



EXPLORE **THE BIBLE.**
Adults

Matthew 14–28

QuickSource

Spring 2026



WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS

If you're an adult of a particular generation, you'll probably remember a toy called The Magic 8 Ball™. For those who aren't as familiar, this was a foolproof tool for getting answers to any questions about the future . . . sort of.

In one sense, the 8 Ball guaranteed you an answer to every question. If you asked about your future spouse or whether you were going to pass your history test, the 8 Ball had an answer. The problem was that the Magic 8 Ball carried about as much prophetic authority as a fortune cookie. At best, the answers were vague. At worst, they were irrelevant.

Then again, it was designed for entertainment. No one with a modicum of sense would entrust their future to an oversized pool ball.

Of course, human nature still longs to know what's ahead. Whether we're thinking about this life or the next, we seek clarity. We want to see what's just around the bend.

Jesus understood that. That's why He often talked with His disciples about what would happen in the short term and in the distant future. Throughout the Gospels, including Matthew's Gospel, Jesus reminded His followers that He holds the future. He is God. He loves us more than we can imagine. He remains in control, and His people can trust Him.

Jesus might not give you every answer you've ever wanted, but He has promised to give you peace for today, tomorrow, and eternity. That starts with a personal relationship with Him. If you're seeking answers to the most important questions in life, 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.

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*Evangelistic Emphasis

MEET THE WRITERS



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HOW TO USE QUICKSOURCE

Using **QuickSource** as your primary resource for preparing to lead a small Bible study group (with the group using the **Personal Study Guide**).

1. Read the core passage, using the Key Words as a quick commentary on the passage.

2. Review the outline under Talking Points (page two of each session) to organize your thoughts and identify the key points in the passage.

Tip: Record your notes on this second page, giving you a way to remember insights gained.

3. Review the questions with response prompts on the Discussion Plan page (page three of each session), recording your response to the questions as you do so.

Some questions/prompts are included in the *Explore the Bible Personal Study Guide*. The corresponding PSG page numbers for these questions are noted. These page numbers correlate to the regular print version of the PSG and may differ from large print versions. The prompts are adapted from the comments in the *Personal Study Guide*.

Tip: Additional “Bonus” questions are also provided in the Discussion Plan, along with the For Further Discussion QR codes. These extra questions are found only in *QuickSource*.

4. Consider ways of using the Bible Skill and Object Lesson ideas to lead your group.

Look for ways of using these ideas, in addition to the questions included on the Discussion Plan page.

5. Read the Dig Deeper feature (page four of each session), looking for ways of using that information when leading the group.

The information found in the Dig Deeper feature is available only in *QuickSource*.

6. Review and refine.

- Add transition ideas to move from one question to the next.
- Consult the *Explore the Bible* Extra page (goExploreTheBible.com/leaderextras) for an idea about using a current news event to begin and end the group time.
- Listen to the weekly *Explore the Bible* adult podcast to gain insights about this study. The podcast can be found on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, Google Podcasts, goExploreTheBible.com/adults-training, or on MinistryGrid (MinistryGrid.com/ExploreTheBible).

7. Gather the items needed to lead the group.

If you plan on using a visual from the *Explore the Bible Leader Pack* or creating your own (see p. 65 for a listing of items and suggested sessions for using them), do so early in the week. Be sure to have extra copies of the *Personal Study Guide* on hand to be given to guests.

8. Arrive early.

The group time starts when the first person arrives. Make sure you are that person so you can set the tone and direction for the group Bible study time.

9. Lead the group in a time of Bible study, following your plan.

10. Evaluate the group time.

Note what you learned about the people in the group as well as things you may need to work on to improve as a teacher. Also make sure any follow-up actions promised to the group are carried out.

USING AS A SUPPLEMENT.

Leader Guide + QuickSource

As a supplement to the *Explore the Bible Adult Leader Guide*.

After completing your study using the commentary provided in the *Explore the Bible Leader Guide*, consult the Key Words section, the Talking Points page, and the Dig Deeper feature for additional insight or as a review. Reflect on the “Bonus” questions in the Discussion Plan and the extra questions provided in For Further Discussion, and add those to your plan as appropriate.

Daily Discipleship Guide + QuickSource

As a supplement to the *Leader Helps in the Explore the Bible Adult Daily Discipleship Guide*.

Look at the Key Words section to identify additional key words not included in the *Daily Discipleship Guide*, the Talking Points page, and the Dig Deeper feature for additional insight or as a review. Reflect on the “Bonus” questions in the Discussion Plan and the extra questions provided in For Further Discussion, and add those to your plan as appropriate.

BIBLICAL BACKGROUND

Matthew's Gospel is the longest book in the New Testament. Nowhere does the writer of this Gospel identify himself by name, but Matthew's human authorship was universally affirmed in the early church.

Author: Matthew's name appears in every list of Jesus's apostles (Matt. 10:3; Mark 3:18; Luke 6:15; Acts 1:13). According to his own account, he had been a tax collector when Jesus called him (Matt. 9:9). Both Mark and Luke identify him as Levi (Mark 2:14; Luke 5:27), the man who made a great feast for Jesus and invited many fellow tax collectors and other "sinners" as his guests (Luke 5:29; see also Matt. 9:10; Mark 2:15). We don't know what happened to Matthew after Acts 1, but church tradition claims he traveled extensively in the Middle East and eventually suffered martyrdom in Ethiopia.

Recipients: That Matthew wrote for a Jewish audience of believers has been claimed since the end of the second century. The early church asserted that Matthew was written to a primarily Jewish audience with a particular emphasis on proving Christ was the Messiah, the awaited descendant of David.

Date: Many Bible students believe Matthew, inspired by God's Spirit, depended on Mark's Gospel as a source and place its writing in the 80s or 90s. However, Irenaeus stated that Matthew issued his Gospel "while Peter and Paul were preaching at Rome." This would place the writing closer to the early 60s.¹

Structure: Bible students offer two main suggestions as to how Matthew structured his Gospel. The first focuses on the five discourses of Jesus (Matt. 5-7; 10; 13; 18; 24-25). Each culminates with a statement that Jesus had finished His teaching. These statements separate His discourses from the Gospel's narratives (7:28; 11:1; 13:53; 19:1; 26:1).

A second option is geographical, moving from north to south. This structure begins with Jesus's Galilean ministry and the

northern areas beyond it (4:12-19:1) and moves toward Jerusalem (19:2-20:34). It concludes with His final days in Jerusalem (21:1-28:15) before His appearing back in Galilee as the risen Lord (28:16-20).

This quarter's sessions include the close of Jesus's Galilean ministry, His fourth and fifth discourses, and His journey to Jerusalem. These chapters consider His activities during Holy Week—including His trials, crucifixion, and resurrection. Matthew also described His commission to make disciples of all nations.

JESUS'S TITLES:

Christ/Messiah: In his Gospel's opening line, Matthew identified Jesus as the "Christ" (the Greek word for "Messiah"). He repeated this title at the end of Jesus's genealogy (1:16-18; 2:4). The Messiah was God's "Anointed One" (Dan. 9:25-26; Ps. 2:2), and Peter boldly identified Jesus as "the Messiah, the Son of the living God" (Matt. 16:16), which Jesus confirmed in 16:20. At His trial, the high priest ordered Jesus under oath, "Tell us if you are the Messiah, the Son of God" (26:63). In both of these passages, Matthew linked Jesus to the titles Messiah/Christ and Son of God.

Son of David: Matthew also used this royal and messianic title in his opening verse. It connects Jesus to the covenant of 2 Samuel 7:16,25-26, where God promised that a descendant of David would rule over an eternal kingdom. Those who sought healing often addressed Jesus by this title (Matt. 9:27; 12:23; 15:22; 20:30-31), along with those who praised His arrival in Jerusalem (21:9). In 22:41-45, Jesus tied together the titles "Messiah," "Son of David," and "Lord" in emphasizing that He was greater than David.

King: When the wise men sought Jesus, they asked for the "king of the Jews" (2:2). When Jesus entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday it was in fulfillment of Isaiah 62:11—"Your King is coming to you" (Matt. 21:5). Pilate asked Jesus if He was the King of the



Jews (27:11), and the soldiers and the religious leaders mockingly acknowledged such in 27:29,42. At the crucifixion, a placard for all to see proclaimed Jesus was King (27:37).

Son of God: Matthew used this title eight times. At Jesus's baptism (3:17) and transfiguration (17:5), the Father acknowledged Him as the Son. Satan challenged the title (4:3,6), but both demons (8:29) and His disciples (14:33) affirmed it. Both Peter (16:16) and Caiaphas (26:63) link the title to that of Messiah. Matthew ended the crucifixion narrative with a Gentile centurion confessing Him as the Son of God (27:54).

Lord: Matthew repeatedly applied the divine title of Yahweh (LORD) from the Old Testament to Jesus. He began with John the Baptist preparing the Lord's way (3:3). In Matthew 7:21-22, everyone's entrance into the kingdom of heaven is based on Jesus's judgment as Lord. He also declared Himself to be "Lord of the Sabbath" (12:8) and referred to His future return as the coming of the Lord (24:42).

Son of Man: Jesus called Himself "Son of Man" thirty times in Matthew's Gospel. Initially associated with the prophecies of Daniel (Dan. 7:13-14), He used it to claim the authority to forgive sins (Matt. 9:6) and to explain how He would sacrifice His life as a ransom (20:28). He is "seated at the right hand of Power" (26:64) and will return as Judge of all people (13:41; 16:27-28; 24:27,30,37,39; 25:31; 26:64). The title stresses Jesus's humanity, deity, and authority all at the same time.

MAJOR THEMES:

Kingdom of Heaven: God's kingdom stands out as a major theme in Matthew. The phrase occurs more than thirty times and emphasizes that Jesus's reign was not of this world (see John 18:36). The kingdom was the heart of John the Baptist's call for repentance (Matt. 3:2), as well as Jesus's own message (4:17,23; 9:35) and the message of His apostles (10:7; 24:14).

"Kingdom of heaven" starts and ends the Beatitudes (5:3,10) and provides the foundation for believers to live out the Christian ethic in practical terms. The growth of the kingdom is assured, despite opposition. But the kingdom also demands vigilance (25:1-13). Matthew 13 records eight parables that help Jesus's followers understand the kingdom better. He added another kingdom parable in 18:21-35 and seven more in chapters 20-25.

Fulfillment of Scripture: Matthew recorded about fifty direct quotations from the Old Testament, plus numerous other allusions to it. Many of these are observed in the ten different formulas Matthew used to introduce Old Testament quotations, all of which contain the Greek verb for "fulfill" (*pleroo*). In other cases, Jesus referred to the fulfillment of Scripture Himself (13:14; 26:54,56).

Every Scripture was fulfilled because the prophecies were of divine origin. They either came "by" (*hupo*) the Lord or "through" (*dia*) a prophet speaking for God. All of this emphasized that what happened to Jesus was not the result of circumstances or unforeseen events. God was in control of the human events regardless of the choices and schemes of humans.

Summary: Matthew began his Gospel with an emphasis on worshiping Jesus—by the wise men in Matthew 2:2,11—and closed it with worship of the risen Jesus by the women (28:9) and by the eleven disciples (28:17). This is the response every reader of Matthew's Gospel should have after encountering Jesus as the Messiah, Son of God, and Lord.

1. Roberts, Alexander and Donaldson, James, eds. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: The Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325. Vol. 1: The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus.* William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1973 [1867/1885]; McGiffert, Arthur Cushman, translator. *The Church History of Eusebius, in vol. 1: A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, second series.* William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1976 [1890].



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)

Courage

JESUS IS GREATER THAN ANYTHING WE FEAR.

Matthew 14:22-33

22 Immediately **A** he made the disciples get into the **boat** **B** and go ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. **23** After dismissing the crowds, he went up on the mountain **by himself to pray** **C**. Well into the night, he was there alone. **24** Meanwhile, the boat was already **some distance** **D** from land, battered by the waves, because the wind was against them. **25** Jesus came toward them walking on the sea **very early** **E** in the morning. **26** When the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were **terrified**. **F** “It’s a **ghost!**” **G** they said, and they cried out in fear. **27** Immediately Jesus spoke to them. “Have courage! **It is I.** **H** Don’t be afraid.” **28** “Lord, **if it’s you,**” **I** Peter answered him, “command me to come to you on the water.” **29** He said, “Come.” And climbing out of the boat, Peter started walking on the water and came toward Jesus. **30** But when he saw the **strength of the wind**, **J** he was afraid, and beginning to sink he cried out, “Lord, save me!” **31** Immediately Jesus reached out his hand, caught hold of him, and said to him, “You of **little faith**, **K** why did you doubt?” **32** When they got into the boat, the wind ceased. **33** Then those in the boat **worshiped him** **L** and said, “Truly you are the Son of God.”

Exploring Key Words

- A** After He fed the multitude, they wanted to crown Jesus king (John 6:15). So, He quickly dismissed His disciples and the crowd (Matt. 14:23).
- B** “Ship” (KJV). Probably a Galilean fishing boat, which could be as long as 30 feet and could have held several people.
- C** Matthew emphasized that Jesus retreated to be alone with God. This was a common practice for Him (Mark 1:35; Luke 5:15-16; 6:12-13).
- D** Literally, “many stadia.” A stadion measured about 600 feet. John 6:19 says the disciples had already rowed three or four miles, leaving them at least a mile from the far shore.
- E** “Fourth watch” (KJV; ESV); “Shortly before dawn” (NIV). Romans divided the day into four watches. The fourth watch was 3–6 a.m.
- F** Mental confusion, emotional turmoil, or spiritual agitation. The disciples’ fear and confusion can be traced to thinking Jesus was a ghost.
- G** A spirit or possibly an angel. Since the disciples had no reference for walking on water, their conclusion would make sense in their culture.
- H** Related to “I am,” God’s covenant name to Israel (Ex. 3:14). Jesus was revealing Himself as God.
- I** In Greek, the conditional “if” can mean “since.” This conveys a measure of faith on Peter’s part. Jesus responded by inviting him to come (v. 29).
- J** Peter lost focus, taking his eyes off Jesus and putting them on his circumstances.
- K** Matthew often used this phrase in the context of crisis (Matt. 6:30; 8:26; 16:8). Peter believed in Jesus, but he lacked faith in the face of the winds and waves swirling around him.
- L** Worship represents the only proper response to seeing Jesus’s power and presence.



TALKING POINTS

NOTES

Jesus's Presence (Matt. 14:22-27)

- After feeding the multitudes, Jesus sent His disciples off in a boat while He went up onto a mountain to pray.
- During the night, the boat was caught in a storm on the Sea of Galilee. Jesus approached His disciples, walking on the water.

Jesus's Invitation (Matt. 14:28-30)

- Peter asked Jesus if He could leave the boat and walk on the water with Him. Jesus invited Peter to join Him in walking on the water.
- As Peter began moving toward Jesus, the winds and waves caused fear. With his faith wavering, Peter started to sink. He cried out to the Lord for help.

Jesus's Response (Matt. 14:31-33)

- Jesus caught Peter and brought him back to the boat with the others. He questioned Peter's lack of faith.
- As soon as Jesus entered the boat, the storm stopped. This led the disciples to worship Him as the Son of God.

Summary Statements

Jesus is greater than anything we fear.

- We can trust Jesus to walk with us in the storms of life.
- When Jesus issues an invitation, we can step out with confidence knowing that He is with us.
- Jesus's power should lead us to worship Him.

Memory Verse

Matthew 14:27

Key Doctrine

God the Son

Christ is the eternal Son of God. (See John 1:1; Philippians 2:5-8.)



For additional commentary, see the Leader Guide or Adult Commentary, available for purchase at [goExploreTheBible.com](https://www.goExploreTheBible.com).

DISCUSSION PLAN

ENGAGE

What do you consider to be your biggest fears? (PSG, p. 9)

- Fear is a powerful foe that hinders us from progressing in life.
- Listen to people around you and you will hear any number of fears mentioned. Many people are terrified at the idea of public speaking. Others have fears of heights, failure, the dark, crowds, spiders, and snakes. Personal fears include injury and illness.
- Our fears impact our thinking, relating, and acting. Fear influences all aspects of life. Dealing with fear correctly is essential for a well-balanced life.

Bonus: How do you respond to fear? Why?

EXPLORE

JESUS'S PRESENCE (MATT. 14:22-27)

Bonus: How do you feel about storms? What unsettles you most about them?

- Jesus urged His disciples to get into a boat and leave for the other side of the Sea of Galilee. His urgency was related to the crowd's growing desire to make Him a king. He didn't want His followers caught up in that fervor.
- Then, He went up to a mountain to pray. Prayer was a regular part of Jesus's life. Despite His need for rest, Jesus prayed long into the night.
- Meanwhile, a storm had hit the disciples on the sea. The wind was against them, and they were still "some distance from land."
- Early in the morning, Jesus came to them walking on the water. The terrified disciples panicked, thinking He was a ghost. This was an understandable conclusion since humans walking on water seemed impossible.
- Jesus sought to allay their fears by telling them to "have courage." The phrase "It is I" reflects the divine name for God (Ex. 3:14), meaning Jesus was declaring His deity.

When has Jesus's presence been especially meaningful to you? (PSG, p. 13)

JESUS'S INVITATION (MATT. 14:28-30)

Bonus: What's the craziest thing you've ever tried? How did it work out for you?

Bonus: What are some things that easily distract you? Why?

- As soon as Peter heard Jesus's voice, he wanted to do what Jesus was doing. The phrase "if it's you" does not express uncertainty. The original Greek actually means "since it's you." Peter was willing to take a risk to be like Jesus.

- Jesus commanded Peter to "come," rewarding his devotion. Initially, the water supported Peter as he walked toward Jesus. But he soon realized that the situation outside the boat was radically different from inside the boat.
- Distracted by the wind and waves, his confidence was shaken, and he began to sink. To his credit, Peter knew enough to call out to Jesus for help.

What step of faith are you prayerfully considering right now? (PSG, p. 14)

JESUS'S RESPONSE (MATT. 14:31-33)

Bonus: Who are some people you trust without reservation? How have those people earned your trust over time?

- Jesus immediately rescued Peter, but He also asked why the disciple had demonstrated such "little faith." The word "doubt" pictures a person being pulled in two directions. In this case, Peter was caught in a tug-of-war between intense loyalty to Jesus and terror about the storm.
- Calm occurred the moment Peter and Jesus got into the boat. The presence of Jesus in the boat most likely calmed the storm in the hearts of the disciples as well. As the boat suddenly reached its destination, the disciples responded by worshiping Jesus. This is the first time they acknowledged Him as the "Son of God."

How do you tend to respond to Jesus's power when you experience it? (PSG, p. 16)

CHALLENGE

As a group, spend time in prayer, giving fears to Jesus and asking for His power to prevail over those fears.

How might the presence and power of Jesus allay those fears? (PSG, p. 17)

Challenge adults to consider what it means to fear the Lord rather than fearing the storms and difficulties of life.

How can you build "fear of the Lord" into the daily routine of your life? Take time to memorize Matthew 14:27 and use that verse in prayer when you are confronted with fear. (PSG, p. 17)

FURTHER DISCUSSION



Scan here for additional discussion questions for this week's study.

BIBLE SKILL (PSG, P. 16)

Examine and reflect on similarities between two passages.

Look for similarities between the event in Matthew 14:22-33 and Matthew 8:23-27. Then look for differences between the two events. Explain why you can be certain these were two different events.

Group adults into teams of two or three. Direct them to work in their teams to complete the Bible Skill activity on page 16 of the PSG. After a few minutes, enlist one adult to read Matthew 8:23-27 and another to read Matthew 14:22-33. Allow volunteers to share what they discussed in their groups.

Point out that while the events are different, they both demonstrate some common things about Jesus. Emphasize His authority over nature and His ability to calm the fears of those who put their trust in Him.

OBJECT LESSON: BOAT

Bring a toy boat or a picture of a boat from home. Allow a volunteer to summarize Matthew 14:28-30. Direct attention to the Key Word B on page 9 and explain that the disciples were probably in a large fishing boat. Remind adults that many of the disciples were fishermen and had faced similar storms in the past.

Talk about the differences between life inside the boat and life outside the boat. Encourage adults to consider a parallel to their own lives. Say: *The boat might represent a comfortable home, community, or job. It will be different for each person, but we all have “boats” that become security blankets for us.* Point out that, sometimes, Jesus calls us to leave the boat and walk in faith through the storm.

If appropriate, share a time when Jesus challenged you to leave your “comfort zone” and step out in faith. Challenge adults to trust and worship Jesus no matter how chaotic the storms around them might seem.

LITTLE FAITH?

Let’s give Peter his due: He got out of the boat. Once he heard Jesus’s voice, he made the audacious request to join Him on the water. Most people would have been more comfortable begging Jesus to get into the boat with them than asking to stroll on the surf.

After Peter’s first faith-filled steps, though, he took his eyes off Jesus and put them on the wind and waves swirling around him (Matt. 14:28-30). Jesus’s criticism of his “little faith” can leave us wondering if we simply need more faith when our world gets chaotic. Maybe in the midst of a storm in your life you’ve asked yourself, “Am I trusting Jesus enough?”

Thankfully, Jesus really doesn’t call us to have more faith. Instead, He calls us to fix the faith we do have on Him. Said another way, the *size* of your faith is not nearly as important as the *object* of your faith. This is why Jesus would later tell His followers that mustard seed-sized faith can move mountains (17:20).

Since the object of our faith is what matters most, we can strengthen our faith best by considering Jesus’s character, work, and presence. First, His character is

trustworthy, faithful, and gracious. Like Peter, when we know who Jesus is, we are willing to go wherever He goes and do whatever He tells us. Second, His work reminds us of His finished work on the cross and in His resurrection. Our sins are forgiven. We are given new life now and promised eternal life to come. Finally, Jesus’s presence through the Holy Spirit strengthens us to continue walking by faith. When the storms of life surround us, we can be confident that we are not alone. God is with us, and He can be trusted.

When our circumstances discourage, distract, or overwhelm us, we can take comfort in knowing that we don’t need to muster up more faith. We only need to look to Jesus. Hebrews 12:2 tells us that we walk by faith by “keeping our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith.”

Real Devotion

JESUS REJECTS SUPERFICIAL RELIGION.

Matthew 15:1-11,16-20

1 Then Jesus was approached by **Pharisees** **A** and **scribes** **B** from Jerusalem, who asked, 2 “Why do your disciples break the **tradition of the elders?** **C** For they don’t **wash their hands** **D** when they eat.” 3 He answered them, “Why do you break **God’s commandment** **E** because of your tradition? 4 For God said: Honor your father and your mother; and, Whoever **speaks evil** **F** of father or mother must be put to death. 5 But you say, ‘Whoever tells his father or mother, “Whatever benefit you might have received from me is a **gift** **G** committed to the temple,” 6 he does not have to honor his father.’ In this way, you have **nullified** **H** the word of God because of your tradition. 7 **Hypocrites!** **I** Isaiah prophesied correctly about you when he said: 8 This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. 9 They worship me **in vain**, **J** teaching as doctrines human commands.” 10 Summoning the crowd, he told them, “Listen and understand: 11 It’s not what goes into the mouth that **defiles** **K** a person, but what comes out of the mouth—this defiles a person. [. . .] 16 Do you still lack understanding?” he asked. 17 “Don’t you realize that whatever goes into the mouth passes into the stomach and is eliminated? 18 But what comes out of the mouth comes **from the heart**, **L** and this defiles a person. 19 For from the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, sexual immoralities, thefts, false testimonies, slander. 20 These are the things that defile a person; but eating with unwashed hands does not defile a person.”

Exploring Key Words

- A** A large and highly influential religious group in ancient Israel. Pharisees regularly challenged Jesus and played a central role in His crucifixion (Matt. 26:62).
- B** Teachers of the law in Israel. Scribes copied, interpreted, and taught the Scriptures.
- C** “Age-old tradition” (NLT). Jewish oral tradition was codified in the Mishnah with instructions for various ceremonies.
- D** This washing was a matter of ceremonial tradition, not personal hygiene. Jesus probably discounted this ritual along with His followers.
- E** Jesus contrasted the Pharisees’ oral traditions with God’s actual laws. As He would point out, some oral traditions actually nullified God’s law.
- F** “Curses” (NIV); “reviles” (ESV). More than disrespect, it implies wishing harm on someone or denouncing one’s relationship with someone.
- G** The practice of “Corban.” Pledging resources to the temple to avoid using it to help others. Jesus specified the support of aging parents.
- H** “None effect” (KJV); “made void” (ESV). The oral traditions of the religious elite set aside the authority of God’s own commands.
- I** Originally a neutral reference to an actor on a stage, it came to refer to duplicity or insincerity.
- J** Implies emptiness, futility, folly. Teaching human ideas as God’s Word is hollow and useless.
- K** Jesus contrasted physical dirt on one’s hands with moral and spiritual defilement of the heart.
- L** The true source of human actions. Jesus emphasized the condition of our hearts apart from God’s grace. This corruption is highlighted by the list of sins in verse 19.



Broken Rules (Matt. 15:1-6)

- A group of religious leaders accused Jesus and His disciples of ignoring the traditions of the elders by not practicing a ceremonial hand washing.
- Jesus pointed out that the religious leaders actually were breaking God's law through Moses by encouraging individuals to set aside resources for the temple instead of using them to support their aging parents. These leaders were choosing to place human traditions over the commands of God.

Lip Service (Matt. 15:7-11)

- Labeling the religious leaders "hypocrites," Jesus described them further by quoting the prophet Isaiah. He noted that they were quick to give God lip service, but their hearts were far from Him.
- Because they cared more about laws of men than of God, they could never understand that true defilement is rooted in a person's heart.

Real Problem (Matt. 15:16-20)

- The religious leaders were concerned primarily with outward behavior, such as eating the right kinds of foods. Jesus emphasized that any food that is consumed passes through our bodies over time.
- In contrast, the attitudes individuals nurture in their hearts will come out in their actions and could lead to sin.

Summary Statements

Jesus rejects superficial religion.

- Honor God's laws above all other rules.
- Pray for your heart to remain close to God.
- Reject superficial religion and focus on what matters most.

Memory Verse

Matthew 15:8-9

Key Doctrine

Salvation

Regeneration is a change of heart wrought by the Holy Spirit through conviction of sin, to which the sinner responds in repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. (See Luke 13:3; John 3:3.)



For additional commentary, see the Leader Guide or Adult Commentary, available for purchase at goExploreTheBible.com.

ENGAGE

What are some things that you demand to be genuine in your life? (PSG, p. 18)

- We tend to like things that are genuine. We generally say no to knockoffs, artificial, or substitute anything.
- Don't give us blended vegetables and call them hamburgers. We've developed an eye for spotting imitation leather and knockoff purses. We like the genuine.
- Likewise, God desires our relationship with Him and the practice of our faith to be genuine.

Bonus: What is the danger of embracing a superficial faith instead of a genuine faith?

EXPLORE

BROKEN RULES (MATT. 15:1-6)

Bonus: What are some obscure rules in sports? Why are they still part of these games?

- In reading the Gospels, we discover that almost every time Jesus healed or taught, representatives from the Pharisees and scribes were present. This was especially true in the latter part of Jesus's ministry in Galilee.
- The Pharisees were the leading religious party in Israel and were strict adherents to the law of Moses. Many of these Pharisees were also scribes who were learned scholars and copyists of the law.
- Their complaint focused on why the disciples (and Jesus) violated the "tradition of the elders" or their man-made interpretations and applications of the law.
- The issue wasn't whether they washed their hands but specifically how they did it and the exact amount of water used. The rules were very precise and cumbersome.
- Jesus ignored the specific criticism concerning hand washing and moved to the heart of the matter. This was an issue of man-made traditions versus the God-given law. Jesus zeroed in on the Jewish practice of "Corban," which involved dedicating resources to the temple treasury so they could not be given to anyone else. Often, this tradition was used to neglect aging parents.

Why is it easy to confuse human rules with God's commands? (PSG, p. 22)

LIP SERVICE (MATT. 15:7-11)

Bonus: When have you acted in a play or musical? How did it feel to "become" that character for a while?

- After detailing how the Pharisees rejected God's law with their man-made traditions, Jesus scathingly denounced them. He called them "hypocrites," a word that means to put on a mask and act out a part. Angrily, Jesus called them two-faced.

- Quoting Isaiah, He said they gave the appearance of a genuine relationship with God, while ignoring God's desires. Their relationship with God was shallow at best and non-existent at worst.
- Turning to His listeners, Jesus explained His condemnation of the Pharisees. He declared that individuals aren't corrupted by the food put into their mouths, but by the words and thoughts that came out of their mouths. Defilement comes from what's inside a person.

What tempts our hearts to drift from God? (PSG, p. 23)

REAL PROBLEM (MATT. 15:16-20)

Why is it important to examine our hearts for sinful attitudes? (PSG, p. 25)

- Peter asked for an explanation of the parable that Jesus had given. Jesus reminded them that food is only physical and does not impact the spiritual.
- The spiritual dimension of life is reflected in the attitudes, motives, and desires of the heart. The words of one's mouth reflect the condition of a one's heart. It is a person's evil attitudes, motives, and thoughts that corrupt the spiritual condition of a person.
- The unregenerate heart is filled with pride, selfishness, and sin of every sort. That is what defiles a person. The way to be "clean" is to allow God to cleanse your heart.

Bonus: Who can hold you accountable for examining your heart regularly? What might hold you back from asking that person for help?

CHALLENGE

As a group, identify areas where it becomes easy in life to accept the superficial.

Discuss ways you can encourage one another to develop a deeper relationship with God that will avoid the inauthentic in your walk with God. (PSG, p. 26)

Challenge adults to evaluate their lives prayerfully.

What are some things you are substituting for a genuine relationship with God? In prayer, confess these to God. (PSG, p. 26)

FURTHER DISCUSSION



Scan here for additional discussion questions for this week's study.

BIBLE SKILL (PSG, P. 25)

Take seriously all biblical commands for Christian living.

Read Matthew 15:1-6. Identify in these verses the commands based on God's Word. Identify any practices based on human tradition. **Why do you think some people make man-made traditions the measure of spirituality (v. 2)?** Make a list of ways you can avoid the trap of substituting human expectations for obedience to God's Word.

Draw two columns on the board: *Physical Life* and *Spiritual Life*. Encourage adults to suggest areas where they will not accept substitutes or imitations. Record their responses on the board. Direct them to complete the Bible Skill activity on page 25 of the PSG. After a few minutes, allow volunteers to share their responses and record them in the second column. Challenge the group to take practical steps to avoid superficial religion and to embrace what is genuine and real.

OBJECT LESSON: RULEBOOK

Prior to the session, obtain a rulebook for a popular sport. During the session, show adults the rulebook. Point out that it provides the basics for competition in that sport. Ask: **What would it be like to play a game without the rules?** Affirm that it would get frustrating after a while—and no one would be able to win.

Note that rulebooks take other forms in our lives each day, such as employee handbooks at work or instructions for assembling a toy. Allow volunteers to suggest additional "rulebooks" they encounter in their lives. Affirm again that, just as in games, these rulebooks play an important role. Say: **They provide clear focus and keep chaos to a minimum.**

Show adults a copy of the Bible. Emphasize that God's Word is the ultimate rulebook for our lives—and no man-made list of rules can compare.

THE PHARISEE INSIDE US

Throughout Jesus's ministry, He clashed with the Pharisees and other religious leaders of the day. As Matthew 15 shows us, these conflicts often centered upon the Pharisees' elevation of external things (such as washing hands or eating with tax collectors) more than the internal matters of the heart.

Interestingly, in Luke 18:9-14, the Pharisees were not only in the crowd listening as Jesus spoke, but they also were the subject of one of His parables. Jesus contrasted the prayers of a self-righteous Pharisee and a humble tax collector (Luke 18:10). The Pharisee looked down upon others and thought highly of his own obedience. He could easily identify the sin of others, but he overlooked his own (18:11-12). This was the very spirit behind the religious elite's ongoing confrontations with Jesus, including those in Matthew 15.

The tax collector sat on the opposite side of the spiritual spectrum. He saw his own need and cried out to God for forgiveness (18:13). He realized that he was

his own worst enemy. His greatest problem could be found inside his own sinful heart. The only solution to his spiritual crisis was to cry out to God with humility and to depend on His mercy.

Jesus concluded His parable by teaching that it was the tax collector who went home justified that day. He was the one who was made right with God. If we come to God in pride, trusting in our own obedience and righteousness, we will be humbled. But if we come to God in humility, depending on His mercy and grace for forgiveness, we will be exalted.

The truth is we all lean toward the Pharisees. We trust ourselves, we focus on the sins of others, and we clean up on the outside without addressing our real need on the inside. Like Jesus's parable in Luke 18, we are invited to examine ourselves and to seek God's mercy and forgiveness. While we all may have a little Pharisee in us, we can be justified like the tax collector.

Following Jesus

JESUS IS THE MESSIAH, THE SAVIOR OF THE WORLD SENT BY GOD.

Matthew 16:13-26

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

Exploring Key Words

- A** About 25 miles north of the Sea of Galilee, this city was named after Philip the tetrarch and in honor of Tiberius Caesar.
- B** A favorite term of Jesus for Himself. Jesus’s use of the term affirms both His deity and humanity.
- C** Herod Antipas had beheaded John the Baptist (Mark 6:14-29). Upon hearing about Jesus, he thought John had been raised from the dead.
- D** Malachi 4:5 identified Elijah as the forerunner of the Messiah. Jesus later clarified that this referred to John the Baptist (Matt. 11:14).
- E** The placement of “you” in the original language is emphatic, revealing Jesus’s desire for a personal response.
- F** Literally “Anointed One.” This is the first time the disciples acknowledged Jesus as Messiah.
- G** “Human being” (NLT). Jesus emphasized that Peter’s confession had a divine origin.
- H** A Greek play on words with Peter’s name highlights the significant role he and his proclamation would play in church history.
- I** A reference to authority. This authority is exercised in the preaching of the gospel.
- J** Jesus’s death and resurrection were no accident, but central to the plan of God (Acts 2:23-24).
- K** Correcting with authority. Peter thought he had authority to correct Jesus, but the tables were turned on him quickly.
- L** Jesus’s rebuke of Peter reflects the same rebuke He gave Satan in the wilderness (Matt. 4:10).
- M** To seek your best life here on earth (cf. 16:26) is pointless if you forfeit eternal life, which can only be found in following Jesus.



NOTES

Know the Messiah (Matt. 16:13-20)

- Outside Caesarea Philippi, Jesus asked His disciples who people thought He was. He also challenged them to consider what they believed about Him.
- Peter responded by acknowledging Jesus as the Messiah and Savior. Jesus affirmed this response as an insight provided by God and one that would provide a foundation for the church.

Embrace His Mission (Matt. 16:21-23)

- Having established Himself as the Messiah, Jesus announced that He would suffer and be prosecuted in Jerusalem. Ultimately, this would lead to His crucifixion and resurrection.
- Peter rebuked Jesus for speaking this way, but the Lord rebuked him for focusing on human desires more than God's desires.

Become His Disciple (Matt. 16:24-26)

- Jesus explained the standard for His disciples. Following Jesus requires self-denial and self-sacrifice for His sake.
- The Christian life is a paradox where death produces life and sacrifice provides great gain.

Summary Statements

Jesus is the Messiah, the Savior of the world sent by God.

- We cannot follow Jesus fully until we know and accept His true identity.
- We cannot follow Jesus fully until we accept His mission as Messiah and Savior.
- We cannot follow Jesus fully until we sacrifice our personal agendas to Him.

Memory Verse

Matthew 16:24

Key Doctrine

God the Son

In His substitutionary death on the cross Christ made provision for the redemption of men from sin. (See Isaiah 53:5-6; 2 Corinthians 5:21.)



For additional commentary, see the Leader Guide or Adult Commentary, available for purchase at [goExploreTheBible.com](https://www.goExploreTheBible.com).

ENGAGE

What are the traits of leaders you want to follow? (PSG, p. 27)

- The world is made up of leaders and followers. The majority of us are followers. As followers, it is critically important who we follow.
- History is replete with people who followed others to destruction and death. Leaders like Jim Jones of the Jonestown massacre, cult leader Charles Manson of the murderous Manson family, or David Koresh of the Branch Davidian tragedy, all led their followers to disaster.
- Each of us must choose leaders wisely. Follow those who lead to life and not to death.

Bonus: Who is the best leader you've ever followed? What did you learn from that person?

EXPLORE

KNOW THE MESSIAH (MATT. 16:13-20)

Bonus: When have you experienced a case of mistaken identity? How did you resolve it?

- Caesarea Philippi was prominent for its many shrines to false gods. Later, it became an early center for emperor worship. This hub of pagan fervor was the backdrop for Jesus's questions about how people perceived Him.
- The disciples gave a variety of answers: John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah, or some other prophet. The common belief was that one or more of these would serve as a forerunner to the Messiah. Thus, the crowd likely saw Him as a forerunner to the Messiah, not the Messiah Himself.
- Jesus turned to the opinion of the disciples. The pronoun "you" is emphatic and plural. This was an important question for all the disciples. Peter answered for the group, declaring that Jesus was the promised Messiah and the unique Son of God.
- Jesus affirmed that Peter's answer originated in a source other than "flesh and blood." It was a divine insight.
- The Gospels and the first chapters of Acts point to Peter as a recognized leader among the apostles. However, here he was a representative of all the disciples. They were the ones Jesus was training to continue His mission on earth. (See "Dig Deeper" on p. 20.)
- Binding and loosing relates to God's kingdom. Believers open the kingdom or close the kingdom through their witness and the proclamation of the gospel.

Why is it important to understand who Jesus is? (PSG, p. 32)

EMBRACE HIS MISSION (MATT. 16:21-23)

Bonus: What does it feel like to be rebuked? How is it helpful? How is it discouraging?

- After Peter's confession, Jesus shifted His focus from a ministry in Galilee to the sacrifice He would make in Jerusalem. So, He shared with His followers why it was "necessary" for Him to suffer, die, and rise again.
- Peter assumed that he knew what was best for Jesus. So, he rebuked his Master, possibly because he felt a new sense of authority after his great confession.
- Jesus rebuked Peter using words similar to the rebuke to Satan in Matthew 4:10. In rebuking Peter, Jesus was really rebuking Satan again and denouncing this latest temptation to stray from God's plans.

How do we let our own agendas replace God's greater plans? (PSG, p. 33)

BECOME HIS DISCIPLE (MATT. 16:24-26)

Bonus: What is the highest price you've ever paid for an experience? How did you decide the price was worth the value?

- Jesus knew He would suffer and that the path of following Him would lead His followers to suffer as well. His disciples also must deny themselves. They must reject being on the throne of their lives instead of God.
- They also are called to take up their cross and follow Him. Jesus's disciples must be willing to pay any price for His sake.
- The Christian life is a paradox. Those who surrender their lives to Christ will find eternal life through Him. Those who try to save their own lives will die spiritually.

What does it mean to deny ourselves and to carry our cross? (PSG, p. 34)

CHALLENGE

As a group, list and discuss various contemporary ideas about Jesus. Discuss how they are similar or different from the ideas held by adults in your Bible study.

Why do you think people hold these opinions about Jesus? (PSG, p. 35)

Encourage adults to spend time reflecting on the costs of following Jesus.

Create a list of the costs of not following Jesus. Which will you choose? (PSG, p. 35)

FURTHER DISCUSSION



Scan here for additional discussion questions for this week's study.

BIBLE SKILL (PSG, P. 34)

Read, reflect on, and apply a Bible passage.

Focus on Matthew 16:24. Identify the three qualifications for becoming a true disciple of Jesus. Reflect on the meaning of each qualification by responding to these questions: ***What does it mean to deny oneself? What are some things that hinder me from denying myself? What does it mean to take up your cross? What does it mean to follow Jesus? For you, what is the next step in following Jesus?***

Direct the group to read Matthew 16:24 and to identify what's required of Jesus's disciples, as instructed in the Bible Skill activity on page 34 of the PSG. Provide each adult with a sheet of paper and pencil and challenge them to answer the questions included in the activity. After a few minutes, allow volunteers to share their responses. Lead a brief discussion about what would be most difficult about adopting the attitudes and actions commanded in verse 24.

OBJECT LESSON: KEY

Encourage adults to list some things that prove ownership in our culture. Ask: ***How could a key demonstrate ownership?*** Discuss responses.

Hold up the key to your car. Say: ***You may need to borrow my car sometime; but even if I give you the key, the car is still mine. You have my permission to use it, but I'm still the owner.*** Help adults understand that Peter did not own the authority of heaven, but his confession of Jesus as Messiah gave him and the other disciples access to God's authority.

Point out that this authority was something they would need as they spread the message of the kingdom across the known world. Affirm that believers possess this same authority today. Say: ***Just like the apostles in the first century, we rely on Jesus's authority every time we share the gospel with someone else. We open the door to heaven, leaving it up to them to make a decision to enter or not.***

BUILT ON A ROCK

What did Jesus mean when he said, "On this rock, I will build my church"? Is Peter the rock? Is Peter's confession the rock? For centuries, scholars and theologians have debated this passage.

Roman Catholics believe Jesus's words are the foundation for papal authority. Some Protestants interpret them as an affirmation of Peter's confession as the bedrock of the church's mission. Regardless of the controversies, two key truths emerge from Matthew 16:13-20. First, Peter would have a pivotal role in supporting the early church. Second, Peter's role is connected to his confession of Jesus as the Messiah.

Peter's foundational role is evident in Acts 2, where he boldly proclaimed the gospel at Pentecost. That sermon led three thousand people to accept Jesus and enter the church (Acts 2:14-47). Paul later would clarify that Peter's confession—along with the proclamations of the other apostles and prophets—serves as the foundation of the church (Eph. 2:19-20). Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of the Living God.

Peter emphasized this truth in his own writings. His role did not involve a perpetual office, but an ongoing ministry of sharing "the prophetic word

strongly confirmed, and you will do well to pay attention to it" (2 Pet. 1:19). In other words, it is not his authoritative role that is pivotal but his proclamation of Christ, the true Rock of the church, which is now recorded in the Scriptures.

While Peter had a unique, foundational role in establishing the early church, the church today continues the same mission of proclaiming Christ. In Matthew 18:18, we see that the responsibility given to Peter is given to every follower of Christ. God has entrusted the church with the authority to loose and bind, announcing God's will on earth as it is in heaven.

The church exercises this authority today through preaching the gospel. We demonstrate it every time we share the good news about Jesus and invite people to trust in Him.

BONUS CONTENT



Three Predictions

Jesus foretold His death three times in Matthew's gospel. Scan this QR code to deepen your understanding of His journey to the cross.

Glory

JESUS FULFILLS GOD'S MESSAGE OF HOPE FOUND IN
THE LAW AND THE PROPHETS.

Matthew 17:1-13

1 After six days **A** Jesus took **Peter, James, and his brother John** **B** and led them up on a **high mountain** **C** by themselves. **2** He was **transfigured** **D** in front of them, and his face shone like the sun; his clothes became as white as the light. **3** Suddenly, **Moses and Elijah** **E** appeared to them, talking with him. **4** Then Peter said to Jesus, “Lord, it’s good for us to be here. If you want, I will set up three **shelters** **F** here: one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” **5** While he was still speaking, suddenly a bright cloud covered them, and **a voice from the cloud** **G** said, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased. **Listen to him!**” **H** **6** When the disciples heard this, they fell facedown and were **terrified**. **I** **7** Jesus came up, touched them, and said, “Get up; don’t be afraid.” **8** When they looked up they saw no one except Jesus alone. **9** As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus commanded them, “Don’t tell anyone about **the vision** **J** until the Son of Man is raised from the dead.” **10** So the disciples asked him, “Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?” **11** “Elijah is coming and will restore everything,” he replied. **12** “But I tell you: Elijah has **already come**, **K** and they didn’t recognize him. On the contrary, they did whatever they pleased to him. In **the same way** **L** the Son of Man is going to suffer at their hands.” **13** Then the disciples understood that he had spoken to them about John the Baptist.

Exploring Key Words

- A** Approximately a week after Peter’s confession of Jesus as Messiah at Caesarea Philippi.
- B** Jesus’s inner circle. They were often present for significant moments in Jesus’s ministry (see Matt. 26:37; Mark 5:37).
- C** The exact location is not mentioned, though Mount Meron, northwest of the Sea of Galilee, is possible. Scholars also suggest Mount Tabor and Mount Hermon.
- D** “Transformed” (NLT). Jesus did not reflect the glory of God as Moses did (Ex. 34:33-35). He radiated the glory of God (John 17:5; Heb 1:3).
- E** Moses represented the Law, while Elijah symbolized the Prophets. Together, they encompassed the entirety of God’s Word.
- F** “Tabernacles” (KJV). Likely, booths such as the ones built during the Feast of Tabernacles.
- G** This is the second time Matthew recorded God the Father affirming Jesus as His beloved Son (see Matt. 3:17).
- H** Having seen His glory, the disciples were now commanded to listen and obey Jesus. He was the “prophet like me” promised by Moses (Deut. 18:15).
- I** Encounters with God’s glory leave people filled with fear and reverence (Isa. 6:5; Dan. 10:8-9; Rev. 1:17).
- J** This does not imply the transfiguration was merely a visionary experience. The term refers to something seen with one’s own eyes.
- K** Malachi 4:5 was fulfilled in John the Baptist, who came “in the spirit and power” of Elijah (Luke 1:17).
- L** John’s suffering and death foreshadowed the suffering and death of Jesus.



NOTES

Transfigured (Matt. 17:1-3)

- Six days after Peter's confession at Caesarea Philippi, Jesus took Peter, James, and John to the top of a high mountain.
- There, He was transfigured before them, and they saw His glory.
- They also saw Moses and Elijah, who represented the Law and the Prophets.

Overshadowed (Matt. 17:4-8)

- While Peter suggested creating a memorial for Jesus and the two Old Testament heroes, the Father's presence overwhelmed them with cloud.
- As He had at Jesus's baptism, God affirmed Jesus as the unique Son of God. He commanded the disciples to listen to Jesus's words.
- When the moment had passed, they found only Jesus was with them.

Instructed (Matt. 17:9-13)

- Coming down from the mountain, Jesus ordered His three disciples not to speak about what they had experienced until after His resurrection.
- The disciples asked Jesus about the coming of Elijah. Jesus affirmed that "Elijah" had come as a forerunner for the Messiah in the person of John the Baptist.

Summary Statements

Jesus fulfills God's message of hope found in the law and the prophets.

- Pray that you would see the glory of Jesus.
- Worship is always the appropriate response to Jesus.
- Seek to know Jesus better by learning God's Word.

Memory Verse

Matthew 17:5b-6

Key Doctrine

The Scriptures

All Scripture is a testimony to Christ, who is Himself the focus of divine revelation. (See Luke 24:44-46; John 5:39.)



For additional commentary, see the Leader Guide or Adult Commentary, available for purchase at [goExploreTheBible.com](https://www.goExploreTheBible.com).

ENGAGE

What kind of sign would you like to receive concerning a decision you need to make? (PSG, p. 36)

- Decision making can be difficult. Often, we seek some sign that we're choosing the right direction and picking the best option. Is this the right job? Is this the best house? Is she the one for me? If we only had a sign!
- Wouldn't it be great if someone magically appeared to give you affirmation that what you are doing is correct? How about a sign in the sky, or a voice out of the blue?

Bonus: How would you describe your process for making decisions?

EXPLORE

TRANSFIGURED (MATT. 17:1-3)

Bonus: When have you seen something truly amazing? How did you respond?

- "After six days" connects these verses to what came before. Specifically, this refers to Jesus's statement that some of His disciples would not die until they had seen His glory (Matt. 16:28).
- Jesus brought three of His disciples—Peter, James, and John—up the mountain with Him. Hebrew law called for two or three reliable witnesses to verify an issue in court. These three would serve as trustworthy witnesses concerning the glory of Christ.
- On the mountaintop, Jesus was "transfigured" before the disciples. The Greek word used implies transformation and is the root of our English word "metamorphosis."
- Jesus's outward appearance completely changed, as He "shone like the sun." It was comparable to the Shekinah glory of God in the Old Testament. In addition, Moses and Elijah appeared, representing the Law and the Prophets.

Where can we see Jesus's glory revealed each day? (PSG, p. 40)

OVERSHADOWED (MATT. 17:4-8)

Bonus: When have you been at a loss for words? How did that work out for you?

- Mark and Luke noted that Peter was at a loss for words and said the first thing that came to mind (Mark 9:5-6; Luke 9:33). His declaration that it was "good for us to be here" likely meant it was good that he and the other disciples were there to help.
- Peter suggested they build shelters for Jesus, Moses, and Elijah. However, his suggestion was interrupted by the appearance of a "bright cloud" that overwhelmed them. From the cloud, God spoke, affirming Jesus as His unique Son and challenging the disciples to listen to His words.

- Terrified, the disciples fell facedown on the ground in reverence. Eventually, Jesus touched them and encouraged them not to be afraid. As the disciples looked around, Elijah and Moses were gone. They "saw no one except Jesus alone."

What hinders our ability to hear and act on Jesus's words? What may hinder a person from taking Jesus's teachings seriously? (PSG, p. 42)

INSTRUCTED (MATT. 17:9-13)

Bonus: Recall a time when you had to keep a big secret. How did it feel once you could finally share the story?

- Coming down the mountain, Jesus told His disciples to keep what they had seen to themselves for a while. After the resurrection, an account of the transfiguration would be easier for everyone to believe and understand.
- The disciples took the opportunity to ask Jesus about the coming of Elijah in relation to the Messiah's arrival. Jesus affirmed that John the Baptist was "Elijah" as predicted in Malachi 4:5. But the leaders and the people had missed his significance. And, just as John suffered and died, Jesus would suffer and die in Jerusalem.

How are you making an effort to grow in your understanding of Jesus, His identity, and mission? (PSG, p. 43)

CHALLENGE

As a group, discuss what it would be like to experience Jesus's glory in your midst.

What would be the appropriate response if you did? (PSG, p. 44)

Challenge individuals to reflect on how God's glory can be revealed through their words, actions, and attitudes.

How have you seen the glory of Jesus in your life? What does it mean for you to reflect His glory? (PSG, p. 44)

FURTHER DISCUSSION



Scan here for additional discussion questions for this week's study.

BIBLE SKILL (PSG, P. 43)

Use cross references to gain a better understanding of a biblical concept.

The New Testament not only records accounts of Jesus's transfiguration but also teaches that believers likewise will experience transformation. Read the following passages and determine what each says about a believer's transformation: Romans 12:2; 1 Corinthians 15:51-55; 2 Corinthians 3:18; and Philippians 3:20-21. ***How and when does this transformation take place in the life of a believer? How is our transformation similar to or different from what Jesus experienced?***

Write the word "metamorphosis" on the board and allow volunteers to share what it means. Note that it refers to a complete transformation, like a caterpillar changing into a butterfly. Share that believers will one day experience a transformation. Encourage adults to complete the Bible Skill on page 43 of the PSG. After a few minutes, review the questions in the activity.

OBJECT LESSON: STONES

Direct each adult to find a partner. Direct half the pairs to read and reflect on 2 Peter 1:16-19, while the other half reads and reflects on John 1:14. After a few minutes, lead a brief discussion on how these passages relate to the transfiguration in Matthew 17.

Give each adult a small stone. Say: *From the passages we just looked at, we know that both Peter and John referred back to the transfiguration in their New Testament writings. We can be certain that they never forgot this event.*

Challenge adults to reflect on their own "mountaintop experiences" with God, symbolized by the rocks in their hands. Challenge them to keep the rock in a visible place this week, remembering times they worshiped God and considering how that experience continues to shape their faith.

THE PROPHETIC WORD

In 2 Peter 1:16-19, Peter assured his readers of the second coming of Christ by pointing to the transfiguration. He insisted that Jesus's return is not one of the "cleverly contrived myths" so many heretics were promoting in that day (2 Pet. 1:16). To the contrary, Peter explained that the transfiguration was proof of what is to come. He, along with James and John, saw Jesus's "majesty" and heard the Father's voice.

In Matthew 17:1-13, we learn that Peter, James, and John not only witnessed Jesus's glory, but they also were commanded to "Listen to him" (Matt. 17:5). Peter echoed this challenge by urging his readers to pay attention to the "prophetic word strongly confirmed" (2 Pet. 1:19). He emphasized that believers can have confidence in the Lord's return because of what he and the other disciples saw on the mountain.

Those of us who weren't on the mountain still have a responsibility to "listen to Jesus" and to live with confidence. To do so, we pay attention to the prophetic word that has been shared with us. In fact, Peter

continued by saying that God's Word serves as "a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts" (2 Pet. 1:19).

So, how can we take Peter's charge seriously? Here are three practical ideas:

- 1. Read the Word.** Make time daily to open your Bible and read it.
- 2. Meditate on the Word.** After reading, reflect on what it means and how it applies to your life. Ask: ***What does this reveal about God? About me? How is God calling me to respond?***
- 3. Pray the Word.** Let Scripture shape your prayers. Speak God's truth back to Him, letting His promises and commands guide your time with Him.

Forgiveness

JESUS CALLS US TO FORGIVE ONE ANOTHER
AS HE HAS FORGIVEN US.

Matthew 18:21-35

21 Then Peter approached him and asked, “Lord, how many times must I **forgive** **A** my brother or sister who sins against me? As many as **seven times?**” **B** 22 “I tell you, not as many as seven,” Jesus replied, “but **seventy times seven.**” **C** 23 For this reason, the kingdom of heaven can be compared to a king who wanted to **settle accounts** **D** with his servants. 24 When he began to settle accounts, one who owed **ten thousand talents** **E** was brought before him. 25 Since he did not have the money to pay it back, his master commanded that he, his wife, his children, and everything he had be sold to pay the debt. 26 At this, the servant fell facedown before him and said, ‘Be patient with me, and I will pay you everything.’ 27 Then the master of that servant had **compassion**, **F** released him, and forgave him the loan. 28 That servant went out and found one of his **fellow servants** **G** who owed him a **hundred denarii**. **H** He grabbed him, started choking him, and said, ‘Pay what you owe!’ 29 At this, his fellow servant fell down and began begging him, ‘Be patient with me, and I will pay you back.’ 30 But **he wasn’t willing**. **I** Instead, he went and threw him into prison until he could pay what was owed. 31 When the other servants saw what had taken place, they were **deeply distressed** **J** and went and reported to their master everything that had happened. 32 Then, after he had summoned him, his master said to him, ‘You **wicked servant!** **K** I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. 33 Shouldn’t you also have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?’ 34 And because he was angry, his master handed him over to the jailers to be tortured until he could pay everything that was owed. 35 So also my **heavenly Father** **L** will do to you unless every one of you forgives his brother or sister **from your heart.**” **M**

Exploring Key Words

- A** A pardon for an offense or freedom from a debt.
- B** A biblical number of completeness. It more than doubles the Jewish tradition of three times.
- C** “Seventy-seven” (ESV; NIV). Jesus went well beyond Peter’s suggestion. The exact number of times was not the point, but unlimited forgiveness fueled by repentance.
- D** The parable is a picture of judgment and provides an illustration of God’s forgiveness.
- E** “Ten thousand” was the highest number imaginable at that time, and a “talent” was the largest measure of currency. As a result, this debt would have been impossible to repay.
- F** “Pity” (ESV; NIV). This same term describes Jesus’s reaction to the crowds (Matt. 9:36).
- G** While he had been called before the king to give an account, the forgiven servant went looking for one of his peers who owed him money.
- H** About one hundred days’ wages. This was much smaller than what the first man had owed the king and could have been paid back in time.
- I** Despite hearing the same plea he had made to the king, the forgiven servant rejected the man’s cries. This was a stark contrast to the king’s response.
- J** “Outraged” (NIV); “deeply grieved” (NASB).
- K** The man was not wicked because of the debt, but because of his lack of compassion.
- L** The king represents how God deals with us—and what He expects from His forgiven children. This is the ultimate point of the parable.
- M** True forgiveness is genuine and internal, flowing from a heart transformed by God’s mercy. It is not surface-level or forced.



Question of Forgiveness (Matt. 18:21-22)

- Peter asked Jesus how many times he should forgive someone who had sinned against him—as many as seven times? This exceeded the traditional Jewish expectation of three offers of forgiveness.
- Jesus responded by challenging Peter to forgive seventy times seven. In this, He was emphasizing an unlimited number.

Compassionate King (Matt. 18:23-27)

- To illustrate His point, Jesus told a parable about a servant who owed a massive debt to his master. The debt was so large that the servant would never be able to repay it.
- In humility and desperation, the man begged his master for mercy. The king demonstrated compassion and forgave the debt completely.

Unforgiving Servant (Matt. 18:28-35)

- The servant whose large debt was forgiven went out and found a fellow servant who owed him a much smaller debt but was having trouble paying it back. He asked the forgiven servant to show mercy.
- Unwilling to extend compassion, the first man threw his fellow servant into prison. Though forgiven much, he refused to show mercy for a debt that could have been repaid in time.
- Hearing what happened, the king overturned his earlier decision and threw the unforgiving servant into prison until he could repay his debt. Jesus warned that those who are unwilling to forgive will face judgment.
- While believers cannot lose their salvation, a lack of forgiveness toward others reveals a dangerous character flaw—possibly even a lack of genuine, saving faith.

Summary Statements

Jesus calls us to forgive one another as He has forgiven us.

- We are not to put limits on our willingness to forgive.
- We can know that God is compassionate and willing to forgive.
- We are to forgive one another in the way God has forgiven us.

Memory Verse

Matthew 18:33

Key Doctrine

Man

Only the grace of God can bring man into His holy fellowship and enable man to fulfill the creative purpose of God. (See Romans 5:6; Ephesians 2:8-10.)



For additional commentary, see the Leader Guide or Adult Commentary, available for purchase at [goExploreTheBible.com](https://www.goExploreTheBible.com).

ENGAGE

Bonus: What is something that would be hard for you to forgive? Why?

- “I’m sorry!” Those two words carry worlds of meaning. When a waitress uses them over and over during the thirty minutes or so you are at her table, they often lose any meaning. But when they come from someone who has hurt you and you can sense their anguish over that hurt, those words can be liberating to you—and to them.
- Forgiving others can be difficult, but it is essential for good spiritual and mental well-being. Jesus calls us to forgive others as He has forgiven us.

Why is it often so difficult to forgive someone who has offended you? (PSG, p. 45)

EXPLORE

QUESTION OF FORGIVENESS (MATT. 18:21-22)

What do you think is a reasonable number of times to forgive someone who hurts you? (PSG, p. 47)

- Jesus’s teaching in Matthew 18:15-20 raised a question in Peter’s mind. He wondered about the limits of forgiveness. Jewish tradition said forgiving someone three times was sufficient. So, he asked Jesus if “seven times” was an acceptable standard for God’s kingdom.
- Jesus’s answer must have surprised Peter. He told Peter to forgive “seventy times seven.” Some translations follow the Greek and say “seventy-seven.” Regardless, Jesus was not calling people to track the number of times they offer forgiveness. Rather, He was encouraging unlimited forgiveness—such as the forgiveness God shows us.

Bonus: How often do you meditate on God’s forgiveness? How could that affect your attitude toward forgiving others?

COMPASSIONATE KING (MATT. 18:23-27)

Bonus: When have you gotten more than you deserved? How did you respond?

- To illustrate His point, Jesus told a parable about a king and his servants. The king represents God, while the servants represent His people. “Settle accounts” is a picture of judgment.
- The king came across a servant who owed him an enormous sum of money—ten thousand talents. The Greek word for “ten thousand” was the highest number in that language. Likewise, a talent was the largest denomination in the first-century economic system. The actual amount is not as important as understanding that this was a debt the servant could never repay.

- For the king, the only remedy was to sell the man, his family, and his possessions to pay the debt. The man begged for patience and mercy. His attitude was genuine, though his goal of paying everything back was impossible.
- Still, the king demonstrated compassion and forgave the debt completely. In no way did the servant deserve this. The forgiveness was solely an act of mercy by the king.

How do you see grace at work in these verses? (PSG, p. 49)

UNFORGIVING SERVANT (MATT. 18:28-35)

What are some dangers of believers failing to forgive others? (PSG, p. 52)

- Jesus introduced another servant who owed the forgiven servant a paltry amount. A “hundred denarii” was roughly the equivalent of 100 days’ wages. This was a debt that could be paid off reasonably over time.
- As the forgiven servant had done in verse 26, this debtor begged for more time to repay the debt. One would have thought that the similarity between the two petitions would have stirred the first servant to also be forgiving. But “he was unwilling” and threw his fellow servant into prison.
- After hearing about what the “wicked” servant had done, the king overturned his previous decision. He refused to show mercy to a man who showed no mercy to others. An important principle is this: *Those who have received mercy must show themselves merciful to others.* (See Matt. 5:7.)

Bonus: What steps can you take to nurture a forgiving spirit in your heart?

CHALLENGE

As a group consider the excuses people give for not forgiving someone else.

How should the experience of God’s forgiveness impact how we approach fellow believers who offend us? (PSG, p. 53)

Challenge adults to think through their relationships and to identify those who need forgiveness.

What might be the consequences of not offering forgiveness? What might be the benefits of forgiving that person? (PSG, p. 53)

FURTHER DISCUSSION



Scan here for additional discussion questions for this week’s study.

BIBLE SKILL (PSG, P. 52)

Compare passages to gain insight into biblical teaching.

Compare Matthew 18:27 with verses 34-35. In verse 27 the king released and forgave his servant's huge debt. In verse 34 the king revoked his forgiveness and cast the unforgiving servant into a place of torture. Verse 35 states this is what God will do to "every one of you" unless you forgive other believers "from your heart." Reflect on the following questions: ***What is the danger of basing a doctrine on a parable? What other passages can you cite to indicate that a believer does not lose his or her salvation?*** Summarize the main point of Jesus's parable and how His warning in verse 35 should be understood.

Encourage adults to read the Bible Skill activity on page 52 of the PSG and to reflect on the questions in the activity. After a few minutes, allow volunteers to share their responses. Challenge adults to ask God to help them forgive "from the heart" moving forward.

OBJECT LESSON: SCOREBOARD

Prior to the session, find a photo of a scoreboard. You also could use a scorecard from a familiar board game. Show adults the scoreboard and discuss how scores are kept in different games. Lead a brief discussion about ways families sometimes change the scoring rules. Talk about how "house rules" make a difference in a game.

Ask: ***Why is it so important for us to keep score?*** Discuss responses. Acknowledge that many games would be frustrating if we had no way to keep score—or to know when the game was over.

Point out that Peter was trying to "keep score" in the areas of personal forgiveness. Note that he may have considered himself generous by expanding the culture's "forgiveness rules" from three to seven. But Jesus debunked the idea of limitations on forgiveness by emphasizing unlimited forgiveness among believers.

DIG DEEPER

FORGIVING LIKE GOD

In Matthew 18:35, Jesus ended His message with a strong warning: "So also my heavenly Father will do to you unless every one of you forgives his brother or sister from your heart." This warning raises some important questions: What does it mean to forgive "from the heart"? And how is that connected to God's forgiveness of us?

The apostle Paul gave us some clues in his letters to the first-century churches. In Ephesians 4:32, he challenged his readers to forgive one another "just as God also forgave you in Christ." Colossians 3:13 offers a similar encouragement: "Just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you are also to forgive." These verses reveal a key biblical pattern: vertical forgiveness from God is the foundation for horizontal forgiveness of others.

But how far does this go? Does Jesus expect us to forgive those who don't even acknowledge their sin?

Jesus's own teaching helps us with this challenge. In Mark 11:25, He said, "Whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him."

This admonition suggests a posture of attitudinal forgiveness—a willingness to entrust the offense to God, even if the offender never repents. Yet in Luke 17:3, Jesus said, "If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him." This points to relational forgiveness—restoring trust and fellowship when repentance is present.¹

Both levels matter. Attitudinal forgiveness guards our hearts from bitterness because we've released the offense to God. Relational forgiveness reflects God's design and restores fellowship. We are called to extend attitudinal forgiveness at all times and stand ready for relational forgiveness whenever possible.

As one commentator has stated well, "The Bible is not saying that it's easy to forgive or that it's natural to forgive; however, it's Christian to forgive."²

1. Jones, Robert D., *Pursuing Peace: A Christian Guide to Handling Our Conflicts*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2012.

2. Platt, David, *Christ-Centered Exposition: Exalting Jesus in Matthew*. Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2013, p. 247.

Our Task

BECAUSE JESUS ROSE FROM THE GRAVE, WE ARE TO TAKE
THE GOSPEL TO ALL PEOPLE.

Matthew 28:1-10,16-20

1 After the **Sabbath**, **A** as the first day of the week was dawning, **Mary Magdalene** **B** and the **other Mary** **C** went to view the tomb. 2 There was a **violent earthquake**, **D** because an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and approached the tomb. He **rolled back the stone** **E** and was sitting on it. 3 His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing was as white as snow. 4 The guards were so shaken by fear of him that they became like dead men. 5 The angel told the women, “**Don’t be afraid**, **F** because I know you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. 6 He is not here. For he has risen, **just as he said**. **G** **Come and see** **H** the place where he lay. 7 Then go quickly and tell his disciples, ‘He has risen from the dead and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; you will see him there.’ Listen, I have told you.” 8 So, departing quickly from the tomb with **fear and great joy**, **I** they ran to tell his disciples the news. 9 Just then Jesus met them and said, “Greetings!” They came up, took hold of his feet, and **worshiped** **J** him. 10 Then Jesus told them, “Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to leave for Galilee, and they will see me there.” [. . .] 16 The eleven disciples traveled to Galilee, to **the mountain** **K** where Jesus had directed them. 17 When they saw him, they worshiped, but some doubted. 18 Jesus came near and said to them, “All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. 19 Go, therefore, and **make disciples** **L** of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am **with you always**, **M** to the end of the age.”

Exploring Key Words

- A** From sundown on Friday until sundown on Saturday, a day of rest according to the law (see Ex. 20:8-11). Jesus was raised on Sunday.
- B** Jesus had delivered Mary from seven demons (Mark 16:9; Luke 8:2). She was a key witness to His death (Matt. 27:56), burial (27:61), and the empty tomb (28:1).
- C** Likely the mother of James and Joseph. She also was at the cross and the burial (Matt. 27:56,61).
- D** This supernatural event was caused by an angel arriving at the empty tomb.
- E** Not to let Jesus out, but so His followers could look inside and see that He was risen.
- F** Jesus offered the women the same greeting when He met them later (v. 10).
- G** On multiple occasions, Jesus had stated clearly that He would be crucified, buried, and raised. See Matthew 12:40; 16:21; 17:23; 20:19.
- H** Eyewitness accounts of the empty tomb affirm the factual, historical nature of the resurrection.
- I** The mixed emotions suggest that the women did not expect an empty tomb, but they were thrilled by the news.
- J** Accepting worship confirmed Jesus’s deity. The disciples also worshiped Him in verse 17.
- K** This was not the site of Jesus’s ascension, which later occurred on the Mount of Olives near Bethany in Judea (Luke 24:50-51; Acts 1:9-12).
- L** The primary command of the Great Commission. This is done through going, baptizing, and teaching those who believe.
- M** Jesus’s power (v. 18) and His presence (v. 20) ensure that believers can fulfill His commission (v. 19).



Believe (Matt. 28:1-7)

- Early Sunday morning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to the tomb where Jesus was buried.
- A violent earthquake had occurred, and an angel of the Lord had rolled back the stone covering the tomb's entrance. Paralyzed by fear, the guards stationed at the tomb fell to the ground like dead men.
- The angel told the women not to be afraid. Jesus was not there because He had risen. They were instructed to "Come and see" the empty tomb (v. 6). Then, the women were commanded to tell the disciples about the resurrection.

Worship (Matt. 28:8-10)

- With a mix of fear and joy, the women quickly left to find the disciples and share the good news. On the way, they met Jesus and immediately worshiped Him.
- Jesus then told the women to tell the disciples to go to Galilee. He would see them there.

Share (Matt. 28:16-20)

- The eleven disciples traveled to Galilee in obedience to Jesus's instructions. Upon seeing Him there, they also worshiped—though some struggled with doubt.
- Jesus then shared what has become known as the "Great Commission." He commanded His followers to make disciples. This would be done by taking His message to every nation, along with baptizing and teaching those who accepted Him.
- He reminded them that He would be with them always.

Summary Statements

Because Jesus rose from the grave, we are to take the gospel to all people.

- We can trust that Jesus is risen because the tomb was empty.
- Our appropriate response to Jesus's resurrection is worship.
- Believers are to share the gospel with people of all nations.

Memory Verse

Matthew 28:19-20

Key Doctrine

Evangelism and Missions

The Lord Jesus Christ has commanded the preaching of the gospel to all nations. (See Luke 24:46-49; Acts 1:8.)



For additional commentary, see the Leader Guide or Adult Commentary, available for purchase at [goExploreTheBible.com](https://www.goExploreTheBible.com).

ENGAGE

Bonus: *What do you consider the most memorable historic event to occur in your lifetime? Why?*

- Most of us remember the details when we received bad news. For example, those who are old enough probably remember what we were doing when we heard about the World Trade Center attacks on September 11, 2001.
- Interestingly, sometimes we don't remember details when we receive good news. The joy of the news overshadows the specifics of how and when the news was received.
- This was not the case for the eyewitnesses to Jesus's resurrection. They could look back and remember vividly.

Why do you think we are selective in what we remember and what we forget? (PSG, p. 54)

EXPLORE

BELIEVE (MATT. 28:1-7)

Bonus: *What are some of your Easter traditions? Why are they important to you?*

- Jesus died on Friday and was hastily buried before the Sabbath began at sundown. His resurrection occurred on "the first day of the week." This is why Christians worship on Sunday.
- Two women, plus several others, were at the cross and witnessed Jesus's burial (see Matt. 27:61). Matthew specifically identified "Mary Magdalene" and "the other Mary" (see "Exploring Key Words").
- An angel came to roll the large stone away from the tomb's entrance. His arrival was accompanied by a "violent earthquake," which terrified the Roman guards.
- Once the women arrived, the angel gave them information, an invitation, and instructions. First, He told them not to be afraid because Jesus had been raised from the dead, "just as he said." Second, he invited them to see the empty tomb for themselves. This would verify his words. Finally, he directed them to tell the disciples what they had seen. He also included a command to meet with Jesus in Galilee.

What obstacles might cause some people to struggle with faith in Christ? (PSG, p. 58)

WORSHIP (MATT. 28:8-10)

Bonus: *When have you had news that you couldn't wait to share with others?*

- In obedience, the women left quickly, filled with "fear and great joy." They were afraid because they had experienced the supernatural, but their great joy overrode their fears.
- Suddenly, Jesus appeared to the women and greeted them. Their immediate response was to take "hold of his feet" in worship.

- Jesus repeated the angel's encouragement ("Do not be afraid"). He also repeated the angel's instructions to tell the disciples (Jesus's "brothers") that He was alive and would meet them in Galilee.

What part of the resurrection story leads you to worship? (PSG, p. 59)

SHARE (MATT. 28:16-20)

Bonus: *Do you think the disciples heard Jesus's words here differently than what He had shared in the past? Why or why not?*

- Jesus's appearance in Galilee is unique to Matthew's Gospel. The name of the mountain and the exact timing after the resurrection are not given. This is not when Jesus ascended into heaven. That would take place near Bethany later (see Luke 24:50-51).
- Two responses are mentioned: worship and doubt. The worship of Jesus no doubt took the form of bowing before Him. The word "doubted" means "to hesitate." For some, this may have been their first glimpse of the risen Savior.
- Jesus promised both His power (v. 18) and His presence (v. 20). With those, the disciples could fulfill the Great Commission (v. 19). The primary command here was to "make disciples." They would do this by going into the world, taking the gospel everywhere. They also would nurture new disciples through baptism and teaching.

What does this passage teach us about our role in Christ's mission? (PSG, p. 61)

CHALLENGE

Within the group, allow volunteers to share how they might have responded if they had met Jesus in Galilee.

Would you worship or doubt? Discuss ways that your group can share the good news of the resurrection of Jesus with those in their world. (PSG, p. 62)

Encourage individuals to reflect on how the lives of Jesus's followers were transformed by His resurrection.

Looking at your own life, is there evidence of the resurrection through the changes Jesus has made? (PSG, p. 62)

FURTHER DISCUSSION



Scan here for additional discussion questions for this week's study.

BIBLE SKILL (PSG, P. 61)

Compare passages that share the same account.

Read Matthew 28:1-15 again and record significant points related to the resurrection. Then, read the resurrection passages in Mark 16:1-20; Luke 24:1-52; John 20:1-22 and do the same for them. ***What similarities do you see in these passages? What are some differences that help you get a more complete picture of the events surrounding the resurrection?***

Group adults into teams of three. Direct them to complete the Bible Skill activity on page 61 of the PSG. Instruct one adult in each team to take the Mark account of the resurrection, as the other two take the Luke and John accounts. Encourage them to work together to respond to the questions in the activity. After a few minutes, allow a volunteer from each group to share what their teams discovered and discussed. Record their responses on the board.

OBJECT LESSON: PROOF OF IDENTITY

Bring an example of personal identification to the session. This could be a driver's license, a name badge for work, a passport, and so forth.

During the session, show the group your proof of identity. Allow adults to suggest what the item proves about you. Briefly discuss other forms of identification and why they are important.

Point out that Jesus's empty tomb proved His identity as God's Son and Messiah. Ask: ***If a friend asked you why you believe Jesus is God and Savior, how would the resurrection help you explain your faith?*** Point out that without the resurrection, the Christian faith collapses. Challenge adults to spend time this week reflecting on what makes the empty tomb so important to their lives today and in eternity.

DID JESUS REALLY RISE?

Matthew 28:1-10 reports that women were the first witnesses to Jesus's empty tomb. But it's also worth noting how hard this truth would have been to accept, even for Jesus's closest followers.

Luke 24:10-11 tells us that when Mary Magdalene and the other women reported the resurrection to the apostles, "these words seemed like nonsense to them, and they did not believe the women." In a first-century context, this is striking. If the resurrection story were fabricated, it's unlikely women, whose testimony wasn't legally accepted, would be portrayed as the first eyewitnesses. One second-century critic mocked Mary's testimony, calling her a "hysterical female . . . deluded by sorcery."¹

Within Jewish thought, any resurrection was expected at the end of time and would not involve the Messiah, who would come to conquer, not be crucified. That helps explain the disciples' initial hesitation (Matt. 28:17)—even after Jesus had predicted His resurrection multiple times (16:21; 17:23; 20:19).

So, how do we explain the transformation of Jesus's followers? According to 1 Corinthians 15:3-8, the risen Christ appeared to Peter, the Twelve, more than five hundred others, and eventually Paul. At that time, many were still alive and could verify the story. Some might argue these were all mistaken, but people generally don't give their lives for a known hoax.

The late Chuck Colson once said that he knew the resurrection was true based on his experience with the Watergate cover-up in the 1970s. "Twelve men testified they had seen Jesus raised from the dead . . . and they proclaimed that truth for 40 years. . . . Watergate embroiled 12 of the most powerful men in the world and they couldn't keep a lie for three weeks."²

The best answer is that Jesus rose from the dead just like He said He would (Matt. 28:6).

1. Origen, *Contra Celsum*, 2.55

2. Charles W. Colson, *Loving God*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983) 73-74.

Eternal Life

JESUS'S GIFT OF SALVATION DEMANDS HUMILITY AND SURRENDER.

Matthew 19:16-30

16 Just then **someone** **A** came up and asked him, “**Teacher,** **B** what good must I do to have **eternal life?**” **C**
 17 “Why do you ask me about what is good?” he said to him. “There is only one who is good. If you want to enter into life, keep **the commandments.**” **D** 18 “Which ones?” he asked him. Jesus answered: Do not murder; do not commit adultery; do not steal; do not bear false witness; 19 honor your father and your mother; and **love your neighbor as yourself.** **E**
 20 “I have kept all these,” the young man told him. “What do I still lack?” 21 “If you want to be **perfect,**” **F** Jesus said to him, “go, **sell your belongings** **G** and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.” 22 When the young man heard that, he went away **grieving,** **H** because he had many possessions. 23 Jesus said to his disciples, “Truly I tell you, it **will be hard** **I** for a rich person to enter the kingdom of heaven. 24 Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the **eye of a needle** **I** than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.” 25 When the disciples heard this, they were utterly astonished and asked, “Then who can be saved?” 26 Jesus looked at them and said, “With man this is impossible, but **with God** **K** all things are possible.” 27 Then Peter responded to him, “See, we have left everything and followed you. So what will there be for us?” 28 Jesus said to them, “Truly I tell you, in the **renewal of all things,** **L** when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. 29 And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields because of my name will receive a hundred times more and will inherit eternal life. 30 But many who are first will be last, and **the last first.**” **M**

Exploring Key Words

- A** Matthew said he was “young” (v. 20). Luke called him a “ruler” (Luke 18:18), possibly in the synagogue. All three Synoptic Gospels note his wealth (Matt. 19:22; Mark 10:22; Luke 18:23).
- B** A term of respect. Unlike the religious leaders, this man’s questions don’t appear malicious.
- C** The only reference to “eternal life” in Matthew. Elsewhere, Jesus taught about God’s kingdom.
- D** Jesus listed five commands that focus on human relationships (Ex. 20:12-16). Jesus knew the man’s true problem was with the commands that related to honoring God.
- E** Later, Jesus quoted this as part of the great commands (Lev. 19:18; Matt. 22:37-39).
- F** “Complete” (NASB). Not without sin, but mature and spiritually whole. See Matthew 5:48.
- G** Not a universal command. This was a specific test of discipleship for this young man.
- H** “Sorrowful” (KJV; ESV); “sad” (NIV). The man’s response reveals the grip that his “many possessions” had on his heart.
- I** Jewish culture saw wealth as a sign of God’s blessing. As such, it was difficult to imagine the wealthy being left outside the kingdom.
- J** For emphasis, Jesus imagined the largest animal in the Middle East trying to get through the smallest conceivable opening.
- K** With God, the difficult is possible. He is the only hope for salvation, including for the wealthy.
- L** The final judgment, when Jesus reigns and all things are made new (Rev. 21:1).
- M** Highlighting the upside-down nature of God’s kingdom. Those who lose the stuff of earth for Jesus’s sake will gain eternal life.



Unwilling (Matt. 19:16-22)

- A rich young man asked Jesus what he must do to have eternal life.
- Since the man claimed to have kept all the commandments, Jesus told him to sell everything he owned and give it to the poor. Then, he could follow Jesus.
- The young man was not willing and went away grieving. He could not give up his “many possessions.”

Possible (Matt. 19:23-26)

- Jesus told His disciples that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God. The disciples were astonished at this and wondered who could be saved if not the rich.
- Jesus replied that with God all things are possible. Salvation for all is possible through Him.

Reward (Matt. 19:27-30)

- Peter responded by saying the disciples had left everything to follow Jesus. He wondered if their sacrifice would be rewarded.
- Jesus promised the disciples that those who have left everything to follow Him will receive a hundred times more. In contrast to the rich young ruler, true followers of Christ also will inherit eternal life.
- He then told them that the first will be last and the last first. This illustrated the upside-down nature of God’s kingdom, where His priorities often contradict what the world finds important.

Summary Statements

Jesus’s gift of salvation demands humility and surrender.

- We can affirm that eternal life cannot be achieved by human achievement.
- We can be encouraged knowing salvation is received as a gift from God.
- We can know that following Jesus is worth it, no matter what it costs—the greatest reward being eternal life.

Memory Verse

Matthew 19:26

Key Doctrine

Salvation

There is no salvation apart from personal faith in Jesus Christ as Lord.
(See John 14:6; Acts 4:12.)



For additional commentary, see the Leader Guide or Adult Commentary, available for purchase at [goExploreTheBible.com](https://www.goExploreTheBible.com).

DISCUSSION PLAN

ENGAGE

Bonus: What makes work satisfying for you?

- An ideology once prevalent in America is something called the “Protestant work ethic.” In its genuine expression, a strong work ethic is a logical progression from one’s relationship with God.
- It is an abuse of this tradition, however, to think that work is the means to a right relationship with God rather than an expression of it. The reasoning of some people is, the harder you work, the better chance of earning God’s favor.

Do you agree or disagree that nothing is free and everything worth having must be worked for? Explain. (PSG, p. 63)

EXPLORE

UNWILLING (MATT. 19:16-22)

What are some common views on how to receive eternal life? (PSG, p. 67)

- While blessing some children (Matt. 19:13-15), a man came and knelt at Jesus’s feet (see Mark 10:17). From verses 20-22, we learn he was young and rich. Luke 18:18 states that he was a ruler, perhaps in the synagogue.
- From all indications, his question was sincere. Unlike the religious leaders who asked questions to trap Jesus, he sensed that something was missing from his life.
- Jesus urged the man to “keep the commandments.” He was not encouraging salvation by works, but He was trying to help him see his own sinfulness. The law cannot save anyone, but it reminds people of where they fall short.
- In response, the man asked Jesus to be specific. Jesus responded by listing commandments from the “second table.” These commands dealt with human relationships.
- The man confidently replied that he had kept all of these; however, Jesus saw a gaping hole in his relationship with God. The command to sell his possessions was a test that revealed how the man related to the first commands, the commandments that focused on honoring God above all else.
- The would-be disciple walked away “grieving.” He could not release his idols. As a result, he could not follow Jesus completely or find the eternal life he sought.

Bonus: What personal idols are hindering your relationship with God—and others?

POSSIBLE (MATT. 19:23-26)

Bonus: How do you define being “rich”? Why?

- Based on first-century Jewish beliefs, wealthy people were closer to God because of His obvious blessing on their lives. So, Jesus’s statement that it was “hard” for the wealthy to get into the kingdom was startling.

- Using hyperbole, Jesus compared it to squeezing a camel through a needle’s eye. The camel was the largest animal most Jews would ever see, while the eye of a needle was the smallest opening they could fathom.
- The disciples were astonished, but Jesus reminded them that nothing is impossible with God. Rich people who trust God find eternal life. Salvation and entrance into the kingdom is dependent on God and God alone.

Why was Jesus so hard on rich people? (PSG, p. 68)

Bonus: Why would rich people struggle with matters of faith?

REWARD (MATT. 19:27-30)

Bonus: How does our culture respond to sacrifice? How does that affect the way you think about it?

- Speaking for all the disciples, Peter wanted to know how this applied to them. They had left everything to follow Jesus and wanted assurance that their sacrifice was not in vain.
- Jesus promised that they would be rewarded, despite coming persecution and the possibility of death. In fact, He noted that anyone who followed Him would find that what they gained surpassed anything they might give up.
- Those who might seem to be in last place by the world’s standards would be first in God’s paradigm.

What have you left behind to follow Jesus? (PSG, p. 70)

CHALLENGE

As a group, discuss the concept that everything worth having must be worked for.

How might your group help others to correct their understanding of salvation by grace and not by works? (PSG, p. 71)

Encourage individuals to write a brief paragraph outlining the things they have given up to follow Jesus.

How do you think Jesus would evaluate that paragraph? (PSG, p. 71)

FURTHER DISCUSSION



Scan here for additional discussion questions for this week’s study.

BIBLE SKILL (PSG, P. 70)

Dig deeper into a doctrine or biblical teaching.

Compare Jesus’s teachings in Matthew 19:16-22 to Matthew 6:19-24. Identify Jesus’s statements in chapter 6 that are represented in the life of the would-be disciple in chapter 19. Reflect on the following: ***How might possessions become detrimental to a believers’ commitment to follow Jesus? What are some things that God might be calling you to surrender in order to follow Him?***

Draw two columns on the board. Direct the group to complete the Bible Skill activity on page 70 of the PSG, with half the adults examining Matthew 19:16-22 and the other half examining Matthew 6:19-24. After a few minutes, allow volunteers from each side to share their findings. Record the responses for Matthew 19 in one column and for Matthew 6 in the other. Discuss the results. Lead adults to answer the questions included in the Bible Skill activity.

OBJECT LESSON: UMBRELLA

Bring an umbrella to the session. Lead a brief discussion about how an umbrella can protect us from either the heat of the sun or rain and other precipitation. Explain: *While it’s not a perfect comparison, God also protects us. He covers us with the umbrella of His grace. But many choose to step outside that protection and face storms and heat alone.*

Allow the group to suggest reasons why people might want to go their own way instead of trusting in the guidance and protection Jesus provides. Encourage the group to consider why they personally struggle to trust their lives, families, finances, and futures to Jesus. Challenge adults to spend time in prayer this week, reflecting on areas where they fight to maintain control and asking God to forgive them for stepping outside the protection of His umbrella.

THE COST OF FOLLOWING JESUS

When Jesus encouraged the rich man to follow Him (Matt. 19:21), He wasn’t inviting him to an improved moral life. He was calling him into discipleship—a full reorientation of identity, allegiance, and purpose.

The Greek word translated “follow” literally means “come after.” It’s the call of a master to a student and involves more than mere belief. It means walking where the master walks, listening to His teaching, obeying His commands, and being with Him.

It’s not easy. Jesus’s command exposed the young man’s heart. He loved his possessions more than he loved Christ. His sorrowful departure shows that the cost was higher than he was willing to pay.

He’s not alone. In Luke 9:57-62, Jesus confronted some would-be followers who offered conditional obedience. Jesus responded with blunt clarity, “No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God” (v. 62).

In Luke 14:26-27, Jesus said that following Him means hating those closest to you. He wasn’t endorsing neglect or cruelty. Rather, He was emphasizing that He must be supreme in the lives of His people. Matthew 10:37 makes this point even more clearly:

“The one who loves a father or mother more than me is not worthy of me.” Everything we call “ours”—comforts, jobs, families, and plans—are at His disposal.

Though the cost of following Jesus is unquestionably high, Jesus made it clear that the reward is infinitely greater. Bottom line: Jesus is worthy. Like Peter and the others, we may find ourselves tempted to ask, “What about me? Look what I’ve given up!” In those moments, Jesus graciously reminds us that nothing we leave behind for His sake is ever lost.

In Christ, we receive far more than we ever give up. Whatever we sacrifice for Jesus—comfort, status, relationships, or security—will be repaid many times over, whether in this life or (most likely) in the age to come.

BONUS CONTENT



The Synoptic Gospels

Learn more about how the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke offer a unified yet distinct portrait of Jesus’s life and ministry.

Grace

JESUS OFFERS GRACE TO ALL PEOPLE.

Matthew 20:1-16

1 “For the kingdom of heaven is like a **landowner** ^A who went out **early in the morning** ^B to hire workers for his **vineyard**. ^C 2 After agreeing with the workers on one **denarius**, ^D he sent them into his vineyard for the day. 3 When he went out about nine in the morning, he saw others standing in the **marketplace** ^E doing nothing. 4 He said to them, ‘You also go into my vineyard, and I’ll give you whatever is right.’ So off they went. 5 About noon and about three, he went out again and did the same thing. 6 Then **about five** ^F he went and found others standing around and said to them, ‘Why have you been standing here all day doing nothing?’ 7 ‘Because no one hired us,’ they said to him. ‘You also go into my vineyard,’ he told them. 8 When evening came, the owner of the vineyard told his foreman, ‘Call the workers and give them their pay, **starting with the last** ^G and ending with the first.’ 9 When those who were hired about five came, they each received one denarius. 10 So when the first ones came, they **assumed** ^H they would get more, but they also received a denarius each. 11 When they received it, they began to complain to the landowner: 12 ‘These last men put in one hour, and you made them equal to us who bore the burden of the day’s work and the burning heat.’ 13 He replied to one of them, ‘Friend, I’m doing you **no wrong**. ^I Didn’t you agree with me on a denarius? 14 Take what’s yours and go. I want to give this last man the same as I gave you. 15 Don’t I have the right to do what I want with what is mine? Are you jealous because I’m **generous**?’ ^J 16 So the **last will be first**, ^K and the first last.”

Exploring Key Words

- A** “Master of a house” (ESV). In this parable, the landowner represents God.
- B** Around 6 a.m., the start of a typical 12-hour Jewish workday during harvest season.
- C** Vineyards were common images in Jesus’s parables (see Matt. 21:28-32; Mark 12:1-9; John 15:1-6). Often in Scripture, vineyards symbolize the nation of Israel (Isa. 5:1-7).
- D** A typical day’s wage. This would have been considered fair compensation for a day’s work in the vineyard.
- E** Day laborers would gather in the market and wait to be hired. This landowner made several trips to the marketplace to enlist workers.
- F** These workers would put in only one hour of work, in contrast to the early workers who had been in the vineyard for nearly twelve hours.
- G** The law demanded workers be paid at the end of the day. Jesus used paying the men in reverse order to establish the main point of His parable.
- H** “Thought” (ESV; NASB); “expected” (NIV). It would be natural for the early workers to expect more than those who worked only an hour.
- I** “Unfair” (NIV; NLT). While the landowner’s pay may have been surprising, it was fair. He had lived up to their agreement.
- J** The landowner had the right to do what he chose with his own resources. His generosity to those hired at 5 p.m. reflects God’s grace and generosity in offering salvation to everyone.
- K** Jesus was reiterating His message about judgment and rewards in Matthew 19:30. Those considered “last” by the world will be honored in God’s kingdom.



NOTES

Workers Hired (Matt. 20:1-7)

- Jesus told a parable about a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire workers for his vineyard. He agreed to pay them the usual daily wage of one denarius.
- The landowner hired more workers at nine in the morning, at noon, and at three and five in the afternoon.

Equally Paid (Matt. 20:8-12)

- At the end of the workday, the landowner paid the laborers, starting with the group that came in last. He gave each worker one denarius, regardless of the number of hours they worked.
- Those who worked longer hours complained, thinking they deserved more pay.

Grace Exemplified (Matt. 20:13-16)

- The landowner in the parable told the workers he had the right to be generous to whomever He chose. He had agreed to pay the early workers one denarius, and he kept that promise. He was not being unfair by paying the others the same amount.
- Echoing His teaching in Matthew 19:30, Jesus again said that “the last will be first, and the first last” (v. 16).

Summary Statements

Jesus offers grace to all people.

- We can trust God to always do what is right.
- We should be thankful God gives us more than we deserve.
- We should never cease to be amazed by God’s grace.

Memory Verse

Matthew 20:16

Key Doctrine

God

God is infinite in holiness and all other perfections. (See Isaiah 40:25; Matthew 6:9.)



For additional commentary,
see the Leader Guide
or Adult Commentary,
available for purchase at
goExploreTheBible.com.

ENGAGE

Bonus: How do you know when you're being treated fairly? What standard do you use?

- Everybody wants to be treated fairly. We become resentful when we perceive we have not received equal treatment. "Unfair," we cry as we demand justice. "He got a bigger piece of cake!" "Her bonus was larger than mine."
- We always want what we think we deserve. Yet life often is unfair. Life never levels the playing field for all those participating. Some are treated better, while others are pushed down. But all suffer the inequalities of life.

Why do you think we perceive life as being continually unfair? (PSG, p. 72)

EXPLORE

WORKERS HIRED (MATT. 20:1-7)

Bonus: Why is trust important in the workplace? How do you see trust demonstrated in these verses?

- This parable by Jesus is like other parables about the rule and reign of God. The "kingdom of heaven" is the sovereign rule of God over all things. The kingdom has a ruler—God the Father, along with the Lord Jesus Christ. The kingdom also has subjects—those who have entered a relationship with God through faith in Jesus.
- In the parable, the landowner, symbolizing God, arose early to hire some workers for his vineyard. Early morning would be around 6 a.m. He reached an agreement with these men to work all day for a "denarius," the common daily wage in first-century Israel.
- The landowner returned to the marketplace to hire more workers at 9 a.m., noon, and 3 p.m. With each of these groups, he promised to pay "whatever is right" (v. 4). He also hired a final group around 5 p.m. with no mention of how much he would pay them.

What is the significance of the detail about the landowner and workers agreeing on the amount of pay? (PSG, p. 75)

EQUALLY PAID (MATT. 20:8-12)

How do people today question God's fairness? How do some view His just nature? (PSG, p. 77)

- The law of Moses specified that day laborers were to be paid daily (Deut. 24:15). Their families would depend on that pay for daily expenses. So, the landowner ordered his foremen to pay the men "when evening came."
- Interestingly, the foreman started by paying the men who had come last. While the landowner could pay the workers however he wished, this reversed order helped set the stage for the parable's larger point.

- Those who had been in the vineyard all day saw what others were being paid. So, when the 5 p.m. crew received a full denarius for just an hour's work, they took notice. They assumed they would receive more.
- However, the 6 a.m. workers also received a denarius. Offended, they grew angry and began to complain. They failed to recognize that the owner had not given any of the workers what they deserved, but what they needed.

Bonus: When has God given you what you needed instead of what you deserved?

GRACE EXEMPLIFIED (MATT. 20:13-16)

Bonus: How can you nurture contentment and appreciation in your life?

- In response to the workers' complaints, the landowner affirmed that he had done them "no wrong." He had kept his word by paying them a day's wage for a day's work. He had honored their bargain. They were just jealous.
- He also had the right to pay workers any amount he wanted. His generosity toward the other workers did not diminish his integrity toward those hired at 6 a.m.
- Jesus taught that participation in the kingdom of heaven is not based on human effort, but on the benevolence of God. All of us stand condemned before God and desperately need His generous grace. Jesus emphasized that God is both just (fair) and generous.

What does this parable teach us about comparing ourselves to others? (PSG, p. 79)

CHALLENGE

As a group, discuss the main point of Jesus's parable in these verses.

How should it impact the way we evaluate ourselves in relation to others? How does it impact the way we relate to others? (PSG, p. 80)

Challenge individuals to spend time in prayer, contemplating God's incredible love and grace toward us.

On a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being very often, how often do you feel you must earn God's love by doing right things and thinking right thoughts? (PSG, p. 80)

FURTHER DISCUSSION



Scan here for additional discussion questions for this week's study.

BONUS IDEAS

BIBLE SKILL (PSG, P. 79)

Use Bible study resources to gain more insight into a passage.

Read articles on “vineyards” and “denarius” from a Bible dictionary. Record significant insights you gain as you consider what you read in light of this session’s focal passages. In addition, consider what made the setting of Jesus’s parable (hiring day-laborers to work in a vineyard) so effective for the audience He was addressing.

Provide several Bible dictionaries for the group. Direct adults to complete the Bible Skill activity on page 79 of the PSG. Encourage them to record their thoughts in the space provided under the Bible Skill description on page 79. After a few minutes, allow a few volunteers to share their findings. Affirm that Jesus used a familiar setting to teach His followers an important lesson about God’s grace and how one enters His kingdom.

OBJECT LESSON: MONEY

Prior to the session, collect the amount of money that represents what you were paid per hour in your first job. Show this to the group. Allow others to share what they made in their first jobs.

Note that the amount might seem paltry today, but most people are thrilled to receive those early paychecks. Briefly discuss how easy it can be for discontent and ingratitude to set in when it comes to being paid. Apply this principle to the workers described in Matthew 20:8-12. Affirm that while it was natural for the early workers to expect to receive more, the landowner was just being generous to those who came to the vineyard late. Emphasize that his generosity did not harm the ones who had worked all day.

Challenge adults to consider how they might “expect” more from Jesus than others get. Say: *If any of us got what we really deserved, we would be lost and without hope.* Remind them that all of us rely on God’s grace.

DIG DEEPER

WAGES AND GRACE

A surprising twist concerning daily wages is the central focus of Jesus’s parable in Matthew 20:1-16. Every laborer, regardless of when they began working for the generous landowner, received the same wage—one denarius (20:2). In the first century, a denarius was a fair day’s wage for a common laborer.¹ Every servant standing idle in the marketplace was hoping and waiting to receive work and to be paid at the end of the day. According to the Mosaic law, wages were to be paid daily (Lev. 19:13; Deut. 24:14-15). Withholding pay was condemned in both the Old and New Testaments (Mal. 3:5; Jer. 22:13; Jas. 5:4).

Jesus used something familiar—a daily wage—to communicate something profound. The kingdom of God operates by grace, not merit. He had suggested as much when He talked to His disciples about rich people in Matthew 19. There, He emphasized that God’s mercy was the key to salvation, not positions or possessions.

In this parable, the landowner did exactly what he said he would do (Matt. 20:13-14). But he also chose to show generosity to those who worked less time

(20:15). While the early workers grumbled (20:11), the landowner reminded them that his mercy toward others did not diminish what he provided for them. It wasn’t a matter of justice. It was about grace. Likewise, what we receive from God does not align with what we’ve given Him. None of us can earn salvation. We receive it through the generosity of the Master.

So, instead of comparing daily wages, we should marvel at divine grace. God does not shortchange His people. He gives us far more than we could ever deserve. Or as Paul put it in Romans 4:4-5, “Now to the one who works, pay is not credited as a gift, but as something owed. But to the one who does not work, but believes on him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited for righteousness.”

1. Blomberg, Craig L., “Matthew,” *New American Commentary*, vol 22. (Nashville: B&H Publishers, 1992), 302.

Authority

JESUS HOLDS ALL AUTHORITY, AND THOSE WHO REJECT HIM
WILL BE CONDEMNED.

Matthew 21:23-32

23 When he entered the temple, the **chief priests and the elders** **A** of the people came to him as he was teaching and said, “By what authority are you doing **these things**? **B** Who gave you this **authority**?” **C** **24** Jesus answered them, “I will also ask you one **question**, **D** and if you answer it for me, then I will tell you by what authority I do these things. **25** Did **John’s baptism** **E** come from heaven, or was it of human origin?” They discussed it among themselves, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ he will say to us, ‘Then why didn’t you believe him?’ **26** But if we say, ‘Of human origin,’ we’re **afraid of the crowd**, **F** because everyone considers John to be a prophet.” **27** So they answered Jesus, “We don’t know.” And he said to them, “**Neither will I tell you** **G** by what authority I do these things. **28** What do you think? **A man had two sons**. **H** He went to the first and said, ‘My son, go work in the vineyard today.’ **29** He answered, ‘I don’t want to,’ but later he **changed his mind** **I** and went. **30** Then the man went to the other and said the same thing. ‘I will, sir,’ he answered, but he didn’t go. **31** Which of the two **did his father’s will**?” **J** They said, “The first.” Jesus said to them, “Truly I tell you, tax collectors and prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God **before you**. **K** **32** For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and **you didn’t believe him**. **L** Tax collectors and prostitutes did believe him; but you, when you saw it, didn’t even change your minds then and believe him.”

Exploring Key Words

- A** Members of the Sanhedrin. These leaders held a great deal of authority over temple activities.
- B** Possibly Jesus’s teaching, but more likely the cleansing of the temple in Matthew 21:12-13.
- C** To the religious leaders, Jesus lacked the credentials and rabbinical training to teach this way, especially in the temple.
- D** The rabbinic method included debate built around questions. Religious leaders used it to try to trap Jesus. Here, He used it to respond to them.
- E** John’s ministry was popular with the people but despised by the religious elite. Jesus challenged them to identify the “origin” of John’s work.
- F** A fundamental weakness of the religious leaders was that they cared more about human opinion than God’s opinion.
- G** Jesus knew the answer to their question—just as they knew the answer to His question. But He felt no obligation to respond directly since they refused to deal with Him sincerely.
- H** While He refused to respond directly, Jesus would use this parable to answer the leaders’ question and affirm His authority.
- I** “Repented” (KJV). The Greek implies regret. A changed heart led to changed behavior.
- J** Obedience is the primary indication of one’s genuine relationship with God (John 14:15).
- K** Another way to affirm that the last will be first (Matt. 19:30; 20:16). God honors those who obey Him, not those going through the motions.
- L** Jesus answered His own question by calling out the leaders’ disdain for John and his message. Their lack of belief would keep them out of the kingdom.



Authority Challenged (Matt. 21:23-27)

- The day after Jesus overturned the tables of the money changers in the temple, the religious leaders confronted Him. They demanded to know by what authority He did these things.
- Jesus responded by asking them to identify where John the Baptist obtained his authority. He wanted them to say if the origin of John's ministry was divine or human in nature.
- When they said that they didn't know, Jesus refused to answer their question about His authority.

Authority Recognized (Matt. 21:28-32)

- Jesus told a parable about a man who directed his two sons to work in his vineyard. The first son refused at first before changing his mind and obeying. The second son agreed to go, but he never went.
- The religious leaders recognized that it was the first son who did his father's will. Then, Jesus explained that they were more like the second son. They appeared to honor God's words, but they rejected Him in their hearts.
- Jesus noted that tax collectors and prostitutes—those who initially disobeyed God, but repented—would enter the kingdom of God before (or "instead of") the religious leaders.

Summary Statements

Jesus holds all authority, and those who reject Him will be condemned.

- We can expect some to oppose or reject Jesus's authority.
- We demonstrate our acceptance of Jesus's authority by our obedience to Him.

Memory Verse

Philippians 2:9

Key Doctrine

God

To Him we owe the highest love, reverence, and obedience. (See 1 Peter 1:15-17; Hebrews 12:28-29.)



For additional commentary, see the Leader Guide or Adult Commentary, available for purchase at [goExploreTheBible.com](https://www.explorethebible.com).

ENGAGE

What are the results of rejecting established authority? (PSG, p. 81)

- Steady erosion can eventually undermine a building's foundation, resulting in destruction. In the same way, erosion of respect for authority can undermine an institution, a business, a government, or a country.
- Authority includes the right to influence or command another, but the weight of authority is eroding in our society. Fewer and fewer people respect or even recognize authority. Many actively reject established authorities.

Bonus: What characteristics make an authority figure worthy of respect and allegiance? Why are these qualities so important?

EXPLORE

AUTHORITY CHALLENGED (MATT. 21:23-27)

Bonus: What has to be true for you to challenge authority? How does that compare to the religious leaders challenging Jesus here?

- After driving money changers out of the temple the previous day, Jesus was confronted by “the chief priests and the elders.” The “chief priests” would have included the most powerful leaders in the temple, including the high priest. The “elders” referred to influential Pharisees and Sadducees. They all would have been members of the ruling body known as the Sanhedrin.
- In the leaders' minds, Jesus did not carry the proper credentials to be a teacher or leader. He had not gone through the training and ordination to be recognized as a rabbi. So, they demanded to know what right He had to do what He was doing and to say what He was saying.
- Jesus recognized that the leaders were setting a trap for Him. This was not the first time they had questioned His authority since they had accused him of blasphemy in the past and attributed His miracles to Satan. So, in response, He asked them a question: *Was John the Baptist's ministry from God or of human origin?*
- The leaders faced a dilemma. They could admit to how they truly felt about John's ministry, but that would expose them to the wrath of the people, who respected John greatly. Or they could admit that John was a prophet with divine authority—and, by association, admit that Jesus also carried God's authority.
- Faced with a no-win situation, they simply said, “We don't know.” It wasn't that they didn't know, but that they refused to admit the truth. Because they refused to answer His question, Jesus refused to answer them. He was not going to fall into their trap.

For what reasons do people not accept Jesus's authority? (PSG, p. 85)

AUTHORITY RECOGNIZED (MATT. 21:28-32)

Bonus: Is it possible to honor someone's authority without submitting to them? Why or why not?

- To further indict the leaders, Jesus told a parable about a man and his two sons. Jesus was equating both sons to the Jewish people. So, this was a parable about the response to Jesus by the people of Israel, including the religious leaders.
- Both sons received the father's instructions to work in the vineyard (which symbolized the nation of Israel). The men responded in different ways. The first refused to go initially, but he later changed his mind (literally, “repented”) and went to work. The second promised to work, but he never came to the vineyard.
- The chief priests and elders recognized that the first son ultimately honored his father's will. In doing so, they condemned themselves because they were more like the second son. So-called “sinners” who had rejected God's way were repenting and coming to Him. Meanwhile, the leaders looked good, but their empty religion did not support their claims of a special relationship with God.
- Jesus said the outcasts would enter the kingdom, while the leaders would be stuck on the outside looking in. Their rejection of John—and Jesus—left them standing condemned by God and under His judgment.

Practically speaking, what does it look like to recognize Jesus's authority? (PSG, p. 87)

CHALLENGE

As a group, discuss the consequences of rejecting the authority of Jesus over your life.

What steps might each of your group members take to ensure they recognize and respect Jesus's authority? (PSG, p. 88)

Challenge individuals to consider how some human leaders derive their authority from God.

Based on this, why is obedience to Jesus absolutely essential? Who might be some delegated authorities in your life? (PSG, p. 88)

FURTHER DISCUSSION



Scan here for additional discussion questions for this week's study.

BIBLE SKILL (PSG, P. 87)

Use a Bible dictionary to learn more about people in the Bible.

Using a Bible dictionary, collect information on the following topics: the chief priests, the elders, tax collectors, and prostitutes in first-century Israel. Reflect on the role each played in Jesus's ministry.

How did each one impact Jesus's message and ministry? Spend time in prayer asking God to help you understand Jesus's work more clearly and to relate to people in a way that reflects His character.

Encourage adults to share what they know about chief priests and elders in Jesus's day. Ask: **How did they feel about tax collectors and prostitutes?** Direct the group to work in pairs to complete the Bible Skill activity on page 87 of the PSG. After a few minutes, allow volunteers to share what their teams discussed. Highlight the contrast Jesus drew between these two groups in today's focal verses.

OBJECT LESSON: REFEREE'S JERSEY

Bring a referee's striped jersey to the Bible study. As you show adults the shirt, encourage them to share what it stands for during a game. Emphasize that referees are considered the authority during a game. They identify rule violations, and they enforce the punishment for those violations.

Highlight how the religious leaders tried to question Jesus's authority in these verses. Point out that by refusing to answer Jesus, they actually were validating His authority. Note that the parable in verses 28-32 simply affirmed what they were fighting to discredit.

Ask: **How did Jesus demonstrate His authority on earth?** Stress that Jesus ultimately revealed His authority by accomplishing the Father's will (v. 31). Share that His death and resurrection validated His identity and His authority as God's Son. Note that our obedience also demonstrates Jesus's authority in our lives each day.

REPENTANCE

The primary Greek word that is rendered "repentance" in the New Testament is *metanoēō*, which means to "change one's mind." It involves more than just altering our thoughts, though. It demonstrates a "deeply seated and thorough turning from self to God."¹

The Old Testament background for repentance indicates there is no distinction between changing one's mind and changing one's actions. It refers to a turning away from sin and turning to God (see Jer. 3:22-4:2; Hos. 14:1-3). In the New Testament, repentance characterized both the ministry of John the Baptist and Jesus (Matt. 3:8,11; Luke 5:32). It remains the ongoing message of the church until Jesus returns (Luke 24:47; Acts 2:38; 20:21; 2 Pet. 3:9).

In Matthew 21:29, Jesus used a different, but related, word to describe the first son's response: *metamelomai*. This word often conveys the idea of regret or remorse. In 2 Corinthians 7:8-10, both terms are used. Paul shared that he didn't "regret" (*metamelomai*) sending a harsh letter because it ultimately produced "repentance" (*metanoēō*).

While *metamelomai* often focuses on emotions (such as regret), *metanoēō* emphasizes a holistic response—turning from sin and toward God. Still, true repentance includes both remorse and obedience.

This overlapping meaning is present in Matthew 21. The first son's regret (*metamelomai*) led to obedience. In contrast, the religious leaders' refusal to "change [their] minds" (Matt. 21:32) was evidence of disobedience and unbelief.

Jesus challenges us to see repentance as more than mere lip service. It is a change of heart that shows up in a changed life. It warns us that where there is no repentance, there will be judgment (21:33-46). However, it also encourages us that it is never too late to repent and trust in Jesus Christ.

1. *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*. (Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 2003), 1376.

Honor

BELIEVERS' HIGHEST CALLING IS TO HONOR GOD IN EVERY ASPECT OF THEIR LIVES.

Matthew 22:15-22,34-40

15 Then the **Pharisees** **A** went and plotted how to **trap him** **B** by what he said. **16** So they sent their disciples to him, along with the **Herodians**. **C** “Teacher,” they said, “we know that you are truthful and teach truthfully the **way of God**. **D** You don’t care what anyone thinks nor do you show **partiality**. **E** **17** Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to **pay taxes to Caesar** **F** or not?” **18** Perceiving their malicious intent, Jesus said, “Why are you testing me, **hypocrites**? **G** **19** Show me the coin used for the tax.” They brought him a denarius. **20** “Whose **image and inscription** **H** is this?” he asked them. **21** “Caesar’s,” they said to him. Then he said to them, “**Give**, **I** then, to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” **22** When they heard this, they were amazed. So they left him and went away. [. . .] **34** When the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the **Sadducees**, **J** they came together. **35** And one of them, an expert in the law, asked a question to test him: **36** “Teacher, which command in the law is **the greatest**?” **K** **37** He said to him, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. **38** This is the greatest and most important command. **39** The **second is like it**: **L** Love your neighbor as yourself. **40** **All the Law and the Prophets** **M** depend on these two commands.”

Exploring Key Words

- A** The largest religious group in Israel. Pharisees focused on keeping the law and the oral traditions more than on political issues.
- B** “Entangle him” (KJV; ESV). This is the only time this Greek word (*pagideuó*) appears in the New Testament. It suggests a hunter setting a snare.
- C** Jews who were loyal to Herod Antipas. The Herodians likely viewed Jesus as a political, not religious, threat.
- D** The ethical demands of God’s law, similar to “the way of righteousness” (Matt. 21:32).
- E** “Regardest not the person of men” (KJV); “not swayed by appearances” (ESV). Jesus was not influenced by popular opinion.
- F** Probably an annual one-denarius tax paid by all men and women who were not Roman citizens.
- G** Originally, an actor who performs wearing a mask. By the first century, it carried a moral connotation related to insincerity or false virtue.
- H** The denarius had an image of the emperor on one side and the inscription of “God and High Priest” on the other.
- I** “Render” (KJV; ESV). To give what is rightfully due. Caesar was due the tax, but that did not diminish one’s ability to honor and worship God.
- J** The wealthy, priestly class. Sadducees were more political and controlled the temple.
- K** Jewish scholars often debated how to rank commands in the law.
- L** Quoting Leviticus 19:18, Jesus placed loving your neighbor alongside loving God. One cannot love God without loving neighbors (1 John 4:20).
- M** The entirety of the Hebrew Scriptures rests on the foundation of loving God and loving others.



Government Authority (Matt. 22:15-22)

- The Pharisees and Herodians wanted to catch Jesus in a verbal trap so they could arrest and condemn Him. They asked Him if it was “lawful to pay taxes to Caesar or not” (v. 17).
- If Jesus approved of paying taxes, it could be viewed as support for the Roman occupation. If He rejected the taxes, it could be viewed as treason against Rome.
- Jesus stunned them with His answer: Give human governments what they are due, and give God all that He is due.

God’s Authority (Matt. 22:34-40)

- Later, another Pharisee, an expert in the law, approached Jesus and asked Him to identify the greatest commandment.
- Jesus replied that the greatest command was to love God with the entirety of one’s being. However, He followed this with a second command to love one’s neighbor as oneself.
- He emphasized that all of the commands and teachings of the Hebrew Scriptures relied on these directives to love God and love others.

Summary Statements

Believers’ highest calling is to honor God in every aspect of their lives.

- We are called to submit to government officials and laws.
- We are to honor God exclusively as the one true God and to love our neighbor as ourselves.

Memory Verse

Matthew 22:37-38

Key Doctrine

The Christian and Social Order

Means and methods used for the improvement of society and the establishment of righteousness among men can be truly and permanently helpful only when they are rooted in the regeneration of the individual by the saving grace of God in Jesus Christ. (See Romans 13:1-2; 1 Timothy 2:1-2.)



For additional commentary, see the Leader Guide or Adult Commentary, available for purchase at [goExploreTheBible.com](https://www.goExploreTheBible.com).

ENGAGE

What is your highest allegiance in life? (PSG, p. 89)

- For years in schools across America, each morning began with saying the Pledge of Allegiance. As children, we were taught to honor and respect the American flag and the nation it represented.
- That is one of many allegiances in life. We give honor and loyalty to any number of causes and people. The critical issue is how we select what we honor. Allegiance to wrong things leads to potential disaster.
- Allegiance to honorable things can result in more joy and fulfillment in life. Choose wisely.

Bonus: What are some patriotic symbols? What makes these symbols so significant to us?

EXPLORE

GOVERNMENT AUTHORITY (MATT. 22:15-22)

What does it look like to honor our government in today's culture? (PSG, p. 93)

- Once again, the religious leaders were trying to trap Jesus. In order to hide their scheme, they sent their “disciples” to Him. They were joined by the Herodians, a group of Jews who were loyal to Herod and friendly with the Romans. Normally, these two groups hated one another, but they saw Jesus as a common threat.
- The confrontation began with flattery: “we know that you are truthful.” Their hook was covered with honey to catch Jesus off guard. The flattery continued when they said Jesus could not be swayed by what others think.
- Their question would have caught the attention of most Jews: Was it lawful to “pay taxes to Caesar?” Jews despised Roman taxation because it reminded them of the Empire’s occupation. Plus, the coin used to pay the tax—a denarius—carried Caesar’s image and an inscription that proclaimed him as “God and High Priest.”
- Jesus’s foes believed they had Him in a corner. If He answered “yes,” the people likely would turn on Him. If he said “no,” He could be accused of treason.
- Recognizing their malice, Jesus called the Pharisees and Herodians out as “hypocrites.” He also called for someone to bring Him a denarius so He could make His point.
- Jesus said to “Give . . . to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” The idea was to give both Caesar and God what they were due.
- Jesus recognized the legitimate responsibility of His people to obey the government, including the payment of taxes. But believers’ ultimate duty is to honor and worship God, the Creator and Giver of all things. Jesus’s response laid a foundation for Christianity’s relationship with the government moving forward (see Rom. 13:1-7).

Bonus: How do you struggle with honoring the government? How does Jesus’s teaching alter your thinking?

GOD’S AUTHORITY (MATT. 22:34-40)

Bonus: If a friend asked you what God cared about most, how would you respond?

- Later, an “expert in the law” tested Jesus with another question: “Which command in the law is the greatest?” The rabbis taught that Moses received 613 laws on Mount Sinai, and they often debated how to prioritize them.
- Jesus answered the question directly. Quoting the *Shema* (Deut. 6:4-5), He said that God’s people must love the Lord “with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.” Mark’s Gospel added “strength” to the list. Loving God wholeheartedly is the “greatest and most important” command.
- Jesus added a second command. From Leviticus 19:18, He said we should “love your neighbor as yourself.” These twin commands emphasize both our vertical relationship with God and our horizontal relationship with others. Our love is incomplete if one (or both) is lacking.
- Jesus also shared that “all the Law and the Prophets” hung on these truths. Without love for God and love for others, genuine faith is worthless and collapses.

What’s at the heart of this command to love other people? What does this demonstrate? (PSG, p. 95)

CHALLENGE

As a group, talk about some reasons people might not be giving God His due.

Discuss with your Bible study group various ways followers of Jesus can demonstrate their allegiance to God. (PSG, p. 96)

Challenge adults to consider what areas of their lives are getting the greatest focus these days.

How is God honored in the various aspects of your life? Identify a next step you might take in one of those areas to honor God more. (PSG, p. 96)

FURTHER DISCUSSION



Scan here for additional discussion questions for this week’s study.

BIBLE SKILL (PSG, P. 95)

Use multiple Scripture passages to understand a Bible passage.

In Matthew 22:17-21, Jesus spoke about giving to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's. Compare this to Acts 5:27-29; Romans 13:1-7; and 1 Peter 2:13-17. Based on all these passages, write a description of the Christian's responsibilities toward government.

Direct attention to the Bible Skill on page 95 of the PSG. Encourage adults to complete the activity, reading and reflecting on the verses mentioned. After a few minutes, allow volunteers to share their description of a Christian's responsibility toward the government. To supplement the discussion, share the four points from the "Dig Deeper" feature below. Challenge adults to focus on being good citizens, even as they seek ways to give God all the honor and worship He deserves.

OBJECT LESSON: QUARTER

Invite all adults to look at a quarter that you've brought to the Bible study. Encourage volunteers to share some unique qualities that set quarters apart from other coins or currency. Note that some characteristics make quarters unique from coins minted in other countries.

If it is not mentioned, point out that every quarter has some symbol of allegiance to the United States government, but quarters also carry the words "In God we trust." Encourage adults to consider how this aligns with Jesus's command to give the government what the government is due while giving God all that He is due.

Affirm that honoring the government and honoring God are not mutually exclusive for believers. Challenge adults to let the quarter serve as a reminder that Jesus's people are called to honor God and honor our government.

GOD AND GOVERNMENT

The Pharisees and Herodians tried to trap Jesus by asking him about paying taxes. Jesus responded with a simple, yet profound, statement: "Give, then, to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's" (Matt. 22:21). This answer provides a foundation for a Christian response to government.

God ordains government. Jesus affirmed the legitimacy of government (Rom. 13:1-2; 1 Pet. 2:13-14). While governments vary, the basic principle remains that God has instituted authority to uphold justice, restrain evil, and promote good (Gen. 9:5-7).

God is sovereign over the government. Though Caesar's image was on a coin, every human being bears the image of God (1:27). Jesus's call to "give . . . to God the things that are God's" does not separate the things of Caesar from the things of God. Instead, Jesus affirmed God's sovereignty. Our highest allegiance is to Him; therefore, everything should be submitted to Him.

God has distinct roles for the church and state. God has entrusted human governments with the responsibility of restraining and punishing evil, as well as protecting the lives and possessions of its citizens. Governments are called to promote what is good (Gen. 9:5-7; Rom. 13:3-4; 1 Pet. 2:13-14). Meanwhile, God has entrusted the church with proclaiming the gospel and making disciples (Matt. 28:18-20). The church does not wield political power, and the state does not govern worship.

God calls Christians to be faithful citizens. Jesus's affirmation to "Give, then, to Caesar the things that are Caesar's" not only verifies that God ordains government, but it also expresses the expectation that His people should submit to government. Elsewhere in the New Testament, we see the expectation to obey the law (Rom. 13:1-2), pray for leaders (1 Tim. 2:1-2), and engage others in our community as salt and light witnesses (Matt. 5:13-16).

Alert

JESUS IS COMING BACK.

Matthew 24:36-51

36 “Now concerning that **day and hour** **A** no one knows—neither the angels of heaven nor the Son—except **the Father alone**. **B** 37 As the **days of Noah** **C** were, so the coming of the **Son of Man** **D** will be. 38 For in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day Noah boarded the ark. 39 They didn’t know until the flood came and swept them all away. This is the way the coming of the Son of Man will be. 40 Then two men will be in the field; **one will be taken** **E** and one left. 41 Two women will be grinding grain with a hand mill; one will be taken and one left. 42 Therefore **be alert**, **F** since you don’t know what day your Lord is coming. 43 But know this: If the **homeowner** **G** had known what time the thief was coming, he would have stayed alert and not let his house be broken into. 44 This is why you are also to be ready, because the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect. 45 Who then is a **faithful and wise servant**, **H** whom his master has put in charge of his household, to give them food at the proper time? 46 Blessed is that servant whom the master finds doing his job when he comes. 47 Truly I tell you, he will put him in charge of all his possessions. 48 But if that wicked servant says in his heart, ‘My master is **delayed**,’ **I** 49 and starts to beat his fellow servants, and eats and drinks with drunkards, 50 that servant’s master will come on a day he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know. 51 He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites, where there will be **weeping and gnashing of teeth.**” **J**

Exploring Key Words

- A** The timing of Jesus’s return is unknown. This makes any speculation on our part an exercise in futility.
- B** The unknown timing reveals Jesus’s voluntary limitation of His divine attributes during His incarnation (see Phil 2:6-8).
- C** The timing of Jesus’s second coming is like the arrival of the flood (Gen. 6–7). In Noah’s day, people were going about their business, ignoring the warnings of God’s judgment (Matt. 24:38-39).
- D** Jesus’s favorite way of referring to Himself. Taken from Daniel 7, the term reflects both His full humanity and His full deity.
- E** Jesus’s return will reveal a distinction between people. The illustrations of the men in the field and the women grinding grain (vv. 40-41) means some will experience Christ’s glory, while others will face His judgment.
- F** The best way to be prepared for Jesus’s return is not to speculate about its timing but to live with consistent faithfulness (see 1 Thess. 5:6).
- G** “Master of the house” (ESV). The threat of a robbery would keep the owner of a house alert. Likewise, the assurance of Jesus’s return should keep His people alert and active.
- H** The first servant provides a picture of what faithfulness to God looks like as we wait for Jesus’s return. He was found faithfully “doing his job” (v. 46).
- I** The “wicked servant” used the master’s delay as an excuse to sin. Likewise, many use Jesus’s delay to deny His return, though it really demonstrates grace on His part (2 Pet. 3:9).
- J** Pictures the remorse and anguish of eternity separated from God in hell.



An Unknown Hour (Matt. 24:36-41)

- Earlier in Matthew 24, Jesus's disciples approached Him with questions about signs of His return and the end of the age. He responded with some general signs in verses 4-35.
- However, Jesus explained that no one knows the specific day and hour. Since Jesus voluntarily limited His divine attributes during the Incarnation, even He could not say at that time when He would return.
- Jesus further illustrated this truth by describing two men in a field, where one man will be taken and one left. He also described two women grinding grain. One would be taken and one left.

Be Alert (Matt. 24:42-44)

- Jesus instructed His disciples to remain alert since the day and hour of His return is unknown.
- To illustrate this point, He told a parable about a homeowner who was about to be robbed. If he knew when the intruder would strike, the homeowner would remain alert and prevent the robbery.
- Since His disciples know Jesus is returning, but don't know when, they need to be vigilant and prepared at all times.

Be Faithful (Matt. 24:45-51)

- Jesus shared a second parable that further emphasized the importance of remaining faithful while we await His return.
- In the story, two servants were entrusted with a master's household. One was faithful to continue his tasks. The other refused to prepare for the master's return, assuming he had plenty of time.
- The second man represents those who suddenly realize there is no time left to repent when Christ returns. They will be judged and experience deep remorse.

Summary Statements

Jesus is coming back.

- We can be certain that Jesus will one day return.
- Believers should be ready for Christ's return.
- Believers are to remain faithful while we await Christ's return, stewarding well the resources God has given us.

Memory Verse

Matthew 24:44

Key Doctrine

Last Things

According to His promise, Jesus Christ will return personally and visibly in glory to the earth; the dead will be raised; and Christ will judge all men in righteousness. (See 1 Thessalonians 5:1-3; Revelation 1:7.)



For additional commentary, see the Leader Guide or Adult Commentary, available for purchase at [goExploreTheBible.com](https://www.explorethebible.com).

ENGAGE

What is it about the end of the world that most fascinates or frightens you? (PSG, p. 97)

- Many are curious—and perhaps fearful—about the end of the world. Everyone from survivalists to the general skeptic finds the prospect of the end of the world fascinating.
- We read books and watch movies that portray the final days of the planet. Doomsday theories abound. People want to know the when, how, who, and what regarding the end of the age. In that, we are not too far removed from Jesus's disciples in Matthew's Gospel.

Bonus: What are some popular books and movies that center on the end of the world?

EXPLORE

AN UNKNOWN HOUR (MATT. 24:36-41)

Bonus: What are some common things people try to predict (such as, the weather)? How accurate are those predictions?

- Matthew 24 begins with Jesus's disciples marveling over the temple, but Jesus told them that it would be destroyed. His disciples asked when this would happen and what signs would signal His return and the end of the age.
- The disciples' question implied another question: *When?* The answer was, "no one knows." Jesus voluntarily limited His divine attributes while on earth. So, this information was reserved for "the Father alone" during that season.
- Philippians 2:6-8 speaks of Jesus limiting Himself of divine attributes during His time on earth. Here, Jesus spoke of limitations on His omniscience. Also, since no one knows the time of Christ's return, any attempt to speculate and calculate it is a waste of time and energy.
- Jesus used two illustrations to emphasize the sudden and unexpected nature of His return. First, He said it would be like Noah's flood, when people went about their daily lives unconcerned about the warnings of judgment. Second, He compared it to men in a field and women grinding grain. In each case, one is taken and one is left. One will experience salvation, while the other will experience judgment.

How do the two illustrations given help us better understand the nature of Jesus's return? (PSG, p. 100)

BE ALERT (MATT. 24:42-44)

If Jesus said it is not possible to know the time of His coming, why do people keep trying to predict the date of His return? (PSG, p. 102)

- Since no one knows when Jesus is coming, His followers should remain "alert." The verb used here is in the present tense and calls for continual vigilance.

- Jesus used another illustration for the suddenness of His return—the homeowner and a thief. The threat of a robbery would keep any homeowner on the alert and ready for action. The reality of Jesus's return should be enough to help believers remain vigilant and serving faithfully.
- Verse 44 summarizes the warning to "be ready." The day is unknown (vv. 42-43). Therefore, constant vigilance and alertness is essential.

What does it mean to be ready for Jesus's return? (PSG, p. 102)

BE FAITHFUL (MATT. 24:45-51)

Bonus: How do you occupy yourself while waiting? What does that say about you?

- Jesus told a parable that contrasted two possible responses to His return. This parable featured two servants, one who was faithful and one who was wicked.
- The first servant remained faithful during the master's absence. This servant (symbolizing true believers) was found "doing his job" and was blessed. As Christians, we should not be waiting idly for Christ's return. We should be engaged in the commission He has given us.
- The second servant reasoned that the master's delay gave him liberty to live as he pleased. His behavior denied the master's eventual return. The master judged the wicked slave (symbolizing unbelievers), sending him to a place marked by "weeping and gnashing of teeth"—that is, the agonies of hell and eternal separation from God.

How are you preparing yourself for Jesus's return? (PSG, p. 104)

CHALLENGE

As a group, discuss how people—even believers—tend to fall into the trap of the wicked servant.

What are ways that your group can assist each other in staying alert? (PSG, p. 105)

Challenge individuals to think about ways they can focus on faithfulness during a typical day.

How can you enhance those activities in your daily schedule? Are there other actions you can take to stay alert? (PSG, p. 105)

FURTHER DISCUSSION



Scan here for additional discussion questions for this week's study.

BIBLE SKILL (PSG, P. 104)

Use cross references to learn more about a word or phrase.

In Matthew 24:51, Jesus used the expression “weeping and gnashing of teeth.” Examine these other passages where Jesus used the phrase: Matthew 8:12; 13:42,50; 22:13; 25:30; and Luke 13:28. Observe the context and setting of these passages. Write a summary of what the expression refers to and why it should be a warning to all.

Ask: **What are some things you know about hell?** Allow adults to suggest truths from Scripture. Emphasize that Jesus taught that hell is a real place of real suffering for all of eternity. (Use “Dig Deeper” below to supplement the discussion.) Direct adults to complete the Bible Skill activity on page 104 of the PSG. After a few minutes, discuss the meaning of “weeping and gnashing of teeth.” Affirm again the suffering that will come with eternal separation from God.

OBJECT LESSON: PHONE NOTIFICATIONS

Invite adults to take out their phones and consider any unaddressed notifications they might see. Ask: **How much attention do you pay to the notifications on your phone? How quickly do you respond to them?** Point out that we might choose to ignore a notification—we know it has come and that more will follow.

Explain that the same is true of Jesus’s return. Note that we don’t know when He will come back, but we can be sure that it’s going to happen. Ask: **From what Jesus said in these verses, how should we prepare for His return?** Allow adults to suggest responses. Point out that Jesus used words like “ready” and “alert” to describe the active waiting of His people as they look for Him to come back.

Challenge adults to examine their lives and to see if they are waiting actively for Jesus or waiting idly for Him. Encourage them to spend time in prayer this week, asking God to help them be faithful and active as they await His return.

DIG DEEPER

THE REALITY OF HELL

Three words refer to hell in the New Testament: Gehenna (Matt. 5:22,29-30; 10:28; Mark 9:43,45,47; Luke 12:5; Jas. 3:6), Hades (Matt. 11:23; 16:18; Luke 10:15; 16:23; Acts 2:27,31; Rev. 1:18; 20:13-14), and Tartarus (2 Pet. 2:4). “Gehenna” refers to the valley on the southwestern side of Jerusalem that was once a site for child sacrifice. Some scholars see “Hades” as a temporary place for those who have died physically and are awaiting the final resurrection. It is also marked by suffering (Luke 16:23), but it eventually will give way to Gehenna as the final place of judgment (Rev. 20:13-14; Matt. 25:41). “Tartarus” appears only once in Scripture and refers to a place where sinful angels were kept for judgment.

Jesus’s teaching made two things clear about hell. First, hell is real. Matthew 10:28 emphasizes that hell is not figurative or metaphorical. It is a real place with physical consequences for both body and soul.

Second, hell is eternal. In Matthew 25:46, Jesus contrasted eternal life with eternal punishment. In Mark 9:48, Jesus echoed Isaiah 66:24, describing hell

as a place “where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.” Revelation 14:11 adds, “the smoke of their torment will go up forever and ever.”

In light of the sobering reality of hell, there are three things we must remember:

1. Sin is serious. In every reference to hell, Jesus warns us of the seriousness of sin.

2. Judgment is real. Like the wicked servant in Matthew 24:48-51, we must not assume God’s patience means there will be no accountability.

3. Salvation is found in Christ alone. Jesus never tried to scare anyone into better behavior. Rather, He consistently called listeners to repent and believe (Matt. 10:32-36). New life now and eternal life to come is found only in Jesus.

We are called to confess our sins to Him and accept His death as the payment for our sin. If we reject His offer, we will spend eternity in hell.

Active Faith

THE WAY WE TREAT JESUS'S FOLLOWERS REVEALS THE NATURE OF OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM.

Matthew 25:31-46

31 “When the Son of Man **comes in his glory**, **A** and all the **angels** **B** with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. **32 All the nations** **C** will be gathered before him, and he will separate them one from another, just as a shepherd separates the **sheep from the goats**. **D** **33** He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on the left. **34** Then **the King** **E** will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; inherit the kingdom **prepared for you** **F** from the foundation of the world. **35** For **I was hungry** **G** and you gave me something to eat; I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink; I was a stranger and you took me in; **36** I was naked and you clothed me; I was sick and you took care of me; I was in prison and you visited me.’ **37** Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? **38** When did we see you a stranger and take you in, or without clothes and clothe you? **39** When did we see you sick, or in prison, and visit you?’ **40** And the King will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, **whatever you did** **H** for one of the **least of these** **I** brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’ **41** Then he will also say to those on the left, ‘Depart from me, you who are **cursed**, **J** into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels! **42** For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat; I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink; **43** I was a stranger and you didn’t take me in; I was naked and you didn’t clothe me, sick and in prison and you didn’t take care of me.’ **44** Then they too will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or without clothes, or sick, or in prison, and not help you?’ **45** Then he will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.’ **46** And they will go away into **eternal punishment**, **K** but the righteous into eternal life.”

Exploring Key Words

- A** At the incarnation, Jesus came in humility. At His second coming, though, He will come in power and majesty (Matt. 16:27; 24:30).
- B** Jesus is often described as being accompanied by angels at His return (Matt. 16:27; 24:31; 1 Thess. 4:16).
- C** Jesus’s authority has no limits. Every person from every nation and every generation is subject to Him (see Isa. 66:18; Joel 3:2).
- D** Similar to the master’s distinction between the faithful servant and the wicked servant in Matthew 24:45-51. The sheep symbolize the righteous, while the goats are the unrighteous.
- E** The imagery shifts from a discerning shepherd to a righteous King executing justice.
- F** While Jesus told His followers to be prepared, He also noted what God had prepared for them. This reward was not spur of the moment, but something made ready from eternity past.
- G** The repeated first-person pronoun indicates how closely Jesus relates to His people in need.
- H** The ministry of the sheep was not theoretical. They proved their faith by taking action. This genuine faith based on action is the standard by which the King will judge.
- I** Followers of Jesus who are in need, dealing with persecution, or experiencing abuse. These are His “brothers and sisters,” and Jesus shares their suffering.
- J** While the sheep (believers) are blessed for their actions, the goats (unbelievers) are condemned for their apathy.
- K** Jesus said this “eternal fire” initially was designed for Satan and his demons (v. 41). This stands in stark contrast to the eternal blessings enjoyed by the righteous.



The Judge (Matt. 25:31-33)

- Matthew 25 continues what has been called the “Olivet Discourse.” Jesus shared more with His disciples about the end of the age and how they should be ready for His return.
- When Jesus returns, angels will be with Him. His glory and authority will be evident as He judges all people from all nations.
- Jesus will separate the righteous from the faithless.

The Righteous (Matt. 25:34-40)

- Referring to righteous people (the sheep), Jesus described them as blessed by the Father. They will inherit the kingdom God has prepared for them.
- He went on to describe the ways the sheep had acted with compassion toward the physical needs of Jesus’s brothers and sisters, the “least of these.” These included hunger, thirst, alienation, nakedness, sickness, and imprisonment.
- The righteous questioned Him, wondering when these events happened. Jesus explained that anyone who met the need of any Christian was also ministering to Him.

The Faithless (Matt. 25:41-46)

- Jesus then addressed the faithless people (the goats). They will suffer eternal punishment and separation from God.
- Jesus then noted the same physical needs and stated that the goats had neglected to meet the needs of those around them. By neglecting these needy persons, they had neglected Him.
- The unrighteous will experience eternal punishment and the righteous will experience eternal life.

Summary Statements

The way we treat Jesus’s followers reveals the nature of our relationship with Him.

- We should live our lives knowing we will stand before Jesus one day.
- We demonstrate our love for God when we minister to other believers.
- We should recognize that unbelievers will be eternally separated from God and will face everlasting punishment.

Memory Verse

Matthew 25:40

Key Doctrine

Last Things

The unrighteous will be consigned to Hell, the place of everlasting punishment. The righteous in their resurrected and glorified bodies will receive their reward and will dwell forever in Heaven with the Lord. (See 2 Thessalonians 1:9; Revelation 21:8.)



For additional commentary, see the Leader Guide or Adult Commentary, available for purchase at goExploreTheBible.com.

ENGAGE

Bonus: What are some things that are judged? What is the criteria used for each one?

- Annual performance reviews can create both anticipation and anxiety. Many employees experience this year after year. In most cases, managers have a metric or checklist by which they evaluate your work performance. In some unfortunate cases, an employee has no clue what the criterion will be for the review.
- It is helpful to know the benchmarks we are striving for as we carry out our daily responsibilities.

What are the advantages of knowing the criteria by which you will be evaluated? What are the disadvantages of not knowing? (PSG, p. 106)

EXPLORE

THE JUDGE (MATT. 25:31-33)

Bonus: What is the difference between a parable and a prophecy?

- While these verses are preceded by parables about Jesus's return, Matthew 25:31-46 is not a parable. It is a prophecy about the coming time when the "Son of Man" will sit in judgment. The words "glory" and "glorious" speak of Jesus's heavenly splendor, majesty, and radiance.
- Jesus will separate the nations into two groups. He compared it to separating sheep from goats. In first-century Israel, sheep and goats often grazed together. While sheep tend to be obedient, goats can be troublemakers. Because of this, shepherds sometimes separated the sheep and goats.

What do these verses teach about Jesus's role in the final judgment? (PSG, p. 109)

THE RIGHTEOUS (MATT. 25:34-40)

What evidence distinguishes between a righteous and unrighteous person? (PSG, p. 110)

- The right side of a throne was seen as the place of honor. To those put in this place of honor, Jesus said "come," meaning they would be rewarded. He added that this group was "blessed by my Father."
- The reward was based on the sheep's ministry to the King. In each case, the King received the care they had provided. While they were rewarded for their works, these acts of mercy did not save them. Their actions were an outflow of a relationship with God that existed already.
- Thanks to their selfless motivation, the sheep (the righteous) in the prophecy expressed great surprise at the King's praise. They wondered when they had experienced the privilege of helping Him.

- The King shared that when they ministered to His "brothers and sisters" they also were ministering to Him. The sheep were honored for their positive response to the gospel, both in accepting it themselves and in living it out for others to see.

Bonus: How should these verses affect the way we see ministry toward others?

THE FAITHLESS (MATT. 25:41-46)

Bonus: How should the prospect of eternal judgment influence the way we respond to those who don't know Christ?

- Just as He had commended the sheep, the King condemned the goats. The judgment mirrors the words spoken to those at His right hand. However, instead of *come*, the King said "depart." Instead of *blessed*, they were "cursed." Instead of a kingdom prepared there was "eternal fire prepared."
- Originally, this fire was not created for the wicked but "for the devil and his angels." Still, they were sent to a place of "eternal punishment" because they rejected Jesus. They demonstrated this lack of faith in the way they treated His people.
- This corresponds to the "weeping and gnashing of teeth" described in Matthew 24:51. It is a place of eternal punishment and eternal separation from God.

What prevents some people in our culture from believing the biblical teaching about hell and eternal life? (PSG, p. 112)

CHALLENGE

Within your group, create a list of compassionate acts that the group or individuals could carry out.

How do these acts of compassion reflect the condition of your heart? (PSG, p. 113)

Challenge adults to spend time evaluating how their lives demonstrate compassion toward others.

Consider ways you can engage in acts of compassion this week. Analyze your motive for wanting to extend merciful treatment to others. (PSG, p. 113)

FURTHER DISCUSSION



Scan here for additional discussion questions for this week's study.

BIBLE SKILL (PSG, P. 112)

Respond emotionally to a principle or doctrine.

Read Matthew 13:40-43,49-50; 18:7-9; and 25:41,46 and record your thoughts about the eternal destiny of the lost. ***What is their prospect? How is it described? How long will it last? Is there any reprieve? How should knowing the destiny of the lost impel believers to share the gospel with others?*** Spend time talking to God about your level of concern for the lost and how you can see them the way He sees them.

Encourage adults to complete the Bible Skill activity on page 112 of the PSG. Urge them to pay special attention to the questions in the activity. After a few minutes, allow them to respond to those questions. Provide time for silent prayer, giving adults an opportunity to talk with God about their attitudes toward the lost and what adjustments He might want them to make.

OBJECT LESSON: CROWN

Write the word “king” on the board or on a large sheet of paper. Allow the group to suggest things that come to their minds when they think of a king. If it’s not mentioned, highlight that most kings have a crown.

Invite two or three volunteers to draw a crown on the board or on the sheet of paper. Compare the crowns they drew. Affirm that crowns come in all kinds of styles. (If possible, print several pictures of crowns and show them to the group.) Note that whatever a crown looks like, it usually implies majesty and a certain level of authority.

Remind adults that Jesus came as a humble servant in the Gospels, but He will rule and judge everyone when He returns in His glory. Say: *The world didn’t accept Him as King the first time, but they won’t have a choice at His return.*

THE CHURCH’S MISSION

Matthew 25:31-46, taken alongside James 2:14-26 and Ephesians 2:8-9, reminds us that works cannot save us. However, saving faith does produce good works. Interestingly, this tension between gospel and good works can also be seen in how we understand the mission of the church. Is the mission of the church primarily defined by proclaiming the gospel or by social action?

A helpful way to think about the church’s mission is to filter it through the Great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20) and the Great Commandments (22:34-40). These directives—making disciples, loving God, and loving our neighbors—are not opposed to each other. Rather, they go hand in hand. Making disciples means moving toward the lost and proclaiming the gospel so they can come to know and follow Jesus. Our good works are meant to commend the gospel (Matt. 5:16; Titus 2:10; 1 Pet. 2:12) and give evidence of saving faith (Jas. 2:14-17).

While the Great Commandments are not at odds with the Great Commission, we must not neglect our responsibility to keep the main thing the main thing. Jesus’s marching orders for His people make one thing clear: We are sent into the world to proclaim the gospel and make disciples:

- “Go . . . and make disciples” (Matt. 28:18-20).
- “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation” (Mark 16:15).
- “Repentance for forgiveness of sins will be proclaimed in his name to all nations. . . . You are my witnesses of these things” (Luke 24:47-48).
- “As the Father has sent me, I also send you” (John 20:21).

This focus is also clear in the book of Acts (see 1:8; 6:7; 9:31; 12:23-24; 19:20; 28:30-31). This biblical emphasis leads us to hold together both evangelism and social action, while keeping His call to proclaim the gospel and make disciples our highest priority.

Our Atonement

JESUS CAME TO DIE ON THE CROSS FOR OUR SINS.

Matthew 26:17-30

17 On the first day of **Unleavened Bread** **A** the disciples came to Jesus and asked, “Where do you want us to make preparations for you to eat the **Passover?**” **B** **18** “Go into the city to a certain man,” he said, “and tell him, ‘The Teacher says: **My time is near**; **C** I am celebrating the Passover at your place with my disciples.’” **19** So the disciples did as Jesus had directed them and prepared the Passover. **20** When **evening** **D** came, he was reclining at the table with the Twelve. **21** While they were eating, he said, “Truly I tell you, one of you will **betray** **E** me.” **22** Deeply distressed, each one began to say to him, “Surely not I, Lord?” **23** He replied, “The one who **dipped his hand with me** **F** in the bowl—he will betray me. **24** The Son of Man will go just **as it is written** **G** about him, but **woe** **H** to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for him if he had not been born.” **25** Judas, his betrayer, replied, “Surely not I, Rabbi?” “You have said it,” he told him. **26** As they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, gave it to the disciples, and said, “Take and eat it; **this is my body.**” **I** **27** Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks, he gave it to them and said, “Drink from it, all of you. **28** For this is **my blood of the covenant**, **J** which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. **29** But I tell you, I will not drink from this fruit of the vine from now on until **that day** **K** when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.” **30** After singing a hymn, they went out to the **Mount of Olives.** **L**

Exploring Key Words

- A** The first of three annual feasts commemorating Israel’s deliverance from Egypt. (See Ex. 23:15; Deut. 16:16.)
- B** By Jesus’s day, this feast was a part of Unleavened Bread. It recalls how God spared Israel through the blood of lambs in Egypt.
- C** His impending betrayal and crucifixion. Jesus also referred to this as His “hour” (John 7:30; 8:20; 12:23; 13:1; 17:1).
- D** The Passover meal was eaten after sunset on the fourteenth day of Nisan, the first month of the Jewish calendar. This would correlate roughly to late March or early April today.
- E** The Greek word (*paradidomi*) means to “hand over” and implies intimacy. The Gospel writers use it to describe the treachery of Judas, while also emphasizing God’s sovereign purposes.
- F** Not an exact identification, but an affirmation that the betrayer was present at the meal.
- G** A reminder that Jesus’s sufferings were foretold in the Old Testament (see Isa. 52–53; Ps. 22).
- H** Judgment (see also Matt. 11:21; 18:7; 23:13–16). While Jesus’s death was ordained by God, Judas was accountable for his actions.
- I** Jesus established the ordinance of the Lord’s Supper. The bread represents His body. Luke added that His body was “given for you” (22:19).
- J** The wine in the cup represents His blood, which initiated a new covenant between God and His people (see Jer. 31:31–34).
- K** Jesus established God’s kingdom at His first coming. It will be completed when He returns.
- L** A hill just east of Jerusalem. This was the site of Gethsemane, where Jesus would be betrayed by Judas and arrested.



NOTES

Coming Betrayal (Matt. 26:17-25)

- On the day of Passover, the disciples approached Jesus to inquire about preparations for the Passover meal. Jesus instructed them to go to a certain man's home where they would celebrate the meal that night.
- During the Passover meal, Jesus revealed that one of the disciples present would betray him. Each disciple, including Judas, denied that he could be the one.

Coming Atonement (Matt. 26:26-30)

- During the Passover meal, Jesus gave new symbolic meaning to the bread and the wine.
- Jesus described the breaking of the bread as His "body." This symbolized His coming crucifixion and death. The cup of wine symbolized His blood that would be poured out for the forgiveness of sins, sealing the new covenant.
- When Jesus and His disciples finished the meal, they sang a hymn and departed Jerusalem for the Mount of Olives.

Summary Statements

Jesus came to die on the cross for our sins.

- Believers must recognize their own capacity to betray Jesus.
- We find forgiveness by accepting Jesus's death as the payment for our sins.

Memory Verse

Matthew 26:28

Key Doctrine

The Lord's Supper

The Lord's Supper is a symbolic act of obedience whereby members of the church, through partaking of the bread and the fruit of the vine, memorialize the death of the Redeemer and anticipate His second coming. (See 1 Corinthians 10:16; 11:23-29.)



For additional commentary, see the Leader Guide or Adult Commentary, available for purchase at [goExploreTheBible.com](https://www.goExploreTheBible.com).

ENGAGE

How does death sometimes sharpen our focus on the things that really matter in life? (PSG, p. 114)

- None of us knows the precise time and date of our death. We do know, however, that death is a certainty for all.
- Consider this scenario: you know the exact day of your impending death, but no one else knows. You throw a dinner party for your family and friends, knowing this will be the last meal you will have with them.
- What emotions do you think you would experience if this scenario played out in reality?

Bonus: What thoughts come into your mind when you think about death?

Bonus: Is death always an occasion for mourning? Why or why not?

EXPLORE

COMING BETRAYAL (MATT. 26:17-25)

Bonus: When have you felt betrayed? When have you felt like a betrayer?

- Thursday of Passion Week also was the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. This was the designation for an eight-day festival that began with Passover. By the first century, the terms “Unleavened Bread” and “Passover” were used interchangeably to speak of a season of remembering Israel’s exodus from Egypt.
- Preparations for the Passover included buying various items for the meal. According to Exodus 12:3, the lamb for the Passover sacrifice was bought on Sunday. It would be sacrificed on Thursday. Luke 22:8-13 indicates that Peter and John were entrusted with the preparation.
- Worshipers would lead the lamb to the temple, where a priest would cut its throat. The blood would flow out into a bowl and be poured at the base of the altar. Peter and John would then carry the carcass to the meal site and roast it.
- During the meal, Jesus announced that His betrayer was present. Each disciple, including Judas, denied being the one. What made this statement even more devastating was the fact that sharing a meal with someone in Jewish culture was an expression of friendship. The Passover meal was also sacred. So, for someone to reveal a betrayal in this setting added to its horrific nature.
- While the impending death of Jesus fulfilled both prophecy and God’s plan, the actions of Judas arose from his own willful choice. Jesus was not a victim of political intrigue, and Judas was not a pawn. Because of this, Judas would suffer the consequences for his decision.

What can we do to resist becoming immune to the dangers of sin? (PSG, p. 118)

COMING ATONEMENT (MATT. 26:26-30)

Why is it important for believers to remember Jesus’s sacrifice on the cross? (PSG, p. 120)

- At this point in history, Passover had been celebrated for more than 1,500 years. But Jesus was going to change everything because soon He would become the ultimate Passover Lamb.
- The Passover meal included prayers, blessings, and a variety of symbolic dishes. These included the *matzah* bread, a flat, unleavened piece of bread that represented the bread eaten in haste as the Israelites prepared to escape Egypt. However, Jesus changed the meaning of this bread. The breaking of the bread pointed to His broken body. It now stood as a symbol of His atoning death.
- Four cups of wine were used during the meal, and each included its own blessing. Jesus used one of these cups (possibly the third) to highlight His sacrifice. Jesus called this cup “my blood of the covenant.” By His blood, Jesus instituted a new covenant, creating a new pathway to “forgiveness of sins” and a right relationship with God.
- Jesus noted that He would not celebrate this kind of meal again until He returned to earth. His words suggested a departure that would cause grief, but also included the hope of a future reunion in the kingdom. After the meal, Jesus and His followers sang a hymn (probably a Hallel from Psalms 113-118). Then, they left for the Mount of Olives, where He would be betrayed and arrested.

Bonus: What emotions does the Lord’s Supper stir up in you? What makes it significant?

CHALLENGE

As a group, discuss how believers are called to approach the observance of the Lord’s Supper.

Share ways to prepare for participating in the Lord’s Supper that have been meaningful for members of your group. (PSG, p. 121)

Challenge individuals to consider Judas and how they may be tempted to “betray” Jesus at times.

What steps might you take to eliminate these false steps from your life? (PSG, p. 121)

FURTHER DISCUSSION



Scan here for additional discussion questions for this week’s study.

BIBLE SKILL (PSG, P. 120)

Compare multiple passages to get a better understanding of a biblical truth.

Compare Matthew 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:17-20; and 1 Corinthians 11:23-26. Consider what each passage teaches about the Lord's Supper. ***What makes the passages unique? What elements did each writer seem to emphasize in their description? How did the writers encourage us to reflect on the past and look to the future? Which Gospel writer did Paul follow more closely?***

Write “bread” on a large sheet of paper. Encourage them to share what this word brings to mind. Write “cup.” Allow adults to share how adding this word affects their response. Affirm the connection to the Lord's Supper. Direct adults to complete the Bible Skill activity (PSG, p. 120). After a few minutes, review the questions. Challenge adults to consider these truths next time your congregation shares the Lord's Supper.

OBJECT LESSON: BREAD

Bring an unsliced loaf of bread to the session.

Encourage adults to share things they know about the Lord's Supper. Point out that Jesus established the Lord's Supper during the Passover meal in today's focal passage. Pass adults the loaf of bread and allow each person to pinch off a small piece. Say: *Jesus also used this occasion (and some bread) to explain that the one who would betray Him was present. His betrayer had dipped bread in the bowl just as Jesus had done.*

Note that this did not provide an exact identification for the betrayer because each of the disciples had done this. Point out that while Judas was the betrayer, Jesus would die for the sins of every person in the room.

Emphasize that our sins played a role in Jesus's betrayal and crucifixion as well. Challenge adults to examine their lives for sins that might be hindering a closer relationship with Jesus.

THE LAST SUPPER

Matthew's Gospel makes it clear that the last supper was a Passover meal. However, John wrote that Jesus was crucified on the day of preparation for the Passover (John 19:14). A few points help explain this difference.

Matthew, Mark, and Luke all refer to the day before the Feast (Nisan 14) as the “First Day of Unleavened Bread.” Mark clarified this as “when they sacrifice the Passover lamb” (Mark 14:12). John 19:31 notes that “preparation” refers to preparation for the Sabbath. Thus, Jesus ate the Passover on Thursday evening, which, by Jewish reckoning, would have been considered the beginning of Friday. Later on Friday—before the Sabbath—Jesus was crucified.

So, what is the significance of the last supper being a Passover meal? Passover meals followed a four-part structure, each marked by sharing a cup. After the opening blessing, the story of deliverance was told (Deut. 26:5-9). Then came a benediction over symbolic foods—bitter herbs, unleavened bread,

and lamb. This was followed by the meal. Finally, the evening ended with the singing of Psalms 116–118 and the fourth cup.

During one of the cups, Jesus gave new meaning to the elements used. The bread became a symbol of His body, while the cup became a symbol of His blood. Both pointed to His sacrificial death as the true fulfillment of Passover. We now celebrate this fulfillment (and the anticipation of Jesus's return) during the ordinance of the Lord's Supper.

The Gospels make no mention of a lamb on the table. Why? Because Jesus is the Lamb. As Paul later wrote in his explanation of the Lord's Supper, “Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed” (1 Cor. 5:7). The last supper was not only a Passover meal. It also validates God's saving grace through Jesus Christ, our Passover Lamb.

Our Savior

JESUS ENDURED THE CROSS SO THAT WE MIGHT HAVE
ACCESS TO GOD.

Matthew 27:27-31,45-54

27 Then the **governor's soldiers** **A** took Jesus into the **governor's residence** **B** and gathered the whole company around him. 28 They stripped him and **dressed him** **C** in a scarlet robe. 29 They twisted together a crown of thorns, put it on his head, and placed a staff in his right hand. And they knelt down before him and mocked him: "Hail, **king of the Jews!**" **D** 30 Then they spat on him, took the staff, and kept hitting him on the head. 31 After they had mocked him, they stripped him of the robe, put his own clothes on him, and led him away to **crucify** **E** him. [. . .] 45 From noon until three in the afternoon, **darkness** **F** came over the whole land. 46 About three in the afternoon Jesus cried out with a loud voice, "**Elí, Elí, lemá sabachtháni?**" **G** that is, "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?" 47 When some of those standing there heard this, they said, "He's calling for **Elijah.**" **H** 48 Immediately one of them ran and got a sponge, filled it with **sour wine**, **I** put it on a stick, and offered him a drink. 49 But the rest said, "Let's see if Elijah comes to save him." 50 But Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and **gave up his spirit.** **J** 51 Suddenly, the **curtain of the sanctuary** **K** was torn in two from top to bottom, the earth quaked, and the rocks were split. 52 The tombs were also opened and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised. 53 And they came out of the tombs after his resurrection, entered the holy city, and appeared to many. 54 When the centurion and those with him, who were keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and the things that had happened, they were terrified and said, "Truly this man was the **Son of God!**" **L**

Exploring Key Words

- A** A troop of Roman soldiers under Pilate's authority. This cohort could have been as large as six hundred men.
- B** "Praetorium" (NIV). Where Pilate stayed in Jerusalem likely included barracks for troops.
- C** To humiliate Jesus, the soldiers used a robe, a crown of thorns, and a staff (vv. 28-29). Each was a parody of royal trappings.
- D** The Romans used the title as a joke. Yet, it was true in a way they didn't know (Matt. 27:11,42).
- E** The crowd had called for Jesus's crucifixion, and Pilate finally gave in to their demands (Matt. 27:22-26). This was the most brutal form of execution imaginable in the Roman Empire.
- F** Darkness in the middle of the day. Many scholars compare it to the darkness of God's judgment against Egypt (Ex. 10:21-23).
- G** See Psalm 22:1. Jesus's words are quoted in Aramaic. His cry expresses the isolation He felt as sin separated Him from His Father.
- H** Some in the crowd thought Jesus was calling for Elijah to rescue Him. Legend stated that Elijah could come to aid those who were suffering.
- I** A common, bitter drink that was cheaper than regular wine.
- J** Idiom for physical death. Jesus maintained control, even to the moment of His passing.
- K** This thick curtain limited access to the holy of holies. This, along with an earthquake and the raising of the dead (vv. 51-53), were additional supernatural signs.
- L** The centurion's confession mirrored that of the disciples (Matt. 14:33; 16:16) and foreshadowed the gospel being received by both Jews and Gentiles.



NOTES

Mocked (Matt. 27:27-31)

- Following Jesus's trial before Pilate, soldiers sought to humiliate Him. They clothed Him in a scarlet robe and put a crown of thorns on His head. They knelt before Him, mockingly referring to Him as "king of the Jews."
- After they were done mocking Jesus, the soldiers abused Him. They spit on Him and struck Him in the head.
- Finally, they led Him away to be crucified.

Forsaken (Matt. 27:45-49)

- At noon, darkness came across the land and lasted for three hours.
- Jesus cried out in Aramaic, asking God why He had abandoned Him. His words echoed Psalm 22.
- Some of the onlookers mistakenly thought He was calling out for the help of Elijah and offered Jesus a drink.

Son of God (Matt. 27:50-54)

- When Jesus died, the temple curtain was torn in two from top to bottom. This was not the only supernatural event Matthew recorded. He also noted that the earth quaked, tombs were opened, and the bodies of saints were raised.
- When the centurion and others with him saw these things, they declared that Jesus must be the Son of God.

Summary Statements

Jesus endured the cross so that we might have access to God.

- Jesus's willingness to endure the shame and humiliation of crucifixion leads us to humble surrender and praise.
- We can be confident in knowing that Jesus's death was part of God's redemptive plan.
- The crucifixion of Jesus calls for the response of faith.

Memory Verse

Matthew 27:50-51

Key Doctrine

Salvation

Faith is the acceptance of Jesus Christ and commitment of the entire personality to Him as Lord and Savior. (See John 1:12-13; Titus 2:14.)



For additional commentary, see the Leader Guide or Adult Commentary, available for purchase at [goExploreTheBible.com](https://www.goExploreTheBible.com).

ENGAGE

Bonus: What was the last biography you read? How much space did it give the person's death?

- Biographers will spend hundreds of pages describing the life of their subjects, but they generally limit the pages about their death to just a few. For example, *The Last Lion* devotes more than 2,600 pages to Winston Churchill's life and only three pages to his death.
- This is not the case with the Gospel of Matthew's account of Jesus. Jesus's death was central, and Matthew devoted seven out of twenty-eight chapters to the events surrounding Jesus's crucifixion.

What does the amount of space devoted to Jesus's death tell you about its importance? Why do you think it's important? (PSG, p. 122)

EXPLORE

MOCKED (MATT. 27:27-31)

Bonus: Which hurts more: physical suffering or emotional suffering? Why?

- Following His trial, Jesus was handed over to the "governor's soldiers." These were not legionnaires, but conscripted soldiers assigned to Pilate.
- The soldiers mocked Jesus. They put "a scarlet robe" on Him and fashioned a crown of thorns to press into His head. A further symbol of mockery was a "staff" or reed representing a makeshift scepter.
- The soldiers also abused Jesus verbally, ridiculing Him as "king of the Jews." They mistreated Him physically by spitting on Him and beating Him on the head. Jesus had predicted this suffering (Matt. 20:19).
- Finally, Jesus was led off to be crucified. Historians suggest that prisoners usually were naked when led to crucifixion. The Romans may have clothed Jesus to placate the Jews.

What emotions does this passage evoke in you? (PSG, p. 125)

FORSAKEN (MATT. 27:45-49)

Bonus: When have you felt most isolated? What made Jesus's separation from God so intense?

- Jesus endured more suffering. Soldiers gambled for His clothes and religious leaders taunted Him. In verse 45, Matthew focused on the last three hours of Jesus's life.
- At noon, everything went dark across "the whole land." This was the first of four supernatural events associated with Jesus's death.
- Matthew recorded only one statement from the cross. Jesus cried out in Aramaic words taken from Psalm 22:1: *Elí, Elí, lemá sabachtháni*. Translated, this cry meant "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?"

- God, who is holy and cannot look on sin, turned from Jesus as He bore the world's sins. Jesus's words were misunderstood by some who thought He was calling out to Elijah. Someone offered Him sour wine. See Psalm 69:21.

How does Jesus's cry on the cross point to the greatness of our sin? (PSG, p. 127)

SON OF GOD (MATT. 27:50-54)

Bonus: What convinced you that Jesus was the Son of God and Savior of the world?

- The cries of most who were crucified grew weaker over time, but Jesus "cried out" loudly, refusing to die with a whimper. With His cry, Jesus "gave up his spirit." The work of paying the penalty for sin (atonement) was complete. Again, Jesus demonstrated His control by determining when He died.
- Three more supernatural events accompanied Jesus's death. The thick temple curtain at the holy of holies tore from "top to bottom." The veil, which was 21 inches thick, could not have been torn by human hands. Other events included an earthquake and the resurrection of saints.
- Witnessing Jesus's death, a Roman centurion declared Him to be the "Son of God." His confession pointed Matthew's readers to a day when many Gentiles would acknowledge Jesus as Lord and Savior.

What evidence from the day's events might be used to help others recognize that Jesus was the Son of God? (PSG, p. 129)

CHALLENGE

As a group, list some ways people try to get into heaven apart from Jesus.

Why is each one a dead end? How do the events that occurred as Jesus was on the cross validate that all the work required for salvation has already been accomplished? (PSG, p. 130)

Challenge adults to identify "key takeaways" from Jesus's death on the cross.

How should that impact your life every day? Are there truths that you discovered that you should share with someone else? (PSG, p. 130)

FURTHER DISCUSSION



Scan here for additional discussion questions for this week's study.

BIBLE SKILL (PSG, P. 129)

Examine an Old Testament passage to better understand a New Testament truth.

Of Jesus's seven cries from the cross, the only one Matthew recorded was Jesus's quote from Psalm 22:1. Psalm 22 is a messianic psalm that predicted much of what Jesus suffered on the cross. Read and reflect on Psalm 22. **Why are these messianic prophecies so important today?** Use what you learned from Psalm 22 as a cross reference for deeper study into Matthew 27:33-50; Mark 15:22-37; Luke 23:33-48; and John 19:17-37.

Group adults into teams of two or three and direct each team to complete the Bible Skill activity (PSG, p. 129). After several minutes, allow volunteers from each team to report on their findings. Remind adults that Matthew's focus was on showing his Jewish audience that Jesus really was the Messiah. Say: *And fulfilled prophecy was a key tool in proving his argument.*

OBJECT LESSON: DARKNESS

Make your room as dark as possible. Share a time when you were in the dark and longing for some light. Allow a few volunteers to share their experiences. Note that many children are afraid of the dark, but even adults can feel uneasy when they are surrounded by too much darkness for too long.

Ask: **How does darkness add intensity to a situation? What do you think the people in Jerusalem imagined was causing the darkness? What does this darkness reveal about how God views sin and death?**

Emphasize that darkness in Matthew 27 was supernatural in origin. Point out that the physical darkness passed after Jesus died and that His death and resurrection made it possible for people to overcome spiritual darkness. Encourage adults to consider where they stand with God. If time allows, review the Plan of Salvation on the inside front cover and encourage adults to speak with you if they still need to accept Jesus as Savior.

THE STRANGE BEAUTY OF THE CROSS

In the very words of those who mocked Jesus, we hear the truth of the gospel:

- “The King of the Jews” (Matt. 27:37).
- “Save yourself . . . come down from the cross” (27:40).
- “He saved others, but He cannot save himself” (27:42).

Jesus is indeed King, not only of the Jews but also of all creation. Yet, He is a King who came willingly to lay down His life for us (John 10:18). In fact, Jesus would not save Himself *from* the cross because He only could save us *through* the cross. Few capture this paradox more powerfully than D.A. Carson's poem “Cross-eyed.”¹

Through his words, Carson reflects on the soldiers who mocked Jesus and, unknowingly, spoke truth by hailing the “king.” They were “blind to this stunning theme: Jesus reigning from a cursed cross.”

He also noted how mockers scoffed at the “battered God-man.” They questioned how He could claim to save others when He couldn't save Himself from the cross. The “savage jeering” of Jesus's humiliation was the key to the salvation from the “King of grace.”

Carson summed up the alienation Jesus felt, His separation from the Father, in the poem's final verse. Yet, that very separation provided a path of reconciliation to everyone who believes. Jesus's death (and resurrection) defeated death once and for all:

*Draped in darkness, utterly rejected,
Crying, “Why have you forsaken me?”
Jesus bears God's wrath alone, dejected—
Weeps the bitt'rest tears instead of me.
All the mockers cry, “He has lost his trust!
He's defeated by hypocrisy!”
But with faith's resolve, Jesus knows he must
Do God's will and swallow death for me.*

1. Carson, D. A., *Scandalous: The Cross and Resurrection of Jesus*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2010.

BONUS CONTENT



Passion Week

Learn more about Jesus's final week on earth—the events that led Him to the cross and the hope that followed.



These items are available in the *Explore the Bible Leader Pack* (print and digital).

Visit goExploreTheBible.com to purchase the pack.

Pack Item 1: Map: Jesus's Ministry Beyond Galilee (Sessions 1-14)

- Locate a map that highlights the key places where Jesus traveled and ministered outside of Galilee in Matthew 14–28.

Pack Item 2: Poster: Outline of Matthew 14–28 (Sessions 1-14)

- Refer to page 8 of the PSG to create a poster that outlines Matthew 14–28.

Pack Item 3: Poster: Peter in Matthew's Gospel (Sessions 1, 3-5)

- Create a chart that highlights Peter's role in Matthew's Gospel. Include locations, references, and descriptions of each experience.

Pack Item 4: Poster: Key Verse: Matthew 28:19-20a (Session 6)

- Create a poster with the text of Matthew 28:19-20a.

Pack Item 5: Poster: Parables of Jesus (Sessions 8, 9, 11)

- Create a chart that identifies and explains the key parables of Jesus found in Matthew 14–28. Include the name of the parable, where it is found in Matthew's Gospel, and its teaching emphasis.

Pack Item 6: Poster: Loving God, Loving Others (Session 10)

- Create a four column poster with these headings: Heart, Soul, Mind, Neighbors. This will be used in application to help adults identify how they can love God and others better.

Pack Item 7: Poster: Key Verse: Matthew 25:40 (Session 12)

- Create a poster with the text of Matthew 25:40.

Pack Item 8: Handout: Matthew Time Line (Sessions 1-14)

- Locate a study Bible with a time line of the major people and events related to the Gospel of Matthew. Include both biblical and non-biblical historical references for context.

Pack Item 9: Handout: Praying Scripture in Matthew's Gospel (Sessions 1-14)

- Create a handout to help adults pray through key Scriptures in Matthew's Gospel. Focus on the following questions: *What does this passage teach me about God and His character? How should I respond to what He is showing me about Himself?*

Pack Item 10: Handout: Traditions of the Elders (Session 2)

- Using a study Bible, Bible dictionary, or other resource, create a brief article that describes the traditions of the elders mentioned in Matthew 15.

Pack Item 11: Handout: Why Caesarea Philippi? (Session 3)

- Using a study Bible, Bible dictionary, or other resource, create a brief article that describes the history and significance of the areas where Peter made His great confession of Jesus as the Messiah.

Pack Item 12: Handout: The Mount of Transfiguration (Session 4)

- Using a study Bible, Bible dictionary, or other resource, create a brief article that considers the possible locations of the mountain where Jesus was transfigured.

Pack Item 13: Handout: Interpreting Parables (Sessions 5, 8, 9)

- Using a study Bible, Bible dictionary, or other resource, create a chart that explains key principles for interpreting the parables Jesus shared in Matthew's Gospel.

Pack Item 14: Handout: Greatness in the Kingdom (Session 7)

- Using a study Bible, Bible dictionary, or other resource, create a brief article that considers how greatness was measured in the ancient world and how Jesus redefined the idea through His teachings.

COMING **NEXT QUARTER**



JOSHUA, JUDGES, RUTH

Session 1: **Strong and Courageous** (Joshua 1:1-11,16-18)

Session 2: **Amazing Grace** (Joshua 2:4-21)

Session 3: **Remembering God's Works** (Joshua 3:14-4:9)

Session 4: **Winning Strategy** (Joshua 6:12-25)

Session 5: **Sin Revealed** (Joshua 7:10-23)

Session 6: **Unwavering Determination** (Joshua 14:1-15)

Session 7: **Vital Decision** (Joshua 24:14-24)

Session 8: **Consequences** (Judges 2:11-23)

Session 9: **Called** (Judges 6:1-4,7-16)

Session 10: **Trust** (Judges 7:1-8,19-23)

Session 11: **Compromise** (Judges 16:16-31)

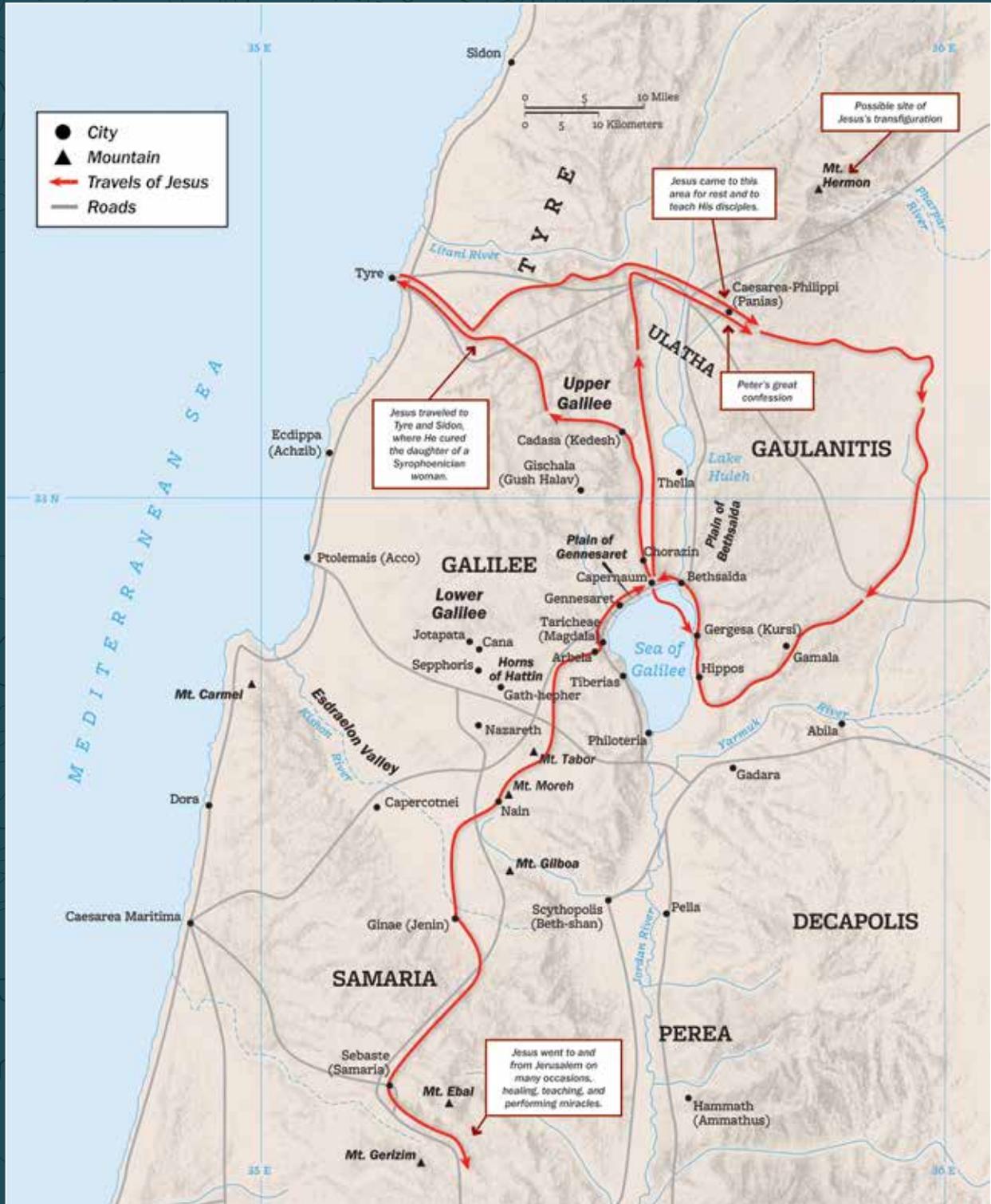
Session 12: **Faithfulness** (Ruth 1:11-18; 2:5-12)

Session 13: **Redemption** (Ruth 3:8-13; 4:13-17)

Explore

“You will seek me and find me when you search for me
with all your heart.” Jeremiah 29:13

Jesus's Ministry Beyond Galilee



"Jesus's Ministry Beyond Galilee" is based on "The Ministry of Jesus Beyond Galilee," Holman Bible Atlas (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 1998), p. 224. Used with permission.

MATTHEW 14–28

Turning points are key to any story. A character moving in one direction suddenly transitions to a new path. Overcoming obstacles, the hero wins in the end. Matthew 14–28 represents a turning point in the life and ministry of Jesus. After preaching and healing in Galilee, Christ turned His face toward Jerusalem. His steps ultimately took Him to a cross—and an empty tomb. As believers, we benefit from this turning point. Through His example, we learn how to face our fears, overcome opposition, sacrifice for others, and embrace the hope that only He provides. By studying Matthew 14–28, we gain a better understanding of what it means to live out our faith each day—and how we can move forward to make disciples of all nations.

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