

Luke

Carefully Investigating the Gospel ... Together

SSBC Luke Bible Study #61

Take this Bible Study home and use it to guide your exploration of the scripture passage that next Sunday's sermon will be focused on.

Passage: Luke 17:1-3

Sermon Date: Nov 19, 2006

Don't Mess with My Little Brother!

The eighth grader thought it was fun to pick on me. He was big (his last name was actually Braun!). As a skinny seventh grader in a locker room full of lacrosse players, I didn't stand a chance. Until, that is, my ninth grade brother got wind of my troubles. The details of the locker-room confrontation are sketchy, but my big brother's message still echoes: "Don't mess with my little brother!"

In this week's passage, Jesus has a similar message of warning for those who would mess with his followers – "Don't mess with my little brothers!" His depiction of how bad it will be for anyone who does mess with them sounds almost like a locker-room threat.

Friends, Jesus sounds real serious about this one. Therefore we aren't going to pull any punches with this study. We're going to wrestle with some tough questions and take an honest look into our own lives and sinfulness, looking for ways in which we may be leading others away from God and toward sin. So don't be afraid, and don't shy away. Let's face this together. We've all gone astray. Let's ask God to protect us and guide us in this. And He will.

These studies are produced by South Shore Baptist Church in conjunction with our weekly sermon series. Studies are distributed one week prior to the sermon as inserts in the church bulletin and posting at www.southshorebaptist.com/sermons/. Sermons are also recorded and can be listened to later by visiting that same website. Have feedback or questions? Contact studieditor@southshorebaptist.com

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Bible Study:

1. Read this week's Bible passage, along with two related passages from Mark and Matthew, and use the chart below to note your observations and any questions you have.

Scripture	Your Observations & Questions
<p>Luke 17:1-3</p> <p>¹ Jesus said to his disciples: "Things that cause people to sin are bound to come, but woe to that person through whom they come. ² It would be better for him to be thrown into the sea with a millstone tied around his neck than for him to cause one of these little ones to sin. ³ So watch yourselves.</p> <p>Mark 9:42-48</p> <p>⁴² "And if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to be thrown into the sea with a large millstone tied around his neck. ⁴³ If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life maimed than with two hands to go into hell, where the fire never goes out. ⁴⁵ And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than to have two feet and be thrown into hell. ⁴⁷ And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell, ⁴⁸ where "their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched."</p>	

Scripture	Your Observations & Questions
<p>Matthew 18:1-9</p> <p>¹ At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"</p> <p>² He called a little child and had him stand among them. ³ And he said: "I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. ⁴ Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.</p> <p>⁵ "And whoever welcomes a little child like this in my name welcomes me. ⁶ But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea.</p> <p>⁷ "Woe to the world because of the things that cause people to sin! Such things must come, but woe to the man through whom they come! ⁸ If your hand or your foot causes you to sin 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 causes you to sin, 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.</p>	

2. Next, use this chart to **interpret some key observations**.

a. Select a few of your observations & questions from pages 2-3 that you find most interesting or important. Rewrite these below, and interpret and apply them using the columns to the right.

b. For each observation, begin to interpret by asking yourself these kinds of questions:

- What does it mean?
- Why is this important?
- What does this tell me about the Father? Jesus? The Holy Spirit?
- Are there other scriptures that could help me understand this?

Observation What does it say?	Interpretation What does it mean?

3. Now consider how you can **apply** the Word to your life. Look for:

- **S**ins to avoid
- **P**romises to believe
- **E**xamples to follow (remember "SPECK")
- **C**ommands to obey
- **K**nowledge to share

Don't just write things to write them – listen carefully to God's Word and what he seems to be teaching you, and look for relevant things that you're truly stirred to do. Then as you do them, God will help you learn, grow, and help others grow.

Application How do I apply what it means?

Seek to Understand and Apply God's Truth:

4. Who was Jesus referring to when he spoke about "little ones" in 17:2? (Consider Mt 18:2-5, Mk 9:42, Lk 10:21, 15:1) How does this affect the meaning of this passage?

Can it be our fault when someone else sins? Certainly their sin is, by definition, their sin. But Jesus is telling us that sin has its causes. Sin begets sin. We sin in one sense because we are descendants of Adam and bearers of the mark of his original sin. But we each have a sin nature within us – a "dark side" or "flesh" – which seems to manufacture sin at every turn. Meanwhile, we are also subject to the effects of our environment (such as temptations). Use the following questions to explore various ways in which our sinfulness may affect others or even contribute to their sin. Some may seem more relevant to your life, so focus more on those. But don't shy away totally – God is serious about this topic, and so we should be serious about it too.

5. In what ways do you think the Pharisees' typical actions (such as their strong **legalism** and rule-making) caused God's people to sin?

a. When have you been legalistic, and what impact did this have on others?

6. Consider Acts 20:30. What impact does **false or inaccurate teaching** have on God's family? How can it contribute to others sinning?

7. Consider 1 John 2:9-11. Verse 10 implies that when we **fail to love our brother**, this can make him stumble. How can our failing to love someone lead to them sinning?

a. When have you seen this happen in your own life?
(Others did it to you? You did it to others?)

8. Consider Gal 6:1-2. How can **failing to confront and help restore** a fellow Christian brother caught in sin result in extending that sin?

a. When have you personally avoided such a confrontation and missed out on an opportunity to restore someone? What do you think was the impact of your un-involvement on that brother's sin?

9. Consider Gal 6:9-10 and Jas 4:17. When we **miss opportunities to do good to others**, how can this contribute to their sin?

a. How have you experienced this dynamic in your own life?

10. How can **parents' sins** affect their children? Consider Ex 20:5, Nu 14:33, Ps 37:28, Pr 14:11, Isa 14:20-22, Lam 5:7.

a. How have you experienced this in your own family? How have your parents' sins affected you? If you have children, how do you think your sins may have affected your children?

11. In what other ways do you see yourself sometimes being a bad influence on others or a bad example, particularly around those who are less mature in their faith? What can you do to change this?

12. We have probed a number of aspects of how our sins can affect others. Meanwhile, Jesus' stark warning stands before each of us. "Woe to the one who causes a 'little one' to sin." In order to "watch yourself" in this, what is one application or focus area you'd like to address going forward (with God's help, and in His strength)?

This study has been rather blunt. We need to heed God's Word and not hide from our sin. But we also need **His grace** in order to deal with it. We need **His hope** to propel us forward. We need **His Spirit** to guide and enable us. And He will provide these – He is faithful!

Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope:
Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed,
for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning;
great is your faithfulness. (Lam 3:21-23)