KINGDOM of HEAVEN

A SERIES IN THE BOOK OF MATTHEW

Community Group Material

Matthew 12:1-21

Week of 15th to 21st of October

Jesus is Greater

Leader Preparation

Read through the passage so that you are familiar with it. Read through the material on pages 30-32 of the CG leader manual. Look carefully through the notes and questions in this guide - it will not be possible to discuss all of the questions! Focus on those most relevant to your group in the discussion time.

This week and next bring into focus the conflict between Jesus and the religious authorities. We will be looking at what this teaches us about dealing with conflict – specifically with those opposing Christ.

Spend some time praying for the members of your group, and asking God to guide you as you lead your time together. How about using this guide based on Colossians 1:9-14 to guide your prayers:

Pray that ...

- they will understand God's will;
- they gain spiritual wisdom;
- they live a life pleasing and honoring to God;
- they do kind things for others;
- they know God better and better;
- they are filled with God's strength;
- they endure in patience;
- they stay full in Christ's joy;
- they are always thankful;
- they recall God's forgiveness of their sins.[1]

https://www.smallgroups.com/articles/2012/facilitate-meaningful-group-prayer.html

Group time:

Getting to know you:

- When it comes to conflict, are you a hedgehog or a rhino? How do you respond when you feel hurt or angry? *(from The Marriage Course by Nicky and Sila Lee)*
- When you think about your family, how did / do they deal with conflict?



Exploring the Passage

READ Matthew 12:1-21

This passage shows a few examples of a pattern:

- Jesus acts out of compassion, prioritizing human need.
- Religious leaders quote the law, weaponizing it to justify their judgement of Jesus and his disciples.
- Jesus shows that he is greater than King David, greater than the temple, and greater than the Sabbath (the structures put in place by God to draw his people to Him)

Read Nehemiah 13:15-22.
Did God want to stop every kind of activity on the Sabbath? What kinds of activities are mentioned in this passage that the prophet wanted to stop?

Read Mark 2: 27-28
Based on this verse, who were the rules of the Sabbath intended to benefit?

Read 1 John 5:3
How do the laws of God differ from the version of the law demanded by the Jewish religious leaders?

Is there any indication that the Pharisees had a change of heart following Jesus' answers to their questions? Does Jesus respond like a rhino or a hedgehog – or a rhin-og?

Looking at Matthew 12:18-21:
Once again we see the contrast between the punishment that will be given to those who have had all the opportunity to recognize Jesus, compared to the compassion that he has for those who are weak but reliant on him.

Have you ever won an argument but hurt somebody in the process?

How can we show compassion to people in need of Jesus in a way that enables a flickering flame to grow into a great fire of faith?

How can we be more teachable than the Pharisees? What makes us become hard and judgmental in the way we accuse others? Could Jesus be convicting you of using his law to judge others rather than drawing them to him?

Prayer

Take some time to pray for the needs of your group members, the church, our city, our nation, and our world. Ask group members to focus their prayer on one news item that has been on their heart.

Try to circulate a list of prayer requests from the group during the week to remind group members to continue to pray for each other.

You may want to pray this prayer for Israel and Gaza:

Lord, You said "Peace, be still," and the storm was stilled.
We confess that at times, we feel overwhelmed by the storm. But today, we lift our eyes to you—the Maker of heaven and earth. And we ask for a miracle…let your peace fill Israel and Gaza.
God, let violence cease in the region. Let there be no more bloodshed. We know your heart breaks for those killed and those left behind—for the orphaned child, the injured elderly, those abducted and families desperate for safety. Lord, speak into this crisis.
We pray for those who have lost loved ones. Let your peace and love wash over them. Please protect and provide for those who have been abducted and bring them home safely. Let them be reunited with their loved ones–let them feel the comfort of their embrace.
God, we pray that you open doors that allow food, essentials and medical supplies to reach those in need. May organisations be able to rescue the injured, comfort the grieving and help rebuild many lives.
God, we pray for your peace and reconciliation to overcome conflict. We ask that you give wisdom and discernment to our global leaders and those in positions of power who have the ability to impact the course of this war. Help us to be bold advocates and agents of peace in our own communities.
We pray for people scattered around the globe whose friends and family members have been caught in the crisis. We know you are with them. Help us to express your love to those affected in our communities, churches and workplaces.
Lord, we raise Israel and Gaza to you, and pray for those suffering. We ask that you provide peace in this crisis, and protection and comfort for all those who have been impacted.
We lift our prayer to you,
Lord, hear us. Amen.
