

Simply Jesus

The Life and Ministry of God's Son

Inductive: Lesson 12

Introduction

Our story has reached the transitional point in the life and ministry of God's Son. In Matthew 18, we come to the end of the first two and a half years; now Jesus will turn southward from Galilee toward Jerusalem where the cross awaits. The remaining time of ministry will be focused on intimate moments of preparing the disciples for the Lord's death and the role they will play in God's plan. Now Jesus will lay out the practical principles of kingdom living that will become an integral part of establishing the early church.

Mark 9 tells us that following the time on the Mount of Transfiguration, as they walked the road to Capernaum, Jesus overheard an argument among the disciples causing Him to ask them about it. Not one of them had an immediate response, but once they arrived at their destination and things were quiet again, they asked Jesus, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of God?" The response that follows is a life lesson in humility for every Christian whose aim is truly to be well pleasing to Him.

The disciples, too often fell short in comprehending the reality of Jesus the Messiah in their midst. They could not grasp the magnitude of the teachings or the miracles even though they walked with Jesus, talked to Him, and witnessed the living Word in action! As we too walk the path this year with them, let us remember the words in 1 Corinthians 10:11, "Now all these happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come."

Did you know

J. C. Ryle has made this observation on the issue of pride: *It is one of the commonest sins which beset human nature. It is a subtle sin. It rules and reigns in many a heart without being detected, and can even wear the clothing of humility. It is a most soul-ruining sin. It prevents repentance, keeps people back from Christ, checks brotherly love and nips spiritual concern in the bud. Let us watch against it and be on our guard. Of all clothing, none is so graceful, none wears so well and none is so rare as true humility.*

Open your Bible and lesson each day by beginning with a word of prayer.

Up Close ~

The chart below represents a reader's guide to the contents of this week's lesson. The topical teachings and/or events covered are followed by the primary scriptural text as well as the supportive parallel passages. You will be able to receive and grasp a well-rounded picture of the story narrative in the Gospel harmony by reading every passage. However, using the bolded text as your point of reference (your anchor text) will allow you to determine the facts, lessons, and personal applications necessary to formulate your own conclusions.

Teaching / Event	Scripture Text	Parallel Passages
Disciples Argue Over Who is Greatest	Matthew 18:1-5	Mark 9:33-37; Luke 9:46-48
Jesus Warns of Offenses	Matthew 18:6-9	Mark 9:42-50
Parable of the Lost Sheep	Matthew 18:10-14	
Dealing with a Sinning Brother	Matthew 18:15-20	
Jesus Teaches about Forgiveness	Matthew 18:21-35	

First Impressions: Group Discussion

Reflect for a moment on the passages you have just read.

Respond by recording your first impressions from your initial reading of the text. Be prepared to share one of your impressions with your discussion group.

Heartbeat: Matthew 18:3 NKJV (Memory verse)

(Write it out once in the space below. **Practice it each time** you open your lesson.)

Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 18:1–5

The Disciples Argue over Who is Greatest

1 At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, 'Who is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?'

2 Then Jesus called a little child to Him, set him in the midst of them,

3 and said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.

4 Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

5 Whoever receives one little child like this in My name receives Me.'

Matthew 18:6–9

Jesus Warns of Offenses

6 'But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea.

7 Woe to the world because of offenses! For offenses must come, but woe to that man by whom the offense comes!

8 If your hand or foot causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you.

It is better for you to enter into life lame or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet, to be cast into the everlasting fire.

9 And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you. It is better for you to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire.'

Matthew 18:10–14

The Parable of the Lost Sheep

10 'Take heed that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that in heaven their angels always see the face of My Father who is in heaven.

11 For the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost.

12 What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them goes astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine and go to the mountains to seek the one that is straying?

13 And if he should find it, assuredly, I say to you, he rejoices more over that sheep than over the ninety-nine that did not go astray.

14 Even so it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.'

Matthew 18:15–20 Dealing with a Sinning Brother

15 'Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother.

16 But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that "by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established."

17 And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector.

18 Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

19 Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven.

20 For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.'

Matthew 18:21–35 Jesus Teaches About Forgiveness

21 Then Peter came to Him and said, 'Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?'

22 Jesus said to him, 'I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.

23 Therefore the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants.

24 And when he had begun to settle accounts,
one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents.

25 But as he was not able to pay, his master commanded that he be sold, with his wife and
children and all that he had, and that payment be made.

26 The servant therefore fell down before him, saying,
“Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all.”

27 Then the master of that servant was moved with compassion, released him,
and forgave him the debt.

28 But that servant went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred
denarii; and he laid hands on him and took him by the throat, saying, “Pay me what you owe!”

29 So his fellow servant fell down at his feet and begged him, saying,
“Have patience with me, and I will pay you all.”

30 And he would not, but went and threw him into prison till he should pay the debt.

31 So when his fellow servants saw what had been done, they were very grieved, and came
and told their master all that had been done.

32 Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, “You wicked servant! I forgave you all
that debt because you begged me.

33 Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?”

34 And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay
all that was due to him.

35 So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart,
does not forgive his brother his trespasses.’

(Scripture from the New King James Bible, © 1980 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission.)

Observation: Look!

Pray. Read the Bible passage several times, trying to get a big picture of what is going on.

Left Column (Facts): Following the writer in the order he tells the story, briefly describe who is involved, what is happening, when and where the events are taking place.

Right Column (Observations): Look closely to observe details. Some questions you may ask:

- What do you know about the people involved in the story? What questions does the story raise? What sources of conflict do you see? What does Jesus identify as true and important to life?
- Put yourself in the Biblical character's shoes. What were his ambitions? How did the character relate to others or to God? What problem did he think he faced? Did Jesus identify a different problem in his life? What did he discover about God? How did he respond?
- Are there any words that you are not familiar with? Look up the definition.
- Are there words or phrases that are repeated or emphasized? Why are they key?
- Identify comparisons, such as "The kingdom of heaven is like leaven..." What do you know about leaven (yeast)? Identify contrasts, such as "You have heard it said...but I say to you..."
- Extra: Record information you may find in Bible dictionaries, maps, handbooks, or encyclopedias. Understanding the culture/time in which Jesus lived will help you discover the meaning of the text.

Matthew 18:1–5 The Disciples Argue over Who is Greatest

What does it say? (Facts from passage)

What do I see? (Personal research/observations)

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Matthew 18:6–9 Jesus Warns of Offenses

What does it say? (Facts from passage)

What do I see? (Personal research/observations)

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Matthew 18:10–14

The Parable of the Lost Sheep

What does it say? (Facts from passage)

What do I see? (Personal research/observations)

Matthew 18:15–20

Dealing with a Sinning Brother

What does it say? (Facts from passage)

What do I see? (Personal research/observations)

Matthew 18:21–35

Jesus Teaches about Forgiveness

What does it say? (Facts from passage)

What do I see? (Personal research/observations)

Interpretation: What does it mean?

Pray. The more time you take to observe the passage, the more you will have a basis for understanding what God's Word means. Interpretation **always** seeks to answer the questions, "What was God saying to the original audience?" and then, "How does that same truth relate to life today?" Asking yourself questions will help you see the spiritual lesson in the text: What does this teach me is true about God? What does it teach me is true about mankind? Is there a command to obey? Is there a promise to claim? Is there a condition to the promise? Is there an example I should follow or avoid? A spiritual lesson is a timeless truth that points to God and speaks to the heart of man. Stating the lesson in a sentence of 10 words or less will help you keep it simple and memorable.

Application: How does it apply to me? Pray. Practicing Biblical truth day-to-day is the only way to grow in Christ and reflect the glory of God. To apply the spiritual lesson you have learned from the text, you have to take deliberate action. Take the time to examine yourself, and ask: Does this spiritual lesson point out error in my thoughts about God? Does it point to error in my attitude or actions? How does this lesson relate to my home life, my work, my relationships, how I spend my time, etc? What change is required? What practical steps will I take to make that change? Write your application in the form of a question to help make it personal.

Matthew 18:1–5

Lesson: _____

Application: _____

Matthew 18:6–9

Lesson: _____

Application: _____

Matthew 18:10–14

Lesson: _____

Application: _____

Matthew 18:15–20

Lesson: _____

Application: _____

Matthew 18:21–35

Lesson: _____

Application: _____

Behold & Be Transformed

What did you see as you beheld God's Son?

How does beholding (looking upon) Him, motivate you to change your thoughts, habit, attitude, speech or actions?

Pause . . . What is the most significant lesson you have learned this week?

Ponder . . . How will you put it into practice?

Pray . . . Write out your prayer and be specific.
