

# MATTHEW

EXAMINING THE LIFE AND TEACHINGS OF JESUS  
UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL

## ***Connect Group Study*** ***February | March***

## **Notes on the Kingdom of God**

*Use these pages to record notes that you find throughout this study about the Kingdom of God (or the Kingdom of Heaven). At the end of the study, you will have collected information about the Kingdom of God from many passages. This is called a topical study and is another way to study the Bible.*

**February 4-5, 2012**  
**Reconciliation and Forgiveness**  
*Matthew 18:15-35*

**Getting Connected**

Is it easier to remember the painful sins done against you or the joyful gifts given you? Why?

Describe a time in which you were forgiven.

Describe your relationship with the person before and after he/she forgave you?

**Going Deeper**

Read Matthew 18:15-17. Who is the audience being spoken of as the offender and the offended?

What is the purpose of these verses? Is it judgment or forgiveness? Is it to lay out punishment for sin or to restore a person to right standing? Explain.

Read Matthew 18:18-20. These verses are a continuation of the discussion in verses 15-17. What are 2 or more agreeing on?

To “bind” in these verses means they are asking the Lord to bind the sins of the unrepentant person – in other words to retain them in His memory until the person repents. How does that fit with your view of God?

Read Matthew 18:21-35. How does God view a lack of forgiveness on the part of the offended party? What are these passages really about?

### **Living Out the Truth of God's Word**

Read Luke 7:37-43. Meditate for a moment on the sins that have been forgiven you by God. How great is your love for God and others?

Are we called to forgive those with unrepentant hearts? Whose job is it to judge the sinner? What is our job? Why is this so important?

Sometimes forgiveness is an act of will, rather than emotion. Pray over the list of those whom you haven't forgiven. If you've approached each one in the manner described by these verses and there is still unforgiveness, seek the Lord of Love and Forgiveness. It is His heart to assist you.

**February 11-12, 2012**  
**Marriage / Divorce Issues**  
*Matthew 19:1-12*

**Getting Connected**

How have you been affected by divorce? Through personal experience or through someone close to you?

What was your parents' marriage like? How much did their relationship influence your views on marriage/divorce?

What are some of the common reasons today that people seek a divorce?

**Going Deeper**

Read Matthew 19:1-6. Why do you think the Pharisees were asking Jesus about divorce? What was Jesus' response?

Read Matthew 19:7-9. What reason did Jesus give for why Moses allowed divorce? What does Jesus say about divorce in vs. 9?

Read 1 Corinthians 7:15. What reason is given here for allowing divorce?

Read Malachi 2:16a. Why does God hate divorce?

### **Living Out the Truth of God's Word**

If you are struggling in your marriage, how will you get help? If you have been through struggles, how can you help other couples?

What would you say to a fellow Christian who is considering divorce? Would your advice be the same for an unbelieving neighbor?

God's heart is always toward reconciliation. If you have been divorced, what is your current relationship like with your former spouse?

Special Note: There will be a panel discussion on Divorce/Remarriage at CTR on Thursday Feb. 16th 6:30- 8 PM in L115. You are invited to come with any questions or just to learn more.

#### Other Resources:

- Boettner, L.; [Divorce](#)
- Murray, J.; [Divorce](#)
- Ellison, S.A.; [Divorce and Remarriage in the Church](#)
- Kirk, K.E.; [Marriage and Divorce](#)
- Talley, J.; [Reconcilable Differences](#)
- Charles, R.H.; [The Teaching of the New Testament on Divorce](#)

**February 18-19, 2012**  
**Cost of Following Jesus**  
*Matthew 19:16-26*

**Getting Connected**

In your family of origin, would you say there was a stronger theme of “good works get you to Heaven” or “faith and grace get you to Heaven?”

Growing up, did you worry much about whether you would go to Heaven if you died?  
Why or why not?

Bottom line, what was your initial reason for choosing to “follow Jesus?”

**Going Deeper**

Read Matthew 19:13-14 (from last week). Review together the qualities that children have.

Discuss Jesus’ attitude towards them, and the statement He made about them. (v.14).

Now read Matthew 19:16 – 23. Compare the attitude of the young man to that of the children.

Read Exodus 20:12-16. Why do you think Jesus only listed 6 of the 10 Commandments?

What category of relationships did the six commandments Jesus listed fall into?

What category of relationship did the four commandments that Jesus did not list fall into?

Why do you think Jesus told the young man to sell everything and give the money to the poor? What do you think Jesus was getting at in the young man's heart?

### **Living Out the Truth of God's Word**

How does Jesus' interaction with this young man challenge your own heart?

Spend some time asking God to show you things in your heart that you have trusted in more than you have trusted in Him...For having eternal life in His Kingdom...For significance and security as you live your life on this earth.

Take some time to deal with whatever He has shown you personally before Him.

**February 25-26, 2012**  
**Reward of Following Jesus**  
*Matthew 19:27-30*

**Getting Connected**

What is a “sacrifice”? What does it mean?

When was the last time you had to make a “sacrifice”?  
Did you receive something in return?

**Going Deeper**

Read Matthew 19:27-30. What question did Peter ask of Jesus in verse 27? Read Matthew 19:26. Explain why Peter asked this question?

In verses 28 and 29, Jesus promises to more than make up for our sacrifices; do you believe him?

Spend some time talking about what heaven will be like. Read Revelation 20:11-13. What are the “deeds” talked of in these verses?

Is your name written in the Book of Life? Have you committed your life to Christ? If so, are you all set now or are there more sacrifices for you to make?

## **Living Out the Truth of God's Word**

If you are not sure whether or not you've committed your life to Christ, say it out loud - seek answers. If you've done that and you are ready, ask your leader or facilitator to pray with you for the gift of eternal life. We look forward with hope to seeing your name written in the Lamb's Book of Life.

Are you aware of something the Lord has asked you to sacrifice at this given time? Have you? Why or why not?

When we pray, the Lord speaks to us through His Word, other people, our circumstances and through that still small voice in our hearts. Pray for the Lord to reveal to you what deeds and sacrifices He has for you. Enlist the help of your group in revealing this and being obedient in it.

**March 3-4, 2012**  
**Last First; First Last**  
*Matthew 20:1-16*

**Getting Connected**

Name some of the good gifts you've received in your life. Why were they "good" for you? Did you *deserve* them?

Have you ever given someone extra grace?  
(grace=unmerited favor; a gift you don't deserve).

Have you ever been employed in a situation whereby you were not paid what was promised?

**Going Deeper**

Read Matthew 20:1-16. What is the theme of this story? Was the landowner unjust?

Read verses 8-12. Can you relate to the statement by made by the workers who labored all day? Wouldn't that have been anyone's reaction?

In Jesus' examples throughout scripture, things are opposite from worldly things. Read Luke 7:36-47. How is Jesus' treatment of the woman backwards from the world? Read Matthew 19:13-15. Children were regarded as inferior in Jesus' day. How is Jesus treatment of children backwards from the world?

How were the thoughts of the laborers who labored all day opposite from the landowner's actual intent?

The landowner did not treat the laborer with injustice. He was fair to those who worked all day but gave “grace” to those who arrived late.

Finally, what is meant by verse 19:30 and verse 20:16? Read Mark 2:17.

### **Living Out the Truth**

Read 2 Colossians 12:9 replacing the word grace with the words “unmerited favor”. What favor has the Lord shown Paul?

Besides the free gift of grace in the form of eternal life, spend some time discussing grace of any other form that Jesus has shown you.

Does giving grace to one deplete Jesus’ ability to give grace to others? Jesus is infinite, nothing depletes Him and He desires to give grace to all in many forms. Do not be afraid to ask for grace in a given situation. Pray unceasingly. As a group, spend 30 minutes praying, each taking a turn as you feel led.

**March 10-11, 2012**  
**Take Care of My Sons**  
*Matthew 20:20-28*

**Getting Connected**

Are you a "make it happen" person? What are the good and bad parts of being like that?

Are you a "sit back and watch it happen" person? What are the good and bad parts of being like that?

**Going Deeper**

Read Matthew 20:20-28. Review what Jesus had just told His followers was going to happen in Jerusalem. (Matthew 20:17-19)

James' and John's mother asks a favor of Jesus.

Based on what she asks, what part of Jesus' message to His followers did she seem to focus on? What part was she skipping over?

In verses 22-28, Jesus gives a picture of "greatness" in His Kingdom. How does that compare with what you picture as "greatness"?

## **Living out the Truth of God's Word**

How do I most often relate to Jesus? Do I relate to Him with requests that benefit myself and family or with a heart that is pursuing following His example as a servant?

How have I not counted the cost concerning my desire to be in the Kingdom of God?

Take some time to ask God to show you some selfish motives in your own heart in your choice to follow Him. Take the time to really wrestle with those things, and decide what needs to change in your heart.

**March 17-18, 2012**  
**Compassion & Healing**  
*Matthew 20:29-34*

**Getting Connected**

Tell about a time when you prayed for healing. What happened?

Tell about a time when you experienced compassion from someone else. Who showed you compassion? What were the circumstances? How did you feel?

**Going Deeper**

Read Matthew 20:29-30. Picture this scene. Describe the scene by answering some “W” questions: Where does this take place? Who is involved? What is happening?

The passage says there were two blind men. Do you think it was helpful for them to come to Jesus together?

When they called Him Lord, what were they acknowledging?

Read Matthew 20:31-34. What was the crowd’s reaction to their cry and how did the blind men respond?

What question did Jesus ask the men? Why do you think He asked that question?

The passage says Jesus had compassion on them. How would you define compassion? If time, look up several definitions of compassion.

### **Living Out the Truth of God's Word**

The blind men supported one another in their request. Who are you inviting to stand with you in prayer

The blind men sat by the roadside where they knew Jesus would pass. Where do you go to seek Him? Are you putting yourself right in His path?

The blind men didn't give up; they didn't listen to the crowd around them. Are there requests in your life that you have stopped praying about?

Blindness can be spiritual as well as physical. We are often unaware when we are blind to things. Ask God to open your eyes to any wounds that need healing in your life and in those around you.

**March 24-25, 2012**  
**Jesus Predicts His Death; OT Predictions**  
*Matthew 20:17-19*

**Getting Connected**

In the study related to the weekend of March 3 and 4, we spent a good deal of time on “grace=unmerited favor”. Do you have a good understanding of this word? Have you had a chance to show grace to anyone since last meeting?

Have you contemplated your death at all? Have you had any brushes with death? If so, did it change you in any way?

Are you ready to die?

These are tough questions making for deep, dark conversation. Jesus does just this with his disciples.

**Going Deeper**

Read Matthew 20:17-19. Why do you think Jesus has told them this multiple times?

Did Jesus know how they would react with his death?  
Read Luke 22:33-34.

Jesus quoted an Old Testament prophecy about himself in Luke 22:37. From where in the Old Testament do these verses come?

### **Living Out the Truth**

This week's verses are very difficult to read. We, and the disciples, were being prepared for Jesus' death. We, like the disciples are being told in advance and given the tools (Old Testament prophecy) to remember Jesus words and to understand it better when the shock of His death wears off. How has this affected you this week?

Put yourself in Jesus' shoes. How difficult must that have been for Him to know His death was imminent and the exact method of his torture?

Have you had a loved one pass away in which you received forewarning; such as from cancer, etc.? Did that make it any easier?

If your death was predicted, what would make your passing easier? Would it be easier if, in the imminence of your death, you were able to bring understanding and healing to others?

Are you ready to die?

**March 31 – April 1, 2012**  
**Triumphal Entry**  
*Matthew 21:1-11*

**Getting Connected**

If Jesus asked you to do something that seemed "awkward" or "odd", how do you think you would probably handle it? What would be going on in your mind?

Why?

**Going Deeper**

The Jewish people were living in their Homeland (Israel), but they were living under the occupying military oppression of Rome. They had been yearning for their freedom from Rome for generations. Rome was a cruel, God-less, hedonistic, powerful force. The Jewish people were not free to speak of their longing for freedom....they had to use "secret codes" to communicate that with each other. They were all longing for the promised Messiah to come and overthrow Rome and establish a free Kingdom in Israel.

How would a "conquering King" typically enter the capital city to establish his Kingdom?

Contrast this with how Jesus entered Jerusalem in this story.

Read Isaiah 62:11 and Zechariah 9:9. How was Jesus fulfilling these ancient prophecies in this passage?

Two of the "secret codes" were to use palm branches to non-verbally communicate "Free Us!" and saying "Hosannah!" was a cry to "Save Us!" that was actually a prayer directed to God Himself.

What were the crowds expecting Jesus to do?

What was Jesus actually going to do within the week?  
What kind of "freedom" was His priority?

### **Living Out the Truth**

Where do you see similarities to yourself in this story?

What things in your own heart do you sense God longs to change?

What do you long to be free from? But what might be the deeper "freedom" Jesus wants to give you?