



INTRODUCING THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW



What does it mean to be a disciple of Jesus Christ? How can we effectively disciple others?

Discipleship is the application of Christian truth to the present: “What does God want me to do about this relationship?” “How can I deal with anxiety?” We need to know what God expects of us on a daily basis. Discipleship is a very practical matter.

The book of Matthew was written to teach us how to be disciples of Jesus Christ and how to disciple others. Your most important need as a disciple is to know what the Lord is like. Matthew will help you.

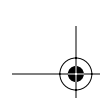
Practical questions are a concern of Matthew’s as he writes his book. You will discover how to handle anger and envy. You will learn how to strengthen your faith, how to pray and how to grow in humility. You will gain insights into a biblical approach to evangelism. You will find out what attitudes the Lord thinks are important. And you will learn how to handle suffering and grief. In short, a study of Matthew will help you become a better disciple and disciplemaker.

The contents of Matthew divide into two equal sections: 1:1—16:20, which focuses on the identity and authority of Jesus, and 16:21—28:20, which focuses on Jesus’ opposition and persecution culminating in the cross and resurrection.

From beginning to end, Matthew is an exciting and challenging Gospel. Get ready for an adventure!

Stephen and Jacalyn Eyre





D A Y O N E

MATTHEW 1—2

In Search of the King

HAVE YOU EVER waited with anticipation for something, only to find that when it came it was not what you wanted at all?

The long-awaited birth of the Messiah is recorded in Matthew 1—2. The nation of Israel waited for centuries for God’s anointed King to be born. What a wonderful day that was to be. Jesus’ birth, however, was greeted not with royal gladness by the nation and its leaders but with intrigue and conflict. The political and religious establishments felt threatened by the coming of the Messiah. It was left to foreign leaders to welcome the newborn King.

☞ WARMING UP TO GOD

Think of something you once strongly desired (a car, a special relationship or whatever). How did it match up to your expectations?

☞ DISCOVERING THE WORD

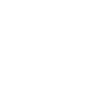
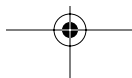
1. *Read Matthew 1—2.* Considering Matthew’s purpose to portray Jesus as a heavenly king, why would Matthew include a lineage at the very beginning of his book (1:1-17)?
2. What does 1:18-25 tell us about Jesus’ origin and destiny?
3. In chapter 2, how does Jesus the heavenly king contrast with King Herod?
4. How are the Magi different from the religious leaders in this passage?
5. God is the unseen actor throughout chapter 2. In what ways can we see his behind-the-scenes actions (vv. 6, 15, 18, 23)?

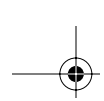
☞ APPLYING THE WORD

- How has knowing Jesus involved you in a search or journey?
- The responses of the Magi and Herod are typical of how people respond to Jesus today. What might cause people to respond to Jesus so differently?
- The Magi not only found Jesus, they worshiped him and witnessed to the city of Jerusalem concerning his birth (2:2-3). How has your search for the Lord resulted in worship and telling others about him?

☞ RESPONDING IN PRAYER

Spend time worshiping Jesus. Ask God to help you tell others about him.





D A Y T W O

MATTHEW 3

Preparing for the King

IN ANCIENT TIMES the coming of a king required special preparation. A herald was sent ahead to prepare the road on which the king would be traveling. Holes were filled, rough places made smooth and crooked sections straightened. The same thing happened when Queen Elizabeth II visited the Bahamas. In preparation for her coming, the roads she would be traveling on were completely resurfaced. In Matthew 3 John the Baptist is sent to prepare the way for the coming of the Lord. But his arrival required a very different kind of preparation.

 **WARMING UP TO GOD**

Spend some time in preparation for meeting the Lord by confessing your sins and listening for God's assurance of forgiveness.

 **DISCOVERING THE WORD**

1. *Read Matthew 3.* For Israel the desert was a place of both punishment and renewal (recall the wilderness wanderings). How does John's ministry convey both concepts (vv. 1-12)?
2. The religious leaders considered themselves children of Abraham (v. 9). According to verses 7-10, how were they abusing this privilege?
3. John calls us to produce "fruit in keeping with repentance" (v. 8). Give examples of the kind of fruit you think he has in mind.
4. Both John and Jesus have ministries of baptism (vv. 11-12). How are their baptisms similar and different?
5. What does Jesus' willingness to be baptized suggest about him (v. 15)?

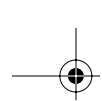
 **APPLYING THE WORD**

- The coming of Christ either demands repentance or brings judgment. In what ways do you need to better prepare for his return?
- Think of people around you who have rough places or valleys in their lives. How can you help them smooth out the rough places or fill in the valleys in preparation for Jesus' coming?

 **RESPONDING IN PRAYER**

Ask God to help you show others how to prepare for Jesus.





DAY THREE

MATTHEW 4

The Beginning of the Kingdom

“IS IT TIME YET?” “How much longer?” Those are the questions children ask repeatedly as Christmas approaches. It’s hard on them (and their parents) to wait. But when Christmas Day comes, it’s full of fun and surprises. After weeks of waiting, we all get to open our new gifts. The beginning of Jesus’ ministry was like the coming of Christmas. After a long wait, the wrappings came off and the world got to see God’s greatest gift.

WARMING UP TO GOD

Reflect on the last time you experienced something new—starting a new job, going to a new school, moving to a new community.

DISCOVERING THE WORD

1. *Read Matthew 4.* Look over the entire chapter to discover the locations mentioned. What do they tell us about Jesus’ ministry?
2. The prerequisite for Jesus’ ministry was his ability to resist temptation. What can we discover about Jesus from his encounter with Satan (vv. 1-11)?
3. Look specifically at each temptation (vv. 3-4, 5-7, 8-10). What was Satan trying to accomplish with each of them?
4. How does Jesus demonstrate his message “The kingdom of heaven is near” in verses 18-25?
5. One of Jesus’ first functions as heavenly king is calling disciples. From verses 18-22, develop a brief definition of discipleship.

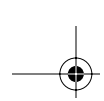
APPLYING THE WORD

- From Jesus’ example, what can we learn about temptation and how to resist it?
- Discipleship for the first disciples meant leaving job and family and following Jesus wherever he went. How has discipleship affected your life?
- Imagine the excitement of the first disciples as they watched Jesus healing and teaching. Describe how you would feel in their shoes.

RESPONDING IN PRAYER

Recall the qualities of discipleship you saw. Pray that you will be made a faithful disciple.





D A Y F O U R

MATTHEW 5:1—6:18

The Law of the King (Part 1)

C. S. LEWIS was once criticized for not “caring for” the Sermon on the Mount. He replied, “If ‘caring for’ here means ‘liking’ or enjoying, I suppose no one ‘cares for’ it. . . . I can hardly imagine a more deadly spiritual condition than that of a man who can read that passage with tranquil pleasure” [*God in the Dock* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), pp. 181-82].

Studying the Sermon on the Mount can be a devastating experience. It exposes the depth of our sin and the shallowness of our commitment. But the pain it inflicts is meant to heal, not destroy, us. It is the most complete summary we have of Jesus’ ethical expectations for his followers. Throughout church history it has been a helpful guide and a convincing challenge.

☞ WARMING UP TO GOD

When is it hard for you to follow God’s law? Talk to God about your struggles with sin.

☞ DISCOVERING THE WORD

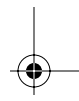
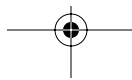
1. Read *Matthew 5:1—6:18*. The Beatitudes describe the qualities Jesus desires in his disciples (5:3-12). Give a brief definition of each quality.
2. What do the metaphors of salt and light (5:13-16) suggest about our role in society?
3. In the rest of chapter 5, Jesus discusses various misconceptions we might have about the Law (Old Testament Scriptures). Why do you think Jesus stresses that he did not come to abolish the Law (5:17-20)?
4. How does Jesus’ teaching on murder and adultery (5:21-30) differ from the traditional understanding?
5. How does Jesus want us to respond to evil and enemies (5:38-47)?
6. What do we learn about motives from Jesus’ teaching in 6:1-18?

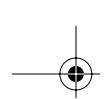
☞ APPLYING THE WORD

- Why are our motives just as important as our religious acts?
- What does this reveal to you about your motives?
- In what way do you need to experience Christ’s blessing?

☞ RESPONDING IN PRAYER

Pray for Christ’s blessing in the areas in which you feel needy.





D A Y F I V E

MATTHEW 6:19—7:29

The Law of the King (Part 2)

JIM ELLIOT, a missionary killed by the Auca Indians, once wrote, “He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.” His words echo this portion of the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus asks us to choose between two treasures, two masters, two roads and two destinies. But he clearly explains why following him is the only wise choice.

 **WARMING UP TO GOD**

When are earthly treasures more tempting to you than heavenly ones? Give some thought to what earthly things have a draw on you.

 **DISCOVERING THE WORD**

1. *Read Matthew 6:19—7:29.* In 6:19-24 Jesus talks about treasures, eyes and masters. What common themes tie these verses together?
2. Worry is a dominant theme in 6:25-34. How can we escape worrying about such things as food and clothes?
3. What is the difference between judging others and being properly discerning (7:1-6)?
4. How should our knowledge of the Father affect our prayers (7:7-11)?
5. In the final section of the Sermon (7:13-27), Jesus talks about narrow and wide gates, good and bad trees, and wise and foolish builders. How do these three metaphors work together to make a common point?

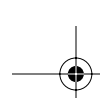
 **APPLYING THE WORD**

- What does seeking first God’s kingdom and righteousness (6:33) mean practically for your life?
- Putting Jesus’ words in practice is the way to build a lasting foundation against the day of judgment (7:24-27). What will the practice of Jesus’ sermon require of you?

 **RESPONDING IN PRAYER**

Pray that you will be a person of wisdom and discernment and not of judgment.





D A Y S I X

MATTHEW 8:1—9:34

The Powers of the King

SOMEONE ONCE commented about a U.S. president: “I don’t know where he is going, but I sure like the way he leads.” Leaders must demonstrate authority. But wise leaders know they must not abuse their authority. They know people follow leaders who also demonstrate integrity and compassion. In chapters 8—9 Jesus demonstrates that he is a worthy king, one in whom we can safely put our trust.

 **WARMING UP TO GOD**

Reflect on how Jesus’ authority has guided you in recent days.

 **DISCOVERING THE WORD**

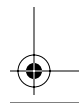
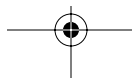
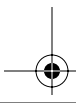
1. *Read Matthew 8:1—9:34.* In chapters 8—9 Jesus’ miracles occur in three groups, followed by a response, or reaction. Briefly describe how Jesus demonstrates his authority in 8:1-22.
2. In 8:18-22 Jesus begins to attract would-be followers. What do these verses teach us about the cost and urgency of following him?
3. What do we learn in 8:23—9:17 about the extent of Jesus’ authority?
4. What is the relationship between Jesus’ claim to have authority to forgive sins and his healing of the paralytic (9:1-8)?
5. In 9:9-17 Jesus compares himself to a doctor and a bridegroom. Then he discusses garments and wineskins. What do these illustrations teach us about his ministry?
6. How do people respond to Jesus in 9:18-34?

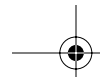
 **APPLYING THE WORD**

- Look back over chapters 8—9. How does Jesus want us to respond to his power and authority?
- How can a knowledge of Jesus’ power and authority strengthen your faith?

 **RESPONDING IN PRAYER**

Spend time praising God for Jesus’ leadership.





D A Y S E V E N

MATTHEW 9:35—11:30

The Messengers of the King

DURING THE LATE 1800s, a wealthy philanthropist decided to give away all his money. He announced he would give five hundred dollars to anyone with a legitimate need. The response was overwhelming. People lined up day after day to receive their gift.

The gospel is a priceless treasure. But as we offer it to people, their response is not always enthusiastic. In this passage Jesus warns us about those who oppose his message and his messengers. But he also encourages us as we reach out to blind and needy people.

 **WARMING UP TO GOD**

Have you ever known someone who seemed to like you only for what you could give them? Think back on how you felt about that relationship.

 **DISCOVERING THE WORD**

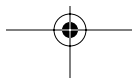
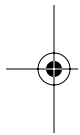
1. Read *Matthew 9:35—11:30*. How and why does Jesus demonstrate compassion for the crowds (9:35-38)?
2. As a result of his compassion, Jesus sends out the Twelve (10:1-15). Describe their mission.
3. Jesus warns the disciples that their compassionate ministry will not be warmly received (10:16-25). What will they experience?
4. In 10:26-33 Jesus prepares his present and future disciples for opposition. Why shouldn't we be afraid of those who oppose us?
5. What does Jesus promise to those who are receptive to our message (10:40-42)?
6. What does 11:7-19 tell us about John and those who heard his message?

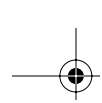
 **APPLYING THE WORD**

- In what ways have you found rest in your life by coming to Jesus?
- What have you learned from this study about Jesus and the nature of discipleship?

 **RESPONDING IN PRAYER**

Pray for the gift of rest in Jesus.





DAY EIGHT

MATTHEW 12

The Leaders and the King

POWER OVER PEOPLE is not easily shared. Wars have been fought, people assassinated and elections rigged in order to gain or maintain power.

The leaders of Israel were becoming concerned over the growing reputation and following of Jesus. Like ripples in a pool of water, the ministry of Jesus and his disciples continued to have a widening impact on the Jewish nation. If Jesus' followers became too numerous, the leaders would end up losing their positions of authority. In Matthew 12 they formulate a strategy to discredit him.

WARMING UP TO GOD

Recall a time untrue rumors about you were being spread around. How did it affect your relationships?

DISCOVERING THE WORD

1. *Read Matthew 12.* Consider the ways that religious leaders attacked Jesus in verses 1-14. What was their strategy?
2. As you compare the Pharisees' second accusation against Jesus (v. 10) with their own response (v. 14), what irony do you see?
3. Notice the startling contrast between the religious leaders' attitude toward Jesus and God's attitude (vv. 15-21). How do they differ?
4. In verses 43-45 Jesus tells the Pharisees and teachers of the law a story. What does it reveal about them?
5. Look back over chapter 12. What factors led to the hardness and unbelief of the Pharisees and teachers of the law?

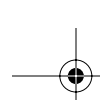
APPLYING THE WORD

- How can we avoid being like the Pharisees and teachers of the law?
- What area of change in your life does this suggest you consider?

RESPONDING IN PRAYER

Ask God to teach you how to read and understand his Word so that you can use it to his glory.





D A Y N I N E

MATTHEW 13

The Parables of the King

CROWDS ARE FICKLE. One moment they follow with enthusiasm, the next they turn hostile and angry. In Matthew 13 Jesus speaks to a mixed and fickle crowd. Some are hungry to hear his message. Others are suspicious and hostile.

In this setting Jesus begins to speak in parables. These stories test our spiritual sight and hearing. They also expose the condition of our hearts.

 **WARMING UP TO GOD**

Prepare for this study by asking God to open your mind and heart to what is here for you.

 **DISCOVERING THE WORD**

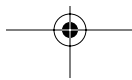
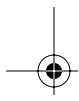
1. *Read Matthew 13.* According to the parable of the sower, what responses does Jesus expect as he preaches his message of the kingdom (vv. 1-9, 18-23)?
2. In verse 10 the disciples ask Jesus why he speaks to the people in parables. Explain his reply (vv. 11-17).
3. Wheat and weeds look similar until the harvest. How does this parable explain God's delayed judgment of the wicked (vv. 24-30, 36-43)?
4. What do the parables of the mustard seed and yeast suggest about the way the kingdom grows (vv. 31-35)?
5. What do the parables of the hidden treasure and the pearl teach us about the value of the kingdom (vv. 44-46)?

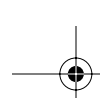
 **APPLYING THE WORD**

- Jesus wants his disciples to understand the parables. How have they enlarged your understanding of the kingdom of heaven?
- Jesus also wants us to respond to what we have heard and understood. Throughout this chapter, what types of responses does he desire?

 **RESPONDING IN PRAYER**

Ask the Lord to help you respond to him in the ways you observed.





D A Y T E N

MATTHEW 14

The Revelation of the King (Part 1)

CRISES ARE UNCOMFORTABLE. They force us to make painful decisions, even when we don't want to decide. In Matthew 14 Jesus places the disciples in tough situations where they must act on what they have learned about him. The focus shifts from parables about the kingdom to the identity of the king.

 **WARMING UP TO GOD**

Teachers use tests. But tests are not limited to school; God also uses tests throughout our lives. Recall a time you thought you were being tested by God.

 **DISCOVERING THE WORD**

1. *Read Matthew 14.* In verses 1-2 Herod speculates about Jesus' identity. What led him to believe that Jesus is John the Baptist (vv. 3-12)?
2. How is the feeding of the five thousand (vv. 13-21) a test for the disciples?
3. Herod and Jesus, the two kings in this passage, both serve banquets. What does each king's banquet reveal about his character and authority?
4. Imagine you are in the boat with the anxious disciples (vv. 22-26). Describe what you would see, hear and feel.
5. How is Peter's trying experience on the water a vivid picture of faith and doubt (vv. 28-31)?

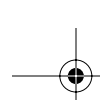
 **APPLYING THE WORD**

- When are you most tempted to take your eyes off the Lord and sink in doubt?
- In verse 33 the disciples worship Jesus and declare, "Truly you are the Son of God." What do you see in this incident that leads you to worship Jesus?
- How can these things help you to trust Jesus the next time you are tempted to doubt?

 **RESPONDING IN PRAYER**

Spend a few minutes worshiping Jesus, the Son of God.





DAY ELEVEN

MATTHEW 15:1—16:20

The Revelation of the King (Part 2)

EUREKA! What a relief and pleasure it is when something we have not quite understood becomes clear to us. In this section of Matthew the disciples come to a supernatural understanding of Jesus. Speaking for the disciples, Peter declares who Jesus really is. Peter's words bring us to the climax of the first half of Matthew.

☞ WARMING UP TO GOD

Think back to how you felt the first time you recognized who Jesus is and what he offers to you.

☞ DISCOVERING THE WORD

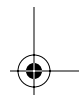
1. *Read Matthew 15:1—16:20.* Religious leaders from Jerusalem oppose Jesus by attacking the disciples (15:1-2). What is their complaint, and what does it suggest about Jesus?
2. How does Jesus respond to their accusation (15:3-20)?
3. How would you account for the unusual interaction between Jesus, the woman and the disciples (15:21-28)?
4. After Jesus heals the sick and feeds the four thousand, the religious leaders ask him for a sign from heaven (16:1). Why do you think Jesus resists them (16:2-4)?
5. In 16:5-12 the disciples misunderstand Jesus' allusion to yeast. How is their misunderstanding related to a lack of faith?
6. In 16:5-12 the disciples couldn't even grasp a simple figure of speech. How then does Peter have enough insight to confess that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God (16:13-17)?

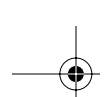
☞ APPLYING THE WORD

- Are there religious practices in your life that are in danger of becoming outward, empty forms? Explain.
- How can you avoid this tendency?
- Jesus' question to Peter is one that everyone will have to respond to at some point. Who do you say Jesus is, and why?

☞ RESPONDING IN PRAYER

Offer praise to Jesus Christ for who he is.





D A Y T W E L V E

MATTHEW 16:21—17:27

The Work of the King

ONE OF THE RULES of good management is “No surprises.” While surprises can be fun, they can also be upsetting. Good corporate leadership seeks to eliminate surprises so that everything runs according to plan.

Now that the disciples have been with Jesus for a while, he must prepare them for the true nature of his kingdom. They are shocked at the cost of his mission and his requirements for discipleship.

 **WARMING UP TO GOD**

Recall an unpleasant surprise you received and how you handled it.

 **DISCOVERING THE WORD**

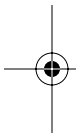
1. Read *Matthew 16:21—17:27*. What were some of the surprises the disciples received?
2. Peter and Jesus seem to be at cross-purposes in 6:22-23. Why do you think Jesus addresses Peter as Satan?
3. What does Jesus reveal about the cost and rewards of following him (16:24-28)?
4. What would the disciples learn about Jesus by his transformed appearance, his conversation with Moses and Elijah, and the voice from heaven (17:1-8)?
5. How might this help resolve their confusion about Jesus’ impending death?
6. As a result of their powerlessness, what do the disciples learn about faith?

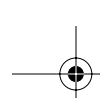
 **APPLYING THE WORD**

- How has following Jesus produced times of confusion for you?
- We don’t always understand life from a heavenly perspective. How can this passage reorient your thinking?

 **RESPONDING IN PRAYER**

Ask God to help you understand his ways so you can be a better disciple.





DAY THIRTEEN

MATTHEW 18

The Greatest in the Kingdom

WHO IS GREATEST in the kingdom of God? How can a subject of the kingdom earn true wealth? When should we forgive? These questions dominate the thoughts of the disciples as they approach Jerusalem. They are also important questions for us. How we answer them will directly affect the quality of our discipleship.

 **WARMING UP TO GOD**

When has someone sinned against you? Reflect on how it affected you.

 **DISCOVERING THE WORD**

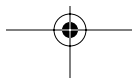
1. *Read Matthew 18.* The disciples want to know who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven (v. 1). How does Jesus' appeal to little children answer their question (vv. 2-5)?
2. Spiritually speaking, the "little ones" are those who humble themselves ("become like little children") and believe in Jesus. What is Jesus' attitude toward those who cause the little ones to sin (vv. 6-7)?
3. How do verses 10-14 further emphasize the value Jesus places on his "little ones"?
4. Greatness in the kingdom is also dependent on living a life of forgiveness and mercy. What guidelines does Jesus give for dealing with those who sin against us (vv. 15-20)?
5. Forgiving someone once does not always guarantee that person will not offend us again. How can the parable of the unmerciful servant help us to keep on forgiving (vv. 21-35)?

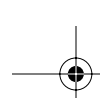
 **APPLYING THE WORD**

- Children have little status in the eyes of adults. How can we assume the status of children in our circle of friends and coworkers?
- How should the value Jesus places on his "little ones" affect the way we view ourselves and other believers?
- How does this chapter challenge your ideas of value and greatness?

 **RESPONDING IN PRAYER**

Ask God to help you forgive those who have hurt you.





DAY FOURTEEN

MATTHEW 19—20

Life in the Kingdom

WHAT IS REALLY important to you? What makes you feel important? Money? Success? Recognition? These are common answers. The values that Jesus teaches, however, have little to do with such things. In the previous study we learned that to be great in the kingdom, we must become “small.” In this study we will see how the values of the kingdom conflict with the world’s approach to wealth and leadership.

☞ WARMING UP TO GOD

What does success mean to you? Think about how your idea of success compares to what our culture says.

☞ DISCOVERING THE WORD

1. *Read Matthew 19—20.* How do Jesus’ teachings on divorce and remarriage contrast with the values and practices of our culture (19:1-12)?
2. In 19:16-22 a young man struggles in choosing between wealth and eternal life. Why do you think Jesus required him to choose?
3. What wealth does Jesus offer those who follow him (vv. 27-30)?
4. What does the parable of the workers teach us about greatness and wealth in the kingdom of God (20:1-16)?
5. In what ways is Jesus a model of the values he teaches in 20:25-28?
6. How does Jesus’ interaction with the two blind men illustrate the values he has just taught?

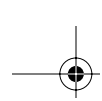
☞ APPLYING THE WORD

- How have you experienced what Jesus describes in 19:29?
- In what ways has Jesus’ teaching on greatness and wealth (Mt 18—20) challenged you?

☞ RESPONDING IN PRAYER

Ask God to give you strength to stand against the world and to make his values your values.





D A Y F I F T E E N

MATTHEW 21:1-27

The King Occupies His Capital

IT IS FASHIONABLE to believe in Jesus. Surveys reveal that millions profess to be Christians. Celebrities claim miraculous, overnight conversions. Politicians boast they are “born again.” Religion has become big business.

In Matthew 21 Jesus’ popularity reaches its zenith. In the midst of public acclamation he occupies Jerusalem, the capital of the Jewish nation. His clash with the religious leaders reveals the difference between genuine faith and empty profession.

 **WARMING UP TO GOD**

Today we will see Jesus enter Jerusalem to the praise and acclamation of the crowd. Imagine you have an opportunity to see Jesus. How do you feel? Express your feelings to the Lord.

 **DISCOVERING THE WORD**

1. Read *Matthew 21:1-27*. Excitement is building and emotions are intense. What words or phrases communicate something of the electrifying atmosphere?
2. What different perceptions does the crowd have of Jesus (vv. 9-11)?
3. Jesus clears the temple in verses 12-17. How does the condition of the temple contrast with what God intended?
4. A fig tree with leaves usually has fruit. How does Jesus’ cursing of the fig tree relate to his clearing the temple (vv. 18-22)?
5. How does Jesus’ encounter with the Pharisees (vv. 23-27) illustrate the danger of not responding to the light God gives us?

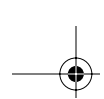
 **APPLYING THE WORD**

- In what ways do you see the modern church “buying and selling” like those in the temple?
- Identify one area in which your actions need to be more consistent with your beliefs.

 **RESPONDING IN PRAYER**

Praise God for who Jesus is and for what you have seen about him in this passage.





D A Y S I X T E E N

MATTHEW 21:28—22:46 *The King Silences the Opposition*

CONFRONTATION IS never easy. Yet there are times when the situation demands it. The religious leaders refused to acknowledge that Jesus was God’s Messiah sent to rule. Skillfully Jesus seeks to expose their hardness of heart and bring them to repentance. They respond not in repentance but by plotting a trap for him.

☞ WARMING UP TO GOD

From time to time we all have been involved in confrontations. Think about how you tend to feel in these situations.

☞ DISCOVERING THE WORD

1. Read *Matthew 21:28—22:46*. What does the parable of the two sons reveal about the chief priests and the elders (21:28-32)?
2. How does the parable of the tenants illustrate the character of the Father, the Son and the religious leaders (21:33-46)?
3. How is the kingdom of heaven like the banquet described in 22:1-14?
4. In 22:23-28 the Sadducees tell Jesus a story designed to refute the resurrection. How does the story illustrate their ignorance of Scripture and God’s power (22:29-33)?
5. Love was the foundation of the Old Testament law (22:34-40). Why do you think we have so much trouble equating God’s laws with love?
6. Jesus poses a dilemma to the Pharisees that silences them: “How can the Christ be both the son of David and his Lord?” (22:41-46). What does this paradox reveal about the Lord?

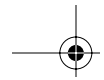
☞ APPLYING THE WORD

- What guidance does Jesus give for fulfilling our obligations to God and the government?
- How can these accounts of Jesus in conflict strengthen your faith in him?
- What do they teach you about handling conflict?

☞ RESPONDING IN PRAYER

Ask for the help you need for whatever conflict you face today.





DAY SEVENTEEN

MATTHEW 23

The King Condemns the Rebels

INFLUENCE IS A powerful force. Those who influence others are able to change minds and to direct actions. The religious leaders in Israel possessed the power of influence. After they decided to oppose Jesus, they tried to lead others to do the same. In Matthew 23 Jesus condemns them point-blank. They should have been the first to enter the kingdom of God because of their knowledge of Scripture and their standing in the Jewish community. Because they refuse, Jesus calls them to judgment. This passage exposes the guilt of those who do not practice what they preach.

 **WARMING UP TO GOD**

When have you been hurt by inconsistency in the life or teaching of an influential person you respected? Talk to God about any feelings of hurt you still have.

 **DISCOVERING THE WORD**

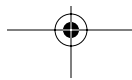
1. Read Matthew 23. What attitude does Jesus teach the people to have toward the religious leaders, and why (vv. 1-4)?
2. Compare the motives of the religious leaders (vv. 5-7) with the motives and attitudes Jesus requires of his followers (vv. 8-12).
3. Jesus pronounces seven woes (judgments) against the teachers of the law and the Pharisees (vv. 13-32). Summarize each one.
4. The entire generation to whom Jesus is speaking is held accountable for the "righteous blood" shed in all previous generations (vv. 33-36). Why do you think they received such a terrible sentence?
5. What responses do you have as you observe Jesus as a judge?
6. In the midst of this overwhelming condemnation, how is the tender compassion of Jesus also evident (vv. 33-39)?

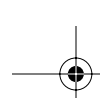
 **APPLYING THE WORD**

- Jesus condemns the religious leaders for confusing inward and outward righteousness (vv. 25-28). In what ways are we inclined to do that today?
- Where does this point out a place that needs to change in your life?

 **RESPONDING IN PRAYER**

Ask God to make your Christian life consistent with your beliefs.





D A Y E I G H T E E N

MATTHEW 24

The Return of the King

WE ALL WANT to be safe and secure. Yet many things can threaten our security: losing our job, our income, our health, our loved ones. Our ability to handle these threats depends on the source of our security. Matthew 24 focuses on the destruction of Jerusalem and the return of Christ. The true issue of Christ's return is not the hows or whens. Rather, how should we live in the present in light of this future? We must learn the true source of our security.

 **WARMING UP TO GOD**

Write down some things that give you a sense of security.

 **DISCOVERING THE WORD**

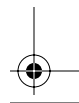
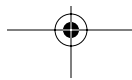
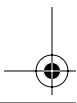
1. Read Matthew 24. After Jesus' statement about the temple's destruction, the disciples ask two questions (v. 3). Look through chapter 24, briefly noting ways that Jesus answers these questions.
2. Throughout history, people have set dates for Christ's return and have been mistaken. What events might deceive the disciples into thinking the end is at hand (vv. 4-8)?
3. Before the end comes, what dangers will believers face, and how are we to handle them (vv. 9-14)?
4. In 167 B.C. Antiochus Epiphanes attacked Jerusalem and set up a pagan altar in the temple—an event that anticipated “the abomination that causes desolation” spoken of by Jesus (v. 15). What occurs in the aftermath of this abomination (vv. 15-22)?
5. How will we be able to distinguish false Christs from the true (vv. 23-31)?
6. How do the parables of the thief and of the wise and wicked servants (vv. 42-51) emphasize the importance of living in light of Christ's return?

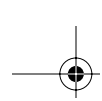
 **APPLYING THE WORD**

- Few of us have ever faced deadly peril for our faith. What types of pressure do you face for your faith in Christ?
- In what ways do you need greater watchfulness and perseverance?

 **RESPONDING IN PRAYER**

Praise God for giving you an unfailing source of security.





DAY NINETEEN

MATTHEW 25

Preparation for the King's Return

ACCOUNTABILITY CAN BE uncomfortable and inconvenient. Our desires and preferences are subject to the demands of another. Most of us would prefer to do things our own way. A rule of thumb in management is that people don't do what you expect; they do what you inspect. Jesus is coming back to inspect our lives. He holds us accountable for how we conduct ourselves in his absence. In Matthew 25 he urges us to prepare for his coming.

WARMING UP TO GOD

Have you ever been in a situation where your work did not meet up to standards when it was reviewed or inspected? Think back on how you felt in that situation.

DISCOVERING THE WORD

1. Read Matthew 25. How does the parable of the ten virgins illustrate the need to prepare for the groom's delayed return (vv. 1-13)?
2. A talent was a vast sum of money. In the parable of the talents, what were the master's expectations of his servants (vv. 14-30)?
3. How does the master demonstrate his approval or disapproval?
4. In the parable of the sheep and the goats, identify the King, the sheep, the goats and the "brothers" of the King (vv. 31-46).
5. What criteria does the King use to separate the sheep from the goats?
6. According to Jesus' teaching in this chapter, what should we be doing until he returns?

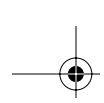
APPLYING THE WORD

- What resources and responsibilities has Jesus given you?
- How can you handle them in a good and faithful manner?
- How should the material in this chapter affect your current priorities?

RESPONDING IN PRAYER

Ask God to show you how to serve him.





D A Y T W E N T Y

MATTHEW 26

The Betrayal of the King

ON THE DRIZZLY DAY of October 16, 1555, Hugh Latimer and Nicholas Ridley, two influential English reformers, were tied to the stake and bundles of sticks were piled at their feet. The crowd strained to hear what the two men were saying. Would they recant or would they persist in dying as heretics? As the executioner pushed a torch into the wood, Latimer said, "Be of good comfort, Master Ridley, and play the man; we shall this day light such a candle, by God's grace, in England, as I trust shall never be put out." Suffering and temptation reveal the quality of our discipleship. Nowhere is this more evident than in Matthew 26, as we move into the climax of the book.

 **WARMING UP TO GOD**

Have you ever been tempted to stop following Christ? Explain.

 **DISCOVERING THE WORD**

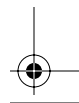
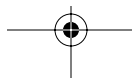
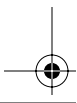
1. *Read Matthew 26.* How do verses 1-16 set the stage for Jesus' betrayal and death?
2. In verses 17-30 Jesus celebrates the Passover with his disciples. How is this occasion both ominous and hopeful?
3. What insights can we gain about Jesus from Gethsemane (vv. 36-46)?
4. As you look over the role of Judas in this chapter, why do you think the religious leaders used one of Jesus' own disciples to betray him (vv. 47-50)?
5. Why do you think Jesus was silent for the first part of his trial (vv. 57-63)?
6. In answer to the high priest's question (v. 63), Jesus declares that he is the Christ (alluding to Dan 7:13-14). Describe the immediate—and ultimate—impact of Jesus' words on those present (vv. 65-68).

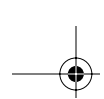
 **APPLYING THE WORD**

- When have you been confronted with the weakness of your commitment to the Lord?
- Jesus and the disciples were tempted in this chapter. How can Jesus' example and the disciples' failures help us withstand temptation and testing?

 **RESPONDING IN PRAYER**

Ask God to give you the courage to claim allegiance to Christ.





DAY TWENTY - ONE

MATTHEW 27

The Crucifixion of the King

DO YOU EVER FEEL that God is absent when you need him most? You pray but receive no answer. You cry but no one seems to care. As Pilate and the religious leaders condemn, mock and crucify God's Son, God himself seems strangely absent. Those who trust in the midst of roaring silence will in the end discover that God was there all along.

WARMING UP TO GOD

When have you felt as though God was absent when you needed him? Talk to God about how you felt.

DISCOVERING THE WORD

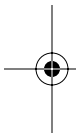
1. Read Matthew 27. After the religious leaders hand Jesus over to Pilate, Judas feels remorse (vv. 1-5). How is remorse different from repentance?
2. Jesus stands before Pilate in verses 11-26. How and why does Pilate seek to avoid sentencing Jesus?
3. The soldiers viciously mock Jesus in verses 27-31. What does their mockery reveal about their knowledge of Jesus?
4. As Jesus hangs on the cross, he is repeatedly mocked and insulted (vv. 32-44). How do these insults reveal spiritual choices these people have made?
5. As death begins to engulf him, Jesus cries out to God (vv. 45-46). What does his cry and the overshadowing darkness reveal about his relationship to the Father during this torment?
6. Observe the role Jesus' followers play during the events of his crucifixion and burial (vv. 55-61). How do you think they felt?

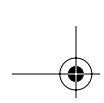
APPLYING THE WORD

- This chapter is filled with irony. Satan's "triumph" is actually his defeat. Christ's "defeat" is actually his triumph. How should this challenge our views about the way God works in our lives?

RESPONDING IN PRAYER

Pray for protection so that you won't succumb to social pressure.





D A Y T W E N T Y - T W O

MATTHEW 28

The Resurrection of the King

VICTORY REQUIRES proclamation. Once a battle has been won, it's time to spread the word. Matthew 28 focuses on the messengers of Jesus' resurrection: the angel tells the women, the women tell the disciples, the disciples tell the nations. Even the guards tell the religious leaders. As Matthew concludes his Gospel, we are invited to join with those who throughout history have been witnesses and messengers of Jesus, the victorious resurrected Lord.

 **WARMING UP TO GOD**

Recall a joyful Easter celebration you have experienced. What elements made it joyful for you?

 **DISCOVERING THE WORD**

1. *Read Matthew 28.* The angel is the first messenger of the resurrection (vv. 2-7). What is the significance of the angel's appearance and words?
2. Consider the mission of the women (vv. 1-10). How does it undergo a radical change?
3. The Roman guard and the Jewish leaders are confronted with a miracle. How do they respond, and why (vv. 11-15)?
4. The disciples go to Galilee, where they meet with Jesus. Describe the commission he gives to them and us (vv. 16-20).
5. How does Jesus equip them and future disciples to carry out his mission?

 **APPLYING THE WORD**

- What keeps people today from believing that Jesus is the resurrected Lord?
- As you conclude this study of Matthew, how can you be more involved in making disciples and fulfilling the Great Commission?

 **RESPONDING IN PRAYER**

Pray that God will help you to be faithful to this task.

