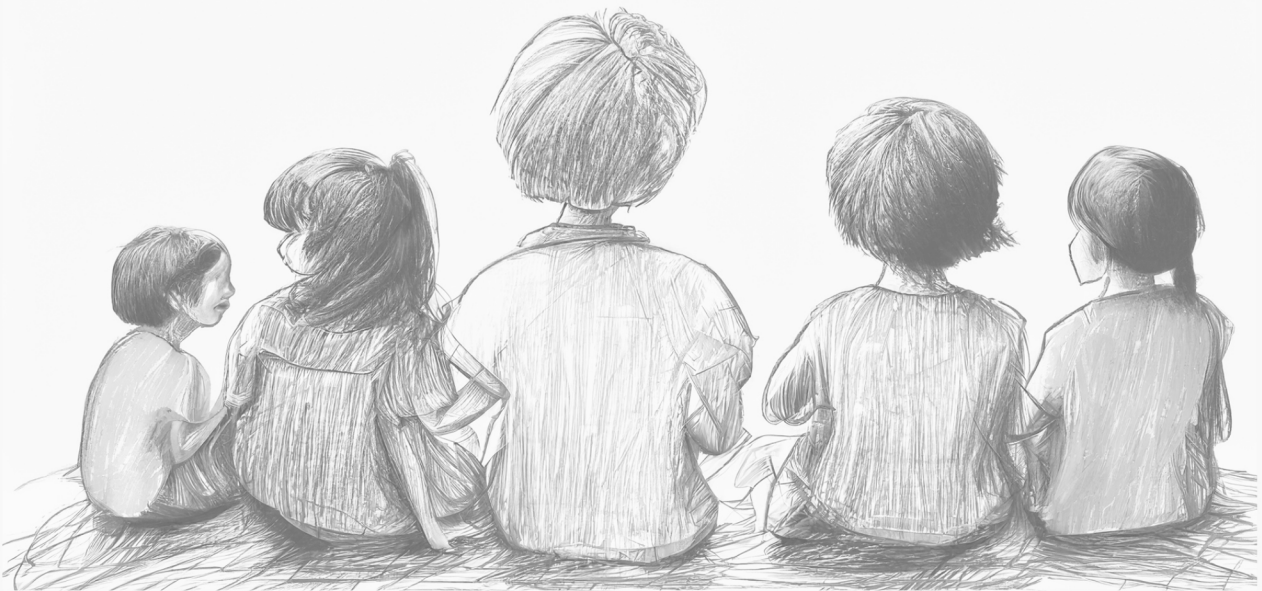


A NEW
COMMUNITY

THE SURPRISING PEOPLE OF JESUS



STUDIES IN MATTHEW 18-21

A NEW COMMUNITY

We've just spent four weeks looking at the different misunderstandings that people have to who Jesus is and why he came. The constant question and chatter was about: "Who is this man?" Jesus is a compassionate healer, who confronted the religious leaders; Jesus is trying to reach "the lost sheep of the house of Israel," but he spends a lot of time caring for Gentiles; Jesus is the powerful Messiah who performs miracles and walks on water, but he is also constantly reminding his disciples that he is heading to the cross; Jesus is the Son of Man, but he's also the Son of God.

Now that some of the misunderstandings have been ironed out, and Peter has proclaimed: "You are the Messiah, the Son of God," Jesus starts to show us the surprising people he will bring into his new community. As we continue in Matthew, we see the book take a bit of a turn: To watch the proud people reject Jesus and his community, yet the weak, the sick, the humble, and the little children being brought into Jesus' new community.

***"The Son of Man
did not come to
be served, but to
serve, and to give
his life as a ran-
som for many."
Matthew 20:28***

As Jesus often is, he surprises those around him (and us) by prioritising these people. But that's how his kingdom works: "Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first among you must be your slave; just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:26-28).

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In this series, we want you all to feel like your groups are freed up to read these passages afresh, and bring your own questions to these stories, as you meet Jesus each week. These five simple questions will be repeated in every study, to try to help that:



What do you like about this passage?



What don't you understand about this passage?



What do we learn about Jesus' heart in this passage?



Where do we see pride and humility in this passage?



How does Jesus want to shape the way you live in this story?

If you feel like you need a little bit more guidance in working through the passages, there will also be more specific questions in each study, as well. But feel free to work through the stories in whatever way is most helpful for your group.

MATTHEW

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO

Things to look for

#1 LOOK UP OLD TESTAMENT QUOTATIONS (THERE ARE A LOT)

#2 LOOK CLOSELY AT THE PEOPLE WHO ACCEPT JESUS
IRRELIGIOUS & UNIMPORTANT + FAITH = TRANSFORMATION

1. MESSIAH FROM THE LINE OF DAVID
2. NEW MOSES
3. GOD - WITH - US

11-13

RESPONSES TO JESUS

PARABLES ABOUT THE KINGDOM (CH 13)

POSITIVE: PEOPLE JESUS IS THE MESSIAH!
NEUTRAL: JOHN THE BAPTIST IS HE THE MESSIAH..<br/NEGATIVE: PHARISES HE IS NOT THE MESSIAH!

PARABLES ARE COMMENTARY

14-20

DIFFERENT EXPECTATIONS ABOUT THE MESSIAH

JEWISH: HE'S THE MESSIAH!
NON-JEWISH: WHO DO YOU SAY THAT I AM?
JESUS: YOU'RE THE MESSIAH!
PETER & DISCIPLES
PHARISES
SUFFERING SERVANT ISAIAH ca. 53
VS
VICTORIOUS! DEFEATS PAGANS! PSALM 2 & DANIEL 7

THE UPSIDE DOWN KINGDOM (CH 18 & 19-20)
• HONOR BY SERVING
• REVENGE VS FORGIVENESS
• CAN'T TRUE WEALTH BY GIVING IT AWAY

21-25

CLASH OF KINGDOMS

CRITIQUE OF YOU PHARISES! HYPOCRITES! (CH 23-25)
NEW JERUSALEM

• ASSERTING AUTHORITY
• SAID, TERRIBLE AS COMPROMISED BECAUSE OF HYPOCRISY
• OFFENDED
• DECIDE TO KILL JESUS

created by the Bible Project

STUDY ONE

LITTLE CHILDREN AND GREAT FORGIVENESS

Matthew 18



READ MATTHEW 18:1-22



What do you like about this passage?

This passage covers many different areas of the Christian life. What are some common themes that run through the passage?



What don't you understand about this passage?



Where do we see pride and humility in this passage?

How is a child a helpful image of how we come to Jesus? Think of three words that describe what Jesus is trying to teach us about children here?

What do you think was Peter's motivation for his question in verse 21? What does Jesus' response teach us about Christian forgiveness?



What do we learn about Jesus' heart in this passage?

What do verses 10-14 show us about Jesus' priority for people? What might this look like, if we followed his example in this?

Verses 15-20 give us a picture of how to deal with a brother or sister who has wronged you. What do you think of the steps involved?

How might this process help people to turn back to Jesus?



How does Jesus want to shape the way you live in this story?

What keeps you from having the childlike faith that Jesus describes in verses 1-4?

What might it look like for you to be seeking out the “little ones” who humble themselves before God, in order to welcome and encourage them?

Have you ever tried to follow verses 15-20, when you’ve been wronged?

What might it look like to take a step toward forgiving a person in your life right now? How might you be praying for that person?

STUDY TWO

THE MARRIAGE QUESTION

Matthew 19:1-12



READ MATTHEW 19:1-12

In Matthew 18, Jesus taught that his followers are a new community, a new family built on mutual forgiveness. Now in Matthew 19, the question arises: Who then can be part of this new family? Can married, divorced, remarried and never-married people all be part of this new family equally? It's an important question when you consider that all of us are at least one of these!



What don't you understand about this passage?



What do we learn about Jesus' heart in this passage?

The Pharisees had divergent interpretations of the divorce law in Deuteronomy 24:1-4. So they get Jesus to publicly state his position (v3), probably hoping he'll divide the crowd. The discussion is all about men divorcing women, probably because, in the ancient world, divorce wasn't really an economic option for a woman... unless the reason for it was to marry another man, which itself would be a form of adultery...

Where in the Scriptures does Jesus go in his reply? What's his point?

Why do you think Jesus cares so much about the sanctity of marriage?

Why did Moses need to restrict and regulate divorce, according to Jesus? (v8)

ASIDE: Can Christians remarry?

Jesus here allows a man to divorce and remarry only in the case of his wife's adultery (v9). That's because sex with another makes you one flesh with that other person (1 Corinthians 6:16), the main way a wife could break the one flesh union with her husband. Presumably, if the discussion raised by the Pharisees had also included a wife's reasons for divorce and remarriage, then Jesus would have said the same concerning a husband's adultery too. The other grounds for divorce and remarriage, discussed elsewhere in the New Testament, are also cases where you aren't the one who ended the one flesh union. If your spouse dies (Romans 7:2-4), or abandons you (1 Corinthians 7:10-16), you are free to remarry. Implicitly, if your spouse deliberately harms you, that ends the one flesh union, since they are no longer treating you as one flesh with them (see Ephesians 5:28-30). Jesus endorses remarriage only when it's not you who broke your previous one flesh union. Any other reason for divorce and remarriage – eg you fell out of love with your spouse, now you're in love with someone else – shows a sinful disrespect for God's design of marriage. Even this can be forgiven by Jesus who died for all our sins. But it's not something you'll pursue in future if you follow Jesus now.



Where do we see pride and humility in this passage?

What attitude do the Pharisees display in their questions to Jesus? (v3, 7)

What attitude do the disciples display in their response to Jesus? (v10)
Do they at least show some humility regarding their own hardness of heart?



How does Jesus want to shape the way you live in this story?

The disciples effectively say, 'Well, if the only option in a really hard marriage is you have to stick it out anyway, better to avoid marriage in the first place, given the high chance that any marriage between two hard-hearted sinners will eventually be really hard!' Jesus doesn't refute their statement. Instead he says this is a truth only some people will be able to grasp, just like only some people are given the secrets of the kingdom in general (Matthew 13:11). He then explains how singleness really can be better than a hard marriage, using the image of a eunuch. In the ancient world, a eunuch was a man who had been castrated, often so that he could guard the king's wives without having sex with them himself. When Jesus says some are born eunuchs and others make themselves eunuchs, it's obviously metaphorical (no one is born castrated!). He means some men are born unable to have sex as God designed (could be disability, no attraction to women etc), and others make themselves unable to have sex as God designed, by choosing not to marry, out of devotion to God's kingdom instead.

Jesus says the only alternative to marriage as God designed it is the "eunuch" life of celibacy. What's challenging about this teaching?

Christians often assume that the 'ideal' Christian life includes marrying and having kids, and not doing so is 'lesser'. How would Jesus have us think about that?

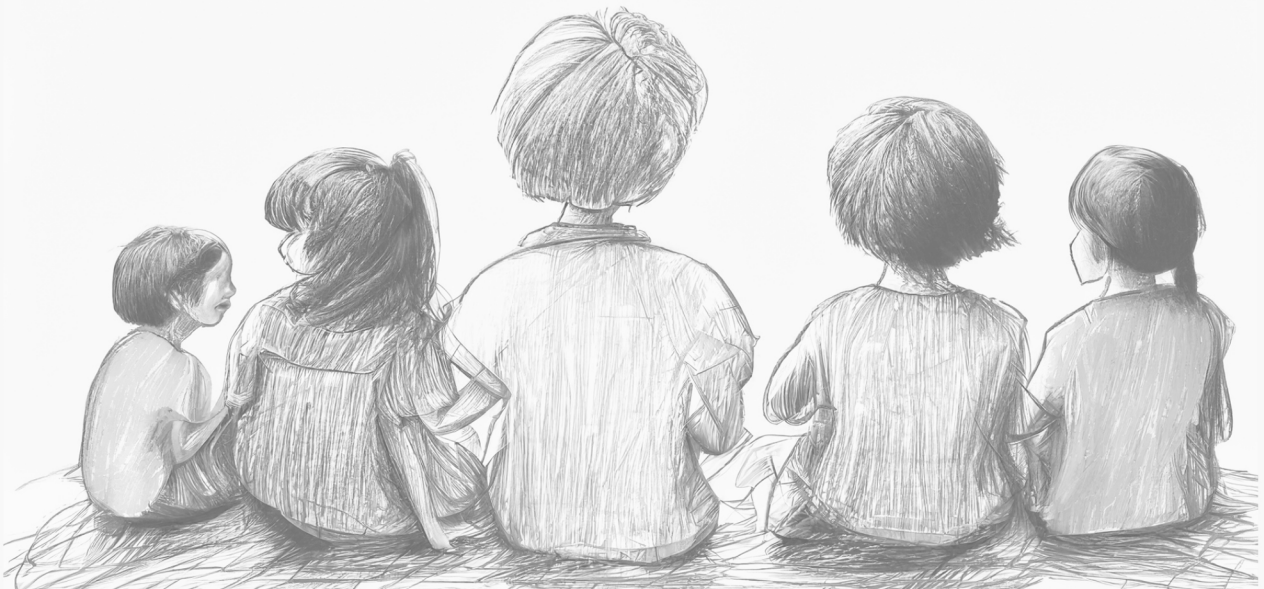
How can married people show devotion to Jesus?

How can single people show devotion to Jesus?

STUDY THREE

LITTLE CHILDREN AND A GREAT CALLING

Matthew 19:13-30



READ MATTHEW 19:13-30



What do you like about this passage?



What don't you understand about this passage?



Where do we see pride and humility in this passage?

Why do you think that we (again) have a scene where Jesus uses children as an emblem of the kingdom? How does this connect with what comes before and after this passage?

Why do you think the disciples rebuked the people who brought children to Jesus?

What's good about the rich young man's questions? (19:16-20)

Jesus omits one of the key commandments when he lists them, in verse 18. Which one is it? (check against Matthew 22:36-40). What might this reveal about the young man's heart?



How does Jesus want to shape the way you live in this story?

Are there ways that you can be too quick to look upon “the little ones in the kingdom” as lesser, and not worthy of your time?

What about Jesus’ conversation with the rich young man is the most personally convicting to you?

What loves, treasures, idols in your life might Jesus identify to you, if he had a similar interaction with you today?

STUDY FOUR

A HUMBLE COMMUNITY

Matthew 20



READ MATTHEW 20:16-34



What do you like about this passage?

What are the
different responses
to Jesus here?



Jesus' disciples
Matthew 20:17-24

The crowds
Matthew 20:29-31



Blind men
Matthew 20:30-34





What don't you understand about this passage?



Where do we see pride and humility in this passage?

In verse 16, we get a paradigm for Jesus' kingdom. How do we see this paradigm in verses 17-19?

How do we see the paradigm in verses 20-24?

Jesus corrects his disciples and Mrs Zebedee in verses 25-28, showing them what it looks like to follow him and be his disciple. What does this teach us the relationship that Christians should have with power?



What do we learn about Jesus' heart in this passage?

In the final verse, verse 34, we hear about what's going on in Jesus' heart. How does this final verse help us to understand why Jesus has done everything else in this chapter?



How does Jesus want to shape the way you live in this story?

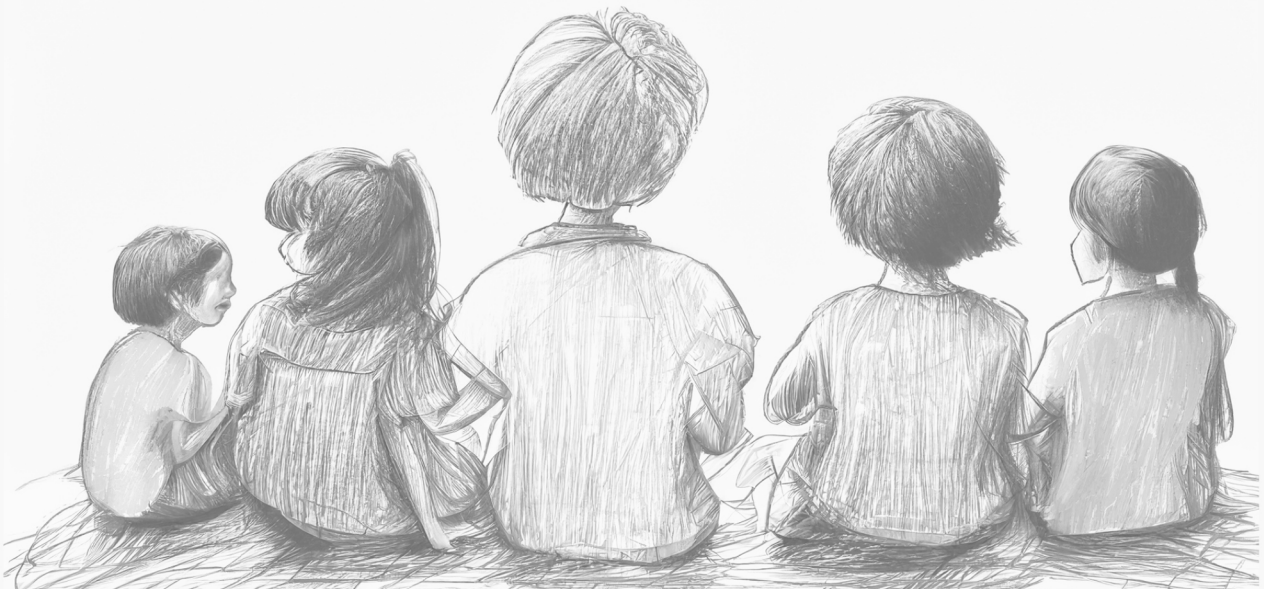
At the start of this passage, Jesus explains how his death and resurrection are central to his purpose on earth. How do you need to be hearing the call to bring Jesus' death and resurrection into the centre of your life?

Even though we might know that our Saviour suffered and died on a cross to save us, we can be just as tempted as James, John and Mrs Zebedee to seek power. Can you think of a way that you desire power, affirmation, or comfort more than the way of the cross?

STUDY FIVE

THE HUMBLE KING

Matthew 21:1-17



READ MATTHEW 21:1-17



What do you like about this passage?



What don't you understand about this passage?

Read Zechariah 8:3 and 9:9. What is this quote meant to show us about what kind of a king Jesus is?



Where do we see pride and humility in this passage?

In verses 11-15, we see many opposing reactions to Jesus. What are they, and what might they show us about their hearts?

The praise of children and infants is a prominent (and surprising) image in this passage. What do you think we are meant to learn from this image?

Fittingly, considering we've heard so much about them in this series, the passage ends with a picture of children praising Jesus. How is this, and the Old Testament quote from verse 16, and answer to the objections of the chief priests and scribes?



What do we learn about Jesus' heart in this passage?

What does Jesus seem most concerned about as he enters Jerusalem?

As the passage concludes, what are you learning about the heart of Jesus, and about his priorities?



How does Jesus want to shape the way you live in this story?

When Jesus cleanses the temple, he's showing us how passionately he is angered by self-serving and hypocritical religion. Does Jesus' warning have anything to say to you right now?

PRAYER POINTS



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