



Kingdom Value
Care and Accountability
Matthew 18:12-20

How to Prepare

Begin preparing by reading the full passage a few times. Then answer the questions for yourself. Then think about how your Small Group might answer them. Try re-wording the questions to fit you and your Small Group. Don't feel tied down to the discussion guide, just be sure to discuss the main point of the text in your conversations.

Resources-

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/essay/church-discipline/>

<https://www.gotquestions.org/where-two-or-three-are-gathered.html>

Sermon Outline:

Matthew 18:12-20

1. God Cares About His Church Deeply. Vv. 12-14
2. God Keeps His Church Through Accountability. Vv. 15-17
3. God Conducts His Church Intimately. Vv. 18-20

Matthew 18:12-20

Ninety-nine Plus One

12 "What do you think? If any man has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go and search for the one that is straying?

13 If it turns out that he finds it, truly I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine which have not gone astray.

14 So it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones perish.

18 Truly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.

19 "Again I say to you, that if two of you agree on earth about anything that they may ask, it shall be done for them by My Father who is in heaven.

20 For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst."

Discipline and Prayer

15 "If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother.

16 But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every fact may be confirmed.

17 If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.

Discussion Questions

Ask a volunteer to read Matthew 18:12-20.

INTRODUCTION

Here is a question or two to help introduce the topic and jump-start discussion.

1. How would you describe a healthy church? How important is it for our understanding of church health to line up with God's expectation for church health?

UNDERSTANDING AND APPLICATION

These questions should help your Small Group dig deeper into the text and then apply it to your lives today.

I. God Cares About His Church Deeply. Vv. 12-14

2. What is the main point in this parable of the shepherd leaving the ninety-nine to find the one? What does this tell us about God's care for each one of His "sheep"?

3. The text says it is "not the will of your Father" that one of the little ones should perish. How does this divine will inform how we should view and treat fellow believers, especially those who are struggling or straying?

4. Can you recall a time when you felt like the "one sheep" that was found? How did that experience impact your understanding of God's care?

II. God Keeps His Church Through Accountability. Vv. 15-17

5. What is the general process that Jesus gives in vv. 15-17 for how to turn someone back from sinning or straying, and what are some of the key principles given in that process?

6. Why, generally speaking, should confronting someone about sin begin as a private conversation? When and why should other people become involved, and what should that look like?

7. What is the ultimate goal of this process, and how does practicing healthy accountability in a church help keep people united in Christ?

III. God Conducts His Church Intimately. Vv. 18-20

8. What does it mean to "bind" and "loose" in this context? What does the phrase "shall have been... in heaven" tell us about who is actually making the decision?

9. When you take into account the context of the whole passage and properly understand verse 18, what does Jesus' promise in verses 19-20 mean? How do we often misapply these verses in Christian culture?

10. How is it comforting to know that Christ is intimately involved in the process of bringing people back to gospel faithfulness? What do we stand to lose if we do not follow His guide in these matters?

Commentary (from ESV Study Bible)

Matt. 18:1–20:34 The Community of the Messiah Revealed. This is the fourth of Jesus' five major discourses in Matthew's Gospel (see Introduction: Key Themes; Literary Features). As his earthly ministry draws to a close, Jesus has spent considerable time clarifying his identity and mission (chs. 14–17). He instructs his disciples on the nature of his covenant community, explaining the kingdom community's characteristics (18:1–35), its implications for the sanctity of marriage (19:1–12), and its value (19:13–20:34).

Matt. 18:1–35 Characteristics of Life in the Kingdom Community. Jesus instructs the disciples about the kind of community life that will characterize their relationships with one another and with the world at large.

Matt. 18:12 a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray. Here the wandering sheep represents a believer, but in a similar parable in Luke 15:3–7 it is an unbeliever. Jesus draws upon the OT images of God's people as both secure sheep (e.g., Psalm 23; Isa. 53:6; Jer. 13:17; Zech. 10:3; 13:7) and straying sheep (e.g., Ps. 119:176; Jer. 23:1–4; 50:6; Ezek. 34:1–30). Cf. also John 10:7–8; 1 Pet. 5:2–4; Rev. 7:17.

Matt. 18:14 little ones should perish. A dangerous yet real possibility is that apparent followers of Jesus may not be true disciples at all but only professing believers (e.g., Judas Iscariot).

Matt. 18:15 go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If a matter can be settled without getting others involved, that will keep rumors and misunderstandings from multiplying and will keep the conflict from spreading (cf. Prov. 25:9). gained. The ultimate objective is restoration of the offending brother or sister to the path of discipleship.

Matt. 18:16 Evidence of two or three witnesses follows the guideline in Deut. 19:15 and refers to witnesses of the subsequent confrontation described in this verse, not necessarily eyewitnesses to the original offense (Matt. 18:15).

Matt. 18:17 If the offending party of vv. 15–16 will not repent after the matter has been brought before the entire church, then he or she is to be excluded from the fellowship and thought of as an unbeliever. Gentile and tax collector describes those who are deliberately rebellious against God.

Matt. 18:18 whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven. Peter's foundational authority is extended to the entire community of disciples, giving them the authority to declare the terms under which God forgives or refuses to forgive the sin of wayward disciples (see note on 16:19).

Matt. 18:20 there am I among them. Jesus affirms that he will be divinely present among his disciples as they seek unity in rendering decisions, which is rightly understood also as an affirmation of omnipresence and therefore of deity.

