



FACILITATOR'S GUIDE—YOUTH

Year 1—The God of Life: A Story of God's Redeeming Shalom

Module 4—Coming Alive by Being Human: Jesus Stories on What it Means to Be Human and Fully Alive

Lesson 4—Matthew 18

ENCOUNTER 1—Community Discussion

Read Matthew 18 together out loud as a group. Encourage each person to journal through the passage using these questions. After allowing sufficient time for reflection, invite the group to share their thoughts.

*How is this God's story?
How is this others' story?*

*How is this my story?
How is this the world's story?*

ENCOUNTER 2—Community Discussion

(Read the reflection included with this lesson. The questions are designed for your group to enter into a meaningful dialog about the Word. The bulleted teaching points are taken from the reflection and correspond to the questions.)

GOD'S STORY—God restores us to a *shalom*-shaped life through his lavish forgiveness in Jesus.

How do you see relationships at the center of this passage? What does that teach you about God and his mission?

- This is a relational passage. God's vision for life in the way of Jesus is aimed at the reestablishment of the richness of life in relationships.
- God's mission is God's priority and he has pursued us in Jesus Christ in order that we might be participants in his life-giving mission in the world.
- Sin is relational. It drives us away from one another and God, destroying the life-giving context of community in which we are created to live.
- God's forgiveness of us in Jesus Christ, therefore, has a relational dimension as well.
- In forgiving us of our sin God is drawing us back into the fullness of life he always intended for us. God's forgiveness frees us to be who he created us to be in community with others in and through the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

OUR STORY—We experience God's forgiveness through repentance and discover life by practicing forgiveness for others.

Why is forgiveness so hard for us?

- Our sin has turned us in on ourselves, pushing us away from life-giving relationship with God and others.
- Our own restoration to life starts when we recognize God's forgiveness of us in Jesus as the only way to true life. Beginning to live in this way starts first with repentance.
- We are being invited to turn away from ourselves and towards God's gracious forgiveness offered to us in Jesus Christ. Jesus is offering us participation in the lavishness of God's forgiving grace.
- God's forgiveness in Jesus Christ is meant to compel us to become people turned outward again toward others, and in that discover the fullness of life in relationship with others.
- Jesus is actually suggesting that we are to be unlimited in our forgiveness, precisely because God has been so lavishly graceful in his forgiveness of us.

OTHERS' STORY—God calls us to be a community of forgiveness with others seeking the richness of *shalom* together even when we hurt each other.

Why is forgiveness so important for life with others?

Jesus gives very clear instructions how to set about seeking the restoration of *shalom* with others in our community when we have been hurt or sinned against.

1. We, like God has done in Jesus, pursue them in order to reestablish a relationship that is life-giving for them and for us.
2. If this does not work, then we are to take others with us. They are there to make sure that the whole story is heard and together everyone seeks the goodness of life together again.
3. If this doesn't bring about restoration, then Jesus calls us to involve the whole community. The lack of restoration and repentance is a threat to the entire community, and so now is the chance to practice discipline and forgiveness together.
4. If even this doesn't work, then we are told to treat them as we would a "pagan or a tax collector" (18:17). In other words, by their unwillingness to repent and seek forgiveness and restoration they are showing themselves to be outside of God's community being called together in the name of Jesus Christ.

THE WORLD'S STORY—Being a community of forgiveness is a witness to the world of God's grace for them in Jesus Christ.

In what ways do you see relationships being restored in the world around you?

How can you practice God's community of forgiveness to others?

- People do whatever they can to get ahead, including walking over others without regard for relationship.
- What the world needs to see is an alternative community that lives from a center in Jesus Christ, where forgiveness and grace are the lynchpin of their life together.
- The world needs the church to hold out a way of life where the restoration of true, open and vulnerably dependent relationships is the norm.
- As the church does this it becomes part of God's life-giving mission for the world by bearing witness to Jesus Christ, who has restored us by becoming open and vulnerable to death in our place, in order to bring us back into the fullness of life with God.

PRAYER

(Lead your group in corporate prayer.)

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil, for yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever and ever, Amen.

WEEKLY PRACTICE

(Read the weekly practice out loud, and challenge your group to practice *missio* beyond today.)

Practicing Forgiveness:

Throughout the course of every week people do things to hurt us, and we do things to hurt others. This week be intentional in seeking forgiveness and restoration of relationship between yourself and others. Do not simply let things go and eventually work themselves out. Instead intentionally go to others and seek forgiveness when you have wronged them, and in grace, seek out others who have hurt you in order that they might be forgiven. As you do this each day, journal what it has been like.

How is it difficult to practice forgiveness?
How is your image of others changing by being a person of forgiveness?
Do you sense any change in yourself? Like what?
How do you feel more connected to people this week?

BECOMING MY STORY

(Encourage the group to spend time this week in God's Word, allowing it to penetrate their heart and life.)

Passages for further reflection this week:

• *Psalm 100*

• *2 Corinthians 2:1-11*

• *Galatians 6:1-10*

• *Philippians 4:1-11*

Spend time this week reading and journaling through the above Scriptures. Reflect on how the passage is God's story, my story, others' story, and the world's story. In the context of Matthew 18, consider the following questions:

How are these Scripture passages related to the message in Matthew 18?

How do these Scriptures tell us about the story of God being continued from Matthew 18?

What is God saying to you through these passages?

Consider other passages that you might know related to Matthew 18 and read them this week, journaling as you go.