the crowds were astonished or amazed at His teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes. All of these passages so far have clearly revealed Jesus' master teaching. Over the past few weeks in our study, Jesus has spent time with the disciples, guiding them to the realization of the cost of following Jesus (16). Then, in chapter seventeen, there is a mind-blowing moment that Peter, James, and John have with Jesus on the mountain, titled the transfiguration of Jesus. It solidifies in their minds who Jesus is and His glory and majesty. Then Jesus reenters the crowds, more healings occur, and he once again foretells his death and resurrection (Matthew 17:22-23). It is an amazing sequence of the teaching of Jesus, and then we come upon chapter 18. What a powerful chapter! Here Jesus is teaching His disciples about the Kingdom of Heaven, childlike faith, the importance of caring for younger believers, and the hard truths regarding how believers should see and deal with sin in their lives. As we work through the first nine verses of chapter 18 we will see that 1.) Kingdom people walk in humility, 2.) Kingdom people protect one another, and 3.) Kingdom people take sin seriously. As you study this week, think through these aspects of “Kingdom Culture” and ask yourself, “Am I walking in humility, brokenness, and contrition as a believer? Am I looking out for other believers, especially children in our church as well as those who are spiritual children in our church? Am I taking sin seriously in my own life and learning to deal with it in a Biblical/Christ Like manner?”

Scripture - Matthew 18:1-9

At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, “Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?”² And calling to him a child, he put him in the midst of them³ and said, “Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.⁴ Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.⁵ “Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me,⁶ but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea.⁷ “Woe to the world for temptations to sin! For it is necessary that temptations come, but woe to the one by whom the temptation comes!⁸ And if your hand or your foot causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life crippled or lame than with two hands or two feet to be thrown into the eternal fire.⁹ And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into the hell of fire.

Key Apps, Websites, and Online Tools for Further Study

- <https://www.blueletterbible.org/>
- <https://www.biblegateway.com/>
- <https://biblehub.com/>
- <https://www.youversion.com/>
- <https://www.bibleref.com/>
- <https://bible.org/>
- <https://netbible.org/>
- <https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/>
- <https://www.desiringgod.org/>
- <https://www.gty.org/>
- <https://www.gotquestions.org/>
- <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/>
- <https://carm.org/>
- <https://dwellapp.io/>

Further Scripture Study

Psalm 32 and 51; [Matthew 18:1-9](#); Mark 9:33-48, 10:13-16; Luke 9:46-48, 17:1-2; Philippians 2:1-11; 1 John 1:5-10

As you study the scripture verses provided for this week, study for right context and right questions...

Right Context:

- The verse itself and key word(s) that stand out in the verse (meanings)
- The verses around the verse, the section of scripture, the chapter, the book, old/new testament, and relation to the rest of scripture
- Author and Date (Who wrote the book and when?)
- Audience (Who is the book written to? Main characters in the story and/or text?)
- Main points and overall purpose of the book
- Historical background, cultural significance, setting, people, rulers, etc.
- Scripture references; let scripture interpret scripture as much as possible

Right Questions:

- What does this passage say?
- What does this passage mean to its original audience?
- What is this passage teaching me about God?
- What does this passage tell us about man?
- What does this passage demand of me? (Is there a command to obey? Is there a promise to claim? Is there a sin to avoid? How is this applicable to me?)
- How does this passage change the way I relate to people? (What actions must I take in response to this passage?)
- What does this passage prompt me to pray? (For God, for others, for my community, for family, etc.)

Key Thoughts

In 17:1-13, Jesus takes three disciples (Peter, James, and John) for a glory-filled transfiguration blinding-light field trip up the mountain. Peter has already spoken up in previous interactions with Jesus and the disciples listening in. These are the disciples of Jesus, but prior to being called by Jesus, they were from a wide-range of blue-collar jobs, and they are doing what people do - they are trying to position themselves with Jesus, the leader of the movement. I believe they try to mask the question that is asked at another moment in the book of Mark, "Which one of us is the greatest?" Instead, they make it a tad more spiritual by asking, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" This is not a question based on character, but on name and recognition. (vs. 18:1)

In verses 18:2-4 Jesus doesn't even take the bait on their question of "Who is the greatest...", but instead takes their question and uses it to teach them about humility.

According to their culture, a child had no business in this setting, much less the center of attention. An undeserving child. A child who has done nothing, paid nothing, not walked with or followed. A child!

Pastor/Teacher Chuck Swindoll writes, "The child had no pride, no arrogance, no conceit, no expectations, no desire for promotion, no spirit of entitlement, and no phony piety. It was a what-you-see-is-what-you-get moment."

Isn't this us? We are undeserving of the gift of salvation that has been paid for by Jesus. We are each sinful and have done nothing worthy to place us in the presence of Holy God, yet God has moved on our behalf.

Jesus is not calling us to be as foolish as a child (1 Cor. 14:20), or playful (Eph. 11:16), or fickle (Eph. 4:14), but rather to continue to come to Christ with humility. A characteristic of humility is surrender, the release of our pride and complete trust in the LORD.

Kingdom People Walk In Humility:

Those who humbly grasp that their spiritual condition is much the same as a child: Completely dependent upon the grace and mercy of Jesus for their standing to HIM.

Remember - there is a child sitting in the midst of the disciples, and Jesus says, "Be humble/dependent as this child, and that is the answer to your question."

Key Thoughts

Humility would lead to surrender, and surrender would lead to their complete trust in Jesus and who He is and will be, and grasping, they had nothing to offer outside of the sacrifice and gift of Jesus Christ. And neither do we. We cannot allow our earthly pride to step in the way of a surrendered relationship with Jesus Christ.

Kingdom People Protect One Another:

As we study these verses, we discover that Jesus is not simply talking about the care and caution of little children (defined in our culture as someone 0-18 years of age). It is also evident from the verses to come that Jesus is speaking about His spiritual children, those who would believe and follow Him. (He deems us his children if we come to him in humility and surrender vs. 1-4).

Without question, we are called, as the called out ekklesia, church, to protect, treat each child with all of their personal needs, and be proactive in caring for them. (Here at Rich Fork: Foster care ministry, REACH, Image Bearers, children's ministry, student ministry, family commissioning, trauma training, father/son campouts, partnerships with BCH and Alpha Pregnancy, and so much more).

We can also come to these verses (3-7) and see the responsibility we each have to lead those who are children in the faith; any person who has come with humility to Jesus Christ.

Kingdom People Take Sin Seriously:

You want to be great??? If so, then be humble (like a child) and be ready and willing to confront sin, get rid of it, and realize it impacts those around you. (vs. 5-9)

In vs. 6, Jesus gives a brutal illustration of a millstone, which was used in the agricultural community to grind grain. The millstone, in many cases, was turned by a donkey walking in circles to grind against the other stone. These could weigh between 250 and 1000 pounds. And Jesus says, you cause one of my children (spiritually) to sin, it's better to tie a 500 stone around your neck and be drowned at sea.

Our sins do not occur in seclusion. (vs. 5-6). The word sin in this verse is the word skandilizo. It literally means to entice, trap, or cause one to stumble or fall. And if we don't quite get the weight of this teaching from Jesus, Jesus goes further.

Our sins must be taken seriously. (vs. 7-14). We must pursue holiness with radical intensity, becoming more like Christ. Our position in Jesus, as we humbly surrender to him, is the basis for our transformation. (This is called sanctification.)

Key Thoughts

How serious is Jesus? His figurative language of cutting off our hands and feet or plucking out our eyes should raise our awareness that sin is serious. Think about what our hands, feet, and eyes represent:

- Feet - Where are you headed?
- Hands - What are you doing?
- Eyes - What are you looking at?

Our sin must be taken seriously. According to Jesus, the removal of sinful desires and actions is of great importance. This resonates from Genesis to Revelation. And it is ultimately not an issue of our feet, hands, or eyes, but of our hearts.

We must turn our eyes away from temptation and look more to Christ. We must look to those in our lives who are reality, not fantasies that entangle us. We must aim our lives with our feet away from places, directions, and relationships that will cause us to stumble and to be tempted. We must use our hands for his glory and good.

- Don't coddle/protect sin, crucify it.
- Don't pretend it will not damage you and those around you.
- Flee from, run from, and disconnect from sinful temptations.
- Don't literally "pluck out your eye", but delete, shift, change, put away the thing in front of you that continues to tempt you.
- Stop pretending. Stop thinking it is only harming you, impacting you, and damaging you.

Personal holiness must be taken seriously because our sin had a cost: a perfect Savior was nailed to a cross as payment for our sin. Don't discount the sacrifice made for your forgiveness, confession, and repentance.

Grace does not make sin less serious. It reveals how costly sin really is.

1 John 1:9, which says, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." This is biblical: confession, faithful forgiveness, and cleansing from God for each of us. This is TRUTH! This is not a verse to toss around, but to claim and trust as TRUTH, because the passages that surround 1 John 1:9 are equally true as well (see 1 John 1:5-10).

Don't pretend. Pursue holiness. Pursue things in the light. Pursue fellowship with one another.

Key Thoughts

How do we do this?

- Eyes: Ask God to reveal sin in your life? (Put down pride and ask with an honest and broken heart.)
- Mouth: Confess your sin.
- Hands: If in question, don't do it, watch it, buy it, or pursue it. (Whatever the temptation is.)
- Feet: Seek accountability, flee from sinful desires and temptations
- Mind: Remember your position in Christ in scripture. (Position leads to practice.)
- Repeat. Repeat. Repeat.
- And just when you think you have your sinful habit tucked away, repeat. (Luke 9:23 - Daily!)

Church, Jesus is not asking us to take sin seriously because He is angry with us. He is asking us to take sin seriously because He knows what it costs to forgive it.

Every sin we excuse... Every temptation we entertain... Every compromise we hide... was paid for by the blood of Jesus Christ on the cross. That's why Kingdom people don't entertain sin. We bring it into the light. We confess it. We turn from it. And we walk in the freedom that Christ has already purchased for us.

Reflect & Respond

What does our culture, country, upbringing, etc. define as greatness? What have you defined as greatness in your own life and have you found it? Does what you define as greatness conflict with what Christ teaches in this week's passages?

Where are you perhaps seeking your own glory rather than humbling yourself like a child before Christ? Have you, will you, like a child, let go of your past, and maybe even your pride, in trying to keep others thinking you are the greatest, when in reality you need to humble yourself and surrender as a child?

Have you kept a childlike faith and heart regarding your faith in Christ, or have you reached the point where you feel you have "arrived" or are beyond learning anything new regarding Christ and His word?

Jesus uses graphic metaphors (cutting off hands/feet; plucking out eyes) to illustrate the danger of sin. Where in your life are you tempted to "minimize" the presence and power of sin, making it seem less dangerous than God says it is?

Spend some time reading through Psalm 32 and Psalm 51. Spend some time in humble and broken confession before the Lord and pray also that He would cleanse your heart and renew your spirit.

Are you still working, perhaps exhausted, at trying to overcome sinful struggles on your own, or are you learning how to truly worship and rest in Christ's work of salvation? (Matthew 11:28-30). Are you living under the yoke of Christ or are you still struggling under a yoke of slavery?

At the end of the day, we have all worshipped our way into our sinful behaviors (idolatry). How are you currently worshipping your way out of it each day? (see Luke 9:23)