

# Jesus & Relationships

## Study 1 Caring for the Vulnerable

What are the criteria our world uses to determine those people who are the greatest? Who do we call the greatest within Christian circles? Who are the people at the bottom of the hierarchy, the most vulnerable in our society and church?

### Matthew 18:1-14

Read the passage as a whole.

1. Verses 2-3: In Jesus times children were the most vulnerable in society, considered half-human until they reached puberty. Children are not perfect as any parent knows. What might be the status and characteristics of children and the vulnerable that Jesus is thinking of? Why is it important that we take on these characteristics?
2. Verses 1, 4-5: How does Jesus answer the disciples' question in v1?
3. Verses 6-7: Jesus uses extreme imagery and language to impress on us the seriousness of what he is talking about. What are some of the things that cause vulnerable Christians to stumble or give up on their faith? Note the dual responsibility of both the sinner and the one who leads them into sin, and, therefore, accountability of both (Rom 5:12).
4. Verses 8-9: Again Jesus uses extreme imagery to urge us not to let sin take a hold of us. What are the opposite characteristics to that of the vulnerable that might be a problem for us? In cooperation with God's work in our lives how can we take decisive action against this sin?
5. Verse 10: This verse may or may not refer to guardian angels (see also Heb 1:14). However, seeing the face of God implies these angels have access to God on behalf of the vulnerable. Contrast the attitude and posture of God to those who despise the vulnerable.
6. Verses 12-14: Jesus uses this story to illustrate God's action and attitude to Christians who lose their way. What lessons can we learn to guide our attitude and actions towards vulnerable Christians who stumble in their faith?

### Pray together

Take some time to bring any problem attitudes or characteristics in your own life to God in repentance. Praise with God for the forgiveness and restoration he works in our lives.

Pray for the vulnerable people in our church and in our community. Ask God how we might show welcome to them.

## Study 2 Conflict

Conflict within the church is rarely about theological differences. What are some of the reasons you have known to trigger conflict and hurt in the church?

### Matthew 18: 15-20

Read the passage as a whole.

1. What should be the intent or reason for talking to a fellow Christian about sin that causes conflict? (v15)
2. Why should we discuss the problem one-on-one before involving others?
3. If the wrongdoer won't listen, Jesus tells us to take 2 or 3 others and try again. What might be the benefit of doing this? (v16, See also Deut 19:15)
4. If the third step of telling the whole story to the church or small group fails, Jesus suggests we treat the wrongdoer as we would treat a 'pagan or tax-collector'. These were people outside the church. How did Jesus and the early church relate to them? (v17 See also Matt 9: 9-10; Acts 11: 18-21)
5. Moving on from v15-17, verse 18 refers to a pronouncement of what is and what is not sin. The early Christians were learning to interpret the Old Testament as Christians living in their context. As we interpret and apply Scripture in our context, what steps can we take so that we reach the same conclusion taken in heaven?
6. What encouragement does v19-20 give us in the type of conflict related in this passage?
7. What would it take to create a safe space in our gatherings as Christians so that we could confess and be confronted with our sin, so that we grow more like Christ?

### Pray together

- Pray for unity in our church and your Life Group. Pray that we might grow in love for Christ and one another so that we feel safe to be confronted by our sin.
- Pray for wisdom and a godly outcome for any conflict situations among Christians that you are aware of.

## Study 3 Forgiveness

Watch the testimony of Danny Abdallah as he launches iForgive Day.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RQK0qT3mR5Q>

How does this testimony strike you?

### Matthew 18:21-35

Read the passage as a whole.

1. We have become over-familiar with this story but for the original hearers Jesus' answer was shockingly radical. Pharisees taught people to forgive 3 times. What was radical about Peter's suggestion? What is problematic with it? V21
2. What is the main point of Jesus' response in v22? How does it differ radically from Peter's suggestion?
3. What is the main lesson of Jesus' story in v23-34? Who does the king/master represent and who do the servants represent?
4. We don't know for sure by one talent is probably worth between several million and one trillion dollars today. Contrast the servant's ludicrous plea with the master's radical response. V24-27
5. One hundred denarii represents the wages of one hundred days. Why was the servant's response to his fellow servant clearly disturbing? Note v30. What does this say about the heart of the first servant?
6. What does the master's response suggest that he expected of the servant? V32-34
7. This story shows us both the mercy and judgement of God. How can a God of mercy also inflict such strong judgement?
8. In response to Peter's question in v21 this passage refers to forgiveness between Christians. Do you think Jesus' advice in v35 equally applies in situations with non-Christians? (See also Matt 6: 12, 14-15)

### Pray together

- Praise God for his grace and mercy that offers us forgiveness freely.
- Take time to bring before God any unresolved personal problems, asking God for his forgiveness and grace to forgive others who have hurt us.