



BIBLE LENS

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Shining a light on the weekly Bible Lessons published in the *Christian Science Quarterly*®

Man

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from the **Responsive Reading**

Matthew 18:2–5, 10

Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, and said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me. . . . Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.

“The child’s humility,” a scriptural authority concludes, “is the pattern of the Christian’s behavior to his fellow-men, and the child’s dependence and trust are the pattern of the Christian attitude towards God, the Father of all.”

In their ministries, Jesus’ followers embraced the Christly authority implied by the phrase “in my name” (see examples in [Acts 2:38; 3:6; 16:18](#)). The Savior assures them, “Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son” ([John 14:13](#)). And [Colossians 3:17](#) urges, “Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus.”

from **Section 1**

4 | [Romans 8:16, 17](#)

The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.

That anyone could be an heir of God was a radical assertion. Jewish law allowed for only certain inheritances, according firstborn sons a double portion. Other male children shared the remainder equally, and female children drew a portion only if there were no male children (see [Deuteronomy 21:17](#) ; [Numbers 27:8](#)). But much of the population—the enslaved, servants, and nonlandowners—received no inheritance.

A modern scholar offers this paraphrase of Paul's statement: "God's Spirit makes us sure that we are his children. His Spirit lets us know that together with Christ we will be given what God has promised."

5 | Matthew 5:48

Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

With this injunction in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus sums up his teaching about Christly behavior (see vv. 3–47). Encouragement to be perfect wasn't entirely new—Hebrew instruction addressed perfection as well: "Thou shalt be perfect with the Lord thy God" ([Deuteronomy 18:13](#)). The Greek term translated *perfect* (*teleios*, signifying wholeness, fullness, and maturity) presents perfection as the Godlikeness natural to all of His children.

from Section 2

6 | Matthew 5:8

Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

Verses beginning with "Blessed are" in the Sermon on the Mount have been called the Beatitudes, from the Latin word *beatitudo* (meaning perfect blessedness or happiness).

"The greatness of the beatitudes," one commentary suggests, "is that they are not wistful glimpses of some future beauty; they are not even golden promises of some distant glory; they are triumphant shouts of bliss for a permanent joy that nothing in the world can ever take away."

Purity of heart is mentioned in [Psalms 24:4](#) as a requirement for entering God's presence, and in [Psalms 51:10](#) in a request for inner cleansing. The Geneva Study Bible (the contemporary update of the 16th-century translation) notes, ". . . as a bright and shining resemblance or image may be seen plainly in a clear and pure looking glass, even so does the face . . . of the everlasting God, shine forth, and clearly appear in a pure heart."

7 | I Timothy 4:12

Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.

Timothy's age isn't known, but the admonition about his youthfulness is clear. To follow the Christian example of living, irrespective of age, is to replace reverence for elders as the sole source of wisdom.

9 | Genesis 39:1, 2, 6–10

Joseph was brought down to Egypt; and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him of the hands of the Ishmeelites, which had brought him down thither. And the Lord was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man; . . . And Joseph was a goodly person, and well favoured. And it came to pass after these things, that his master's wife cast her eyes upon Joseph; and she said, Lie with me. But he refused, and said unto his master's wife, Behold, my master wotteth not what is with me in the house, and he hath committed all that he hath to my hand; there is none greater in this house than I;

neither hath he kept back any thing from me but thee, because thou art his wife: how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God? And it came to pass, as she spake to Joseph day by day, that he hearkened not unto her, to lie by her, or to be with her.

Seen by some as simply a morality tale, this episode in Joseph’s Egyptian captivity reveals a deeper theme: unwavering commitment to God. The rest of the story—Joseph’s journey to a position of power, with the ability to help many nations—shows the far-reaching outcome of this commitment.

“Who Joseph is and what Joseph does make a difference to God’s work in the world,” a Bible authority remarks. “In turn, God’s work in Joseph enables him to mature and develop in ways that would not otherwise be possible.”

from Section 3

10 | [Matthew 5:5](#)

Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.

Inheriting the earth or the land originally referred to possession of Palestine. Over time it came to signify the arrival of the Messianic kingdom (often associated with [Psalm 37](#), especially vv. 9, 11, 22, 29, 34).

While the Greek sense of meekness was outward mildness and gentleness toward others, Christian doctrine related it to an inward faith in and dependence on God.

12 | [1 Samuel 3:1–4](#)

The child Samuel ministered unto the Lord before Eli. And the word of the Lord was precious in those days; there was no open vision. And it came to pass at that time, when Eli was laid down in his place, and his eyes began to wax dim, that he could not see; and ere the lamp of God went out in the temple of the Lord, where the ark of God was, and Samuel was laid down to sleep; that the Lord called Samuel: and he answered, Here am I.

Samuel became an important leader in ancient Israel’s transition from the period of the judges to the beginning of the monarchy. He was the nation’s last judge, and anointed its first two kings—Saul and David. Samuel was likely unique in filling three vital positions (prophet, priest, and judge) simultaneously. That God “let none of his words fall to the ground” (v. 19) confirms Samuel’s prophetic mission.

“No open vision” probably alludes to the infrequency of prophetic vision for many decades. During the judges’ administration—lasting over one hundred years—only Deborah and Gideon engaged in prophecy (see [Judges 4:4](#) and chaps. 6–8). Because of this, God’s calls to Samuel are viewed as unprecedented, and his role as prophet to Israel is recognized throughout the nation, “from Dan even to Beer-sheba” (1 [Samuel 3:20](#)).

“The temple of the Lord” was not the Temple at Jerusalem (built about a century later during Solomon’s reign). It was a tabernacle at Shiloh, about twenty miles north of Jerusalem, established after the conquest of Canaan (see [Joshua 18:1](#)). This sacred space, where Eli served as high priest, housed the ark of the covenant and was a center for worship and

sacrifice. Since the lamp of God was kept burning all night, Samuel’s calls must have come shortly before it was extinguished at dawn.

from **Section 4**

13 | [Matthew 5:6](#)

Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

Spiritual cravings and their fulfillment are similarly depicted in the book of Psalms: “My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God” (42:2) and “He satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness” (107:9). Sources point out that it isn’t the righteous who are designated as blessed in this beatitude—it is those who long for righteousness with the intensity of a starving or extremely thirsty person.

Righteousness is a key idea in Matthew’s Gospel, occurring multiple times (in contrast to infrequent mentions in the other Gospels). In this blessing, it is highlighted as the object of hunger and thirst—a metaphor that appears only in Matthew. Luke’s version has the simpler “Blessed are ye that hunger” (Luke 6:21).

One scholar characterizes righteousness as “. . . the outflowing of a life that is centered on submitting to, worshiping, and seeking after God and confessing Jesus as the Messiah.”

16 | [Proverbs 22:6](#)

Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.

A commentator explains: “. . . Jewish education was entirely religious education. There was no text-book except the Scriptures; all primary education was preparation for reading the Law; and all higher education was the reading and the study of it.” This authority quotes classical Jewish thinker Philo: “Since Jews esteem their laws as divine revelations, and are instructed in the knowledge of them from their earliest youth, they bear the image of the Law in their souls.”

from **Section 5**

18 | [Matthew 19:13–15](#)

Then were there brought unto him little children, that he should put his hands on them, and pray: and the disciples rebuked them. But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven. And he laid his hands on them, and departed thence.

Hebrew custom allowed for bringing infants and little children to synagogues for blessing by rabbis. When an infant, Jesus himself was given a blessing in the Temple by the devout man Simeon (see [Luke 2:25–35](#)). Now, as a revered spiritual teacher—and seen by many as the long-awaited Messiah—Jesus is approached by nurses or mothers to bless their children. (The putting on of hands was part of the ritual of blessing, and became a symbol of consecration and healing.)

While we can't know the disciples' motive for rejecting the children, scholars assume either a protective attitude toward their Master or an opinion that children weren't worthy of his attention.

from **Section 6**

19 | [Matthew 5:4](#)

Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.

Mourning is viewed here in two ways—as regret for one's own wrongdoing or sinful thinking, and as sorrow about sin and suffering in the world. In both cases, scriptural authorities observe, mourning arises from hearts longing for good and unresigned to evil. One source considers the promised comfort to be “. . . the consolation that arises from a sense of the forgiveness of sins, peace with God, clear discoveries of his favour, and well-grounded, lively hopes of the heavenly inheritance”

21 | [Matthew 15:21, 22, 24, 25](#)

Then Jesus went thence, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil. . . . But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me.

Since Old Testament times, Tyre and Sidon were prominent ports on the Mediterranean Sea. The “woman of Canaan” was one of the Canaanite inhabitants, also called Phoenicians, who worshiped pagan gods.

Though the woman who approached Jesus was a Gentile, she appealed to Jesus as the Jewish Messiah, calling him the son of David. Her persistence and humility elicited Jesus' commendation of her great faith (see [v. 28](#))—a commendation recorded only one other time, in the Savior's healing of the centurion's servant (see [8:10](#))—and brought healing for her daughter.

from **Section 7**

Read a related poem, “[Who am I? Why am I here?](#)” by Thomas O. Poyser.

Resources quoted in this issue

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