

Message #63

Matthew 18:1-14

Obviously in view of **verse 1**, this was a discussion among the disciples.

THE DISCIPLE WHO WILL BE GREATEST IN THE KINGDOM WILL BE THE DISCIPLE WHO DID NOT SEE HIMSELF AS GREAT, BUT AS A LITTLE CHILD THAT MAINTAINS PROPER, HUMBLE ATTITUDES IN AND CONCERNING MINISTRY.

Now I want you to notice what Christ did when He was asked who would be the greatest—He called a child to Him and set the child before the disciples. The noun “child” (paidion) is one that refers to a small, young child (Smith, p. 333). We know greatness will definitely include childlike faith and humility. In God’s kingdom no one is high and mighty, because God is there.

GREATNESS PREREQUISITE #1 – Greatness in the kingdom requires childlike conversion. **18:3**

The word “convert” means to turn oneself to a childlike faith in Jesus Christ to get into the kingdom.

GREATNESS PREREQUISITE #2 – Greatness in the kingdom requires childlike humility. **18:4**

The word “humility” is a word that implies a low estate. I understand the word to mean that one has a very low estimation of self when compared to the majesty and glory of God. One is like a child in dependence on God and lowliness of mind. That is what humility really is. Humility does not mean you do not think accurately about your own gifts and abilities. It is a humble, contrite spirit before God, realizing that before God we don’t deserve anything. Dr. Griffith Thomas said childlike humility requires being teachable—eager to learn; trustfulness—eager to believe the truth learned; tenderness—eager to respond to the things of God.

GREATNESS PREREQUISITE #3 – Greatness in the kingdom requires childlike receptiveness. **18:5**

Greatness in the kingdom means that we will receive and accept any who have trusted Christ, including a child.

GREATNESS PREREQUISITE #4 – Greatness in the kingdom requires not causing people to stumble. **18:6**

The word “stumble” is an important word in the next verses. It occurs once in **verse 6**, twice in **verse 7**, once in **verse 8**, and once in **verse 9**. The Greek word is one that means to set a trap or snare that causes one to stumble.

GREATNESS PREREQUISITE #5 – Greatness in the kingdom requires a present perspective of future judgment. **18:7**

A “woe” pronouncement was a serious judgment.

GREATNESS PREREQUISITE #6 – Greatness in the kingdom requires heart examination. **18:8-9**

This passage is not teaching self-mutilation because as Jesus has already pointed out, the real problem is found in the heart (Matt. 15:18-19). What I understand this passage to be teaching is that a disciple who will be great will continually monitor his own heart and will discipline himself to make certain that nothing blocks his relationship with Jesus Christ.

GREATNESS PREREQUISITE #7 – Greatness in the kingdom requires not despising little ones. **18:10**

The word “despise” is one that means to think little of children. Jesus wanted His disciples to know that little children are continually monitored in heaven. One who hinders a child from coming into a right relationship with the Father has heaven as his witness.

GREATNESS PREREQUISITE #8 – Greatness in the kingdom requires going after God’s sheep no matter who they are. **18:12-14**

A great disciple will be one who goes after straying sheep. He will search for them and try to rescue them from perishing. It may be a little boy or girl. It may be a prominent person or not so prominent person. It may be an older person or a younger person. A great disciple has a passion for lost and hurting souls.