

## 28.65a Offenses (Matthew 18:7–20; Mark 9:42–50)

(The teacher of younger children will want to modify and shorten this story. If so, teach the underlined part of the lesson.)

✓ “Check” it out: opinion, inference, supposed conversation, or fact one can verify follows  
[. . .] indicates a remark to the teacher, not the student. It also indicates answers to questions.

### Visuals and Tools:

- Pictures and/or visual aids found at the end of this lesson. Please give credit to the sources of pictures.
- Check also “Activities” and “Handwork” below for additional suggested items.
- A mouse trap [Teacher, you may or may not wish to set it; be sure to keep students away from it.]
- A large block of wood—a stumbling block
- Rock salt or sea salt

**Bible Time Tips and Terms to Teach:** Vocabulary words are enlarged for flashcards at the end of this lesson. Print, cut out, and glue to card stock, or just print on colorful cardstock.

- *woe*: an expression of judgment to come
- *offense*: Greek *skandalon*; root meaning is “the stick in the trap that springs and closes the trap when the animal touches it” (WP, 1, 46 in Online Bible); (See photo below and/or refer to the straight wire that sets a mouse trap).
- *hell*: the place of eternal torment

### Scripture: (ESV)

Matthew 18:7 “Woe to the world for temptations to sin! For it is necessary that temptations come, but woe to the one by whom the temptation comes! 8 And 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 crippled or lame than with two hands or two feet to be thrown into the eternal fire. 9 And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into the hell of fire.

10 “See that you do not despise one of these little ones. For I tell you that in heaven their angels always see the face of my Father who is in heaven. [V. 11 is left out of the ESV because some important manuscripts do not include it. Nevertheless, here it is from the KJV: For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost.] 12 What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go in search of the one that went astray? 13 And if he finds it, truly, I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went astray. 14 So it is not the will of my Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.

15 “If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. 16 But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. 17 If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. 18 Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. 19 Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. 20 For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.”

Mark 9:42 “Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him if a great millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea. 43 And if your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than with two hands to go to hell, to the unquenchable

fire. 45 And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life lame than with two feet to be thrown into hell. 47 And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into hell, 48 ‘where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.’ 49 For everyone will be salted with fire. 50 Salt is good, but if the salt has lost its saltiness, how will you make it salty again? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another.”

### **Introduction/Review:**

When Jesus’ disciples argued about being the greatest in God’s kingdom, Jesus set a child in their midst and made some thought-provoking statements:

- “Unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.”
- “Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.”
- “Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me.”
- “Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea.”

In addition, Jesus made statements about people working for Jesus but not part of “the crowd”:

- “Do not stop him, for no one who does a mighty work in my name will be able soon afterward to speak evil of me.”
- “For the one who is not against us is for us.”
- “For truly, I say to you, whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you belong to Christ will by no means lose his reward.”

What astute comments by our Lord! They did not refer just to children or other workers but to people who have come to the Lord, weak as they might be.

### **Story:**

Jesus continued to speak about seven related issues, ✓all of which might be connected to the original offense—the disciples’ argument about “Who is greatest?” We will consider six of these matters today and the seventh in our next lesson. These proclamations and stories are quite powerful; so hold onto your hat. Let’s go.

#### **1) *Offensive hand, foot, eye* (Matthew 18:7–9)**

Jesus began His message to the disciples by saying, “Temptations will come, but woe to anyone who causes temptations to sin.” Instead of *temptations*, the King James Version uses the term *offenses*, which better shows the negativity of the word. In other words, “I pronounce judgment on anyone who causes a person to stumble—to sin.”

The statement continued, “Woe to *anything* that offends or is a stumbling block,” for He says, “If your hand or your foot or your eye causes you to sin, cut it off or tear it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life crippled or lame or blind in one eye than with two hands, two feet, or two eyes to be thrown into the eternal fire of hell ‘where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.’” Do you get the picture?

As we talk of the hand, foot, or eye causing a person to sin, we, of course, know that the mind instituted the sin. Understanding this, how, then, might a hand cause a person to sin? [Teacher, use discretion about student responses to these questions.] Examples might be using the hand to steal, to wield a weapon, to assault. What about a foot? It could take a person to a place where [s]he would sin. An eye? Watching TV shows and movies that cause one to covet, consider demonic things, or premeditate sin is sin. TV or other screen time sometimes becomes a first- and second-commandment sin (“no other god”; “no idol”). Better than spending eternity in hell is to go through life without a hand, foot, or eye if losing that body part had turned you away from sin to life in Christ.

What is “the worm that does not die” in hell? Some Bible commentators think it is conscience (John Gill).

Others say “it is a mere image of loathsome, dreadful, and ‘eternal’ suffering . . . beyond the power of any living mortal to imagine” (<https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/bnb/mark-9.html>). The *worm* picture is prophesied in the final verse of the book of Isaiah: “And they shall go out and look on the dead bodies of the men who have rebelled against me [God]. For their worm shall not die, their fire shall not be quenched, and they shall be an abhorrence to all flesh” (Isaiah 66:24). Perhaps you feel differently from me about this: I don’t mind earthworms, but the thought of a big, green worm on my tomato plant or parasitic worms in the body grosses me out. The idea of worms in hell makes this place even more dreadful!

Hell, or the Lake of Fire, is just that—fire!\* Mark’s Gospel tells us that “everyone will be salted with fire.” Again, this statement is difficult to interpret. We might begin by reading the text: “For everyone will be salted with fire. Salt is good, but if the salt has lost its saltiness, how will you make it salty again? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another” (Mark 9:49, 50).

The first part of the passage seems to indicate the unsaved, who are in unquenchable fire, as the ones who will be preserved even as they burn. John Gill writes, “[A]s the sacrifices under the law were salted with salt, these shall be salted with the fire of hell, and shall never be utterly destroyed; but shall ever remain the objects of God’s sore displeasure; and fiery indignation” (<https://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/gills-exposition-of-the-bible/mark-9-49.html>).

Let’s consider the picture of a person in hell—tormented within and without! Definitely, it would be better to go through this life without an eye or a limb that would cast us into such a place than to spend eternity there.

## 2) *Guardian angels* (Matthew 18:10)

From this dire picture Jesus returned to the child next to Him, and ✓likening him to believers, said, “See that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I tell you that in heaven their angels always see the face of my Father who is in heaven.” Here is an argument for guardian angels, ✓who are not necessarily present on earth with a person but, rather, are in the presence of the Father, guarding from above, which they are able to do. Angels care for believing offended ones. [See the note with the picture of a guardian angel found below.]

## 3) *One lost sheep* (Matthew 18:11–14)

The next verse, “For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost.”\*\* leads into a story, one of my favorites. Listen. “What do you think?” asked Jesus. “If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go in search of the one that went astray? And if he finds it, truly, I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went astray. So it is not the will of my Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.” Jesus seeks the lost and offended. He cares for them. Not one whom He saves will perish. We will see this story again in another lesson.

## 4) *Church discipline* (Matthew 18:15–18)

The theme of offenses continued when Jesus explained the proper process by which to deal with offenses that occur within in the body of believers—the church. [See visual aid below. A possible example to apply in these steps could be robbery or a bad report by the offender.]

1. “If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone.”
2. “If he listens to you, you have gained your brother.”
3. ”But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses.”
4. “If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church.”
5. “And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.”

So there we have the steps to handle conflict in God’s kingdom, ✓all of which should be bathed in prayer and even fasting. If the person refuses to be corrected after all efforts have been made, [s]he should be

“churched”—removed from the membership.

Being “as a Gentile and a tax collector” means the church members are to “cease to have religious contact with him, or to acknowledge him as a Christian brother. It does not mean that we should cease to show kindness to him and aid him in affliction or trial, for that is required toward all people; but it means that we should disown him as a Christian brother, and treat him as we do other people not connected with the church” (<https://biblehub.com/commentaries/matthew/18-17.htm>). A special love exists among church member; forfeiting that love would be a terrible loss to the stubborn offender.

In a previous story when Peter proclaimed that Jesus is the Christ, Jesus responded, “You are Peter. . . . Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” (Matthew 16:19). Now Jesus repeated that statement here, saying to *all* the disciples, “Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” Binding and loosing means that “whatever you shall do in the discipline of the church shall be approved by God or bound in heaven” (<https://biblehub.com/commentaries/matthew/18-17.htm>).

#### **5) Answered prayer** (Matthew 18:19, 20)

Now, listen to the next words of Jesus: “Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.” How does this fit in with offenses? Well, when there is an offense, there is also usually deep hurt and a situation which only God can correct. We must pray, casting all our anxiety on Jesus, in those situations.

God will do all His holy will; yet He tells us to pray. Many times Scripture states we will have what we ask in prayer. However, we don’t always see those answers. We know God is true and doesn’t lie. *Pulpit Commentary* gives an explanation that might help us in our unbelief: “The thing asked must be reasonable, good in itself, expedient [useful] for the petitioner; the prayer must be earnest, faithful, persevering. If such conditions are satisfied, the desire will be granted in some form, though, perhaps, not in the way or at the time expected” (<https://biblehub.com/commentaries/matthew/18-19.htm>). So we pray, believing God will answer.

#### **(6) Saltiness** (Mark 9:49, 50)

Let’s go back to “Salt is good, but if the salt has lost its saltiness, how will you make it salty again? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another.” Gill suggests, “[Jesus] may have respect to . . . the saints and people of God, who are an . . . acceptable sacrifice to him; . . . and so as the sacrifices of the Jews were salted with salt, and became acceptable to God; such who are seasoned with the grace of God, are preserved from the corruptions of the world, are acceptable in the sight of God, and are kept safe to his kingdom and glory” (<https://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/gills-exposition-of-the-bible/mark-9-49.html>).

Jesus, it seems, ✓ was telling his competitive disciples, those wondering who was greatest, that they should present their bodies “as a living [salted] sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God,” which was their service of worship (Romans 12:1). They didn’t need to offend each other in seeking to be the best or most important. Rather, they needed salt in themselves—self-sacrificing qualities to be useful to God and others. “Salty” believers surely would do their best to save people from such a dreadful place as hell. They tell others that Jesus is the One who suffered all that hell to save those who believe in Him.

“And one more thing,” said Jesus. “Be at peace among yourselves. ✓ In other words, stop offending others, for even the lowest believer has guardian angels and is as valuable to the Shepherd as a lost sheep. There is a way to handle conflicts and offenses. Pray and forgive.”

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\*Note: I am disappointed to read in this context the following by Albert Barnes, whom I have often quoted: “It is not to be supposed that there will be any ‘real’ worm in hell - *perhaps no material fire*”

(<https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/bnb/mark-9.html>; emphasis mine). Apparently, for him the Lake of Fire is not truly fire.

\*\*“Beza observes, that this whole verse [v. 11] is left out in some Greek copies, but it stands in others . . . nor can it be omitted; the following parable, which is an exemplification of it, requires it” (John Gill at <https://biblehub.com/commentaries/matthew/18-11.htm>). See also my note in the Scripture reading above.

### Lessons from This Lesson:

- Jesus is God:  
He speaks of “My Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 18:10, 14, 19, 35).  
He claimed to be among two or three gathered together in His name (Matthew 18:20).
- Deal with offenses—ones you cause and those against you—in a proper way.
- “Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another” (Mark 9:50),

### Activities:

- Play dough: hand; foot; eye; sheep; shepherd’s staff; worm; angel
- Sing or listen to “The Ninety and Nine” song. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fh9Sb60tUUw> links to Burl Ives’s singing this song while several pictures illustrate the words. Sadly, some of the pictures are of Jesus in robes of Roman Catholic priests, but otherwise it is the best video I could find. Also, here is an interesting link to Ira Sankey, Moody’s song leader and the composer of this song’s music, singing this song in 1898: <https://www.sermonaudio.com/saplayer/playpopup.asp?SID=97081010204>.
- Review questions: (Game: Have ten cotton balls representing sheep and two transparent containers available. A student who answers a question correctly gets to put a cotton ball in his/her team’s container.)
  1. Which body parts that might offend did Jesus use for examples? [Hand, foot, eye.]
  2. Why would it be better to go through life without a body part that had caused one to sin? [It’s better to go through life handicapped than to burn in hell fire because that body part caused one to sin.]
  3. What does *worm* in the phrase, “where their *worm* does not die,” mean? [It might be the conscience or the utter horror of hell.]
  4. Where are guardians angels? [Before the face of the Father in heaven.]
  5. In the story Jesus told, how many sheep did the shepherd have? [One hundred.]
  6. How many sheep did the shepherd seek? [One.]
  7. What was the purpose of the story of the lost sheep? [“So it is not the will of my Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.”]
  8. Give two or three of the steps to take in dealing with offenses in the church. [Tell him his fault between you and him alone; take one or two others along with you; tell it to the church; let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.]
  9. Complete this sentence: For where two or three are gathered in my name, \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ [There am I among them.]
  10. What does the verse, Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another, have to do with offenses? [Be a useful servant; seek peace.]

### Handwork:

- Color the clipart picture found below.

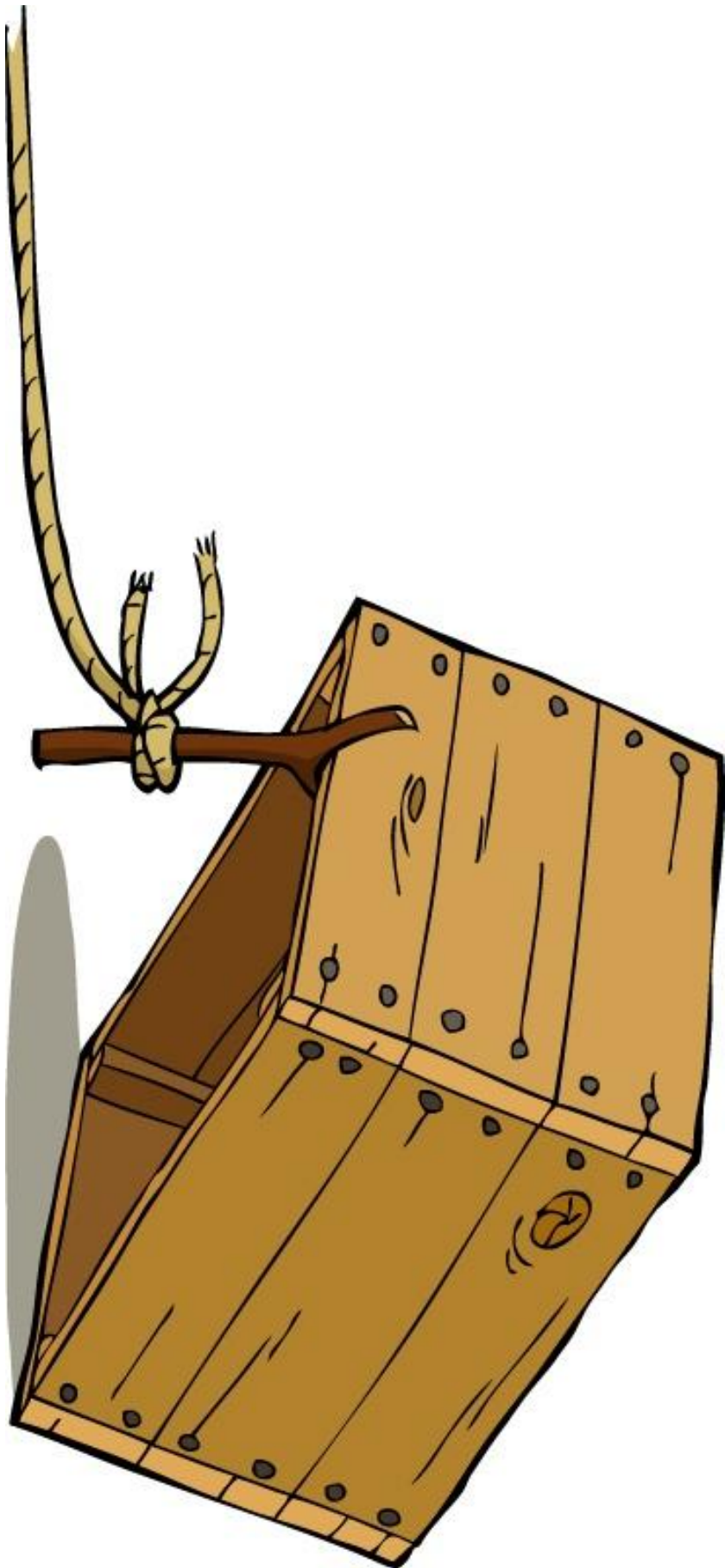
### Memory Verse:

- Mark 9:50— Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another.

**W O E**

**O F F E N S E**

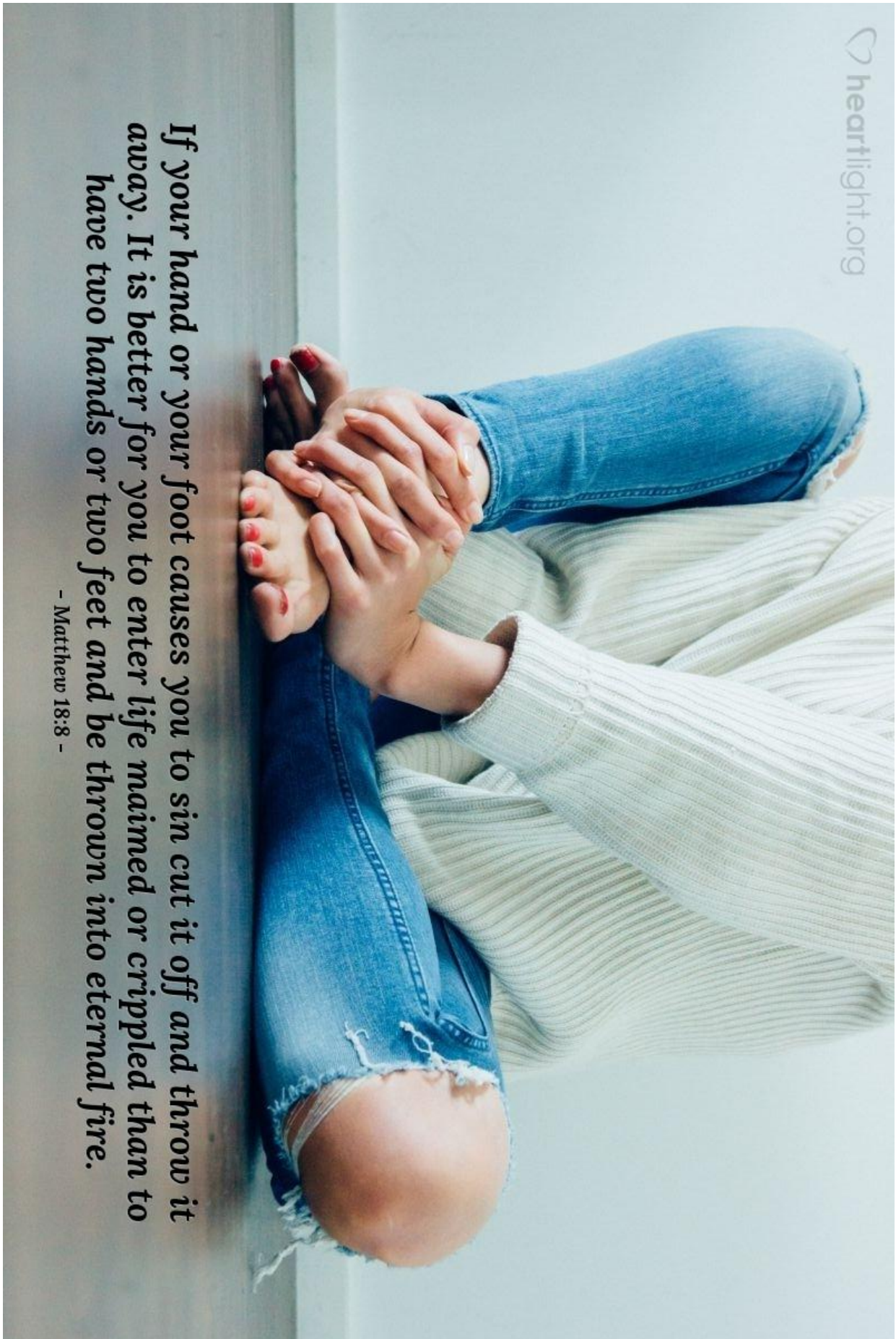
**H E L L**





***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.***

***- Matthew 18:8 -***







<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-2773617/Does-believing-guardian-angels-safe-People-fewer-risks-non-believers-study-claims.html>

This picture demonstrates two common fallacies about angels—that they are beautiful feminine beings and that they are nearby at all times.





[https://www.goodsalt.com/thumbs\\_big/prcas2656.jpg](https://www.goodsalt.com/thumbs_big/prcas2656.jpg)



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# **STEPS TO HANDLE CONFLICT**

**Tell the person his fault between you and him alone.**

**Take one or two others along with you.**

**Tell it to the church.**

**Let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.**



**Again I say to you, That if two of  
you shall agree on earth as touching  
any thing that they shall ask,  
it shall be done for them of  
my Father which is in heaven.**

**For where two or three are  
gathered together in my name,  
there am I in the middle of them.**

**Matthew 18:19-20**



<https://www.findshepherd.com/march-11-2018-matthew-1819-20.html>

# The Ninety and Nine

Elizabeth Cecelia Douglas Clephane, 1868

Ira David Sankey, 1874

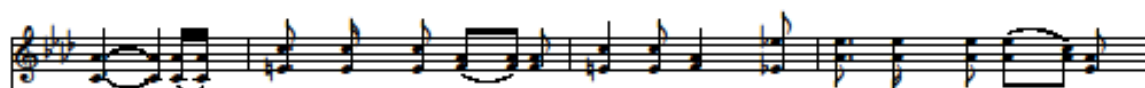
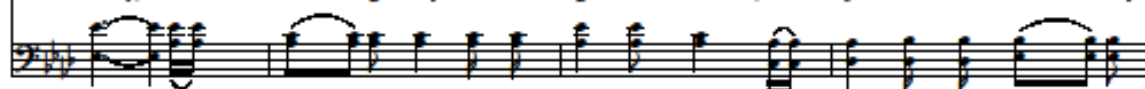
J=95



1. There were nine - ty and nine that safe - ly lay In the she - lter of the  
2. "Lo - rd, Th - ou hast here Thy nine - ty and nine; Are they not e - nough for  
3. Bu - t none of the ran - somed e - ver knew Ho - w deep were the wa - ters  
4. "Lo - rd, whence are those blood drops all the way Th - at mark out the mount - ain's  
5. A - nd all through the mount - ains, thun - der riven A - nd up from the rock - y



fold But one was out on the hills a - way, Far off from the gates of  
Thee?" But the Shep - herd made an - swer: "This of Mine Has wan - dered a - way from  
crossed; Nor how dark was the night th - e Lord passed through Ere He found H - is sheep that was  
track?" "They were shed for one who had gone a - stray Ere the Shep - herd could bring him  
steep, There a - rose a glad cry to the gate of heaven, "Re - joice! I have found My



gold. A - way on the mount - ains wild and bare. A - way from the ten - der  
Me; And al - though the road be rough and steep, I go to the des - ert  
lost. Ou - t in the desert He heard its cry, Si - ck a - nd helpless and rea -  
back." "Lord, whence are Thy hands so rent and torn?" "They are pierced to - night by  
sheep!" And the an - g - els echoed a - round the throne, "Re - joice, for the Lord brings



Shep - herd's care. A - way from the ten - der Shep - herd's care.  
to find My sheep, I go to the des - ert to find My sheep."  
dy to die; Si - ck a - nd helpless and ready to die.  
many a thorn; They are pierced to - night by many a thorn."  
back His own! Re - joice, for the Lord brings back His own!"



