

Small Group Guide KINGDOM COMMUNITY

The Church at Brook Hills

Dr. David Platt

April 29, 2012

Matthew 18

This guide is a tool to help you lead your group into spiritual transformation. Use it as a resource to train your group into potential disciple-makers and lead your group in discovering, owning, and applying the truths of God's Word. There may be aspects you do not want to use and there may be instances where you just want to focus on a particular point or truth. Some questions may bring out emotions and cause people to dwell on an aspect of their relationship with God. Your role is to help facilitate this encounter with God in His Word with His Body, not just to complete the guide. Use this as a flexible teaching tool not a rigid group task list.

Relate . . .

Begin your group time by engaging in relational conversations and prayer that may include the following elements:

Welcome—a simple, brief time to greet one another (especially new friends), enjoy refreshments, and make announcements.

Review—a time to review the truths discussed last week and report on how members have had success or frustrations in applying those truths during the week. (The leader will want to provide encouragement and shepherding during this time.) Periodically, the leader will also want to review the gospel and allow members to share reports about opportunities they've had to share the gospel. Occasionally, the leader will want to review the vision for the group and discuss ways to accomplish that vision better.

Prayer—a time of general prayer with the whole group praying for struggles regarding the application of truths, for those with whom the group is sharing the gospel, and for understanding of today's truths.

Reflect . . .

Use the following summary and questions to review this week's message and reflect on its implications for our lives. (As a training tool, leaders might want to have various members summarize the teachings in their own words each week sharing how they think the Scripture applied to the original hearers and how the principles apply to us today.)

KINGDOM COMMUNITY

Matthew 18

Becoming a Christian...

- To be a citizen of the kingdom, you must become a child of the King.
 - The necessity of conversion...
 - Turn from yourself.
 - Trust in the Father.
 - A necessary clarification...
 - Jesus calls His disciples to humility of heart, not childishness of thought.

Loving the Church...

- We protect one another.
 - We are selflessly concerned about each others' holiness.

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- We are radically committed to our own holiness.
- We love one another.
 - In light of the Father's angelic provision for His children.
 - In light of the Father's individual pursuit of His children.
- We restore one another.
 - The process of church discipline and restoration...
 - Step 1: Private correction.
 - Step 2: Small group clarification.
 - Step 3: Church admonition.
 - Step 4: Church excommunication.
 - God's promises amidst church discipline and restoration...
 - He has given us His authority.
 - He has granted us His support.
 - He has guaranteed us His presence.
- We forgive one another.
 - In Christ, we have received extravagant grace.
 - As Christians, we now extend extravagant grace.

How Shall We Respond?

- As The Church at Brook Hills, we must care for every individual member...
 - Elevating church membership...
 - Prioritizing our covenant with one another.
 - Fulfilling our commitment to one another.
 - Ensuring pastoral leadership...
 - Pastor for Member Care
 - Elders
 - Equipping small groups...
 - To make disciples of all nations
 - To make disciples of succeeding generations
- As Christians...
 - Are you causing, leading, or enabling a brother or sister to sin?
 - Are you guarding, protecting, and nurturing your own personal holiness?
 - How can you more clearly express the love of the Father to the church around you?
 - Is there anyone you need to humbly confront concerning sin for their good and for the Father's glory?
 - Are you harboring any bitterness or unforgiveness toward someone else?
- May the love of the Father through Christ compel the love of His children in the church.

Message Summary

In Matthew 18, Jesus addresses life in the kingdom of God. First, He answers the question of how one becomes a citizen of the kingdom. Citizenship is based on relationship; you must become a child of the King.

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As children of our heavenly Father, and because He first loved us, we love one another. We protect one another, care for one another, restore one another, and forgive one another. We must zealously guard our own holiness as well as that of our brothers and sisters. Jesus is concerned for the purity of the church, the Bride He purchased with His blood.

God grants us His authority to lovingly seek out and confront those in the church who are caught in sin. With the Lord's support and presence, we can restore or expel them. Because we have received extravagant grace, we can extend extravagant grace.

The Church at Brook Hills is actively working to care for every individual member. Steps are in process to better live out the commands of Matthew 18 as a church. As individuals, we must consider how to obey this passage in our lives, growing in all four areas identified by Dr. Platt (protect, love, restore, forgive). Ultimately, the church is compelled by the love of God to love one another.

Group Discussion

Use the following questions to help review the application of God's Word to our Head (What does God want me to know?), to our Heart (What does God want me to desire/value?), and to our Hands (What does God want me to do?).

- Read Matthew 18:1–4. How does one enter the kingdom of heaven? What does it mean for us to “turn and become like children”?
- What aspects of a child should the children of God emulate? What aspects should we not embrace? Right now, how are you relying on yourself to “do life?” How can we grow in faith, humility, and dependence on God's provision? How are humility and dependence on God critical for us as we protect, love, restore, and forgive others in the church?
- Look at Matthew 18:5–9. While children's ministry is vital to a healthy church, this passage is not about children's ministry. Who are the “children” referred to in these verses and throughout the rest of the chapter? How does that affect our interpretation of these passages?
- Parents desire to protect their children and are upset by anyone who would harm them. Do you think God is concerned about the wellbeing of his children? How do these connections (between parents and children; God and his children) help you better understand this passage? Why is God so concerned with the holiness/purity of His children?
- Why should we be concerned about our own holiness? About the holiness of our brothers and sisters? Can we be casual about sin and still honor God? If we are not serious about our own sin, do you think we will be serious about others' sins? What is God's attitude toward sin as expressed in this passage?
- The world is full of temptations to sin. How can we guard our own holiness? What are some ways we might cause another child of God to sin? Are you causing, leading, or enabling another brother or sister to sin? If so, will you stop? How?
- Read Matthew 18:10–14. Does God care for us as individuals? Does He seek us out when we are far from Him? How should these truths affect our attitudes and actions towards the brothers and sisters in our faith community? How can we more clearly express the love of the Father to those in our local church? In our small group?
- Read Matthew 18:15–20. How does this passage relate to verses 10–14? How are church discipline and restoration acts of love and care? Why are they worthwhile?
- What are the four potential steps in church discipline and restoration? If matters are handled according to Scripture, do you think church discipline and restoration should be a regular part of the body's ministry to each other? Do you think most matters can be dealt with in step 1, or at most, step 2? When would a matter proceed to steps 3 and 4? What might that look like in our context?
- Discuss some misinterpretations of verses 18–20. What do these verses really mean? In relation to church discipline, why do you think Jesus makes a point to assure us of His authority, support, and

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presence? Is the authority to lovingly correct others ultimately found in us or in Him? Why is our humility important in the process of church discipline and restoration?

- What might prevent us from confronting others caught in sin? How can those obstacles be overcome? What attitudes and actions (sins) must we avoid ourselves when engaged in church discipline and restoration? Is there anyone you need to humbly confront concerning sin for their good and the Father's glory?
- Read Matthew 18:21–35. The one man owed 20 years' worth of wages. The other owed only one day's wages. What is the point Jesus is making with this story?
- Why is forgiveness difficult? But why then is forgiveness critical to kingdom community? Who are we hurting when we choose to hold onto our bitterness and unforgiveness? Is there anyone you need to forgive?
- Life in kingdom community is joyful, but it also can be trying and heartbreaking. What compels us to continue loving our brothers and sisters?

Respond . . .

Encourage your group to break out into smaller, same-gender groups where they will respond to the truths of today's study. These groups will share with one another based on the following questions and then close in prayer:

- What are some of the main truths that God wants you to know from this study?
- How do your thoughts need to adjust to align with these truths?
- According to the truths from this study, what does God want you to desire/value?
- How do your values need to change to align with His values?
- What actions does God want you to take according to the truths of this study?
- What is an action that you can start to implement today or tomorrow?
- What is going to be the most difficult aspect of this study to personally apply?

Close this time by praying for each other, specifically for strength to apply these truths, for personal needs, for the lost people with whom you are seeking to share the gospel, and for our weekly prayer focus as a church.

Weekly Prayer Focus ...

- **Pray for Our Lives:** *This week we study some of Jesus' teachings to His disciples about the nature of His church. Pray we would be a unified body of believers. Ask God to develop humility in each of us. Pray we would take seriously the temptation to sin and constantly seek to avoid it. Pray for brothers and sisters caught in sin to be reconciled to the church. Pray that we would all be quick to respond with forgiveness whenever wronged.*
- **Pray for Our City:** *This week we are praying for Antioch Missionary Baptist Church, Q. E. Hammonds, pastor. This week are praying for the hundreds of families still recovering from the effects of the tornado disaster in Jefferson County one year ago.*
- **Pray for Our World:** *This week we are praying for our short-term team serving with our church planters in North Africa. We are also praying for Brook Hills' mid-termer, MC, serving in the Middle East. Sent out a year and a half ago, MC has been part of a team engaging women by teaching English at a language center.*