

Time Audit Chronicles: Teachings on Humility, Forgiveness, and Discipline – Lessons for the Kingdom

(Matthew 18)

Prologue: The Greatest in the Kingdom

The Presswood family gathered in the living room on a rainy afternoon, with the sound of raindrops tapping gently against the windows. Ariel sat cross-legged on the rug, reading a book about famous leaders in history, while Alice arranged her stuffed animals in a circle, declaring Mr. Fluffernutter the “king of the tea party.”

“Daddy,” Ariel asked, looking up, “how do you think someone becomes great in God’s kingdom? Is it about doing big, important things?”

Ryan smiled, setting down his coffee. “Jesus said it’s the opposite of what we usually think. He taught that greatness in God’s kingdom comes from humility—being like a little child—and from forgiving and loving others.”

Alice tilted her head. “Like me? I’m little.”

“Exactly,” Ryan said. “Jesus said the greatest in His kingdom are those who trust Him with a childlike heart. Let’s use the Time Audit Machine to hear what else He taught about humility, forgiveness, and how we’re called to care for one another.”

The Journey Begins: A Lesson in the Kingdom

The Time Audit Machine hummed softly as Ariel programmed the coordinates.

“Destination: Galilee, 27-29 CE. Objective: witness Jesus’ teachings on humility, forgiveness, and discipline.”

With a flash of light, the family found themselves in a sunlit courtyard, where Jesus sat with His disciples. Nearby, children played under the watchful eyes of their parents.

“There’s Jesus,” Ryan said, pointing. “He’s about to teach the disciples a lesson they’ll never forget.”

Who Is the Greatest? *(Matthew 18:1-4)*

The disciples approached Jesus, their expressions curious. One of them asked, “Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” (Matthew 18:1)

Jesus paused, then called a small child to come and stand among them.

“Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.” (Matthew 18:3-4)

Alice’s eyes widened. “He’s saying kids are the greatest?”

“Not just kids,” Ryan explained. “Jesus is talking about having a heart like a child—trusting, humble, and open to God.”

Caring for the Little Ones (*Matthew 18:5-9*)

Jesus continued, His tone growing serious:

“And whoso shall receive one such little child in My name receiveth Me. But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in Me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.” (Matthew 18:5-6)

Ariel frowned. “Why is He so harsh here?”

“Because He’s showing how much God cares for the vulnerable,” Ryan said. “When we hurt others, especially those who trust Him, it’s a serious offense to God.”

Jesus warned about temptations, urging His followers to remove anything in their lives that caused sin: “If thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off, and cast them from thee.” (Matthew 18:8)

Alice wrinkled her nose. “Does He really mean to cut off your hand?”

“Not literally,” Ryan said. “Jesus is using strong language to show how serious sin is—and how important it is to stay close to God.”

The Lost Sheep (*Matthew 18:10-14*)

Jesus then told a parable:

“How think ye? If a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray?” (Matthew 18:12)

The Presswoods watched as Jesus described the joy of finding the lost sheep:

“Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish.” (Matthew 18:14)

“He’s talking about people, not just sheep,” Ariel said.

“Exactly,” Ryan said. “God loves each of us so much that He’ll go to any lengths to bring us back when we wander away.”

Dealing with Sin in the Church *(Matthew 18:15-20)*

The scene shifted as Jesus taught His disciples about discipline within the church:

“If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.” (Matthew 18:15)

“Why go to them alone first?” Ariel asked.

“Because it’s about reconciliation, not punishment,” Ryan explained. “Jesus wants us to handle conflicts with love and care.”

Jesus continued: “But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more... And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church.” (Matthew 18:16-17)

“So, it’s about helping them, not embarrassing them?” Alice asked.

“Exactly,” Ryan said. “The goal is always to restore relationships and guide people back to God.”

The Power of Forgiveness *(Matthew 18:21-35)*

Peter stepped forward, asking, “Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Till seven times?” (Matthew 18:21)

Jesus replied, “I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven.” (Matthew 18:22)

Alice gasped. “That’s a lot of forgiving!”

“It means forgiveness has no limits,” Ryan said. “Jesus calls us to forgive as God forgives us.”

Jesus then told the parable of the unforgiving servant. A king forgave his servant a massive debt, but that servant refused to forgive a fellow servant who owed him a small amount.

The family watched as the king confronted the unforgiving servant:

“Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee?” (Matthew 18:33)

The king’s punishment for the unforgiving servant was severe, and Jesus concluded:

“So likewise shall My heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.” (Matthew 18:35)

Returning Home: A Heart of Forgiveness

Back in the garage, the Time Audit Machine powered down, leaving the family reflective. Ariel flipped through her notes, while Alice hugged Mr. Fluffernutter tightly.

“Jesus’ teachings were so clear,” Ariel said. “He calls us to be humble, care for others, and forgive.”

“Exactly,” Ryan said. “Living for God’s kingdom means putting others first and showing the same grace He’s shown us.”

Alice looked up. “Do you think we can forgive like that?”

“We can try,” Ryan said gently. “And when it’s hard, we can ask God to help us.”

Reflection: Living the Kingdom Way

That evening, Ariel read aloud from Matthew 18:

“Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.”

The family sat quietly, reflecting on the beauty of Jesus’ words.

“Humility, forgiveness, and care for others are at the heart of His teachings,” Ryan said. “When we live that way, we reflect His love to the world.”

“And we’re part of His kingdom,” Ariel added.

Alice hugged Mr. Fluffernutter tightly. “I think Jesus has the best kingdom ever.”

“And we’re invited to be part of it,” Ryan said with a grin.

Takeaway: Living with Grace and Love

Jesus’ teachings on humility, forgiveness, and discipline in Matthew 18 reveal the heart of God’s kingdom. True greatness comes from a humble, childlike trust in God. His call to forgive others reflects His boundless grace, and His instructions for dealing with sin show His desire for restoration and love. These lessons invite us to live with humility, care, and forgiveness, reflecting the character of our King in everything we do.