

THE BEREANS

ACTS 17:11

Matthew 18

Lesson #17

A fuller perspective

11/19/2017

Christian UNITY is a major theme in the N.T.

This means that we must
know how to:

- **preserve our boundaries** and
- **manage our differences**



Four major texts:

Galatians 5

Matthew 18

1 Cor. 12-14

Rom. 14-15



Matthew 18

Addresses three questions

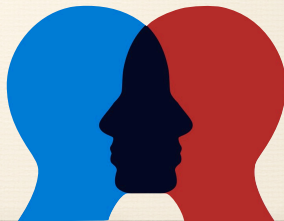
**Why do
people
stumble?**

**Where is God
when people
stumble?**

**What can
we do to help
people recover?**

and one theme

Empathy



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Why do people stumble?

Matthew 18

“¹ At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, “Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?”. . . ⁴ “Whoever then humbles himself as this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. ⁵ And whoever receives one such child in My name receives Me; ⁶ but **whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble**, it is better for him that a heavy millstone be hung around his neck, and that he be drowned in the depth of the sea.””

1. We may share some responsibility with those who stumble.

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Consider this before you confront those who are out of bounds.

1. In many cases they may be “set up” to stumble - early childhood experience is key.

Numbers 14:18

“visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generations.”

Luke 12:48

“From everyone who has been given much, much will be required;”

2. These do not excuse the behavior but they are to be considered in our response to restore or convert.

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Why do people stumble?

“⁸ And 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 having two hands or two feet, to be cast into the eternal fire. ⁹ And 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 having two eyes, to be cast into the fiery hell. ¹⁰ See that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you, that their angels in heaven continually behold the face of My Father who is in heaven.”

1. In many cases they may be “set up” to stumble.
2. They fail to take personal responsibility.

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Before you play a “get out of jail free” card consider:

1. Victims seldom if ever change without their cooperation and sacrifice.



“Between stimulus and response is our greatest power - **the freedom to choose.**”

2. How much should a victim sacrifice? - Read vs. 8-9 again.

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What are we to throw from us?

- ✓ The language used here is clearly metaphorical.
- ✓ It has to do with those things that we know to be “entry level” issues that if left unchecked can lead to destructive ends.

Matthew 25:21

“Well done, good and faithful slave, You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things;”

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Matthew 18

Addresses three questions

Why do people do bad things?

They may be victims of abuse!
1-7

They do not take personal responsibility!
8-10

Where is God when bad things happen?

What can we do?

8

Where is God when people stumble?

“¹¹ For the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost. 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? ¹³ And 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. ¹⁴ Thus it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones perish.”

1. The shepherd does not erase the free will of the straying sheep.
2. The shepherd's joy is in restoration - consider the prodigal son (Luke 15)

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Where is God when bad things happen?

God seeks to save but does not violate human free will.
11-14

Human and natural disasters call for acts of God, they don't reflect them.

What can we do?

10



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Where is God when we are being abused?

- ✓ He is seeking to save sinners (both abused & abuser). **We demand that He save us and condemn our "enemies".**
- ✓ He is seeking to comfort us. **We demand justice not comfort.**
- ✓ He knows that the freedom to abuse is also the freedom to repent. **We demand vengeance not repentance.**
- ✓ He knows that we all share in the abuse of a fallen world. **We believe that we are innocent victims.**

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What can and should we do?

Matthew 18

1. Respect personal dignity with privacy.

¹⁵ If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, **just between the two of you.** **If** he listens to you, you have won your brother over.

2. Support the evidence with witnesses.

¹⁶ But **if** he will not listen, take one or two others along, **so that every matter may be established** by the testimony of two or three witnesses.

3. Apply pressure through the community.

¹⁷ **If** he refuses to listen to them, **tell it to the church;**

4. Match behavior with environment.

and **if** he refuses to listen even to the church, **treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector.**

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What can and should we do?

¹⁸ Truly I say to you, whatever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. 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. ²⁰ For where two or three have gathered together in My name, there I am in their midst."

1. God disciplines those outside the church, (*1 Cor. 5:13*) while the church has authority to manage discipline within the church.
2. Note that the context of Vs. 20 is the judgment by the church (leaders) in the discipline of those who refuse to repent.

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What can we do?

Work for genuine repentance.
15-20

Be willing and eager to forgive and restore.
21-35

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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?" ²² Jesus said to him, "**I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.**" ²³ For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a certain king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves."

³² Then summoning him, his lord said to him, 'You wicked slave, **I forgave you all that debt because you entreated me.** ³³ **Should you not also have had mercy on your fellow slave, even as I had mercy on you?**' "

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Mahatma Gandhi



"An eye for an eye makes the whole world blind."

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John Stott



"The longer I live the more clearly I see my own depravity and God's grace in Christ toward me."

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What should we take home

Empathy

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What can we do for those who stumble?

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What should we take home

1. **Get the whole story** - Stumbling can involve more than one person's choices.
2. **Burn the victim card** - Those who see themselves as "victims" seldom change.
3. **Bear one another's burdens** - Getting out of trouble calls for community involvement.
4. **Remember that God seeks all sinners** - He loves the victim and the victimizer.
5. **Work for repentance and restoration**, not punishment and exclusion.
6. **Be more eager to forgive** than demand personal rights and justice.

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