



# BEIJING INTERNATIONAL CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

## INTRODUCTION

This study guide will be most helpful if you work through it slowly with an open Bible, looking up all the references. Grab some friends and do it together!



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# KINGDOM STORIES

PARABLES THAT  
INFURIATE OR INSPIRE



**Matthew is divided into five discussions by Jesus (5-7, 10, 13, 18, 23-25). Chapter 18 begins the fourth main teaching of Jesus. This is often called the discourse on the church. To understand our parable today we need to see where Matthew placed it and why he placed it there.**



*Quickly skim over chapter 18, what are some repeated words or ideas? What comes before this chapter? What comes after this chapter?*

16:16	16:22	16:28	17:1	17:27	18:1
Peter Confesses	Peter Rebukes	Some won't see death (Peter)?	Peter sees Jesus's glory	Peter catches a coin	Who is the Greatest?

The chapter begins with the disciples fighting for first place. Jesus responds by reminding them to **care for one another** (humble yourself, don't allow your actions to lead another into sin, do not think lightly of the "weaker" brother. Matthew, who quotes the Old Testament more than any other Gospel writer, is pointing us back to Ezekiel 34.

**READ Ezekiel 34:4-6 and fill in the chart below:**

Weak	Not Strengthened
	Not healed
Injured	
Lost	



*Can you think of ways the disciples also failed in their shepherd role?*

*See 14:15, 15:23, 15:33, 17:16, 19:13-14, 20:20-21, 26:8*

*How would you summarize the meaning of this parable*

### Main Idea

This is a parable that is meant to show us the attitude and action of God toward those the world sees as “less than.” In the Kingdom of God EVERY son or daughter has great value.

**Matthew 18:2, 3, 4, 5, 6, & 10**  
**speak of a child or little one**



*Verse 6 is key to understanding what Jesus meant by “child.” According to this verse, who is he referring to?*



*Why would Jesus use a child as an example of humility that enables you to enter the Kingdom?*

### John 1:12

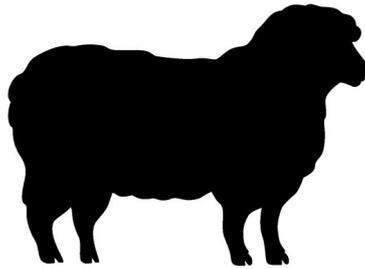
But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God

### Romans 8:16-17

The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ.



*What are some ways in which we relate to God as a son or daughter?*

**Πλανάω**

To go astray, to wander, to roam.

**Read the following Verses:**

Matt. 24:4, 11

Mark 12:24 (*Wrong* – same verb)

2 Tim. 3:13

Heb. 3:10

*What are some ways in which we can find ourselves removed from the Shepherd?*



*What does straying look like? How do you know when you have left the shepherd?*

**Daily the soul is lured to other treasures, other satisfactions, other rewards besides Jesus and his way. Jesus taught us to pray daily, “forgive us for these wanderings and lead us not into, but out of, them.”**

**-John Piper-**



*Do you have a daily strategy to help keep your heart from straying?*



*What specific treasures are luring you away from the true treasure?*

In 1757 Robert Robinson wrote these words: *Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it, Prone to leave the God I love.*

**Ezekiel 34:11-12, 16, 23**

Behold, I, **I myself will search** for my sheep and will seek them out. As a shepherd seeks out his flock when he is among his sheep that have been scattered, so will I seek out my sheep, and **I will rescue them** from all places where they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness...I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak, and the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them in justice... And **I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David**, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd.



## Searching



*Thousands of years before Jesus was born God declared that He would send them a True Shepherd. How has Jesus sought after us (give as much detail as possible)?*

**Left Heaven**

(John 6:38)

**1**

**To Return to  
Heaven (The  
Kingdom) with Us**  
(John 14:3)

**Sacrificed Himself  
for Us**  
(2 Cor. 5:21)

**4**

**Came to Earth**  
(Phil 2:6-8)

**2****3**

**Associated with  
Sinners**  
(Matt 11:19)

**ζητέω**

To seek in order to find.

*Tell of a time when you lost something, searched for it, and never found it.*



*How do we know that Jesus will find us (His sheep) when we stray? What attributes and character does he display that gives us confidence in this area?*

**John 10:11, 14, 16**

I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep... I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me... I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd.

**John 17:9, 11-12**

I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours...Holy Father, keep them in your name...While I was with them, I kept them in your name...I have guarded them, and not one of them has been lost except the son of destruction, that the Scripture might be fulfilled.



*Tell of a time Jesus sought you while you were straying.*

*Salvation (and sanctification) is entirely the work of God, in which we are entirely involved.*

**-Klyne Snodgrass-**



*Read Jeremiah 31:18 and Lamentation 5:21 and discuss how God's searching and our returning work together.*



Joy

### Zephaniah 3:17

“The LORD your God in your midst, The Mighty One, will save; He will **rejoice over you with gladness**, He will quiet you with His love, He will **rejoice over you with singing.**”



*How do you feel knowing that God rejoices over you with singing. Why would God find joy in us?*

#### --Charles Spurgeon--

*Creation could not make Him sing; and I do not even know that Providence ever brought a note of joy from Him, for He could arrange a thousand kingdoms of providence with ease. **But when it came to redemption, that cost Him dear.** Here He spent eternal thought, and drew up a covenant with infinite wisdom. Here He gave His Only-begotten Son, and put Him to grief to ransom His beloved ones. When all was done, and the Lord saw what became of it in the salvation of His redeemed, then He rejoiced after a divine manner. What must the joy be which recompenses Gethsemane and Calvary!*

Briefly describe your greatest experience of joy. What was it over? Describe the feeling of joy. Was there any physical responses to that joy?



*What moments in the Bible do we see Jesus show us that he cares for us and longs to be with us?*

*One of the most important things we can do is to know the heart of God. In understanding His heart we begin to know what our heart should be. Reading through Matthew 18 in light of God's heart helps us to know how to relate to our brothers and sisters. **Does knowing his heart today cause us to change how you are currently relating to someone?***

EXTRA  
DISCUSSION  
QUESTIONS

1 After reading Matthew 18 in the context of Eze. 34, what are some ways we can be good shepherds, like our True Shepherd, and help move our brothers and sisters deeper into the Kingdom?

2 Share with the group how you came to faith in Christ. Was there ever a time when you strayed away from the faith? Do you feel like straying now? If so, why?

3 Once again we find angels mentioned in the parables. What are some things we are to learn about angels from this parable?

4 Being a shepherd wasn't an honorable job. Why do you think God chose to identify himself as a shepherd?

5 Read Ezekiel 34:17-21. Have you know people like the selfish sheep mentioned in these verses? What are some practical examples of how people can "muddy the water" and "trod on the grass"?

6 Theologians use phrases like, **sovereign will and moral will**, or **will of decree and will of command** to describe the will (desire) of God. An example would be: "will of command" ("Let my people go!") and "will of decree" ("God hardened Pharaoh's heart"). Do you think Matthew 18:14 is one of decree or command? Why?

SERMON  
NOTES:

## I NTRODUCTION

Today is a time to behold the beauty of Christ and by beholding him we will be captivated by his love and challenged to be changed into his likeness.

### 1

He loves us because he loves us. v. 10

## Q UESTION

*Do you find it comforting to know that God has not loved you because of anything in you but because of the goodness in himself? Why or why not?*

### 2

His love compels him to look for the wandering sheep. v. 12

## Q UESTION

*How do Heb. 5:2 and 1 Peter 2:25 help us better understand how Jesus seeks us?*

### 3

He rejoices over our return. v. 13

## Q UESTION

*A previous parable told how we had joy upon finding the Kingdom and this parable tells us that God has joy upon finding us. The Kingdom is marked with joy! Would you say that your life is filled with joy? Why or why not?*