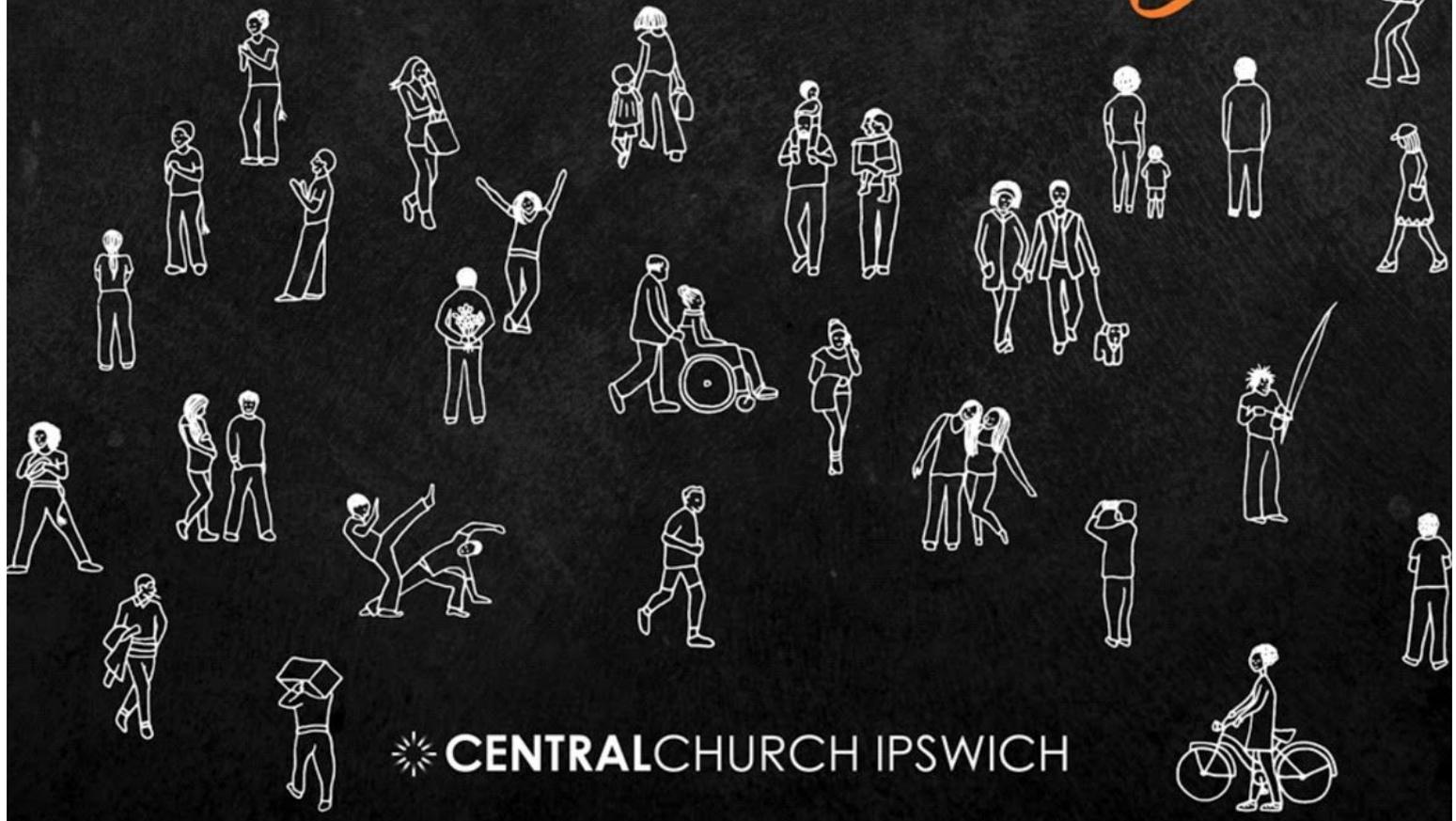




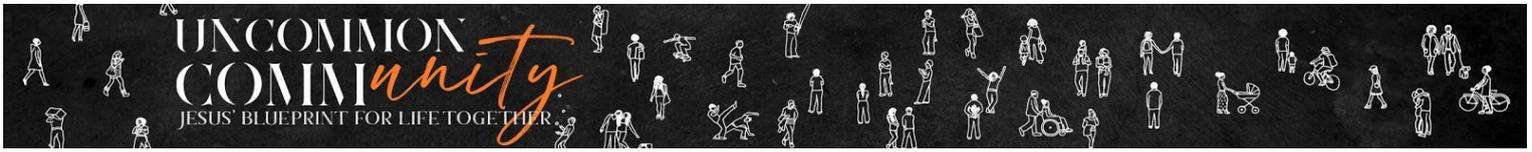
MATTHEW 16-20

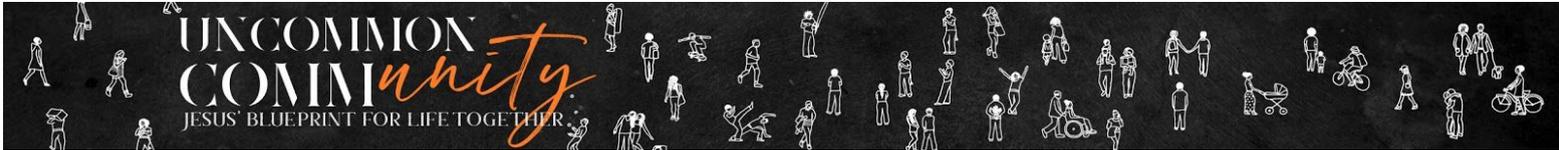
UNCOMMON COMMUNITY

JESUS' BLUEPRINT FOR LIFE TOGETHER



 **CENTRALCHURCH IPSWICH**





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Contributors: Thanks to Chris Meadows, Adam Hess, Stuart Atkinson, Joel Jeevaraj, Matt Mansfield, Anthony Moman and Scott Muir who contributed to this discussion guide.



Thanks for Being Part of a Homegroup

At Central, we believe that disciples grow in circles, not rows. By that we mean that we grow most as believers when we sit together around God's word, discussing the real issues of life as a follower of Jesus.

Central homegroups are part of the DNA of our church. Sunday services are important, but in homegroups there is greater opportunity for learning together, serving together, caring together, praying together and doing life together. God's people are not saved into isolation, but into a community and the best expression of that community is in homegroups.

Making the Most of Your Homegroup Time

Anything worth doing is worth doing well. That's why we ask that you treat your homegroup as an important part of the rhythm of your weekly life. There are a few things you can do so that you get the most benefit out of the group and so that you are a benefit and a blessing to the group.

Be There: Your presence encourages others. It means you are not only committed to the group, but to the other members of the group. Being inconsistent sends a negative message to everyone else.

Prayer: Pray for the people in your group, especially your group leader.

Prepare: Read any parts of the Bible that your leader suggests, do any homework that comes out of the study. It will not be onerous and you will benefit from it.

Care: Be willing to give of yourself to the others in your group. The Bible says, "Love one another for love is from God and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God" (1 John 4:7).

STUDY ONE

YOU DON'T WANT TO BE SATAN

Matthew 16:21-28

Introducing Matthew

We have previously progressed through Matthew's Gospel, covering chapters 1:1 to 16:20. Matthew was a Jew writing to fellow Jews. He seeks to prove that Jesus' life and atonement are the fulfillment of OT prophecy. Matthew has two "big ideas" in his gospel: Jesus is King and the nature of discipleship for those who follow Christ.

As we take up the narrative in Chapter 16, Peter (as representative of the 12 disciples) had finally recognised the real identity of Jesus (16:16 "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God"). This confession by Peter concludes the case Matthew has made that Jesus is the Christ (God's anointed Messiah). Peter's confession and Jesus' follow up words in this study are a climactic point in Matthew's Gospel. With his identity thus clarified, Jesus turns at once to his mission, and the story moves inexorably to the cross.

As Jesus makes his way to Jerusalem, his teaching is less directed at the crowds and more directed to the disciples. Chapters 16:20 to 20:34 include teachings on the demands of discipleship and how his disciples will live as Jesus' kingdom community, distinct from the world.

A Verse to Remember

"Then Jesus told his disciples, 'If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.'" (Matthew 16: 24)

Quick Facts About Matthew

Matthew (also called Levi) was a tax collector and therefore a book-keeper by profession, with a penchant for orderly arrangement in his account of Jesus' life. The material in Matthew's Gospel is based on a rhythmic, back and forth movement between blocks of narrative (Chapters 1-4, 8-9, 11-12, 14-17, 19-20, 21-23, 26-28 focus primarily on the King's identity) and blocks of discourse (teaching which tends to focus on the King's people and how they should live in God's kingdom). There are five passages of discourse (Chapters 5-7, 10, 13, 18, 24-25) . Matthew uses a set formula to signal these units, ending each with a statement "when Jesus had finished these sayings..."



Matthew's Gospel is focussed on explaining what the gospel is and how it should be applied in the lives of Jesus' disciples. For Matthew, the gospel is the good news that God has inaugurated the final stage in his plan to reclaim the world from the destruction of sin and establish his just and merciful reign over it. God has given the central role in this final stage of his work to Jesus, his long awaited and specially designated King. Where Jesus is present in Matthew's gospel, God and his kingdom are present. The reign of God is evident when Jesus banishes demons, heals the sick, the lame and the blind; and gathers together a people for himself whose lives are to demonstrate God's just and merciful character. The climactic events of the gospel describe how the King dies for his people and rises again to life so his people can belong to him in his kingdom forever!

For Starters

Have you ever had a memorable "light bulb" moment in your life when you understood something really important about God so that you felt really close to Him, only to be followed by a "crash" when you really failed God?

Our study begins after Peter had a real "light bulb" moment about the identity of Jesus (16:16). However as Jesus begins to teach Peter (and the other disciples) about the mission of God's Christ (Messiah) Peter comes crashing down in his understanding about Jesus.

From the Word

Read Matthew 16: 21-23

1. What does Jesus reveal about his mission? (16:21-22; check out 1:21, 4:23-25, 5:17, 9:6, others?)
2. How does Peter "get it" so horribly wrong? (16: 22)
3. What does Jesus mean when he says to Peter, " Get behind me Satan!" (16:23) (Compare with 4:10 and link with 1 Cor. 1:18)

Read Matthew 16: 24-28

4. What does Jesus tell his disciples (and us!) about following him? (verse 24, which is worth memorising)

5. What does each part of this verse (24) mean? 1. Denying self. 2. Take up our cross. 3. Follow Jesus.

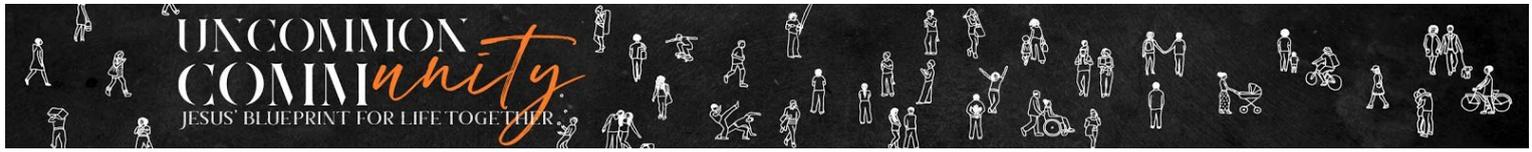
6. What reasons does Jesus give for why we should deny ourselves, take up our cross and follow him? (16: 25 - 27; hint: there are 3 reasons, each beginning with "for" in the ESV)

7. To what is Christ referring in verse 28?

For Discussion

8. J.C. Ryle stated. " The death of Christ is the central truth of Christianity. Right views of his vicarious death and the benefits resulting from it, lie at the very foundation of Bible-religion. If we are wrong here , we are ruined forever. Error on many points is only a skin disease. Error about Christ's death is a disease of the heart." Why is the cross of Jesus Christ crucial? How can we help one another to rejoice in what Christ did for us on the cross? (16:21)

9. Matthew Henry wrote, "The first lesson in Christ's school is self denial." How can we encourage one another to learn that vital lesson and keep on learning it and to apply that lesson in our daily lives?



10. What is the value of the soul or life of a person (and our own) worth? What are we tempted to put in the place of that value?

For Prayer

Let's pray for one another that we know Jesus better - who he was and what he did for us. Ask God to reveal more of his Son to us from his word.

Pray for one another so we can put verse 24 into practice in our daily lives - deny ourselves, take up our cross and follow Jesus.

As we commence a new year, we want to remain committed to reaching the lost. Homegroups are not only about growing as Christians, but also about reaching the lost. An important way we do this is by supporting one another as we share our faith with friends, family and people we are serving in ministries. On the following page you will find a place to make a record of each group members' 'frontline friends' ie, the 2 or 3 people who you are especially trying to witness to about Jesus. Take some time sharing together and then pray. And keep praying for the rest of the year.



MY SERMON NOTES



STUDY TWO

YOU SHOULD BE FRIGHTENED

Matthew 17:1-13

For Starters

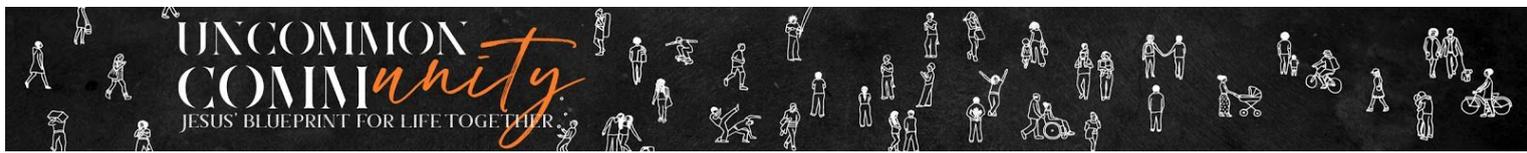
What has been the most frightening situation you've ever been through or faced? Did it overcome you or did you overcome it through support by a family member, fellow believer or stranger? Did God play a role in comforting you?

In this study we will look at a key episode of Christ's life - The Transfiguration. We will look at the fear of the disciples and also what this event reveals about Jesus.

From the Word

Read Matthew 17:1-13

1. "Transfigured" doesn't normally come up in everyday language. Give a brief definition of what this means. Why is this more significant than just an outward change?
2. Just like Moses, Jesus' face shone. Read Exodus 34:28-35. What is the difference between these two events, why did their faces shine?
3. It seems strange that Moses and Elijah both showed up. What do they represent? In their appearing and Christ's transfiguration, what does it confirm? (Have a look at 2 Peter 1:16-21).



4. An important feature of this narrative is the cloud. Look at Exodus 13:21-22, 24:15-18 and 40:34-38. What is the significance of the cloud?

5. The voice from the cloud says, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him" (Matthew 17:5). Does this remind you of another time the voice spoke? What does this imply about Jesus? (Discuss this first before reading Matthew 3:17 and Deut 18:15-18)

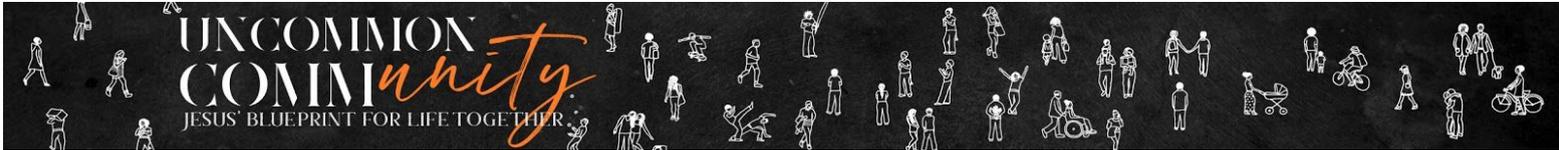
6. Why are the disciples afraid?

7. Malachi 4:5-6 states that Elijah will come before "the great and awesome day of the LORD", which the disciples rightly asked about. What is Jesus' answer? How do the disciples connect this with John the Baptist? (Matthew 3:1-12)

For Discussion

8. The Disciples were terrified, and Jesus comforted them (17:7). In times of fear, how can you find peace and comfort from Jesus?

9. Jesus ties his transfiguration with the suffering that he will face (17:12). How does this provide us hope of Salvation and can we use this passage as a means of evangelism?



10. In Matthew 13:43, we have the promise that we too will share in Jesus' glory which we see in Matthew 17. Have you considered the transfiguration as a hope of what is to come? How does that change how we live life today?

For Prayer

Acknowledge and praise the glory found in Christ and pray for the hope we have in him as we too are blessed to share in His glory.

Pray for each other and bring your fears to God.



MY SERMON NOTES



STUDY THREE

MOVING MOUNTAINS

Matthew 17:14-27

For Starters

This section at first glance seems like a disconnected collection of events, however each section brings the disciples a blurry picture of who Jesus is and what he's come to do into sharper focus.

Just for fun, blindfold one of the members of your group, then put something into their hands to see if they can tell what it is simply by feeling it! Let a few people have a go if you like with different objects. Feel free to give hints!

From the Word

Coming Down To Earth

Read Matthew 17:14-20

1. You could say Peter, James and John are on a high, but now we come back down to earth with a thud. As Jesus and the three come back down the mountain after Jesus' transfiguration, a father comes to Jesus pleading for help for his son who suffers from seizures. We've become accustomed to Jesus' ability to heal, but what's different about this scenario?
2. Who is Jesus' initial response directed at, and what do you make of it?
3. One might describe Jesus' response as "losing it" at this point. What does it show us about Him?



4. Shortly after, the disciples come to Jesus and ask the obvious question - why couldn't we cast it out? What's Jesus' response (including the bit about moving mountains), and what do you think he means by it?

Did you notice? No verse 21!! Several translations omit this verse (21) However, this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting. **NKJV** because it's not present in the the earliest and most reliable manuscripts of Matthew. It is thought this verse (which is included in Mark's version of this story) may have been added by scribes into Matthew's gospel to harmonise with that text.

The Son will be Delivered into the Hands of Men

Read Matthew 17:22-23

5. This is now the third time Jesus has spoken to the disciples about the certainty and close proximity of his death. What's their response this time, and what do you think is behind it?

The Sons are Free - or A Fishy Tale!

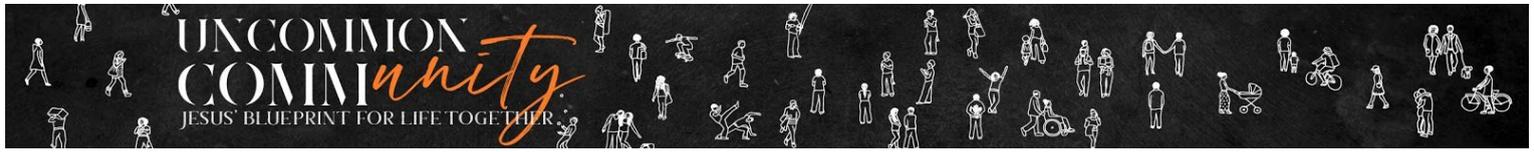
Read Matthew 17:24-27

The "two drachma tax" was an annual levy imposed (by Jewish leaders) on Jewish males over the age of twenty for the upkeep of the temple / tabernacle. It is thought to have been a continuation of the instruction outlined in Exodus 32. There were certain exemption categories for this levy - such as recognised rabbis and priests. Two drachmas roughly equates to a Roman denarius, which is the amount paid for a days wage. Two drachmas also amounts to half a shekel, and as half shekel coinage is rare, payment is often made for two men with one shekel.

6. Rather than simply knock on the door and demand payment of the temple tax, the collectors ask a question - who do they ask, what do they ask, and what is the answer?

7. Have a go at rephrasing the question. Put it into your own words to clarify the essence of what **you think** they're really getting at. Do that separately, then share your answers with each other.

8. When Peter goes into the house, Jesus is first to speak. What's his question and why do you think he asks it?
9. What does Jesus' declaration of "the sons are free" suggest about the need for Jesus to pay temple tax? Why or why not?
10. Do you think Jesus is including his disciples in this exemption? Why or why not?
11. Even though he is exempt, Jesus tells Peter to go ahead and pay the tax - why?
12. Jesus' response here demonstrates how the Son uses his rights. He foregoes the right to flaunt his exemption to pay the tax so as "not to give offence". Where else do you see this principle in action in the New Testament?
13. Now he's just showing off! Presumably Jesus could have taken any number of approaches to arrange for the payment of the tax on his behalf. Why do you think he goes for this one?
14. Take a few minutes to sketch out what series of events would need to take place for Peter to land the big one.



For Prayer

Ask God that you, like the disciples would increase in your knowledge of and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Give thanks for these recorded events for those of us who weren't present with Jesus.

Give thanks for God's providential and unseen care.

MY SERMON NOTES

STUDY FOUR

ARE YOU WANDERING?

Matthew 18:1-14

For Starters

Have you ever gone hiking or travelled somewhere and gotten lost? What happened?

In Matthew 18:1-14 we will see how Jesus answers an inappropriate question of who is the greatest by using a child as a metaphor and through the illustration of a sheep who has gone astray.

From the Word

Read Matthew 18:1-14

1. In the first verse, what makes this question ignorant and arrogant? What do you believe their intention was in asking the question? (If you wish, read Mark 9:33-34)
2. How does Jesus answer the question? Why a child?
3. In verses 5-9, Jesus uses harsh language and judgement upon those who sin or cause others to sin. What are these punishments and why would Jesus use such harsh punishments?
4. Who is the lost sheep in verse 12 and how is it different from the lost sheep in Luke 15:1-7?



5. Reading the lost sheep parable in Matthew, what does it tell us about “The Shepherd”?

For Discussion

6. Being humble doesn't seem to come naturally for sinners. What does humility look like in everyday life?

7. Discuss in what ways we might lead people to sin. How can you avoid this?

8. Maiming yourself seems pretty extreme. What are practical ways you can protect yourself from sinning?

9. One thing we can take from the lost sheep parable in Matthew is God's concern for pastoral care. Taking note of this, how can you provide pastoral care for fellow believers who are in danger of “going astray”? Are there any people you can think of right now who seem to be wandering and whom you could love by reaching out to them?



For Prayer

Important part of Pastoral Care is praying for one another. Go around the group and share things you are struggling with so they can pray for you. Perhaps pray for the stumbling blocks you have put in front of fellow Christians.



MY SERMON NOTES



STUDY FIVE

THE F WORD (FORGIVENESS)

Matthew 18:15-35

For Starters

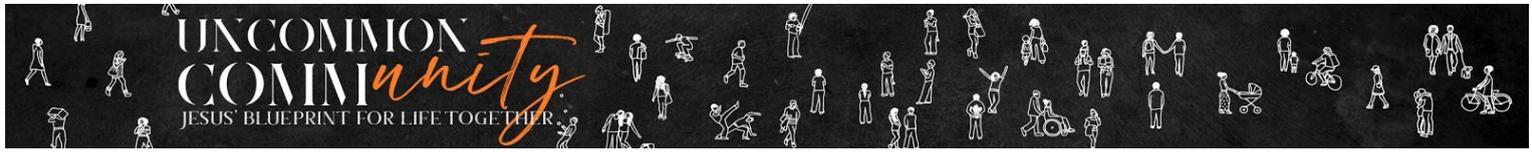
Think of the last time you had to forgive someone. Did you find it hard? If so, why?

In this next section of Matthew, we see Jesus use a parable to teach about forgiveness. Forgiveness is hard and costly and does not come easily to us. As we will see, just like for the servant in the parable, the consequences are dire if we cannot learn to forgive. The only way we can learn to forgive is through a heart transformed by the gospel, which has radical forgiveness at its heart.

From the Word

Read Matthew 18:15-20

1. According to verse 15-17, what steps are to be taken when a fellow Christian sins against you?
2. Where does the responsibility lie in these steps? Is this important?
3. What is the result if there is no repentance/resolution and what do you think it means to "let him be to you like a gentile and a tax collector?"
4. Dealing with sin is heavy stuff. What is the comfort given in verses 19-20?

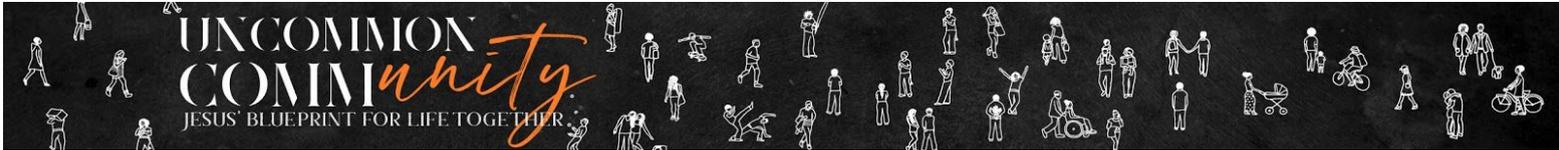


Read Matthew 18:21-35

5. What is the significance of the numbers used in verses 21-22?
6. What is the difference between what the first servant owes the king compared to what the second servant owes the first?
7. What is the difference between how the king and the first servant respond to the debt due to them? What is the ultimate result for the first servant (v34)?
8. What is the major point of the parable? What is the comfort and what is the warning?

For Discussion

9. How do you know when to confront someone over sin or to overlook it?
10. How does your personality shape the way you view conflict? What do you think a God honouring way of dealing with conflict looks like?
11. Why is forgiveness so important and why do we find it so hard to forgive?



12. How should the gospel shape how we deal with conflict resolution and forgiveness?

For Prayer

Pray for wisdom and guidance in working out when and how to confront a fellow Christian.

Pray that we would glorify God even in times of disagreement and confrontation, that this may be a powerful witness to the gospel.

Finally, give thanks to our incredible King who acted like a servant and chose to forgive and pay our debt. Pray that our hearts would be transformed so that we may be able to go and do likewise to the glory of God.



MY SERMON NOTES



STUDY SIX

WHAT GOD HAS JOINED

Matthew 19:1-12

For Starters

Either from experience or from observation, what is good about marriage?

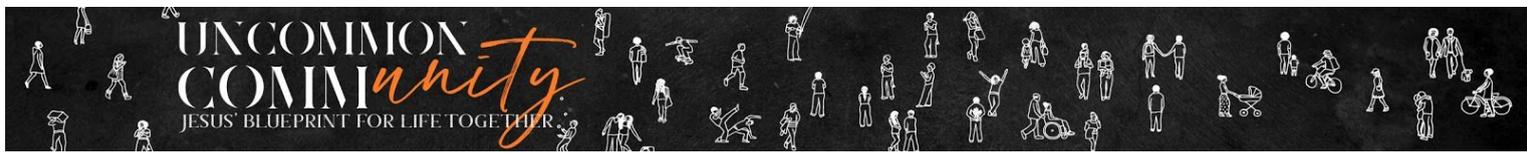
What is challenging about marriage?

Today we deal with a sensitive topic - marriage and divorce. As we look at Jesus' interaction with the Pharisees on this issue, let's keep in mind that everyone has their own story. Our desire will be to hear and obey the words of Jesus and also to share the heart of Jesus for those in our groups who have sinned and been sinned against in relation to marriage and divorce.

From the Word

Read Matthew 19:1-12.

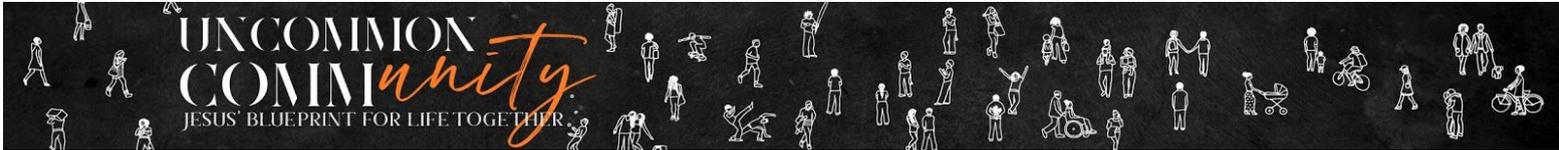
1. What was the Pharisees' motive when they questioned Jesus about divorce?
2. Jesus doesn't answer their question directly. What does his answer reveal about God's attitude to divorce?
3. What can we learn about the nature of marriage from what Jesus says in verses 4 to 6?
4. Does Jesus contradict what Moses said in Deuteronomy 24:1-4? Explain.



5. Why is Jesus so opposed to divorce? Look up Genesis 2:23-24 and Ephesians 5:31-32 to help you answer?
6. What is noteworthy about Jesus's words in verse 9, 'And I say to you'?
7. What constitutes sexual immorality (verse 9) and should it always be grounds for divorce?
8. Consider verses 10-12. Is Jesus' response to the disciples' comment surprising to you? Explain.

For Discussion

9. It is clear that for couples to remain married is the ideal in Jesus' eyes. Discuss the kinds of habits that will help married couples strengthen their relationship.
10. What can you as a group and we as a wider church do to help marriages?
11. What's wrong with a little bit of porn? Is it a big deal? Discuss it as the issue applies to both the married and the unmarried.
12. Jesus is quite positive about remaining single, probably more positive than most Christians are. What would you say to a single Christian who is questioning God because he has not provided a marriage partner for them?



For Prayer

Pray for the marriages in your group and in the church, that God would strengthen couples and they would represent the gospel well.

Pray for those who are divorced. Pray they would know God's love and healing.

Pray for those who are single, that they would be daily renewed by the never ending love of Christ and honour him as singles.



MY SERMON NOTES



STUDY SEVEN

THE MAN JESUS MADE SAD

Matthew 19:13-30

For Starters

Have you ever been so sure about something just to find out you were completely wrong? Share with the group a time you've been humbled.

Today's passage looks at a man who came to Jesus thinking he knew the answers to eternal life only to turn away sad.

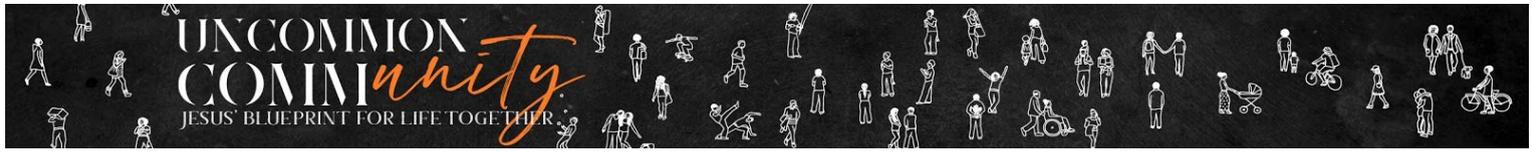
From the Bible

Read Matthew 19:13-15

1. Why did the disciples rebuke the people bringing their children to Jesus?

Read Matthew 19:16-30

2. What seems to be the man's concern and how does Jesus respond (verses 16-17)?
3. Jesus mentions some commandments. Compare his list to Exodus 20:1-17
Why do you think Jesus only highlighted a few of them?
4. How does the man rate his ability to keep the commandments? Do you think he's being arrogant?



5. The man ends up walking away sorrowful at Jesus' last invitation. What was he still lacking?

6. Why would it surprise the disciples to hear how hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of heaven?

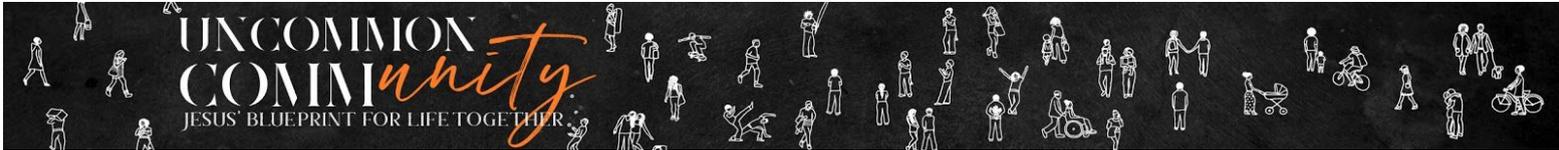
7. What was Jesus' attitude to the children in v13-15 and how does that help us understand verse 30?

For Discussion

8. The rich young man felt eternal life could be achieved through works however Peter's question in verse 27 also hints at a similar attitude that we can fall into. How is Peter's attitude similar to the young man's and how do we avoid falling into the same thinking?

9. Do you have to give away everything you have to receive eternal life?

10. Reflect on your own life, what do you need to give up that would improve your faith and relationships?



11. Explain in your own words how eternal life is achieved. This can be a big help to your witness and understanding of faith.

For Prayer

Thank God for Jesus and the grace shown to us through the cross.

Ask for forgiveness for the times we are like the rich young man and/or Peter.

Ask God to help you to identify the areas in our lives that act as a barrier to us fully depending on him.



MY SERMON NOTES



STUDY EIGHT

GOD'S GREAT INJUSTICE

Matthew 20:1-16

For Starters

When I was a child I remember the rule in our house when working out who gets the last piece of food. "You cut, I pick". This was my parents way of making sure we didn't have any arguments and things were fair.

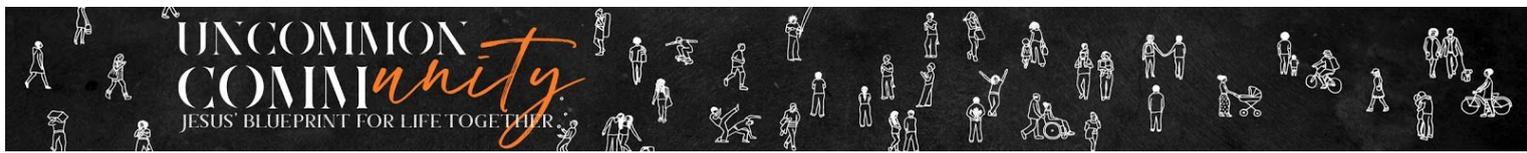
What is your earliest memory of fairness? What rules did you have to make sure there weren't arguments over small things?

Today's parable is scandalous! There is much about it that seems wrong. When we get unsettled by Jesus, that's good. It is a clear sign of where we are not aligned with the values of the kingdom. And grace is a big one. That's what we're on about today.

From the Word

Read Matthew 20:1-16

1. From the passage, identify the key characters.
2. In verses 1-6, note how many times it says that the master 'goes out'. What is the significance of this?
3. Do you see parallels to the Israelites in the Old Testament?



4. How does their reaction show where their heart is?

For Discussion

This passage presents us with a myriad of possible applications.

- Fair Pay (Should we as Christians pay fairly, or work for free since we have been given everything in Jesus?)
- Equality and Justice (Should we as Christians fight for justice or just sit back and trust that God is Just?)
- Putting Others First (Is this just a good moral passage to give us the biblical basis for teaching our kids to put their brother or sister first?)
- Generosity (Should we be generous with what God has given us or should we only pay people what we agreed on?)
- Converting Fellow Believers (We should be happy when other people come to be a part of the Kingdom of God or gain blessings from God)

Unfortunately, people have used this passage to push any or all of the applications above. This is not inherently wrong because generosity and justice are important and we as Christians should value and fight for these things, but this passage is clearly about how God's gift of salvation is just and generous.

God is the one who is going out and offering up his grace to all who want to receive it. God has paid the price for all those who have entered his kingdom and all those who *will* enter through the death of Jesus on the cross. As workers, we shouldn't be upset about the gift, but we should be excited about people receiving the gift of grace from a generous God.

Kingdom Allegiance.

A good way to test where your heart is at is to think about your first reaction to this passage.

Did you think - 'Wow that owner is unfair' - this points toward an earthly mindset.

Did you think - 'Wow that owner is generous' - this points towards a heavenly mindset.

What was your reaction?

Test Your Heart.

Sometimes as Christians we are quick to accept grace as a free gift, but might feel upset when other people accept the gift without doing anything for it. Have you ever felt like someone who received grace didn't deserve it? Try these scenarios below.

When someone who has spent their life in jail for terrible crimes, becomes a Christian, does your heart sing with praise? Or feel a sense of unfairness?

When someone who has spent their whole life living for themselves, doing whatever they wanted, becomes a Christian, does your heart sing with praise? Or feel a sense of unfairness?

When someone who has spent their whole life living for themselves, doing whatever they wanted, gets terminally ill and becomes a Christian, does your heart sing with praise? Or feel a sense of unfairness?

When someone you really don't like becomes a Christian, does your heart sing with praise? Or feel a sense of unfairness?

If we struggle with any of these scenarios, we need to think about our reaction like the workers in this passage. This passage is about God going out and bringing people home to Him. His gift, His grace, His justice, His plan for mankind, His kingdom!

5. As people who have been brought in already, what do these people do in the vineyard?

6. What is our role in God's Kingdom?

For Prayer

Pray for our hearts. That God would be helping us understand His grace, His gift and His kingdom.

Pray for others who don't yet know God:

- Pray for those far from God, especially those on your frontline (go back to the original list you made in week 1).
- Pray for those close, but not yet saved.

Pray that God would use us for his Kingdom.



MY SERMON NOTES

