

Beautiful Church:
Matthew 18:1-37

Warm Up


What's your reaction when a celebrity or politician '*falls from grace*'? Do you think "Yes! They deserve that!" Or are you inclined to show them mercy in your response? Does it depend on whether you like them or not?

Background and context


This passage comes at the heart of a block of teaching towards the end of Jesus' ministry on earth. He has already spoken about the need for child-like faith and altering your life to avoid sin. The selected verses reveal not only the heart of the Father in heaven but our response to His mercy and love. There is also a warning about abusing the grace God has given us. The whole passage is a picture of a beautiful relationship between the Father and those who trust Him. It reveals the love of the Father, the holiness we are expected to have and the forgiveness we are expected to show to others.

Thinking it through: Main discussion/activity


READ 18:10-37. What are the surprising things in the passage? What is new? What don't you really understand?

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- v10.** How does this verse reveal the depth of love God has for His "*little ones*" ?
 - How does it make you feel, knowing that you have an angel who faces God on your behalf? Have you ever considered this before?
 - v14.** How do we know the Father is interested in you as an individual?
 - v15-20.** Jesus is calling His children to holy living. What does holy living look like?
 - Why does **v15** often create a dilemma for modern western Christians?
 - This section creates a structure for Church discipline and the maintenance of holiness. Have you been in a church where this has been practised? How comfortable was it?
 - v18.** What does this verse mean? How does it apply to the Church?
 - v19-20.** What does this reveal about Jesus' vision for the Church?
 - v21-37.** What does this parable teach about looking for forgiveness from God?
 - What is the hallmark of genuine forgiveness in a person?

Discipleship and Application

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- What is attractive and what is scary about a church that practises, love, holiness and forgiveness?
 - Personal reflection: Which, if any, of LOVE, HOLINESS, and FORGIVENESS need work in your own life?

Try to leave 15-20 mins to talk about prayer needs of the group and to pray.



There are many creative ways of praying together: writing prayers, using candles as a focus, reading prayers or praying for each other in pairs.