

Study Notes - Sunday 26 March: Like Children - Tim Blackburn

Matthew 18:1-9 NIV 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.

Matthew 19:13-15 NIV Then people brought little children to Jesus for him to place his hands on them and pray for them. But the disciples rebuked them. (14) Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." (15) When he had placed his hands on them, he went on from there.

1. 'Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?' What kind of answer might the disciples have expected Jesus to give?
2. In what ways do we need to change and become like little children?
3. Distinguish between being childlike and childish?
4. In what sense could the description 'child-like' be applied to Jesus?
5. What can we learn from the great value that Jesus places on children? 18:vv4-6;19vv13-15. In what ways does this challenge us concerning our church life?
6. We sometimes argue that children are not the church of tomorrow but a valuable part of the church of today. How would this realisation affect our behaviour towards children?
7. What are some of the ways in which we could cause children, or indeed any person, to stumble?
8. Reflect on the vivid illustrations of the eye, the hand or the foot causing us to stumble? If this does not mean literal self-mutilation. What does it mean for us in practical terms? Some of us remember being taught these words - Be careful little hands what you do, eyes what you see, feet where you go – there's a Saviour up above and He's looking down in love... comment!