

**2012 Week One**  
*Midlands Churches of Christ, Birmingham, UK*  
*Women's Ministry*  
**Offerings for Quiet Time Study**

**1. DO NOT TREMBLE, DO NOT BE AFRAID**

**DANIEL CHAPTER 7; ISAIAH 44:6-8; ROMANS 2:6-11**

(See [www.greatcommission.com/Daniel.pdf](http://www.greatcommission.com/Daniel.pdf) for Dr. John Oakes' wonderful commentary on the book of Daniel.<sup>1</sup> I am amazed at God's power and plan and love and purpose for us, as I read over again the details that God revealed in Daniel, probably six hundred years in advance, about the specific Roman emperors to come – and even detail about a particular personality [Dan 7:20]! )

- Why should this incredible quality of God and his Word – specific prophecies about the future which are accurate and true! – give me strength when I am afraid and help me not to fear?<sup>2</sup>
- In Daniel 7:13-14, Jesus is given authority, honour, esteem, sovereign power, and all peoples of every nation and language worship him. When God looks at me today, is he seeing that the place I give Jesus in my life, throughout the day, is in keeping with this description of him? What do I need to do to make sure I am honouring him appropriately today? <sup>3</sup>
- Spend some time thanking and praising God for the incredible encouragement of Dan 7:18: *I am one of those who has received the kingdom of God and will possess it forever!*

<sup>1</sup> John M. Oakes, *Daniel, Prophet to the Nations* (Spring, Texas, Illumination Publishers International, 2008). ISBN: 978-0-9776954-8-5

<sup>2</sup>*If God is absolutely sovereign and in control over all the powers of the nations on earth, then he can take care of all of my personal troubles, no matter how big or small! If God reveals his plans for the nations -- all having to do with the coming of the Messiah, who is My Personal Saviour! -- to his servants in the Bible, how amazing that he has put his Word into my hand for me to read and understand! He reveals to me (Heb 4:12-13) even the thoughts and attitudes of my own heart! God, I am sorry that sometimes I don't trust that you care about me as much as I think you care about what happens on a grander scale in the world. God, I know you do rule the nations, today. Now. I know that you, God, are sovereign, and that you alone have almighty power and authority over all kingdoms, governments, presidents, prime ministers, dictators – no matter how evil the regime. I believe and I know that no authority exists on earth today but what you allow, for whatever time you give it, in your perfect wisdom, for your perfect purposes – which are always working everything out for the good for those who love you, who have been called according to your purpose. No one is ever helpless before you, because anyone who simply chooses to seek you with all their heart finds you (Jer 29:11-13). I know that your plan and purposes are bigger than my life (and anyone's individual life), and at the same time, I believe that every single individual life is unspeakably precious to you. I'm sorry that I forget that sometimes. I know that you reconcile what seems unfair and horrible to us in the end. You are the Perfect and Just Judge. The parable of Lazarus and the rich man comforts me. Thank you for the promise of eternal life. Your perspective is the right perspective. Help me, teach me to have it. Thank you that whatever's going on here are "light and momentary troubles." I have absolutely nothing to fear. Thank you, Lord!*

<sup>3</sup>*I need to make sure I take the time to pray specifically and thoroughly about the things that burden my mind. I need to pray specifically and with faith, so that when I get up from my*

*prayer the burden is lifted and I can go through my day with the light heart and childlike trust in God that will honour Jesus the way he deserves to be honoured. For me, this means using the Word of God as I pray and being faithful about bringing before God the list of important specific needs, concerns, and people that are on my mind. I need to make sure that I spend enough time in God's word, reading in a way that addresses my own personal spiritual needs, so that that I walk away from my time with God with increased faith (Romans 10:17) – and so that I will I have the spiritual and emotional energy to keep thinking about Jesus today and actively thinking throughout the day about how to show him respect and esteem, and inspire others to do the same.*

## **2. GOD EXPECTS CHANGE**

### **MATTHEW 18:1-14, MATTHEW 5:3, JAMES 2:5, REVELATION 3:17**

In Matthew 18:1, the disciples come to Jesus and ask a question (“Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?”) -- not terribly unlike a question asked by the Pharisee in Matthew 22:36, “Which is the greatest commandment in the law?” or the question the crowd asks Jesus in John 6:28, “What must we do to do the works God requires?” Each of these questions seems to me to be a bit like asking, “*how do I know what you think of me, God?*”<sup>4</sup> “*How do I know if I’m ‘doing well’ spiritually, God?*”

In the Matthew 18 passage, Jesus tells his disciples, “I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of God.”

The Greek word for “change” here is, in the root form, *strephō*. It means to turn, to turn around; metaphorically it means to turn oneself from one’s course of conduct, to change one’s mind<sup>5</sup> (similar in usage here to the word “repent,” even though “repent” in Greek is a completely different word<sup>6</sup>). I looked at each one of the 19 verses where this Greek word for “change” is used in the New Testament.<sup>7</sup> In each case where this word is used, it does mean simply to *turn* -- often, to turn away-- but in each case where this word is used, something of deep significance seems to be happening. Something changes in the person who is turning. For example: Jesus said, if someone strikes you on the left cheek, [*strephō*] to him the right as well; when Peter took Jesus aside and rebuked him, Jesus [*strephō*] to Peter and said, “Get behind me, Satan!”

This verb, *strephō*, has a reflexive aspect to it. The person doing the turning or changing is doing it himself or herself. *I am in control of this strephō; I am the one deciding to turn, I am the one making the change.*

*So what I understand from this so far is that Jesus is saying, it’s not enough to simply come to Jesus, as these disciples of his were doing in Matthew 18. They were already obeying his clear command to “come follow me” (Matthew 4:19) – and I can also come to Jesus every morning to read the Bible and to pray, but unless I [*strephō*], and change, turning quite obviously, I need to understand (wow!) that I will never enter the kingdom of heaven. (James 1:22-25 immediately comes to mind. I need to make sure that I am not just reading, but that I am making changes every day.) Now I want to know, how exactly is God wanting me to change myself?*

Jesus tells his disciples here that they must change themselves and become like children. The word, “little” is actually not in the text, it just says “children.”<sup>8</sup> Looking at the usage of this word (*paidion*) in the New Testament, it’s kind of hard to figure out exactly how old this child was that Jesus brought in to stand among the disciples as an example for them in Matthew 18:2. *Paidion* is used for Tabitha, who was 12 years old, in Mark 5:23, 41-42; it’s used to describe the demon-possessed boy in Mark 9:17-21, who may well have grown beyond childhood. *Paidion* is also used to describe the child Jesus when he was at the age that the Magi came to visit him (Matthew 2:11), which had to be, I think, between infancy and two.<sup>9</sup>

A little later on in the Matthew 18 passage, in verses 6, 10, and 14, Jesus uses the phrase, “little ones.” This is just one word in Greek, not two -- the root of which is *mikros*,<sup>10</sup> meaning small or little. It can refer to being small or little in size, stature, length; it can mean a small space, a small age, a little bit or brief time, a small quantity of something, or it can mean small in rank or influence<sup>11</sup> – *i.e., humble!*<sup>12</sup> *This immediately made me think of, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 5:3).*

One more word exploration: *ptōchos* is the Greek for “poor” in the phrase, “Blessed are the

poor in spirit," in Matthew 5:3. It means, someone who is destitute of wealth, position, influence and honour; reduced to begging; someone who is powerless to accomplish an end; someone who is poor and needy; someone lowly and afflicted --*someone who recognizes their spiritual need for God.*<sup>13</sup>

This same *ptōchos* shows up in James 2:5, yet another witness in the New Testament confirming that this is the attitude we need to change to have if we are to inherit the kingdom God has promised to those who love him. And again in the Revelation 3:17 passage, written to lukewarm Christians in the church in Laodicea, *ptōchos* appears again: "But you do not realise that you are wretched, pitiful, *ptōchos*, blind and naked. I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire...." *Faith.*<sup>14</sup> *Not trusting in what I can do and what I can accomplish. Trusting in God.*

- What is it about a child that is like being small, little, not influential (*mikros*), that is like being poor in spirit (*ptōchos*)? Write down some thoughts.<sup>15</sup>
- What do I need to do today to change, becoming like a child, acknowledging my need for God to God?<sup>16</sup>

<sup>4</sup> *Implied in that question, I think, is also, "How do I know what you think of other people, God?"*

<sup>5</sup> Blue Letter Bible. "Dictionary and Word Search for *strephō* (Strong's 4762)". Blue Letter Bible. 1996-2011. 29 Dec 2011. < <http://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm? Strong=G4762&t=KJV> >

<sup>6</sup> Blue Letter Bible. "Dictionary and Word Search for *metanoēō* (Strong's 3340)". Blue Letter Bible. 1996-2012. 2 Jan 2012. < <http://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm? Strong=G3340&t=NASB> >

<sup>7</sup> Matthew 5:39 if someone strikes you on the right cheek, [strephō] to him the other also. Matthew 7:6 ...don't throw your pearls to pigs. If you do, they may trample them under their feet, and then [strephō] and tear you to pieces.

Matthew 23:21-23 Jesus began to explain that he must suffer, be killed, on the third day be raised to life. Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. V. 23: Jesus [strephō] and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan!"

Matthew 18:3 unless you [strephō] and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

Luke 7:9 Jesus has been talking with the friends of the Centurion, whose servant was sick and about to die. The friends brought the Centurion's message: don't come all the way to my house, just say the word, and my servant will be healed. V. 9: "When Jesus heard this, he was amazed at him, and [strephō] to the crowd following him, he said, "I tell you, I have not found such great faith even in Israel."

Luke 7:44 Jesus is having a conversation with Simon the Pharisee. V.44 "Then he [strephō] toward the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman?"

Luke 9:55 Jesus is heading for Jerusalem with his disciples. The people in a Samaritan village along the way did not welcome him. When James and John saw this, they asked the Lord if he wanted them to call down fire from heaven to destroy them. V. 55 "But Jesus [strephō] and rebuked them, and they went to another village."

Luke 10:23 Seems like Jesus is speaking with the 72. Full of joy through the Holy Spirit, he prays to

God, seems to be continuing his instruction to the 72. V 23: "Then he [strephō] to his disciples and said privately, "blessed are the eyes that see what you see. For I tell you that many prophets and kings wanted to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it." Luke 14:25 "Large crowds were traveling with Jesus, and [strephō] to them, he said: 'if anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters – yes, even his own life – he cannot be my disciple.'"

Luke 22:61 Peter denies Jesus in v 60. V. 61: "The Lord [strephō] and looked straight at Peter."

Luke 23:28 A large number of people followed Jesus as Simon carried the cross behind Jesus on the way to the crucifixion. v. 28" "Jesus [strephō] and said to them, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me: weep for yourselves and for your children."

John 1:38 Two disciples of John the Baptist follow Jesus. V. 38: "[strephō], Jesus saw them following and asked, "what do you want?"

John 20:14 Mary at the tomb: They have taken my Lord away, and I don't know where they have put him. V. 14: "At this, she [strephō] and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realise that it was Jesus." Jesus said to her, "Mary." V 16: She [strephō] and cried out in Aramaic, "Rabboni!"

Acts 7:39, 42 But our fathers refused to obey Moses. "Instead, they rejected him and in their hearts [strephō] to Egypt."

The Israelites made the golden calf in the desert, and held a celebration in honour of what they had made. V. 42: "But God [strephō] away and gave them over to the worship of the heavenly bodies."

Acts 13:46 Jews were abusive to Paul and Barnabas, then Paul and Barnabas answer them boldly: "We had to speak the word of God to you first. Since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now [strephō] to the Gentiles."

Rev 11:6 "These men have power to shut up the sky so that it will not rain during the time they are prophesying; and they have power to [strephō] the waters into blood and to strike the earth with every kind of plague as often as they want."

<sup>8</sup>The phrase translated "little children" is just the one word *paidion*, in Greek.

Blue Letter Bible. "Gospel of Matthew 18 - (NASB - New American Standard Bible)."

Blue Letter Bible. 1996-2011. 30 Dec 2011. <

<http://www.blueletterbible.org/Bible.cfm?b=Mat&c=18&t=NASB> >

<sup>9</sup>Blue Letter Bible. "Dictionary and Word Search for *paidion* (Strong's 3813)". Blue

Letter Bible. 1996-2011. 29 Dec 2011. < [http://](http://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm? Strongs=G3813&t=KJV)

[www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm? Strongs=G3813&t=KJV](http://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm? Strongs=G3813&t=KJV) >

<sup>10</sup>*mikros*: Blue Letter Bible. "Gospel of Matthew 18 - (NASB - New American Standard Bible)." Blue Letter Bible. 1996-2011. 30 Dec 2011. <

<http://www.blueletterbible.org/Bible.cfm?b=Mat&c=18&t=NASB> >:

<sup>11</sup>Blue Letter Bible. "Dictionary and Word Search for *mikros* (Strong's 3398)". Blue

Letter Bible. 1996-2011. 29 Dec 2011. < [http://](http://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm? Strongs=G3398&t=NASB)

[www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm? Strongs=G3398&t=NASB](http://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm? Strongs=G3398&t=NASB) >

<sup>12</sup>Some of the other uses of *mikros* are in Matthew 10:42, "If anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these [*mikros*] because he is my disciple...;" Matthew 11:11, "one who is [*mikros*] in the kingdom of heaven is greater than [John the Baptist.];" in Mark 15:40, James the Less is called James [*mikros*] (he must have been short – the same word is used for Zaccheus in Luke 19:3)! And in Luke 12:32, Jesus says, "Do not be afraid, [*mikros*] flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions and give to the poor..." If these people are old enough to sell their possessions and give to the poor, [*mikros*] here is clearly not referring to a small age, these are grown-ups.

<sup>13</sup>Blue Letter Bible. "Dictionary and Word Search for *ptōchos* (Strong's 4434)". Blue Letter Bible. 1996-2011. 30 Dec 2011. < <http://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm? Strongs=G4434&t=NASB> >

<sup>14</sup> 1 Peter 1:7: "...your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes, even though refined by fire...."

<sup>15</sup> *As a child, I was dependent on my parents for food, protection, all the basic physical and emotional needs. There was no question about who to go to when I was hungry or when I wanted something. I can remember that I shamelessly asked for whatever I wanted most for birthday or Christmas presents! I was not in control of many things that happened to me. Sometimes I was blessed (like birthday wishes coming true) and sometimes, horrible things happened (like my father's death when I was 12). I couldn't just go off and do what I wanted – even though I played at running away a couple of times, when I was about 8 or so, I always came back a few hours later. The family unit set the boundaries for what I could and could not do. The older I got (the more like an adult and less like a child, I guess), the more I resented those boundaries and lied and conspired to get around them any way I could when I wanted more freedom. That's not the heart that knows its need, already. I didn't realise I was hurting myself when I cast off the boundaries that were meant to protect me. I wasn't ready to take care of myself; I didn't know enough to be able to recognise and avoid wrong influences. No wonder God calls us "children," even and especially when we're grown! Without the intervention of his Word, even with the experience of advanced age, we can't distinguish good from evil (Hebrews 5:13-14).*

<sup>16</sup> *Dear God: I need to look to you so much more like a little child looks to a wonderful Father, to meet my needs -- my schedule, what I'm going to do today; what's going to satisfy me and fill me up, this needs to come from you, God, and not from my accomplishing whatever it is that I think I need to do today to feel good about myself. I need to talk to you more about what I want (not just what I need) – this is my New Year's resolution: to pray much more specifically, particularly I know I need to talk to you more about the important personal desires I have. I need to recognise that these are needs that I often neglect in favour of what is urgent. I need to change my attitude about the way I allow things that I cannot control bother me, and learn how to let you teach me whether I should be carrying a particular burden or concern at the moment, or if I should put it down and stop thinking about it, and trust that you will intervene and let me know that I should be carrying it, if indeed I shouldn't have put it down. I am so far away from this simple example of practical faith and real trust in you! I need to change my expectations about myself and be more humble, like a little child would be, about what I am capable of, what I think I "should" know or be able to do, and be more positive about all the opportunities for learning and growing that you present to me. When I make mistakes or feel challenged because I'm falling short in some area, I want to be close enough to you to take responsibility without being crushed, to be happy about the learning and growing that is taking place, and trust that you are pleased as long as I am trying my best.*