

MATTHEW

The Life of a Disciple





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- › grow in their love for Scripture;
- › gain new knowledge about what the Bible teaches;
- › develop biblical disciplines;
- › internalize the Word in a way that transforms their lives.



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**EXPLORE THE BIBLE: Matthew:
The Life of a Disciple**
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We believe that the Bible has God for its author; salvation for its end; and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter and that all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy. To review LifeWay's doctrinal guideline, please visit *lifeway.com/doctrinalguideline*.

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▶ ABOUT THIS STUDY

THE FIRST GOSPEL

The Gospel of Matthew provides Kingdom citizens with rich insights into Jesus' life and ministry. In this important Bible book we come to know Jesus in a way that compels us to live for Him. When we study Matthew's account of the life of Jesus, we'll love our King more completely, follow Him more sincerely, look forward to His return with greater confidence, and bend our knees and bow our hearts in anticipation of His eternal reign.

Explore the Bible: Matthew shows us that Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah. Throughout His ministry Jesus left no doubt about His identity. He was the promised Messiah whom God's people had been longing to see.

The **Explore the Bible** series will help you know and apply the encouraging and empowering truth of God's Word. Each session is organized in the following way.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT: This page explains the original context of each passage and begins relating the primary themes to your life today.

EXPLORE THE TEXT: These pages walk you through Scripture, providing helpful commentary and encouraging thoughtful interaction with God through His Word.

OBEY THE TEXT: This page helps you apply the truths you've explored. It's not enough to know what the Bible says. God's Word has the power to change your life.

LEADER GUIDE: This final section provides optional discussion starters and suggested questions to help anyone lead a group in reviewing each section of the personal study.



For helps on how to use *Explore the Bible*, tips on how to better lead groups, or additional ideas for leading, visit: ministrygrid.com/web/ExploreTheBible.

➤ GROUP COMMITMENT

As you begin this study, it's important that everyone agrees to key group values. Clearly establishing the purpose of your time together will foster healthy expectations and help ease any uncertainties. The goal is to ensure that everyone has a positive experience leading to spiritual growth and true community. Initial each value as you discuss the following with your group.

PRIORITY

Life is busy, but we value this time with one another and with God's Word. We choose to make being together a priority.

PARTICIPATION

We're a group. Everyone is encouraged to participate. No one dominates.

RESPECT

Everyone is given the right to his or her own opinions. All questions are encouraged and respected.

TRUST

Each person humbly seeks truth through time in prayer and in the Bible. We trust God as the loving authority in our lives.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Anything said in our meetings is never repeated outside the group without the permission of everyone involved. This commitment is vital in creating an environment of trust and openness.

SUPPORT

Everyone can count on anyone in this group. Permission is given to call on one another at any time, especially in times of crisis. The group provides care for every member.

ACCOUNTABILITY

We agree to let the members of our group hold us accountable to commitments we make in the loving ways we decide on. Questions are always welcome. Unsolicited advice, however, isn't permitted.

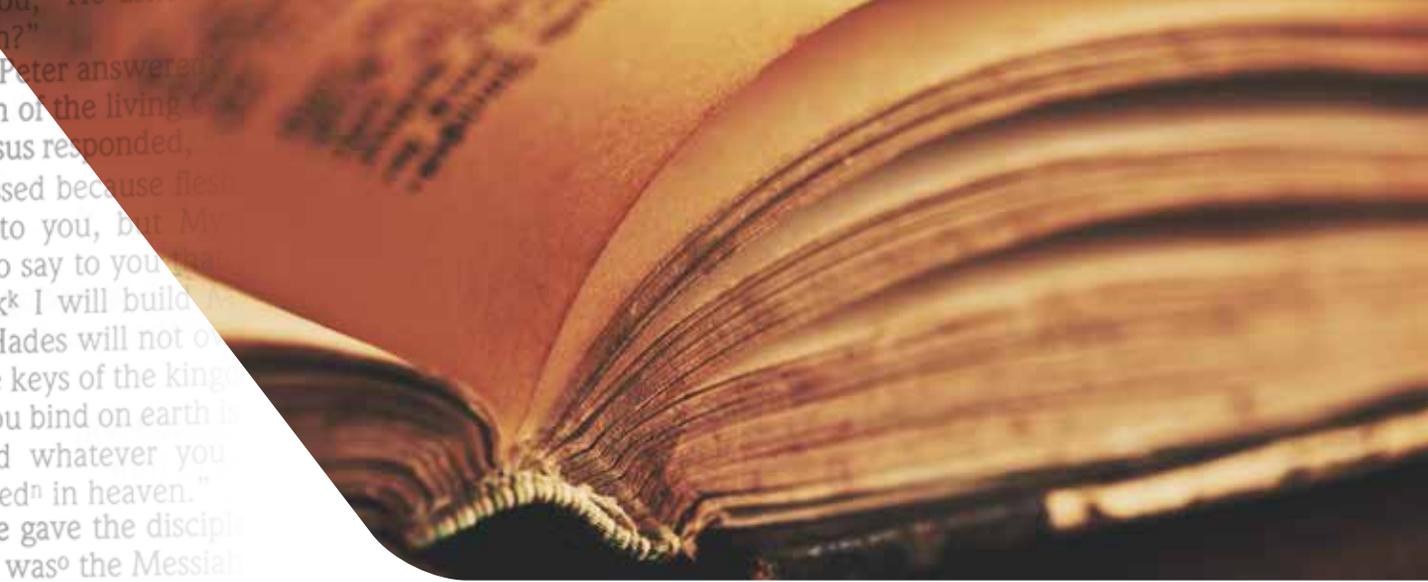
I agree to all the commitments.

Date

➤ GENERAL EDITOR



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SESSION 1

WHO IS JESUS?

Jesus is the Christ to whom all Scripture points.



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➤ ABOUT THE BOOK OF MATTHEW

AUTHOR AND DATE

The identity of the person who wrote the Gospel of Matthew isn't formally stated in the Bible book itself. However, two important clues point to Matthew, one of the twelve disciples of Jesus Christ, as the writer. First, the earliest manuscripts of Matthew's Gospel ascribe it to him. Second, the name of the tax collector in Matthew 9:9-13 was Matthew. That's the only Scripture passage that gives Matthew as the name of the tax collector who followed Jesus as a disciple. The other accounts of the same story refer to him as Levi (see Mark 2:14; Luke 5:27). Levi was the name his parents gave to him. Matthew was probably the name given to him after he devoted his life to Christ. The name Matthew means *the gift of God*.

No one knows for certain when Matthew wrote his Gospel account. Scholars generally agree that he wrote it late in the first century, although none of them can be more exact with regard to the date. Their estimates range from A.D. 60 to 90.

PURPOSE

Insights from the Gospel of Matthew confirm that Matthew wanted to show that the Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah had been fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

The Book of Matthew declares some significant messages about Jesus. The Galilean preacher named Jesus was actually the Son of God, whose birth was announced by an angel. His life and ministry verified His unique relationship with His Heavenly Father. Jesus died on the cross and was resurrected. He was raised from the grave and assures Christians today of victory over death. One day He will return for His followers. For that reason believers remain alert and live in hope.

Believers have been commissioned to share the gospel of Christ. Our mandate is to make the Messiah known to the whole world and to guide other believers to become growing disciples of Jesus.

"IF MAN HAD HIS WAY, THE PLAN OF REDEMPTION WOULD BE AN ENDLESS AND BLOODY CONFLICT. IN REALITY, SALVATION WAS BOUGHT NOT BY JESUS' FISTS, BUT BY HIS NAIL-PIERCED HANDS; NOT BY MUSCLE BUT BY LOVE; NOT BY VENGEANCE BUT BY FORGIVENESS; NOT BY FORCE BUT BY SACRIFICE."

—A. W. Tozer

➤ MATTHEW 16:13-28

Think About It

Highlight the different opinions about Jesus' identity. How did each identity fall short when compared to Jesus' true identity?

Notice the ways Jesus addressed Peter at different points in the conversation. How did Peter's understanding and misunderstanding play a role in this conversation?

13 When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” **14** They replied, “Some say John the Baptist; others, Elijah; still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” **15** “But you,” he asked them, “who do you say that I am?” **16** Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.” **17** Jesus responded, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but my Father in heaven. **18** And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overpower it. **19** I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will have been loosed in heaven.” **20** Then he gave the disciples orders to tell no one that he was the Messiah. **21** From then on Jesus began to point out to his disciples that it was necessary for him to go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders, chief priests, and scribes, be killed, and be raised the third day. **22** Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, “Oh no, Lord! This will never happen to you!” **23** Jesus turned and told Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me because you’re not thinking about God’s concerns but human concerns.” **24** Then Jesus said to his disciples, “If anyone wants to follow after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me. **25** For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life because of me will find it. **26** For what will it benefit someone if he gains the whole world yet loses his life? Or what will anyone give in exchange for his life? **27** For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will reward each according to what he has done. **28** Truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.”

► UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

USE THE FOLLOWING PAGES TO PREPARE FOR YOUR GROUP TIME.

Matthew 14 marks the beginning of a new chapter in the ministry of Jesus. He brought His ministry in Galilee to a close and began to prepare for the cross. Up to this point, His disciples had seen Him preach, teach, heal, and perform other miracles. However, they didn't know what lay ahead.

Jesus started to prepare His disciples for the challenges of the cross. He talked with them about His identity and the implications of declaring Him to be the Messiah. In Matthew 16:13-28 Jesus asked His disciples two questions about His identity. Peter shared the disciples' answer to the second question. Responding in accordance with what Jesus had revealed to them, they proclaimed that Jesus was the Messiah. Jesus asserted that such a proclamation would be foundational for the church. He went on to teach them that proclaiming Him to be the Christ implied that they would follow Him by making Him their sole priority. Jesus assured them that giving themselves to Him in complete devotion would enrich their lives. He also asserted that after He suffered, He would be glorified and that some of them would behold Him as He came in His kingdom.





► EXPLORE THE TEXT

MISUNDERSTOOD IDENTITY (Matthew 16:13-14)

¹³When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?”

The time had come. The challenge ahead of Jesus’ disciples would be difficult. Soon they would see Jesus condemned to die on a cross. Preparing for such a challenge required them to be alone with Him. The region of Caesarea Philippi, 25 miles north of the Sea of Galilee, provided that time without interruption.

Somewhere in their journey, Jesus asked His disciples two questions. The first question involved what others had been saying about His identity. In His question He referred to Himself as the Son of man, a title that came from Daniel 7:13-14. In the Book of Matthew alone Jesus referred to Himself as the Son of man 28 times.

¹⁴They replied, “Some say John the Baptist; others, Elijah; still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.”

Some people said Jesus was John the Baptist. John had paved the way for Jesus’ arrival and had preached about repenting to prepare for the coming of the Messiah. Because of John’s ministry, Herod had ordered him beheaded (see Matt. 14:1-12). When some saw Jesus, they believed John the Baptist had been raised from the dead.

The disciples had noticed that Elijah’s ministry seemed to be repeated in Jesus. God’s power worked through both of them in similar ways. Some people believed Jesus fulfilled an Old Testament promise that one day Elijah would return (see Mal. 4:5).

The people who considered Jesus to be Jeremiah probably had Jesus’ prophetic work in mind. Like Jeremiah, Jesus spoke with conviction and devotion to God’s truth.

Think about people in your life—family, friends, and coworkers. What do they think about Jesus? Why?

TRUE IDENTITY (Matthew 16:15-16)

¹⁵“But you,” he asked them, “who do you say that I am?”

The disciples had been given plenty of opportunities to observe Jesus with discerning eyes. Nobody else would have been able to have their perspective. Therefore, their conviction about Him would speak volumes about His true identity.

¹⁶Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.”

Peter served as the spokesperson for all the disciples. They shared the same conviction about Jesus that Peter expressed. Peter’s answer confirmed that they had come to believe for themselves that Jesus was the fulfillment of the Old Testament promises.

How does Peter’s declaration emphasize Jesus’ being both fully human and fully God?

NEW IDENTITY (Matthew 16:17-20)

¹⁷Jesus responded, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but my Father in heaven.”

KEY DOCTRINE

God the Son

Christ is the eternal Son of God.

BIBLE SKILL

Review other passages to gain a clearer understanding.

Read John 1:1,14; Acts 17:3; and Hebrews 4:15. Reflect on the truth that only God the Son could maintain both human and divine identities at the same time. How does Jesus' humanity help us relate to Him? How would you describe the unity and necessity of the human and the divine in the Person of the Messiah?

Jesus affirmed that God Himself had opened Peter's spiritual eyes so that Jesus' true identity could be revealed to him.

18“And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.”

Jesus focused His attention on Peter by giving him a new name. Everyone knew him as Simon (see v. 17). Now he would be known as Peter, a name that meant *rock*. Peter's declaration would be the rock on which Jesus would build His church as the Messiah, or Christ.

19“I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will have been loosed in heaven.”

Under the authority of Jesus, the disciples' work in the future would be synchronized with God's plan in eternity.

20Then he gave the disciples orders to tell no one that he was the Messiah.

The disciples needed to remain silent about Jesus' identity and to learn more about what following Jesus would require .

What can affect a person's understanding of who Jesus is?

CROSS IDENTITY (Matthew 16:21-28)

21From then on Jesus began to point out to his disciples that it was necessary for him to go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders, chief priests, and scribes, be killed, and be raised the third day. 22Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, “Oh no, Lord! This will never happen to you!” 23Jesus turned and told Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me because you're not thinking about God's concerns but human concerns.”

Jesus told the disciples what would happen soon. Jesus knew Satan had manipulated Peter to rebuke Him, even persuade Him not to go to the cross.

²⁴Then Jesus said to his disciples, “If anyone wants to follow after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me.”

Followers of Jesus must give up control and live for Christ.

²⁵“For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life because of me will find it. ²⁶For what will it benefit someone if he gains the whole world yet loses his life? Or what will anyone give in exchange for his life?”

The path of discipleship leads to the life God intended for us.

²⁷“For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will reward each according to what he has done. ²⁸Truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.”

Jesus’ resurrection would pave the way for His glorification. It would also set the stage for His return. He assured His disciples that He would come again and that some of them would see Him sooner, perhaps a reference to His resurrection. Three of them would see Him on the mount of transfiguration (see 17:1-13).

How can the desire for money and fame on earth get in the way of following Jesus?



► OBEY THE TEXT

- Jesus is the promised Messiah and the only Son of God, regardless of what others may think.
- Jesus' redemptive purpose is realized through His church.
- Jesus demands total obedience born from our confession of Him.

Discuss ways your Bible-study group can help others better understand Jesus' identity. Put together a plan for acting on what you discuss.

Record a declaration of who you believe Jesus to be. Include evidence that supports your statement. With whom can you share this statement and evidence?

Ask God to show you areas of your life in which you need to deny self. Identify steps you need to take to fully obey Jesus.



MEMORIZE

Jesus said to his disciples, "If anyone wants to follow after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me."—Matthew 16:24

USE THE SPACE PROVIDED TO MAKE OBSERVATIONS AND RECORD PRAYER REQUESTS DURING THE GROUP EXPERIENCE FOR THIS SESSION.

MY THOUGHTS

Record insights and questions from the group experience.

MY RESPONSE

Note specific ways you'll put into practice the truth explored this week.

MY PRAYERS

List specific prayer needs and answers to remember this week.

