

The Character of Jesus 38
False Ambition Versus Childlikeness
Matthew 18:1 – 14, Mark 9:33 – 50, Luke 9:46 – 50

- Characteristic: Humility
 - Following the Mark account
 - Matthew includes an extra line of explanation about childlikeness: “Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as a little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.”
 - Matthew includes Jesus’ parable about leaving the 99 sheep while searching for the one who was lost.
 - (33 – 34) The Transfiguration followed by the failure of the left-behind disciples to cast out a demon occurred just before this, giving opportunities for self-importance.
 - (35) Isaiah 52:13 – 53:12 predicted that the Messiah would be a servant. This is the beginning of that teaching which will culminate in the foot-washing scene in John 13.
 - (36) Another occasion with children occurs later: Mark 10:13 – 16, Luke 18:15 – 17.
 - (37) “In My name” means “with the nature of Jesus.” So, he who relates to a child with patience and gentleness while affirming the child’s worth and importance has the right attitude for connecting with the Son and the Father.
 - (38) John had the same blind spot as the Pharisees who questioned Jesus’ miracles because of the Sabbath. The fact that the miracles could be accomplished should have had a bigger impact.
 - (39 – 40) This is the counter point to “the blind leading the blind” (Matthew 15:14). Those through whom the Spirit works need to stick together.
 - (41) The previous advice was not just for miracle workers, but included all those who do what they can, however seemingly insignificant. The fact that they did it “because you belong to Christ” is the important point.
 - (42) This stumbling has as its context the “my group has the truth” attitude. People, especially the humble, can be driven away from the gospel by such arrogance.
 - (43 – 48) If you know it’s wrong, yet it still “causes you to sin,” take drastic action. Jesus paid off our debt to justice and sent the Spirit to repair our characters, but we are still responsible for taking whatever action we can, including the extreme.
 - (49) Terrible things (probably mostly temptation) will come. We are “seasoned” if we have the attitude of James 1:2 – 4. But, we can be destroyed by the same fire if we deceive ourselves into believing it’s OK.
 - (50) Their salt was not pure sodium chloride, but a mixture of salts. If their salt got wet, the most soluble salts (the ones that taste salty) would leach out, leaving the remainder tasteless. The point is not to be tasteless as those who, for fear of sin, do nothing. Rather, be flavorful, which often causes conflict, but at the same time be at peace with one another.
- Application: Humility
 - What opportunities exist in the modern church for self-importance?
 - Jesus was both a servant and humble, yet He was a leader and active. The point is to act like Jesus.
 - The faithful need to stick together even when not working together.
 - Every task is important.
 - Will temptation season or consume?