

ways, new believers (regardless of age) are like little children spiritually. They need to be nurtured and they need the right kind of influence. Occasionally an adult is arrested for using a young child as an accomplice in a shoplifting spree. We are all repelled by such a terrible thing. But what might we sometimes do in our churches to cause new believers to sin? How could we avoid doing that?

GROUP 2

Review Matthew 18:11-14. Most churches have as many missing members as they have active members. They joined the family at one time but have pulled away and are no longer involved. How could churches intentionally carry out a “search and rescue” mission to find those church members who are lost to fellowship? What specific actions might your class or group take to reclaim missing believers?

Wrapping It Up

- **It is important that we be careful how we influence and nurture new believers. It is important that we do whatever we can to reclaim those who pull away from our church. And it is important that we deal with conflict between believers appropriately and graciously, always seeking reconciliation and the restoration of members to fellowship with the rest of the church.**
- Call on someone to lead the class in prayer.

GROUP 3

Review Matthew 18:15-20. In this passage Jesus gave clear instruction about dealing with conflict between members of a church. How is this different from the way most churches usually deal with such conflict? How could following Jesus’ plan strengthen a church? What would it take for your church to begin following these instructions given by Jesus? Look at verses 19-20. What should be the first step toward implementing Jesus’ instructions?

- Allow groups five to seven minutes for discussion. Then lead them to share their ideas and insights with the rest of the class.

Teacher's Toolbox

*Getting your class into God's Word
and God's Word into your class*

ExcitingBibleStudy.com

Bible Books Series

Matthew 18

November 4, 2007

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HOW TO USE TEACHER'S TOOLBOX: Make a four-page folded teacher's leaflet from the first two sheets by printing two-sided (or by putting the blank sides together). The other two sheets are for duplicating, displaying, distributing, or otherwise using as called for in the lesson plan.

Getting Started

Leading questions

- Use the following series of questions to guide learners toward the theme of the lesson. Allow time for a response or two after each question.
 - What is a family?
 - What makes a family different from other groups?
 - How does a family grow?
 - How does a family react to new members?
 - What responsibility does a family have to new members?
 - What sometimes causes a member of a family to be alienated from the rest of the family?
 - How do families react when a member is alienated like that?
 - When one family member offends another family member, what are the various results that may occur?
 - What part does forgiveness play in a healthy family?
- **The church is like a family. Sometimes we gain new members. Sometimes we lose old members. Sometimes members are at odds**

with one another. How we respond to those situations shows how health our church family is. Today's study gives us some insight into how a healthy church family should behave.

Exploring God's Word

Lesson outline

● Write the following lesson outline on the chalkboard (or display Item 3) and use it to guide the study.

The Greatest in the Kingdom Put Others First

- Nurturing New Believers
(Matt. 18:1-11)
- Reclaiming Missing Believers
(Matt. 18: 12-14)
- Restoring Offending Believers
(Matthew 18:15-35)

Overview

● Have someone read aloud Matthew 18:1.

● **Jesus' teaching in this chapter was in response to the question, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"** What Jesus tells us is that those who are the greatest in the kingdom of heaven are those who humble themselves like a little child.

The rest of his teaching in this chapter expands on that idea and shows us that such childlike humility is demonstrated when we put others

first – specifically when we nurture new believers, reclaim missing believers and restore offending believers.

Identifying actions and results

- Call attention to the first outline point. Have someone read aloud Matthew 18:1-6. Ask them to identify in those verses four actions related to children and the result of each action.
 - Change and become like children: enter the kingdom of heaven
 - Humble self like a child: be greatest in the kingdom of heaven
 - Welcome child in Jesus' name: welcome Jesus
 - Cause a child who believes in Jesus to sin: be better to be drowned
- Have someone read aloud Matthew 18:7-11. (NOTE: Some translations, following certain manuscripts, omit verse 11, which says, "The Son of Man came to save what was lost.")
- **What is the overall point that Jesus is making here?** (spiritual wholeness is more important than physical wholeness)

Comparing passages

- Have someone read aloud Matthew 18:12-14. Have members find and compare it to the parable Jesus told in Luke 15:4-7.
- **What is the overall point that Jesus is making here?** (Not that what is lost is more important than what is not lost; rather, when something is missing, it is still as valuable as before and needs to be found.)

Finding "if's"

- Have someone read aloud Matthew 18:15-20, asking the rest of the class to listen for the word "if."
- **What were some of the "if/then" connections that Jesus mentioned?**
 - If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault.
 - If he listens to you, you have won your brother over.
 - If he will not listen, take one or two along.
 - If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church.
 - If he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as a pagan.
 - If two of you agree, it will be done for you.
- **Look at verses 18 and 20. How might you convert those into "if/then" connections?**
 - If you bind something on earth, it will be bound in heaven.

- If you loose something on earth, it will be loosed in heaven.
- If two or three come together in Jesus' name, He is there with them.

Pantomime

- Have someone read aloud Matthew 18:21-22.
- **Jesus told a parable to illustrate the importance of forgiveness. Let's watch and listen to that parable.**
 - Call on four persons, enlisted in advance, to present Matthew 18:23-35. One will read the passage aloud while the other three silently act out the parts of the king, the servant who owed the king, and the second servant who owed the first servant. Before class, give the four a copy of Item 1 which has suggestions on movements. Tell them to exaggerate their actions but not to make any sounds.

Making It Personal

Discussion groups

- Divide the class into three groups. Give each group one of the following assignments (cut apart Item 2).

GROUP 1

Review Matthew 18:2-10. Jesus compared those entering the kingdom of heaven to little children. In many

Pantomime

Matthew 18:23-35

Suggestions for actions

- the king is standing alone
- the servant approaches the king
- the servant pulls out his empty pockets
- the king frowns, extends his arm, and points off into the distance, as if saying, "Take him away"
- the servant falls to his knees, arms stretched upward
- the king crosses his arms and turns his back on the servant
- the king turns around, reaches down, and helps the servant to his feet
- the king smiles, pats the servant on the back, and walks him out of the room
- the king goes back to where he was standing
- the servant is smiling and walking away, walking in place
- the second servant approaches
- the first servant grabs the second servant and begins to choke him, waving his finger in his face
- the second servant pulls out his empty pockets, then falls to his knees with arms stretched upward
- the first servant crosses his arms and turns his back on the servant
- the first servant turns around, reaches down, pulls up the second servant, and tosses him to the side, as if throwing him into prison
- the second servant cowers on the floor
- the king motions for the first servant to come to him
- the servant approaches the king
- the king frowns and waves his finger at the servant
- the king shoves the servant in the direction of the second servant, he falls to the floor

GROUP 1

Review Matthew 18:2-10. Jesus compared those entering the kingdom of heaven to little children. In many ways, new believers (regardless of age) are like little children spiritually. They need to be nurtured and they need the right kind of influence. Occasionally an adult is arrested for using a young child as an accomplice in a shoplifting spree. We are all repelled by such a terrible thing. But what might we sometimes do in our churches to cause new believers to sin? How could we avoid doing that?

GROUP 2

Review Matthew 18:11-14. Most churches have as many missing members as they have active members. They joined the family at one time but have pulled away and are no longer involved. How could churches intentionally carry out a "search and rescue" mission to find those church members who are lost to fellowship? What specific actions might your class or group take to reclaim missing believers?

GROUP 3

Review Matthew 18:15-20. In this passage Jesus gave clear instruction about dealing with conflict between members of a church. How is this different from the way most churches usually deal with such conflict? How could following Jesus' plan strengthen a church? What would it take for your church to begin following these instructions given by Jesus? Look at verses 19-20. What should be the first step toward implementing Jesus' instructions?

The Greatest in the Kingdom Put Others First

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(Matt. 18:1-11)*

*Reclaiming Missing Believers
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*Restoring Offending Believers
(Matthew 18:15-35)*