



Every Life Valued

Session 7 • Matthew 8:1-4,14-17; 9:1-8



ENGAGE

PREPARE: Display **Pack Item 1** (*Map: Jesus's Ministry Around Galilee*) on a focal wall. Make copies of **Pack Item 12** (*Handout: Miracles in Matthew 8–9*).

READ: Call on a volunteer to read the opening paragraph on page 65.

ASK: What are some things that make people feel valued? What might make them feel undervalued? (p. 65)

CONTEXT: Share that Jesus revealed His love and concern for all people through His teaching and His healing. Summarize this information from **Understand the Context** (p. 65) to share how Matthew focused on these two aspects of Jesus's ministry:

- “Matthew’s Gospel is organized around two major activities of Jesus—teaching and healing. An example of that organization is found in Matthew 4:23–9:35. . . . [This passage] first gives to us a body of teaching called the Sermon on the Mount (5:1–7:29). Next, comes the healing ministry of Jesus, beginning in 8:1.”

EXPLAIN: Note that the miracles in chapter 8 and 9 illustrate Jesus's authority over illness, creation, demons, and even

sin. Emphasize that, ultimately, the miracles revealed Jesus's heart for people.

STATE: *This session supports the sanctity of all human life. This was a principle Matthew understood because he saw Jesus value life at every turn. His Gospel also challenges us to imitate Jesus's attitude. It might be an unborn child, someone with a mental or physical illness, one marginalized by cultural stereotypes, or an elderly man or woman who needs a friend. Whatever the specifics, we are called to love them as Jesus demonstrated His love in passages like Matthew 8.*

EXPLORE THE TEXT

DISTRIBUTE: Provide the group with copies of **Pack Item 12** (*Handout: Miracles in Matthew 8–9*) and draw attention to the healing miracles performed by Jesus.

READ: Instruct the group to read Matthew 8:1-4 silently and to underline what the leper said and circle what Jesus did. Encourage volunteers to share what they know about leprosy.

EXPLAIN: To provide more information on what the man's ailment might have been, share the following information:

- **(8:2)** *The Greek word translated “leprosy” could refer to a number of serious skin diseases in addition to Hansen’s disease, which is usually called leprosy today. The Old Testament law required that a person with this skin disease live separated from normal society, outside the village. He was to wear torn clothes and unkempt hair. In addition, the leper was required to cry out “Unclean, unclean” when anyone approached him (Lev. 13:45-46).*

ASK: Based on this information, why is it significant that the man approached Jesus and that Jesus touched him?

EXPLAIN: Highlight Jesus’s compassion in touching the man and how his healing was immediate. Explain the law’s requirements to declare healing.

- **(8:4)** Jesus commanded him, “Don’t tell anyone.” Jesus often told people not to talk about His healing miracles because it could hinder His ability to share the message of the kingdom. Jesus’s admonition was not intended to keep the healing a secret, but to follow the law’s procedure. To be declared clean, the man had to “show yourself” to the priest. Priests were tasked with diagnosing skin diseases and confirming the cure. The man also needed to offer “the gift that Moses commanded” (see Lev. 13-15). Obediently following God’s directions would be a “testimony” to the priests and the community at large.

ASK: Who are the outcasts in our society and what are some typical reactions to them? (p. 67)

READ: Read **Matthew 8:14-17** as the group identifies the actions of Jesus and those He healed.

SAY: *The individuals healed in this passage also would be considered persons of little reputation or held in low regard.*

RECAP: To emphasize how Jesus’s care and compassion continued to shatter the norms established by society, summarize the following information.

- **(8:14-15)** In addition to the leper’s healing, chapter 8 records the healings of a Roman centurion’s servant and Peter’s mother-in-law. Matthew’s narrative of these healings illustrates Jesus’s compassion toward those who might have been considered second-class citizens in Jewish society. Certainly, the leper was an outcast. The servant of a Gentile centurion would be considered to have little value as a person. The same would be true for his master, the centurion. Finally, Peter’s mother-in-law belonged to another category of second-class people in that society—women.

EXAMINE: Divide the group into an even number of teams. Each team should have two or three people. Give them the following directions:

- Instruct half the groups to read and reflect on Matthew 8:16. Discuss why individuals brought people at night and how Jesus responded to those brought to Him.
- Instruct half the groups to read and reflect on Matthew 8:17. Discuss the significance of Jesus fulfilling the prophecies of Isaiah.

EXPLAIN: After a few minutes, allow the teams to report on their work. Highlight how Matthew was proving Jesus's role as the Messiah through both the authority of miraculous healings and the fulfillment of prophecy.

ASK: In what ways can we show that we value the most vulnerable members of society? How do these verses in Matthew provide a model for us? (p. 67)

READ: Direct the group to read Matthew 9:1-8 silently and to identify the various attitudes displayed. After a few minutes, allow volunteers to list the different people mentioned in the passage and the attitude or emotion that best describes each one.

CONTEXT: Enlist two adults to read accounts from Mark 2:4 and Luke 5:19. Discuss similarities and differences in the narratives. Highlight the men's faith in tearing up the roof to help their friend. Share that many scholars believe this was Peter's house.

EXAMINE: Why do you think Jesus addressed spiritual needs before He addressed physical needs? (p. 67)

RECAP: Note that the religious leaders had a different response. Explain their reaction. They were convinced Jesus was usurping a function that belonged only to God. They refused to believe Jesus was God.

STATE: *Jesus proved His authority to forgive sins by demonstrating His authority to heal physical disabilities. As God, He has the power to do both. And He is willing to meet every need because He cares about every human life.*

CHALLENGE

GUIDE: Create a list of those in your community who might be considered outcasts or of lesser value as directed in the **Apply the Text** suggestion on page 67. Plan a group project that will allow adults to minister to these individuals in a meaningful way. Suggest they reflect on the **Apply the Text** suggestion from page 71 during the week.

PRAY: Close the session in prayer, thanking God for the gift of each human life. Ask Him to impress that value on the heart of each person as they seek ways to serve as His hands and feet in the world.

AFTER THE SESSION

Text or email the group, encouraging them to do some deeper soul searching as they consider the sanctity of human life. Remind them to read and reflect on the **Apply the Text** suggestion from page 71. Let them know that you are praying for them as they seek to become more like Jesus in the area of honoring the sanctity of all human life.