KINGDOM of HEAVEN

A SERIES IN THE BOOK OF MATTHEW

Community Group Material

Matthew 18:1-14

Week of Sunday 21st of April

The Greatest in the Kingdom

Leader Preparation

Read through pages 4-6 of the study guide.

This week's study focuses on our attitude to our position in God's Kingdom. God can use us best when we have an attitude of humility and dependence on him. Sometimes we interpret the description of children from Jesus as indicating that children or "little ones" are innocent or pure. The description is rather one of dependence, and really emphasizes our responsibility to those who are still choosing to follow the right or wrong path.

Group Sharing

Over the next few weeks, get your group members to share personally and refresh everyone's memory about some of the highlights of Matthew so far. Ask one or two people to share each week. They should share about something that has been meaningful to them in the passages we have studied in Matthew – not a whole sermon, but just a couple of verses and why that message is meaningful to them. Be sure to discuss it beforehand and warn people in advance so that they have time to prepare.

Group Time:

****** Some advance preparation required ******

Ask your group members to bring a picture of themselves as a child or baby to the group this week. Share about your photos in the group. You could also talk about:

- what is your earliest childhood memory?
- what siblings do you have?
- what role did you take on in your childhood family? (serious and responsible, clown, rebel, helpless one, conflict diffuser, parent, . . .)

Allow time for a group member to share something that they have learned from our study of Matthew so far.

Exploring the Passage

READ Matthew 18:1-14

What are the events leading up to this moment? What might have made the disciples focused on this question?

Look at each of Jesus' techniques of teaching here?

- a physical demonstration
- a whole lot of metaphors
- a parable

Which of these do you think would be most powerful to you if you were there? Why do you think Jesus repeats this message in so many different ways?

There are some characteristics of children that we should not try copy – what qualities is Jesus recommending to us? *(see leader notes)*

Looking through the passage, pick out each section that shows how Jesus expresses the value of "a child" or "little ones"

Who are the "little ones" that we encounter in our everyday lives? How would Jesus like us to reach out to them?

Jesus seems to be a big fan of amputation! Would removing a body part solve the sin problem? Why does he use such a drastic illustration?

How should we become more like children in our daily lives?

What are some aspects of our modern lives that discourage us from being like children in this way?

Last week we spoke about a cycle that happens as we move in our lives from humble dependence on Jesus to pride and independence repeatedly. How should we respond when we find ourselves once again not depending on Jesus?

Prayer

There are many difficulties in South Africa that affect children. For all the reasons we have discussed this evening, things that affect society have the greatest impact on those who are most dependent and vulnerable. In your group, pray for the children of South Africa. You could focus on some of these areas – maybe bring along some newspaper headlines as prompts for your prayers.

- for families and marriages to be strong
- for children whose fathers are not present in their lives
- for young children who are not physically nourished
- for parents struggling to provide
- for school children trying to grow through education
- for university students who don't have provision
- for children with illnesses and disabilities that set them back
- for children who do not experience love and care
- for children who are neglected or abused
- for children who never hear about Jesus
- for the children in our church family

Opportunities to grow

Part of the benefit of people being in small groups is a chance to regularly speak to the church body about being involved in the regular ministry of the church in a way that communicates that is natural and to be expected.

The Kids' ministry at RUC has MANY opportunities for people to serve – some teaching children directly, others supporting parents or assisting the ministry in other ways. Invite your group members to contact Ansune directly if they would like to be involved! (ansune@ruc.org.za). They could also look for opportunities to serve at Rays of Hope, who support many families and children in Alex. (https://raysofhope.co.za/volunteer/)
