

Character Makeover – Cultivating Humility

“The Upside-down Kingdom”

Matthew 16-20

GOSPEL GAIN:

True humility is the only way of and into the Upside-Down Kingdom of Heaven.

Gathering Together (Icebreaker)

So, Pride is bad. Humility is good. We know that, right? So, share a time when you witnessed the silliness of pride and/or when you observed gracious humility in action. What impact did it have on you?

Growing Together (Truth/Equipping)

From the very beginning of His ministry, Jesus was preaching the Gospel of the *Upside-Down Kingdom* of Heaven. Read **Matthew 20:20-28**. What are the traditionally “bad” things listed here? Why does Jesus turn the conventional perspective on its head and encourage these “un-honorable” attitudes, calling them “blessings” in His kingdom?

The word *kingdom* (βασιλεία) appears 55 times in the book of Matthew. Scan the Gospel and look for five separate occurrences of *kingdom of heaven* and list what they have in common. What do you learn about the upside-down nature of this kingdom?

Read **Matthew 18:1-7** and **19:13-25**.

- What stands out to you in these passages?
- What is Jesus’ primary concern?
- What does it mean to “*turn and become like children?*”
- What would you say to claim that Jesus teaches that only children go to heaven?
- Why do you think Jesus has such a soft spot for children?
- What are some ways that we could learn to follow Jesus better from our much younger brothers and sisters in the faith?

Read **Matthew 20:20-31**.

- What leadership lessons are found in this passage?

- Discuss any insight, inspiration, encouragement or conviction that comes from pondering Jesus' discourse with an over-bearing mom, selfish brothers, and 10 angry and anxious disciples.
- *"If I want to be like Jesus, I'll need to descend on the 'prestige ladder' to where I will have to embrace suffering."* – True or false? Why?
- How might this passage apply specifically to you? What secret questions are you asking Jesus to "make it so"
- The punchline is found in V.28. Jesus states that He is not like Caesar or any other natural leader. He didn't come to be served. Jesus came to serve; not to take, but to give His life as a ransom. How does this differ from leaders in our culture today?
- In that society, convicted capital criminals were even lower than children, slaves and servants. Jesus stated that this was the status category He was operating in! It was there that He states greatness and power were truly found. Do you believe that true power to transform the world into the Kingdom of Heaven can only come through people who have previously been transformed from proud to humble at the foot of the cross? Why or why not?

Getting Real Together (Accessibility)

We gain this catalytic insight from these passages: true followers of Jesus are marked by embracing the low status of children, not their naive character. It's about, representation, humility and service...not position, glory and power.

Matthew 16:17-19 tell us there that ere two kingdoms at war. Here are some key questions you need to answer for yourself to help you determine which kingdom you are in. Can you share these answers with your life group?

- Am I representing Christ's emphasis on humility accurately?
- Am I embracing the suffering of Christ or only seeking His associated glory?
- Am I seeking the ultimate benefit of others over my own?
- Am I convinced that Jesus means it when He says that unless I seek humility that I will not enter God's kingdom (Matt. 18:3)? Am I living like I believe it?

Praying Together (Supplication)

- Pray **Isaiah 66:2** for yourself and your Life Group – *"This is the one to whom I will look: he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at My Word."*
- Pray that Oakwood would be marked by true humility and a desire to slave, serve, and sacrifice for those in our fellowship and surrounding community.
- Pray the words of John the Baptist in **John 3:30** – "He must increase. I must decrease."