

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

CHAPTERS 12:46-17:13

Life Group
Participant's Guide

The Gospel of Matthew: Chapters 12-17

Sermon Series	Sermon Date	Passage
Week 1	23-Oct	Matthew 12:46-13:23
Week 2	30-Oct	Matthew 13:24-58
Week 3	06-Nov	Matthew 14:1-36
Week 4	13-Nov	Matthew 15:1-20
Week 5	20-Nov	Prayer Night – 21st Nov
Week 6	27-Nov	Matthew 16:13-28
Week 7	4-Dec	Matthew 17:1-13
Week 8	11-Dec	GG Christmas parties

For an overview of Matthew's gospel see the two video summaries from *The Bible Project*:

Matthew 1-13: <https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/matthew-1-13/>

Matthew 14-28: <https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/matthew-14-28/>

Matthew 12:46-13:23 / How to have more

UNDERSTANDING GOD'S WORD

Read Matthew 12:46-13:23

1. How do Jesus' comments about his family relate to the Gospel and the Church? (31-35)
2. What does the seed represent?
3. What are the four kinds of ground that the seed falls on? (vs 4-8)
4. Why are the birds able to snatch the seed from the path? What kind of person does this example represent? (v.19)
5. The rocky ground results in quick growth that fades quickly in the heat. Why is this? What kind of person does this soil represent? (vv.20-21)
6. What are the thorns that prevent growth and fruitfulness in a person's life? (vv.22)
7. Why does the person that represents the good soil bear fruit? (v.23, see Luke 8:15)
8. Jesus is speaking in a parable to his followers. What is a parable, and why do you think Jesus is teaching this way? (vs13-15)
9. Do you think Jesus intends to make things clear or obscure by telling parables?

APPLYING GOD'S WORD

10. What do you think Jesus means by 'the will of my Father'? (v50) What is the significant of that for your relationship with Jesus?

11. Jesus shows in this parable that the Word of God divides people into *two groups only* – those who hear the Word but have hard hearts that ultimately reject it, and those who hear the Word, accept it and bear fruit. Does this convict or challenge you in any way?

12. How are you responding to the Word of God? Be specific

13. To what parts of God's Word have you closed your eyes, deafened your ears, and hardened your heart? How have you seen this in your life and decisions?

14. What are some examples in your life where you are bearing fruit because you have heard and accepted God's Word?

15. Discuss one way you will personally put what you have learnt into practice in the coming week/s.

PRAYER

How did God's Word convict/challenge/encourage me in this session?

Prayer points for the coming week/s:

Who needs prayer in our Group:

Matthew 13:24-58 / The secrets of the Kingdom

UNDERSTANDING GOD'S WORD

Read Matthew 13:24-58

1. What does each parable teach us about what the Kingdom of heaven is like?

Vs 24-30, 36-43

Vs 31-33

Vs 44-46

Vs 47-50

2. Why does Jesus speak in parables? Vs 34-35 (see Psalm 78:2-4)

3. What was the initial response of those who heard Jesus' teaching in the synagogue at Nazareth (Vs 53-54)? What do you think were some reasons for their rejection of Jesus (vv.55)?

4. Why didn't Jesus do many miracles there (v.58)?

APPLYING GOD'S WORD

5. God's kingdom doesn't begin with the raising of a powerful army but in seeming weakness (sowing a tiny seed- the word about a crucified Saviour), yet nothing is able to stop it's spread throughout the world as it continues to grow, and to find it is like finding the most valuable thing in the world. How can that perspective be seen in our lives?
6. What do the parables of the good seed and bad and the net teach us about God and his plan of salvation (see 2 Peter 3:9-10)? How does this inform our attitude to evil in the world?
7. Jesus knows everything about you. He knows if you are good fish (a genuine believer) or bad (an unbeliever). He will one day separate those who trusted him from those who trusted themselves. How can we know?
8. How have you seen Kingdom growth at TCMB? As a group, brainstorm some ways you can be a part of furthering it.
9. Jesus made a conscious choice to work among those who believed in Him. Does unbelief ever hinder God's work in your life? Name some examples.

PRAYER

How did God's Word convict/challenge/encourage me in this session?

Prayer points for the coming week/s:

Who needs prayer in our Group:

Matthew 14:1-36 / The compassion of Christ

UNDERSTANDING GOD'S WORD

Read Matthew 14:1-12

1. What did Herod think of Jesus vs 1-2? Why did he think this?

2. Why was Herod not able to put John the Baptist to death initially? Why did he want to? (vv.3-5)

3. Look at v.5 & vs 9 again. What kind of person do you think Herod was? Have you ever come across anyone who has responded the way Herod did?

Read Matthew 14:13-21

4. Notice the striking reversal – vs 1, Herod heard the reports about Jesus, and now vs 13, Jesus heard what Herod had done. What point is Matthew making by doing this?

5. Jesus withdraws by boat to a solitary place, but as often happens the crowd sees where he's going and follows him on foot around the lake and arrive there before he gets there. What is Jesus' response and why?

6. What do you think was symbolic about the miracle itself and the number of baskets left over? What do you think Jesus was trying to teach them? (v.43, John 6:26-27)

Read Matthew 14:22-36

7. What did Jesus do after making the disciples cross over without Him? (vv.22-23)

8. Why were the disciples afraid when Jesus walked out to them? What does He say to them?
9. The words “**It is I**” literally translate to “**I am**”. Do you think Jesus might be making a statement about His identity? (See also Exodus 3:14, Isaiah 43:10; 51:12)
10. What is Matthew’s purpose for including this story? Why do you think that?
11. Why are verses 54-56 a good conclusion to what Jesus has been doing so far? What does it tell us about who He is and what He has power over?

APPLYING GOD’S WORD

12. Herod’s great desire was to be King of the Jews, and he refused to submit to the true King of the Jews. The old king of self still seeks to steal our allegiance from the true King, Jesus. How are you doing in this battle? When have you refused to submit to God because your desire was to build your own kingdom?
13. What encourages you and helps you to persevere in this spiritual battle?
14. Christ is full of compassion and knows and can provide your every need. Do you really believe this? What makes you doubt it? How can you strengthen your faith in this Jesus?
15. What can we learn from Jesus’ actions in v.23? Why did He need to do it? Why do we?
16. “The disciples saw the Lord with their eyes, but not with their hearts”. What is the difference?
17. To what extent are you so familiar with hearing about the works of Jesus that His actions fail to impact you and your life?

PRAYER

How did God's Word convict/challenge/encourage me in this session?

Prayer points for the coming week/s:

Who needs prayer in our Group:

Matthew 15:1-20 / Jesus and the Scripture

UNDERSTANDING GOD'S WORD

Read Matthew 15:1-9

1. Why did the Pharisees criticise Jesus' disciples when they ate (vv. 1-2)?
2. What is the essence of Jesus response in verses 3-6?
3. How did the Pharisees fit Isaiah's prophecy in vv.6-7? What was the example Jesus used and why did he say it was wrong?
4. Can you think of any present-day religious traditions that supersede what the Bible teaches?

Read Matthew 15:10-20

5. How does Jesus redefine what word 'defile' means?
6. What does the 'heart' refer to, and how does it participate in a person's defilement?
7. Read Jeremiah 17:9, Romans 3:10-12. How do these verses support what Jesus is saying in this passage?

APPLYING GOD'S WORD

8. Not all traditions are wrong. When and why can good traditions sometimes turn bad?

9. What is the danger of a church that refuses to do things differently than 'the way it has always been done'? How can we break out of this bondage to tradition?

10. When we look at this passage, what can we see that really matters to God?

11. How can hypocrisy sometimes show itself in a Christian's life?

12. In v.19, Jesus includes sins such as false testimony and slander alongside sins like murder and adultery. What does this teach us about how God views sin? How can we wrongfully categorise sin at times?

13. Read James 1:14-15. In what way does both Jesus and James' teaching challenge our attempts to blame people, circumstances, evil spirits or Satan for our sin?

14. It's never easy to come to terms with just how sinful we are. What should we do about it?

PRAYER

How did God's Word convict/challenge/encourage me in this session?

Prayer points for the coming week/s:

Who needs prayer in our Group:

Matthew 16:13-28 / Who do you say he is?

UNDERSTANDING GOD'S WORD

Read Matthew 16:13-28

1. What is the significance of Jesus referring to himself at the Son of Man (vs 13)?

2. The disciples would have been quite concerned with popular opinion and respond to Jesus first question (vs13) with three answers all prophets. Why is Peter's response (vs 16) to Jesus second question (vs 15) a key to understanding who Jesus is?

3. What does vs 17 tell us about who gives us spiritual understanding? See 2 Cor 4:6

4. Having finally brought the disciples to the place where they recognise that he is the Messiah, the Son of the living God, what does Jesus now do – vs 21?

5. Why does Jesus rebuke Peter (v.23)? What would have been Peter's mistaken beliefs about the Messiah that caused him to do what he did?

6. Peter's man-centred attempt to turn Jesus aside from God's eternal plan moved Jesus to teach them about what it really means to follow the Him. What does Jesus tell them to expect when they follow him?

APPLYING GOD'S WORD

7. If God gives spiritual sight, are we really responsible for our spiritual blindness?
8. What are some examples of how we as Christians can be subject to spiritual blindness, just like the disciples?
9. Confessing Jesus as Messiah is evidence of spiritual sight. What are some other examples of how seeing the gospel clearly makes a difference in our lives?
10. Is there a person you know who is walking in darkness, blind to the truth about who Jesus is? How does this passage encourage you? Pray about these people as a group.
11. Read 2 Corinthians 8:9; Philippians 2:5-8. How did Jesus deny Himself?
12. Why does seeing Jesus' denial of Himself inform a right view of discipleship?
13. Drawing on the answers from the last two questions, what do you think it looks like to "deny ourselves and take up our cross" at home, at church and in the workplace?
14. "In our society, it is incomprehensible that we would forfeit the experience of good, enjoyable things for the sake of a spiritual, invisible joy that we claim is greater." Why do you think this is so? Why do you think biblical self-denial is so uncommon in 21st century Australia?
15. What ideas, dreams, goals, desires or expectations does our society value that can get in the way of us living a life of self-denial and cross-bearing?

PRAYER

How did God's Word convict/challenge/encourage me in this session?

Prayer points for the coming week/s:

Who needs prayer in our Group:

Matthew 17:1-13 / The beginning of the end

UNDERSTANDING GOD'S WORD

Read Matthew 17:1-13

1. The word “transfigured” (v.2) literally means to “change form”. What do you think happened to Jesus on the mountain?
2. Who witnessed this event? What was the reaction of Peter? Why do you think he said what he did? (vv.2-6)
3. What do Moses and Elijah represent? What is the significance of taking them away, leaving Jesus and God’s voice from the cloud bearing witness? (vv.7-8)
4. What are some reasons this event would be so important for the disciples to witness before Christ’s death on the cross?

APPLYING GOD'S WORD

5. Have you ever had an experience “on the mountain” where Jesus was suddenly revealed to you as holy and glorious God? What do these experiences do for our faith?
6. The cross of suffering preceded Jesus’ crown of glory. What does this mean for us as followers of Jesus in our lives?
7. There are a lot of different people, opinions, and values in our society that we can listen to. God testifies: “This is my beloved Son, *listen to him*” (v.7). How does this phrase encourage, challenge, or convict you? Discuss.

PRAYER

How did God's Word convict/challenge/encourage me in this session?

Prayer points for the coming week/s:

Who needs prayer in our Group: