

## Stage V. Jesus Withdraws to the Gentile Regions Surrounding Galilee

### C. Jesus End His Withdrawal With Discipleship Training

## The DAILY JESUS NEWS #137

### 4. Jesus' Teaches on 'True Kingdom Greatness," Part II: A Good Example

Base Text: MT 18.7-9 (Parallel Text: MK 9.43-50)

6 *"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.*

7 *"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!*

8 *"If your hand or your foot is causing you to stumble, I command you to 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.*

9 *"And if your eye is causing you to stumble, I command you to gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter eternal life with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into the fire of hell, where 'THE WORMS THAT EAT THEM DO NOT DIE, AND THE FIRE IS NOT QUENCHED.' (Isa. 66.24)*

*"Everyone will be salted with fire. Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can you make it salty again? Have salt among yourselves, and be at peace with each other."*

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NOTE: We use superscript identification of the source gospel in "blended texts" as follows: Matthew = <sup>MT</sup>, Mark = <sup>M</sup>, Luke = <sup>L</sup>, John = <sup>J</sup>, Acts = <sup>A</sup>. This "superscript ID" is inserted at the beginning of the quoted text, identifying that Bible book until a different superscript appears. In addition, *the words of Jesus are in red italics*. Old Testament quotations are CAPITALIZED.

	CONTEXT DIGEST
Location	Capernaum
Timeline	September (Month 33)
Jesus' Life Context	Stage V: Jesus Withdraws to the Gentile Regions Surrounding Galilee
	C. Jesus End His Withdrawal With Discipleship Training
Title	4. "True Kingdom Greatness," Part II... Being a Good Example

#### COMMENT:

Jesus spoke of a succession of characteristics a true servant-attitude in Matt. 18. After explaining that true greatness is found in child-like, loving service to God and man (18.1-5), he showed that a servant leads by example (18.7-9), is a care-giver (18.10-14), restores the weak and fallen (18.15-20), and forgives unconditionally. These are all expressions of unconditional love, which is the defining characteristic of God's own greatness and glory. Therefore, loving service constitutes true greatness in God's kingdom.

In today's reading Jesus focuses on the way a humble servant leads first and foremost with their example. People, especially men, tend to think of greatness in terms of wielding power. That was the mistake the apostles were making in their evaluations of their own "greatness." Jesus is our perfect model of the power and influence of a true servant's leadership by example.

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The last thing Jesus had done prior to giving the apostles this teaching was pay the temple tax for Peter and himself. That was a perfect example of the point Jesus was making in today's reading. When we love someone, we desire the best for them. That means we will care deeply about the kind of influence we are having on them. Our motivation will be to build them up, not tear them down through the power of our example.

Jesus went out of his way not to give a cause of offense to those around him by paying the temple tax, even when he was exempt from it. Jesus practiced what he preached. In this section of his teaching Jesus said that his disciples must also be careful to avoid giving offense to people around us by giving them a destructive example. We are responsible for the way our lives impact others.

In his first major teaching on discipleship (MT 5-7), Jesus had commanded us to ***"let your light shine before people in such a way that they can see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven."*** (5.16) Loving, humble servants of God first love God, and therefore desire him to be glorified in all things. Because they so love God, his servants also love people unconditionally, and therefore they desire all people to experience God's love and glory as they do.

A good example should point others to see God as the source and power for what we do, so that God receives the glory. That is the right motivation for setting a good example before others. The wrong motivation for elevating our example is to gain glory for ourselves. That is hypocrisy.

There is a key quality that separates a hypocritical *"good example"* from a true servant's example. The key is our attitude toward our sin. Hypocrites act as if they have no sin; no struggle in doing God's will. They present themselves as thoroughly righteous people. That is a deadly, utterly false example. It is the worst stumbling block we can place before people. It was the *"example"* that Jesus hated most.

Truly *"great"* servants of God love him, and that love causes them to constantly recognize and hate their own sin. They are an example of people who do not turn a blind eye to their sinful nature, but who deal ruthlessly with it instead. As Jesus said, they ***"cut it off"*** and remove it from themselves constantly. God's humble servants have a *"zero tolerance"* policy regarding their own sin, even though they have to deal with it every day of their lives.

Constant awareness of the lack of their own righteousness causes *"great"* servants to abide constantly in Christ's righteousness through his forgiveness and cleansing.

People who deal honestly with their own sinfulness are humble servants. Their pride is constantly being bashed by their need for forgiveness. People who are broken about their own sins are concerned that they do not lead others into the same path. Their personal example is one of constant repentance and fresh forgiveness from their loving God. THAT is the example that other sinful people need to see more than any other. The only righteous person is Jesus. All the rest of us are sinful people in constant need of change in our lives in order to follow him.

*"Great"* servants humbly demonstrate a repentant lifestyle that acknowledges and deals with their own sinfulness through the limitless forgiveness and grace of their Savior. These are *"good works"* that glorify God. This is the example that leads other people to receive Jesus' salvation, and avoid stumbling into more sin. This is the example we all need.

#### APPLICATION:

It is only by dealing relentlessly with our own sin that we can influence other people to do the same. Jesus is the example of true righteousness. We need to be an example of repentance and transformation by his grace. Anything else is hypocrisy.

*Honestly, what kind of example are you setting?*