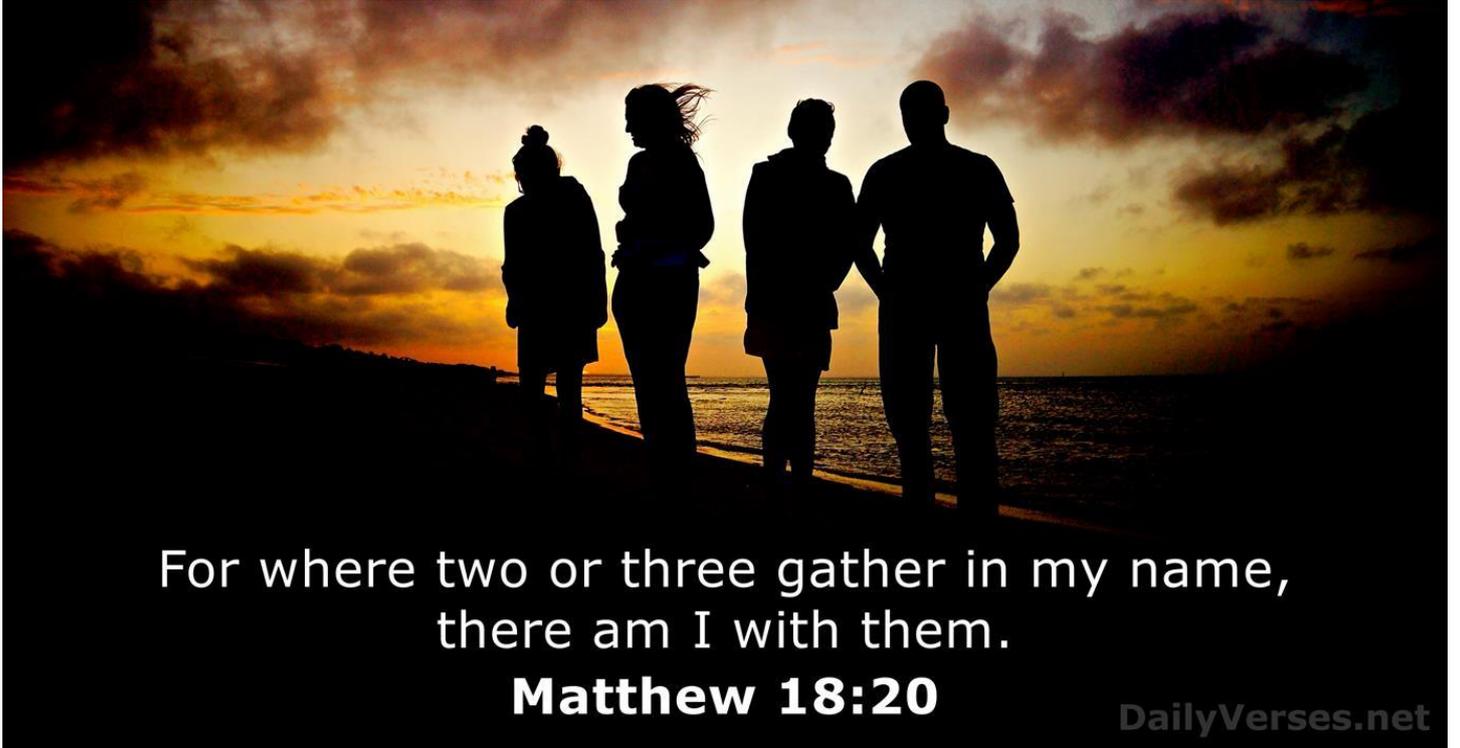


The Book of Matthew



For where two or three gather in my name,
there am I with them.

Matthew 18:20

DailyVerses.net

2023 – Part 2

2 more studies in Matthew's Gospel

Brief Outline of Matthew's Gospel

1:1 – 4:16	Introducing Jesus
4:17 – 16:20	Public ministry in and around Galilee
16:21 – 18:35	Private ministry in Galilee; preparing the disciples
19:1 – 25:46	Ministry in Judea
26:1 – 28:20	The death and resurrection of Jesus

Please Note the following:

1. It is helpful, but not mandatory, to prepare your answers before meeting with your group.
2. It is not necessary to look up all the Bible cross references listed in a particular question; your Growth Group Leader will summarize these Bible cross references for you.
3. Just a reminder that sometimes in our Growth Groups, people feel comfortable sharing very personal and sensitive things about their lives. This information **MUST BE CONFIDENTIAL and NEVER LEAVE THE GROUP.**

Study 1 – Greatness in the Kingdom – Matthew 18:1-14

(Sermon on 19-March-23)

Before we begin: What sort of **attitude** do you think we need to have as a Christian?

The same attitude as Jesus.

Wednesday afternoon study answers: exhibit fruit of the spirit; generous with our God-given talents; love one another; forgiving; good listeners; imitate Jesus; WWJD.

Read Matthew 18:1-5 and parallel passages in Mark 9:33-37 and Luke 9:46-48

1. What question do the disciples ask in verse 1? Why would they ask that?

The question they asked is: “Who is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven?”. In Mark and Luke’s version they argued with each other about who is the greatest.

Why did they ask this? Perhaps a) because in chapter 17, Jesus only took 3 disciples with them and are they greater than the others? Or b) because Jesus has chosen 12 close companions and they wanted to know which of them was the greatest. Or c) 3 of the disciples have seen Elijah and Moses up the mountain and there have been discussions about John the Baptist being the new promised Elijah; and the disciples are wondering who is the greatest in the Kingdom? Basically, the disciples were thinking in “human” terms, not “godly” terms.

2. What do you think Jesus means in verse 3 by “**unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the Kingdom of Heaven**”?

Jesus could have pointed to Himself, when they asked “who is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven” but instead he took a little child and placed the child among them. And notice, Jesus didn’t say Peter was the greatest even though in chapter 16, Jesus said He would build His church on Peter; so that eliminates the idea of Peter and successive popes being the greatest! No, instead, Jesus said His disciples have to be like a child. In the culture, children were seen as a possession and to be seen and not heard. What Jesus means is a disciple has to be like a child in terms of innocence, humility and low status/position; and simply trusting their parents in all things. Unquestioning faith. Accepting like a Kindy kid – totally teachable and accepting without asking “why?” which comes when there are a bit older.

3. What do you think Jesus means in verse 4 by “**whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven**”?

When we fulfil the humble place that a child had in Jewish culture, we are on the way to greatness in Jesus’ Kingdom. That is when we accept that we have a lowly position and are not concerned about our status or position, then we are on the right track. There can be no EGO in Jesus’ Kingdom (or His Church!). Position/status is not important; something the Pharisees and Sadducees and many today struggle with.

4. Who are we welcoming in verse 5 and who are we actually welcoming?

We are welcoming a child but in doing so we are actually welcoming Jesus!

If Jesus welcomes everyone; we should too.

Read Matthew 18:6-9

5. What warning does Jesus give in verse 6?

We are not to cause one of these little ones (in Jesus' Kingdom) to stumble. The Greek word for stumble is where we get scandalize. In other words, we are not to lead someone into sin and corrupt their childlike innocence.

6. What is the woe in verse 7?

A woe is something that will cause great sorrow or distress.

Jesus is saying the people of the world [not of the Kingdom] cause great sorrow and distress when they cause people to stumble (sin and corrupt their innocence). And Jesus says it will be a particular woe (sorrow and distress) to the person who causes this!

7. Are verses 8 and 9 meant to be taken literally? What does Jesus mean?

Jesus warns that avoiding sin is not always easy and may involve sacrifice to fight against sin. Jesus is saying it really is better to sacrifice in the battle against sin NOW, rather than face the judgment and punishment of eternity later.

This is not literal [although in some Middle Eastern countries – hands are chopped off for stealing]. If I cut my right hand off, I can still sin with my left hand. Even if I cut all my limbs off and cut my eyes out, I can still sin in my heart and in my thoughts. What Jesus is saying is to eliminate sin, there needs to be a total transformation from the inside out; i.e., spiritual surgery!

Read Matthew 18:10-14

8. What is the parable?

The parable is about a man (shepherd) owning 100 sheep. One sheep wanders off, so he leaves the 99 safe sheep to find the lost one. When he finds it, he is happier the one found sheep than the 99 safe sheep, because there has been a dramatic change in bringing this lost sheep back. This parable is a picture of how God cares for all His precious sheep and doesn't want anyone to wander away from Him and get lost!

9. What is Jesus teaching the disciples/us here?

Jesus is teaching how important His flock is to Him. This is what our attitude should be like to people lost from God. We should have an attitude of love and care and concern for the lost sheep. If everyone is important to Jesus (as the parable says) then they are important to us too! Do we see people lost from God as sinners in need of a Saviour? Do we shed tears for those lost from God and unsaved?

10. What does “**their angels**” mean in verse **10**?

This verse suggests that people have personal (guardian) angels. In general, it's talking about the role of angels – who continue to do God's work – sometimes bringing messages from God and sometimes bringing protection from God! Remember, churches have angels (see Daniel 12:1; Revelation 2:1ff)

Read Exodus 3:1-14; 4:10; 6:12; 6:30

11. How do these passages (especially Exodus 3:11) relate to Matthew 18:1-14

Exodus 3:1-14 – God calls Moses. Moses is humble, especially verse 11 – “Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?”

Exodus 4:10 – Moses tells God about his ineloquence and slow speech?

Exodus 6:12 – Moses questions why anyone would listen to him with faltering lips?

Exodus 6:30 – Moses again questions why Pharaoh would listen to him with faltering lips?

In summary, Moses, plays down (is humble) when called by God. Moses doesn't see that He is deserving of a call from God; he sees himself as of “low” status [nothing special] and has certain failings which would make this calling difficult!

Moses has the childlike status (humility, low status, no ego) that Jesus calls for from His disciples.

Read Judges 6:15; 1 Samuel 9:21; 1 Samuel 18:18; 2 Samuel 7:18

12. How do these passages relate to Matthew 18:1-14?

Judges 6:15 – Gideon says he is from the weakest clan and the least in his family.

1 Samuel 9:21 – Saul says he is from the least clan of the least tribe (Benjamin)

1 Samuel 18:18 – David recognizes his low status when called by Saul

2 Samuel 7:18 – David is humble before God about his family and background.

Gideon, Saul and David have the childlike status (humility, low status, no ego) that Jesus calls for from His disciples.

Read Isaiah 6:1-13

13. How does this passage (especially verse 5) relate to Matthew 18:1-14

God calls Isaiah as a prophet; Isaiah is humble about his status; especially verse 5, when Isaiah says “Woe to me!” “I am ruined. For I am a man of unclean lips...”

What's the **BIG IDEA** of **Matthew 18:1-14**?

Imitate Christ's attitude



Give a **light globe** moment you experienced in this passage?



How does this passage **apply to your life**?

a. *Confess any ego we have*

- b. *Confess any pride we have*
- c. *Be humble. Real greatness is not to be found in seeking to be praised and served by others but in seeking others to serve, especially those who have no rights and/or are lost from God!*
- d. *Don't cause anyone to stumble (lead into sin)*
- e. *Be a stepping stone, not a stumbling block*
- f. *Look beyond ourselves and care for God's flock [pastoral care], especially those lost from God*
- g. *Have the same attitude of Jesus*
- h. *Ask God to give us an attitude makeover – undergo spiritual surgery!*
- i. *Notice when God called Moses, Gideon and Isaiah – and they raised objections about their unworthiness; God also empowered and equipped them.*

Share the verse that had a special meaning to you in this study?

Matthew 18:14 - In the same way your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should perish.

Finish in prayer: Thanking God for sending Jesus as a humble servant to seek and save those lost from God. Ask God to give us an attitude makeover.

Study 2 – Forgiving a brother or sister – Matthew 18:15-35 *(Sermon on 26-March-23)*

Before we begin: What is forgiveness? When should we forgive? How do we forgive?

What is forgiveness? Dictionary: when we stop feeling angry or resentful towards someone for an offence against us. Or - we no longer feel angry about or wish to punish/repay someone for an offence.

In Greek, forgive (aphiemi) means to let go/give up a debt.

When should we forgive? We should be “always ready and willing” to forgive when someone comes and says sorry. Isn’t that what Jesus is saying in the Sermon on the Mount: “Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you” (Matthew 5:44). And in Luke 6:27-28, Jesus says “But to you who are listening I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, 28 bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.

Jesus had an attitude that was “ready and willing” to forgive those who put Him on the cross, should they come to realize what they had done and repent, when He said: “Forgive them Father, for they know not what they are doing” (Luke 23:34)

How do we forgive? There should be no desire to repay like for like. Jesus even says “turn the other cheek” (Matthew 5:39) – not every “slap in the face” needs a response!

Read Matthew 18:15-17

1. What is the **process** of dealing with a brother or sister who sins (*‘sins against you’* – in some manuscripts as per NIV footnote)?

Note: the context is following on from the parable of the lost ONE sheep from verses 10-14 and the ONE lost from God is because of their sin – not just sin against a brother or sister (as this was probably not in the original manuscripts) but just any sin done by a brother or sister – that is someone known to us.

The process is:

1. *Go to the brother or sister who has sinned and point out their fault. That means we don’t go and tell everyone else about it and gossip about it. We simply speak to the other party directly. A word of caution – that we don’t go to our brother and sister, with every petty offence; because we are also called to bear with one another and be patient (literally long-suffering) with each other. But sometimes, there are matters we can’t leave and they need to be dealt with. So we have two options – drop the matter and let it go – OR – go to our brother and sister if we can’t let it go. A third option of – harbouring a grudge, retaliating or gossiping about them – is NOT an option as a Christian!*
2. *If the brother or sister listens to your grievance – then the matter is dealt with. They may apologize or in our discussion we may discover it was a misunderstanding or they might even have been right and we were wrong! And there is reconciliation.*

3. If the brother or sister won't listen – then the process continues by bringing two or three witnesses. This agrees with Old Testament law – in Numbers 35:30; Deuteronomy 17:6; 19:15 – cf. John 8:17; 2 Corinthians 13:1; 1 Timothy 5:19; Hebrews 10:28.
4. If the brother or sister still won't listen – then the church gets involved. Practically this might be some members of the church or the leadership of the church. If the brother or sister still won't listen, they are treated like heathens or tax-collectors. The latter is most likely a Jewish expression of ostracism and means refusing fellowship with the body of believers – until they repent. Now remember, Jesus loved the heathens and tax-collectors into repentance and so treating them like heathens and tax-collectors should not be seen as a negative; but as an opportunity for the brother or sister to repent and be welcomed back into fellowship.

2. What is the purpose of this process?

The purpose of this process to “win over” your brother or sister, not to reject and punish. Which is another good reason for not making the offence so public to begin with!

The purpose of this process is NOT punishment but repentance and reconciliation. The idea is for them to miss fellowship with the body of believers and come to repentance and rejoin the church community.

3. Why do you think verse 16 says to take one or two others along? (cf. Numbers 35:30; Deut 17:6; 19:15)

The Old Testament Law in many places states that two or three witnesses are required to establish the truth and to confirm a wrong-doing. This is the case even in a court of law today; people cannot be convicted of an offence without the evidence of witnesses.

4. What does “binding” and “loosing” mean in verse 18? (cf. Matthew 16:19)

We saw in Matthew 16:19 – binding meant something that was prohibited/not permissible – and loosing meant something that was allowed/permissible. Here Jesus is giving the disciples, as the ones establishing the church, the authority to decide in cases where an offence/sin has been committed; they decide who is right and who is wrong based on the evidence presented and the testimony of the witnessed called.

5. **Ponder:** Does verse 19 and 20 – mean if we get two or three people to agree with us, we can ask for whatever we want and it will be given to us? Or does it mean something else?

No, it does not mean we can ask for whatever we like and it will be given to us.

The context is gathering together to pray for the brother of sister who has sinned but obviously this can be applied more widely to any gathering of Christians in prayer.

The key phrase is in verse 20, gather “in my name”. When we gather in Jesus’ name; we gather as Christians and as such we gather as people who follow Jesus’ example, character and teaching; and as people who, just like Jesus, seek to do the Father’s will; and so when we ask for something, we are asking for whatever is the Father’s will, not ours; just as Jesus did.

6. What wonderful promise does Jesus make in verse 20 and is there a condition?

He promises to be in the midst of us when we gather together – as long as we gather in His name!

Read Matthew 18:21-35

7. What wonderful question does Peter ask in verse 21? How would you answer?

Peter's question is "how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me?" It is difficult to keep forgiving someone who keeps sinning against us. But I am reminded how many times I sin against God and can come to Him for forgiveness. I'm sure it's more than seven, or seventy-seven or even seventy times seven!

Note: The Rabbi's teaching of the day – said three times was enough! (see Amos 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 13; 2:1, 4, 6).

Note: Did Peter assume that his brother or sister would sin against him, but not he against his brother or sister?

8. What answer does Jesus give in verse 22? Is this a literal number?

Assuming the correct translation was seventy times seven – i.e., 490. It would be strange to say on the 491st occasion "no, sorry, I don't forgive you this time". Seven is a God-number, a perfect number; so Jesus is saying we forgive someone who is repentant an unlimited number of times!

By the time we've forgiven 490 times, we're in the habit of forgiving!

As 1 Cor 13:5 says "love keeps no record of wrongs"

9. Jesus tells a parable in verses 23 to 34. Summarise the parable.

Jesus tells the parable of a servant who owes his master a huge sum of money.

The sum of money is 10, 000 bogs of gold (10,000 talents). A talent is worth 20 years wages of a laborer). The point is the debt is so HUGE – it is literally unrepayable!

The master orders that the servant's wife and children be sold as slaves to repay the debt.

The servant begs for the master to be patient.

Out of mercy, the master cancelled the debt altogether and let him go.

But when released, the servant went to one of his fellow-servants who owed him a small debt of 100 silver coins (100 days wages) and demanded this servant repay the 100 silver coins.

[Note: the MSG -uses the figures of \$100, 000 for the huge debt and \$10 for the small debt. But I think the large debt should really be in the millions, to get a more realistic comparison.]

When the second servant could not repay the 100 silver coins, and begged for more time, the first servant had the second servant thrown in jail.

The first servant's cruel action was reported to the master.

The master was so angry with the first servant and had him thrown in jail because he did not show mercy to the second servant, as the master had shown him!

10. Why is Jesus telling the parable?

The parable shows us how much of a huge DEBT we have been let off – our huge debt of sin has been paid for by Jesus – so the parable is telling us to be forgiving and merciful, just as God has been forgiving and merciful towards us.

The unforgiving/unjust servant had received forgiveness but had not experienced forgiveness in his heart because he was simply glad to be “off the hook”. And because he hadn’t experienced forgiveness in his heart, he wasn’t able to share that forgiveness with the second servant.

11. What is Jesus’ conclusion about forgiveness in verse 35? (cf. Matthew 6:14; James 2:13)

Jesus wants us to show the same level of mercy and forgiveness that He showed on the cross. If as Christians we don’t show the same measure of mercy and forgiveness towards others that has been shown to us by Jesus; then it is unlikely we have the correct concept of what a forgiven Christian really is!

Read Genesis 4:19-24

12. How does this passage relate to Matthew 18:15-35?

Back in Genesis 4:15; God told Cain (who was worried that people would find him and kill him) that no-one would touch him; if they did they would suffer seven times over. And God put a mark on Cain to protect him. Then a few generations later, Lamech boasted about his murder of another, and even promised a greater retribution than God had done for Cain. Lamech says in v24, he will be avenged seventy-seven times, rather than Cain’s seven times. This shows the progressive degeneracy of humankind; no wonder God sent a flood.

How this passage relates to Matthew 18:15-35?

- a. The reference to seven times and seventy-seven times*
- b. Rather than REVENGE over and over – Jesus is teaching FORGIVENESS over and over!
Wouldn’t the world be a better place!*

Read 2 Kings 4:1-7

13. How does this passage relate to Matthew 18:15-35?

In the parable of the unmerciful servant (Matthew 18:21-35); the man who owed 10,000 bags of gold and was unable to pay, was ordered by the master that his wife and children would have to be sold to pay the debt. The implication is that they will be sold as slaves. In the story from 2 Kings 4, the widow fears that now that her husband has died, the creditor (master) will come to take her 2 sons as slaves (2 Kings 4:1) but Elisha provides mercy for the widow by miraculously providing oil to fill up the empty jars, so that she can sell the jars of oil and pay her debts. In the same way, Jesus’ parable is teaching us to show mercy to others; because at the end of the day; isn’t that what God did for us – He showed mercy (which by definition is undeserved) and paid all our debts of sin – through the precious blood of His Son.

What’s the BIG IDEA of Matthew 18:15-35?

Forgive as we have been forgiven. Show mercy as we have been shown mercy.



Give a **light globe** moment you experienced in this passage?

- ➔ How does this passage **apply to your life**?
- a. *Is there someone we need to say sorry to but we have been putting it off?*
 - b. *Is there someone we need to forgive but we're holding a grudge?*
 - c. *How do we handle sin in our life?*
 - d. *How do we handle sin in our brother and sister? Do we gossip, publicize it; or sort it out privately?*
 - e. *Have we really understood and appreciated what God did for us in allowing Jesus to pay our huge debt of sin.*
 - f. *Have we share the mercy and forgiveness we have received with others*

Share the verse that had a special meaning to you in this study?

V27 - ²⁷The servant's master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go.

Finish in prayer: Thanking God that we are forgiven through the blood of His beloved Son Jesus. Ask God to help us to forgive others as we have been forgiven by God, through Jesus.

Studies prepared by Paul O'Rourke
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Resources:

The MacArthur Study Bible

New Bible Commentary (Carson, France, Moyter & Wenham)

Life Applications from Every Chapter of the Bible (G. Campbell Morgan)

The Message of Matthew (Michael Green)

Focus on the Bible: Matthew (Charles Price)

Matthew Volume 1 (Barclay)

Be Loyal Following the King of Kings NT Commentary on Matthew (Warren W. Wiersbe)

Notes/Prayer Points