

Small Group Guide DIVORCE AND DISCIPLESHIP

The Church at Brook Hills,

Dr. David Platt

May 13, 2012

Matthew 19:16-20:34

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.)

Message Outline

MIRACULOUS MERCY

Matthew 19:16-20:34

One Over-Arching Truth...

- Salvation is a free gift of divine mercy totally devoid of human merit.

The Little Children and the Rich Man...

- One primary truth from this correlation...
 - Jesus receives the humble.
 - Jesus rejects the proud.
- Many secondary truths in these illustrations...
 - Children are important to the heart of Jesus.
 - Children are safe in the arms of Jesus.
 - Jesus' call to salvation demands radical surrender.
 - We must realize the dangerous, deadly nature of desire for possessions.
 - We must understand our use of money and possessions in the context of redemptive history.
 - Jesus' call to salvation guarantees radical reward.

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The First and the Last...

- God's grace is surprising...
 - He does what we would never expect according to what we could never earn.
- God's grace is sovereign...
 - He has the right to dispense His mercy as He pleases.

Twelve Proud Disciples...

- Why Jesus came...
 - He came to suffer.
 - He came to save.
 - He came to be our substitute.
 - He came to show us how to live.
 - He came to serve us.
- What this means...
 - Jesus is our servant.
 - This does not mean we tell Jesus what to do.
 - This does mean Jesus gives us what we need.
 - We are Jesus' servants.
 - This does not mean that Jesus needs our aid.
 - This does mean that we submit to Jesus' authority.
- How we respond...
 - We trust Jesus to serve us.
 - Jesus' service to us enables our obedience to Him.
 - We exalt Jesus by serving others.
 - Our service to others demonstrates His sacrifice for us.

Two Blind Men...

- Boldly confess your need for His mercy.
- Humbly believe in His power to do the miraculous.

Message Summary

In this passage, Jesus receives the humble children, rejects the proud rich man, and teaches that salvation is impossible with man but possible with God. The parable in Matthew 20 demonstrates that God's actions are not based on what is fair by human standards but on His mercy. Christ explains that He came to serve us instead of being served by us, and with the last account in Matthew 20, Jesus compassionately heals two blind men who cry out to Him for mercy. Matthew 19:16-20:34 expresses the overarching truth that salvation is a free gift of divine mercy and is totally devoid of human merit. God shows surprising grace to sinners by freely giving to us what we could never earn, and He sovereignly dispenses His mercy as He pleases. Praise God for His great mercy towards sinners!

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?).

- The accounts of Jesus' interaction with the children and with the rich young ruler are back-to-back in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. What truth do these two stories express about entrance into God's kingdom? Is your heart better reflected by the children in this passage or by the rich ruler?

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- Why would the disciples rebuke the parents for bringing the children to Jesus in Matthew 19:13? Jesus demonstrated care for the children as He laid hands on them and blessed them. Because children are valued by the Lord, we should also nurture and care for children. How are you discipling and investing in the next generation whether or not you are a parent? Are you praying for the next generation? How can you serve children in this faith family, in Birmingham, and around the world?
- A secondary principle gleaned from verses 13-15 and from other passages in Scripture is that children are safe in Jesus' arms. What happens to children when they die? What is the biblical basis for your belief (see Gen. 18:25; 2 Sam. 12:23; Dt. 1:34-39; Rom. 1:18-21)? The term "age of accountability" often arises when discussing what happens to children when they die. What does this term "age of accountability" mean? Does Scripture support this concept? Why or why not?
- When the rich man asked Jesus what good he must do to inherit eternal life, Jesus directed him to God who alone is good then questions the rich man about his adherence to the law. What point is Jesus making to the rich man in verses 16-22?
- Two common errors in interpreting Matthew 19:16-22 include universalizing the passage (all Christ-followers should sell all they have and give their possessions to the poor) and minimizing the passage (not recognizing that Christ does call some believers to give up all that they have). Christ calls us all to surrender to Him and not just be willing to surrender. How has His call of salvation required radical surrender in your life?
- How tightly do you cling to your possessions? Think through all of the items in your closet. If each item cost \$20 on average, how much money would you have spent on just the items in your closet? How are you using the possessions that God has given you to bless people in need? How are you glorifying God with your possessions?
- Do you live in excess? How much do you spend each month on things that you do not need? Just because you have the means to buy things does not mean that you should buy them. What does your spending reflect about your heart? How are you glorifying God in your spending? In what areas of spending can you trim the excess in your life in order to free up resources that you can give to others?
- In Matthew 19:23-4, Jesus described wealth has a barrier to salvation. How is wealth a barrier? This shocked the disciples who attributed wealth to God's blessing. Define the terms "health and wealth gospel" and "prosperity gospel." Does the New Testament promise material reward for spiritual obedience? Explain that the New Testament never promises material wealth because God's plan is not for Christ-followers to display His glory through their higher standards of living but through the radical sacrifice of their lives for the sake of others.
- What reward does Christ promise in Matthew 19:29 for those who follow Him? How we live today is based in what we believe about our future. Christ promises ultimate treasure – eternal life with Him. What are you living for – pleasure that will fade or treasure that will endure forever? If you are a Christ-follower, how does your current lifestyle reflect your eternal hope?
- How would you share the gospel with someone who has a works-based view of salvation like the rich young ruler? What Scriptures could you share that express Christ's sufficiency in salvation and man's inability to obtain salvation by merit? Take time in small group to role-play and practice sharing the gospel with someone such as Muslim, Hindu, or Buddhist who believes that salvation can be earned through good deeds.
- What is your initial response to the actions of the master in Matthew 20:1-16? What truth is Jesus expressing through this parable? Describe what it would look like if salvation were fair. Define mercy and grace as a small group. Praise God together for these attributes and for salvation being based on what He has done rather than on what we have done.
- In the context of Matthew 20:17-23, what is the cup that Jesus will drink? What cup would James and John drink? How does this mother's request and the disciples' response to the request contrast with Jesus' teaching in verses 16-28? How does this passage inform how we should live?
- The call to follow Christ is a call to radical service, which you cannot do on your own. It is only through the power of the Holy Spirit. Do you look for ways in which you can serve others? How will you serve those around you this week (i.e., your spouse, children, friend, co-worker, complete stranger, etc.)?

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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 ... (from our worship guide)

- *Church: On this week of Mother's Day, we see in this text the request of a mother on behalf of her sons. Jesus uses her request to reveal to his disciples that in order to be great in his kingdom, you must be a servant. Praise God this week for mothers and the many way in which they serve their families. Thank God for the example so many mothers set for the rest of us. Pray for those in our faith family longing to be mothers but struggling to see that desire become a reality. Pray for all of the women in our faith family, and thank God for the unique ways he has gifted and empowered them to serve within our faith family. Pray that we might look ultimately to Christ to see what it means to serve and give our lives away to others.*
- *Local: This week we are praying for First Baptist Powderly, Rodney Golsom, Pastor. We are also praying for women, especially mothers, in our faith family.*
- *Global: This week we are praying for our Short-Term team serving in India. We are also praying for Brook Hills Mid-Termer, Cierra C., serving in East Asia. Cierra is engaging university students that are part of a minority people group in East Asia. This minority group is unreached with the gospel. Through daily interaction and relationship building, Cierra is seeing great fruit as people come to faith in Christ.*