



# Matthew

DISCUSSION GUIDE  
CHAPTERS 16 THROUGH 20



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# INTRODUCTION

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Shocking and impossible! This was Peter's response to the news that Jesus, the Son of God, would suffer and die. Imagine how he felt when he learned that everyone who wanted to follow Christ must walk that same path. A life of true self-sacrifice and denial was as alien in Peter's world as it is today. Today's messiahs tell us to "save our lives" through self-affirmation, self-acceptance, and self-improvement. As we encounter the revelation of Jesus and his promised Kingdom, what we read in Matthew 16-20 will disrupt these normal priorities we often hold.

Matthew's gospel began by revealing that the man Jesus is the promised God-with-us: Immanuel! And Jesus began his ministry proclaiming "The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand!" But what did it mean to say that God was with us? And what did people expect his kingdom to be? Especially given all the miraculous signs and wonders he was doing! Here in this next section of Matthew, Jesus takes his disciples deeper into the reality of his identity as King and Saviour, and what this means for those who would seek to follow him.

This upside-down life of discipleship – of gaining our life by losing it – is a prominent theme in the latter half of Matthew. Jesus is preparing his disciples for his departure. Even as opposition to his ministry grows, he invests more time shepherding his disciples. There is less emphasis on public healing, and more on teaching. He wants them to understand who he is, why he came, and what this means for them. He wants them to trust that their identity is grounded in his identity. It is also here that we first encounter the word "church," whose very existence springs into being with the confession that Jesus is "the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt 16:16). On this truth – and through his suffering, death, and resurrection – this Church will be built. And it is this Church which will be given the privilege of joining in the radical work of life together in the Kingdom of God.

May God bless you as you continue to read this magisterial gospel. He who has ears, let him hear!

## SOME TIPS FOR READING

The Gospel of Matthew can be a difficult book to sketch out structurally. If you were to read five commentaries, you would encounter five different outlines. At the same time, Matthew is not a random collection of Jesus' teachings and actions. This Gospel has been carefully composed with a purpose. As you continue to read through Matthew, it will be very helpful to pay attention to these larger overarching themes and developments. Two good questions to ask yourself as you read are: What point is Matthew trying to make by including this passage? Why is this passage here?

Pay attention to:

- Recurring phrases like "When Jesus had finished these sayings..."
- Progressions of action
- References to time
- Abrupt changes in location and audience
- Thematic connections between passages
- Repetitive catchwords and titles
- Shifts in genre (story, parable, comment from the narrator etc.)
- Old Testament quotations and fulfillments; "this was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet..."



- 1 And the Pharisees and Sadducees came,  
and to test him they asked him to show them a sign from heaven.
- 2 He answered them,  
“When it is evening, you say, ‘It will be fair weather, for the sky is red.’
- 3 And in the morning, ‘It will be stormy today, for the sky is red and threatening.’  
You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky,  
but you cannot interpret the signs of the times.
- 4 An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign,  
but no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah.”  
So he left them and departed.
- 5 When the disciples reached the other side, they had forgotten to bring any bread.
- 6 Jesus said to them,  
“Watch and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.”
- 7 And they began discussing it among themselves, saying, “We brought no bread.”
- 8 But Jesus, aware of this, said,  
“O you of little faith, why are you discussing among yourselves the fact that you  
have no bread? Do you not yet perceive?
- 9 Do you not remember the five loaves for the five thousand, and how many baskets  
you gathered?
- 10 Or the seven loaves for the four thousand, and how many baskets you gathered?
- 11 How is it that you fail to understand that I did not speak about bread?  
Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.”
- 12 Then they understood that he did not tell them to beware of the leaven of bread,  
but of the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.
- 13 Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples,  
“Who do people say that the Son of Man is?”
- 14 And they said, “Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah  
or one of the prophets.”
- 15 He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?”
- 16 Simon Peter replied, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”
- 17 And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-jonah!  
For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.
- 18 And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church,  
and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.
- 19 I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven,  
and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you  
loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”
- 20 Then he strictly charged the disciples to tell no one that he was the Christ.

These studies are written with the assumption that your group will read the passage together. They are meant to encourage conversation and, as such, have some open-ended questions. These are not “must ask questions” but are here to help your group get chatting. Decide as a leader, in advance, where you’d like the focus to be.

## 1. WHERE HAVE WE BEEN?

*What are some of the big events of previous passages?*

- Jesus rebuked the religious leaders at the start of Matthew 15 and they’re back for more. Where have you seen the “sign of Jonah” before?

## 2. WHAT IS HAPPENING?

*What are the movements of the passage, who is doing what?*

- Why do the Pharisees ask Jesus for a sign?
- Why does Jesus warn about what the Pharisees are teaching? What does that have to do with his own ministry?
- There are three sections in this passage. Are they connected? Why or why not?

## 3. THE BIG POINTS

*What are the central things in this passage?*

- Why do you think Jesus reacted so strongly to the Pharisees?
- The disciples seem a bit dense in v.7, but Jesus uses it as an opportunity. What is the connection between the leaven of the Pharisees, and the feeding miracles Jesus did in Matthew 15?
- In v.16 Peter says something completely new: “You are the Christ.” “Christ” is a Greek word for “God’s Anointed One.” How did Peter know this? What was the result of his confession?

## 4. WHAT ABOUT US?

*How can we apply this passage to our daily lives and meditations?*

- The voices we listen to and respect, shape the way we think and influence the way we behave. Is there any teaching/leaven in your life that you should get rid of?
- Who do you say that Jesus is?
- We often have the habit of getting comfortable with “churchy” language. What does it mean for you to say that Jesus is the Christ?

## 5. PRAY

*Reading and digesting the word is not a single day activity.*

Take some time to pray together for the daily or weekly challenges you are facing. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you the ways in which you might be listening to unhealthy teaching which leads you away from Jesus.

- 21 From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.
- 22 And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, "Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you."
- 23 But he turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man."
- 24 Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.
- 25 For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.
- 26 For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul?
- 27 For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay each person according to what he has done.
- 28 Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom."

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## 1. WHERE HAVE WE BEEN?

*What are some of the big events of previous passages?*

- What is important about Peter’s declaration in Matthew 16:16?
- How about Jesus’ response?

## 2. WHAT IS HAPPENING?

*What are the movements of the passage, who is doing what?*

- This passage seems to skip a chunk of time in v.21. Why do you think that is?
- Why does Peter react so strongly to Jesus’ announcement of his anticipated suffering? Especially after getting it so right in v.16?

## 3. THE BIG POINTS

*What are the central things in this passage?*

- How surprised are you by Jesus’ claims in v.21?
- Should our reactions be more like Peter’s? Christ’s claims are very radical.
- How is it possible for Peter to go from correctly praising Jesus as the Messiah in v.16 to being rebuked and likened to Satan in v.23?
- Verses 24-27 are some of the most direct and tough commands given by Christ to his followers. Are they realistic or feasible?

## 4. WHAT ABOUT US?

*How can we apply this passage to our daily lives and meditations?*

- What is Jesus’ talking about when he speaks of denying one’s self daily? What can that look like in our lives?
- Is he telling us that we need to suffer to the same extent as him in order to follow him properly?

We often have the habit of playing down or minimizing Christ’s challenges to us. Give some serious thought to areas of your life that you have been refusing to give Christ lordship over.

## 5. PRAY

*Reading and digesting the word is not a single day activity.*

Take some time to pray together for the daily or weekly challenges you are facing. Give some thought to areas where you are having difficulty denying yourself and taking up your cross.



- 1 And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James, and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain by themselves.
- 2 And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light.
- 3 And behold, there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him.
- 4 And Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good that we are here. If you wish, I will make three tents here, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah."
- 5 He was still speaking when, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him."
- 6 When the disciples heard this, they fell on their faces and were terrified.
- 7 But Jesus came and touched them, saying, "Rise, and have no fear."
- 8 And when they lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only.
  
- 9 And as they were coming down the mountain, Jesus commanded them, "Tell no one the vision, until the Son of Man is raised from the dead."
- 10 And the disciples asked him, "Then why do the scribes say that first Elijah must come?"
- 11 He answered, "Elijah does come, and he will restore all things.
- 12 But I tell you that Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him, but did to him whatever they pleased. So also the Son of Man will certainly suffer at their hands."
- 13 Then the disciples understood that he was speaking to them of John the Baptist.

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## 1. WHERE HAVE WE BEEN?

*What are some of the big events of previous passages?*

- The disciples have realized that Jesus is the Christ, and then immediately been taught about his death and suffering. Is that relevant to what happens here?

## 2. WHAT IS HAPPENING?

*What are the movements of the passage, who is doing what?*

- Why does Jesus take Peter, James, and John with him up the mountain?
- Are there other instances of God speaking aloud in the Matthew? Do they relate to this passage?

## 3. THE BIG POINTS

*What are the central things in this passage?*

- Why is the Transfiguration so unusual and important?
- What specifically does God say, and why is it important?
- In chapter 16 Peter confesses that Jesus is the Christ. What’s the connection to chapter 17?
- Why does Jesus tell Peter, James, and John not to tell anyone about what happened until he has died and risen again?

## 4. WHAT ABOUT US?

*How can we apply this passage to our daily lives and meditations?*

- Why does it matter that Jesus is the beloved Son?
- What specifically does God command followers of Jesus to do (v.5)?
- Before Jesus’ birth or resurrection, before time began, he was always this glorious. Does the greatness of his true being give you encouragement or trouble you? What does Jesus say in v.7?

## 5. PRAY

*Reading and digesting the word is not a single day activity.*

Take some time to pray together for your daily and weekly challenges. Give some thought to who Christ truly is and how much he cares for you.

- 14 And when they came to the crowd, a man came up to him,  
and kneeling before him, said,
- 15 “Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is an epileptic and he suffers terribly.  
For often he falls into the fire, and often into the water.
- 16 And I brought him to your disciples, and they could not heal him.”
- 17 And Jesus answered, “O faithless and twisted generation,  
how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you?  
Bring him here to me.”
- 18 And Jesus rebuked the demon,  
and it came out of him, and the boy was healed instantly.
- 19 Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said,  
“Why could we not cast it out?”
- 20 He said to them, “Because of your little faith.  
For truly, I say to you, if you have faith like a grain of mustard seed,  
you will say to this mountain,  
‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move,  
and nothing will be impossible for you.” [Note that v.21 is missing due to limited  
manuscript support]
- 22 As they were gathering in Galilee,  
Jesus said to them,  
“The Son of Man is about to be delivered into the hands of men,
- 23 and they will kill him,  
and he will be raised on the third day.”  
And they were greatly distressed.
- 24 When they came to Capernaum,  
the collectors of the two-drachma tax went up to Peter and said,  
“Does your teacher not pay the tax?”
- 25 He said, “Yes.”  
And when he came into the house, Jesus spoke to him first, saying,  
“What do you think, Simon?  
From whom do kings of the earth take toll or tax?  
From their sons or from others?”
- 26 And when he said, “From others,” Jesus said to him,  
“Then the sons are free.
- 27 However, not to give offense to them,  
go to the sea and cast a hook and take the first fish that comes up,  
and when you open its mouth you will find a shekel.  
Take that and give it to them for me and for yourself.”

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## 1. WHERE HAVE WE BEEN?

*What are some of the big events of previous passages?*

We just had the Transfiguration, and before that Christ has been teaching and talking about his death and upcoming suffering. This will be increasingly important as we march towards Jerusalem in Matthew.

## 2. WHAT IS HAPPENING?

*What are the movements of the passage, who is doing what?*

This passage can be broken up into three smaller chunks:

- vv.14-21: healing of the demon possessed boy
- vv.22-23: Christ about his suffering
- vv.24-27: Peter paying the temple taxes

Why do you think these passages are together?

## 3. THE BIG POINTS

*What are the central things in this passage?*

- A big theme in the past few passages is the nature of Jesus’ authority and how it interacts with our world. How does that play out here?
- Why is Jesus speaking about his death and resurrection again?

## 4. WHAT ABOUT US?

*How can we apply this passage to our daily lives and meditations?*

- What is Christ’s rebuke in v.17 and who does it apply to?
- What about Jesus’ promise to the disciples in v.20? Is his claim of faith moving mountains literal?
- Surely the disciples who were trying to drive out the demon had some faith? Was it not enough or in the wrong thing?
- Jesus laments and rebukes “this generation” because they are people who have learned from him and they still refuse to live a life acknowledging his authority. Does this also apply to us and our generation?

## 5. PRAY

*Reading and digesting the word is not a single day activity.*

Take some time to pray together for your daily or weekly challenges. Give some thought to those who have not yet met Christ and need his saving kindness because they are trapped within a wicked generation.

- 1 At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying,  
"Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"
- 2 And calling to him a child, he put him in the midst of them and said,  
3 "Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children,  
you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.
- 4 Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.
- 5 Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me,  
6 but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin,  
it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck  
and to be drowned in the depth of the sea.
- 7 Woe to the world for temptations to sin!  
For it is necessary that temptations come,  
but woe to the one by whom the temptation comes!
- 8 And if your hand or your foot causes you to sin,  
cut it off and throw it away.  
It is better for you to enter life crippled or lame  
than with two hands or two feet to be thrown into the eternal fire.
- 9 And if your eye causes you to sin,  
tear it out and throw it away.  
It is better for you to enter life with one eye  
than with two eyes to be thrown into the hell of fire.
- 10 See that you do not despise one of these little ones.  
For I tell you that in heaven their angels always see the face of my Father  
who is in heaven. [Note that v.11 is missing due to limited manuscript support]
- 12 What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep,  
and one of them has gone astray,  
does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains  
and go in search of the one that went astray?
- 13 And if he finds it, truly, I say to you,  
he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went astray.
- 14 So it is not the will of my Father  
who is in heaven  
that one of these little ones should perish.



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## 1. WHERE HAVE WE BEEN?

*What are some of the big events of previous passages?*

- Jesus has been teaching about what it means to be the Messiah and what it will cost to follow him. What are some elements of following of Jesus that you’ve seen so far in Matthew?

## 2. WHAT IS HAPPENING?

*What are the movements of the passage, who is doing what?*

- Jesus and his disciples are talking about being members of the Kingdom of Heaven. Why do the disciples ask about greatness?
- What is the connection between vv.1-6, 7-9, and 10-14?

## 3. THE BIG POINTS

*What are the central things in this passage?*

- Jesus subverts our understanding of greatness. In what unexpected ways are the followers of Christ described?
- Why does Jesus use such strong language in vv.7-10?

Jesus speaks with a great deal of severity to his disciples. How is he also being gracious in his teaching?

## 4. WHAT ABOUT US?

*How can we apply this passage to our daily lives and meditations?*

- Are the sacrifices Jesus expects of us possible?
- How does Christ’s talk of “little ones” give better insight into how he feels about us, his followers?
- These passages are both an encouragement to those who follow him and a challenge to those chosen to lead. There is a heavy responsibility given to those who could lead others astray. What do Jesus’ words here reveal needs to change in your life?

## 5. PRAY

*Reading and digesting the word is not a single day activity.*

Take some time to pray together for your daily or weekly challenges. Give thanks to God for loving you like a parent loves a child, but infinitely more.

- 15 “If your brother sins against you,  
go and tell him his fault,  
between you and him alone.  
If he listens to you, you have gained your brother.
- 16 But if he does not listen,  
take one or two others along with you,  
that every charge may be established  
by the evidence of two or three witnesses.
- 17 If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church.  
And if he refuses to listen even to the church,  
let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.
- 18 Truly, I say to you,  
whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven,  
and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.
- 19 Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask,  
it will be done for them by my Father in heaven.
- 20 For where two or three are gathered in my name,  
there am I among them.”

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## 1. WHERE HAVE WE BEEN?

*What are some of the big events of previous passages?*

- Last time we saw some of the challenges and costs of being Jesus’ followers. What were they?

## 2. WHAT IS HAPPENING?

*What are the movements of the passage, who is doing what?*

- Christ is still teaching his followers about what it means to be his church. What aspect of church relationships is he focused on here?
- Is Jesus’ instruction about dealing with sin in the church necessary?
- Why would he be teaching this to his disciples now?

## 3. THE BIG POINTS

*What are the central things in this passage?*

- Christ’s teaching on dealing with sin in the church is detailed. What are the steps? Do you think are they helpful?
- Jesus instructs that if someone is defiant in their sin in front of the whole gathering they should be shunned. Why?
- How do vv.18-20 expand on this idea?

## 4. WHAT ABOUT US?

*How can we apply this passage to our daily lives and meditations?*

- This is a very tough lesson Jesus gives here. Is it possible to be in a relationship with someone who is defiantly unrepentant of their sin?
- Jesus’ instruction makes it clear that discipline is a role shared by all within the church. Do you think you could carry out Christ’s instructions?
- How does his teaching before and after this passage prevent an abuse of authority?

## 5. PRAY

*Reading and digesting the word is not a single day activity.*

Take some time to pray together for your daily or weekly challenges. Ask God for the courage, humility, and wisdom to be able to helpfully talk to others about potential sin that needs repenting of.

- 21 Then Peter came up and said to him,  
“Lord, how often will my brother sin against me,  
and I forgive him? As many as seven times?”
- 22 Jesus said to him,  
“I do not say to you seven times, but seventy-seven times.
- 23 Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king  
who wished to settle accounts with his servants.
- 24 When he began to settle, one was brought to him  
who owed him ten thousand talents.
- 25 And since he could not pay, his master ordered him to be sold,  
with his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made.
- 26 So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him,  
‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.’
- 27 And out of pity for him, the master of that servant  
released him and forgave him the debt.
- 28 But when that same servant went out,  
he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii,  
and seizing him, he began to choke him, saying,  
‘Pay what you owe.’
- 29 So his fellow servant fell down and pleaded with him,  
‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you.’
- 30 He refused and went and put him in prison until he should pay the debt.
- 31 When his fellow servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed,  
and they went and reported to their master all that had taken place.
- 32 Then his master summoned him and said to him,  
‘You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt  
because you pleaded with me.
- 33 And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant,  
as I had mercy on you?’
- 34 And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers,  
until he should pay all his debt.
- 35 So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you,  
if you do not forgive your brother from your heart.”

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## 1. WHERE HAVE WE BEEN?

*What are some of the big events of previous passages?*

- Jesus has been teaching his disciples how to live as a body. What specifically did you learn last week?

## 2. WHAT IS HAPPENING?

*What are the movements of the passage, who is doing what?*

- Peter inquires to qualify how much forgiveness he should be asked to give out. Why is he asking this?
- What are the two answers that Jesus gives? How are the answers related?

## 3. THE BIG POINTS

*What are the central things in this passage?*

- Rabbin thought that forgiving someone three times was appropriate. What is the point of Jesus is making with his multiplication?
- What point is the parable trying to demonstrate about God’s capacity for mercy?

## 4. WHAT ABOUT US?

*How can we apply this passage to our daily lives and meditations?*

- Why does Jesus tell this parable to Peter?
- Is the parable about God’s grace, his judgement, or about how we deal with sin so imperfectly and hypocritically?

## 5. PRAY

*Reading and digesting the word is not a single day activity.*

Take some time to pray together for your daily or weekly challenges. Ask God for a heart that strives for genuine forgiveness of others.



- 1 Now when Jesus had finished these sayings,  
he went away from Galilee and entered the region of Judea beyond the Jordan.
- 2 And large crowds followed him, and he healed them there.
  
- 3 And Pharisees came up to him and tested him by asking,  
“Is it lawful to divorce one’s wife for any cause?”
- 4 He answered,  
“Have you not read that he who created them  
from the beginning made them male and female,  
5 and said, ‘Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother  
and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’?  
6 So they are no longer two but one flesh.  
What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.”
- 7 They said to him,  
“Why then did Moses command one to give a certificate of divorce  
and to send her away?”
- 8 He said to them,  
“Because of your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives,  
but from the beginning it was not so.  
9 And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality,  
and marries another, commits adultery.”
  
- 10 The disciples said to him,  
“If such is the case of a man with his wife, it is better not to marry.”
- 11 But he said to them,  
“Not everyone can receive this saying, but only those to whom it is given.  
12 For there are eunuchs who have been so from birth,  
and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by men,  
and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the  
kingdom of heaven.  
Let the one who is able to receive this receive it.”
  
- 13 Then children were brought to him that he might lay his hands on them and pray.  
The disciples rebuked the people,  
14 but Jesus said,  
“Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them,  
for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven.”
- 15 And he laid his hands on them and went away.

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## 1. WHERE HAVE WE BEEN?

*What are some of the big events of previous passages?*

- Christ is continuing to teach about behaviour in the Church. Last week we read the Parable of the Unforgiving Servant. What was the big idea there?

## 2. WHAT IS HAPPENING?

*What are the movements of the passage, who is doing what?*

- It’s been some time since the Pharisees were explicitly mentioned. Why have they turned up this time?
- What is the connection between the discussion on marriage, the discussion on eunuchs, and the discussion on children?

## 3. THE BIG POINTS

*What are the central things in this passage?*

- The Pharisees attempt to trap Jesus with a question about divorce. Is there anyone else in Matthew who has tried to trap Jesus with Scripture?
- This is one of the few instances Jesus teaches directly on sexual ethics. What does his answer reveal?
- Is his answer unsatisfying for an issue that has so much weight these days?

## 4. WHAT ABOUT US?

*How can we apply this passage to our daily lives and meditations?*

- How does Jesus’ teaching here challenge all of us?
- In a time when roughly 40% of Canadian couples get divorced, what encouragement is to be had from these verses?
- Jesus does not forget people who (like him) were not married, what encouragement does he offer the unmarried?
- How is Jesus’ attitude towards children instructive on this issue?

## 5. PRAY

*Reading and digesting the word is not a single day activity.*

Take some time to pray together for your daily or weekly challenges. Give thought to asking God for wisdom in how to navigate the deeply emotional and personal world of family and gender identity as a disciple of Christ today.

- 16 And behold, a man came up to him, saying,  
“Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?”
- 17 And he said to him,  
“Why do you ask me about what is good?  
There is only one who is good.  
If you would enter life, keep the commandments.”
- 18 He said to him, “Which ones?”  
And Jesus said,  
“You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery,  
you shall not steal, you shall not bear false witness,  
19 honor your father and mother, and, you shall love your neighbor as yourself.”
- 20 The young man said to him,  
“All these I have kept. What do I still lack?”
- 21 Jesus said to him,  
“If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor,  
and you will have treasure in heaven;  
and come, follow me.”
- 22 When the young man heard this he went away sorrowful,  
for he had great possessions.
- 23 And Jesus said to his disciples,  
“Truly, I say to you, only with difficulty will a rich person enter the kingdom  
of heaven.
- 24 Again I tell you, 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.”
- 25 When the disciples heard this,  
they were greatly astonished, saying,  
“Who then can be saved?”
- 26 But Jesus looked at them and said,  
“With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.”
- 27 Then Peter said in reply,  
“See, we have left everything and followed you.  
What then will we have?”
- 28 Jesus said to them,  
“Truly, I say to you, in the new world,  
when the Son of Man will sit 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 lands, for my name’s sake,  
will receive a hundredfold and will inherit eternal life.
- 30 But many who are first will be last, and the last first.

These studies are written with the assumption that your group will read the passage together. They are meant to encourage conversation and, as such, have some open-ended questions. These are not “must ask questions” but are here to help your group get chatting. Decide as a leader, in advance, where you’d like the focus to be.

## 1. WHERE HAVE WE BEEN?

*What are some of the big events of the previous passage?*

Christ’s teachings about divorce and marriage came just before this. What have been some of the themes of citizenship in the kingdom of heaven from the past few chapters?

## 2. WHAT IS HAPPENING?

*What are the movements of the passage, who is doing what?*

- If you had an opportunity to ask a single question directly to Jesus, what would it be?
- What do you think about the rich man’s question?
- The disciples are thrown off by Jesus’ treatment of the rich man. Why?

## 3. THE BIG POINTS

*What are the central things in this passage?*

- The rich man inquires to what he must do to gain eternal life, and Jesus presents him with two answers. How are the answers related and distinct from each other?
- How does his answer relate to his teaching in Matthew 16:24?
- Jesus tells that it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than a rich person to enter the kingdom. Why is this true?

## 4. WHAT ABOUT US?

*How can we apply this passage to our daily lives and meditations?*

- What is challenging about this passage?
- What is comforting about this passage?
- How should we treat our wealth?

## 5. PRAY

*Reading and digesting the word is not a single day activity.*

Take some time to pray together for your daily or weekly challenges. Ask God for the power to turn over to him your concerns over earthly rewards and money.

- 1 “For the kingdom of heaven is like a master of a house  
who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard.
- 2 After agreeing with the laborers for a denarius a day,  
he sent them into his vineyard.
- 3 And going out about the third hour,  
he saw others standing idle in the marketplace,  
4 and to them he said, ‘You go into the vineyard too,  
and whatever is right I will give you.’
- 5 So they went.  
Going out again about the sixth hour and the ninth hour, he did the same.
- 6 And about the eleventh hour, he went out and found others standing.  
And he said to them, ‘Why do you stand here idle all day?’
- 7 They said to him, ‘Because no one has hired us.’  
He said to them, ‘You go into the vineyard too.’
- 8 And when evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman,  
‘Call the laborers and pay them their wages,  
beginning with the last, up to the first.’
- 9 And when those hired about the eleventh hour came,  
each of them received a denarius.
- 10 Now when those hired first came, they thought they would receive more,  
but each of them also received a denarius.
- 11 And on receiving it they grumbled at the master of the house, saying,  
12 ‘These last worked only one hour,  
and you have made them equal to us  
who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat.’
- 13 But he replied to one of them,  
‘Friend, I am doing you no wrong.  
Did you not agree with me for a denarius?
- 14 Take what belongs to you and go.  
I choose to give to this last worker as I give to you.
- 15 Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me?  
Or do you begrudge my generosity?’
- 16 So the last will be first, and the first last.”



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## 1. WHERE HAVE WE BEEN?

*What are some of the big events of previous passages?*

- Jesus and the rich young man discussed qualifications for earning eternal life. Is it possible for humans alone to achieve? Why or why not?

## 2. WHAT IS HAPPENING?

*What are the movements of the passage, who is doing what?*

- Jesus is expanding upon his thought from the end of the previous chapter: “But many who are last will be first, and many who are first will be last.” Is Christ’s idea of fairness different from our own human ideas regarding what is fair? Why or why not?

## 3. THE BIG POINTS

*What are the central things in this passage?*

- Jesus tells another parable. What does the wage paid at the end of the day represent?
- They worked harder, for longer, yet were “made equal” to the other workers. How is this fair?
- How does this parable help you understand “the last will be first and the first will be last”?

## 4. WHAT ABOUT US?

*How can we apply this passage to our daily lives and meditations?*

- What qualifications did the later workers have to justify being made equals?
- Is God’s fairness the same as ours? It would seem, by earthly standards, to be an unfair action on his behalf. How do vv.13-15 talk about this issue?
- When do you have trouble with the generosity of God to others?
- How does God’s idea of grace up-end this thinking?

## 5. PRAY

*Reading and digesting the word is not a single day activity.*

Take some time to pray together for your daily or weekly challenges. Thank God for his generosity in giving us more than we could ever earn.

- 17 And as Jesus was going up to Jerusalem,  
he took the twelve disciples aside, and on the way he said to them,
- 18 “See, we are going up to Jerusalem.  
And the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and scribes,  
and they will condemn him to death  
and deliver him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified,  
and he will be raised on the third day.”
- 20 Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came up to him with her sons,  
and kneeling before him she asked him for something.
- 21 And he said to her, “What do you want?”  
She said to him, “Say that these two sons of mine are to sit,  
one at your right hand and one at your left, in your kingdom.”
- 22 Jesus answered, “You do not know what you are asking.  
Are you able to drink the cup that I am to drink?”  
They said to him, “We are able.”
- 23 He said to them, “You will drink my cup,  
but to sit at my right hand and at my left is not mine to grant,  
but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by my Father.”
- 24 And when the ten heard it, they were indignant at the two brothers.
- 25 But Jesus called them to him and said,  
“You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them,  
and their great ones exercise authority over them.  
26 It shall not be so among you.  
But whoever would be great among you must be your servant,  
27 and whoever would be first among you must be your slave,  
28 even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve,  
and to give his life as a ransom for many.”
- 29 And as they went out of Jericho, a great crowd followed him.
- 30 And behold, there were two blind men sitting by the roadside,  
and when they heard that Jesus was passing by, they cried out,  
“Lord, have mercy on us, Son of David!”
- 31 The crowd rebuked them, telling them to be silent,  
but they cried out all the more, “Lord, have mercy on us, Son of David!”
- 32 And stopping, Jesus called them and said,  
“What do you want me to do for you?”
- 33 They said to him, “Lord, let our eyes be opened.”
- 34 And Jesus in pity touched their eyes,  
and immediately they recovered their sight and followed him.

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## 1. WHERE HAVE WE BEEN?

*What are some of the big events of previous passages?*

- Last week was the Parable of the Field Workers. What was Jesus trying to demonstrate with the parable?

## 2. WHAT IS HAPPENING?

*What are the movements of the passage, who is doing what?*

- Jesus is making his way further towards Jerusalem. Why does he tell the Twelve a third time about his upcoming suffering? Is twice not enough?
- James, John, and their mother come and ask for prominence in Jesus’ kingdom. What do they think they are asking for?
- How does Jesus respond to them?

## 3. THE BIG POINTS

*What are the central things in this passage?*

- Jesus responds to the first request of this passage with a question. What does he mean by “Can you drink from the cup I am going to drink?”
- Do you think the disciples have grasped the nature of his kingdom? What haven’t they understood yet?
- Why does this passage end with two blind men calling Jesus the “Son of David?”

## 4. WHAT ABOUT US?

*How can we apply this passage to our daily lives and meditations?*

- Even though we have these teachings from Christ and the advantage of time with centuries of Christian teaching, humility is a rare characteristic. What are some things we can do to align ourselves more with the desperate blind men begging Jesus for help?

## 5. PRAY

*Reading and digesting the word is not a single day activity.*

Take some time to pray together for your daily or weekly challenges. Ask God for a humble heart, and for opportunities to raise others up.