

LEADERS GUIDE

***UNEXPECTED
JESUS***

Matthew 14-18

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UNEXPECTED

JESUS

Matthew 14–18

In Matthew 14–18, the reactions to Jesus grow more divided, splitting communities into passionate believers and fierce sceptics. To some, He is the long-awaited Messiah, a beacon of hope for Israel. To others, especially the Pharisees, He is a dangerous disruptor who must be silenced. Yet the most startling truth is this: almost everyone misunderstands the true nature of Jesus' identity and mission. Even Peter, who boldly declares Jesus as the Messiah (Matthew 16:16), is shaken when Jesus reveals His unexpected path of suffering, death, and resurrection (Matthew 16:21). These chapters challenge us to rethink our assumptions about Jesus and invite us to follow the Unexpected Jesus with unwavering faith.

OVERVIEW OF MATTHEW

The Gospel of Matthew presents Jesus Christ as the long-promised Messiah, the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy, and the King who inaugurates the kingdom of heaven. Rooted in a deep understanding of God's covenantal promises, Matthew emphasizes God's sovereign plan of redemption and Christ's role as the second Adam, the true Israel, and the ultimate mediator between God and His people.

RESOURCES

COMMENTARIES



Matthew – A Commentary
by Douglas O'Donnell

PODCASTS



Overview of Matthew's Gospel – Down Under Theology (Spotify)

BOOKS



Surprised by Jesus: Subversive Grace in the Four Gospels – Dane Ortlund



Overview of Matthew's Gospel – Down Under Theology (Apple Podcasts)

VIDEOS



Gospel of Matthew Summary: A Complete Animated Overview (Part 1)



Bible Books in 30 Minutes – Matthew (Spotify)



Gospel of Matthew Summary: A Complete Animated Overview (Part 2)



Bible Books in 30 Minutes – Matthew (Apple Podcasts)

ARTICLES



Introduction to the Gospels and Acts: An Essay by Charles L. Quarles

BIBLE READING PLAN

WEEK 1

(FEB 10 - FEB 16)

Feb 10 (Mon):
Matthew 14:1-12

Feb 11 (Tue):
Matthew 14:13-21

Feb 12 (Wed):
Matthew 14:22-33

Feb 13 (Thu):
Matthew 14:34-36

Feb 14 (Fri):
Review Chapter 14

Feb 15 (Sat):
Reflection & Prayer

Feb 16 (Sun):
Sermon

WEEK 2

(FEB 17 - FEB 23)

Feb 17 (Mon):
Matthew 15:1-9

Feb 18 (Tue):
Matthew 15:10-20

Feb 19 (Wed):
Matthew 15:21-28

Feb 20 (Thu):
Matthew 15:29-39

Feb 21 (Fri):
Review Chapter 15

Feb 22 (Sat):
Reflection & Prayer

Feb 23 (Sun):
Sermon

WEEK 3

(FEB 24 - MAR 1)

Feb 24 (Mon):
Matthew 16:1-12

Feb 25 (Tue):
Matthew 16:13-20

Feb 26 (Wed):
Matthew 16:21-28

Feb 27 (Thu):
Review Chapter 16

Feb 28 (Fri):
Reflection & Prayer

Feb 29 (Sat):
Catch-up Day

Mar 1 (Sun):
Sermon

WEEK 4

(MAR 2 - MAR 8)

Mar 2 (Mon):
Matthew 17:1-13

Mar 3 (Tue):
Matthew 17:14-21

Mar 4 (Wed):
Matthew 17:22-23

Mar 5 (Thu):
Matthew 17:24-27

Mar 6 (Fri):
Review Chapter 17

Mar 7 (Sat):
Reflection & Prayer

Mar 8 (Sun):
Sermon

WEEK 5

(MAR 9 - MAR 15)

Mar 9 (Mon):
Matthew 18:1-5

Mar 10 (Tue):
Matthew 18:6-9

Mar 11 (Wed):
Matthew 18:10-14

Mar 12 (Thu):
Matthew 18:15-20

Mar 13 (Fri):
Matthew 18:21-35

Mar 14 (Sat):
Review Chapter 18

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This guide is not meant to replace the Sunday sermon but is designed to help you apply the Biblical teaching given on a Sunday in your Life Groups. We don't want our Life Groups to feel like another 'mini-sermon', but rather to be places where we learn to obey what God says in Christian community. You can find our latest sermons here <https://oasischurch.com.au/audio/>

CHURCH SERVICES

Keep this guide with your Bible and bring it with you to church. There is space for you to take down notes during the sermon as well.

LIFE GROUP

Use this guide during life Group each week. There are Life Group questions for each sermon in the series, and space to write down prayer points that come from the discussion that week or prayer requests from the members of your group.

PERSONAL DEVOTIONS

Although this guide is primarily designed for Life Groups, it can also be used in personal devotions. After you have heard the sermon preached on the Sunday, go through this guide and use it to apply what you have learnt. It may be more natural to go through these questions with your family. There are also leader's guides available that give additional information to aid leaders in arriving at Biblical answers. Leaders use these to help them lead the group but you may find one beneficial in your personal devotions. If you would like a copy of a leader's guide please email ben@oasischurch.com.au

GUIDELINES FOR DISCUSSION

Your group needs to be a safe place for all people to share and to enter the discussion. This means, all members of the group need to follow a few guidelines:

WE LEAD WITH GRACE

We respond to one another in light of what Christ has done for us, understanding that we are all in need of His grace, compassion, and mercy.

WE TREAT EACH OTHER WITH RESPECT

We can wrestle with ideas and disagree with one another without judgement, personal attack, or dismissal. We don't laugh at others when they've shared and no putdowns of any kind. These are the actions that make others withdraw and feel uneasy about sharing.

WE ARE HERE TO SUPPORT ONE ANOTHER, NOT 'FIX' ONE ANOTHER

Jesus does the 'fixing'. Give encouragement, speak truth, and point to Jesus. Don't try to solve or fix each other.

WE COMMIT TO CONFIDENTIALITY

What is said in the group should stay in the group unless permission is given to share it elsewhere. This is not to create a dysfunctional group that keeps unhealthy secrets. Instead, it is to create a culture of safety where everyone feels safe to share thoughts and feelings and knows that others will not find out.

WE DO NOT CROSSTALK

Crosstalk is a conversation during discussion time that leaves others out and can be hurtful. Each person should be free to express his or her feelings without interruptions.

Your group needs to agree with one another that you are committed to providing a safe place to be encouraged and challenged by the word of God and to let Him do a healing, sanctifying work in your lives.

If you have any concerns, you should speak to your group leader or get in contact with our Community Pastor, Ben Fien (ben@oasischurch.com.au).

WHEN THE TRUTH HURTS

Matthew 14:1-12

CONTEXT

In the preceding passage (Matthew 13:53-58) Jesus experienced opposition toward His ministry. In this study we are shown how Jesus' cousin, the prophet John the Baptist, also experienced hostility.

STUDY OBJECTIVE

To help people understand how God's servants are treated by the world, to understand that we should expect opposition when we are faithful to Christ and that this is a privilege. To also help them to see how Christ withstood the worst opposition so that we can experience the blessing of His eternal Kingdom.

SHARE TOGETHER

Check in with each other. Discuss some or all of the following questions:

- What has God been teaching you lately?
- How has God been stretching you?
- Where have you seen God working in your life?

PRAY TOGETHER

Before you begin your discussion, spend time in prayer together. While catching up you may have identified some prayer points you should include. Be sure to pray that God makes you more like Jesus through this discussion.

PURSUE GOD

1 Who would you say is a 'great' person? How would you define greatness?

READ MATTHEW 14:1-12

2 Name the characters in this story.

Herod. John the Baptist. Herodias (wife of Herod's brother). The daughter of Herodias.

3 What do you know about John the Baptist? If needed, you can read Matthew 3:1-15 and Matthew 11:2-15.

More information: There are multiple 'Herods' in the Bible because it is the name of several rulers who formed a dynasty during this period of history. The 'Herod' in this story is Herod Antipas. Herod Antipas was petty and dependent on Rome. He was "the son of Herod the Great and ruled as tetrarch of Galilee and Perea from about 4 BC until he was banished for seeking the kingship in AD 39...." (CSB Study Bible)

4 Why was John put in prison and eventually killed by Herod?

5 Would you call John blessed? After giving your initial answer consider Jesus' words in Matthew 5:10.

6 Are you willing to face persecution for Jesus' sake? Share the reason for your answer.

7 What might it look like for you to stand for Jesus' sake in our day without being obnoxious or unnecessarily offensive?

Remember, Herod Antipas was a ruler of the Jews. So John the Baptist was challenging someone who was considered part of their religious group. It's not quite the same as going to someone outside of the religious group and challenging their moral choices. In fact, the Bible expressly warns against Christians judging outsiders (1 Corinthians 5:12-13), but encourages us to hold each other accountable in gentleness (Galatians 6:1-2), love and humility (Matthew 7:1-5). If you need further passages to consider the dynamic between us and those outside the church here are some you can study further: 1 Peter 2:11-17, 1 Peter 3:13-18.

8 What similarities are there between Jesus' ministry and John's ministry?

"The lives and ministries of John and Jesus contain many parallels: Both preached about the necessity of repentance in light of the dawning kingdom of God; both accumulated massive followings and made disciples; both were rejected at various points in their ministries; both were executed as criminals by their opponents; and both were buried by their disciples. Matthew 11:10 indicates that their callings and respective fates are intertwined." John D. Barry et al., Faithlife Study Bible (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2012, 2016), Mt 14:12.

9 Jesus was also persecuted for righteousness' sake. He was the sinless one who was unjustly charged, tortured, publicly shamed and crucified as a criminal. Jesus stood for righteousness so that we might have access to His Kingdom, the Kingdom of Heaven. Discuss what Jesus did for you and share how it moves you.

LIVE IT OUT

10 Is there something you can do to courageously align yourself with Jesus' Kingdom, even if it means hostility against you? Share with the group and pray for each other.

A SERIES OF MIRACULOUS EVENTS

Matthew 14:13-36

CONTEXT

Jesus has just heard about the unjust beheading of his cousin John in the previous passage. The passage of this Bible study opens up with Jesus seeking to get away and be alone (Matthew 14:13).

STUDY OBJECTIVE

To help people understand the identity of Jesus in these accounts from Matthew. Matthew is communicating about Jesus' divine identity as God incarnate by the miracles Jesus performs. He also gives us insight into Jesus' heart and character by what moves Him to compassion.

SHARE TOGETHER

Check in with each other. Discuss some or all of the following questions:

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- How has God been stretching you?
- Where have you seen God working in your life?

PRAY TOGETHER

Before you begin your discussion, spend time in prayer together. While catching up you may have identified some prayer points you should include. Be sure to pray that God makes you more like Jesus through this discussion.

PURSUE GOD

- 1 Some mental health groups use the acronym HALT (hungry, angry, lonely, tired) to identify states where people are more likely to make negative choices. Do you find this to be true personally? Why or why not?

READ MATTHEW 14:13-16

- 2 Why did Jesus withdraw to be alone?

Jesus had just heard of the execution of his cousin John the Baptist. Ensure people know the family connection. To make sure people understand how incredible Jesus' compassionate response is, you may also like to ask this question: "How would you feel if your cousin or some other family member was beheaded unjustly?"

- 3 How do you think Jesus was feeling at this time?

He was possibly angry about the injustice. He was likely feeling deep grief. People's beliefs about the divinity and humanity of Jesus may come up in this question (e.g., they might think He is unaffected by emotional distress because He's divine). If so, you can take the opportunity to discuss these things if you want to. The ancient Athanasian Creed gives careful wording to help you here: You may need to remind people that Jesus is truly human, not quasi-human. And He is truly divine, not somewhat divine.



- 4 What does Jesus' response to the crowds in verse 14 tell us about his heart?
- 5 How does Jesus' attitude towards the crowds compare with the disciples' attitude?

- 6 Does Jesus' response to the neediness of others during His own time of need affect you in any way? How?

People may feel convicted about their own lack of compassion toward others. Or they may feel comforted knowing that Jesus has limitless compassion for them in their own need, etc.

READ MATTHEW 14:17-21

- 7 God's people are provided with bread in a remote and solitary place. Does this remind you of any other stories in Israel's history?

The most obvious story is God's feeding of Israel during their exodus wanderings in the desolate wilderness/desert (Exodus 16). Note also that the 'twelve basketfuls' in verse 20 may be designed to remind us of the twelve tribes of Israel and reinforce that this miracle is alluding to other miracles in Israel's history.

- 8 If this event is parallel to the manna in Exodus, what does this tell us about the identity of Jesus who is providing the bread?

He is Yahweh – the God of Israel.

- 9 Think back to our series in 2 Kings last year. Elisha did a similar miracle in his ministry. Share if you remember what it is. Otherwise read about it together in 2 Kings 4:42-44.

- 10 If Jesus is doing something similar here what does this tell us about his identity?

The most simple way to put it is that Jesus is the Greater Elisha. We tried to draw it out in our 2 Kings series, but Jesus does many Elisha-like things in his ministry, but obviously far exceeds Elisha because Jesus is not just another prophet. If you or your group would like to learn more about how Jesus is the greater Elisha, this podcast is a great resource.



READ MATTHEW 14:22-23

- 11** Jesus still found time to be alone in prayer with the Father later. If Jesus needed time to be alone in prayer, how much more do we! Are you cultivating this practice in your life? If so, share the blessing of intentional time in prayer. If not, how could you begin to spend time alone with God in prayer?

READ MATTHEW 14:24-33

- 12** Who in the Old Testament has power over the sea? Consider Job 9:8; Psalm 77:19 and Psalm 107:23–32. What does this tell you about Jesus' identity?

'In demonstrating his mastery over wind and waves, Jesus clearly is exercising prerogatives previously reserved for Yahweh himself.... It is God alone who can rescue from the sea...' – Craig L. Blomberg, *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, p. 50.

- 13** In verse 27, Jesus says, 'It is I'. A literal translation of the Greek here would have Jesus saying, 'I AM'. What does this tell you about Jesus' identity?

You may like to read Exodus 3:14 together as well.

LIVE IT OUT

- 14** Share if you have found anything compelling, convicting or challenging in this discussion.
- 15** How can you apply what you've learnt? Is there something God is moving you to do, something He is moving you to repent of, or a belief He wants to change?

CLEAN HANDS, DEFILED HEARTS

Matthew 15:1-20

DISCOVER THE TEXT STUDY

GUIDE FOR LEADERS

Read passage out together (2-3 minutes)

Give the group time to read and make notes as individuals (7-15 minutes, depending on how long and difficult the passage is)

Discussion (30-40 minutes)

REMEMBER

The win is for people to get deep in the Word, not for every answer to be heard or for all 7 questions to be answered. The questions are merely meant to provide the foundation/starting point for discussion about the Bible.

SHARE TOGETHER

Check in with each other. Discuss some or all of the following questions:

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- How has God been stretching you?
- Where have you seen God working in your life?

PRAY TOGETHER

Before you begin your discussion, spend time in prayer together. While catching up you may have identified some prayer points you should include. Be sure to pray that God makes you more like Jesus through this discussion.

5 What are some ways that the passage could be applied to our lives?

6 State a heresy which this passage disproves (for example, “John 3:16 teaches us whoever believes in Jesus WILL NOT have eternal life”).

7 How does this passage point toward Jesus, remind us of our need for Jesus, or tell us about Jesus (In John 5:37-40 and other passages we learn that the whole Bible points to Jesus)?

CRUMBS OF GRACE

Matthew 15:21-39

DISCOVER THE TEXT STUDY

GUIDE FOR LEADERS

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THE DEMAND FOR A SIGN

Matthew 16:1-12

CONTEXT

In the previous passage, Jesus performed an incredible sign, miraculously feeding thousands. In this study's passage, the Pharisees and Sadducees ask for more signs and the disciples seem to forget how easily Jesus can provide for their basic needs.

STUDY OBJECTIVE

This passage is all about the danger of doubt. It's not warning us about honest doubts that God's people experience (e.g. Psalm 10:1). It's warning us against the kind of doubt that stands aloof from Jesus and that puts God to the test. Help your group understand the kind of doubt being discussed in this passage and help them move towards a deeper, simple trust in Jesus.

SHARE TOGETHER

Check in with each other. Discuss some or all of the following questions:

- What has God been teaching you lately?
- How has God been stretching you?
- Where have you seen God working in your life?

PRAY TOGETHER

Before you begin your discussion, spend time in prayer together. While catching up you may have identified some prayer points you should include. Be sure to pray that God makes you more like Jesus through this discussion.

READ MATTHEW 16:1-4

1 Have you ever had to prove your trustworthiness? How did it make you feel?

2 In verse 1 it says that the Pharisees and Sadducees ‘tested’ Jesus. The Greek word behind ‘tested’ has come up twice before this in Matthew 4:1 and 4:3. What do you think is the significance of this?

The Pharisees and Sadducees are testing Jesus just like Satan did in the wilderness temptation. They may not be aware of it, but they’re allied with Satan. Ironically, earlier in Matthew 12:24, the Pharisees accused Jesus of being in league with the prince of demons.

3 Jesus has talked about the sign of Jonah before in Matthew’s Gospel. Can you explain what he means? If you need help, go back and read Matthew 12:38-42.

4 Why is ‘putting God to the test’ such a bad thing?

- 5 Do you think there is a difference between honest questions of God and cynically testing God?

A cursory reading of the Psalms gives us permission to ask questions of God and to express our confusion, disappointment and difficulty to comprehend His ways. The Pharisees aren't coming with innocent questions in the passage, they've already identified Jesus with the prince of demons. They are coming to test, tempt and trap Jesus.

READ MATTHEW 16:5-12

- 6 In verses 5-8, Jesus symbolically uses 'yeast' (a substance that makes dough rise) to teach a lesson. The disciples miss the point by thinking Jesus is talking about literal yeast. Does it comfort you that the Apostles, the leaders of the church and writers of New Testament books, were slow to understand?

- 7 What is Jesus' point in verses 8-10?

It seems like Jesus is saying, "Are you serious? Why would you assume I mentioned yeast because we don't have bread right now? You've recently seen me multiply bread for thousands! I'm not concerned about our lack of bread. I'm talking about something else."

- 8 Verses 11-12 spell out what Jesus is warning them about. Jesus is warning his disciples about the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees. The Pharisees and Sadducees disagreed on many points of doctrine, so what do you think Jesus is concerned about?

"The Pharisees and Sadducees disagreed about many doctrines, so reference to their common teaching likely meant their joint scepticism regarding Jesus's messiahship." – CSB Study Bible

- 9 In what ways do you think we are in danger of this 'yeast' in the modern-day church?

LIVE IT OUT

- 10 How can you practice humble, child-like faith in Jesus this week? How can you more fully trust Him and rely on His Word if you've taken a more doubtful position in the past?

HOW TO FIND YOUR SELF

Matthew 16:13-28

CONTEXT

In the previous passage, the Pharisees and Sadducees asked for more signs and the disciples seemed to forget how easily Jesus can provide for their basic needs. In this study's passage, Jesus reveals his identity as the Messiah, affirmed by Peter's confession. He predicts his suffering, death, and resurrection, rebuking Peter for misunderstanding his mission. Jesus calls his disciples to deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow him, emphasizing true discipleship.

STUDY OBJECTIVE

This passage reveals Jesus' identity as the Messiah, clarifies his mission of suffering and resurrection, and teaches the cost of discipleship, calling followers to prioritise God's plan over human desires and embrace self-denial for the sake of Christ. Help your group to better understand why there is a cost to following Jesus, what that entails, and how we can better support and encourage one another as we take up our cross daily and follow him.

SHARE TOGETHER

Check in with each other. Discuss some or all of the following questions:

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PRAY TOGETHER

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PURSUE GOD

1 Who is Jesus? What are some common answers to this question from those in your life (non-believing family, colleagues, friends, etc.)?

2 Why does the answer to this question matter more than anything else?

READ MATTHEW 16:13-20

3 Why did people think Jesus might have been a historical figure come back to life?

4 What does it mean for Jesus to be “the Messiah, the Son of the living God” (v.16)?

5 How was this revealed to Peter, and now to us?

READ MATTHEW 16:21-28

6 What does Jesus' rebuke to Peter in verse 23 say about the place of the cross in God's plan?

7 What does it mean for someone to "take up his cross"?

8 Why do we struggle with this?

- 9 What are some specific areas in your life where you need to deny yourself in order to take up your cross and follow Jesus? How might those in your Life Group be able to support you in this?

A MOUNTAINTOP EXPERIENCE

Matthew 17:1-13

DISCOVER THE TEXT STUDY

GUIDE FOR LEADERS

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Discussion (30-40 minutes)

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5 What are some ways that the passage could be applied to our lives?

6 State a heresy which this passage disproves (for example, “John 3:16 teaches us whoever believes in Jesus WILL NOT have eternal life”).

7 How does this passage point toward Jesus, remind us of our need for Jesus, or tell us about Jesus (In John 5:37-40 and other passages we learn that the whole Bible points to Jesus)?

DEMONS, DOUBT AND TAXES

Matthew 17:14-27

DISCOVER THE TEXT STUDY

GUIDE FOR LEADERS

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Discussion (30-40 minutes)

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PRAY TOGETHER

Before you begin your discussion, spend time in prayer together. While catching up you may have identified some prayer points you should include. Be sure to pray that God makes you more like Jesus through this discussion.

1 Can you find, or think of, any interesting context of the passage? (what comes before and after, or what is the historical situation etc.)

Often many people leave this blank. If no-one has anything, its not an issue. Just move on to question 2.

2 What do you notice or what interests you in the passage (e.g. key words, repetition, surprising statements, images, connections with other parts of the Bible)?

3

What questions (if any) do you have about the passage or what aren't you sure about?

Do not allow people to be belittled for their questions. Do your best to let other people answer the questions, not yourself. Only answer yourself if it's necessary. If no one knows the answer to a question, then acknowledge it and move on with the study. It is ok for mystery to exist.

4

What do you think is the main point of the passage?

The goal here is not to have a heated debate with one another. Some answers might be more correct than others. But the question is worded so that there are no wrong answers. Discussion is good, but contentious debate is unhealthy for group safety and trust.

5 What are some ways that the passage could be applied to our lives?

6 State a heresy which this passage disproves (for example, “John 3:16 teaches us whoever believes in Jesus WILL NOT have eternal life”).

7 How does this passage point toward Jesus, remind us of our need for Jesus, or tell us about Jesus (In John 5:37-40 and other passages we learn that the whole Bible points to Jesus)?

LITTLE CHILDREN AND LOST SHEEP

Matthew 18:1-14

CONTEXT

In the previous section, we see Jesus identify with us in our suffering in order to bring us salvation from sin; he predicts his death for a second time; and he displays humility in paying the temple tax, despite being one who is greater than the temple. In Matthew 18:1-14 Jesus teaches his disciples a lesson in child-like humility, highlighting this character trait as essential for being a Christian. He then proceeds to outline what life within the church ought to look like. In this passage, we look at the first half – that we should protect one another and love one another. The second half will be covered in Week 10.

STUDY OBJECTIVE

This passage aims to show us that for any of us to be followers of Jesus, we need to have a child-like humility, and then as children of God, there is a particular way that we should engage with one another.

SHARE TOGETHER

Check in with each other. Discuss some or all of the following questions:

- What has God been teaching you lately?
- How has God been stretching you?
- Where have you seen God working in your life?

PRAY TOGETHER

Before you begin your discussion, spend time in prayer together. While catching up you may have identified some prayer points you should include. Be sure to pray that God makes you more like Jesus through this discussion.

1 How does a child display humility in ways that adults might struggle to replicate?

READ MATTHEW 18:1-5

2 What is the difference between having child-like faith and being immature in your faith?

3 Why does Jesus say that having child-like faith is a requirement to enter the kingdom of heaven?

4 How does the requirement of humility in verses 1-4 compare with our culture's view of greatness?

READ MATTHEW 18:6-9

5 Who does this passage tell us to protect?

6 How much does personal holiness matter?

7 Theologian John Owen said, “Be killing sin or it will be killing you”. Do you agree or disagree with him? Why?

READ MATTHEW 18:10-14

8 What does this passage tell us about how we should treat one another?

9 How might God's example challenge us to live differently?

LIVE IT OUT

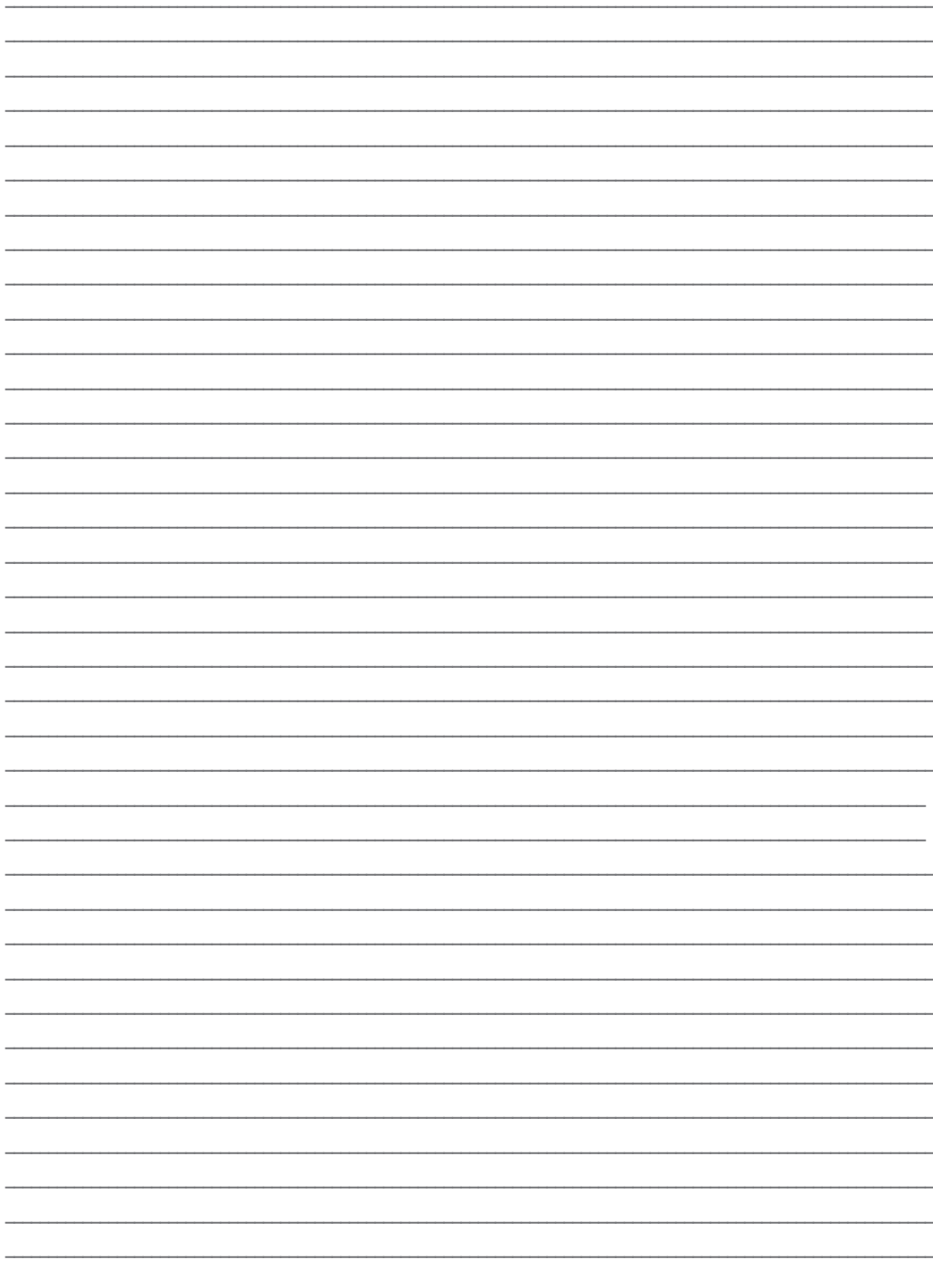
10 What might it look like for you to live with a child-like, humble faith?

11 What area/s in your life need to be put to death for the sake of godly holiness?

12 How can you welcome others like God has welcomed you? What is stopping you from doing so?

THE MATHEMATICS OF MERCY

Matthew 18:15-35



CONTEXT

This passage cuts in halfway through Jesus outlining what life within the church ought to look like – how believers should interact with one another. In the earlier sections of this chapter, Jesus teaches how we ought to protect and love one another, and then in the remainder of the passage, he teaches how we ought to restore and forgive one another.

STUDY OBJECTIVE

This passage challenges us to think through how to deal with sin within the church appropriately and in a way that reflects God's own character. Help your group to be real and go deep in exploring the balance between grace, accountability, and church discipline.

SHARE TOGETHER

Check in with each other. Discuss some or all of the following questions:

- What has God been teaching you lately?
- How has God been stretching you?
- Where have you seen God working in your life?

PRAY TOGETHER

Before you begin your discussion, spend time in prayer together. While catching up you may have identified some prayer points you should include. Be sure to pray that God makes you more like Jesus through this discussion.

READ MATTHEW 18:15-20

- 1 What is the purpose (or ultimate goal) of holding brothers and sisters accountable?
- 2 What steps does Jesus say we should take in holding someone accountable?

Private correction (v15); small group clarification (v16); church admonition (v17); church excommunication (v17).

- 3 According to the passage, on whose authority is church discipline carried out? And why is this important?

"Jesus is not giving some special authority to us outside of Himself, but rather it is attached to Him and His Word. He is saying that what we do as a church in His name, with His authority, is a reflection of what He does in heaven. So, if someone comes to the church and says, "I am living in sin and I am unrepentant—I will not turn to Christ," then we can say to that person with authority, "You are living bound in sin and your sin is not forgiven." To be clear, their sin is not unforgiven because we said so; their sin is unforgiven because Christ has said so in His Word. Similarly, if someone says that they are willing to turn from their sin, then we can say to them with full confidence that their sin is forgiven and they are now free from it. Jesus has given us the privilege of proclaiming what He has said to be true." (David Platt, Exalting Jesus in Matthew)

4 What should or should not be matters of church discipline?

5 Given the context, what do you think verse 20 means?

"Jesus is not saying, "Once you've got two or three together, count Me in." Instead, in this context He's talking about the difficult work of church discipline when two or three believers are gathered to address a brother or sister living in unrepentant sin. When we do the tough work of gentle, loving confrontation, we can be assured that Christ's presence, which is always with us (Matt 28:20), will be especially real and strong in the middle of that situation. This should give us great confidence." (David Platt, Exalting Jesus in Matthew)

READ MATTHEW 18:21-35

6 How would you describe the grace shown by the king towards the servant in Jesus' parable?

7 How does our debt to God compare with the servant's debt to the king?

- 8** Based on the parable that Jesus tells, how would you define what forgiveness is and what it is not?

LIVE IT OUT

- 9** If you are not showing grace to others, how might that be an indication that you are not being shaped by the gospel?
- 10** Are you harbouring any bitterness or unforgiveness toward someone else? If yes, what do you need to do about it?
- 11** How can you more clearly express the love of the Father to the church around you?
- 12** For personal reflection, are you causing, leading, or enabling a brother or sister to sin?



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