
Matthew

The book of Matthew is the first of four gospels. It serves as a bridge between the Old and New Testaments, introducing Jesus as the King and promised Messiah of the Jews.

The New Testament begins with four gospels, each telling the story of Jesus' life, ministry, death, and resurrection. The first three gospels share so many stories they are called the Synoptic ("seen together") gospels. Though the gospels share a common story and format, each gospel emphasizes a different aspect of who Jesus is:

Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
King of Israel	Perfect Servant	Son of Man	Son of God

The book of Matthew's first verse asserts that Jesus is the Son of David and Abraham, inheriting their promises and covenants. The book documents Jesus' genealogy, establishing His right to be **King of Israel**. In Matthew, wise men arrive seeking the King of the Jews.

Author

Matthew was a tax collector (publican). Matthew became a new person when he opened his heart to Christ. He lost his old friends and a large amount of income when he accepted Christ.

Key Word and Verse

The word **kingdom** occurs 56 times.

Mat 27:37 And they put up over His head the accusation written against Him: THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS. (NKJV)

Sermon on the Mount

Matthew 5-7 is the Sermon on the Mount, arguably the greatest sermon in history, where Jesus interprets the Old Testament Law and presents His kingdom of righteousness. For details, view the "The Way Up is Down" message series on the Resources > Media Center > Messages page of: www.VisitGraceChurch.com

The Church

In **Matthew 16:18** and **Matthew 18:17**, the Bible records Jesus using the word “church” for the first time. The word in Greek is “ekklesia” which means “assembly” or “called out.” Of the 115+ mentions in Scripture, one-third refer to the global body of “called out” believers and two-thirds refer to a local “assembly.”

Parables

In **Matthew 12**, Israel’s leaders accused Jesus of performing miracles by Satan’s power. After being rejected, Jesus began teaching in parables (story form). Parables both revealed truth to those who accepted Jesus and hid truth from those who rejected Him.

Matthew 13 documents seven of Jesus’ parables, illustrating different aspects of the “kingdom of heaven.”

	Parable	Kingdom Meaning
1	Sower and Soils	The Kingdom’s Start
2	Wheat and Tares	The Kingdom’s Judgment
3	Mustard Seed	The Kingdom’s Growth
4	Leaven	The Kingdom’s Growth
5	Hidden Treasure	The Kingdom’s Value
6	Costly Pearl	The Kingdom’s Value
7	Dragnet	The Kingdom’s Judgment

Old Testament References

Jesus often quoted the Hebrew Scriptures. In the book of Matthew, there are references to:

OT Book	Matthew
Genesis	19
Exodus	22
Leviticus	22
Deuteronomy	4
Psalms	25, 26, 27
Isaiah	13, 26
Jeremiah	21
Daniel	24
Hosea	9
Micah	10
Zechariah	24, 26, 27
Malachi	11

High-Level Outline

Rejection of the Kingdom	Rejection of the King
Mat 1-4 presentation of the kingdom Mat 5-7 proclamation of the kingdom Mat 8-12 power of the kingdom	Mat 13-15 rejection of the King Mat 16-20 preparation of the disciples Mat 21-28 passion and climax

Personal Reflection and Application

- Being **poor in spirit** (**Mat 5:3**) doesn't mean you view yourself as worthless. It means you have a healthy sense of unworthiness. What is the difference (**Isa 6:5**, **Luke 5:8**, **1John 1:9**)?
- If you are experiencing tension and disagreements in your marriage or other relationships, what actions could you take to prevent them from damaging your relationship with God (**Mat 5:23-26**)?
- When we pray for our enemies, we find it easier to love them. It takes the "poison" out of our attitudes. Love is a mark of maturity. It is God-like (**Mat 5:45**). Think about a person who is an enemy (has treated you poorly). Return good for evil as an investment of love. Pray for the spiritual welfare of that person.
- Notice that the Lord's prayer illustrates the importance of not only asking God to forgive us, but notes that we are to forgive others.

Mat 6:12 And forgive us our debts, As we forgive our debtors.

Why is it important to forgive others (**Mat 6:14-15**)?

- The **eye** is a gate through which temptation comes (**Mat 6:22-23**). What can you do to prevent your eye from seeing things that promote lust?

- What should be the primary concern for believers (**Mat 6:33**)?
 - ▶ How can you focus more on doing what God wants and less on worrying on what you need?
 - ▶ What should your attitude be towards earthly wealth?
- Do you judge yourself before you judge others? What are some reasons for judging yourself first?

	Mat 7:1-2
	Mat 7:3-5

- Consider the broad way versus the narrow way (**Mat 7:13-14**).
 - ▶ Did your profession of faith cost you anything?
 - ▶ Did you give up the baggage of sin and your focus on worldly things?
 - ▶ What are some reasons there are few who find the narrow way?
- For our lives to not be wasted, our lives must have purpose. If we have Christ as Lord and Savior, what is the purpose of our lives (**Php 2:13-16**, **Mat 13:23**)?

Small Group Conversation Guide

- How do the following verses describe the **poor in spirit** (**Mat 5:3**)?

Psa 10:17
Rom 12:3

- ▶ In what areas of your life do you tend to depend on your talents and possessions?
- ▶ What would it take for you to fully rely on Jesus Christ?
- What does Jesus say happens to our relationship with God when we are angry with someone else (**Mat 5:23-24**)? In which area of your life are you most prone to struggle with anger? What are some things you can do to begin to transform that area of your life?
- Discuss how not always doing what you say you will do can cause an incremental loss of integrity (**Mat 5:37**). What are some practical ways to make sure you honor your commitments?
- What are some examples of ways you could go the extra mile (**Mat 5:41**) to reflect Christ in situations where people are demanding things of you?
- According to what Jesus said in **Matthew 5:43-45**, how can you become a true child of God?

- Discuss whether we should always keep giving a secret (**Mat 6:3-4**). What are our motives in having someone see us when we give?

<i>verse</i>	<i>motive</i>
Mat 6:1	
Mat 5:16	

Considering the motives noted in the verses above, when would it be okay for someone to see our good deeds (including giving)?

- It is not wrong to possess things; however, it is wrong to let things possess you. Discuss how materialism can enslave you in the following ways.

heart	Mat 6:19-21
mind	Mat 6:22-23
will	Mat 6:24

- Discuss your experiences in applying the "golden rule" (**Mat 7:12**).
 - ▶ How would the golden rule look differently through the eyes of a believer and a nonbeliever?
 - ▶ When you want what God wants for others, how might they oppose your good intentions?
- In what ways does hunger and thirst for **righteousness** please God (**Pro 15:9, Mat 13:43**)?
- At what point does looking become lust? What is the origin of lust (**Mat 15:19, Pro 6:25**)?

Leadership Principles from Matthew

Clear Mission and Message?

There are few leaders more bold than John the Baptist (**Mat 3:1-10**). What helped John be as bold as he was? Consider the following:

- ▶ He was clear on his mission. He knew his purpose was to prepare people for the coming of the Lord.
- ▶ He was able to state his message clearly and succinctly, "Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!" (**Mat 3:2**).

Are you clear on your purpose as a leader? Can you state your message clearly and succinctly?

my purpose	my message

3 Temptations of a Leader

Henry Nouwen (*In the Name of Jesus*) suggests that the three temptations Jesus faced (**Mat 4:1-11**) correspond to the temptations we face as leaders:

temptation to be self-sufficient	Mat 4:2-4
temptation to be spectacular	Mat 4:5-7
temptation to be powerful	Mat 4:8-10

To which of these temptations are you most susceptible? How do you deal with them?

Ultimate Challenge

Consider **Matthew 5:48** as an ultimate challenge. Being "perfect" means to be mature or complete in Christ. (This does not mean sinless, yet). What would it take for you to meet that ultimate challenge? In what areas are you lacking spiritual maturity?

Who's in Charge, You or Your Money?

Study **Matthew 6:31-34** to see how an over-focus on money can ruin your ability to let Christ's light shine through you to others. How can it darken your eye and divide your heart (**Mat 6:22-24**)?

Judge Yourself First

Do you judge yourself before you judge others (**Mat 7:1-5**)? Here are some reasons that is a good idea:

- ▶ It prepares you for the final judgment.
- ▶ It helps you keep things in perspective.
- ▶ It prepares you to better serve others (seeing your own problems gives you the insight to help others).

Think of ways you can be sure to judge yourself before judging others.

What do the following verses say about not judging compared to judging righteously?

Judge Not	Judge Righteously
Mat 7:1 Luke 6:37 Rom 14:13 Jas 4:11-12	Mat 7:6 1Cor 6:2-5 1Cor 2:15 John 7:24

False Leaders

One of the pathways that can lead us away from Christ is false leaders. Some leaders claim to be Christians; however, they seek public praise, they crave material things, and they insist they have a right to judge others. These are indicators that they don't know Christ (**Mat 7:22-23**). What are you doing to be certain you directly build your life on Christ rather than lean entirely on a human leader?

Cautious, Curious, or Committed?

Jesus didn't beg others to follow Him. In fact, when the numbers grew large, He began to test for their level of commitment (**Mat 8:18-27**). John Maxwell says there are three types of followers, "the cautious, the curious, and the committed." To see where His followers stood:

- ▶ Jesus first clarified what it meant to follow Him including the necessary sacrifices (**Mat 8:18-22**).
- ▶ Next, He demonstrated good reasons for them to follow Him (**Mat 8:23-27**).

As a leader, have you determined the types of followers you have? Have you made it clear what it will take to be fully committed to the mission? Have you shown that there are good reasons to follow you?

Develop a Vision

Do you have a vision? How did you arrive at the vision? Notice the development of a vision in **Matthew 9:35-38**:

See a need	"He saw" (Mat 9:36)
Develop a burden	"moved with compassion" (Mat 9:36)
Recognize the cause	"laborers are few" (Mat 9:37)
Make a call to action	"therefore pray" (Mat 9:38)

To be a relevant leader, you must identify and meet real needs. Be observant. Let God give you a burden. Then seek His direction for a vision.

Meekness is Not Weakness

Meekness is not weakness. It is power under **control** (**Mat 11:29**). What are some of the reasons that Christ was meek?

Using Parables

Take some tips for communicating a vision from the Master. Notice how Jesus used parables (**Mat 13**). Parable means to "cast alongside." A parable is a story or comparison put alongside something to make a message clear. To follow His communication example:

- ▶ **Simplify** the message. Focus on something familiar to your audience. Use comparisons or stories.
- ▶ **Know** the **needs** of your audience.
- ▶ **Watch** for moments when they are receptive to hearing.
- ▶ **Model** the truth. Live a life worthy of following.
- ▶ **Check** to be sure they understand.

Teaching Moment

One challenge a leader faces is being sure followers understand the intent of a communication [Mat 16:5-12]. When the disciples misunderstood, Jesus used it as a teaching moment. He instructed them to remember what they had seen Him do rather than talk among themselves to guess the meaning. Do you provide teaching moments when there is a misunderstanding? Would it be possible for your followers to derive meaning from remembering what they have seen you do?

<i>Cause of Misunderstanding</i>	<i>Your Action</i>
They need further instruction.	Make it a teachable moment.
You have failed to set an example they can follow.	Clarify, then recommit to demonstrating worthy leadership behaviors.

Time to Retreat

In the account of the Transfiguration [Mat 17:1-13], Jesus selected a private place. This pictures our need to withdraw from our regular activities to experience a transforming fellowship with God. When burdened with cares of the world, it is not possible to lift up our hearts and seek spiritual things. Leader, how often do you schedule times of retreat to be alone with God and His Word? Here are some of the reasons it is important to have regular times alone with God:

- ▶ It lets God know how important He is to you [Mat 6:33].
- ▶ It nourishes and refreshes you spiritually which brings you inner peace [Php 4:6-9 and Isa 26:3].
- ▶ It fills you so that you are able to pour yourself out for others [1Cor 10:23-24].

Like a Child

To answer the disciples' question about who was the greatest, Jesus told them that to be greatest they must become as little children [Mat 18:1-4]. List the characteristics of children that picture humility:

- ▶ Psa 131:1
- ▶ 1Cor 14:20
- ▶ 1Pet 2:1-12

Consider to what degree you possess those characteristics.

Why Be a Leader?

Why are you a leader? Is it because you like to exercise authority or because you desire to serve [Mat 20:25-28]? Certainly, in the world, there are more people who seek status than those who seek to serve. To gauge which group you are most like, examine how you pray. Are your prayers selfish and self-centered, asking for things to be your way? When you can honestly say, "Speak Lord, Your servant wants to do Your will," you will be the leader Our Lord desires.

A Plan Brings Power

Consider the parable of the 10 maidens [Mat 25:1-13]. If you knew Christ was coming for you tomorrow, what would you do today to prepare to meet Him [Mat 24:44]? John Maxwell says, "The man with the plan is the man with the power." In both the long-term and in daily living there is power in preparedness. As a leader, do you have a plan? If you have a plan, what steps are you taking to implement the plan? In what ways have you incorporated preparedness into your plan?

Standard of Righteousness

The Pharisees separated themselves from “unclean” Jews who did not practice the Law or who opposed the traditions they had established to govern their lives. Some Pharisees were sincere; however, most used their religion to gain status or wealth. Jesus described the basic flaws of their religion in [Matthew 23:1-12](#).

<i>Pharisees</i>	<i>Believers</i>
Appointed themselves to determine what was righteous	Obey God’s Word
Quick to tell others what to do, but didn’t hold themselves accountable	Hold themselves accountable to God
Sought praises of men, status, and authority	Seek God’s approval, direct others to Christ

Leader, what is the source of your standard of righteousness?
 To whom do you hold yourself accountable? Whose approval do you seek?

Under Pressure?

As a Roman governor, Pilate had pledged to uphold the law. As a politician, he knew he must keep the people reasonably happy to avoid a riot. Pilate found no fault with Jesus, but could not find a way to get the people to listen to reason ([Mat 27:11-26](#)). The religious leaders knew how to make Pilate fearful by suggesting that, if he let Jesus go, then he was not a friend of Caesar’s. Pilate yielded to the pressure.

Think about times when you have been under pressure to do the wrong thing. How did you react? What can you do in the future to yield to Christ rather than yielding to the world?

Teach Them

If you have accepted Christ as your Lord and Savior, He asks you to make disciples and to teach them ([Mat 28:18-20](#)). Are you fulfilling this responsibility?

<i>Make Disciples</i>	<i>Teach Them</i>
Do you live your life according to His Word? Those who see Christ in you may ask questions giving you an opportunity to humbly share your faith in Christ. Do you watch for those opportunities and respond to them?	He may not call you to stand in front of a group to teach; however, He does ask you to share what He teaches you with others. Do you talk to others about what He teaches you? When those around you are struggling, do you share Bible verses that comfort you?

Something to Find in Each Chapter

As you read through the book, it may help to have something to look for in each chapter.
Try these:

01. How Jesus' genealogy proves His right to the throne	02. How Jesus' time in Egypt fulfilled prophecy (Hos 11:1)
03. What God said aloud when Jesus was baptized	04. How Jesus battled temptation by quoting Scripture
05. How Jesus intended to affect the Old Testament Law	06. What Jesus said happens if you do not forgive others
07. What Jesus compared to someone disobeying Him	08. Why the centurion's faith was greater than Israel's
09. What Jesus said to pray for regarding the harvest	10. Who Jesus forbade the disciples from preaching to
11. What John the Baptist began wondering in jail	12. What story foreshadowed Jesus' three-day burial
13. What Jesus said was the purpose of parables	14. Why Peter was able to walk on water with Jesus
15. How the Pharisees valued tradition over the Bible	16. Why Jesus called Peter both "Blessed" and "Satan"
17. How long the apostles had to wait to tell their story	18. What steps Jesus gave us to resolve conflict
19. Who finds it difficult to enter God's kingdom	20. How natural and Christ-like leadership styles differ
21. What Israel's rejection of Jesus meant to Gentiles	22. What Jesus said was the greatest commandment
23. Whether people are cleansed outside or inside first	24. What will characterize the days of Jesus' return
25. How people can feed or provide a drink to Jesus	26. How Jesus prayed in the garden to avoid the cross
27. What was torn when Jesus died on the cross	28. How Jesus charged us to make disciples worldwide