

**My comments are in red Lucida Sans 12 point.**

## TRINITY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

### IHOP BIBLE STUDY

**Topic: Matthew 18: 1 to 18: 35 “Lesson series on The Spiritual Oasis”**

The Gospel of Matthew's message is powerful and relevant to our current human situation. Matthew's purpose is to give us a training manual for teaching the Deeply Satisfied Life. This material is developed for the early church, but is applicable for us today.

Matthew's teaching role model is Jesus. The "Deeply Satisfied Life" is the experience ("Gut Trip Analysis") of the term Sanctification (which is an Old Christian Code Word understood through "Head Trip Analysis").

This is our nineteenth lesson in this series. This lesson still is under the general banner associated with "A Training Manual For Teaching the Transparent Sanctified Life. However, this is the fifth arena, and this is related to Matthew's material on "The Teacher's Handbook: Part II – The Spiritual Oasis."

The Spiritual Oasis (formerly, the Secret Garden) is not really all that secret. It is a metaphor for the Kingdom of Heaven. However, what interests us is the experience of the Kingdom rather than an understanding of the Kingdom. This relates to our understanding of the difference between "Head Trip Analysis" and "Gut Trip Analysis."

- I. **Read the assigned reading at one time.**
- II. **What is life like in the Spiritual Oasis?**

**Vss. 18: 1 – 5:** Living in the Spiritual Oasis is living as the greatest in the Kingdom of God. The one caveat is that we are asked to become like children: humble, trusting, surrendered. First, we surrender finding our significance in the things of this world. Second, we surrender finding our significance in the things of the Spiritual Oasis. Perhaps, it is helpful to remind ourselves that living in the Spiritual Oasis is living AT HOME—i.e., living our human existence with a sense of place. What we give up is living ON VACATION—i.e., living our human existence without a sense of place.

**What is the difference between living at home and living on vacation? Living “at home” is where humans are intended to live in At-One-Ment with neighbor, self and Perfect At-One-Ment. This is living in the Spiritual Oasis. Living “on vacation” is to live blind to the reality of the Spiritual Oasis.**

**Vss. 18: 6 – 9:** Jesus gives his disciples (and us) two warnings about preventing others from living in the Spiritual Oasis.

1. **vss. 18: 6:** The operating word here is “sin.” Remember, our use of this word means to cause separation, or the antithesis of At-One-Ment. If anyone causes any of “these children” to be separated from the experience of At-One-Ment, Jesus reports that it is better this person be drowned (suffering permanent separation!).

**How is "sin" experienced? Sin is the experience of living in a state of separation from neighbor, self and Perfect At-One-Ment.**

2. **vss. 18: 7 – 9:** In vss. 7, Jesus reminds us that in the natural world there is the experience of separation. "Such things **must come.**" However, the one (man or woman) through whom it comes will himself or herself end up in separation.

**Why "must such things" come to us? The axiom "The reward for the deed is found in the deed itself" helps here. I prefer to use the indicative phrase "will come" instead of the imperative "must come." The reward always is found in the deed itself!**

Then Jesus tells us how to "enter life." By this Jesus means entering the Spiritual Oasis. He reminds us of the "eternal fire" and the "fire of hell" which is a metaphor for permanent separation."

**How is this "the judgment? The judgment is built into the deed itself. God is not in the business of punishing us. We punish ourselves through our choices. Sometimes the reward is experienced harshly; sometimes it comes to us as grace.**

**So, how are we to "enter life?" We enter "life in the Spiritual Oasis" by surrendering our deeds and our lives before Perfect At-One-Ment.**

The conditions for putting ourselves in such jeopardy is that if our hands or foot or eyes are the cause for hurting others and causing their separation, it would be better that we enter the Spiritual Oasis maimed.

**Why is this true? Hurting others prevents us from living in the Spiritual Oasis. Thus, it would be better to enter the Spiritual Oasis maimed than to be prevented from entering it because of our tongue, finger, hand, foot, other any other body part.**

- III. **Now, see what you can do with the following—**
  1. **vss. 18: 10 – 14: The parable of the Lost Sheep**

Living in the Spiritual Oasis is accomplished how?

**Helping a "lost one who is on vacation" to awaken to the deep satisfaction of living in the Spiritual Oasis is a very pleasing experience.**

2. **vss. 18: 15 - 20: A brother who sins against you**

There are three little lessons here: 1. How we are to treat our wayward brothers and sisters; 2. binding and loosening; 3. consensing with two or three.

How does this inform us on how to live in the Spiritual Oasis?

**Vss. 18: 15 – 17--- The obligation of those who live awake is to care for our brothers and sisters who are asleep or who are returning to spiritual sleep. This is the work of The Church—the Awakened Ones.**

**Vss. 18: 18--- Bound and loosed. In the Early Church, these terms referred to a judicial activity. In our context, “binding” is the reward for the deed. “Loosing” is likewise a reward for the deed, but loosing refers to enabling At-One-Ment.**

**Vss. 18: 19 – 20--- The consensus of two or three together, on the basis of WWJD, results in the experience of wholeness and authenticity of life.**

**3. vss. 18: 21 - 35: The Parable of the Unmerciful Servant**

What is the lesson to be learned? How does this inform us on how to live in the Spiritual Oasis?

**We live as the Awakened through our experience of gratitude. The failure to extend forgiveness to other results in further separation and the denial of our own Awakening.**

Do a little commentary research on the significance of forgiving others seventy-seven times.

**The Internet is full of commentary. One source I frequently use is Bible Gateway Commentaries at [biblegateway.com](http://biblegateway.com).**

**All right, talk to me!**