

WEEK OF JULY 26, 2026

**5-Day Devotional
based on Sunday's message:**



Who Is the Greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven?
Matthew 18:1-14

Provided by



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Matthew 18:1-14 (NLT)

At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, “Who, then, is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” He called a little child to him, and placed the child among them. And he said: “Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me. “If anyone causes one of these little ones—those who believe in me—to stumble, it would be better for them to have a large millstone hung around their neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea. Woe to the world because of the things that cause people to stumble! Such things must come, but woe to the person through whom they come! If your hand or your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life maimed or crippled than to have two hands or two feet and be thrown into eternal fire. And if your eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into the fire of hell. “See that you do not despise one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven. “What do you think? If a man owns a hundred sheep, and one of them wanders away, will he not leave the ninety-nine on the hills and go to look for the one that wandered off? And if he finds it, truly I tell you, he is happier about that one sheep than about the ninety-nine that did not wander off. In the same way your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should perish

Day 1: What Do You Notice?

Devotional

Have you ever ended a day knowing you solved every urgent problem, yet missed the person who needed your attention? Responsibility can train us to look for what is loud, visible, or immediately demanding. The danger is that we begin to measure importance by urgency. In Sunday's message, Pastor Rob described walking past an injured child during an EMT exercise because his eyes went to what looked like the biggest problem. The disciples faced a similar correction. They were close to Jesus, but still thinking about status. Jesus placed a child among them and showed that Kingdom life begins with humble dependence. We do not enter by proving that we are impressive. We receive the grace of the King. That moment of recognition matters because attention is one of the ways love becomes visible. When we slow down enough to see people, we become available to the grace Jesus is teaching us to receive.

Quote

"Where our eyes naturally go... isn't always where they should go."

Bible Verse

"At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, 'Who, then, is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?' He called a little child to him, and placed the child among them. And he said: 'Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven' — Matthew 18:1-4(NLT)

Reflection Question

Where are urgency, recognition, or control keeping you from noticing what Jesus wants you to see?

Today's Practice

Pause once today and ask, "Jesus, who needs me to notice them?" That pause interrupts the habit of reacting to urgency and creates room for compassionate attention.

Prayer

Jesus, redirect my eyes and teach me to depend on Your grace. Help me slow down long enough to see the people You place in front of me. Amen.

Day 2: Making Room

Devotional

Most of us know the difference between entering a room and being welcomed into it. One experience makes you search for a place; the other gives you a place. In Jesus' world, a child had little social influence or status. Yet Jesus placed a child in the middle of the disciples and connected that child with His own presence. The point reaches beyond children. New believers, quiet people, struggling Christians, and those who cannot advance our interests are not interruptions. They are people Jesus asks us to receive. A church shaped by the King does not ask first, "What can this person contribute?" It asks, "How can I make room for Christ by making room for them?" Jesus is not asking us to create a perfect community. He is asking us to notice the person in front of us and let His welcome become concrete through our ordinary choices.

Quote

"When we make room for the overlooked, we make room for Christ."

Bible Verse

"And whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me." — Matthew 18:5 (NLT)

Refection Question

Who may be standing at the edge of your circle because you have not made room?

Today's Practice

Give one person your unhurried attention and a clear welcome. A clear welcome helps another person experience the belonging Jesus promises rather than having to earn their place.

Prayer

Jesus, give me Your eyes for people and make my welcome reflect Your heart. Teach me to make room for others as You have made room for me. Amen.

Day 3: The Weight of Influence

Devotional

A careless comment can change the atmosphere of an entire room. A joke can make someone ashamed. Hypocrisy can make faith seem impossible. A leader's neglect can leave a young believer alone with questions. Jesus warns that causing one of His little ones to stumble is serious because people are precious to Him. His warning is also personal. We cannot protect others while excusing the patterns in our own hearts. Jesus' radical language calls us to honest repentance, not self-punishment. We bring our sin to the One who changes us from the inside out, then we remove whatever repeatedly harms our obedience or our influence. Repentance protects relationships because it replaces defensiveness with responsibility. When we bring our influence to Jesus, He can turn it from a source of harm into a means of grace.

Quote

"Take sin seriously. And rejoice that Jesus came to solve the problem at its source."

Bible Verse

"If anyone causes one of these little ones—those who believe in me—to stumble, it would be better for them to have a large millstone hung around their neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea. Woe to the world because of the things that cause people to stumble! Such things must come, but woe to the person through whom they come! If your hand or your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life maimed or crippled than to have two hands or two feet and be thrown into eternal fire. And if your eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into the fire of hell. "See that you do not despise one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven." — Matthew 18:6-10 (NLT)

Reflection Question

What word, habit, or attitude in your life could quietly weaken someone else's faith?

Today's Practice

Confess one specific pattern to Jesus and take one practical step away from it. A concrete step matters because repentance becomes real when it changes what we repeatedly choose.

Prayer

Lord, make my influence safe for others and change my heart at its source. Give me courage to repent honestly and to use my influence for the good of others. Amen.

Day 4: The Slow Drift

Devotional

People rarely decide all at once to abandon a friendship, a church, or their faith. Distance usually grows through small choices: one conversation postponed, one prayer skipped, one compromise accepted. Because the change is gradual, others may not notice until the person feels far away. Jesus tells of a shepherd who refuses to call that loss acceptable. He searches for the one sheep and rejoices when it is restored. This is not a picture of a reluctant Savior. It is the determined love of Jesus, who moves toward wandering people. His love also teaches us to pay attention before distance becomes isolation. The first step toward restoration is often simply refusing to look away. Patient attention can become the doorway through which someone discovers that Christ has not forgotten them.

Quote

“The shepherd refuses to say, ‘Ninety-nine out of a hundred is not bad.’”

Bible Verse

“What do you think? If a man owns a hundred sheep, and one of them wanders away, will he not leave the ninety-nine on the hills and go to look for the one that wandered off? And if he finds it, truly I tell you, he is happier about that one sheep than about the ninety-nine that did not wander off.” — Matthew 18:12-13 (NLT)

Reflection Question

Where do you see gradual drifting in your own life or in someone you care about?

Today's Practice

Send one sincere message of care to someone who may be growing distant. A simple message may not solve everything, but it lets a drifting person know they have not been forgotten.

Prayer

Good Shepherd, find us when we wander and make us patient pursuers of others. Give me patience to move toward people with care instead of assuming someone else will act. Amen.

Day 5: The Heart of the King

Devotional

At the end of a busy week, it is natural to measure yourself by achievement, recognition, or influence. Jesus gives us another measure. He points to humility, welcome, protection, and pursuit. These are not qualities we manufacture so God will accept us. They are the qualities Jesus has already shown us. He humbled Himself for sinners, welcomed people others rejected, protected the vulnerable, and came looking for wandering sheep. The more clearly we receive His grace, the more His heart becomes visible in ours. Greatness in the Kingdom is not the position we secure. It is the love we give because the King has first loved us. This is why the final question is personal. Jesus is not merely describing an ideal church; He is inviting us to receive His heart and practice it in the places where He has already placed us.

Quote

“The disciples asked, ‘Who is greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven?’ Jesus never pointed to the strongest disciple. He pointed to the humble, welcomed the overlooked, protected the vulnerable, and pursued the wandering. That is what greatness looks like in His Kingdom.”

Bible Verse

“At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, ‘Who, then, is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?’ He called a little child to him, and placed the child among them. And he said: ‘Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me. ‘If anyone causes one of these little ones—those who believe in me—to stumble, it would be better for them to have a large millstone hung around their neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea. Woe to the world because of the things that cause people to stumble! Such things must come, but woe to the person through whom they come! If your hand or your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life maimed or crippled than to have two hands or two feet and be thrown into eternal fire. And if your eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into the fire of hell. ‘See that you do not despise one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven. ‘What do you think? If a man owns a hundred sheep, and one of them wanders away, will he not leave the ninety-nine on the hills and go to look for the one that wandered off? And if he finds it, truly I tell you, he is happier about that one sheep than about the ninety-nine that did not wander off. In the same way your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should perish.’ — Matthew 18:1-14 (NLT)

Reflection Question

Which part of Jesus’ heart most needs to grow in you: humility, welcome, protection, or pursuit?

Today’s Practice

Choose one practice from this week and continue it with one person in mind. Continuing one practice turns a Sunday truth into a pattern of life that can reshape your relationships over time.

Prayer

King Jesus, make Your heart visible in me and in our church. Let Your grace shape the way I welcome, protect, and pursue the people around me. Amen.