



DEAF PERSONAL STUDY GUIDE

Matthew 1–13

Gregg Matte, General Editor

LIFE BY DESIGN

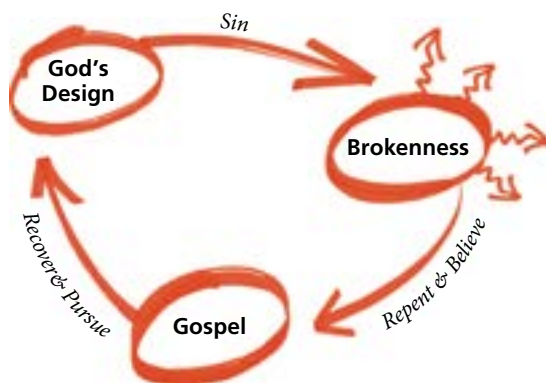
We live in a broken world. This brokenness is seen in suffering, violence, poverty, pain, and death around us. Brokenness leads us to search for a way to make **LIFE work.**

The Bible tells us that God originally planned a world that worked perfectly—where everything and everyone fit together in harmony. God made each of us with a purpose—to worship Him and walk with Him. (See Genesis 1:31 and Psalm 19:1.)

Life doesn't work when we ignore God and His original design for our lives. We selfishly insist on doing things our own way. The Bible calls this sin. Sin leads to a place of brokenness. The consequence of our sin is separation from God—in this life and for all of eternity. (See Romans 3:23 and Romans 6:23.)

At this point we need a remedy—some good news. Because of His love, God did not leave us in our brokenness. Jesus, God in human flesh, came to us and lived perfectly according to God's Design. Jesus came to rescue us—to do for us what we could not do for ourselves. He took our sin and shame to the cross, paying the penalty of our sin by His death. Jesus was then raised from the dead—to provide the only way for us to be rescued and restored to a relationship with God. (See John 3:16; Colossians 2:14; and 1 Corinthians 15:3-4.)

We don't have the power to escape this brokenness on our own. We need to be rescued. We must ask God to forgive us—turning from sin to trust in Jesus. This is what it means to repent and believe. Believing, we receive new life through Jesus. God turns our lives in a new direction. (See Mark 1:15; Ephesians 2:8-9; and Romans 10:9.)



When God restores our relationship to Him, we begin to discover meaning and purpose in a broken world. Now we can pursue God's Design in all areas of our lives. God's Spirit empowers us to recover His Design and assures us of His presence in this life and for all of eternity. (See Philippians 2:13 and Ephesians 2:10.)

Now that you have heard this Good News, God wants you to respond to Him. You can talk to Him using words like these: My life is broken—I recognize it's because of my sin. I believe Christ came to live, die, and was raised from the dead—to rescue me from my sin. Forgive me. I turn from my selfish ways and put my trust in You. I know that Jesus is Lord of all, and I will follow Him.

Excerpted from Life on Mission: A Simple Way to Share the Gospel.

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» GENERAL EDITOR



The Book of Matthew speaks to the souls of all who read it. As you begin this journey, keep your mind and heart open to all that God will say to you. You'll learn His ways, hear from His heart, and be inspired to walk in His steps. Studying His kingdom and reign will bring impact and peace to

your life—be listening for His whisper.

I encourage you to read from the depths of your heart and grab a pen to write down the inspirations you will discover for your soul. As you make notes in these pages, God will be making notes in you. More than a document from long ago, this book has grit and glory rolled into the true story of Jesus walking our earth. As we see Him live, we have a greater understanding of how we are to live.

So let's start the journey into the good news Matthew has for us.

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BIBLE READING PLAN

DECEMBER

- ☐ Matthew 1:1-6
- ☐ Matthew 1:7-11
- ☐ Matthew 1:12-17
- ☐ Matthew 1:18-25
- ☐ Matthew 2:1-6
- ☐ Matthew 2:7-12
- ☐ Matthew 2:13-15
- ☐ Matthew 2:16-18
- ☐ Matthew 2:19-23
- ☐ Matthew 3:1-6
- ☐ Matthew 3:7-12
- ☐ Matthew 3:13-17
- ☐ Matthew 4:1-4
- ☐ Matthew 4:5-7
- ☐ Matthew 4:8-11
- ☐ Matthew 4:12-17
- ☐ Matthew 4:18-22
- ☐ Matthew 4:23-25
- ☐ Matthew 5:1-6
- ☐ Matthew 5:7-12
- ☐ Matthew 5:13-16
- ☐ Matthew 5:17-20
- ☐ Matthew 5:21-26
- ☐ Matthew 5:27-32
- ☐ Matthew 5:33-37
- ☐ Matthew 5:38-42
- ☐ Matthew 5:43-48
- ☐ Matthew 6:1-4
- ☐ Matthew 6:5-8
- ☐ Matthew 6:9-15
- ☐ Matthew 6:16-18

JANUARY

- ☐ Matthew 6:19-24
- ☐ Matthew 6:25-34
- ☐ Matthew 7:1-6
- ☐ Matthew 7:7-12
- ☐ Matthew 7:13-14
- ☐ Matthew 7:15-20
- ☐ Matthew 7:21-23
- ☐ Matthew 7:24-29
- ☐ Matthew 8:1-4
- ☐ Matthew 8:5-13
- ☐ Matthew 8:14-17
- ☐ Matthew 8:18-22
- ☐ Matthew 8:23-27
- ☐ Matthew 8:28-34
- ☐ Matthew 9:1-8
- ☐ Matthew 9:9-13
- ☐ Matthew 9:14-17
- ☐ Matthew 9:18-22
- ☐ Matthew 9:23-26
- ☐ Matthew 9:27-31
- ☐ Matthew 9:32-34
- ☐ Matthew 9:35-38
- ☐ Matthew 10:1-4
- ☐ Matthew 10:5-10
- ☐ Matthew 10:11-15
- ☐ Matthew 10:16-20
- ☐ Matthew 10:21-25
- ☐ Matthew 10:26-31
- ☐ Matthew 10:32-36
- ☐ Matthew 10:37-39
- ☐ Matthew 10:40-42

FEBRUARY

- ☐ Matthew 11:1-6
- ☐ Matthew 11:7-15
- ☐ Matthew 11:16-19
- ☐ Matthew 11:20-24
- ☐ Matthew 11:25-27
- ☐ Matthew 11:28-30
- ☐ Matthew 12:1-8
- ☐ Matthew 12:9-14
- ☐ Matthew 12:15-21
- ☐ Matthew 12:22-24
- ☐ Matthew 12:25-28
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- ☐ Matthew 13:1-9
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- ☐ Matthew 13:13-17
- ☐ Matthew 13:18-23
- ☐ Matthew 13:24-30
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- ☐ Matthew 13:34-35
- ☐ Matthew 13:36-43
- ☐ Matthew 13:44-46
- ☐ Matthew 13:47-50
- ☐ Matthew 13:51-53
- ☐ Matthew 13:54-58



ACCEPTING CHRIST



Rose Hawley

I was born in Wilson County in North Carolina. My mom always took me to the hearing church, but I did not understand about Jesus. No one explained it to me. I still went to church, but all I could do was look around at the people reading their Bibles. I did not understand because I also could not read.

When I got older, I told my mom I wanted to go to a Deaf church. A friend told me about one church. My husband and I visited that church and Sunday School. But no one talked to us. We did not feel welcomed. So we went back to the hearing church for our daughter to learn about Jesus.

My friend told me about a different church. There were six Deaf people, but I started to learn more at that church and in December, 1994, I finally understood and I accepted Jesus Christ as my Savior. I was baptized in the cold water because the heater was broken, but that was ok.

God changed my life after that. I became involved in a new ministry for Deaf children. I became a teacher for Special Needs children. I love music, and God helped me to become a music leader in my church. God opened the door for me to serve on the Deaf WMU leadership team.

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God has called me to go on mission trips to many different countries. At first I was scared to fly on the plane to a foreign country. I went to the Dominican Republic. I saw other people were scared on the airplane, but then I realized that God was protecting me. I have been on other mission trips to Venezuela and Uruguay. Several times, God made it possible for me to serve Him in New Mexico and teach Deaf people about Jesus using the Evangecube.

When I married my husband, I was not a Christian. God blessed me with thirty-one years of marriage. I have grown as a Christian since 1994. I have learned from others how to grow. My favorite Bible verse is John 3:16: “God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son so that whoever believes in him may not be lost, but have eternal life.” I feel that God has blessed me and given me full joy and the opportunity to continue doing mission work to tell others about Jesus Christ as our Savior. God is good all the time. Amen and Amen.

You can have a full and meaningful life, too. Do you believe my favorite Bible verse? God loves you so much that he let Jesus die for you. It is not difficult to have a changed life. All you need to do is:

1. Admit that you are a sinner (Romans 3:23).
2. Believe that Jesus died for your sin (Romans 10:9).
3. In faith, ask Jesus to forgive your sin and come and live in your heart (Romans 3:22).

Now thank God for the wonderful work He has done. Maybe you don't feel any different, but wait and see the new opportunities God will give you.

INTRODUCTION TO MATTHEW

During the four hundred years between the Old Testament **prophet Malachi** and the writing of Matthew's Gospel, no Scripture was written. Some books called The **Apocrypha** were written, but they are history, not Scripture. However, many things happened in Israel and in the world during that time:

- » 1. **Rome became the greatest nation in the world.**
- » 2. **The Romans developed a concrete that would harden underwater and they built large pipes to supply water to Rome.**
- » 3. **Israel came under Roman rule about sixty years before Jesus was born and remained under the Roman government throughout the New Testament times.**
- » 4. **The Hebrew language became the synagogue or religious language. A form of Hebrew called Aramaic became the language for daily use. Latin was the official government language and Greek was the language of literature.**
- » 5. **The Old Testament was translated into Greek.**

The Gospel of Matthew introduces us to groups in Jewish culture that did not exist at the close of the Old Testament. In the synagogues and in society, the **Pharisees** were the stronger group. They were politically active with the goal of restoring the nation of Israel back to the line of David and having their own king to rule over them.

The **Sadducees** were the wealthy and social group. They would have been the Facebook and Twitter users of today. They wanted to do away with **tradition** (the old way of thinking). They were liberal in their theology and rejected **supernatural** ideas and events.

A third group, the **scribes**, were the rigid, professional interpreters of the law. They were full of head knowledge but did not let the spirit of the law govern their hearts and lives.

During the time when there was no written communication from God, He prepared the world for the coming of the **Messiah**. The nation of Israel, the civilization of the Greeks, the empire of the Romans – all were in need of a **Savior**. “But when the right time came, God sent his Son who was born of a woman and lived under the law” (Galatians 4:4).

Who wrote the Gospel of Matthew? Matthew, the former tax collector who obeyed when Jesus said, “Follow me” (Matthew 9:9).

When was the Gospel of Matthew written? Most Bible students accept a date between A.D. 70 and A.D. 90.

Why was the Gospel of Matthew written? Matthew wanted to tell others about his experience with Jesus.

Who was the Gospel of Matthew written to? As a Jew who believed that Jesus was the promised Messiah, Matthew wrote to the nation of Israel, telling them the true story about what Jesus did – His preaching, His teaching, and His miracles.

Important ideas in the Gospel of Matthew: The past, present, and future are found in the Gospel of Matthew. Past: many Old Testament prophecies were fulfilled by Jesus. Present: Jesus taught that the kingdom of heaven came in Him. Future: Jesus taught about building the church.



Session 1

THE WAY IS PREPARED

MATTHEW 3:1-12

God used John the Baptist to announce the coming of King Jesus.

FIRST THOUGHTS

The Southern Baptist Conference of the Deaf (SBCD) has an International Missions committee that has been very active for a long time. In the early 1980's, God burdened the hearts of the members of this committee because there were no missionaries in foreign countries assigned to share the gospel with the Deaf. Members of this committee began to build relationships with the Foreign Mission Board (currently the International

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Mission Board) to educate them of the need. SBCD sponsored trips for members of the committee and others to travel to different countries on “fact finding” missions. These mission trips involved visiting countries, finding and meeting the Deaf leaders and organizations, visiting the Deaf Schools, gathering numbers, and writing up reports that were sent to the Foreign Mission Board. The Foreign Mission Board used these reports to develop field requests for missionaries for the Deaf in foreign countries. Those early 1980’s trips and reports prepared the way for the International Mission Board to recognize Deaf people as an affinity group and a large number of missionaries specifically sharing the gospel with the Deaf people in the world.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

Read the Introduction in the front of this quarterly. This will help you understand the background of the Bible verses we will study from the Gospel of Matthew.

Also, try to find a “harmony of the Gospels.” This will show you what Mark, Luke, and John also wrote about some of the same stories we will study in Matthew.

The time between the days of the **prophet Malachi** and the birth of Jesus was about four hundred years. During this time, there was no new communication from God to the nation of Israel. God began to communicate again when the angel, Gabriel, appeared to the priest, **Zechariah**, and told him that he and his wife, **Elizabeth**, would have a son, and they were to name him John. Gabriel said that John would grow up and become a powerful influence for God’s kingdom (Luke 1:5-25).

Our first lesson begins in Matthew, chapter 3 with the introduction of John the Baptist and his ministry that began shortly before Jesus began His ministry. We will study chapters 1 and 2 after we learn about John the Baptist.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

(MATTHEW 3:1-12)

1. Preparing for the Coming of the King (Matthew 3:1-6)

VERSES 1-2.

¹ About that time John the Baptist began preaching in the desert area of Judea. ² John said, “Change your hearts and lives because the kingdom of heaven is near.”

Hundreds of years before Matthew began to write his story, the **prophet** Isaiah wrote that a messenger would come just before the **Messiah (Christ, Savior)** appeared. **Malachi** also wrote about the **messenger** (Malachi 3:1).

John’s message in verse 2 is simple: 1. Change your hearts and lives (**repent**). 2. The kingdom of heaven (Jesus reigning in the hearts of believers) is near (in the person of King Jesus). When Jesus began His ministry He often spoke about the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 4:17; 10:7).

VERSE 3.

³ John the Baptist is the one Isaiah the prophet was talking about when he said: “This is a voice of one who calls out in the desert: ‘Prepare the way for the Lord. Make the road straight for him’” (Isaiah 40:3).

The world waited a long time for John’s message. Matthew reminded his readers that John’s message was the one the prophet Isaiah wrote about hundreds of years earlier.

VERSE 4.

⁴ John’s clothes were made from camel’s hair, and he wore a leather belt around his waist. For food, he ate locusts and wild honey.

John's message was different. John was different! He didn't buy his clothes at expensive stores. He didn't cut his hair. He ate an unusual diet. He wandered in the desert. Many people said John was a rebel, an outcast, or a nut case. He was like someone who walked out of the pages of the Old Testament directly into the New Testament.

VERSE 5.

⁵*Many people came from Jerusalem and Judea and all the area around the Jordan River to hear John.*

The Jordan River is about 10 miles from Jerusalem. It took about two hours to walk that far. But people walked to John's location to listen to his message. Wherever people came from, John's message remained the same (verse 2).

VERSE 6.

⁶*They confessed their sins, and he baptized them in the Jordan River.*

Many people who listened to John's message began to live changed lives, and John baptized them. This is why he was called John the Baptist (baptizer).

KEY DOCTRINE: *Baptism (Matthew 3:6)*

The word *baptize* is the English form of a Greek word that means "to put something completely under water."

Baptism was common in Bible times. A person who became a Jew was baptized. John's message required two things from people: repent and be baptized. Repent means "to change direction, to turn from something to something different." *Baptize* means "to immerse completely in water."

John's baptism showed that the people who listened to the message had changed their lives. We will see in verses 11-12 that what we call believer's baptism (baptism after belief in Jesus as one's personal Savior) is different from John's baptism.

2. Preaching the Truth (Matthew 3:7-10)

VERSES 7-10.

⁷ Many of the **Pharisees** and **Sadducees** came to the place where John was baptizing people. When John saw them, he said, “You are snakes! Who warned you to run away from God’s coming punishment?”

⁸ “Do the things that show you really have changed your hearts and lives. ⁹ “And don’t think you can say to yourselves, ‘**Abraham** is our father.’ I tell you that God could make children for Abraham from these rocks. ¹⁰ “The ax is now ready to cut down the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.”

John’s message was always the same. This led to a conflict when many of the Pharisees and Sadducees went to hear John preach. In Jesus’ time, the Pharisees were the strongest political party, and the Sadducees were the Jewish political party with very liberal theology. After their return from exile in Babylon, the Israelites began a desperate attempt to live holy lives through the Law, as written in the Books of Genesis and Deuteronomy. In fact, the Law had become almost like an idol to them because they worshiped the Law more than they worshiped God.

John was not afraid when he spoke to the religious leaders. He called these leaders snakes!

John did not let the Pharisees and Sadducees reply or use one of their favorite arguments that they were children of Abraham. John said, “God could make children for Abraham from these rocks” (verse 9). From rocks? Hard, lifeless rocks? John meant the religious leaders had a false hope—they were depending on their Jewish **heritage** for their salvation.

BIBLE SKILL: *Spiritual Fruit (Matthew 3:10)*

The New Testament has much to say about bearing fruit. We know that an oak tree cannot grow oranges. Only a fruit tree can produce fruit. Jesus said that making leaves and shade is not the job of a fruit tree. If the fruit tree does not produce fruit, it is only good for firewood and will be cut down (Matthew 7:17-19).

John said the gospel—the good news—is for all people, including the **Gentiles**. (See Luke 2:10; Romans 11:11-23.)

Do you think John was rude to the religious leaders when he called them snakes? YES NO Why or why not?

What was John trying to help them to understand?

What was the connection between repentance and fruit that John wanted the religious leaders and us to understand?

3. Pointing to the King (Matthew 3:11-12)

VERSE 11.

¹¹ *“I baptize you with water to show that your hearts and lives have changed. But there is one coming after me who is greater than I am, whose sandals I am not good enough to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.”*

John pointed to the Person of his message. He explained how superior this Person (Jesus) is in every way, including His ability to understand the thoughts of the heart.

John taught that he baptized with water to show that a person had repented. But John wanted people to understand that “the One coming after me” (Jesus) will have a different kind of **baptism**. John taught that Jesus’ baptism is done by the Holy Spirit and with fire.

John taught that through the baptism of the Holy Spirit, Jesus will begin a process of removing all the impure things in our lives. The fire is like the process of burning garbage—getting rid of all the impure things—and He will change our lives.

VERSE 12.

¹² *“He will come ready to clean the grain, separating the good grain from the chaff. He will put the good part of the grain into his barn, but He will burn the chaff with a fire that cannot be put out.”*

Chaff is “the part of the grain that is removed when it is prepared for food.”

John wanted the people to understand that the baptism of Jesus has two long-range effects. The first, burning the garbage, teaches us that this process is a daily process. We must take out the trash (sin) in our lives every day.

Second, one day in the future, King Jesus will burn the garbage forever. John described this action as a separation process, not a recycling process. The good grain (believers) will be separated and stored in God’s barn (heaven) forever. The chaff (nonbelievers) will be thrown into “a fire that cannot be put out.”

How do we “take out the trash” every day?

“If we c _____ our s _____, He will f _____
our s _____, because we can trust God to do what is right. He will
c _____ us from all the w _____ we have done.”
(1 John 1:9).

IN MY CONTEXT

John the Baptist preached a strict message, but the message offered hope to the people who listened to him. John taught very plainly about sin and the requirement of repentance. John's message never changed, and he did not soften his message for anyone. Both John and Jesus taught that bearing fruit is not an option or part-time work for believers.

Today's lesson is summarized in verse 12. John taught that someday there will be a final time to take out the trash, and the result will be eternity in either heaven or hell, depending on a person's life choice of accepting or rejecting Jesus. Jesus will separate saved people (into heaven) from lost people (into hell).

What do you remember about the time you repented and believed in Jesus? _____

Would you describe your life as firewood or a fruit tree? _____

If you are firewood at the moment, what do you need to add to your life to become a fruit tree? Choose one or two of the things below and make a note how you plan to change your life to be useful in serving God.

Bible study _____

Prayer life _____

Memorize Scripture _____

Other _____

Write the name of one unbeliever that you can pray for every day?

MEMORY VERSE

John the Baptist is the one Isaiah the prophet was talking about when he said: "This is a voice of one who calls out in the desert: 'Prepare the way for the Lord. Make the road straight for him.'" —Matthew 3:3



Session 2

THE KING ARRIVES

MATTHEW 1:18-25

The birth of the King!

FIRST THOUGHTS

The Old Testament contains more than three hundred prophecies about the promised coming of the **Messiah**. Some were written thousands of years before Jesus was born. The miraculous birth of Jesus fulfilled all the Old Testament prophecies about the promised Messiah. Many prophecies were fulfilled before the birth of Jesus. Some were fulfilled after His birth (Jeremiah 31:15 and Matthew 1:23). All of the prophecies were 100 percent accurate and complete with the birth of Jesus.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

In Matthew 1:1-17, Matthew listed the **ancestors** of Jesus. This may seem unimportant to us, but it shows how Jesus came from the line of **Abraham** and David, just as the prophecies said He would.

Matthew quotes more from the Old Testament than the writers of the other Gospels. Matthew's target group for his Gospel was the Jewish people. The Jews were waiting for, looking for, and hoping for their Messiah to come. Matthew wants his readers to understand that Jesus is the Messiah. The name *Jesus* means "God saves."

EXPLORE THE TEXT (MATTHEW 1:18-25)

1. The Virgin Birth of Jesus (Matthew 1:18)

VERSE 18.

¹⁸ *This is how the birth of Jesus **Christ** came about. His mother Mary was engaged to marry Joseph, but before they married, she learned she was pregnant by the power of the Holy Spirit.*

Jesus' **conception** was **supernatural**. That means it did not happen like a normal pregnancy. It happened while Mary was a virgin and engaged to Joseph. The **prophet** Jeremiah wrote that God would cause a new thing to happen. The virgin birth of Jesus was the new thing God did. It was a supernatural event and the fulfillment of Jeremiah's prophecy.

Jewish families were proud of their ancestors and their **heritage** (family history). Each family kept careful records of their ancestors so they could prove who their fathers, grandfathers, and so on were. Matthew presented Jesus' family tree in three sections: 1. Fourteen generations from Abraham to King David. 2. Fourteen generations from King David to the beginning of the exile to Babylon. 3. Fourteen generations from

the end of the exile in Babylon until Jesus was born. Matthew wanted his readers to understand that Joseph was not the father of Jesus. Matthew carefully wrote in verses 1-16 that each listed person was the father of the next one in the list. Matthew changed his words in the last part of verse 16 when he wrote, “Joseph was the husband of Mary.”

In nearly every nation’s history, the royal family and the royal line depended on ancestry. Matthew wrote about the human **heritage** of Jesus in Matthew 1:1-17 and His divine heritage in Matthew 1:18-25. Matthew listed the family tree of Jesus to show how He fulfilled the prophecies that the **Messiah** would be a **descendant** of **Abraham** and King David. Matthew also wanted his readers to know that Jesus was the Messiah. Remember that these three words have the same meaning: Messiah is the Hebrew word and **Christ** is the Greek word for our English word **Savior**.

Verse 18 states that “before they married,” Mary knew she was pregnant by the power of the Holy Spirit. Mary and Joseph were not yet living together and she was pregnant! Mary knew that Jewish Law said that a pregnancy outside of marriage was a crime to be punished by being stoned to death.

Why did Matthew think it was important to carefully explain the circumstances of Mary’s pregnancy?

2. God Promised to Send the Messiah (Matthew 1:19-23)

VERSE 19.

¹⁹ *Because Mary’s husband, Joseph, was a good man, he did not want to disgrace her in public, so he planned to divorce her secretly.*

When a couple became engaged, they were often referred to as husband and wife even before the wedding ceremony. This union was so strong that to break the engagement required what we would call a divorce.

Joseph was in shock, shamed, and embarrassed to learn that his fiancée was pregnant. Who could Joseph talk to? The news about Mary would soon become common knowledge in the small town of Nazareth through the gossip of the people.

Matthew described Joseph as “a good man.” Joseph knew the Jewish law would let him end their engagement and the reason would be all Mary’s fault. Matthew wrote that this good man began making plans to quietly divorce Mary.

VERSES 20-21.

²⁰ *While Joseph thought about these things, an angel of the Lord came to him in a dream. The angel said, “Joseph, descendant of David, don’t be afraid to take Mary as your wife, because the baby in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹ “She will give birth to a son, and you will name Him Jesus, because He will save His people from their sins.”*

Joseph thought about what he must do, but he was directed in a dream to take Mary as his wife. The child was also identified in the dream as the promised Messiah. Joseph obeyed the instructions given to him in the dream.

When I was young and I had a decision to make, my grandfather would advise me to “sleep on it.” Perhaps this kind of good advice goes back to early New Testament times! Joseph probably tossed and turned until he finally went to sleep, and then he learned in a dream what he should do. In the dream, the angel explained that everything was OK in his relationship with Mary. After reminding Joseph that he was a relative of King David, the angel explained the part that Joseph would have in God’s plan for the world: 1. Take Mary as his wife. 2. Name the baby *Jesus*. The name *Jesus* means “God saves.”

BIBLE SKILL: *Jesus' Family Tree (Matthew 1:1-17)*

The first 17 verses in the Gospel of Matthew give a list of the ancestors of Jesus. A chart showing our ancestors is called a *family tree*. A study of our family tree is called *genealogy*.

Most Americans do not know their family tree more than two generations. They do not know anything about their ancestors before their grandparents. Jewish families kept family records that went back hundreds, and sometimes thousands, of years.

Why did Matthew list the family tree of Jesus?

Write the names of two important leaders of the Jewish nation that Matthew listed in the genealogy of Jesus?

Ab_____ and Da_____

VERSES 22-23.

²² *All this happened to bring about what the Lord had said through the prophet: ²³ "The virgin will be pregnant. She will have a son, and they will name him Immanuel," which means "God is with us."*

The angel explained God's plan to Joseph. Memorizing Scripture verses was so much a part of Joseph's education that he may have recalled the **prophet** Isaiah's words when the angel spoke to him: "The virgin will be pregnant. She will have a son, and she will name him Immanuel" (Isaiah 7:14). The name *Immanuel* means "God is with us."

God came to live with people in the person of Jesus. Because Jesus came to live with us and die among us, He fulfilled the meaning of His name. He became *the* **Savior**, who is able to save us from our sins.

Do you think it was difficult for Mary to tell Joseph she was pregnant? YES NO

Why or why not? _____

3. Joseph and Mary Obeyed God (Matthew 1:24-25)

VERSES 24-25.

²⁴ *When Joseph woke up, he did what the Lord's angel had told him to do. Joseph took Mary as his wife, ²⁵ But he did not have sexual relations with her until she gave birth to the son. And Joseph named him Jesus.*

Joseph obeyed God's instructions delivered by an angel in a dream. Mary also obeyed God's instructions, told to her by an angel, that she would give birth to Jesus (Luke 1:26-38). Joseph took Mary as his wife and named the child *Jesus*.

KEY DOCTRINE: *Obedience (Matthew 1:24)*

Matthew wrote about the obedience of Joseph. The words *obey* and *obedient* occur over 450 times in the Bible.

What is obedience to God? It is more than doing right things and not doing wrong things. Obedience to God is more than behaving like His people. Obedience is not just following the law. True obedience, in the eyes of God, means to surrender my will to the authority of God. Obedience to God is when my heart accepts Him as Lord. It is when I accept His right to command and my duty to obey (Deuteronomy 30:1-10).

Abraham showed his faith by obeying God without question. How did Abraham show obedience in these verses?

Genesis 12:1-9

Genesis 22:1-18

Through the Old Testament prophets, God promised that the **Messiah** would come, but He gave no time schedule. When it was time for the Messiah to be born, Mary and Joseph obeyed God.

Obedience is required for followers of Jesus. We can trace the word obey as a thread woven through the Bible from Genesis to Revelation.

What were the three things Joseph did to obey God?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

IN MY CONTEXT

What would the people in your church say if an unmarried girl became pregnant? Not very many years ago she would have been seen as a great sinner.

How would her fiancé feel if he knew he was not the father of that baby? Maybe that helps us to understand the situation Mary and Joseph faced. In that time Mary could have been stoned to death! But Mary and Joseph obeyed God.

How important is obedience in the last recorded words spoken by Jesus? (Read Matthew 28:19-20.)

Think about your experience with obedience. Answer these questions in your heart:

1. When you pray, do you spend more time asking God for things than you do asking God to show you His will so you can obey Him?
2. When you spend your money, do you ask God to help you so you can obey His will with your money?
3. When you read your Bible, do you look for God's promises to you and skip over His commands to you?
4. When you prepare to go to church, do you think more about whom you will see than about seeing God more clearly?
5. When you worship in church, do you ask God to show you His will and promise to obey Him?
6. When you feel God leading you to do something for someone else, do you try to follow His leadership?
7. When you are at work, do you think other people know you are trying to obey God?

MEMORY VERSE

"She will give birth to a son, and you will name Him Jesus, because He will save His people from their sins." —Matthew 1:21



Session 3

WORSHIPING THE KING

MATTHEW 2:1-12

Wise men (and women) still **worship** King Jesus.

FIRST THOUGHTS

Several years ago, Rev. Carter Bearden, Sr. led the morning Bible study at the SBCD conference. He is highly respected among the Deaf in the United States and in foreign countries. During that week at SBCD, many people wanted to hear the messages he brought from God's Word and would get up early in the morning to be sure they did not miss the Bible study. They would take notes to help remember his words later when they went home from the conference. I noticed that many people wanted to talk

with him at different times during the day. Often people would try to sit with him during a meal. People did not worship Rev. Carter Bearden, but they did respect him.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

How could anyone have known this newborn Jesus was **worthy** of worship? Why were acts of honor, devotion, respect, and praise given to Jesus at His birth? The angels sang at Jesus' birth, and today we often sing hymns of praise to Jesus because He is worthy of our worship.

Have you ever wondered what it might be like to miss Christmas? A great number of people actually missed the first Christmas. The **scribes** and **Pharisees**, King Herod, the priests and teachers of the Law, and even the people in Bethlehem missed the first Christmas in Bethlehem. Of course, these same people missed the **Christ** of Christmas later when they heard Him teach and saw His miracles but refused to accept Him.

EXPLORE THE TEXT (MATTHEW 2:1-12)

1. The Search (Matthew 2:1-2)

VERSES 1-2.

¹ *Jesus was born in the town of Bethlehem in Judea during the time when Herod was king. When Jesus was born, some wise men from the east came to Jerusalem.* ² *They asked, "Where is the baby who was born to be the king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him."*

In all of the world's religions, only Christianity teaches that God became a baby, grew as a child, a youth, and a man who was with us here on earth.

The angels announced the birth of the **Messiah** to some shepherds. They went to Bethlehem to "see this thing that has

happened which the Lord has told us about” (Luke 2:15). The shepherds did not have to travel a great distance to see the baby Jesus.

The **Magi**, or wise men, made a long, difficult, and probably expensive journey in their search to find the baby and **worship** Him. We know little about the wise men. We usually think of three wise men, probably because of the number of gifts they gave to Jesus, but the Bible does not say how many there were. Normally, people traveled across the desert in large groups for protection from robbers. These men may have had many servants with them.

We do not know their names or background. They were probably **Gentiles**. The Holy Spirit led Matthew to include them to remind us that people of all nations must acknowledge Jesus as King and worship Him. They were probably **astrologers** (people who used the stars and planets to learn about things). Because they were searching for the king of the Jews, it was natural that they went to the capital city of Jerusalem.

These men understood something that we should not overlook. They understood that Jesus was born a king, not that He would grow up to become one later on.

KEY DOCTRINE: *The King’s Kingdom (Matthew 2:2)*

Jesus often spoke of the kingdom of God or the kingdom of heaven. Jesus’ message was that the kingdom is near or present (Mark 1:14-15, Luke 11:20), and at other times in the future (Matthew 25:1-46, Luke 9:27).

In Matthew 13, Jesus compared the kingdom with a:

_____ (verse 24),	_____ (verses 31-32),
_____ (verse 33),	_____ (verse 44),
_____ (verses 45-46),	_____ (verse 47).

The *kingdom of God* means “God’s rule in the hearts of His people.” The kingdom must be more important to the believer than anything else (Matthew 6:33).

The Magi believed in the **Christ** but had never seen Him. Their faith caused them to search for the Christ until they found Him.

How would you describe the faith of the wise men?

2. The Questions (Matthew 2:3-6)

VERSE 3.

³When King Herod heard this, he was troubled, as were all the people in Jerusalem.

King Herod was appointed by the emperor of Rome to rule over Judea. He called the Jewish religious leaders to advise him about where the **Messiah** was supposed to be born.

The Magi probably started at the city gate where the men met to talk all day. They asked where they could find the newborn king of the Jews. The men probably told them where to find King Herod.

VERSES 4-6.

⁴Herod called a meeting of all the leading priests and teachers of the Law and asked them where the Christ would be born. ⁵They answered, "In the town of Bethlehem in Judea. The prophet wrote about this in the Scriptures: ⁶But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are not just an insignificant village in Judah. A ruler will come from you who will be like a shepherd for my people Israel."

King Herod lived in Jerusalem which had been the capital city of the Jewish nation of Judah. So it was natural that he called for the Jewish leaders.

The Jewish leaders found their answer in Micah 5:2. The Jews expected their Messiah to be born in Bethlehem.

Read to see what the Jewish leaders thought about the Messiah and the tiny village of Bethlehem.

Why were the Jewish religious leaders able to answer Herod's question? _____

3. The Secret Meeting (Matthew 2:7-8)

VERSES 7-8.

⁷Then Herod had a secret meeting with the wise men and learned from them the exact time they first saw the star. ⁸He sent the wise men to Bethlehem, saying, "Look carefully for the child. When you find him, come tell me so I can worship him too."

King Herod was a mean, evil person. He murdered his wife, three of his sons, his mother-in-law, his brother-in-law, his uncle, and many others. Read verses 12-16 to understand Herod's real reason for learning where the baby was born. He had an answer from Scripture, but he met secretly with the wise men to learn when they first saw the star. Why? Because that would give him an idea of when the baby was born.

After learning all he could from the wise men, Herod urged them to find the child and then return and share the location with him so he could **worship** Him, too.

What additional information did Herod learn from his secret meeting with the wise men? _____

4. The Worship (Matthew 2:9-12)

VERSE 9.

⁹After the wise men heard the king, they left. The star that they had seen in the east went before them until it stopped above the place where the child was.

Many Christmas cards and manger scenes show the **Magi** visiting Jesus at the manger. We do not know where or when they began their journey. They could have come from Babylon, Persia, Turkey, Iran, Iraq, or some other place. They may have traveled as much as 2,500 miles. This was not on Interstate

highways, but crossing the desert on camels. Because of the long travel time, they probably arrived many months after Jesus' birth and visited the family at a house in Bethlehem where Mary, Joseph, and their baby lived. It may have been as long as three years, because Herod killed baby boys under that age. Have you ever wondered why Joseph did not take his family back to Nazareth? The Bible does not tell us that, but we know it was God's plan.

VERSE 10.

¹⁰ *When the wise men saw the star, they were filled with joy.*

Can you imagine the emotions that must have filled the Magi at this time? Their journey and their search were over!

VERSE 11.

¹¹ *They came to the house where the child was and saw him with his mother, Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. They opened their gifts and gave him treasures of gold, **frankincense**, and **myrrh**.*

The Magi finally located Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. First, the wise men worshiped Jesus. Second, they offered their gifts. Gold was a gift to give to a king, and Jesus is the King of kings.

Frankincense (incense) was a gift for a priest, and Jesus is the High Priest. Finally, myrrh was an ointment used to heal, and Jesus is a healer. Myrrh was also used to **embalm** dead bodies, and Jesus was born to die.

BIBLE SKILL: *Jesus and His Mother*

Matthew wrote about Mary, the mother of Jesus, several times. The other Gospel writers also wrote much about Jesus and His mother. We have enough information to understand that she was often with Jesus.

Read Matthew 2:11-14 and 20-21. Do you see a pattern every time Jesus and his mother are mentioned together? YES NO

What is the pattern you discovered, and why do you think Matthew wrote this way? _____

Where was Jesus mother in these verses?

Matthew 27:55-56, Mark 15:40-41, and John 19:25-26. _____

Matthew 27:61 and Mark 15:47. _____

Mark 16:1-2. _____

Matthew 12:46. _____

Acts 1:14. _____

Believing in a person they had never seen, these **Magi** spent months and much money to travel to see Jesus. Now their faith had become sight.

VERSE 12.

¹² *But God warned the wise men in a dream not to go back to Herod, so they returned to their own country by a different way.*

To protect the location of the child from King Herod, God warned the wise men to take a different route back to their home and not to return to see Herod.

Who believed the Bible the most, the Jewish leaders or the Gentile men from the East? _____

IN MY CONTEXT

Why did Herod have to question the Jewish leaders about the birthplace of the Christ? _____

God reveals His truth to people who are honestly seeking to discover that truth. We have instructions written to us about seeking in Isaiah 55:6, "You should look for the Lord before it is too late; you should call to Him while He is near."

God had communicated His plan four times to different people. Read these verses and write how God communicated His plan to each one:

Zechariah (Luke 1:11-13) _____

Mary (Luke 1:26-30) _____

Joseph (Matthew 1:20-21) _____

The Magi (Matthew 2:12) _____

Which of the four above expressed doubt about God's plan? _____

What was God's punishment to the one who doubted? _____

Why do you think Herod did not want the Magi to meet the Jewish religious leaders and compare notes about the birth of the new king?

Does the world seem to be spinning out of control? _____

What seems to be driving your life, faith or fear? _____

One feature of a king is his crown. Are you wearing the crown that rightfully belongs to King Jesus? If yes, pray to Him asking forgiveness for wearing His crown and tell Him you will give it back.

MEMORY VERSE

"They came to the house where the child was and saw him with his mother, Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. They opened their gifts and gave him treasures of gold, frankincense, and myrrh."

—Matthew 2:11



Session 4

THE KING IS TESTED

MATTHEW 4:1-10

Jesus faced temptations but He never sinned.

FIRST THOUGHTS

Many people are tempted by food today. Some people are tempted to overeat food. Other people are tempted in a different way. They are tempted to not eat enough food. **Satan** used food to tempt Eve and Adam in the garden of Eden. In the garden of Eden, there was an abundance of foods, but only one food was forbidden. With Satan's temptation Adam and Eve saw it was good to eat and they ate it (Genesis 3:6).

Jesus was in the desert with no food to eat. Satan used food to tempt Jesus. You can imagine Satan saying, “Some of these stones look just like loaves of fresh-baked bread your mother makes. Because you are God’s son, you can change these stones into delicious bread.”

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

Last week’s lesson ended with the wise men visiting the infant Jesus in Bethlehem. In Matthew 3:13-17, Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist and God gave His approval by saying, “This is my Son, whom I love, and I am very pleased with Him.”

How did Jesus feel when God affirmed Him and His **baptism**? He had to feel stronger. He knew He was doing God’s will. He knew God’s path would not be easy, and He would have to prepare for the future. As we study today’s Bible verses, we will learn how Jesus defeated Satan in physical, spiritual, and **psychological** testing.

EXPLORE THE TEXT (MATTHEW 4:1-10)

1. Face to Face with the Devil (Matthew 4:1)

VERSE 1.

¹*Then the Spirit led Jesus into the desert to be tempted by the devil.*

The Holy Spirit led Jesus into the desert. Jesus was away from other people who could offer help, support, and comfort. His only source of help was God, His Father.

This story has three main characters: Jesus, the Holy Spirit, and the Devil. Jesus must have told this story to Matthew at a later time, and Matthew wanted his readers to understand very early about the kind of **Savior** we have in Jesus.

2. The Food Test (Matthew 4:2-4)

VERSE 2.

² *Jesus fasted for forty days and nights. After this, He was very hungry.*

Jesus went without food for forty days. This is called **fasting**. The worldly view of fasting is usually to protest against authorities for some political reason. Fasting has a different meaning in the Bible. It means opening ourselves to the work of God, expressing **repentance** because of sin, and realizing our total dependence on God.

VERSE 3.

³ *The devil came to Jesus to tempt Him, saying, “If you are the Son of God, tell these rocks to become bread.”*

Look at how powerful an enemy we face in the Devil (**Satan**). He is not afraid to attack our **Savior**, God’s Son!

We need to understand the little word *if* in this verse. It may seem that Satan is questioning if Jesus is God’s Son because his question begins, “If you are the Son of God.” Many Bible students feel that a better translation is to use the word *since* or *because*. “Since (or because) you are God’s Son . . .”

Can you see Satan’s thinking? It is almost as if he is saying to Jesus, “How could your Father let you get into this mess? You have not eaten in forty days!” Satan used this sort of trick question to create doubt instead of a direct **approach** like “Does your Father really love you?” or “Your Father doesn’t love you or He would feed you.”

VERSE 4.

⁴ *Jesus answered, “It is written in the Scriptures, ‘A person lives not on bread alone, but by everything God says.’”*

Many Bible translations give Jesus’ answer as, “Man shall not live by bread alone.” Jesus was being tempted as a man. He was hungry. Jesus was battling Satan as a man, but He used divine weapons to defeat Satan’s attack.

Jesus did not use His human powers to defeat Satan. That was what Satan wanted Jesus to do! Instead, Jesus used the same spiritual help that we can use today: the power of the Holy Spirit (1 John 4:4), and the power of God’s Word: “It is written.” Even today, the best weapon we have against Satan is to answer with God’s Word.

Jesus quoted from Deuteronomy 8:3 to defeat Satan. Read what Jesus said later about true food (John 4:32-34).

What would it mean if Jesus had used His divine powers to provide for His own needs? _____

3. The Faith Test (Matthew 4:5-7)

Have you ever played baseball? You probably felt pretty good when you first got up to bat, especially if your eye was good enough to recognize those first two pitches as balls. But that first swing-and-a-miss strike began to make you lose faith in yourself. In Satan’s temptation plan, one strike was actually an out, because it would mean he had gained a victory over the sinless Son of God.

The temptations Jesus faced were real. But He had nothing in His nature that would allow Satan a toehold. Read John 14:30 to learn what Jesus said about Himself in His battles with Satan. Jesus said these things after His resurrection to show His power and victory over sin, death, and the grave.

VERSES 5-6.

⁵ Then the devil led Jesus to the holy city of Jerusalem and put Him on a high place of the temple. ⁶ The devil said, “If you are the Son of God, jump down, because it is written in the Scriptures: ‘He has put His angels in charge of you. They will catch you in their hands so that you will not hit your foot on a rock.’”

The first temptation was physical—bread. The second temptation was a spiritual attack on Jesus. **Satan** quoted Scripture, but not accurately, changing it just enough to sound like truth. Read Psalm 91:11-12 and learn what it really says.

In the garden of Eden, Eve saw that the food would make her wise (Genesis 3:6). The temptation to Christians today is often pride (1 John 2:16).

BIBLE SKILL: *Satan's Lies*

You may want to use two Bibles to do this activity:

Open one Bible to Psalm 91:11-12.

Open the other Bible to Matthew 4:6.

Compare Psalm 91:11-12 with the way Satan quoted it in Matthew.

How did Satan change the words in Psalm 91 to fit his purposes to tempt Jesus?

Do you agree with the following as a definition of temptation?

“Satan tries to get us to do things we know that God does not want us to do.” YES NO

Why or why not?

Copy and memorize these two Bible verses to help you in times of temptation:

Zechariah 4:6

Philippians 4:13

VERSE 7.

⁷ Jesus answered him, “It also says in the Scriptures, ‘Do not test the Lord your God.’”

Satan asked Jesus to prove that God is faithful to His Word. In other words, will God do what He says He will do?

Jesus replied by quoting Scripture again as His answer. Jesus quoted from Deuteronomy 6:14-17.

What is the difference in testing God in Malachi 3:10 and Deuteronomy 6:16? _____

4. The Popularity Test (Matthew 4:8-10)

VERSES 8-9.

⁸ Then the devil led Jesus to the top of a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in all their splendor. ⁹ The devil said, “If you will bow down and worship me, I will give you all these things.”

The first two temptations were physical and spiritual. The third time the temptation was **psychological**.

Satan will not take no for an answer! He failed when he tempted Jesus in His hunger and in His faith in what God has said. Satan next tried to tempt Jesus in a psychological way.

All the kings, emperors, and rulers of all the nations throughout world history have wanted power. They believed that if they had power, they could be popular and be rich.

Satan said to Jesus, “Hey! All of this is going to be yours some day! Bow down and **worship** me just once, then you won’t have to die to get what you see here.”

Satan offered Jesus a shortcut. He offers us shortcuts. But the Bible teaches us that there are no shortcuts available. We’ve been promised to share in the glory, so we have to also share in the suffering (1 Peter 5:10).

VERSE 10.

¹⁰ *Jesus said to the devil, “Go away from me, **Satan!** It is written in the Scriptures, ‘You must **worship** the Lord your God and serve only him.’”*

Jesus answered each of Satan’s temptations with a quotation straight from God’s Word. None of the things Satan offered said anything about service. Jesus knew that worship and service must go together. Later in His ministry Jesus again spoke to this idea in Luke 16:13.

Jesus did not negotiate or talk His way out of the conflict with Satan. Jesus told Satan to “get out of here” and Satan left.

How did Jesus answer each of Satan’s temptations?

James 4:7 tells us how to say, “Get out of here, Satan.” Copy it here.

KEY DOCTRINE: *Temptation*

Temptation was not an option for Jesus, so it is not an option for Christians. We are promised that every temptation—not some, not most, but every temptation—can make us stronger if we let God help us.

Copy 1 Corinthians 10:13 or James 1:2-4 here.

IN MY CONTEXT

Satan tempted Jesus in a strong way. But Jesus was prepared for the attack and stood strong against Satan. Jesus used several weapons against Satan. He was prepared because he had spent time with God while he was in the desert. He knew God had the perfect plan and He trusted God. He refused to accept the offered shortcut. He used God's perfect Word as his sword of the spirit (Ephesians 6:17). When we memorize God's Word, we have weapons to use to back up our words when we say, "Go away from me, Satan!" (Matthew 4:10).

1. Can you recall a time in your life when fasting helped you make a decision or made you feel closer to God? YES NO Write a few words about that experience. _____
2. Have you ever thought about fasting as a way for you to draw closer to God or gain understanding in something you are concerned about? YES NO Write a few words about that experience. _____
3. Can you think about a time you were tempted by Satan? YES NO What weapons did you use to defeat Satan's attacks on you? _____
4. How can we prepare or equip ourselves to be able to defeat Satan's attacks and temptations? _____
5. Whom can you encourage this week? Write their name(s) here. _____

Will you pray right now about how you will talk with them? Some people text a verse of Scripture to encourage friends each day. Is this something you can begin doing?

MEMORY VERSE

Jesus said to the devil, "Go away from me, Satan! It is written in the Scriptures, 'You must worship the Lord your God and serve only him.'"

—Matthew 4:10



Session 5

WHAT THE KING EXPECTS FROM HIS FOLLOWERS

MATTHEW 5:1-16

We can expect blessings from King Jesus, but He expects **worship** and obedience from us.

FIRST THOUGHTS

I have heard stories from Deaf friends about their years in a Deaf school that did not allow Sign Language. They told me their teachers would explain the rule. The teachers wrote the “No Sign Language” rule on the board. But sometimes students would forget or disobey the rule. When they used Sign Language, the

teacher would punish them. Seeing a friend punished helped other children to remember the “No Sign Language” rule. The teacher used different ways to communicate her expectations.

Jesus shares His expectations with us through the Bible, through prayer, and through the Holy Spirit. We don’t reflect the qualities of Jesus our King if we do not follow His teaching. He cannot bless us if we are not obedient. Jesus said, “If you love me, you will obey my commands” (John 14:15).

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

In Matthew, chapter 4, we learn that Jesus began his work in Galilee. This is the area around the Sea of Galilee, about 100 miles north of Jerusalem. It includes the towns of Nazareth and Capernaum, about 30 miles apart. Verse 13 tells us Jesus went to live in Capernaum. This is where Peter, Andrew, James, and John lived and worked as fishermen. He called them to follow Him (verses 18-23).

Today’s Bible verses are part of what is called the Sermon on the Mount. It is not a sermon like we have in our churches today. Jesus sat down with His disciples to teach them. He let the crowd listen. Later Matthew wrote from memory and we can read in Matthew’s Gospel what Jesus taught.

EXPLORE THE TEXT (MATTHEW 5:1-16)

1. The New Moses (Matthew 5:1-2)

VERSES 1-2.

¹When Jesus saw the crowds, He went up on a hill and sat down. His followers came to Him, ²And He began to teach them, saying:

Many Bible scholars have compared Jesus’ teaching on the mountainside with Moses at Mount Sinai, and they call Jesus

the new Moses. But Moses is not equal to Jesus. (Read more about the comparison of Moses to Jesus in Hebrews 3:2-6.)

BIBLE SKILL: *Moses' Words and Jesus' Words*

Use two Bibles for this activity. Open the first Bible to Exodus 20. Open the second Bible to Matthew 5:3-12.

In Exodus 20, what did God expect from His followers? _____

Were the Israelites afraid or comforted? _____

In Matthew 5, what did Jesus tell the followers to do? _____

Were the followers afraid or comforted? _____

What is a basic difference between the Law that Moses taught in the Ten Commandments and what Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount? _____

Jesus sat down with His disciples, and the crowd probably pushed in and sat down to hear Jesus.

Do you think Jesus cared that the people crowded around Him and heard what He was teaching? YES NO

Why or why not? _____

2. The New Blessings (Matthew 5:3-12)

VERSE 3.

³*They are blessed who realize their spiritual poverty, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to them.*

This section of the Sermon on the Mount is called "The Beatitudes." The word **beatitude** means "blessing."

The Beatitudes describe attitudes and goals that should be

present in our lives as believers and visible to those around us. Another way to begin each teaching is, “You are rewarded with happiness when . . .” or “You are blessed when . . .”

Jesus taught that when we realize we cannot do good things in our own power, we can draw on God’s unlimited power to do things for Him. (Read Philippians 4:13.)

VERSE 4.

⁴*They are blessed who grieve, for God will comfort them.*

All of us have times of deep sorrow, emotionally or spiritually. God comforts His children when they **grieve**. (Read what Paul wrote about comfort in 2 Corinthians 1:3-7.)

VERSE 5.

⁵*They are blessed who are humble, for the whole earth will be theirs.*

Other Bible translations use the word *meek* instead of humble or gentle. Meek does not mean weak. The Greek word means “power under control.” It is the word that describes a horse that has been trained for work—power under control.

VERSE 6.

⁶*They are blessed who hunger and thirst after justice, for they will be satisfied.*

We should view sin the same way God does, not try to hide it or let it control us. This lets us share in God’s plans as we let Him live in and through us. We will receive peace, comfort, and renewed strength as we let God use us for His purposes.

VERSE 7.

⁷*They are blessed who show mercy to others, for God will show mercy to them.*

Believers know they are saved sinners, and they are conscious of God's mercy to them. Believers want to share God's mercy with others. The more we share, the more we are aware of God's mercy being shown to us and how to share His mercy with others.

VERSE 8.

⁸*They are blessed whose thoughts are pure, for they will see God.*

A heart that is messed up by sin cannot focus on God. To be able to see God means to be able to see things as God sees them.

VERSE 9.

⁹*They are blessed who work for peace, for they will be called God's children.*

We must first be at peace with God. Then we will want to encourage and help everyone get along with one another.

VERSE 10.

¹⁰*They are blessed who are persecuted for doing good, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to them.*

When believers live like unbelievers, the world lets them alone. When believers live like God wants them to, the world is uncomfortable or hates them.

BIBLE SKILL: Words from Jesus (Matthew 5:3-12)

Circle the word(s) that best describe the spiritual meanings that Jesus was teaching in the words below:

Poverty: no money or want stronger faith

Grieve: cry all the time or seek God's comfort

Humble: be like doormats or be content in God's plan

Thirsty: need a drink of water or want what God wants

Pure: double-minded or see what God wants

VERSES 11-12.

¹¹ People will insult you and hurt you. They will lie and say all kinds of evil things about you because you follow me. But when they do, you will be blessed. ¹² Rejoice and be glad, because you have a great reward waiting for you in heaven. People did the same evil things to the prophets who lived before you.

Most people think they are blessed if they have a good job, a nice car or two, a nice house they can show off, and extra money to be able to buy things they want.

Jesus said, “Your blessing is when someone insults you or injures you by things they say or people telling lies about you and making up evil stories about you.”

Jesus continued, “You will have a great reward waiting for you in heaven.” Jesus is really saying, “You will be rewarded forever.” (Read Hebrews 11:13-16.)

Sometimes believers may want to ask for an exception so that they do not have to be persecuted for their beliefs. See the first word in 2 Timothy 3:12. Does this verse say God will let anyone avoid persecution? YES NO

3. What the King Expects (Matthew 5:13-16)

VERSE 13.

¹³ You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its salty taste, it cannot be made salty again. It is good for nothing, except to be thrown out and walked on.

Does salt have power? Yes! One time when we were visiting my brother's family, my wife made cinnamon rolls for breakfast. They looked so good! But one bite quickly changed things. She had put in seven tablespoons of salt instead of sugar because the containers had no labels!

Jesus said our power and usefulness to the world is to become different from the world. (Read Colossians 4:5-6.)

I remember my mother finding a box of salt that had been pushed to the back of her cabinet on an upper shelf. (My mother was short, so she could not see the upper shelf!) The salt was almost five years old. When we tasted it, there was no salty taste. It fit the description Jesus gave: “It is good for nothing, except to be thrown out and walked on.”

VERSE 14.

¹⁴ You are the light that gives light to the world. A city that is built on a hill cannot be hidden.

Jesus might have said, “You are the flashlights for other people in their darkness.” What do flashlights require? Batteries—and rechargeable batteries are the best kind just as the Holy Spirit recharges us daily. We cannot give off full light without full power.

VERSES 15-16.

¹⁵ And people don’t hide a light under a bowl. They put it on a lampstand so the light shines for all the people in the house. ¹⁶ In the same way, you should be a light for other people. Live so that they will see the good things you do and will praise your Father in heaven.”

In Jesus’ time, the common household lamp (light) was a palm-sized baked clay dish that had one wick. These lamps did not give off a lot of light, but they really did help people see if they were held high or put on the top of a lampstand.

If a person put the lamp under a bowl or basket and covered it up, two things happened that Jesus wanted to teach us: 1. No one could see or have any benefit from the light. 2. The lamp would go out because it could not get oxygen.

Jesus said to us, “I want you to shine and I want you to depend on Me to keep you shining.”

Faith Check: Circle your faith battery size here: A C D 9-volt 12-volt
What are some ways you can both charge and increase your faith batteries on a daily basis? _____

IN MY CONTEXT

Believers must represent Christ to the world by deeds (salt) and in the world by light (words of teaching, encouragement, rebuke, and example).

How important is it that the world sees a model of Christianity in a believer? _____

Could someone you know describe a Christian from the way you talk and live? _____

What do these verses promise us when we want to follow the Holy Spirit's leadership?

Psalm 119:105 _____

Isaiah 30:21 _____

As you think about Jesus' words to His followers, and what God expects from His children, bow your head and pray these words from Psalm 119:33-35:

33. Lord, teach me your demands, and I will keep them until the end.

34. Help me understand, so I can keep your teachings, obeying them with all my heart.

35. Lead me in the path of your commands, because that makes me happy.

MEMORY VERSE

"You are the light that gives light to the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hidden." —Matthew 5:14



Session 6

MEETING THE KING

MATTHEW 6:5-18

Jesus taught His followers how to **approach** (meet) the Father through prayer.

FIRST THOUGHTS

Jesus told His followers about approaching (meeting) the Father at any time in our prayers.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

In Matthew 5:16-48, Jesus taught about the importance of the Law, anger, sexual sins, divorce, and making promises.

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In chapter 6, Jesus taught about giving money, having gifts, praying, **fasting**, and preparing for the future. Jesus did not condemn these practices. Jesus warned that it is desirable to do good works, but we are not to do them to draw attention to ourselves. We should be seen doing good works for God, but we should not do them to be seen (Matthew 5:16).

In Matthew 6:1-5, Jesus taught that the correct pattern of giving should be a quiet, secret action between the giver and God, and not an action to draw attention and seek praise from people. Jesus was saying, “Do not give at all if you are giving because you want to be praised by your friends and neighbors.” He continued this same idea as He taught about prayer.

EXPLORE THE TEXT (MATTHEW 6:5-18)

1. Between God and Us (Matthew 6:5-6)

VERSE 5.

⁵ *“When you pray, don’t be like the hypocrites. They love to stand in the synagogues and on the street corners and pray so people will see them. I tell you the truth, they already have their full reward.”*

Jesus reminded the crowd that prayer was talking to God and not a method for showing holiness, devotion, or righteousness.

Jews usually prayed standing up, and they prayed three times a day—morning, afternoon, and evening (Psalm 55:17 and Acts 3:1). If they were in the markets or in a crowded street at prayer time, people noticed them and often praised them. Jesus taught His followers that this was not the correct way to pray.

Hypocrite is a Greek word that meant an actor who wears a mask. Today, the word means “someone who uses religion to cover up his sins.” Jesus taught that the hypocrite did not pray to be heard by God, but to be seen by other people as a righteous person. Remember, God hears the softest of whispers.

VERSE 6.

⁶*When you pray, you should go into your room and close the door and pray to your Father who cannot be seen. Your Father can see what is done in secret, and He will reward you.*

The people listening to Jesus probably did not recognize His teaching. It was different! The Jews never spoke God's name (Yahweh), and Jesus said to pray to your Father! Jesus taught a new relationship. In the Old Testament God refers to the entire nation as His son (Exodus 4:21-3). Jesus said His followers are individual sons of God (John 1:12-13).

Jesus does not condemn or forbid public prayer, but He taught that the attitude of those praying is very important.

Jesus taught that the goal of prayer is to be alone with God. Your prayer is between you and God. We need to find a quiet place and share time with our Father.

Have you ever had someone say to you, "That was a beautiful prayer you just prayed"? YES NO

What was your reaction to their praise? _____

2. Honest Communication (Matthew 6:7-8)

VERSE 7.

⁷*"And when you pray, don't be like those people who don't know God. They continue saying things that mean nothing, thinking that God will hear them because of their many words.*

Can you send or receive text messages without a phone or tablet? Can you send or receive email without a phone or computer? Can you read a magazine or newspaper without holding the printed item or reading it online on your phone or computer? All of these questions must be answered with one word: NO. Can you pray without a phone, without sending a text message, or without reading a written prayer? Yes, of course.

Jesus taught that prayer is honest communication with God. That is not reading a prayer that someone has written or repeating the same words or **signs** again and again.

Who were “those people who don’t know God” that Jesus talked about? They were the unbelievers. They were the ones who memorized long prayers, special words, and the names of their many gods and repeated these many times in their prayers. They kept their hope by constantly repeating these words. Jesus condemned meaningless words (signs) in our praying, not long prayers.

VERSE 8.

⁸Don’t be like them, because your Father knows the things you need before you ask him.

Jesus taught that believers are different because of the relationship we have with the Father. Jesus often taught that we should ask the Father for our needs. Perhaps more important, Jesus said our Father knows what we need before we ask Him.

Whom did Jesus say we should not model (copy) in our prayers? _____

Do you have to make a list of things for God to have an idea of what you need or want? YES NO

Why or why not? _____

3. Show Respect When You Pray (Matthew 6:9-15)

VERSE 9.

⁹So when you pray, you should pray like this: ‘Our Father in heaven, may your name always be kept holy.

These verses are often called the Lord’s Prayer. Perhaps a better title is the Model Prayer. This prayer is an example of how we

should **approach** God and give our requests to Him. The words in this prayer do not have any special power.

BIBLE SKILL: Prayer

Read Luke 18:10-14.

Jesus said the Pharisee was praying to whom? _____

What was the attitude of prayer of the publican? _____

Which of the two men had the correct attitude when they prayed to God? _____

Jesus did not say, “When you pray, say these words.” Instead, He said, “When you pray, you should pray like this.” Jesus said to use this prayer as an example for our prayers, not as a substitute prayer that we repeat again and again.

The opening words tell us about our relationship with God through His Son, Jesus: OUR Father! Jesus would have said, “My Father.”

VERSE 10.

¹⁰ *May your kingdom come and what you want be done, here on earth as it is in heaven.*

The goal is not to get our will done in heaven, but God’s will done on earth. We want God to be in control of everything here on earth just like He is in control in heaven.

VERSE 11.

¹¹ *Give us the food we need for each day.*

More than food to eat, this verse describes our complete dependence upon God. God provides everything we need, whenever we need it.

VERSE 12.

¹² *Forgive us for our sins, just as we have forgiven those who sinned against us.*

The need for forgiveness of sins is a topic throughout the Bible. Even though God placed them in a near-perfect garden, Adam and Eve soon needed forgiveness, and the need continues daily in the 21st Century. We need to be regularly forgiven for our sins and forgive those who have hurt us or done something wrong to us by praying, “Forgive me when I do not live the way you want me to live. Help me to forgive those who do bad things to me.”

VERSE 13.

¹³ *“And do not cause us to be tempted, but save us from the Evil One. [The kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours forever. Amen.]”*

Jesus taught that we are tempted **24/7**! But God does not tempt us to sin. Read James 1:13-15.

KEY DOCTRINE: *Forgiveness*

Read Mark 11:25-26.

How does this verse compare with Matthew 6:12?

Read Ephesians 4:32.

How does this verse fit together with Matthew 6:12 and Mark 11:25-26?

VERSES 14-15.

¹⁴Yes, if you forgive others for their sins, your Father in heaven will also forgive you for your sins. ¹⁵But if you don't forgive others, your Father in heaven will not forgive your sins.

The Bible always teaches us a balance. In many of the promises made to us, God said, "If you do this, then I will do that." We cannot expect to be forgiven if we do not forgive others.

What is the promise in Matthew 6:15?

4. Fasting with Right Reasons (Matthew 6:16-18)

VERSES 16-18.

¹⁶When you fast, don't put on a sad face like the hypocrites. They make their faces look sad to show people they are fasting. I tell you the truth, those hypocrites already have their full reward. ¹⁷So when you fast, comb your hair and wash your face. ¹⁸Then people will not know that you are fasting, but your Father, whom you cannot see, will see you. Your Father sees what is done in secret, and he will reward you.

When Jesus finished teaching about prayer, He moved quickly into teaching about worshiping God through acts of **fasting**, a time when someone does not eat food. Jesus reminded the crowd that fasting was to be done with sincere **repentance** and not as a display of self-righteousness.

As Christians, our faces should reflect happiness and joy, not gloom or sadness. Joy is one of the major themes in the Bible, and the words *joy* or *rejoicing* appear almost four hundred times. Joy is important to a believer and is a source of strength (Nehemiah 8:10).

IN MY CONTEXT

When we pray, we need to go to God with reverence and humility. Prayer is to be viewed as a conversation with the holy God for the purpose of understanding His heart and will.

Is it important to use correct signs when we pray? YES NO
(God knows our heart before we sign or use words.)

When we fast, our actions are directed toward God, not toward impressing others. Jesus taught that no one needs to know we are fasting, and we should appear normal in dress and appearance with a joyful face.

Our English word for happy is based on external events or circumstances. Our word for joy is based on internal events or circumstances. Being happy depends on things; joy depends on Jesus. Joy is a blessing from God. Paul wrote, "I pray that the God who gives hope will fill you with much joy and peace while you trust in Him. Then your hope will overflow by the power of the Holy Spirit" (Romans 15:13).

1. What has been your prayer attitude lately? _____
2. If your attitude needs changing, what will you do differently in your next prayers? _____
3. Read Exodus 16:4-18. How did God provide food for the people of Israel in the wilderness? _____
4. Read Numbers 11:1-8. God was providing food. How did the people react to what God gave them? _____
5. Can you remember a time when you should have been more thankful for God's blessings instead of complaining? YES NO
How did you talk to God (pray) when you realized your mistake?

MEMORY VERSE

"Seek first God's kingdom and what God wants. Then all your other needs will be met as well." —Matthew 6:33



Session 7

WHO IS IMPORTANT?

MATTHEW 5:17-22,43-45

Everyone is important to King Jesus.

FIRST THOUGHTS

There was a young, Deaf woman who was in an accident when she was very young. The accident left her with brain damage, and she lived the rest of her life with her parents. A man who knew her family took advantage of her. He had sexual relations with her, and she became pregnant. After prayer and counseling with the Deaf pastor, she and her family decided to give up the baby for adoption to parents who wanted a child to love. The law said an **abortion** was OK. But this young woman showed that she valued her baby's life.

Jesus values all human life and expects His followers to do the same.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

The **Pharisees** spent their lives studying the written Law. They were taught by famous teachers. Their teaching authority came from what their teachers taught them. They taught from authority.

What Jesus taught was so new and different that the people and the leaders recognized that Jesus taught with His own authority. He didn't teach what other people said or taught before (Luke 4:31-36; Mark 1:21-22).

The common people believed the Pharisees were the most religious group of people. Jesus challenged this belief. Jesus taught that obedience must exceed the examples of the Pharisees (Matthew 5:20).

EXPLORE THE TEXT

(MATTHEW 5:17-22,43-45)

1. The Importance of the Law (Matthew 5:17-20)

VERSE 17.

¹⁷ *"Don't think that I have come to destroy the Law of Moses or the teaching of the prophets. I have not come to destroy them but to bring about what they said."*

Jesus wanted His listeners to understand that He obeyed the Law of God. This was called the Law of Moses. Jesus said it was not His plan to challenge the Law, change it, or do away with it. Instead, His purpose was to **fulfill** the Law.

Jesus had constant conflicts with the **Pharisees** and other religious leaders. Most of them believed that salvation came through keeping the Law. Jesus taught that the Ten Commandments were timeless truths that revealed God's character, expectations, and values. However, only faith in Jesus could give the righteousness that God demanded.

The religious leaders said Jesus broke the Law by associating with sinners and doing things on the Sabbath. Jesus healed people on the Sabbath. Jesus was friends with sinners. Jesus said some of those laws were made by men and not truly part of the Law of Moses.

VERSE 18.

¹⁸ I tell you the truth, nothing will disappear from the Law until heaven and earth are gone. Not even the smallest letter or the smallest part of a letter will be lost until everything has happened.

The Hebrew alphabet has some letters with small, extra marks to the side that are not attached to the letters and can be easily overlooked. Jesus knew that it was easier to keep some parts of the Law than others, but He taught that everything in the Law is important, even what some would think were little things.

VERSES 19-20.

¹⁹ Whoever refuses to obey any command and teaches other people not to obey that command will be the least important in the kingdom of heaven. But whoever obeys the commands and teaches other people to obey them will be great in the kingdom of heaven. ²⁰ I tell you that if you are no more obedient than the teachers of the law and the Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus knew the Pharisees were proud because they obeyed the Law and its extra rules like how many steps one could take or how much they could carry on the Sabbath Day.

Jesus could not have been clearer in His teaching than in verse 20. His choice of words left no doubt that the Pharisees were not teaching the truth and were not obeying the Law. They were not doing God's will.

KEY DOCTRINE: *Doing God's Will*

Read John 4:34. Which phrase(s) below describes Jesus?

- a. delight in the Father's will
- b. it is OK to go without food
- c. satisfaction in doing God's work
- d. there is no hurry in doing things for God
- e. doing a good job

Read Psalm 37:4-5. What can a person experience from serving God?

Read Galatians 2:20. What does Paul mean by saying, "I do not live anymore"? _____

Read Galatians 2:21. Does Paul say that Christ's death was useless?
YES NO Why or why not? _____

How did Jesus' teaching differ from the Pharisees' teaching?

2. Human Life Is Important (Matthew 5:21-22)

VERSE 21.

²¹*You have heard that it was said to our people long ago, "You must not murder anyone. Anyone who murders another will be judged."*

Jesus began teaching about the sixth and seventh commandments. Jesus taught that there is more to obeying

the laws than what we call the letter of the law. There is also the spirit of the law or obeying the law in our hearts before our actions can disobey the law. Jesus gave new understanding to the law. Many people today do not want to be tied down by the moral laws of God. They want to decide for themselves what is right and moral.

Jesus identified murder as an act that begins in the heart when another person is seen as worth nothing. The sin is in the attitude as well as in the act of murder. Murder, selling drugs, **sex trafficking**, and **abortion** are all examples of ignoring the value of other people.

Perhaps the largest example of ignoring the value of life we see in America is abortion. Since the 1973 decision by the United States Supreme Court on the issue of abortion, more than 57.5 million abortions have been performed in the U.S. Some reports state that over 1.2 million abortions per year are performed in Japan where oral contraceptives are still illegal.

VERSE 22.

²² But I tell you, if you are angry with a brother or sister, you will be judged. If you say bad things to a brother or sister, you will be judged by the council. And if you call someone a fool, you will be in danger of the fire of hell.

Jesus finished talking about murder and then began teaching about anger. Was it because murder and anger are related?

Jesus taught that what begins small can grow to violence. This new type of teaching is another example of Jesus fulfilling the Law.

Read Proverbs 14:12. What is the result of people deciding for themselves what is right and moral? _____

How does this affect society when everyone wants to do this? _____

3. Love Beyond Expectations (Matthew 5:43-45)

VERSES 43-44.

⁴³ *You have heard that it was said, “Love your neighbor, and hate your enemies.”* ⁴⁴ *But I say to you, love your enemies. Pray for those who hurt you.*

The **Pharisees** had it completely wrong. They would not eat or fellowship with people they decided were sinners. The Pharisees labeled Jesus as a friend of Publicans and sinners. But in Luke 15:1-7, Jesus told a **parable** that taught that it is good to love sinners in order to teach them about God. Jesus’ example taught that Christians and the church should welcome those who are willing to seek God’s forgiveness in **repentance**. Today we often hear this expressed as “love the sinner, hate the sin.”

Jesus taught that His followers should not only love all people but also love people who persecuted them.

VERSE 45.

⁴⁵ *If you do this, you will be true children of your Father in heaven. He causes the sun to rise on good people and on evil people, and he sends rain to those who do right and to those who do wrong.*

In His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus gave examples about how believers should live. Jesus talked about how His followers should live so nonbelievers will want to follow Him.

BIBLE SKILL: *True Children of God*

To be a true child of God we must obey His will.

In your mind, imagine you have two acorns, a hammer, and a small shovel. Imagine that you take the two acorns and place them on the ground. Imagine you dig a small hole, place one acorn in it, and cover it with dirt. Imagine you take the other acorn and smash it with a hammer. With that picture in mind, answer these questions:

Which acorn will become an oak tree, and become what it is supposed to become? _____

Now, imagine that the acorns are your life. What will happen if you “plant” your life the way God wants it? _____

What will happen if you abuse your life and do not use it the way God wants you to? _____

Read Psalm 51:10 and Isaiah 40:31. Write down three things you will ask God to do to help you follow His will.

All that Jesus taught is summed up in the first part of verse 45: “If you do this, you will be true children of your Father in heaven.”

Jesus taught that we cannot choose or decide who we will love or bless. He explained that God’s love is for everyone, even those who do not know Him yet, just as the blessings of sunshine and rain are for everyone.

Write the words from John 3:16 here and substitute your name for the word *world*. _____

Now write the verse again with the name of a friend or family member and promise to pray for that person every day. _____

IN MY CONTEXT

From what Jesus said, is murder a big sin and anger a little sin?

YES NO

Do you think that your sins are smaller or bigger than someone else's sins? YES NO

What do you think God thinks about this? _____

Do you know someone who is struggling with what to do about an unplanned pregnancy? YES NO

How do you think Jesus would respond to them? _____

How should you respond to them? _____

Jesus called His followers to live their daily lives to a higher standard. Jesus knows we cannot do this in our own strength. This is why we have Bible promises that God will give us His strength and power to do what He wants us to do. Copy Philippians 4:13 here.

Pray using these words.

MEMORY VERSE

"But I say to you, love your enemies. Pray for those who hurt you."

—Matthew 5:44



Session 8

TWO PATHS, ONE CHOICE

MATTHEW 7:13-21, 24-27

Choosing to follow King Jesus.

FIRST THOUGHTS

Every person faces an important choice regarding his or her eternal destiny.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

Matthew started chapter 7 with three things Jesus taught:

1. Judging others will cause problems for you. 2. Effective prayer is prayer that does not give up. 3. The most important rule, called the Golden Rule, should guide our lives.

Jesus had the attention of the crowd and like a shepherd, He guided them into a basic teaching: the way to heaven is difficult.

Jesus continued teaching about judgment and decisions. There are decisions we must make daily and these decisions guide our lives and relationships.

EXPLORE THE TEXT (MATTHEW 7:13-21,24-27)

1. Narrow Versus Wide? (Matthew 7:13-14)

VERSES 13-14.

¹³ *Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to **destruction**, and there are many who enter through it. ¹⁴ For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it.*

Driving on country roads is very different from driving on the Interstate highways. In rural areas, you may see a sign, “One-Lane Bridge.” Traffic must slow down and take turns crossing the bridge.

I was an air traffic controller in the military. I used radar to guide pilots when they landed. The radar beams were very narrow and accurate. Following my words, a pilot would arrive exactly over the runway for a safe landing.

If you go to a restaurant, you must make choices. Most restaurants have many choices for different appetizers, soups, salads, entrees, sides, drinks, and desserts. Wow!

If you want to follow Jesus, what are your choices? Jesus taught that everyone must choose between two gates: a wide one and a narrow one. The wide gate opens to a wide road crowded with many people. They are doing what they want to do. They have good times and bad times, but they make their own choices in life. Jesus said this wide, crowded, easily traveled road leads to hell. (Read Ecclesiastes 7:29.)

The narrow gate opens to a narrow road with fewer people, and it is a difficult road to travel. This road leads to true life, but only a few people find this road. David described the road this way: “Happy are those who live pure lives, who follow the Lord’s teachings” (Psalm 119:1). The narrow road will finally open out into eternal happiness and blessing. Jesus said, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. The only way to the Father is through me” (John 14:6). People who teach that there is more than one way to heaven are not arguing with Christians. They are arguing with God.

Both gates lead to eternity. The result of our choice cannot be changed after we die

KEY DOCTRINE: *Eternity Is Forever*

Eternity is many times more than one billion years. Do you have an idea of how many is a billion (1,000,000,000) of something?

How long is one billion hours? A billion seconds ago it was 1959. A billion minutes ago Jesus was alive.

Think of Jesus’ promises as money in your bank account, as if Jesus deposited one billion promises in your bank account, and you can write checks one-at-a-time on these promises. How many checks can you write before you are overdrawn? _____

How long will eternity be? _____

Read Jeremiah 21:8. What two choices does God give?

1. _____

2. _____

People often worry about heaven and hell. Read Luke 13:24. Was the answer Jesus gave different from His teaching in Matthew 7:13-14?

YES NO

If there is a difference, what is the difference?

2. Good Versus Bad? (Matthew 7:15-21)

VERSE 15.

¹⁵ *Be careful of false prophets. They come to you looking gentle like sheep, but they are really dangerous like wolves.*

Jeremiah **cautioned** the people of Judah and Jerusalem that they were following the teachings of false prophets and priests. They were false because they did not obey God's laws themselves (Jeremiah 23:16-22). Jeremiah said the teaching of God's true prophets was to help people turn away from their sins, while the false prophets, pretending to give God's message, were encouraging people to do wrong. Hundreds of years later, Jesus found the same problems because of what the **Pharisees** were teaching.

Why is the narrow gate difficult to find? Jesus taught that it is because of false teachers.

VERSES 16-20.

¹⁶ *You will know these people by what they do. Grapes don't come from thorn bushes, and figs don't come from thorny weeds.* ¹⁷ *In the same way, every good tree produces good fruit, but a bad tree produces bad fruit.*

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¹⁸ *A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot produce good fruit.* ¹⁹ *Every tree that does not produce good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.* ²⁰ *In the same way, you will know these false prophets by what they do.*

Jesus challenged people to consider the fruit or results of the teachers they chose to follow. He warned about people **masquerading** as believers. Jesus said they would be punished.

VERSE 21.

²¹ *Not all those who say “You are our Lord” will enter the kingdom of heaven. The only people who will enter the kingdom of heaven are those who do what my Father in heaven wants.*

This is a most important verse. Jesus taught that a person can go through life saying the correct words or using the correct **signs**, praying religious-sounding prayers, and going to church with believers to appear to be walking on the narrow road when they are not.

Jesus mixed a truth with a warning in what He said. Jesus taught that love should be the motivating drive in obedience and service, and that joy will be the result.

“How can I be sure I will go to heaven?” has been a question of Jesus’ followers from the time He was on earth until today. After John wrote his Gospel, he wrote three other letters that were read in the early churches. The letter we call 1 John contains many promises that Christians believe today. One of the best verses for the security of true believers is found in 1 John 5:1-13. John outlined truths about Jesus and the security of those who put their faith in Him. The key verse is verse 13: “I write this letter to you who believe in the Son of God so you will know you have eternal life.”

BIBLE SKILL: *How Can I Know?*

Open your Bible to 1 John 5:1-13.

Ask yourself, "How can I know that I have eternal life?"

Copy 1 John 5:1.

Ask yourself, "How can I know that I have eternal life?"

Copy 1 John 5:2.

Read verses 4-12 and ask yourself one more time, "How can I know that I have eternal life?"

Copy 1 John 5:13.

Jesus described false prophets as being dangerous. Read Proverbs 12:28. What does this verse teach about the choices we make?

3. Rock Versus Sand? (Matthew 7:24-27)

VERSES 24-27.

²⁴ *Everyone who hears my words and obeys them is like a wise man who built his house on rock.* ²⁵ *It rained hard, the floods came, and the winds blew and hit that house. But it did not fall, because it was built on rock.*

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²⁶ *Everyone who hears my words and does not obey them is like a foolish man who built his house on sand.* ²⁷ *It rained hard, the floods came, and the winds blew and hit that house, and it fell with a big crash.*

Jesus compared the choice facing each person to be like a person building a house on a foundation of sand or on rock. Perhaps Jesus chose this story to stress that each person must do something following each choice he or she makes. Building a house is certainly doing something. Jesus taught that hearing something is of no value if one does not act or do something. Jesus warned the people about building their lives on anything other than Him.

Jesus again taught about “listen + obey = wisdom.” He also taught the opposite: “not listen + not obey = foolishness.” The rains, floods, and winds represent the attacks on our faith in our daily lives: fear, doubt, misunderstandings, suffering, bitterness, disappointment, and persecution.

Our hope is based on the fact of the resurrection of **Christ**. The fact of His resurrection leaves nothing to chance. Christianity is the only world religion based on a resurrected, living **Savior**. Mohammed died and is dead. Joseph Smith died and is dead. Buddha died and is dead.

What have you hoped for lately? (Pass a test? A pay raise? Win the lottery?) _____

Are these hopes based on external events that we can control?
YES NO

What is our hope based on? R_____ **of**
C_____.

IN MY CONTEXT

Did you complete the exercise based on 1 John 5:1-13? Trusting in Jesus is the only way we can have real life. Trusting in Jesus is our promise that we have eternal life. We should not live as though eternal life begins when we die. Someone once said after professing faith in Jesus, "Today is the first day of the rest of my life."

What will you do this week to tell someone about Jesus and eternal life? _____

Write the name of a friend you will pray for regularly. _____
Pray that God will give you divine opportunities to live and to share your faith.

The Bible records the words Jesus spoke over 2,000 years ago. Read John 12:47-50. How important are the words of Jesus today? _____

Read 1 Corinthians 1:18. What two ways did Paul describe the teaching about the cross? _____ and _____

In Jesus' story of the two builders—one wise and one foolish—He also taught that we will be held responsible for the life we live. Building our life on anything other than Jesus leads to destruction.

Read 1 Corinthians 3:23. Whom do you belong to? _____
Whom does Christ belong to? _____

Write a short sentence about how you can live to better show others that you belong to Christ. _____

Remember the formula "listen + obey = wisdom?" What are some ways you can "listen" better to God? _____

MEMORY VERSE

"Enter through the narrow gate. The gate is wide and the road is wide that leads to hell, and many people enter through that gate."

—Matthew 7:13



Session 9

SHOW ME YOUR FAITH

MATTHEW 8:5-13

The King has all power.

FIRST THOUGHTS

Jesus finished teaching and walked down the hill. Jesus set very high standards for living our daily lives. Next, Jesus shifted His teaching from the talk to the walk.

Chapter 8:1-4 gives us an example of the faith of a man with a skin disease, perhaps **leprosy**. The man showed his faith when he told Jesus, “Lord, you can heal me if you will.” Jesus touched the man! This was open disobedience of the rules about anyone with a skin disease. Jesus said, “I will. Be healed!”

┌
In 2 Kings 5:1-14, the **prophet** Elisha told the king of Israel to “Let Naaman come to me. Then he will know there is a prophet in Israel.” When Naaman followed the prophet Elisha’s instructions, he was healed of his leprosy. Moses and Jesus were the only other people in the Bible who healed lepers. Jesus showed that He has authority over all of His creation.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

In Jesus’ time, Israel was under Roman rule, and Roman troops served throughout Israel. There were many Roman soldiers in Jerusalem. The usual Roman army group was called a *centuria*. This means “one hundred soldiers.” A centurion was in charge of the *centuria*. A **centurion** would be like a sergeant in our Army with many stripes on his sleeve. The Jews considered every Roman officer to be an enemy and treated them with hatred.

Centurions are mentioned in a positive way in the Gospels and Acts, and we know the names of two of them: Cornelius (Acts 10:1-8) and Julius (Acts 27:1-6). Centurions were always Roman citizens.

EXPLORE THE TEXT (MATTHEW 8:5-13)

1. Ask with Humility (Matthew 8:5-7)

VERSES 5-7

⁵When Jesus entered the city of Capernaum, an army officer came to him, begging for help. ⁶The officer said, “Lord, my servant is at home in bed. He can’t move his body and is in much pain.” ⁷Jesus said to the officer, “I will go and heal him.”

┌
We do not know much about the **centurion**. We don't know where he was born, and we don't know his name. As a Gentile, he believed in Jesus, while most of the people of Israel and their religious leaders remained blind to the **Messiah**.

The Roman centurion was a man of **compassion** (verse 6). Slaves were seen as property, not people. They had no rights. Most people thought that if one slave died, another slave could be bought, so why worry if one is sick?

The crowd traveling with Jesus heard the centurion ask Jesus to heal his servant. They were truly surprised when they heard Jesus say, "I will go, and heal him." This was because Jews did not like to enter the home of a foreigner. They disliked being with **Gentiles** (non-Jews).

BIBLE SKILL: *Comparing the Gospel Stories*

This story of the centurion's servant is also told in Luke 7:1-10. After reading the story in Luke, answer the following questions:

In Luke's account, did the centurion go to Jesus? YES NO

If not, who went to Jesus? _____

Did the Jews with Jesus that day have the same concern for this centurion as most Jews had for Roman centurions? YES NO

Why or why not? _____

Luke 7:6 says that "Jesus went with the men." Is this different from the way Matthew described events? YES NO

If yes, what was different? _____

Why are these stories different? Both Matthew and Luke wrote the story many years after it happened. It is not unusual for two people to remember details differently. Both of them, however, told the same basic story.

2. Accept His Authority (Matthew 8:8-9)

VERSE 8.

⁸*The officer answered, “Lord, I am not worthy for you to come into my house. You only need to command it, and my servant will be healed.*

The centurion expressed faith in Jesus’ authority. He said Jesus’ ability to heal just by speaking the word was like the commands that a military officer might give.

Many people believe that power = authority and authority = power. Remember that the people said Jesus taught with authority, not from the authority that came from studying with famous teachers or graduating from a famous university or seminary. Jesus spoke and taught as the Son of God, with authority and power.

In the middle of a pushing crowd, Jesus said in Luke 8:46, “Someone touched me, because I felt power go out from me.” Shaking with fear, a woman knelt before Jesus to admit she had not only touched Him, but that she had been instantly healed. Jesus told her that her faith contributed to her healing and that she should go in peace.

VERSE 9.

⁹*“I, too, am a man under the authority of others, and I have soldiers under my command. I tell one soldier, ‘Go,’ and he goes. I tell another soldier, ‘Come,’ and he comes. I say to my servant, ‘Do this,’ and my servant does it.”*

Even though the centurion said in verse 9, “I, too, am a man,” he did not mean, “I am a man like you.” Instead, he recognized something of the divine power that Jesus possessed and used. The centurion basically declared to Jesus, “You can heal my servant beside his bed or from across the ocean. Just give the order!”

Do you think the power of Jesus to heal, to save, and to give guidance is limited by distance? YES NO

Why or why not? _____

What part, if any, do you think the centurion's compassion for his servant played in Jesus' decision to go to the man's house and heal the servant? _____

Read Ephesians 4:32. Does following this command have any influence on our being able to do what it says in Ephesians 5:1-2? YES NO

How can it influence us? _____

3. Expect with Faith (Matthew 8:10-13)

VERSE 10.

¹⁰ *When Jesus heard this, He was amazed. He said to those who were following him, "I tell you the truth, this is the greatest faith I have found, even in Israel."*

Jesus saw the faith of the **centurion** and healed the servant. Jesus also pointed to the faith shown by the centurion as the kind of faith required of those in His kingdom. This was completely opposite to the self-righteous rules and interpretations of the Law that the **Pharisees** taught.

Another way to state this verse might be, "When Jesus heard this, He was stunned and said to the crowd, 'You Israelites are supposed to be the authorities about God. But this man has greater faith than anyone else I have met in Israel!'"

VERSE 11.

¹¹ *Many people will come from the east and from the west and will sit and eat with **Abraham**, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.*

The east and the west represent countries that are not part of Israel. The faith of these people from the east and the west will

be what lets them enjoy the feast of the **Messiah** when His kingdom is finally established (when Jesus comes again to the earth). The original children of the kingdom (Israel) thought they naturally had rights and privileges, but Jesus taught that faith is the requirement that guarantees the rights and privileges and leads to victory.

VERSE 12.

¹² *But those people who should be in the kingdom will be thrown outside into the darkness, where people will cry and grind their teeth with pain.*

Head knowledge is not the same as heart knowledge. The Pharisees and other religious leaders had head knowledge, but they were missing the necessary heart knowledge they needed for service and obedience.

Jesus said that those who knew about the faith but did not believe would be left in the dark to cry in their terrible pain.

VERSE 13.

¹³ *Then Jesus said to the officer, "Go home. Your servant will be healed just as you believed he would." And his servant was healed that same hour.*

We need to understand what the Bible says about miracles. Do you remember the story of Moses and the plagues against Egypt (Exodus 7-11)? Those were both miracles and judgments on Egypt when Pharaoh would not obey God and let the Israelites leave Egypt.

KEY DOCTRINE: *Miracles*

The Bible tells about many miracles Jesus did. It also tells about miracles done by His disciples and others.

Anyone who can perform miracles is sent by God with God's message. TRUE FALSE (Read 2 Thessalonians 2:7-10.)

Why did Jesus perform miracles?

- a. To show His compassion? YES NO
- b. To prove His authority and fulfill Old Testament prophecies?
YES NO
- c. Reveal saving truth? YES NO
- d. All of the above? YES NO

Read Isaiah 35:5-6. Which of these things did Jesus do to prove He was the promised Messiah?

Jesus' miracles were judgments against Israel also. Jesus required people to decide to follow or reject Him. The religious leaders not only rejected Jesus, but they decided Jesus was working for **Satan** (Matthew 9:31-34 and 12:22-24).

IN MY CONTEXT

Being born in America makes us American citizens. Anyone living in a country, but is not a citizen of that country, is called an alien or stranger. When we belong to God, we will not feel completely at home in this world, because our loyalty and desires are focused on the kingdom of God. Paul wrote, "But our homeland is in heaven, and we are waiting for our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, to come from heaven" (Philippians 3:20).

A citizen has certain rights and privileges that are denied to non-citizens. When we go to God in prayer with a request, we must be humble and know He is able to answer. Then we will know He hears us. God's authority and ability do not depend on our faith. Faith in Jesus is the requirement for being a part of His kingdom. We are confident in our salvation, but at the same time we have work to do for His kingdom.

Read Philippians 2:12-13. Does this say we have to work to become saved? YES NO

Why or why not? _____

When the work is done, when our salvation is final, what will we look like? (Read 1 John 3:2.) _____

MEMORY VERSE

"The officer answered, 'Lord, I am not worthy for you to come into my house. You only need to command it, and my servant will be healed.'"

—Matthew 8:8



Session 10

IN HIS SERVICE

MATTHEW 9:35–10:8

King Jesus invited His followers to be a part of His work.

FIRST THOUGHTS

The King calls for volunteers to work in His kingdom.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

In chapter 8, Matthew wrote about six miracles. Chapter 9 begins with another **miracle**, then the call for Matthew to follow Jesus, followed by two more miracles before our study begins today. Remember that Jesus did not turn away anyone

who came to Him in faith. The rich young ruler turned himself away because he loved his wealth more than Jesus (Luke 18:18-25). The young man went away sad. We can learn two things from the miracles Jesus did: 1. Jesus has divine power to do miracles because He is God's Son. 2. He showed kindness, sympathy, love, and mercy. Matthew explained these special characteristics of Jesus in one word: **compassion**.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

(MATTHEW 9:35–10:8)

1. Inspired by Compassion (Matthew 9:35-36)

VERSE 35.

³⁵ *Jesus traveled through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the Good News about the kingdom, and healing all kinds of diseases and sicknesses.*

Jesus' purpose remained unchanged: to teach, to preach, and to heal physically and spiritually.

VERSE 36.

³⁶ *When He saw the crowds, He felt sorry for them because they were hurting and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.*

In chapter 4, people came and Jesus healed them. In chapter 5, we have a record of some of the things Jesus taught. In these verses in chapter 9, we see that Jesus showed compassion for all people. Jesus saw the crowds of people, and they looked like sheep without a shepherd. In John 10:7-18, Jesus called himself the Good Shepherd. He also said that the good shepherd gives his life for the sheep. That is the kind of compassion Jesus had for the crowds of people. He loved them and us so much that He was willing to die for us.

BIBLE SKILL: *Jesus' Work*

Read Matthew 4:23 and 9:35. What are the things Jesus did?

1. T _____
2. P _____
3. H _____

Read Exodus 3:1. What kind of work was Moses doing? _____

Read Numbers 27:16-17. What was part of Joshua's job description?

Can you recall another famous shepherd-leader? (Read Psalm 78:70-72.) _____

2. Challenged to Pray (Matthew 9:37-38)

VERSES 37-38.

³⁷ *Jesus said to His followers, "There are many people to harvest but only a few workers to help harvest them."* ³⁸ *"Pray to the Lord, who owns the harvest, that He will send more workers to gather His harvest."*

Jesus wanted His disciples to be concerned about people. The **Pharisees** called the people sinners and unclean. Jesus touched and ministered to these same people because of His love for them.

Jesus needs workers to plow the rocky soil in the hearts of unbelievers. He needs workers to plant the seeds of the gospel in those hearts. He needs workers to water those planted seeds. He will bless them when they help harvest a crop of new believers.

We are those workers. Look at the Deaf people around you and your church. Are there enough harvest workers? No. Jesus taught His disciples to pray for more workers.

Sometimes God calls specific people to become full-time workers. Write the name(s) of a missionary or pastor working with Deaf people and pray for that person during the next month:

Use the Prayer Journal at the back of your lesson book. Write a name, the prayer need, and the answers that God will give. Try it for a month, then six months. When you see what God is doing to answer your prayers, commit to a year, and see what happens!

3. Commanded to Go (Matthew 10:1-8)

VERSES 1-4.

¹ *Jesus called His twelve followers together and gave them authority to drive out evil spirits and to heal every kind of disease and sickness.*

² *These are the names of the twelve apostles: Simon (also called Peter) and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John;*

³ *Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew, the tax collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; ⁴ Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot, who turned against Jesus.*

Up until this time, many people followed Jesus, and He called them disciples (learners). In these verses, Jesus selected twelve disciples to become known as His apostles (representatives). In the Bible, and in our lesson today, we often see the twelve called *disciples* instead of *apostles*.

The word **apostle** comes from the Greek language and means “a person who goes out under the authority of someone else.” The English word is **ambassador**. The word was used to name the personal representatives of the king. The Bible lists several things that are required for someone to be called an apostle: 1. He must have seen the resurrected **Christ** (1 Corinthians 9:1). 2. He must have fellowshiped with Him (Acts 1:21-22). 3. He must have been chosen by Jesus (Ephesians 4:11).

VERSES 5-6.

⁵ *Jesus sent out these twelve men with the following order: “Don’t go to the non-Jewish people or to any town where the Samaritans live.*

⁶ *“But go to the people of Israel, who are like lost sheep.”*

Jesus sent the twelve apostles in **pairs** to do the same kind of ministry He did, including the announcement of the arrival of the **Messiah**. The apostles became involved in a ministry of preaching, teaching, and healing. However, Jesus told them not to preach to anyone except the Jewish people. Why did Jesus put this restriction on the disciples? The Jews had been looking for the Messiah for generations and now the Messiah had come. The people could now follow their King if they chose to do so. This would mean they would no longer be lost sheep without a Shepherd.

KEY DOCTRINE: “Go!”

The disciples went on their “mission trip” following directions Jesus gave them. Many missionaries working with Deaf people in other countries plan to spend their lives away from home and the United States telling the good news. Some Christians in those countries are the only believer in their family. Their families have been rejected because they believe in Jesus.

Everyone has the responsibility to go—across the street or across an ocean.

Have you felt God leading you to “go”? The Holy Spirit gives us the idea of going and will guide us all the way if we will let Him.

Read Mark 10:29-30. Write the promise Jesus gives to us if we faithfully follow His call? _____

Use a Bible concordance and look up verses with words like *missions, witness, go, and tell*. Let God’s Word speak to your heart.

Later, God sent Paul to preach to the **Gentiles**. In some of His last words, Jesus told His followers to take the good news to all of the world (Matthew 28:19-20).

In these verses (Matthew 9:5-6), Jesus instructed His disciples to take the good news to the Jews only. In Matthew 28:19-20, Jesus tells His disciples to preach to ALL people, not only to the Jews. Why do you think these instructions were different? _____

VERSES 7-8.

⁷ Jesus said, *“When you go, preach this: ‘The kingdom of heaven is near.’* ⁸ *“Heal the sick, raise the dead to life again, heal those who have skin diseases, and force demons out of people. I give you these powers freely, so help other people freely.”*

“The kingdom of heaven is near.” This is the message the apostles preached to the Jews. The message we preach today is that **Christ** died for our sins. He suffered, died, and arose from the dead. He offers salvation to all who will believe. When they believe, they become part of that kingdom.

When Jesus sent out the apostles, how did their message to the Jews differ from our message to the Deaf world today? _____

VERSES 9-10.

⁹ *“Don’t carry any money with you – gold or silver or copper. ¹⁰ “Don’t carry a bag or extra clothes or sandals or a walking stick. Workers should be given what they need.”*

Can you imagine what Jesus might say today? “Don’t take any cash, credit cards, or your debit card. Don’t take a backpack with extra clothes or another pair of comfortable shoes. Don’t even take your walking stick. The people who show you **hospitality** will take care of your daily needs.”

The disciples had to trust God to provide their needs. But they could expect help, since people usually were willing to provide food and shelter for a teacher.

Paul said more about Christian workers. Read 1 Corinthians 9:14. Our churches today have an important responsibility to provide for the needs of the people (pastors and missionaries) who serve Deaf people.

KEY DOCTRINE: *Pray for and Support Missionaries*

Find the name of a missionary to the Deaf, maybe one who shares your birthday. Contact the International Mission Board (www.imb.org) or the North American Mission Board (www.namb.org) to get information about missionaries.

- a. Pray for that missionary family.
- b. Is there a way you can contact them through email or text?
YES NO
- c. Write, email, or text a note saying you are praying for them.
- d. Ask if they have any special needs you can pray for.
- e. Give your offering to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering® for International Missions.

The needs of Deaf people who have not heard the gospel should move us to **compassion** and action. We should pray for God to continue to call men and women to serve Deaf people in His name. We should pray for more Deaf pastors, Deaf missionaries, Deaf Bible teachers, and Deaf leaders. We can trust God to provide for those He sends.

What authority did Jesus give to the twelve apostles?

How did Jesus describe the people of Israel?

IN MY CONTEXT

Why were most Jewish people afraid to come near a person who had leprosy? _____

Read Matthew 21:43. When Israel rejected the Messiah, what two things did Jesus say would happen?

1. _____

2. _____

If you had been one of the twelve apostles that Jesus sent out in pairs, whom would you have wanted to work with?

Why? _____

In some of His last words to the disciples, Jesus told them in Matthew 28:19-20 that they were to take the good news to every part of the world and share it with all people. Different groups have sent thousands of missionaries around the world since Jesus gave His command. We now have many people working with Deaf people around the world, but there are many groups of Deaf people who have never been taught about Jesus.

Look for people from other countries who live in your area. Find out if any church is reaching out to them. Pray for God to send missionaries to them.

With your Bible class, make a list of different international people groups in your city. Divide the list among class members. Promise to pray for these groups during the week.

MEMORY VERSE

“Pray to the Lord, who owns the harvest, that he will send more workers to gather his harvest.” —Matthew 9:38

A pair of dark-colored sneakers with light-colored laces sits on a decorative, carved stone step. The step is part of a larger architectural structure with intricate carvings. A diagonal line, possibly a shadow or a design element, runs across the image from the top left towards the center.

Session 11

AN OPEN INVITATION

MATTHEW 11:20-30

Jesus offers an invitation to everyone: follow Him and join His kingdom.

FIRST THOUGHTS

Invitations are a part of our daily lives. It may be a simple request, “Can I get you something to drink?” Or, it may be more serious like, “Please sign your name here to complete the contract for your new house.” Or, “Will you marry me?” When one person offers an invitation, the other person needs to reply with a yes or no.

Jesus is the only one who offers an open invitation to everyone. Throughout His ministry and continuing today, Jesus invites anyone willing to follow Him to join His kingdom. Today we will learn the benefits of accepting Jesus' invitation and the consequences of declining His invitation.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

In the verses between last week's lesson and today's lesson, Jesus finished giving the twelve disciples instructions before they left on their "mission trip." He also warned them about their future, but gave them the promise that the Holy Spirit would give them the words to speak.

Jesus then returned to Galilee, where John the Baptist's followers met Him. John the Baptist was already in prison and would soon die. John asked if Jesus was the **Messiah**, or should they wait longer. Jesus did not answer directly with yes or no. But John the Baptist was from the priestly family, so he knew the Law and the Prophets. Jesus answered John's question with the words spoken by the **prophet** Isaiah (Isaiah 29:18-21; 35:5-6; 61:1) that described the Messiah.

EXPLORE THE TEXT (MATTHEW 11:1-30)

1. Promised Judgment (Matthew 11:20-24)

VERSES 20-24.

²⁰ *Then Jesus criticized the cities where He did most of His miracles, because the people did not change their lives and stop sinning.* ²¹ *"How terrible for you, Korazin! How terrible for you, Bethsaida! If the same miracles I did in you had happened in Tyre and Sidon, those people would have changed their lives a long time ago. They would have worn rough cloth and put ashes on themselves to show they had changed.*

²² *"But I tell you, on the Judgment Day it will be better for Tyre and Sidon than for you.* ²³ *"And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted up to*

heaven? No, you will be thrown down to the depths. If the miracles I did in you had happened in Sodom, its people would have stopped sinning, and it would still be a city today.²⁴ “But I tell you, on the Judgment Day it will be better for Sodom than for you.”

In chapters 8-9, Matthew records ten miracles that Jesus did. Five of them were done in Capernaum, the city where Jesus was living.

Jesus said the judgment for people who refuse to **repent** and accept Him is greater than the judgment experienced by Tyre, Sidon, and Sodom.

Tyre was a Phoenician city in modern Lebanon. When the city fell, it was literally scraped bare like a rock.

Sidon fell to Nebuchadnezzar’s armies. An earthquake in 146 B.C. caused a large portion of the city to sink into the ocean.

Abraham bargained with God to save Sodom if only ten righteous people could be found in the city. God destroyed the city.

The judgments Jesus spoke about are still in the future. The subject of the judgment is not the cities He names but the people. Jesus taught about our individual responsibility for our sins, and that God will bring judgment at some time—a judgment that is both final and unchangeable.

KEY DOCTRINE: *Miracles*

Read John 20:30-31.

What are the two reasons John gives for the miracles that Jesus did?

1. _____
2. _____

Does that help you understand why Jesus didn’t heal everyone while He was here on the earth? YES NO

Use a study Bible to find a list of the miracles Jesus did. Do you think people today would accept Jesus if He did miracles like that?

YES NO

Why or why not? _____

What was the main theme of the preaching of John the Baptist, Jesus, and the apostles? **Repentance!** The goal of their preaching was to guide people to leave their sins and turn to God, but the people would not change.

The failure was not in the miracles that Jesus performed. The people failed to “change their lives and stop sinning.” Jesus’ message was a warning to unbelievers.

This was not the first time a **messenger** from God had warned the cities in the area of Galilee. The prophets Isaiah (chapter 23), Ezekiel (chapters 27 and 28), and Amos (1:9-10) gave warnings that God would judge their disobedience. The people in Korazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum saw Jesus’ miracles and still refused to believe His message.

The citizens of Capernaum were very proud of their city, often saying that their city reached up to heaven. Jesus had used the city as a base for His ministry in Galilee. The people had seen many of the miracles Jesus did. Jesus compared Capernaum to the wicked city of Sodom that God destroyed. He said that if the people of Sodom had seen what Jesus did, they would have stopped sinning and the city would have been saved. Jesus said that the people in Tyre and Sidon would have changed their lives if they had seen the miracles of Jesus.

Jesus’ miracles were proof that the kingdom had arrived!

Were the miracles Jesus performed unable to show His divine power to the people, or did the people just refuse to accept Him?

2. Revelation Is Promised (Matthew 11:25-26)

VERSES 25-26.

²⁵ *At that time Jesus said, “I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the people who are wise and smart. But you have shown them to those who are like little children.”* ²⁶ *“Yes, Father, this is what you really wanted.”*

The religious leaders did not lead by example. They did not teach the people God's law. They added to the Law and made it harder for the people to obey God. The leaders rejected Jesus' message and encouraged the people to do the same. The religious leaders thought they were wise, but they did not believe what Jesus taught.

Jesus thanked the Father for revealing the truth of the gospel to people who are willing to believe.

Contrast Jesus' words in Matthew 13:11-13 with verses 25 -26 above.

3. A Relationship Is Promised (Matthew 11:27)

VERSE 27.

²⁷ *"My Father has given me all things. No one knows the Son, except the Father. And no one knows the Father, except the Son and those whom the Son chooses to tell."*

Jesus said, "I am what was prophesied. I am the One. I am God in the flesh, here with you. I am the **Messiah**. I am the door. I am everything. I Am." And the people rejected Him.

What have we learned from these verses? Jesus has power over everything. This verse shows us the relationship between God, the Father, and the Son. You can see how important Jesus is for anyone who wishes to know the Father. Jesus knows the Father, and "those whom the Son chooses to tell." This kind of authority is kingly authority.

In verse 27, who can know the Father? _____

Jesus reminded His followers another time about the power He had been given (Matthew 28:18). Copy that verse here. _____

4. Rest Is Promised (Matthew 11:28-30)

VERSE 28.

²⁸ *Come to me, all of you who are tired and have heavy loads, and I will give you rest.*

Jesus said, “Come!”

The **Pharisees** said, “Do what we say is best for you.” They had many rules for the people to follow. Jesus knew the people were tired from trying to keep the Law. The people were burdened down by too many rules.

BIBLE SKILL: *When Does Jesus Become King?*

Which of the following help you make Jesus your King? Check the ones that are true.

- ☐ Savior of the body (head knowledge).
- ☐ I like (worship?) my house.
- ☐ I like (worship?) my car.
- ☐ Savior of the soul (heart knowledge).
- ☐ Master of my heart.
- ☐ Master of my spirit.
- ☐ Most important person in the universe.

Write something you will do this week to honor Jesus as your King.

True salvation is found only in Jesus **Christ**. Jesus said, “Come to Me. Trust Me. Follow Me, and see how good life can be. I promise not to put a load of heavy rules on you.” Jesus is not against honest work. Ecclesiastes 5:12 says, “Those who work hard sleep in peace.” Jesus taught about the burden of sin, and only repenting can cure it or lift it.

VERSE 29.

²⁹ *Accept my teachings and learn from me, because I am gentle and humble in spirit, and you will find rest for your lives.*

Jesus said, “I’ll teach you how to do what you need to do if you will trust Me, learn from Me, and follow Me.”

“Accept my teachings and learn from Me” results in peace with God (Romans 5:1). “You will find rest for your lives” results in the peace of God (Philippians 4:6-9).

Jesus promised a rest that is a release from the burden of sin, not rest from serving God.

Read Psalm 38:4. How heavy is the burden of sin? _____

VERSE 30.

³⁰ *The burden that I ask you to accept is easy; the load I give you to carry is light.*

Jesus taught that His followers will have burdens to carry. If something is a burden it is usually because it is time consuming, troublesome, or heavy. But Jesus said, “The load I give you to carry is light.” How can this be? Jesus plans to help us carry our load.

Some translations use the word **yoke** instead of load. A yoke joined two oxen as they worked pulling a plow or other things. The yoke gives the idea of work, discipline, fellowship, and submission.

The load that the people were trying to carry was becoming more and more of a burden because of extra rules (Luke 11:46). Note that Jesus said my yoke. He said, “Each of you is under a yoke (burden) that makes you weary. Take that yoke off and trade it for mine. I will help you carry it every day.”

Were the people tired? YES NO

If yes, what made them tired? _____

IN MY CONTEXT

The word *gospel* means “good news.” So what is the good news? The main message of the gospel is that God is not far away sitting on a throne waiting to judge us. Yes, He will do that, but at some future time. God is waiting, through Jesus, to enter and live in the heart of a hungry and thirsty person.

“Like Us on Facebook.” We see this in the ads for restaurants, auto repair shops, movie reviews, musical groups, and much more. When you hear the gospel, is it enough to “like it on Facebook”? YES NO Why or why not? _____

In Matthew 11:20, did Jesus criticize the people because they failed to believe in Him as a teacher come from God? YES NO Why did Jesus criticize the people? _____

Matthew’s Gospel asks again and again, “Is Jesus Christ King of your life?” But, the Gospel of Matthew also shows us again and again that through Jesus we can have a relationship with God the Father.

Every person will be held responsible if they choose to reject Christ. Jesus is the only way to the Father, with no other choice. Jesus offers sure salvation to everyone who trusts Him as Savior and Lord.

MEMORY VERSE

“Come to me, all of you who are tired and have heavy loads, and I will give you rest.” —Matthew 11:28



Session 12

WHAT'S THE SIGN?

MATTHEW 12:38-42

How can we identify the King?

FIRST THOUGHTS

Matthew's Gospel was written to show proof that Jesus is the King, the **Messiah**. Most kings have a palace, a throne, excellent clothes to wear, a crown, and the title, "King."

Jesus did not have these **symbols** of royalty. Jesus said, "The foxes have holes to live in, and the birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to rest His head" (Matthew 8:20). This can be an early description of what Paul calls Christians: citizens of heaven. "Our homeland is in heaven, and we are waiting

for our **Savior**, the Lord Jesus **Christ**, to come from heaven” (Philippians 3:20).

Matthew wrote that the proof of His kingship and rule is found in Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

As chapter 12 begins, the **Pharisees** wanted to kill Jesus, but they were afraid of the crowds. Jesus had a continuing conflict with the Pharisees about the Sabbath Day. Through the years, the Sabbath had changed from a day of **worship** to a day of trying to meet the rules of men. The Sabbath had become a burden, not a blessing.

Jesus never taught that the Sabbath Day should be removed. Jesus never taught that the disciples were not to keep the Sabbath. Jesus wanted to purify the Sabbath from man-made requirements. Jesus never hesitated to do good at any time, including on the Sabbath, nor should we rest from doing good.

EXPLORE THE TEXT (MATTHEW 12:38-42)

1. Seeking a Sign (Matthew 12:38)

VERSE 38.

³⁸ *Then some of the Pharisees and teachers of the law answered Jesus, saying, “Teacher, we want to see you work a **miracle** as a sign.”*

The Pharisees wanted **supernatural** proof of Jesus’ identity as the Messiah. In Matthew 12:14, the Pharisees began making plans to kill Jesus. Jesus’ perfect, sinless life threatened the Pharisees, and they hated Him. The Jewish leaders had already witnessed some of Jesus’ miracles (Matthew 9:1-8; 12:9-14).

Many of them had seen Jesus heal the sick, cleanse lepers, raise the dead, and cast out demons. They said to Jesus, “Just one more sign, please.”

KEY DOCTRINE: Signs

There were many signs that Jesus was who He claimed to be. Read the following verses and complete the chart.

Verses	Who saw the sign?	What was the sign?	Who believed?	Result of the sign?
Matthew 2:1-6				
Luke 2:8-20				
John 1:29-34				
John 2:1-11				
Luke 1:39-45				
John 14:26				
Luke 9:28-36				

What power is at work here? The power of unbelief. They had seen enough evidence to convince them, but they did not want to be convinced.

Read Mark 9:17-27. Is this father’s unbelief different from that of the Pharisees? YES NO

What is the difference? _____

2. Identifying the Sign (Matthew 12:39-40)

VERSES 39-40.

³⁹ *Jesus answered, “Evil and sinful people are the ones who want to see a miracle for a sign. But no sign will be given to them, except the sign of the prophet Jonah.”* ⁴⁰ *“Jonah was in the stomach of the big fish for*

three days and three nights. In the same way, the Son of Man will be in the grave three days and three nights.”

The **Pharisees** asking for a sign was like **Satan’s** words to tempt Jesus when he said, “If you are the Son of God, jump down” (Matthew 4:6). Doing something amazing would prove Jesus’ authority to them. The heart problem was that the Pharisees did not believe they had sinned. They thought they did not need to **repent** or believe in Jesus.

BIBLE SKILL: Miracles

Read the following verses and complete the chart.

Verses	Who did it?	Type of miracle?	Who benefited?	Result of miracle?
Exodus 14:13-16				
Numbers 22:26-38				
I Kings 17:1-6				
Acts 3:1-10				

Jesus blamed the religious leaders. Who was looking for a **miracle**? “Evil and sinful people are the ones who want to see a miracle for a sign,” Jesus said.

Jesus declared that the only sign that would be given would be the sign of Jonah. Jesus was pointing to His own death, burial, and resurrection.

The story of Jonah is short—only forty-eight verses. Jonah’s sermon may be the shortest on record. All he said was, “After forty days, Nineveh will be destroyed!” The Book of Jonah could be described as a handbook on how not to be a **prophet**! Jonah tried to run from God. He refused to take God’s message offering

forgiveness and hope to Nineveh. Jonah seemed to think that God belonged to Israel and was not to be shared with any other people group.

When Jonah preached, the people believed God. The story of God's grace and forgiveness triumphed, and today the Book of Jonah is read during the Jewish celebration known as Yom Kippur, on the Day of Atonement.

Jesus spoke of Jonah's experience as a picture of His own death, three-day burial, and resurrection. Jesus said, "The Son of Man will stay three days in a grave. That will be your sign."

The **Pharisees** had decided that Jesus must be killed. While they made their plans, the Pharisees were always looking for a way to trap Jesus. Jesus knew what was in their hearts. He knew that another **miracle** would not change their hearts. But He also knew the Pharisees would understand his words about His death and resurrection. The Pharisees believed in the resurrection. Some of Jesus' listeners may not have fully understood Jesus' words, but the Pharisees could understand. The Pharisees knew their own secret plans to kill Jesus. Jesus' words about his death, burial, and resurrection pointed to the sin in the Pharisees' hearts and to the only sign that could change their hearts.

Jesus was capable of doing some sort of miracle, even a tiny one, when the Pharisees asked Him. Why did Jesus tell them no?

Jesus could have reminded the Pharisees that the entire city of Nineveh repented when they heard God's prophet. Why do you think Jesus spoke of Jonah's experience in the big fish instead of the city-wide revival? _____

3. A Warning Sign (Matthew 12:41-42)

VERSES 41-42.

⁴¹*On the Judgment Day the people from Nineveh will stand up with you people who live now, and they will show that you are guilty. When Jonah preached to them, they were sorry and changed their lives. And*

I tell you that someone greater than Jonah is here. ⁴² On the Judgment Day, the Queen of the South will stand up with you people who live today. She will show that you are guilty, because she came from far away to listen to Solomon's wise teaching. And I tell you that someone greater than Solomon is here.

Everyone listening to Jesus knew the story of Jonah. Jesus caused the people to listen by comparing them to Jonah and the Ninevite people, or the Queen of the South (the Queen of Sheba) and Solomon.

The Ninevites and the Queen of Sheba were **Gentiles** who showed faith in God. When Jonah preached to the Ninevites, they believed his message and changed their lives. God did not destroy the city. Jesus taught, preached, did miracles, and the Pharisees still continued to reject Him. In 1 Kings 10:1, the Queen of Sheba traveled to Jerusalem to test King Solomon's wisdom with some difficult questions. Jesus reminded the Pharisees about their history when He spoke of Jonah, the Queen of Sheba, and King Solomon.

Miracles did not make a difference in the Pharisees' hearts. The Pharisees refused to believe in Jesus. Now, Jesus pointed to the greatest sign they would see: His resurrection.

Many people today do not want to take a stand on issues that are really important. Jesus often asked and answered tough questions. Today, people are unable to make decisions since they are trying to please everyone and offend no one.

We have one priority: Jesus. We do not have several priorities, nor can we say that Jesus or church is one of our main priorities. That kind of obedience does not come from reading and understanding the First Commandment: "You must not have any other gods except me" (Exodus 20:3). Many people try to be neutral, and not make a choice. But there are only two sides in matters of religion. Jesus said, "Whoever is not with me is against me. Whoever who does not work with me is working against me" (Matthew 12:30).

Compare Jonah and Jesus. Write *Jonah* or *Jesus* beside each of these statements.

- | | |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| _____ Wanted everyone to die | _____ Wants everyone to live |
| _____ Son of God | _____ Man |
| _____ Disobeyed God | _____ Obedient |
| _____ Unloving | _____ Loving |
| _____ Died | _____ Did not die |
| _____ Resurrected | _____ Not resurrected |
| _____ Whole world ministry | _____ One city ministry |

IN MY CONTEXT

Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection show the truth of His teachings and identify Him as the Son of God. Jesus calls us to trust Him in faith.

Circle TRUE or FALSE for the following:

TRUE FALSE—Jesus' message is grace and truth.

TRUE FALSE—Jesus' message saves everyone that believes in Him.

TRUE FALSE—Trusting Christ saves us from judgment.

TRUE FALSE—Trusting Christ gives us eternal life.

TRUE FALSE—Are all the above TRUE in your life?

If you have to put FALSE to any of the above, you may want to read Romans 10:9 and 1 John 1:9. Do either of these verses give you any new information? _____

The Pharisees had to accept or reject Jesus. Are things different today, some 2,000 years later? YES NO

Do you agree or disagree with the following statements:

a. Jesus will be my enemy or my friend. AGREE DISAGREE

b. Jesus will be my Savior or my Judge. AGREE DISAGREE

Which of the above roles does Jesus have in your life today? _____

If Jesus is not yet your friend and Savior, read the following verses: Acts 16:31 and Romans 10:9-11. Will you let Jesus become your friend and Savior today? _____

MEMORY VERSE

“Jonah was in the stomach of the big fish for three days and three nights. In the same way, the Son of Man will be in the grave three days and three nights.” —Matthew 12:40



Session 13

HOW TO LIVE WITH THE KING

MATTHEW 13:1-13

Jesus used parables to teach the secrets of the kingdom.

FIRST THOUGHTS

I knew a person who was learning American Sign Language. At first she struggled to understand when people signed to her. After many years, she understood more and did not struggle to keep up with a conversation. Later she married a Deaf man and became very skilled with Sign Language.

One day she went to a class and learned more about American Sign Language and Deaf culture. She learned that in the middle of a group conversation, two signers can start their own signed conversation that nobody else in the group can understand. When this happens, other people in the group leave and find someone else to talk with. She started to think about the times when this happened to her. Before the class, she always thought she just could not understand because she did not have strong enough Sign Language skills.

All languages have the ability to exclude or include certain people in conversations. Hearing parents might spell out words so their children cannot understand what they are saying. Deaf people might sign a secret under the table so other people cannot see the sign. Jesus told parables that everyone could understand if they decided to accept what Jesus said.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

The **Pharisees** openly rejected Jesus, and He knew about their plot to kill Him. Jesus began to teach using parables. A **parable** is “a simple story that helps to teach a deep truth.” Jesus’ parables were often stories about things in the lives of ordinary people. They made the subject easier to understand. Matthew wrote about seven of the parables.

The people who wanted to obey God by believing in Jesus would understand the stories Jesus taught. Jesus knew that people who did not want to obey God would not understand the stories.

This first parable describes how the kingdom begins: the preaching of the Word and planting seeds into the hearts of people.

Understanding parables usually depended on recognizing Jesus as the **Messiah**. Although they can sometimes be understood, there are also mysteries of the kingdom that are still waiting to be explained to us. The kingdom has begun, but we do not see many **signs** today. The kingdom is accepted by those whose hearts have been made ready to receive it. Planted seed

can only produce a crop when the soil has been prepared for it. That is the point of the **parable** of the sower. The kingdom has taken root in some hearts, so growth will follow.

EXPLORE THE TEXT (MATTHEW 13:1-13)

1. A Crowd (Matthew 13:1-3a)

VERSES 1-3a.

¹ *That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the lake.*

² *Large crowds gathered around Him, so He got into a boat and sat down, while the people stood on the shore.* ³ *Then Jesus used stories to teach them many things.*

Jesus used parables to present His message. Parables would give understanding to searching hearts. People who wanted to obey God would understand parables. People who did not want to obey God would not understand the stories.

Crowds of people often surrounded Jesus, wanting to hear what He had to say. It was the custom of Jewish teachers to sit down to teach.

Did Jesus teach in parables to confuse or condemn the people?

YES NO

If YES, why? _____

If NO, why not? _____

2. A Parable (Matthew 13:3b-9)

VERSES 3b-9.

³ *He said, "A farmer went out to plant his seed."* ⁴ *"While he was planting, some seed fell by the road, and the birds came and ate it all up."* ⁵ *"Some seed fell on rocky ground, where there wasn't much dirt. That seed grew very fast, because the ground was not deep."* ⁶ *"But*

when the sun rose, the plants dried up, because they did not have deep roots. ⁷ “Some other seed fell among thorny weeds, which grew and choked the good plants. ⁸ “Some other seed fell on good ground where it grew and produced a crop. Some plants made a hundred times more, some made sixty times more, and some made thirty times more. ⁹ “Let those with ears use them and listen.”

Jesus told a parable about a farmer who scattered seed on four different types of soil. A seed needs water, nourishment (fertilizer), and sunshine to grow until harvest time. Only the seed that fell on good soil produced a crop.

People without fruit do not have saving faith in their heart. Sunshine is necessary for plants to grow, but it kills plants with weak roots. This may explain why some people do not last because of weak faith, weak understanding, and insincere decisions.

What does this parable teach us about our responsibility as a believer and as a church? _____

3. A Reason (Matthew 13:10-13)

VERSES 10-13.

¹⁰ *The followers came to Jesus and asked, “Why do you use stories to teach the people?”* ¹¹ *Jesus answered, “You have been chosen to know the secrets about the kingdom of heaven, but others cannot know these secrets. ¹² “Those who have understanding will be given more, and they will have all they need. But those who do not have understanding, even what they have will be taken away from them. ¹³ “This is why I use stories to teach the people: They see, but they don’t really see. They hear, but they don’t really hear or understand.”*

The disciples asked Jesus why he used parables. He explained that He used parables so people who were willing to believe could understand the truth. At the same time, parables concealed the truth from people who were unwilling to believe.

BIBLE SKILL: *Hear, Obey, Serve (Matthew 13:13)*

Compare Matthew 13:13 to Psalm 135:16-18. What is missing in both selections? _____

Read Matthew 13:13 and Mark 4:11-12.

1. What ideas are the same in both verses? _____

2. What ideas are different? _____

Any person who wants to know (understand) God's Word can know (understand) it. Any person who does not want to understand—which is a form of rejecting the King—will not understand.

The explanation of the types of soil represents the hearts of the people listening to the **parable**.

By the road—The ground people walked on was packed and hard. The seeds would stay on the top. Birds came and very quickly ate the seeds. This could be like some people in church. They have heard the Word of God, but they do not respond in faith. Christianity is like a hobby to them. **Satan** takes the Word away from them.

Rocky ground—This ground had very little soil. There would be enough soil for seeds to sprout quickly, but the plants could not grow deep roots, so they died in the hot sun. This group has God's Word taken from them by outside interests—the flesh.

Thorny weeds—Weeds were already present in this soil. Think of the crabgrass in your front lawn—it is there all through the winter and is the first thing to show green in the spring. Weeds quickly fill the space. Seeds will begin to grow, but with the bigger weeds in place, new seeds cannot get enough

water, nourishment, and sunshine, so they die. A Deaf pastor, preaching to a large group of Deaf people at SBCD or at a Deaf revival, may see people go forward to say they have accepted Jesus. But temptations and opposition can cause shallow-rooted believers to dry up. The cares and problems of the world soon wipe out the faith in these people, choking out the influence of God's Word. **Poverty** and riches can also choke out God's Word. James may have described this group well when he wrote, "Do what God's teaching says; when you only listen and do nothing, you are fooling yourselves" (James 1:22).

Jesus taught about three kinds of soil, not believers. The believers in these first three types of soil are not believers at all.

Good ground—This is soil where seeds can grow and receive the water and sunshine they need. This leads to good crops to be harvested. These are the people who receive God's Word with understanding and faithful belief. Some are more fruitful than others, but Jesus' point is that they remain faithful followers and produce good fruit.

KEY DOCTRINE: *Power of the Gospel*

The parable of the sower (farmer) is also recorded in Mark 4:1-8 and Luke 8:4-15. Each of the Gospels helps us understand more of the meaning of the parable.

Study this parable in Matthew, Mark, and Luke; then write what each of the words mean.

The farmer (sower) is _____.

The act of sowing means _____.

The seed is _____.

The birds represent _____.

The field is _____.

Jesus also explained to His disciples about the secrets or mysteries they would learn and understand. In the Bible, a **mystery** is something hidden or secret for a time and then God reveals the answer. Using this definition, in Jesus' time the church would have been a mystery, since the church had not been revealed in the Old Testament. There were no churches until after **Christ's** resurrection.

The glory that belongs to Jesus is still waiting to be revealed to the world. How does this affect our faith 2,000 years after Jesus taught His parables? Read 1 Peter 1:7 and copy the last part of the verse here so you can remember it. "But the purity of your faith will _____."

Jesus shared whenever there was a willing group assembled. When the gospel is shared, the response will always be varied. Everyone should be given the opportunity to review Jesus' teachings, even those who reject Him. YES NO

Was there anything wrong with the seed that was planted?

YES NO

If you marked YES, what was the problem? _____

Read John 2:23-25. Is it possible to believe and not be saved?

YES NO

Explain your answer. _____

IN MY CONTEXT

Is the parable of the sower (farmer) still true in the 21st century? Yes, it is. When people assemble to hear the Word of God taught, we can see the parable come true right before our eyes. In the parable we see a description of what is going on in Deaf churches here in America and around the world, where the Word is proclaimed, the Holy Spirit convicts of sin, and people accept Jesus as their Savior to obey, follow, and serve Him.

Who does the farmer represent in the parable? _____

After planting, what does a seed need to grow? w_____,
n_____, and s_____.

In the parable, the sun can also symbolize persecution. Does persecution help believers grow? YES NO

If YES, how? _____

If not, why? _____

Did the sower do anything special to fertilize the seed or prepare the ground before planting YES NO

What does this indicate about every individual's choice? _____

Read and compare 1 Peter 3:15 with 2 Timothy 4:2. What do these verses say about responsibility? "Be ready to _____."
_____."

MEMORY VERSE

"Let those with ears use them and listen." —Matthew 13:9

THE PARABLES OF JESUS IN MATTHEW

The Lamp Under a Basket	<i>Matt. 5:14-15</i>
The Two Foundation	<i>Matt. 7:24-27</i>
New Wine into Old Wineskins	<i>Matt. 9:17</i>
Parable of the Strong Man	<i>Matt. 12:29-29</i>
The Sower	<i>Matt. 13:1-9</i>
The Wheat and the Weeds	<i>Matt. 13:24-30</i>
The Mustard Seed and the Yeast	<i>Matt. 13:31-33</i>
The Hidden Treasure	<i>Matt. 13:44</i>
The Priceless Pearl	<i>Matt. 13:45-46</i>
The Net	<i>Matt. 13:47-50</i>



The Lost Sheep	<i>Matt. 18:10-14</i>
The Unforgiving Slave	<i>Matt. 18:21-35</i>
The Vineyard Workers	<i>Matt. 20:1-16</i>
The Two Sons	<i>Matt. 21:28-32</i>
The Vineyard Owner	<i>Matt. 21:33-46</i>
The Wedding Banquet	<i>Matt. 22:1-14</i>
The Fig Tree	<i>Matt. 24:32-35</i>
The Faithful Servant	<i>Matt. 24:45-51</i>
The Ten Virgins	<i>Matt. 25:1-13</i>
The Talents	<i>Matt. 25:14-30</i>
The Sheep and the Goats	<i>Matt. 25:31-46</i>

WORD LIST

24/7—This phrase means to never stop; 24 hours each day, 7 days a week.

Abraham—The father of the Jewish nation and Isaac.

Abortion—A medical procedure to end a pregnancy and cause the death of the fetus.

Alien—A person who is not a citizen.

Ancestors—The people who were in your family in past times.

Approach—To come near or before someone or something.

Apocrypha—Early Christian writings not included in the Bible.

Apostle—A representative who has authority from someone who has greater power.

Ambassador—The Greek word used to mean apostle.

Aramaic—A form of Hebrew. The daily language used in Jesus' time.

Astrologers—Persons who study how the stars and planets influence human affairs and events.

Baptism—Being immersed (completely put under) in water.

Beatitude—Blessedness.

Caution; Cautioned—Warned.

Centurion—An officer in the Roman army in command of one hundred men.

Christ—The Greek word for Messiah or Savior. It is a title, not a name.

Compassion—A feeling of wanting to help someone who is sick, hungry, in trouble, etc.

Conceive; Conception—To become pregnant.

Descendant—Someone who is related to a person or group of people who lived in the past.

Destruction—The act or process of damaging something so badly it no longer exists or cannot be repaired.

Embalm—To prepare a dead body for burial.

Elizabeth—The mother of John the Baptist.

Fasting—Not eating food for a specified period of time for spiritual reasons.

Frankincense—An expensive, aromatic plant burned to make a sweet smelling smoke; often symbolizes prayers going up to God.

Fulfill; Fullness—To complete, or when something is completed.

Genealogy—Study of a family history.

Gentiles—A term used by the Jews to describe anyone who was not Jewish.

Grieve—To be very sad because something bad happened or someone died.

Heritage—The traditions, beliefs, achievements, etc., that are part of the history of a person, group or nation.

Hospitality—When a person welcomes another person into their personal space, such as at home, work or church.

Hypocrite—A person who pretends to have certain beliefs about what is right, but who behaves in a way that disagrees with those beliefs.

Immerse—To go completely under water. The biblical form of baptism.

Inspired—When something happens or is said that touches a person's heart and causes them to act.

Leprosy—Today, it is called Hansen's disease. It is a skin disease. As it spreads, it often turns skin tissue white, causes painful sores, and leads to the loss of feeling and sensation.

Magi—Often called the wise men from the East who came to worship Jesus shortly after His birth in Bethlehem.

Malachi—The prophet who wrote the last book in the Old Testament.

Masquerading—Wearing a mask or pretending to be something that you are not.

Messenger—A person sent to deliver a message or news from one person to another.

Messiah—The "Anointed One." The expected King and Deliverer that God promised to send to the Jews. It is a title, not a name. It is a Hebrew word. The Greek word is Christ and the English word is Savior.

Miracle—An event that is unexplainable by natural law or science.

Myrrh—An expensive ingredient in oil for anointing and also used in embalming a dead body.

Mystery—Something hidden until the time God reveals it.

Pairs—Groups of two people or things.

Parable—A short story illustrating a moral teaching or religious principle.

Pharisees—The leading political party in Jesus' time. They thought of themselves as the group who interpreted the Law for others.

Poverty—Being very poor, physically or spiritually.

Prophet—A messenger from God who tells about future events.

Psychological—Things or events related to one's mind.

Publicans—Tax collectors who contracted to collect taxes for the Roman government. They were often Jews and always distrusted and hated.

Repent; Repentance—Change directions in life; leave your sins and turn to God.

Sadducees—The Jewish political party with very liberal theology in Jesus' time.

Satan—The sworn enemy of God and humanity. His other names also describe his activities: tempter, evil one, the accuser, the prince of demons, the enemy.

Savior—Someone who saves someone from harm or danger. The word used by Christians to refer to Jesus Christ.

Scepter—The royal wand or baton the king always carried with him as a sign of his office and power.

Scribes—The lawyers in Jesus' time.

Sex trafficking—When a person is falsely or illegally taken or sold as a slave for sexual purposes.

Signs—An event that proves something is true.

Supernatural—Unexplainable, miraculous, invisible events.

Symbols—Objects or pictures that represent a person, place or thing.

Tradition—A way of thinking or doing something that has been used by the people in a group, family, or society for a long time.

Worship—An act of honor, devotion, respect, or praise.

Worthy—Having value, importance, honor, or respect.

Yoke—A wood piece that joins two oxen together to pull a plow.

Zechariah—A priest and the father of John the Baptist.

Resources for Students and Leaders

- On-Line Commentary: <http://www.easyenglish.info/bible-commentary/index.htm>
- Bible verses in this publication are from the New Century Version (NCV).
- The ASL Bible is produced by Deaf Missions and available at www.deafmissionsstore.com
- The ASL Bible for mobile devices is available at www.DeafBible.com or www.Bible.is/Deaf
- Let's Sign Hymnal and the ASL Bible are available at www.Letssignllc.com
- The Ethics and Religious Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention provides information related to Sanctity of Human Life (Session 7) at <http://erlc.com/life>
- International Mission Board, Deaf Peoples website can provide information about missionaries in foreign countries and Lottie Moon Christmas Offering at <https://deafpeoples.imb.org/>



LEADER GUIDE

The background of the page is a grayscale photograph of the Golden Gate Bridge. A large, diagonal, semi-transparent reddish-brown shape covers the left side of the image. Overlaid on this shape is text from the Bible, specifically the Beatitudes from Matthew 5:1-13, in a light-colored, serif font. The text is partially obscured by the bridge's structure and the diagonal shape.

Matthew 1–13

Session 1

THE WAY IS PREPARED

MATTHEW 3:1-12

PLAN AHEAD

Encourage class members to read all of the chapter(s) being studied each week.

Ask _____ to sign the hymn, “All Hail King Jesus” (Let’s Sign Hymnal* # 7).

EXPLORE THE TEXT: (MATTHEW 3:1-12)

1. Preparing for the Coming of the King (Matthew 3:1-6)

Ask _____ to study the Key Doctrine (**Baptism**) in the pupil material and summarize it for the class (in ASL!).

Ask _____ to study Dig Deeper (John the Baptist) and summarize it for the class.

DIG DEEPER: *John the Baptist*

John was the son of Zacharias (a Jewish priest) and his wife, Elizabeth. John was about six months older than Jesus. (See Luke 1:5-25, 57-80.)

Matthew does not tell when John began his work. But Luke gives the names of the rulers at that time (Luke 3:1-2). Using Luke’s information, John began to preach about A.D. 26-28.

The desert was on the northwest side of the Dead Sea.

John’s diet of locusts was not unusual. The Law allowed the Jews to eat locusts (Leviticus 11:21-25). John’s clothes were similar to Elijah’s (2 Kings 1:8). The Jews believed Elijah would come to announce the Messiah was coming (Malachi 4:5).

Encourage discussion of the question at the end of this section in the pupil material.

2. Preaching the Truth (Matthew 3:7-10)

Ask _____ to study this Scripture Search (**Pharisees** and **Sadducees**) and summarize it for the class.

SCRIPTURE SEARCH: **Pharisees and Sadducees**

The word Pharisee means separated people. They separated themselves from others in order to study and teach the Scriptures. They controlled the synagogues where the Law was taught. They believed the Law, as they interpreted it, must be obeyed. They were willing to adopt new religious ideas. They sought to win Gentiles to accept Judaism (Matthew 23:15). They were self-righteous (Luke 16:14-15; 18:9-12). They believed in the resurrection. Paul studied in Jerusalem under a Rabbi named Gamaliel (Acts 22:2-5) and became a Pharisee (Philippians 3:5), until his conversion.

The Sadducees were priests and responsible for the temple worship. They were wealthy. They did not believe in the resurrection (Matthew 22:23, Acts 4:1-3). The Sadducees did not accept the traditions of the Pharisees. They were very conservative.

The Pharisees and Sadducees opposed each other, but they joined to condemn Jesus to the cross. In the Book of Acts, they opposed the spread of the gospel.

Ask class members to share their answers to the questions in the pupil material. Encourage discussion.

3. Pointing to the King (Matthew 3:11-12)

Use the questions in the pupil material to generate discussion and emphasize the theme of the lesson, "Preparing the Way for a King."

IN MY CONTEXT

Use the discussion questions in the pupil material to apply the lesson. Help the class understand the concepts of "taking out the trash" and "firewood or fruit tree."

Final emphasis: "The Holy Spirit can use a **Christ**like life to prepare the hearts of unbelievers so they can welcome King Jesus."

Session 2

THE KING ARRIVES

MATTHEW 1:18-25

PLAN AHEAD

Review the resources page for ideas to make your teaching more effective.

Review the pupil material for Scripture and lesson format. Use this Leader Guide to supplement your teaching.

Ask _____ to sign the hymn, “The Birthday of a King” (Let’s Sign Hymnal # 407).

Introduce the lesson with a brief discussion of the importance of the **genealogy** list in the first verses of the Gospel of Matthew. Ask _____ to study this Scripture Search (Genealogy of Jesus) including the Bible verses, and also the Bible Skill (Jesus’ Family Trees) in the pupil material and summarize these for the class.

SCRIPTURE SEARCH: **Genealogy of Jesus (Matthew 1:1-6.** **See also Luke 3:23-38.)**

The Jews did not usually put the names of women in the list of ancestors, but four women are named in this list. They are Tamar (verse 3), Rahab (verse 5), Ruth (verse 5), and Uriah’s wife, Bathsheba, (verse 6). Three of them were guilty of serious sins. Tamar had sex with her father-in-law (Genesis 38:1-30). Rahab was a prostitute in Jericho (Joshua 2:1-21). Bathsheba had sex with David before she became his wife (2 Samuel 11-12). This shows how God uses all people, men and women, obedient and disobedient. Jesus came to save all people (Matthew 9:12-13).

EXPLORE THE TEXT (MATTHEW 1:18-25)

1. The Virgin Birth of Jesus (Matthew 1:18)

Matthew may have included much detail because some Greek myths told about gods fathering children, but none of those stories are like the virgin birth of Jesus.

Ask if anyone in the class has a problem believing the virgin birth? Encourage discussion of our accepting with faith the record we have in the Bible.

2. God Promised to Send the Messiah (Matthew 1:19-23)

Ask _____ to study Dig Deeper (Joseph) and summarize it for the class.

DIG DEEPER: *Joseph*

The angel told Joseph he should not hesitate to take Mary as his wife. To take her meant to complete the marriage. In a Jewish wedding at that time, the man would go to the bride's house and take her from there to his own house. Then they would have the wedding meal to complete the marriage.

The angel explained to Joseph the truth about this situation. The child inside Mary was not because of sex with a man. The power of the Holy Spirit had done this. Joseph was not the father of the child. But by his marriage to Mary, he would legally become the father of Jesus.

3. Joseph and Mary Obeyed God (Matthew 1:24-25)

Encourage discussion of the difficult situation Mary and Joseph experienced in their community and with their families.

Briefly summarize the marriage customs of the Jews in New Testament times. Use some of the reference books in your church library, or search online.

Ask class members to share their responses to the study question at the end of this section.

IN MY CONTEXT

Use the study questions in the first part of this section in the pupil material to encourage discussion of the theme of this lesson.

Use the study questions in the second part of this section to close with a challenge: Does this lesson call for us to be more obedient? What areas are difficult to obey – tithing, witnessing, prayer, **worship**, lifestyle?

Session 3

WORSHIPING THE KING

MATTHEW 2:1-12

PLAN AHEAD

Review the resources page for ideas to make your teaching more effective.

Review the pupil material for Scripture and lesson format. Use this Leader Guide to supplement your teaching.

Use the questions in the pupil material to encourage discussion.

Ask _____ to sign the hymn, “We Three Kings” (Let’s Sign Hymnal # 457).

EXPLORE THE TEXT (MATTHEW 2:1-12)

1. The Search (Matthew 2:1-2)

Introduce the lesson by giving background for the Bible verses in today’s lesson.

Ask _____ to study this Scripture Search (What Year Was Jesus Born?) and share it with the class.

SCRIPTURE SEARCH: *What Year Was Jesus Born?*

It is easy to think that Jesus was born in 1 B.C. But a scholar in the sixth century, Dionysius Exiguus, developed our calendar and divided it into B.C. (before Christ) and A.D. (in the year of our Lord). Somehow, he made a mistake of about four to six years.

Jesus was born while Herod the Great was king (Matthew 2:1). He became king over Judea in 40 B.C. He died about 4 B.C. So, Jesus was probably born a year or so before 4 B.C. Most Bible students accept the date as 4-6 B.C.

Ask _____ to study Dig Deeper (Distances Between Places) and summarize it for the class.

DIG DEEPER: *Distances Between Places*

At the time Jesus was born, most people walked or rode on camels or in horse-drawn wagons. Since people usually traveled in groups for protection, they only walked about twenty miles in one day. Mary and Joseph traveled from Nazareth to Bethlehem (Luke 2:1-5). It probably took them about a week to travel the one hundred miles. Bethlehem was about five miles from Jerusalem. The Magi traveled “from the East” and may have been on the road several months. Joseph took his family to Egypt. We do not know where in Egypt, but it may have been as much as two hundred miles, and about the same distance back to Nazareth later. As you study the life of Jesus, notice how many times He walked from Jerusalem to Galilee—about one hundred miles each way.

2. The Questions (Matthew 2:3-6)

Emphasize that the religious leaders knew of the prophecy about Bethlehem and the **Messiah**, but they did not offer to go with the **Magi** to see if it was true.

Herod did not introduce the Magi to the religious leaders. Can you think of reasons why he may not want them to discuss this together? The chief priests were those who had been high priest in the past.

3. The Secret Meeting (Matthew 2:7-8)

Why do you think Herod did not volunteer to go with the Magi to Bethlehem? (Verse 8.)

4. The Worship (Matthew 2:9-12)

Joseph, Mary and Jesus escaped to Egypt (Matthew 2:13-15) and later returned to Nazareth. About thirty years later, Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist (Matthew 3:13-17).

IN MY CONTEXT

God reveals His truth to people who are honestly seeking to discover that truth. Rejecting Jesus as King doesn’t change the fact that He is King. Jesus is **worthy** of our **worship** regardless of the cost.

Close with the challenging question at the end of the pupil material.

Session 4

THE KING IS TESTED

MATTHEW 4:1-10

PLAN AHEAD

Ask _____ to sign the hymn, “Trust, Try, Prove Me” (Let’s Sign Hymnal # 444).

EXPLORE THE TEXT (MATTHEW 4:1-10)

1. Face to Face with the Devil (Matthew 4:1)

Give each class member one of the Scripture verses in Scripture Search (Temptation). Ask them to tell who was tempted, what they were tempted to do, and if they refused or accepted the temptation.

SCRIPTURE SEARCH: *Temptation*

The Bible has many stories about people who gave in to temptation and about people who resisted.

Genesis 39:5-19. Joseph resisted temptation and was falsely accused.

Job 2:9-10. Job resisted temptation when his wife urged him to curse God and die.

Daniel 1:8-14. Daniel and his friends resisted temptation to eat or drink food not approved by God.

Acts 8:9-24. Peter resisted temptation to accept a bribe from Simon the magician to give Simon power to heal.

1 Chronicles 21:1-3. Satan tried to lead David to see how big his kingdom had grown, rather than trust God to protect the Israelites.

2 Samuel 11:1-26, 1 Kings 11:1-4. David and Solomon were both tempted and gave in to sexual sin.

2. The Food Test (Matthew 4:2-4)

Encourage discussion of how God's Word is more important for life than bread. God often speaks to us as we prayerfully read the Bible.

3. The Faith Test (Matthew 4:5-7)

Ask _____ to study Dig Deeper (View from the Temple and the Mountain.) and summarize it for the class.

DIG DEEPER: *The View from the Temple and the Mountain*

The highest point of the temple was about 450 feet above the valley outside Jerusalem. If Jesus jumped into the valley or into the area near the temple, He would get the attention of all the people! The Devil said they would follow Him. The Devil misquoted Psalm 91:11-12 about God's protection.

The mountain may have been real or just pictured in Jesus' mind. From a real mountain, a person could not see all the kingdoms of the world. The Devil showed Jesus the glory of those kingdoms, but he did not show the sinfulness of the people. Jesus did not ask about the Devil's power to give Him the world's kingdoms. The Devil is now the god of this world (2 Corinthians 4:4). But he can only act as God lets him act. And the kingdoms will become God's kingdom (Revelation 11:15).

4. The Popularity Test (Matthew 4:8-10)

Ask _____ to sign Hebrews 4:14-16. This shows Jesus' temptations were real.

Ask other class members to sign one of these verses and tell what it says about temptation:

James 1:12. Temptation does not come from God.

James 1:14. Temptation comes from within us, from our own desires.

1 Corinthians 10:13. God will not allow us to be tempted more than we are able to resist. We can resist temptation by praying and asking God's help.

IN MY CONTEXT

Use the last four questions in the pupil material to encourage discussion and apply this lesson.

Session 5

WHAT THE KING EXPECTS FROM HIS FOLLOWERS

MATTHEW 5:1-16

PLAN AHEAD

Ask _____ to sign the hymn, “Count Your Blessings” (Let’s Sign Hymnal # 78).

Introduce the lesson. Ask _____ to study Dig Deeper (Galilee) and summarize it for the class.

DIG DEEPER: *Galilee*

Today’s lesson is part of what Jesus taught in Galilee (Matthew 4:13).

Galilee is an area about one hundred miles north of Jerusalem (in Judea). Samaria is between Judea and Galilee. Capernaum and Nazareth are in Galilee. Galilee was important for fishing on Lake Galilee and for farming. Many people lived in large and small villages near the lake and many were Gentiles. Trade routes went through this area. The people seemed to be more willing to listen to Jesus and follow Him, than the Jews in Judea.

EXPLORE THE TEXT (MATTHEW 5:1-16)

1. The New Moses (Matthew 5:1-2)

The Sermon on the Mount is about the kingdom of heaven (or kingdom of God). It includes Jesus’ rules for life in the kingdom.

2. The New Blessings (Matthew 5:3-12)

The word blessed, or happy, in these verses mean joy. Joy continues no matter what happens. No one can take that joy away from us (John 16:22).

Encourage discussion of each verse, following the pupil material.

Ask _____ to study this Scripture Search (Persecution) and summarize it for the class.

SCRIPTURE SEARCH: *Persecution*

Jesus spoke to His disciples. He told them to expect persecution if they were faithful to Him (John 15:18-21). The first Christians often suffered persecution. This persecution is not new. Jesus and the prophets were persecuted for righteousness, also.

After Jesus returned to heaven, people told many evil lies about the Christians. One lie was because Christians greeted each other with a “holy kiss” of peace (Romans 16:16). Their enemies said they were practicing sexual sins.

The Romans let the Jews handle most of their own legal problems, but the Jews could not condemn a person to death. People were tried for most crimes by a local council or by the religious leaders. Jewish law limited punishment by whipping to forty hits (Deuteronomy 25:1-3). The usual punishment for many crimes was thirty-nine. Paul wrote he had been beaten like that five times (2 Corinthians 11:24-25).

Jesus said they would be blessed if the persecution was the result of their faithfulness. He did not mean suffering that comes because a believer becomes angry, or does other wrong things.

Our persecution today is more often in words or signs than in physical pain. But believers, including many Deaf believers, in other nations, face beatings, jail, and death.

3. What the King Expects (Matthew 5:13-16)

Our salt today is not like the salt they got from places like the Dead Sea. Today it is made from chemicals (sodium chloride). The salt from the Dead Sea had many other chemicals in it. If the salt was washed out, the rest was worthless.

Encourage discussion of salt from the Bible verses and the pupil material.

IN MY CONTEXT

Use the pupil material to encourage discussion and emphasize the theme of this lesson, “What does King Jesus expect from you?”

Session 6

MEETING THE KING

MATTHEW 6:5-18

PLAN AHEAD

Ask _____ to sign the hymn, “Sweet Hour of Prayer” (Let’s Sign Hymnal # 394).

EXPLORE THE TEXT (MATTHEW 6:5-18)

1. Between God and Us (Matthew 6:5-6)

Use the questions at the end of this section in the pupil material to encourage discussion.

Did Jesus teach that public prayer is wrong? (No, He was teaching about our attitude in prayer.)

2. Honest Communication (Matthew 6:7-8)

Jesus told His followers that prayer was humble communication with God, not some special words.

Ask _____ to study Scripture Search (Hypocrisy) and summarize it for the class.

SCRIPTURE SEARCH: *Hypocrisy*

Some translations use the word hypocrite in this verse. Hypocrisy is a sin committed by people who want to be known as righteous but they are not righteous. The Greek word means an actor with a mask in a drama. The actor pretends to be someone different from himself. Hypocrites deceive other people. Paul said hypocrites “say they know God, but their actions show they do not accept Him” (Titus 1:15-16). Hypocrites are often more interested in money, popularity, and self-importance than they are in true spirituality.

Did Jesus criticize long prayers or repeated prayers? (No, He spent all night in prayer (Luke 6:12). In Gethsemane, Jesus prayed the same prayer three times. Also, He told His disciples to pray all the time (Luke 18:1). This lesson is on sincerity, not the words or **signs** we use.)

3. Show Respect When You Pray (Matthew 6:9-15)

The Greek word used here is *Abba*. It is a special word a child would use for his father, like *Daddy*.

Review each of the verses and the specific requests included in this prayer: food, forgiveness, and help overcome temptation.

4. Fasting with Right Reasons (Matthew 6:16-18)

Jesus reminded His followers that **fasting** was to be done with sincere **repentance** and not self-righteousness.

Ask _____ to study Dig Deeper (Fasting) and summarize it for the class.

DIG DEEPER: Fasting

Fasting is one way to prepare yourself spiritually. Then you can wait for God to show you His plan. The Bible has many examples of fasting. Fasting in the Old Testament was a private act, not public. Fasting was a normal part of the Jewish religion by the time of Isaiah (Isaiah 58:3). Fasting was a part of the Day of Atonement, an annual day of special worship. The purpose of fasting was to understand God's will, or to mourn, or seek forgiveness of sin (Joel 1:14). Moses fasted for forty days and forty nights before God gave him the Ten Commandments (Exodus 34:28). The Christians at Antioch fasted and prayed before they sent Barnabas and Saul on their missionary trip and God blessed them (Acts 13:1-3). Zechariah 7:5-6 stresses that the only value of fasting is for the individual if he does it as a time of worship, repentance, and obedience to God.

IN MY CONTEXT

Use the final two questions in the pupil material to summarize the lesson and challenge the class.

Session 7

WHO IS IMPORTANT?

MATTHEW 5:17-22,43-45

PLAN AHEAD

Ask _____ to sign the hymn, “Oh, How He Loves You and Me” (Let’s Sign Hymnal # 320).

EXPLORE THE TEXT (MATTHEW 5:17-22,43-45)

1. The Importance of the Law (Matthew 5:17-20)

This is the Sanctity of Life lesson for this quarter. Be careful not to spend too much time on this section in order to focus more fully on the next section.

Ask _____ to study this Scripture Search (The Law) and summarize it for the class.

SCRIPTURE SEARCH: *The Law*

The Law means the first five books of the Old Testament. It is sometimes called the Law of Moses. The Pharisees added many rules, but Jesus spoke only about the Law of Moses. The Law was based on the covenant between God and His people (Exodus 19:5). Psalm 119:1-16 uses several words for the Law: teachings (verse 1), rules (verses 2, 14), orders (verses 4, 15), demands (verses 5, 8, 12, 16), commands (verses 6, 10), laws (verses 7, 13), words (verses 9, 11), and God’s ways (verse 15). The Ten Commandments summarize the whole Law (Exodus 20:2-17; Deuteronomy 5:6-21). Many of the laws begin with the words *if* or *when*. If the people obey, God will bless. When they disobey, God will punish. (See Exodus 21:2-4; 22:1-5,25-27).

How do we know what parts of the Old Testament law we must obey and what parts are no longer required? (New Testament teachings, especially the words of Jesus, are what Jesus meant by “fulfilling the Law.”)

2. Human Life Is Important (Matthew 5:21-22)

Review the material in the pupil section and use the study questions at the end to emphasize the sanctity of human life. Encourage discussion of what this means in your community, or among the Deaf people in your community.

3. Love Beyond Expectations (Matthew 5:43-45)

Review the pupil material.

Ask _____ to study Dig Deeper (A Child of God) and summarize it for the class.

DIG DEEPER: *A Child of God*

John 3:1-8 is a wonderful word picture of salvation: to be born again. We become a child of God. “Everyone who believes that Jesus is Christ is God’s child” (1 John 5:1). “Everyone who is a child of God conquers the world” through faith (1 John 5:4). “Those who are God’s children do not continue to sin” (1 John 5:18).

A child is different from a slave. “Now, you are not a slave, you are God’s child, and God will give you the blessing He promised, because you are His child” (Galatians 4:7). We are not naturally born children, but adopted by God through our faith in Jesus as Savior. “To all who did accept Him and believe in Him, He gave the right to become children of God” (John 1:12). “The Father has loved us so much that we are called children of God. And we really are His children” (1 John 3:1).

IN MY CONTEXT

Encourage discussion of the three elements of this lesson: the Law, human life, and love. Ask the class to discuss how these three ideas are related in this lesson.

Session 8

TWO PATHS, ONE CHOICE

MATTHEW 7:13-21,24-27

PLAN AHEAD

Ask _____ to sign the hymn, “The Solid Rock” (Let’s Sign Hymnal # 424).

EXPLORE THE TEXT (MATTHEW 7:13-21,24-27)

1. Narrow Versus Wide? (Matthew 7:13-14)

In concluding His sermon, Jesus compared the choice facing His disciples with following a narrow path versus following the wide or easy path. He declared that those who follow the narrow path will find life.

Ask _____ to study Dig Deeper (Gates) and summarize it for the class.

DIG DEEPER: *Gates*

The walls around Jerusalem had many gates. As the city grew, new gates were added and others were closed. Each gate also had several names, so it is difficult to know just how many gates the city had at any time. Nehemiah reported on the progress of rebuilding the wall by listing ten gates and the wall near those gates. The sheep gate (Nehemiah 3:1) was also called the Benjamin gate (Jeremiah 37:13, 38:7). It was on the east wall and led to the area where the tribe of Benjamin lived.

In Bible times, the gates of a city were not just large doors for people and animals to enter and exit. They were often made up of two to four sets of doors, with space between. The gate was always the weakest point in the wall of the city, so they were protected by guards at all times.

In the wide gates, the space between the sets of doors was also used for markets. Farmers from outside the city brought their goods to the gate. The space was also used for public speeches or for the judges of the court. The life of the Israelites centered on their home, the temple, and the city gate.

The wide gates opened to wide roads used for travel and business. Other gates were narrow, only big enough for one person to go through. They opened to a small path leading out into a farm or other activity. This may be the picture Jesus suggested when he spoke of the wide gate and the narrow gate.

2. Good Versus Bad? (Matthew 7:15-21)

Review the pupil material.

Ask class members to find one of these texts in Scripture Search (Fruit) and sign it for the class.

SCRIPTURE SEARCH: *Fruit*

The characteristics of a growing Christian are listed in these verses. Paul also listed characteristics of a Christian in Galatians 5:22-24. Paul called these the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. In Ephesians 5:9, Paul listed goodness, right living, and truth. James listed these characteristics: wisdom, purity, peace, gentleness, ready to help, fair, honest, right living (James 3:17-18). Jesus said if we abide in Him we will bear much fruit (John 15:5).

3. Rock Versus Sand? (Matthew 7:24-27)

In concluding His sermon, Jesus compared the choice facing His disciples with building a house on sand and on rock. He warned them about building their life on anything other than Him.

IN MY CONTEXT

What did Jesus mean by the two gates, two kinds of trees, and two foundations?

What hard choices do we have today?

Encourage discussion.

Session 9

SHOW ME YOUR FAITH

MATTHEW 8:5-13

PLAN AHEAD

Ask _____ to sign the hymn, “My Faith Looks Up to Thee” (Let’s Sign Hymnal # 290).

EXPLORE THE TEXT (MATTHEW 8:5-13)

1. Ask with Humility (Matthew 8:5-7)

Ask _____ to study Understanding the Context about centurions and summarize it for the class.

The **centurion** believed that the word of Jesus could cure his servant from far away. Jesus did not find any Jews with the same faith.

2. Accept His Authority (Matthew 8:8-9)

Ask _____ to study Dig Deeper (Unclean) and summarize for the class.

DIG DEEPER: *Unclean*

The Jewish people around Jesus were surprised when He said He would go to the centurion’s home. If a Jewish person went into a Gentile’s home, they became unclean and had to go to the priests to become clean again. Unclean meant a person did not follow the traditions of the past. It did not refer to breaking the Law of Moses in the Scriptures. The Pharisees often accused Jesus of letting His disciples do something that was unclean. They ate without washing their hands in a special way (Matthew 15:2).

Hand washing included putting water on the hands with their fingers pointing up, then again with the fingers pointing down. Then they used a fist to clean the other hand.

When Jesus was on trial, the Jewish leaders would not go into Pilate's house because it would make them unclean, but they met Pilate outside and demanded to have Jesus killed! (John 18:28-32).

3. Expect with Faith (Matthew 8:10-13)

There were probably many people in the crowd around Jesus that needed to be healed. What was the difference between the centurion and the Jewish people that wanted to be healed?

Ask _____ to study the Key Doctrine (Miracles) and summarize it for the class.

Ask _____ to study this Scripture Search (Faith) and summarize it for the class.

SCRIPTURE SEARCH: *Faith*

It is easy to trust God when everything is going well. Peter had faith to walk on water until he looked down and took his eyes off Jesus (Matthew 14:28-31). David said, "I look up to the hills" because that is where my help comes from the Lord (Psalm 121:1).

Fear causes a person to look down or look from side to side. Confidence lets us look upward to God. "Those who trust in themselves are foolish" (Proverbs 28:26). The prophet Hosea said, "Because you have trusted in your own power and your many soldiers, your people will hear the noise of battle, and all your strong, walled cities will be destroyed" (Hosea 10:13-14). Paul said, "If you think you are strong, you should be careful not to fall (1 Corinthians 10:12).

IN MY CONTEXT

Use the comments in the pupil material to emphasize how faith is the only way to become a citizen of heaven. If you have unsaved people in your class, use this opportunity to present the plan of salvation clearly to them.

Session 10

IN HIS SERVICE

MATTHEW 9:35–10:8

PLAN AHEAD

Review the resources page for ideas to make your teaching more effective.

Review the pupil material for Scripture and lesson format. Use this Leader Guide to supplement your teaching.

Use the questions in the pupil material to encourage discussion.

Ask _____ to sign the hymn, “Serve the Lord with Gladness” (Let’s Sign Hymnal # 365).

EXPLORE THE TEXT (MATTHEW 9:35–10:8)

1. Inspired by Compassion (Matthew 9:35-36)

Jesus was moved to **compassion** as He saw the great needs of the people he met.

Ask _____ to study Dig Deeper (Synagogues) and summarize it for the class.

DIG DEEPER: *Synagogues*

The word *synagogue* is made up of two Greek words that mean meeting together. It is like our words *meeting house*. In the time of Jesus, synagogues were established all over Palestine and in other nations where the Jews lived. Jerusalem had about four hundred synagogues.

In the synagogues the people met together on the Sabbath Day to pray, to listen to the reading of the Old Testament, and to listen to their teachers.

Jesus often went to the synagogue in Nazareth (Luke 4:16) and Capernaum. He taught in other synagogues in Judea (Luke 4:44). He healed a man in Capernaum in the synagogue (Luke 4:31-37).

2. Challenged to Pray (Matthew 9:37-38)

Use the pupil material to encourage discussion of this section.

3. Commanded to Go (Matthew 10:1-8)

Ask _____ to sign Luke 6:12-13. Emphasize that Jesus spent all night in prayer, and then in the morning, He chose twelve men to be His apostles.

SCRIPTURE SEARCH: *The Twelve Apostles*

See the discussion in the pupil material about the word apostle.

There are four lists of the apostles. In addition to this chapter in Matthew, they are also listed in Mark 3:14-19, Luke 6:13-16, and Acts 1:12-26. The lists are not exactly the same. Some of the apostles are listed under a different name, and the order of names is different. But Simon Peter (Cephas) (John 1:42) is always listed first, along with the other three fishermen, Andrew, James, and John. These four were disciples of John the Baptist before they met Jesus (John 1:35-42). Bartholomew and Nathanael are probably the same person.

Philip and Nathanael came from Bethsaida, near Capernaum. Simon the Canaanite, belonged to the group of Jews who wanted to force the Roman rulers out of their country. They were called zealots.

Judas Iscariot (man from Kerioth, in Judea) is always last on every list. When Judas died, the other apostles selected Matthias to take his place (Acts 1:20-26).

Use the pupil material to discuss this section. Encourage discussion of God's call to serve Him.

IN MY CONTEXT

Use the last paragraph in the pupil material to generate discussion of unsaved Deaf people in your area, and help the class make specific plans to witness to them.

Session 11

AN OPEN INVITATION

MATTHEW 11:20-30

PLAN AHEAD

Ask _____ to sign the hymn, “Jesus Calls Us O’er the Tumult” (Let’s Sign Hymnal # 224).

EXPLORE THE TEXT (MATTHEW 11:10-30)

1. Promised Judgment (Matthew 11:20-24)

Ask class members to find the Bible verses in this Scripture Search (Jesus Spoke Against Some Cities) and report what they learn about these towns.

SCRIPTURE SEARCH: *Jesus Spoke Against Some Cities*

Chorazin (or Korazin) (Luke 10:13). Chorazin was near Capernaum.

Tyre and Sidon (Isaiah 23:1-18;). These cities were on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. Many ships stopped at their ports. The people were rich and proud. They may have heard about Jesus, but He did not do as much there as He did in Galilee.

The people in Galilee heard Jesus teach and saw His miracles, but they did not repent or follow Him. They had much more opportunity to turn to Jesus than the other towns Jesus named. Jesus said judgment will be stronger against the people who had more knowledge and opportunity.

Bethsaida was a suburb of Capernaum beside Lake Galilee (Mark 8:22-26, Luke 9:10-11). Jesus did many miracles in these towns. (Matthew 9:1-8; Mark 1:21-28). Jesus lived in Capernaum when He was in Galilee. He taught in their synagogue and did many miracles there.

Sodom (Genesis 18-19) is one of the towns God destroyed during the time of Abraham. We studied about Sodom and Gomorrah last quarter.

2. Revelation Is Promised (Matthew 11:25-26)

Emphasize the truth that God will reveal Himself to the people who want to know Him.

How can we know more about God? (Through Bible study.) We learn from Him through faith, not from great wisdom and education.

3. A Relationship Is Promised (Matthew 11:27)

We can only know the Father by our relationship with Jesus.

4. Rest Is Promised (Matthew 11:28-30)

Ask _____ to study Dig Deeper (The Burden) and summarize it for the class.

DIG DEEPER: *The Burden*

In these verses, Jesus promised both rest and work! He said to take the load or burden He gives us because it is not too heavy for us. Other Bible translations use the word yoke for load.

The Jewish people were tired from the burden of all the laws they were required to keep.

When two oxen worked together, they wore a yoke made of wood. It fit over their necks, just ahead of their shoulders and made it possible for them to pull a plow or heavy load. If a yoke was made well, it fit the oxen and did not cause pain when the oxen pushed against it.

The burden, or load, or yoke Jesus gives is easy. Why? Because Jesus is on the other end of the yoke. He will help us carry the load. When we work with Him, He will give us spiritual success

IN MY CONTEXT

Encourage discussion of the pupil material. Emphasize that liking something on Facebook is not the same as faith in Jesus.

Session 12

WHAT'S THE SIGN?

MATTHEW 12:38-42

PLAN AHEAD

Review the resources page for ideas to make your teaching more effective.

Review the pupil material for Scripture and lesson format. Use the questions in the pupil material to encourage discussion.

Ask _____ to sign the hymn, "O Worship the King" (Let's Sign Hymnal # 317).

EXPLORE THE TEXT (MATTHEW 12:38-42)

1. Seeking a Sign (Matthew 12:38)

The Jewish leaders had already seen many of Jesus' miracles, but they wanted more proof (Matthew 9:1-8; 12:9-14). They called him teacher, or rabbi, but they probably did not do it with true respect.

Ask _____ to study Dig Deeper (Signs) and summarize it for the class.

DIG DEEPER: *Signs*

Every Deaf person knows what signs are! But Jesus was not talking about sign language. The Bible often uses the word *sign* to talk about something that points to another thing or event. God used signs to show Pharaoh that He is the Lord (Exodus 8:21-23, 10:1-2). Judas' kiss was a sign to the soldiers that Jesus was the one they wanted (Matthew 26:47-49). The Bible identifies several signs of Jesus' return (Matthew 24:30). Eating unleavened bread was a sign to remind the Israelites of the Passover (Exodus 13:4-10). In the Book of Revelation, John often said, "I saw a sign in heaven." Today we might use words like proof, or evidence, or warning as synonyms for the word sign.

Ask class members to share the information they entered in Dig Deeper (Signs) and help them find the proper answers.

2. Identifying the Sign (Matthew 12:39-40)

Ask _____ to study Scripture Search (Jonah and the Queen of the South) and summarize it for the class.

SCRIPTURE SEARCH: *Jonah and the Queen of the South*

Jesus used Jonah as a sign of His death, burial, and resurrection. Jonah was in a big fish for three days and nights (Jonah 1:17). He did not die, but it was similar to Jesus' death and then resurrection three days later. The phrase three days and three nights usually meant a few days, rather than three twenty-four hour days. Jesus was in the grave from Friday afternoon to Sunday morning. Jesus' resurrection was proof He was the Messiah.

Nineveh was the capital of Assyria. It was north of Babylon. The people were very sinful. God told Jonah to warn them that He would destroy Nineveh in forty days, but they repented and God did not destroy them.

The queen of the south was the Queen of Sheba. The religious leaders knew her story well. She was from Arabia (now Yemen). She traveled a long distance to talk with Solomon (1 Kings 10:1-10). Jesus was wiser than Solomon, but the religious leaders did not believe He was the Messiah.

Ask class members to share the information they entered in Bible Skills (Miracles) and help them find the proper answers.

3. A Warning Sign (Matthew 12:41-42)

Ask class members if they ignore warning signs that they have car trouble or that a baby is ready to be born.

IN MY CONTEXT

Use the questions in the pupil material to summarize and apply the lesson. If you have unsaved class members, use this opportunity to present the plan of salvation to them clearly.

Session 13

HOW TO LIVE WITH THE KING

MATTHEW 13:1-13

PLAN AHEAD

Review the resources page for ideas to make your teaching more effective. Review the pupil material for Scripture and lesson format. Use this Leader Guide to supplement your teaching.

Use the questions in the pupil material to encourage discussion.

Ask _____ to sign the hymn, "Christ Was Born in a Distant Land" (Let's Sign Hymnal # 403).

EXPLORE THE TEXT (MATTHEW 13:1-13)

1. A Crowd (Matthew 13:1-3a)

This is one of many times Jesus saw a crowd of people. Ask class members to find these verses in this Scripture Search (Jesus and the Crowds). Ask someone to tell what Jesus did when he saw the crowd.

SCRIPTURE SEARCH: *Jesus and the Crowds*

The Gospel writers tell of many times when Jesus saw a big crowd of people. They followed Him wherever He went. What did Jesus do?

Matthew 5:1. Jesus taught them.

Matthew 9:36. Jesus felt sorry for them.

Matthew 14:14. Jesus healed them.

John 6:5-13. Jesus fed them.

What must we do when we see people in our area who do not know about Jesus?

2. A Parable (Matthew 13:3b-9)

Ask _____ to study Dig Deeper (Parables) and summarize it for the class.

DIG DEEPER: *Parables*

Other Bible translations use the word parables for the stories Jesus told. A parable has one main point. We must not try to find meaning in every word or phrase in the parable. Rather, we ask ourselves, what is the central point of this story? The parables sometimes had Jesus as one of the characters, identified as king, sower, etc. Sometimes two or three parables were given together to emphasize what Jesus wanted His followers to understand, such as the pearl and the treasure (Matthew 13:44-46), the man who built a tower and the king who attacked (Luke 14:25-33), or the lost sheep, lost son, and lost coin in (Luke 15:1-32). Some parables were a single sentence. Some were long stories such as the story of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37).

The people understood the meaning of the stories if they truly wanted to. If not, the stories had no meaning for them.

Why did Jesus use parables? Encourage discussion, using ideas from the pupil material. Jesus explained that He used parables so that the people who were willing to believe could understand the truth while the people who were unwilling to believe would not understand (Mark 4:33-34).

(Hold discussion of the content of the parable for the next section.)

3. A Reason (Matthew 13:10-13)

Review the **parable** and the interpretation Jesus gave to it. Use the pupil material, and especially the Key Doctrine (Power of the Gospel) as a guide.

IN MY CONTEXT

Use the pupil material to summarize and apply the lesson.

Ask _____ to sign 1 Peter 3:15 and _____ to sign 2 Timothy 4:2. What is our responsibility?

Encourage class members to prepare for the start of next quarter by beginning to read the first few chapters of the Book of Acts.

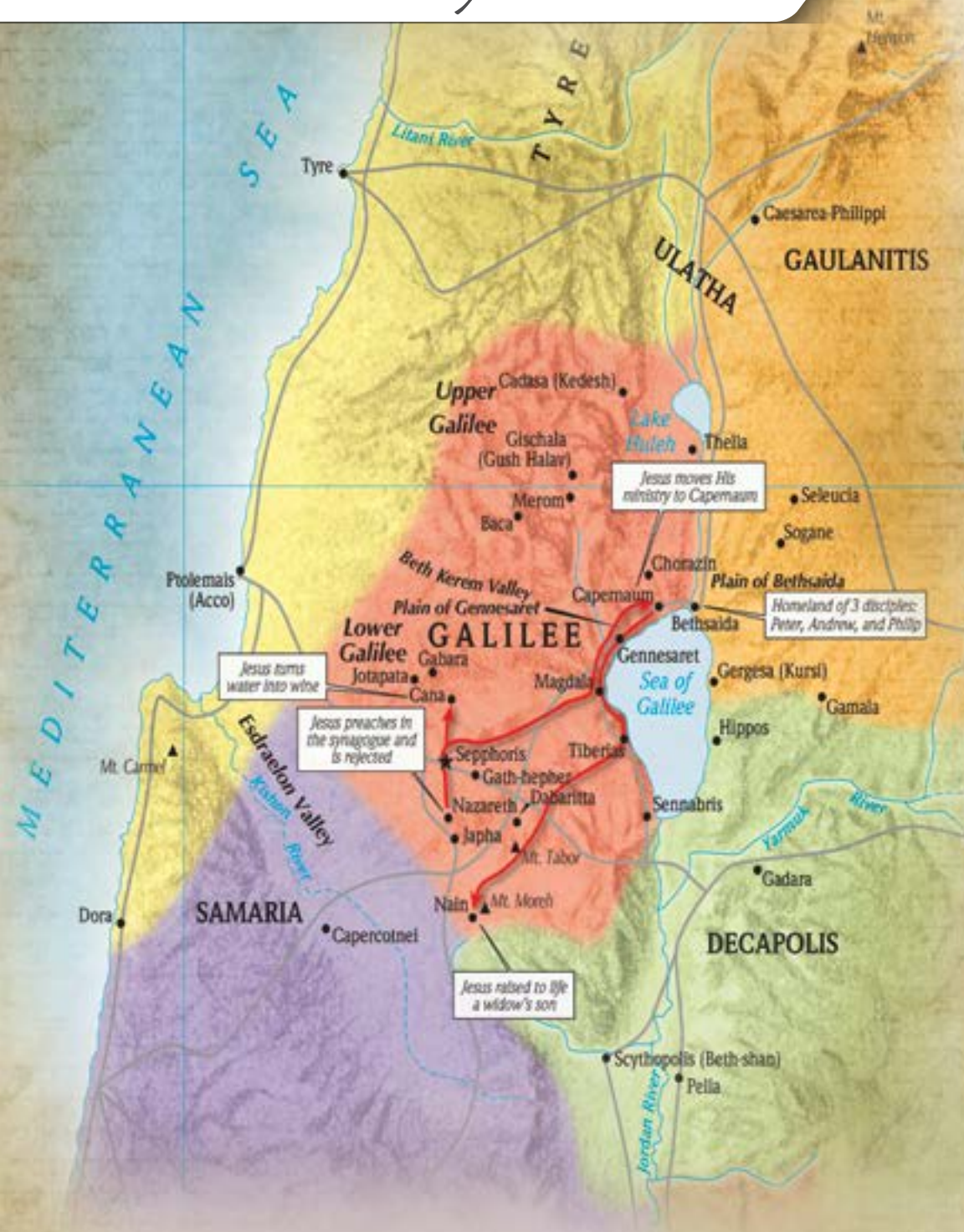
Teachers: Your help is needed!

How do you like this new format? We would like to hear from you and your class members. Send an email to ETBDeaf@lifeway.com to tell us what you think of it, and how it can be improved.

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Jesus' Ministry in Galilee



Matthew 1–13

Who would you want to write your life story? Would you put the task in the hands of your tax accountant? God used four different men to record the gospel story of Jesus in Scripture. One of these men, Matthew (also known as Levi), worked as a tax collector until Jesus called him to be a disciple and apostle. As a tax man, Matthew bowed to an earthly ruler. When he became a follower of Christ, he began to serve the eternal King of kings.

Matthew's Gospel presents Jesus as the One who was born King of the Jews. After His baptism, Jesus preached the good news of God's kingdom. He told parables so that His followers might understand the kingdom of heaven. He fulfilled the prophecy of Zion's coming King. A sign on His cross proclaimed Him a King, and His resurrection confirmed His regal authority.



Let the Word dwell in you.