

Problem:

- Read 1 Corinthians 12:27 and Matthew 18:1-3. The church is not called to be childish but childlike.
- Read the following article and discuss a proper metric for maturity based on the message.
<http://www.bpnews.net/bpnews.asp?ID=30593>

Text:

greatness (Matthew 18:1-4)

- The disciples wanted to know who was greatest IN the Kingdom and Jesus responds that without humility they could not even ENTER the Kingdom.

Read Matthew 23:11-12. What do slaves and children have in common?

How does Matthew 18:4 answer this question?

is a shared calling (Matthew 18:5-14)

- In verses 5-9 we see a calling to be careful about the spirituality of others.
 - Read Matthew 23:13-15. Why is this so important?
 - Read Romans 14:13-15:2; 1 Corinthians 8:1-13; 10:23-24.
 - What does this mandate to the corporate or shared calling to humility look like? In other words what does childlike humility look like in community?
- In Matthew 18:10-14 we see the heart of God for His wandering sheep.
 - Read Ezekiel 34:1-16. How does these verses bring out the gravity of despising the faith of His saints?

Application (Matthew 18:15-20)

- This passage needs to be read in light of the whole chapter on humility. Church discipline is an act of mercy to protect the church from unrepentant sin which affects the whole body.
 - Read Genesis 4:8-9. Are you your brother's keeper?
 - Read 1 Corinthians 5. Why is it important to show unrepentant people who lack humility in their sin, the exit?
 - Read Acts 5:1-14. Who benefited from this discipline? How does this jive with Matthew 18:5-14, specifically verses 8-9?

Illustration (Matthew 18:21-35)

- The key verse in this section as it relates in context to the rest of the passage is verse 31.

Explain.

- Read Ephesians 4:32. Notice that for the apostle Paul, the injunction to forgive is based on the actual past experience of real forgiveness in salvation. to not forgive is evidence of not having received it in the first place. In other words, our forgiveness is not the basis but the evidence of our own forgiveness.
 - forgiveness is a great concept until you have to do it. discuss.
 - Read Ephesians 4:9-16 and Philippians 2:1-11. In both sections the idea is one of maturing in the faith, or growing up into maturity which Philippians defines as a shared mind of humility. Childlikeness is not childishness. This is the Main Idea:

Greatness is our shared calling to maturity in childlike, not childish, faith

Implication:

you are your brothers keeper - we must be involved with who comes in and who goes out of this church. Discuss the difference between childish and childlike faith.

Application:

I cannot possibly call and follow up with all those who fall off the wagon. You know them. Reach out to them and encourage them.

I cannot possibly root out every member in our church who is in the midst of unrepentant sin. You know them. Reach out to them with a mind to restore them and to protect the church from their harmful and discouraging witness.

I want you to care who sits in the seats at church. I want you to care who is missing. I want you to care for this church as if it was a part of your body...cause in God's eyes it is.

read the following articles and discuss if time permits:

<http://utmost.org/am-i-my-brother's-keeper/>

<http://milesarmbruster.hubpages.com/hub/How-to-evaluate-Christians-who-are-immature>

<http://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/causes-immaturity/>

Discuss some practical ways to apply this sermon in your group.