

Small Group Study in the Book of Matthew
June 14, 2026

A suggested format for your group time

15 min – Fellowship

15 min – Prayer (using the four quadrants of the SG prayer sheet)

45 min – Study (see below)

Matthew 18:15-35

Passage Summary

Chapter 18: Greatness in the Kingdom and Forgiveness

Jesus addresses concerns about who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. He uses the illustration of a child to emphasize the importance of humility and welcoming others as children welcomed into God's kingdom. He also teaches on forgiveness, highlighting the need for unconditional forgiveness, modeled by God's own boundless love and mercy.

<https://biblewise.com/matthew-chapter-summaries/>

Jumpstart Questions

- Which do you find more difficult, asking for forgiveness or extending forgiveness?
- Why is forgiveness an essential characteristic for maintaining a healthy marriage and a healthy church? How do people tend to deal with having their feelings wounded in church? (**tell others, avoid the person who hurt us, change churches**). What happens when a wounded relationship goes unattended?
- Does the Bible call us to forgive and forget? What does genuine forgiveness look like?

Matthew 18:15-20

- Why does the first step in forgiveness need to be private? At what point do others need to be involved in the process of forgiveness?
- Why is it wise to bring others in on the conversation? Why would the church need to be made aware of the offense? How should the church respond to a brother or sister that is involved in open and determined sin?
- Is the purpose of church discipline to purge the fellowship or to restore a fellow believer? Why are we hesitant to follow this biblical prescription?

Matthew 18:21-27

- How many times was Peter willing to forgive an offending brother? (**The Rabbi's taught that three times was the limit**). How many times did Jesus say to forgive the offender? What was Jesus trying to teach Peter concerning the number of times forgiveness should be extended? (**Unlimited number**)
- How great was the debt owed by the servant in the parable? Why did the servant plead with the Master for patience? How did the Master respond to the servant? (**He did more than he requested...He forgave him and released him from all debt**)
- Why do you think the word *release* relates to the idea of forgiveness? Who is being released when you forgive someone? Should you forgive someone who does not ask for forgiveness? What if they are oblivious to the offense or consider their actions against you are not needing forgiveness?

Matthew 18:28-35

- How did the forgiven servant treat another servant who owed him money? How did the other servants respond when they saw what happened?
- How did the Master respond when he heard? Why should we forgive others? Is our debt against Jesus greater than any offense we may have experienced?
- What is the consequence of unforgiveness? How does an unforgiving heart keep us in spiritual bondage? How is it possible to genuinely forgive another person, especially if the wound is deep?
- Is there someone you need to forgive? Is there anyone of whom you need to ask forgiveness?

Practical suggestions:

1. Please feel free to modify any question and include other text-based questions that you might find helpful for your group to help them think through the passage - specifically questions that lead participants to make comments *based on the text* (not just to give opinions).
2. Invite group members to make other observations they see in the passage. Have them to identify the specific verse where that observation is made.
3. Ask what application can be made out of these verses that will help a person to put into practice the truths in the passage?
4. Ask for volunteers to read the various sections. **Make sure you know the person you are asking to read is comfortable doing so. Please don't just assume and put someone on the spot.*
5. Be intentional about including everyone into the conversation. Asking an 'open' question directed to a specific person who remains fairly quiet is one simple way of inclusion (in other words, a question that may not have a specific right or wrong answer). An example of an 'open' question is: *What's your favorite part of this passage? Why?*
6. Remain sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit and make both ministry and teaching a priority of your group time together.