

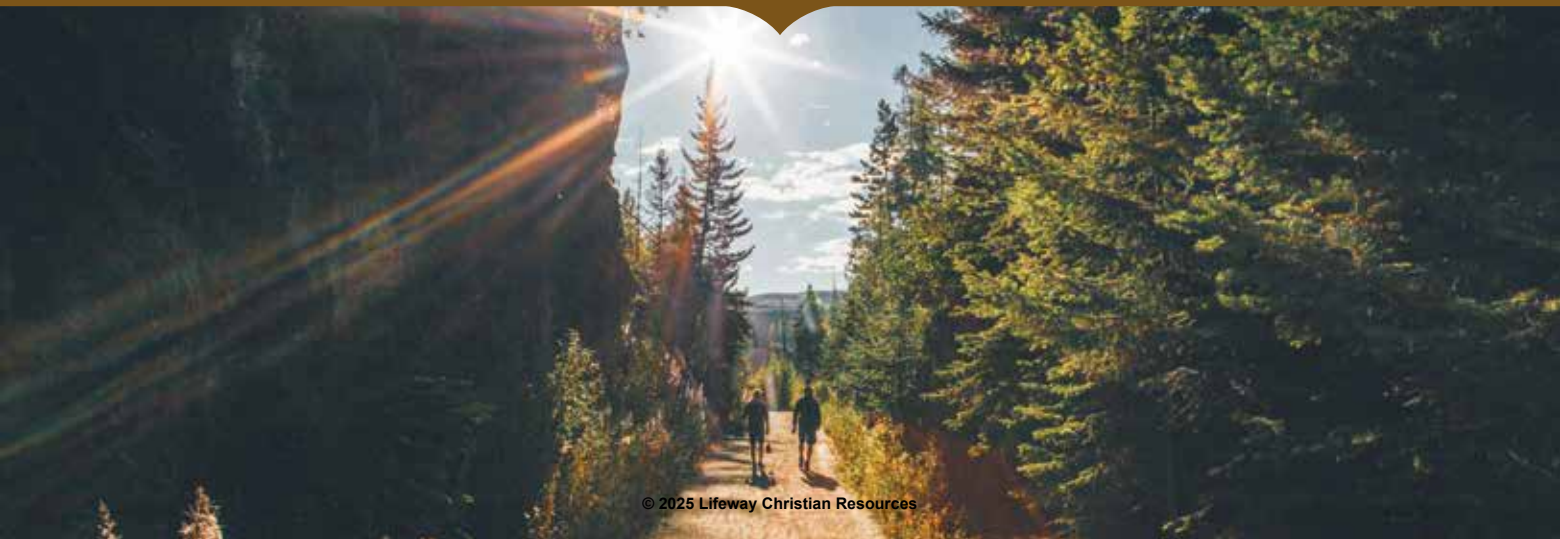


EXPLORE **THE BIBLE.**
Adults

Matthew 1–13

Leader Guide (CSB)

Winter 2025-26



THE POWER OF ONE

The teacher writes the essay prompt on the board, and you stare at it blankly: “Name the person who has made the single greatest impact on your life and why.” You sense various levels of confusion assault you at the same time. One minute, you wonder if anyone has really made that big of a difference in your life. The next minute, you’ve got a list of candidates that seems impossible to whittle down.

And even if you could eliminate every name but one, surely the last person standing deserves more attention than you could ever offer in a few hundred words. Someone like that would make such an indelible impression that you wouldn’t know where to start, what to include, or what to leave out. Such a transformational figure requires the word count of a novel, not a few pages filled with the snatches of collected memories.

Naming the most influential person in your life? On the surface, it might seem like an impossible task for you and me. But, for a former tax collector named Matthew, the choice was easy: Jesus. See, it was Jesus who had found him at his tax booth, and it was Jesus who had called him in a new direction. It was Jesus who had seen past the social and spiritual stigma that hung on first-century tax collectors like barnacles on a boat. And it was Jesus who taught him what it really means to have a personal relationship with God.

Matthew, the cultural outcast, had met Jesus, and Jesus had made all the difference. That’s why Matthew wrote an entire book of the Bible dedicated to the words and actions of Jesus. Thankfully, Jesus is still in the business of transforming lives today. He still accepts outcasts and social pariahs. He still makes room for them in His kingdom. And He still teaches us what it really means to have a personal relationship with God.

Honestly, Jesus has the single greatest impact on the lives of all who come to Him. If you’ve never met Him, now is the time. Like Matthew, all you have to do is hear His call and respond by following Him in faith. If you’re ready to take that step, here’s what you need to do . . .

- **Admit** to God that you are a sinner. Repent, turning from your sin.
- **By faith receive** Jesus as God’s Son and accept His gift of forgiveness from sin. He took the penalty for your sin by dying on the cross. Jesus also rose from the dead, making a new, eternal life possible for us.
- **Confess** your faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. You may pray a prayer similar to this as you call on God to save you: “Dear God, I know that You love me. I confess my sin and need of salvation. I turn away from my sin and place my faith in Jesus as my Savior and Lord. In the name of Jesus I pray, amen.”

After you have received Jesus Christ into your life, tell a pastor or another Christian about your decision. Show others your faith in Christ by asking for baptism by immersion in your local church as a public expression of your faith.

CONTENTS



SESSIONS

SUGGESTED FOR
THE WEEK OF

| | | | |
|----------------|-------------|---|-----|
| Dec. 7 | Session 1: | Affirmation (Matt. 3:13–4:11) | 15 |
| | Article: | Titles of Christ in the Gospels | 27 |
| Dec. 14 | Session 2: | Invitation (Matt. 4:12-25) | 29 |
| Dec. 21 | Session 3: | Worship the King (Matt. 2:1-12) | 39 |
| | Article: | First Century Bethlehem | 49 |
| Dec. 28 | Session 4: | True Righteousness (Matt. 5:13-20,43-48) | 51 |
| Jan. 4 | Session 5: | Treasure (Matt. 6:19-34) | 61 |
| | Article: | The Kingdom of Heaven in Matthew | 71 |
| Jan. 11 | Session 6: | Authority Acknowledged (Matt. 7:15-29) | 73 |
| Jan. 18 | Session 7: | Every Life Valued (Matt. 8:1-4,14-17; 9:1-8) | 83 |
| | Article: | The Sanctity of Human Life | 93 |
| Jan. 25 | Session 8: | Mercy Extended (Matt. 9:10-19,23-26) | 95 |
| Feb. 1 | Session 9: | Loyalty Tested (Matt. 10:16-20,26-34) | 107 |
| Feb. 8 | Session 10: | Confronting Doubts (Matt. 11:1-6,16-24) | 117 |
| Feb. 15 | Session 11: | Rejecting Legalism (Matt. 12:1-14) | 127 |
| | Article: | The Parables of Jesus | 137 |
| Feb. 22 | Session 12: | Judgment Coming* (Matt. 13:24-30,36-43) | 139 |
| | Article: | Explaining Salvation to an Adult | 149 |

*Evangelistic Emphasis

FEATURES

| | |
|------------------------|-----|
| • Meet the Writers | 4 |
| • From the Team Leader | 5 |
| • Leadership Training | 6 |
| • Word Wise | 8 |
| • Bible Reading Plan | 9 |
| • Using This Guide | 10 |
| • Biblical Background | 12 |
| • Outline | 14 |
| • Leader Pack Ideas | 151 |
| • Coming Next Quarter | 154 |

MEET THE WRITERS



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FROM **THE TEAM LEADER**



“Delivery delayed. Now arriving November 9.” How well do you wait? When a package you’ve been anxiously awaiting is delayed, for example, do you respond with patient anticipation or irritated frustration? Personally, one-day shipping, DoorDash®, and streaming TV shows have spoiled me. When unexpected circumstances require me to wait, it’s a needed exercise for me to practice patience.

Jesus’s birth in Bethlehem was a long-awaited event. For centuries, God’s people waited for the promised One. Old Testament prophets spoke of a Deliverer. This news of a coming Messiah was especially meaningful to those who persevered year after year with no deliverance in sight. “She will give birth to a son, and you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins” (Matt. 1:21). Matthew’s gospel recounts the story of Jesus’s life. This quarter, we will study Jesus’s teachings, witness His miraculous power, and examine His earthly ministry.

May this study stir anew within you a deep appreciation for our Savior, the One who delivers us from our sins. We no longer have to wait; those days are over. Our King has come!

In Him,

Amber Vaden

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Explore

Discover



The Impact of Prayer

G. Dwayne McCrary

God has been kind to me, allowing me to be a part of some wonderful churches and to serve in multiple ways. He has allowed me to see Him do some mighty things that opened doors for me to help other leaders.

For example, God allowed me to be in a church that grew by a thousand people in attendance over a five-year period. Of course, God used a lot of resources to make that happen in that church. Staffing, city culture, and a variety of other factors came together for that particular church to be driven with a passion to reach people with the gospel. Along the way, we saw college students, convicted felons, a satanist, and many others become faithful followers of Jesus.

FINDING THE REAL REASON

Several of us joined the staff at the beginning of those five years, giving the appearance that we were major contributors to that growth. Several of us began being asked to write articles and lead conferences explaining what we were doing. As those invitations began coming, the challenge we faced was figuring out what we were actually doing that contributed to the growth.

Obviously, God was using us and the talents He had given us to make an impact and to shape what was going on. We were faithful to train people, to look for ways to reach out in our community, to start new Bible study groups, and to make outreach a priority. But those were actions other churches and leaders were taking without seeing the same results.

The answer to why the growth was taking place came on an early Saturday morning when I went to the church parking lot to meet a group of men for a golf outing. To my surprise, another group of men was already in the church facilities. It was a smaller group by comparison, no more than ten men. They had keys to the building, which was unusual to say the least.

Turns out, they met in the building every Saturday morning to pray. They prayed for what would happen the next day, for God to remove obstacles for those who needed the Sunday School lesson and sermon, and for the people who would be leading the classes and worship. This smaller group met regardless of the weather or the season. Not all would be present every week, but some of them would always be there.

Their only purpose for these meetings was to pray. There was no coffee or food. They simply had been faithfully doing this work of prayer for several years. The church had been steady during those years, but what was happening at that point was what these men had been asking God to do from the first day they met to pray.

They were finally seeing God answer the prayer they had begun voicing for several years.



People were aware of this group of praying men, and most folks were impressed by their consistency. But the vast majority was not impressed enough to make the commitment to join them. To be fair, they invited others to join them, but they did so with humility and without fanfare. They did not brag about what they were doing. Instead, they simply carried out the task of asking God to impact their city—every Saturday morning—for years. The men in this group were marked by prayer.

They were the reason we were seeing God do what He was doing at that time in the life of that church.

IMAGINE YOUR CHURCH

Now that you’ve heard my story, reflect on your own context. Imagine what might happen in your church if a few people were willing to be marked by prayer, to approach God with the hope of seeing Him reach your community or your city for His glory, regardless of who He decided to use or how He determined to do it.

Imagine Sunday school classes ending their weekly gathering with a time of prayer that grew out of the passages studied during that hour. Imagine believers committing themselves to follow God in whatever way He saw fit.

Imagine what might happen if the people who attended those Bible study groups then spent some of their prayer time during the week talking with God in a way that echoed the emphasis of the Bible passage studied, expressing their willingness to follow Jesus and His plans for them.

As leaders of Bible study groups, we can make a difference in our community by the way we lead the people in our group to pray. Here are some specific actions we can take that might help:

- Maintain a list of the names of people our group is praying for who need to know and follow Jesus.
- Carry a list of people for whom we and the group are asking God to draw to Him through our conversations and witness.
- Make sure those names are the first item on any prayer list we distribute to our Bible study group.
- Each month, set aside the second Sunday’s group prayer time to focus specifically only on those same names, adding names and updating the list as needed.

What other actions could you take to encourage your group to consistently pray for people who are far from God and for the opportunity to share with them?

G. Dwayne McCrary is the manager of adult ongoing Bible studies at Lifeway. This article is adapted from his soon-to-be-released book, *Marked by Prayer*. The book, releasing February 17, 2026, can be preordered at [Lifeway.com](https://www.lifeway.com).



Terms listed here are identified in the Bible commentary with a dot (•).

Bethsaida [beth-SAY ih duh]—means “house of fish”; town on the northeast side of the Sea of Galilee; hometown of Philip, Andrew, and Peter (John 1:44); one of the cities Jesus censured because of the unbelief of its inhabitants (Matt. 11:21)

Capernaum [kuh PUHR nay uhm]—Jesus’s base of operations (Matt. 9:1); home of Andrew, Peter, James, and John; economic center of Galilee

Chorazin [koh RAY zin]—a city located in Galilee; one of the cities Jesus censured because of the unbelief of its inhabitants (Matt. 11:21)

Decapolis [dih KAP oh liss]—place name meaning “ten cities”; mentioned only in Matthew and Mark in the Bible (Matt. 4:25; Mark 5:20; 7:31)

Galilee [GAL ih lee]—small region in the northern part of Israel where Jesus did much of His ministry (Matt. 3:13; 4:18,23,25)

Hades [HAY deez]—the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew term “Sheol”; refers to the place of the dead

Judea [joo DEE uh]—the area including Jerusalem and the territory immediately surrounding it; formerly called Judah in the Old Testament, was given the name Judea following the Babylonian exile

Naphtali [NAF tuh ligh]—region north of the Sea of Galilee; named after one of the twelve sons of Jacob (Gen. 30:3-8; Matt. 4:13)

Nazareth [NAZ uh reth]—Jesus’s hometown (Matt. 2:23); located in Galilee about halfway between the Sea of Galilee and the Mediterranean Sea

Sidon [SIGH duhn]—ancient city on the Phoenician coast; often associated with Tyre (Matt. 11:21-22)

Sodom [SAHD uhm]—a city renowned for its wickedness during the time of Abraham (Gen. 18:20)

Syria [SIHR ih uh]—ancient region located north of Israel; played an important role in the early spread of the gospel; Damascus (Acts 9:1-9) and Antioch (Acts 11:26; 13:1-3) were located in Syria

Tyre [TIGHR]—ancient city on the Phoenician coast; often associated with Sidon (Matt. 11:21-22)

Zebulun [ZEB yoo luhn]—name of Jacob’s tenth son (Gen. 30:20), the tribe named for him, and the area they settled west of the Sea of Galilee (Matt. 4:13)

BIBLE READING PLAN



DECEMBER

- ☐ 1. Matthew 1:1-6
- ☐ 2. Matthew 1:7-11
- ☐ 3. Matthew 1:12-17
- ☐ 4. Matthew 1:18-21
- ☐ 5. Matthew 1:22-25
- ☐ 6. Matthew 2:1-4
- ☐ 7. Matthew 2:5-8
- ☐ 8. Matthew 2:9-12
- ☐ 9. Matthew 2:13-15
- ☐ 10. Matthew 2:16-18
- ☐ 11. Matthew 2:19-23
- ☐ 12. Matthew 3:1-6
- ☐ 13. Matthew 3:7-10
- ☐ 14. Matthew 3:11-12
- ☐ 15. Matthew 3:13-17
- ☐ 16. Matthew 4:1-4
- ☐ 17. Matthew 4:5-7
- ☐ 18. Matthew 4:8-11
- ☐ 19. Matthew 4:12-17
- ☐ 20. Matthew 4:18-22
- ☐ 21. Matthew 4:23-25
- ☐ 22. Matthew 5:1-10
- ☐ 23. Matthew 5:11-12
- ☐ 24. Matthew 5:13-16
- ☐ 25. Matthew 5:17-20
- ☐ 26. Matthew 5:21-26
- ☐ 27. Matthew 5:27-30
- ☐ 28. Matthew 5:31-32
- ☐ 29. Matthew 5:33-37
- ☐ 30. Matthew 5:38-42
- ☐ 31. Matthew 5:43-48

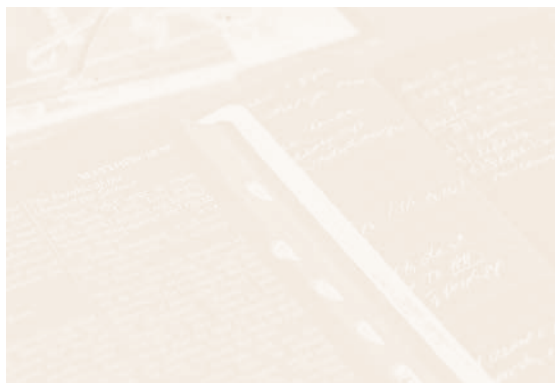
JANUARY

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

FEBRUARY

- ☐ 1. Matthew 10:40-42
- ☐ 2. Matthew 11:1-6
- ☐ 3. Matthew 11:7-10
- ☐ 4. Matthew 11:11-15
- ☐ 5. Matthew 11:16-19
- ☐ 6. Matthew 11:20-24
- ☐ 7. Matthew 11:25-30
- ☐ 8. Matthew 12:1-8
- ☐ 9. Matthew 12:9-14
- ☐ 10. Matthew 12:15-21
- ☐ 11. Matthew 12:22-29
- ☐ 12. Matthew 12:30-32
- ☐ 13. Matthew 12:33-37
- ☐ 14. Matthew 12:38-42
- ☐ 15. Matthew 12:43-45
- ☐ 16. Matthew 12:46-50
- ☐ 17. Matthew 13:1-9
- ☐ 18. Matthew 13:10-15
- ☐ 19. Matthew 13:16-17
- ☐ 20. Matthew 13:18-23
- ☐ 21. Matthew 13:24-30
- ☐ 22. Matthew 13:31-33
- ☐ 23. Matthew 13:34-35
- ☐ 24. Matthew 13:36-43
- ☐ 25. Matthew 13:44-46
- ☐ 26. Matthew 13:47-50
- ☐ 27. Matthew 13:51-52
- ☐ 28. Matthew 13:53-58

USING THIS GUIDE TO LEAD



BEFORE THE GROUP TIME

1. STUDY THE CORE PASSAGE.

Prepare early. Read the passage, listing key people, places, words, phrases, and actions. Use the commentary included in the *Explore the Bible Leader Guide* and the *Explore the Bible Adult Commentary* to dig deeper into the items you listed. If a QR code is available in a lesson, scan it to gain additional information on what's found in the passage. Write a summary of the session's main idea. Use the statement printed under each session title as a starting place.

2. READ THE GROUP TIME PLAN.

Study the Group Plans in the *Explore the Bible Leader Guide*, which include ideas for integrating the *Explore the Bible Personal Study Guide*. Page numbers for related PSG content are provided in the Group Plans. These page numbers correspond to the regular print version of the PSG and may differ from large print versions. Adjust the plan to fit the needs of your group. Identify ways to engage adults, explore the text, summarize the lesson, and challenge the group.

For additional ideas or questions, consult *Explore the Bible QuickSource* and *Explore the Bible Extra* (which identifies a current event to introduce and conclude the lesson and is found at goExploreTheBible.com/LeaderExtras).

Review the items available in the *Explore the Bible Leader Pack*. Look at the Lifeway Sunday School blog and Groups Ministry blog for additional helps on leading an ongoing Bible study group.

3. GATHER AND REVIEW.

Review the group plan and options again and collect any supplies you will need. Make sure you have additional copies of the *Explore the Bible Personal Study Guide* for guests.

DURING THE GROUP TIME

4. ARRIVE EARLY.

Make sure you are the first person to arrive. Pray as you set up the area. Greet adults as they arrive and focus their attention on the Bible study.

5. LEAD THE GROUP IN A TIME OF BIBLE STUDY.

Use the plan, recording notes of how the group responded. Remember, every group experience takes a few unexpected twists and turns, so be flexible.

AFTER THE GROUP TIME

6. EVALUATE AND RECORD.

Review and implement the After the Session idea to encourage the group to put the truths they discovered into practice. Record prayer requests and other insights you gained about the group and specific participants. Use these notes to help you grow as a leader.

7. START PREPARING TO LEAD THE NEXT GROUP TIME.

MEETING THE EXPLORE THE BIBLE FAMILY OF ADULT RESOURCES

CORE RESOURCES

Use the *Daily Discipleship Guide* or *Personal Study Guide* and *Leader Guide* as the core resource for your group.

Daily Discipleship Guide

Resource for both the group members and the group leader. An alternative to the *Personal Study Guide/Leader Guide* model. Includes key words, commentary and questions for the group, daily Bible readings for personal study after the group time, and ideas for smaller groups to discuss the study. Leader helps with targeted teaching plans included in the back.

Personal Study Guide

Resource for the group members to help them prepare for and study during the group time.

Leader Guide

Resource for leaders of groups using the *Personal Study Guide*. Includes commentary and group teaching plans.

ADDITIONAL LEADER HELPS

Commentary

Provides additional insight into the passages studied.

QuickSource

Resource for leaders, providing additional discussion questions, an object lesson, and dig deeper feature. Also provides ease of use for an individual called on to step in and lead the group on short notice.

Leader Pack

Resource filled with posters, masters for informative handouts, and access to a digital leader pack (includes DOC files of the *Leader Guide* commentary, group plans, the pack items in PDF format, and other helps for the leader).



Find out more or order at goExploreTheBible.com

BIBLICAL BACKGROUND

AUTHORSHIP

When Matthew went to work at his tax booth that morning, he had no idea how his life would be transformed. He was a publican—a tax collector. His fellow Jews hated him and every other tax collector because this was a job that meant receiving duty and taxes from businesses and individuals—all on behalf of the Roman occupiers.

In addition, tax collectors were notoriously dishonest. They were known for taking more than was due and lining their pockets with the profits. But whatever issues Matthew may have had leading up to this day, things would never be the same after his encounter with one man.

Matthew was surprised when Jesus walked by and said, “Follow me,” but he did not hesitate. He left his job, his responsibilities, and his former identity to become a disciple of Christ (Matt. 9:9-13).

Luke’s Gospel refers to Matthew as “Levi” (Luke 5:27). Mark initially called the publican “Levi the son of Alphaeus” (Mark 2:14), although later he referred to his colleague as Matthew (3:18). It was not unusual for men to have two names. The name “Matthew” means “the gift of Yahweh.”

Another disciple, James, also was a “son of Alphaeus” (3:18). Assuming both texts refer to the same Alphaeus, Matthew and James would make the third set of brothers among Jesus’s disciple group, along with Peter and Andrew, James and John.

Matthew always referred to himself as either “Matthew” (Matt. 9:9) or “Matthew the tax collector” (10:3). One gets the sense that he never got over the fact that Jesus called him, a tax collector, to be one of His disciples. Once he had accepted Jesus’s call to follow Him, Matthew invited other tax collectors to dinner at his house so they could meet Jesus too.

Matthew not only wrote a Gospel that bears his name, but he also shared the good news of Jesus with those he knew best (9:10-11). As someone who had been an outsider, he demonstrated a heart for other outsiders.

Early church leaders accepted Matthew as the author of this Gospel. Scholars point out the introductory heading “The Gospel According to Matthew” simply reads “According to Matthew” in earlier manuscripts.

Matthew’s Gospel shares some of the same material as Mark and Luke (example: Matt. 12:1-8; Mark 2:23-27; Luke 6:1-5). These books are called the Synoptic Gospels because they have so much in common. The term “synoptic” means “to see alongside,” which describes well how these Gospels connect to one another. Yet, each is unique and, in several instances, contains different details and organization.

Generally, this so-called Synoptic “problem” can be explained by different men writing from different viewpoints that bring together a more complete picture. Many scholars think that the Gospel of Mark was written first, although Matthew is placed first among the four Gospels in the New Testament canon. Depending on how one dates Mark’s book, Matthew probably was written around AD 60-70.

Ultimately, the Author of all Scripture is God (2 Tim. 3:16). Yet, God used human writers as more than mere divine typewriters. Rather, He utilized their personalities and experiences to shape their work—all under the direction of the Holy Spirit (2 Pet. 1:21).

ORIGINAL AUDIENCE

According to genre, Matthew is considered a Gospel, a term that means “good news.” As a historical narrative, it presents the life of Jesus so readers not only learn about Him but also can believe that He is the Messiah, the Son of God.



Matthew primarily wrote for a Jewish audience. From Jesus's genealogical history onward, Matthew offered proof that Jesus was the Messiah, starting with Jesus's ancestry with Abraham to emphasize His Jewish heritage. Commentators point out how the specific inclusion of the patriarchs and King David highlight Jesus's right to the throne of David as the Messiah (Matt. 1:1-2).

Some scholars see Matthew's account as passing through Joseph, while Luke carries the lineage through Mary. They argue that as Jesus's earthly father, the legal genealogy would follow Joseph's background, as expected by Matthew's Jewish audience. Yet, Matthew carefully showed Jesus was not Joseph's biological son. He offered proof for the virgin birth by quoting from Isaiah 7:14 (Matt. 1:23), and the angelic affirmation that the child was from the Holy Spirit (1:18-20).

OCCASION

Matthew's Gospel is not merely a history of Jesus's life. Commentators argue that, like other Gospel writers, Matthew was not so concerned with the sequence of events as with the purpose of the narration. Speaking to his fellow Hebrews, Matthew offered a first-person portrait of the Messiah.

Matthew's Gospel emphasizes Jesus as King. From His genealogy to the kingdom parables, Jesus is identified as the Messiah. He is the fulfillment of prophecies and long-held desire in the hearts of Israel's people. His miracles were further proof of who He is.

MAJOR THEMES

Who is Jesus? Matthew emphasized Jesus as the Messiah. Jesus's distinctively Jewish genealogy, His miracles, and His fulfillment of prophecy all pointed to Him as the Christ.

What did Jesus teach? Two important sections of Matthew 1-13 share deep insights into the manner and subject matter of Jesus's teachings. First, readers learn how to relate

to God and to people. The Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5-7) contains some of the most cherished treasures of instruction for Jesus's followers. These instructions often contrast the letter of tradition with the deeper spirit of God's Word.

Second, readers are shown the kingdom of heaven. For example, chapter 13 contains several "kingdom" parables, which illustrate aspects of God's rule and reign. Three of the five times Matthew uses the Greek word translated "gospel" or "good news," he associates it with the kingdom (Matt. 4:23; 9:35; 24:14).

What did Jesus do? Jesus's actions can be grouped under two primary headings: His personal life and His public ministry. In His personal life, Christ was blameless. He endured temptation without yielding to sin (4:1-11), and He associated with sinners without becoming one (9:10-11). Publicly, Jesus performed numerous miracles (especially Matt. 8-9) that fulfilled three purposes: revealing His divine authority, demonstrating His compassion for hurting people, and fulfilling messianic prophecies.

What were the results? Jesus was loved and hated. Crowds gathered wherever He went, and His disciples left everything to follow Him. Yet, people in His hometown rejected Him (13:53-58). Even John the Baptist experienced conflicting emotions, endorsing Jesus as the Christ, while later questioning whether He was the One (11:1-3).

People haven't changed much. Many love Jesus and follow Him regardless of the consequences. Others reject Him because they want to continue in sin without a sense of guilt. In the end, every person will recognize Jesus as Lord (Phil. 2:10-11). The only question each person must answer will be "Is He Savior?"



MATTHEW

- I. Birth and Infancy of Jesus (1:1-2:23)
- II. Beginning of Jesus's Ministry in Galilee (3:1-4:25)
- III. Discourse One: The Sermon on the Mount (5:1-7:29)
- IV. Jesus's First Miracles (8:1-9:38)
- V. Discourse Two: Ministry of Jesus's Disciples (10:1-42)
- VI. Responses to Jesus's Ministry (11:1-12:50)
- VII. Discourse Three: Parables about the Kingdom (13:1-58)
- VIII. Close of Jesus's Ministry in Galilee (14:1-17:27)
- IX. Discourse Four: Character of Jesus's Disciples (18:1-35)
- X. Jesus's Ministry on the Way to Jerusalem (19:1-20:34)
- XI. Jesus's Ministry in Jerusalem (21:1-23:39)
- XII. Discourse Five: Olivet Discourse (24:1-25:46)
- XIII. Betrayal, Crucifixion, and Burial (26:1-27:66)
- XIV. Resurrection and Commission (28:1-20)



Affirmation

JESUS CAME TO FULFILL THE FATHER'S PLAN OF SALVATION.

Scripture Passage: Matthew 3:13–4:11 Memory Verse: Matthew 3:17

Perhaps no other subject generates more controversy than the nature and mission of Jesus Christ. Arguments regarding most issues—from abortion to gender identity and more—depend on what one believes about Jesus's person and purpose. People who accept Jesus as Lord and Savior don't fear or hate those who hold different societal or personal values. By their words and lives, believers simply proclaim Christ as God's Son and Lord of all. Their beliefs, values, and choices are defined by their commitment to Jesus.

Consider how you make decisions. Are they based on your affirmation of Jesus as Messiah and Master? If He is our Savior, He is our Lord. If He is our King, He holds authority over every aspect of our lives. As you prepare to lead this opening session from Matthew's Gospel, reflect on how Jesus affects the way you relate to others and how you can surrender more control to Him each day. Ask God to help you lead adults to understand that the more we embrace Jesus as the Son of God—our Sovereign and Savior—the more others see Christ in us and desire to know Him too.



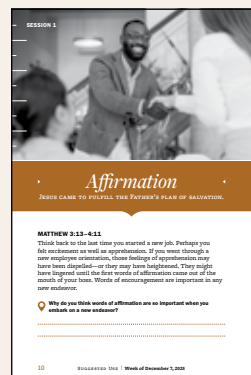
Weekly Podcast: Group Leader Training

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Think back to the last time you started a new job. Perhaps you felt excitement as well as apprehension. If you went through a new employee orientation, those feelings of apprehension may have been dispelled—or they may have heightened. They might have lingered until the first words of affirmation came out of the mouth of your boss. Words of encouragement are important in any new endeavor. (PSG, p. 10)

Why do you think words of affirmation are so important when you embark on a new endeavor?



Understand the Context (Matthew 3:1–4:11)

“In those days.” The opening phrase of Matthew 3 establishes foundations on which the ministry of John the Baptist and the mission of Jesus the Christ are understood. Those days followed centuries of preparation across generations from Abraham to David to Jesus. “Those days” looked back at an angelic annunciation to a young virgin that she would bear the Son of God. Those days occurred in the aftermath of wise men from the East searching, finding, and worshiping the One born as King of the Jews. Casting a glance into Luke’s Gospel, those days saw the miraculous birth of a prophet to a childless, priestly couple—a child who rejoiced in his mother’s womb at the approach of the mother of his Lord (Luke 1:5-45).

Fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah (Isa. 40:3), the adult John did not look like one who would herald the Son of God. He lived a rough life in the wilderness, wore rough clothing, and shared a rough message. He called religious leaders a “brood of vipers” when they came to his baptisms (Matt. 3:7). Still, the people streamed from Jerusalem, the Judean countryside, and the Jordan River valley to hear John preach, and they remained with repentant hearts to be baptized.

John’s ultimate purpose was to prepare the way for the coming Messiah. John’s commission centered on identifying God’s Son, the Christ (John 1:29-34). When Jesus came, requesting baptism, John immediately knew He was the

One. As Jesus rose from the water, John watched as the Holy Spirit descended in dove-like fashion and rested on Him. John heard the voice of God proclaiming from heaven that this was His Son in whom He was well-pleased.

Though you have not seen and heard as John did, Bible study leaders can experience and express the reality of Jesus—the Son of God.

Jesus quickly experienced challenges to His identity and His mission. Going further into the wilderness, He fasted and prayed for forty days. In the midst of His physically weakened condition, Satan challenged Him with a series of temptations. Twice the enemy questioned His identity: “If you are the Son of God . . .” (Matt. 4:3,6).

On his third attempt, the devil confronted Jesus’s mission. Of course, Satan cared nothing for the kingdoms of the world. Jesus could have them all and avoid the cross if He would worship him. None of these tests swayed Christ. He knew who He was and why He had come. He dismissed the devil as He had before—with Scripture.

You and I also have the power to resist temptation as we submit to the Son of God and resist Satan with the Word of God.

Read Matthew 3:1–4:11 in your Bible. Highlight all the affirmations of Jesus’s identity. What do John the Baptist, the Father, the Spirit, and the angels reveal about Jesus? (PSG, p. 11)

ENGAGE



PREPARE: Display **Pack Item 2** (Poster: Outline of Matthew 1–13) to highlight during the session. Make copies of **Pack Item 8** (Handout: Matthew Time Line) and **Pack Item 9** (Handout: Praying Scripture in Matthew’s Gospel) to distribute to the group.

INTRODUCE:

Invite the group to read the opening paragraph on page 10 of the PSG.

ASK:

Why do you think words of affirmation are so important when you embark on a new endeavor? (PSG, p. 10)

DISCUSS:

Lead a brief discussion about the group’s responses. Allow two or three volunteers to share encouraging words they’ve received and why those words were so meaningful to them.

RECAP:

Remind the group that they are embarking on a study of Matthew 1–13 over the next twelve weeks. For context, share this information from page 11 of the PSG:

The Gospel of Matthew is one of the three Synoptic Gospels, along with Mark and Luke. The name “synoptic” means “with the same eye” or from the same viewpoint. These three Gospel accounts follow a similar order of events and contain many of the same teachings of Jesus. . . . In rapid succession, Matthew tells of three key events that launched Jesus’s ministry—the appearance of John the Baptist, Jesus’s baptism, and His temptation in the wilderness.

TRANSITION:

Share that Jesus had a mission from God and that this session examines these early steps in His public ministry from Matthew’s perspective.



Group Activity Option

Music

Play “Holy Water” by We the Kingdom. Draw attention to the second verse, which refers to baptism. Highlight how the song points to baptism as a sign of repentance and testimony of salvation. Ask: **How is baptism a public and formal way to demonstrate faith in Christ?** Share that today’s session examines why Jesus was baptized and how it initiated His ministry on earth.

Obeying God (Matt. 3:13-17)

13 Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan, to be baptized by him. **14** But John tried to stop him, saying, “I need to be baptized by you, and yet you come to me?” **15** Jesus answered him, “Allow it for now, because this is the way for us to fulfill all righteousness.” Then John allowed him to be baptized. **16** When Jesus was baptized, he went up immediately from the water. The heavens suddenly opened for him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming down on him. **17** And a voice from heaven said, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased.”

(v. 13) Human nature struggles with submission, even when it comes to obeying God. Jesus demonstrated obedience to the Father in every way. Paul declared that Jesus, who is God in human flesh, still humbled Himself and obeyed His Father—all the way to the cross (Phil. 2:5-8).

Jesus provided an excellent example in His baptism. John the Baptist had been ministering for some time when **Jesus came from •Galilee**. Growing up in Nazareth, Jesus likely worked with His family until He reached the age to begin His ministry. He traveled to the Jordan so He could be **baptized** by John. The English word “baptize” is a transliteration of the Greek word *baptizo*, meaning “to immerse or put under.”

(v. 14) John’s baptism was different from typical Jewish baptism. Many Jews saw baptism as a cleansing ritual or as a way to initiate proselytes into Jewish traditions. John, though, required proof of true repentance (Matt. 3:8).

When Jesus approached, John was shocked. He recognized Jesus as the Son of God who had no need to repent (John 1:27). Instead, John protested, **I need to be baptized by you**. Here was the Christ who would baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire, the One whose sandals John was not worthy to untie (Matt. 3:11).

(v. 15) Jesus did not deny John’s statement but told him, **Allow it for now** because it would **fulfill all righteousness**. Jesus was not saying that baptism makes anyone righteous. Righteousness means being in a right relationship with God.

Jews thought righteousness was obtained by following the Mosaic law. Scripture says we are made righteous through faith in Christ and His sacrifice for our sins (Rom. 10:3-11). Centuries earlier, Habakkuk had declared that just people (or righteous ones) live by faith (Hab. 2:4). Paul reiterated this truth in his letters (Rom. 1:17).

Jesus told John that by obeying God in this manner both of them could demonstrate faith and fulfill the demands of righteousness. Consequently, **John allowed him to be baptized**.

Christians understand the deeper faith meaning of baptism. Immersion points people toward Jesus’s death and resurrection, and it identifies believers with Him (Rom. 6:3-5). We are not saved by baptism. We are baptized to demonstrate our obedience to Jesus because He has saved us.

Key Doctrine

Baptism

Christian baptism is the immersion of a believer in water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is an act of obedience symbolizing the believer’s faith in a crucified, buried, and risen Savior, the believer’s death to sin, the burial of the old life, and the resurrection to walk in newness of life in Christ Jesus. (See Acts 2:41-42; Romans 6:3-5.)

(vv. 16-17) **He went up immediately from the water** described Jesus rising out of the river. The historical nature of baptism and the innate meaning of *baptizo* combine to support immersion as the method of Jesus’s baptism.

After His baptism, **the heavens suddenly opened**, and the triune God testified to Christ. The **Spirit of God** came down **like a dove**. This suggests no actual bird appeared, but the Spirit still made His presence felt in a real way.

The Father also spoke: **This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased**. He would affirm Jesus in a similar way on two other occasions: on the mountain of transfiguration (Matt. 17:5; Mark 9:7; Luke 9:35) and a few days before the crucifixion (John 12:27).



CONTEXT:

APPLICATION POINT: Believers are called to demonstrate obedience through baptism by immersion.

Use **Pack Item 2** (Poster: Outline of Matthew 1–13) to provide a brief overview of the entire study. Distribute **Pack Item 8** (Handout: Matthew Time Line) for additional context.

READ:

Invite a volunteer to read Matthew 3:13-17 while the group listens for Matthew’s description of one of the watershed moments in Christianity. Share that this passage presents a paradigm shift: Jesus was beginning His public ministry, which meant that John the Baptist’s ministry was reaching its climax.

ASK:

Why did Jesus come to John for baptism?

RECAP:

To explain the reasons for Jesus’s baptism, share the following information from pages 12-13 of the PSG:

Jesus, fully God and fully man, took this step to identify with the sinfulness of humanity. Jesus, who would be the sacrifice for sin, identified with sinners by being baptized as they were. . . . Jesus’s baptism demonstrated His commitment to fulfill the mission for which He came into the world. Thus it was also an act of obedience to the Father and gives to us an example of obedience.

EXAMINE:

Direct attention to the phrase “went up” in verse 16. Share that this means Jesus actually went under the water. Point out the Key Doctrine (PSG, p. 13). Emphasize the Greek word for baptism (*baptizo*) means “to immerse.” Note that this indicates full immersion is the proper mode of believers’ baptism.

ASK:

What is the purpose of baptism in a believer’s life?
(PSG, p. 13)

EXPLAIN:

Discuss baptism as the visual representation of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ and a believer’s willingness to identify with that.

HIGHLIGHT:

Point to God’s words of affirmation. Highlight the involvement of each member of the Trinity in this event. Use the content for verses 16-17 on page 18 in the Leader Guide for more on the Spirit’s appearance “like a dove” and the Father’s words of affection and affirmation. Note that Matthew 3:17 is the session memory verse and encourage adults to reflect on it and memorize it during the week.

Hearing God (Matt. 4:1-4)

1 Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. **2** After he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. **3** Then the tempter approached him and said, “If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.” **4** He answered, “It is written: Man must not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.”

(v. 1) To obey God, we must hear Him. One tool God uses to speak to us is His Word. In these verses, Jesus displayed the value of knowing and applying Scripture. The introductory word **then** indicates that these events took place shortly after Jesus’s baptism. Mark left the same impression in his Gospel (Mark 1:9-13).

Many believers think hearing God and following His Spirit frees us from difficulties, but this scene shows that the Spirit may lead us *into* challenging situations. After seeing the Spirit descend and remain on Him at His baptism, Jesus followed the Spirit’s leadership **into the wilderness**. The Jewish concept of **led up** did not mean a northerly direction, but moving to a higher elevation. The wilderness here may have been a rough, mountainous area far from towns or villages.

More difficult than the terrain was the purpose of the trek. The Spirit brought Jesus to this harsh place **to be tempted by the devil**, the enemy of God. The Bible makes it clear that God does not tempt anyone (Jas. 1:13). However God does give Satan limited permission to engage people, as with Job (Job 1:8-22).

The Father did not need to test His Son since the two are one (John 10:30). Instead, the temptation likely served as a rebuke of Satan. The devil is not some mere personification of ultimate evil. He is a real supernatural being. Having failed in his rebellion against God, Satan turned his wrath on humanity—God’s highest creation—and on His Son who was sent to be humanity’s Savior.

Jesus’s temptation also allowed Him to identify with humanity. The writer of Hebrews noted that Jesus experienced everything we experience, only without sin (Heb. 4:15). This is possible because Jesus endured Satan’s temptations, which gave us yet another example of how to live out the Christian life in a meaningful way.

(v. 2) Often, we experience spiritual challenges when we are physically weak. Jesus **fasted forty days and forty nights**. Being completely human, as well as fully divine, Jesus felt the same

physical needs we do. The term **hungry** suggests an intense craving. Having gone without food for more than a month, Jesus was famished.

(v. 3) Once Jesus reached the physical breaking point, the enemy showed up. Scripture describes Satan as our adversary (1 Pet. 5:8), the Father of lies (John 8:44), and the accuser of the brethren (Rev. 12:10). Here, he is called **the tempter**. His purpose in temptation is to use trickery, lies, and other deceit to entice people to sin.

Satan **approached** Jesus. The term suggests more than merely coming near someone. It carries a sense of hostility and malevolence. Imagine the arrogance of accosting Christ with evil intent!

The first temptation involved commanding some **stones to become bread**. Since Jesus was hungry, the enticement to use His divine powers for immediate gratification was real, but it wasn’t purely physical. Depending on how one translates the Greek word for **if**, Satan’s proposition also subtly may have questioned Jesus’s identity as the **Son of God**. (Some translators render it “since,” which would make Satan’s statement more sarcastic than cynical.) Like a playground bully, the devil challenged Jesus to prove it.

(v. 4) Jesus could have commanded Satan to leave Him alone. Instead, He responded to the attack with the sword of the Spirit—the Word of God (Eph. 6:17). He appealed to Scripture: **It is written**.

Christ’s quotation of Deuteronomy 8:3 draws to mind the context for the original statement. During Israel’s wilderness wanderings, God deliberately allowed His people to experience severe hunger and then fed them with heavenly manna. His goal was to help them recognize that their lives were sustained not merely by bread, but by the very words of God.

We can rely on Scripture to find strength and resist temptation. We should read the Bible, memorize its passages, and ask God to help us apply them to our lives.



APPLICATION POINT: We can rely on Scripture to find strength and resist temptation.

READ:

Direct the group to read Matthew 4:1-4 silently and to identify one word or phrase that summarizes the temptation.

EXPLAIN:

Briefly highlight Jesus's condition when the devil approached Him. Note that He had gone nearly six weeks without food. Affirm that Satan often strikes when we are weak and our defenses are more likely to be down.

SHARE:

Encourage adults to share the word or phrase they identified as they read the verses. Note that this temptation was not just a physical challenge. Emphasize that Satan was suggesting that Jesus use His power for His own satisfaction rather than trusting God to meet His needs.

RECAP:

Use this content from page 15 of the PSG to examine Jesus's use of Scripture:

Jesus responded to Satan's attack by quoting Deuteronomy 8:3. In essence, Jesus affirmed that our physical needs are not our most crucial needs. The Word of God and the will of God as revealed in His Word are the most important things in all of life. . . . Jesus would not be lured from His allegiance to God. He affirmed loyalty to God above physical satisfaction.

ASK:

How have you found strength and encouragement in God's Word? (PSG, p. 15)

DISCUSS:

Facilitate a brief discussion about the merits of using Scripture when we face temptation. Share that Satan was not done with his temptations, and Jesus was not done relying on God's Word.

Group Activity Option

Bible Skill

Give each adult a sheet of paper and a pencil. Encourage them to complete the Bible Skill (PSG, p. 18). After a few minutes, allow some volunteers to share their work. Spend time talking about their lists of ways Satan tempts believers today. Encourage them to use the Scriptures they identified as a way to deal with temptations each day.

Trusting God (Matt. 4:5-7)

5 Then the devil took him to the holy city, had him stand on the pinnacle of the temple, **6** and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down. For it is written: He will give his angels orders concerning you, and they will support you with their hands so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.” **7** Jesus told him, “It is also written: Do not test the Lord your God.”

(v. 5) When his first temptation failed, Satan took Jesus **to the holy city** (Jerusalem). The text does not specify the manner of their movement to the site. Obviously, they did not walk into town. Satan likely used supernatural power to transport Jesus to the next place of temptation.

The tempter led Christ to **the pinnacle of the temple**. The term *pinnacle* translates a Greek word also used for “wing.” Some commentators suggest this may have been Herod’s portico. Others identify it as the peak of Solomon’s Porch on the east side of the temple. Both locations reached hundreds of feet above the floor of the Kidron Valley. The fact that crowds in the temple courtyard did not witness Jesus’s presence above them attests to the supernatural nature of this event.

(v. 6) Satan’s second temptation repeated his assault on Jesus’s identity as the **Son of God** and His trust in the Father. Again, Satan undoubtedly knew who Jesus was, just as his demons did (Matt. 8:28-29). He used this taunt to elicit a reaction from Christ and prompt Him to prove Himself. If the devil could induce Jesus to act contrary to God’s will, His actions would disqualify Him from being humanity’s Savior.

Since Jesus employed Scripture in response to the first temptation, the devil also quoted an Old Testament text, Psalm 91:11-12. This text is part of a larger psalm that describes God’s provision and protection for the person “who lives under the protection of the Most High” and those who reside “in the shadow of the Almighty” (Ps. 91:1).

In this case, Satan was saying that Jesus could do whatever He wanted and know that God would protect Him. He was encouraging Jesus to test God’s faithfulness by leaping off the pinnacle point. However, the psalmist was talking about someone who might stumble in their walk with God.

The enemy’s misuse of this passage was supposed to justify Jesus’s violation of God’s will. Satan often bends God’s Word to trick believers

into doing his bidding. We need to beware of taking Scripture passages out of context or applying them in a way that was not intended by their divine Author.

The first half of Satan’s words comprise a false application of the text. **Throw yourself down**. Again, nowhere does the psalm suggest doing so. Like the tempter’s encounter with Eve in the garden, he twists truth with his lies to beguile his victim into doubting God and acting contrary to His will (Gen. 3:1-5). Like his first temptation, Satan wanted Jesus to use His supernatural power and His relationship to the Father to perform a spectacular feat.

Some Bible scholars argue the devil was trying to detour Jesus into a short-cut around the cross. The temple courtyards would have been teeming with people. Imagine the awe onlookers might experience if they saw Jesus jump from the heights and be saved by angels! The assumption is that they would accept Him as Messiah without the agony of the crucifixion. However, Jesus’s purpose was to atone for sin, not amaze the people. And that required a sacrificial death, not a miraculous rescue.

(v. 7) As one might expect, Jesus was not fooled by Satan’s tricks. He again relied on Scripture to interpret Scripture. Christ reiterated what was **written**. He knew the passage Satan misused was not intended to justify dramatic action. Quoting the first half of Deuteronomy 6:16, He said, **Do not test the Lord your God**. We cannot behave presumptively toward God. Like Christ, we respond to His Word with faith and obedience, not distorting it to mean what we want.

We can trust God’s faithfulness without demanding miracles. God sometimes works wonders on our behalf, but He does so for His purposes, not ours. He cannot be manipulated to do our bidding.



READ:

APPLICATION POINT: We can trust God's faithfulness without demanding miracles.

Call on a volunteer to read Matthew 4:5-7 as adults again identify a single word or phrase that summarizes the temptation in the verses.

EXPLAIN:

Point out that scholars have different ideas about where this pinnacle of the temple might be. Note that some believe it could be the part of Solomon's Porch, which rose to more than 450 feet above the Kidron Valley. Share that others think it could have been an area known as Herod's portico, which also rose high above Kidron. Emphasize that the exact location is not as important as Satan's purpose for bringing Jesus there.

DISCUSS:

Briefly review the second temptation and allow adults to share the word or phrase they identified as the verses were read. Talk about how those terms are significant to the story.

RECAP:

Explain Satan's attempted use of Scripture and Jesus's response by highlighting this content from page 16 of the PSG:

Jesus defeated Satan in round one by quoting the Word of God. Satan now tried to turn the tables on Jesus by using the Word of God himself. His implication was: "Jesus, if you believe so strongly in Scripture, then use the Word of God to prove that You are the Son of God." Quoting from Psalm 91:11-12, Satan challenged Jesus to throw Himself off the top of the temple into the valley below. . . . Satan misused Scripture, taking verses out of context. The psalm speaks of a life lived in God's will. When our lives are lived in His will, God can be counted on to protect and provide for us. For Jesus to misuse this verse and jump off the temple in a spectacular fashion would place Him outside of God's will.

ASK:

What are some ways people might try to put God to the test in our culture? (PSG, p. 16)

STATE:

Jesus used another Scripture, Deuteronomy 6:16, to reject Satan's temptation. He understood the meaning of the passage that Satan was twisting, so He could respond with wisdom and the authority of God's truth. Context matters when it comes to understanding and applying God's Word in our lives. We have to be careful to avoid the temptation to twist God's Word to fit our own ideas and agendas.

Worshipping God (Matt. 4:8-11)

8 Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. **9** And he said to him, “I will give you all these things if you will fall down and worship me.” **10** Then Jesus told him, “Go away, Satan! For it is written: Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.” **11** Then the devil left him, and angels came and began to serve him.

(v. 8) Satan **again** tried to tempt Jesus into leaving the Father’s path. The scene shifted from the pinnacle of the temple **to a very high mountain**. The text does not specify the mountain’s location, but not even Mount Everest would have provided a vista from which **all the kingdoms of the world** could be seen at once.

The phrase **the devil . . . showed him** indicates that Satan supernaturally offered a vision of all the nations **and their splendor**. He did not show their squalor or suffering. Rather, he emphasized their wealth and wonders.

(v. 9) This time, the tempter did not appeal to Jesus’s identity as God’s Son or to Scripture. Instead, Satan went to the heart of his goal. The devil did not desire these kingdoms or their inhabitants. He wanted to usurp the place of the Most High God (Isa. 14:14). He offered Jesus **all these things** if Jesus would just **fall down and worship** him.

Scholars agree that Satan has some level of power over the world. He is called “the ruler of this world” (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11) and “the god of this age” (2 Cor. 4:4). However, God holds ultimate power over all the world and beyond.

Satan’s temptation went beyond authority. He offered Jesus a path without the cross. If Christ’s goal was building an earthly kingdom, He could have skipped the suffering and shame of Calvary. However, Jesus was committed to the kingdom of God and the salvation of the human race.

(vv. 10-11) Jesus did not argue with his adversary. He did not need to weigh Satan’s offer. He recognized the father of lies for what he was, and He also knew who He Himself was. He had the authority and used it: **Go away, Satan!**

Once more, Jesus backed up His power with Scripture: **“Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.”** His declaration incorporated the heart of Deuteronomy 6:13 as well as the primary commandments of Exodus 20:2-7. The term “your God” also emphasized that He was Satan’s

God, even though the devil rebelled against God’s lordship. Rather than seeking to be worshiped, Satan should worship God—and will one day.

After this ultimate rebuke, **the devil left him**. Luke’s Gospel affirms that the devil only left Jesus for a while (Luke 4:13). While the Gospels do not share another instance of temptation, we can be sure that Satan continued his assault.

Imagine the heavenly hosts as this scene played out. The **angels** of heaven were poised to intervene at the Father’s command. Later, Jesus reminded His disciples that He could summon legions of angels to His aid (Matt. 26:53). For now, it was enough that they would **serve him**. We do not know the details of this ministry, but the angels did what they were created to do—serve the Son.

Praying Scripture

Matthew 4:10

Spend time praying Scripture using Matthew 4:10. Read the verse, then respond to these questions:

- How does God reveal Himself in this verse?
- How should I respond to what He reveals?

Example: Ask God to help you memorize Scripture so you can reject the temptations of Satan. Thank Him for providing this powerful tool to strengthen your walk with Him.

During the session, invite adults to pray this Scripture, as well. You and the adults in your group can also take advantage of the Explore the Bible Prayer Guide. This QR code also appears on page 19 of the *Personal Study Guide*.



Prayer Guide

Scan here for a weekly prayer guide based on this quarter’s Bible passages.



READ:

APPLICATION POINT: We must acknowledge God alone as worthy of our worship.

Direct the group to read Matthew 4:8-11 silently to identify the third temptation of Jesus and to summarize it in a single word or phrase.

RECAP:

Encourage volunteers to share their responses from the reading. Briefly discuss Satan's authority to make this offer. Summarize this content from page 17 of the PSG:

"[Satan] showed Jesus all the kingdoms of the world. These kingdoms represent all that Satan controlled—the governments, the economies, and world systems that God allows Satan to rule. Their splendor would represent that which was glitzy and appealing about all the worldly things these kingdoms possessed. These would be Satan's to give since he was the 'ruler of this world' (John 12:31)."

SHARE:

Remind adults that Satan was offering kingdoms that will belong to Jesus one day anyway, according to Revelation 11:15. Highlight that the real issue was not authority over kingdoms, but becoming King without the suffering of the cross.

PRAY:

Note that Jesus again used Scripture to defeat Satan. Distribute copies of **Pack Item 9** (*Handout: Praying Scripture in Matthew's Gospel*) and encourage adults to reflect on how they can pray the truth of Matthew 4:10 using the prayer prompts on page 24 of the Leader Guide.

ASK:

What challenges our worship of God alone? How can we overcome those challenges? (PSG, p. 18)

Group Activity Option

Object Lesson: Money

Display a \$50 or \$100 bill on a table in front of the group. Note that this is not a huge amount of money, but it does represent a few hours of hard work for many people. Ask: ***What would you give up for this money?*** Suggest things like skipping a worship service or abandoning a plan to check on a sick neighbor. Remind adults that nothing should stand in the way of our walk with Jesus. Affirm that temptations and distractions take forms other than money, but our hearts should be devoted to God completely. Challenge adults to examine their lives for anything that might be drawing their hearts away from worshiping God and serving Him only.

CHALLENGE

REVIEW:

Review these points from Apply the Text on page 19 of the *Personal Study Guide*:

- *Believers are called to demonstrate obedience through baptism by immersion.*
- *We can rely on Scripture to find strength and resist temptation.*
- *We can trust God's faithfulness without demanding miracles.*
- *We must acknowledge God alone as worthy of our worship.*

ENCOURAGE:

Emphasize that baptism is the first step of obedience after salvation and that if anyone has questions you are available to talk with them. Also, remind adults that Scripture memory is a vital tool for fighting temptation. Suggest they reflect on the first set of questions (PSG, p. 19) during the week and consider how they can encourage one another to resist temptation.

RESPOND:

Draw attention to the second set of questions on page 19 of the PSG. Encourage them to consider how they can begin memorizing Scripture more effectively. Remind them that they can start with this session's memory verse, Matthew 3:17.

PRAY:

Encourage adults to continue using **Pack Item 9** (*Handout: Praying Scripture in Matthew's Gospel*) to pray through this session's passages. Close the session in prayer, asking God to help adults move forward in obedience and to rely on the power of Scripture each day.

AFTER THE SESSION

Email or text the group and share that you are praying for them this week. Remind them that while this session largely focused on using Scripture to fight temptation, a well-rounded Christian also uses it proactively. Consider praying Philemon 6 for the group: "I pray that your participation in the faith may become effective through knowing every good thing that is in us for the glory of Christ."

LEADER EXTRAS



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EXPLORE  THE BIBLE.

Titles of Christ in the Gospels

The Gospels contain two classes of titles: those that go back to Jesus Himself and those that are applied to Him by others. There is considerable scholarly discussion about the exact nature of the first group, but the evidence of Scripture must be allowed to speak for itself. Jesus used certain titles for Himself and allowed His followers to refer to Him in certain ways. From these, we gain insight into how He understood Himself and His mission.

SON OF MAN

This is Jesus's favorite self-designation. It originated in the Old Testament (Dan. 7:13-14), was used during the intertestamental period, and was chosen by Jesus to define his messianic mission. It was serviceable because it had messianic overtones.

It also was sufficiently fluid to allow Jesus to inject His own meaning to it. He needed to do this because the idea of messiahship in His day was that of a military hero who would come to conquer the Romans and reestablish the throne of David in Israel. Instead, Jesus came to be the Savior of the world.

Jesus used the title "Son of Man" in four different ways. First, He frequently used it as a synonym for "I." Jesus was simply referring to Himself by that title (see Matt. 26:24). Second, the Son of Man is one who exercises divine authority (see Matt. 9:6). Third, the Son of Man fulfills His earthly mission through His death and resurrection (see Matt. 12:40; 17:9,12,23). Fourth, the Son

of Man will return in great glory one day to establish His glorious kingdom (see Matt. 16:27-28; 19:28). In this way, Jesus cut through the conventional wisdom of first-century Jewish culture and accurately defined who He, the messianic Son of Man, actually is.

SON, SON OF GOD, ONLY SON

"Son of God," or "Son" for short, was also a messianic title derived from the Old Testament (2 Sam. 7:11-16). It assumes more an exalted status, however, when it is used by or about Jesus. In fact, it means that Jesus possesses the qualities of the divine nature. It affirms that He is God.

This was quite evident when the heavenly voice cried out to Jesus at His baptism, stating that He was beloved and well pleasing (Matt. 3:16-17). It also was an affirmation reiterated at Jesus's transfiguration (Mark 9:7). While Jesus became completely human from the moment of the incarnation, He never surrendered His deity. He was, is, and ever will be the Son of God.

Jesus's own understanding of His unique relationship to God as Son is reflected in Matthew 11:25-27 and Luke 10:21-22. Jesus expressed the same idea when confounding the Pharisees (Matt. 22:41-46). In the Gospel of John, Jesus is referred to as God's "one and only Son" (John 3:16), a term that means "one of a kind" or "unique."

“He was, is, and ever will be the Son of God.”

LORD

This was a title of human honor used of Jesus, the equivalent of “Master” or “Sir.” However, we can see lurking in it something of greater significance (Matt. 8:5-13; Mark 2:23-28). In Judaism, “Lord” had become the word pronounced when the personal name Yahweh appeared in Scripture. Thus, “Lord” meant “God.” Later, the church used it to mean that Jesus was nothing less than God by virtue of His death and resurrection.

CHRIST (MESSIAH)

Jesus was reluctant to acknowledge this title publicly because, as noted, popular misconceptions about the Messiah abounded in first century Jewish life, centering on a king to rule on David’s throne. Under the proper circumstances, however, He was willing to confess that He was indeed God’s Anointed One (Matt. 16:13-20; 26:62-64; John 4:25-26).

This title was used so commonly later on in the church that it virtually became another name for Jesus. “Jesus the Christ” simply became “Jesus Christ.” (As an example of the shifting use of names and titles, see 2 Cor. 12.)

THE WORD

In the Gospels, this title is found in John (1:1-14). The expression “word of God” is common in both the Old and New Testaments as defining how God expressed Himself and what the content of that communication was.

When referring to Jesus, it makes the self-revelation of God personal. Jesus as the Word of God supremely reveals who God is. If we would know God, we simply need to look at Jesus, the very expression (Word) of God. As Jesus explained to His disciples, “the one who has seen me has seen the Father” (John 14:9).

SAVIOR

It is self-evident in the Old Testament that just as there is only one God, so there is only one Savior (Isa. 43:3,11; 45:21). This is also true in the New Testament (1 Tim. 2:3; 4:10; Titus 1:3; 2:10). It is all the more significant, then, that Jesus is announced as the Savior of Israel (Luke 2:11) and the world (John 4:42) in the Gospels. Jesus was understood to be divine redemption incarnate and was proclaimed as such by the early church (Acts 5:31; 13:23; 1 John 4:14).

HOLY ONE OF GOD

This is a term used of Jesus specifically by demons and emphasizes Him as the One who is pure and holy (Mark 1:24; Luke 4:34; John 6:69). As such, He sealed their doom in that He is wholly righteous, while they are wholly evil. It identified Jesus with the Holy God (see Isa. 6).

SON OF DAVID

Son of David is a messianic title frequently used to refer to Jesus in the Gospels (Matt. 1:1; 9:27; 15:22; 20:30-31; 21:9,15). The title expresses hope. The Son of David, who was greater than David (22:41-45), would bring deliverance for those living hopelessly in bondage.

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