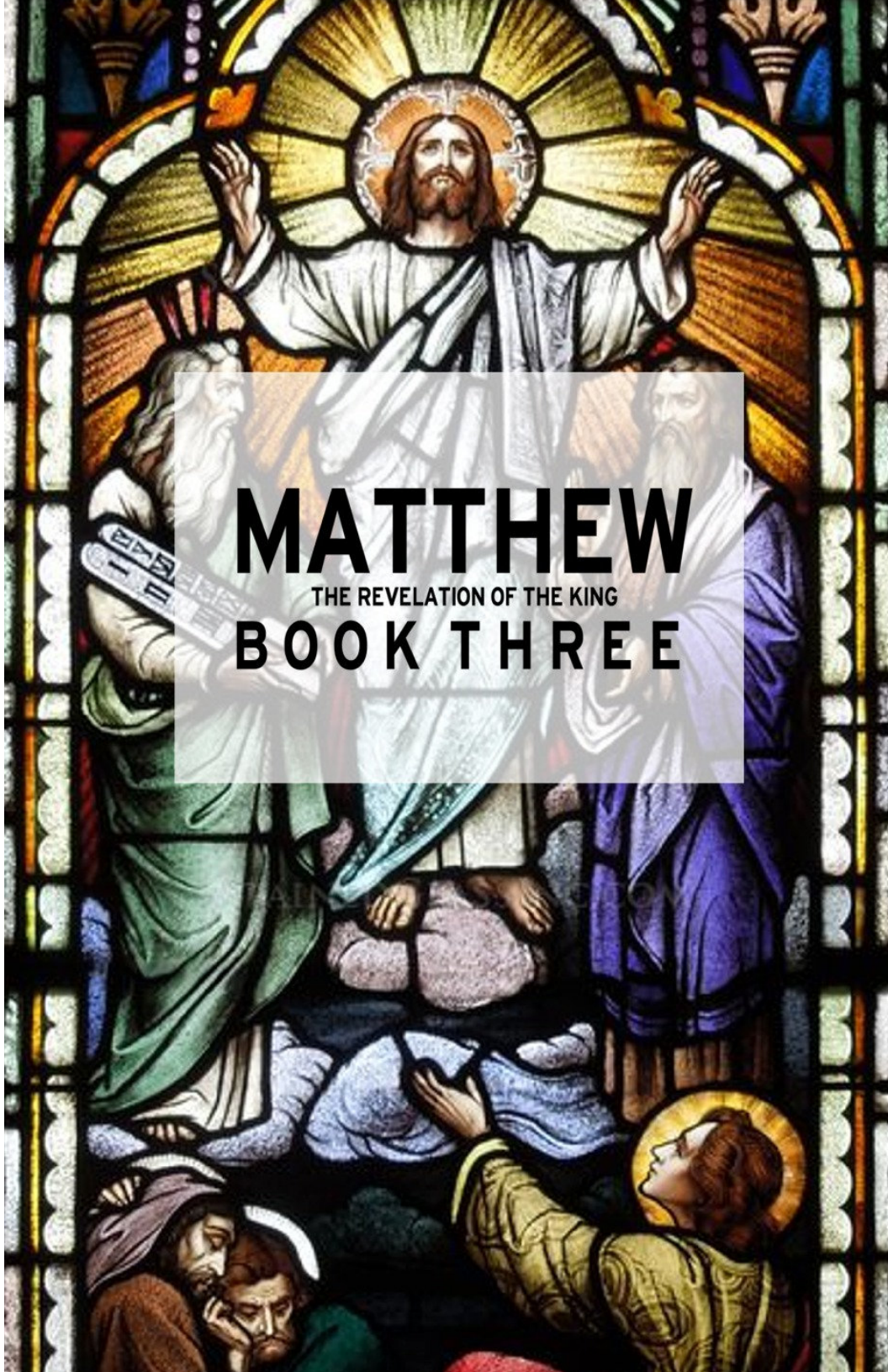




**MATTHEW**  
THE REVELATION OF THE KING  
**BOOK THREE**

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**MATTHEW**  
THE REVELATION OF THE KING  
**BOOK THREE**





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**There's Spirituality Jesus** who hates religion, churches, pastors, priests, and doctrine; and would rather have people out in nature, finding the god within and listening to ambiguously spiritual musical.

**There's Platitute Jesus**, good for Christmas specials, greeting cards, and bad sermons; he inspires people to believe in themselves, and lifts us up so we can walk on mountains.

**There's Revolutionary Jesus** who teaches us to rebel against the status quo, stick it to the man, and blame things on the "system."

**There's Guru Jesus**, a wise, inspirational teacher who believes in you and helps you find your center.

**There's Boyfriend Jesus** who wraps his arms around us as we sing about his intoxicating love in our secret place.

**There's Good Example Jesus** who shows you how to help people, change the planet, and become a better you.

**And then there's Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God.** Not just another prophet. Not just another Rabbi. Not just another wonder-worker. He was the one they had been waiting for: the Son of David and Abraham's chosen seed, the one to deliver us from captivity, the goal of the Mosaic law, Yahweh in the flesh, the one to establish God's reign and rule, the one to heal the sick, give sight to the blind, freedom to the prisoners and proclaim good news to the poor, the lamb of God come to take away the sins of the world.

This Jesus was the Creator come to earth and the beginning of a new creation. He embodied the covenant, fulfilled the commandments, and reversed the curse. This Jesus is the Christ that God spoke of to the serpent, the Christ prefigured to Noah in the flood, the Christ promised to Abraham, the Christ prophesied through Balaam before the Moabites, the Christ guaranteed to Moses before he died, the Christ promised to David when he was king, the Christ revealed to Isaiah as a suffering servant, the Christ predicted through the prophets and prepared for through John the Baptist.

This Christ is not a reflection of the current mood or the projection of our own desires. He is our Lord and God. He is the Father's Son, Savior of the world, and substitute for our sins—more loving, more holy, and more wonderfully terrifying than we ever thought possible.

## Appendix 2: Who do you say that I am?

<http://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/kevindeyoung/2009/06/10/who-do-you-say-that-i-am/#sthash.T36aRL9w.dpuf>

The greatness of God is most clearly displayed in his Son. And the glory of the gospel is only made evident in his Son. That's why Jesus' question to his disciples is so important: "Who do you say that I am?"

The question is doubly crucial in our day because not every Jesus is the real Jesus. Almost no one is as popular in this country as Jesus. Hardly anyone would dare to say a bad word about him. Just look at what a super-fly friendly dude he is over there. But how many people know the real Jesus?

**There's the Republican Jesus** who is against tax increases and activists judges, for family values and owning firearms.

**There's Democrat Jesus** who is against Wall Street and Wal-Mart, for reducing our carbon footprint and printing money.

**There's Therapist Jesus** who helps us cope with life's problems, heals our past, tells us how valuable we are and not to be so hard on ourselves.

**There's Starbucks Jesus** who drinks fair trade coffee, loves spiritual conversations, drives a hybrid and goes to film festivals.

**There's Open-minded Jesus** who loves everyone all the time no matter what, except for people who are not as open-minded as you.

**There's Touchdown Jesus** who helps athletes run faster and jump higher than non-Christians and determines the outcomes of Super Bowls.

**There's Martyr Jesus**, a good man who died a cruel death so we can feel sorry for him

**There's Gentle Jesus** who was meek and mild, with high cheek bones, flowing hair, and walks around barefoot, wearing a sash and looks very German.

**There's Hippie Jesus** who teaches everyone to give peace a chance, imagine a world without religion, and helps us remember all you need is love.

**There's Yuppie Jesus** who encourages us to reach our full potential, reach for the stars, and buy a boat.

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<sup>15</sup> He said to them, "**But who do you say that I am?**" <sup>16</sup> Simon Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." <sup>17</sup> 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."  
*Matthew 16.15-18*

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## HOW TO USE THIS STUDY GUIDE

The material in this guide is intended to supplement the sermons preached on Sunday mornings. These booklets are prepared months in advance of the actual sermon series. As a result, as the Spirit leads, a preacher's sermon may diverge from the ideas presented each week.

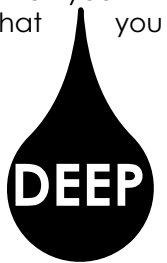
The study guide is designed to be used by individuals, families, and groups. Before you begin to read, pray that the Holy Spirit will open your eyes to see what He is teaching you in the Bible, and that He will give you the spiritual strength to do something about it.

Next, read the given Biblical text. Then read it again. Take notes. Underline your Bible. Write down questions. Once you have spent time in God's Word, then work through the study and write out answers to the questions. Resist any temptation to skip over the personal questions. Though these questions are sometimes the most penetrating and difficult, they are designed to help you apply these truths to your life.

After you have spent time in the text on your own, it is important for you to share with others who are wrestling with the same text. The Bible is meant to be read and studied in community. So take the time to do it on your own first, and then consider gathering with others to discuss what you have learned.

Each section of this guide is organized to help individuals and groups go **D.E.E.P.** into gospel truth:

- D- DISCUSS SERMON:** A key verse and a summary to help the group discuss the biblical text, answer basic questions, and review the sermon.
- E- EXCHANGE VIEWS:** A general discussion question encouraging individuals to share their first reactions to the text or sermon. Often, this will inspire deeper examination into the text in a particular direction.
- E-EXAMINE TEXT:** A series of questions related to the biblical text and the sermon. These questions are designed to help the group dig deeper into what the text actually says and, together, determine what it might mean.
- P- PERSONALIZE TRUTH:** One or two questions to help apply the text to your personal life and experience.



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## HOW TO DOWNLOAD PAST SERMONS

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Should you miss a sermon, there are several ways to listen, read, or watch sermons from this series. Please visit our network website and click on SERMONS at [www.3strand.org](http://www.3strand.org). In addition to the sermon you are looking for, you will also find past sermon series preached at various 3Strand Network Churches.

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## HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE WITH YOUR FAMILY

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The Bible teaches us that parents, not pastors, are responsible for the biblical and spiritual training of their kids. As you are studying and learning, you need to teach your kids, share with them how God is challenging you, and impart to them a passion for Christ, His Word, and His Way (See Deuteronomy 6.4-9). Parents, we encourage you to spend the week preparing your family, especially the older children, for the public gathering and the sermon on Sunday. Here are some specific ways to prepare your family for worship:

**Family preparation should always include reading of the passage that will be preached on Sunday.** As you read, remember that the intent is not to teach them everything about the passage. Not only do you want to expose them to the Word of God, you also want to demonstrate its importance in your lives.

**Family preparation should always include an age-appropriate discussion about the text.** Following the reading, begin an age-appropriate discussion using the booklet as a guide. Ask probing questions that fit their specific maturity as they look forward to sitting under the preached Word on Sunday.

**Family preparation should always include prayer.** This should be done as a family and individually. First, pray to understand the text. Then, pray for the needs of your own family, for the church, and for our city. Individually read and pray with each of your children throughout the week and try to dialogue with them as individuals about the passage.

\*Your efforts, not your expertise, will set an example for your children, will make the church gathering more meaningful, and will help your family feel more cared for.

His claims. For us to be confident in Him as Messiah, we need to know what He proved. The following is a (partial) list of the prophecies in the OT with a description of how Jesus fulfilled it found in the NT:

### MESSIANIC PROPHECY FULFILLED

Gen. 3:15 Seed of a woman (Luke 1:35, Mt 1:18-20)  
Gen. 12:3 As Abraham's seed, will bless all nations (Acts. 3:25,26)  
Gen. 12:7 The Promise made to Abraham's Seed (Gal. 3:16)  
Gen. 14:18 A priest after Melchizedek (Heb. 6:20)  
Gen. 14:18 The Last Supper foreshadowed (Mt. 26:26-29)  
Gen. 17:19 The Seed of Isaac (Rom. 9:7)  
Gen. 22:8 The Lamb of God promised ( Jn. 1:29)  
Gen. 49:10 The Seed of Judah (Lu. 3:33)  
Ex. 12:5 A Lamb without blemish (1 Pet. 1:19)  
Ex. 12:13 The blood of the Lamb saves from wrath (Rom. 5:8)  
Ex. 12:21-27 Christ is our Passover (1 Cor. 5:7)  
Ex. 12:46 Not a bone of the Lamb to be broken (Jn. 19:31-36)  
Ex. 15:11 His Character-Holiness (Luke 1:35; Acts 4:27)  
Ex. 33:19 His Character-Merciful (Lu. 1:72)  
Lev.14:11 The leper cleansed-Sign to priesthood (Lu.5:12-14; Acts 6:7)  
Lev.16:15-17 Prefigures Christ's once-for-all death (Heb. 9:7-14)  
Lev.23:36-37 The Drink-offering: "If any man thirst." (Jn. 19:31-36)  
Num. 21:9 The serpent on a pole-Christ lifted up (Jn. 3:14-18)  
Deut. 18:18 Sent by the Father to speak His word (Jn. 8:28, 29)  
Deut. 21:23 Cursed is he that hangs on a tree (Gal. 3:10-13)  
Ruth 4:4-9 Christ, our kinsman, has redeemed us (Eph. 1:3-7)  
1 Sam. 2:10 Shall be an anointed King to the Lord (Mt. 28:18; Jn.12:15)  
2 Sam. 7:12 David's Seed (Mt. 1:1)  
2 Sam. 7:16 David's house established forever (Lu. 3:31; Rev. 22:16)  
1 Chr. 17:13a "I will be His Father, He...my Son." (Heb. 1:5)  
Job 19:23-27 The Resurrection predicted (Jn. 5:24-29)  
Psa. 2:7, 8 The Crucifixion and Resurrection intimated (Acts 13:29-33)  
Psa. 2:12 Life comes through faith in Him (Jn. 20:31)  
Psa. 8:5, 6 His humiliation and exaltation (Lu. 24:50-53; 1 Cor. 15:27)  
Psa. 17:15 The resurrection predicted (Lu. 24:6)  
Psa. 22:1 Forsaken because of sins of others (2 Cor. 5:21)  
Psa. 22:2 Darkness upon Calvary (Mt. 27:45)  
Psa. 22:16 They pierced His hands and His feet (Jn. 19:34,37;20:27)  
Psa. 22:17,18 Stripped Him before the stares of men (Lu. 23:34,35)  
Psa. 22:18 They parted His garments (Jn. 19:23,24)  
Psa. 22:20,21 He committed Himself to God (Lu.23:46)

Psa. 22:20,21 Satanic power bruising the Redeemer's heel (Heb. 2:14)

a description of the mission of the author who composed the concluding chapters of the book of Isaiah, but were later regarded as a description of the messianic age:

The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion - to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. [Isaiah 61.1-3]

Although they were not intended as such, these lines were interpreted as messianic at Qumran and by the first Christians.

So, we see that the Messiah will comfort those who need to be comforted and will restore Israel and its tribes. It is also clear that there will be a new world ruler in the messianic age, but it is not clear whether 'the desire of all nations' will rule the nations (Daniel 7:14; Psalm 72), or is merely inaugurating God's personal rule of the universe (e.g., Isaiah 24:23).

Three remarks must be made at the end of this part of our study of ancient messianism. In the first place, the coming of the Messiah does not necessarily mean the end of times; this is a Christian idea. Of course it has some roots in Jewish thought, but the connection between messianism and apocalypticism (or eschatology) is not a necessary one.

In the second place, not everybody expected the Messiah. In many texts that refer to a brave new world or the Last Judgment, no mention is made of the Messiah (e.g., the oldest portions of the Enoch writings, the Assumption of Moses, the Sybilline Oracles, the Wisdom of Ben Sira, or the first two Books of Maccabees). Probably, the concept was too vague to be really inspiring.

Finally, there were people who started to make calculations about the date of the Messiah's arrival.\*The article 'Messianic Expectation' is by Jona Lendering from the website: Livius.org.

## THE FOCUS OF JESUS' MINISTRY

In this we see that Jesus miracles and teachings were not just 'good words for people to live by' but were intended to connect His life to the prophecy of the OT. He was providing the evidence to back up

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## HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE WITH A GROUP

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The best way to use this guide is with a small group. As smaller expressions of our larger church body, small groups are where Christians can strive to learn together, love together, serve together, and go on mission together. Tim Keller has suggested that, *"The Primary Goal for the fellowship group is to develop a Christian community where Jesus Christ is experienced in his presence and power."* In other words, these groups are intended to be more than a group to "hang out with" and more than a typical bible study.

### What should you expect as part of a small group?

- A welcoming atmosphere for strugglers and real sinners (Christ is for real sinners!) "I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners." Mt. 9:13; "If anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense-Jesus Christ, the Righteous One." 1 Jn. 2:1
- A family learning to live out of the Gospel "As you have received Christ Jesus, so live in Him..." Col.2:6 "I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge..." Eph. 3:17-19; "Let us love one another, for love comes from God...He sent His one and only Son" 1 Jn. 4:7,9
- A safe place to share your struggles, confess your sins, and expect to be pointed to Jesus. "There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus..." Rom. 8:1; "Confess your sins to one another..." James 5:16
- A family learning to celebrate grace! "Rejoice with those who rejoice..." Rom.12:15
- A place to be quick to listen and sympathize with another's struggles, and respond with compassion and prayer, and if you can, practical help to meet the need. Avoid superficial, pat answers that don't address and encourage the heart. "Be devoted to one another..." Rom. 12:10; "Everybody should be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry..." James 1:19; "Pray for each other..." James 5:16; "Honor one another above yourselves...Rom. 12:10b; "mourn with those who mourn..." Rom.12:15

- A place to worship God by enjoying one another and God's good gifts (new people, food, art, etc.) "Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate...." Luke 15

As you can see, the Gospel is never static, but moves us into grateful action. As we hear and believe the Gospel again and again, the love of Christ working within our hearts energizes us to practical works of love. We begin to ask, "What does loving my neighbor really look like?" This means that we will also want to avoid anything in our group that does not have this goal of Gospel motivation and love.

### What should you not expect in a small group?

- A lengthy teaching monologue or lecture by one person.
- An overly- academic group of theological debaters who don't address matters/struggles of the heart, and how the Gospel applies to them (see I Cor.13:1).
- An affinity group to make you happy (Although sweet fellowship in Christ should occur and will bring joy!).
- A place to have your every need met (Although as we serve one another in love, many of your true needs will be met, prayed for, and clarified).

coincidence that Theudas, the Egyptian prophet and an anonymous prophet led their followers through the desert.

The Messiah was expected to sacrifice and worship in the Temple, like the kings of Israel's golden age. At the same time, he was supposed to restore the twelve tribes:

*And on the staff of the prince of the whole community they shall write his name and the names of Israel, Levi and Aaron, together with the names of the twelve tribes according to their genealogy and the names of the twelve chiefs of their tribes. [War scroll 5.1-2]*

Another author who assumes the restoration of the tribes wrote the Psalms of Solomon:

*He will gather a holy people whom he will lead in righteousness; and he will judge the tribes of the people that have been made holy by the Lord their God. He will not tolerate unrighteousness even to pause among them, and any person who knows wickedness shall not live with them. For he shall know that they are all children of their God. He will distribute them upon the land, according to their tribes. The alien and the foreigner will no longer live near them. [Psalms of Solomon 17.26-28]*

The last line means that the pagan Greeks and Romans will no longer live in the land of Israel. However, there are also texts that make it clear that the Messiah has something to offer to the non-Jewish peoples. This idea is very old: it dates back to the late sixth century BCE, when the Temple was rebuilt. In an appendix to the prophecies of Isaiah, God says:

*'The foreigners who join themselves to the Lord, to minister to Him, to love the name of the Lord, and to be His servants, every one who keeps the sabbath and does not profane it, and holds fast My covenant - these I will bring to My holy mountain, and make them joyful in My house of prayer; their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on My altar; for My house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples.' Thus says the Lord God, Who gathers the outcasts of Israel: 'I will gather yet others to him besides those already gathered.' [Isaiah 56.6-8]*

The same sentiment was at the same time expressed by Haggai, who calls Zerubbabel 'the desire of all nations' (Haggai 2.7). Needless to say that these texts were later interpreted as referring to the coming of the Messiah. The same happened to the following words, that were meant as



### Appendix 1: Messiah & Messianic Prophecy

This section of Matthew deals with the confirmation of Jesus as the Messiah. This includes the fulfillment of prophecy, His declarations of who He was, and the response of the people who witnessed His miracles and teachings. As we study this, we do it against the backdrop of first century Israel. The people struggling with and rejecting Jesus are doing so because of how He fits with their Messianic understanding. In order to understand their offense, we first need to understand their expectation.

#### MESSIANIC EXPECTATION\*

Sometimes, the Messiah is described a warrior, sometimes he is a man of peace. Daniel 7:14 describes the triumphant son of man coming with power, but Isaiah 42.3 states that he does not even break a bruised reed. Daniel 7:13 has him arriving over the clouds, but Zechariah 9:9 states that he will be riding a donkey.

To make sense of such contradictory messianic notions, the sect at Qumran speculated that there were two or perhaps even three Messiahs (more). A question that we have not systematically explored, is: **what was the Messiah expected to do?**

To a certain extent, the answer is easy: the Messiah(s) would restore Israel. Adherents of the military messianology expected that the son of David would throw out the Romans and restore Israel politically; others believed that he would give the true interpretation of the law and inaugurate Israel's ethical revival; still others hoped for cultic reforms and a cleaning of the temple by the true high-priest; and there must have been people who combined these expectations.

The age before the coming of the Messiah is usually likened to a stay in the desert; like Moses, the Messiah will lead the faithful into the promised land. Isaiah's appeal to 'prepare the way of the Lord in the wilderness' (40.3) was probably understood as messianic, although this is not easy to prove. It is not certain whether 4Q176, which announces that Jerusalem will be comforted, assumes the Messiah's ministry, but Mark 1.2-3 can certainly be interpreted as messianic. Moreover, it is probably no

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*And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light... and a voice from the cloud said, "**This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him.**"*

*Matthew 17.1-5*

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# MATTHEW 14.13-21

## WEEK 1 | JESUS SATISFIES

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*When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them and healed their sick. V. 14*

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Whenever we focus on the power of God it can lead us to feeling very distant from Him. We look at His power and we feel incredibly weak in comparison. We dwell on His holiness and feel evil. We spend time in the Word and His wisdom offends us and makes Him seem so incredibly different than us. All of this is because He is. God is infinitely greater than us in every way and this makes us feel...separated. But God did not stay far away from us. He did not use our brokenness as a reason to stay far from us. He came to us. In Jesus we get a picture of God's compassion. He cares enough to work to overcome our shortcomings; we see Him do this here through feeding and healing. What we need to see here is that those who Jesus had compassion on were satisfied: as many as touched it were made well. We don't have to be worried about whether or not He will be enough; we should spend our time being amazed that He cares.

### QUESTIONS |

1. What part of the text or sermon had the greatest impact on you? Where were you most encouraged, intrigued, challenged?
2. How does Jesus show the compassion of God in these miracles?
3. The disciples wanted to send the people home. Why was Jesus so intent on them staying? How does this show the difference in purpose between the disciples and Jesus?
4. Read John 6.24-40. What does Jesus express as the purpose of this sign? If Jesus purpose was to make a statement, does this negate His compassion?
5. What are the things about God that make Him feel distant from you? How does His mercy bridge this gap?

# MATTHEW 20.17-34

## WEEK 17 | JESUS, POSITION, & THE KINGDOM

"...whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave, even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many." V. 27

As Jesus nears Jerusalem, he pulls the twelve disciples aside. For the third time, Jesus describes to the twelve disciples in clear language that he will suffer, die, and be raised from the dead. Jesus knew the pain and anguish that awaited. We can be sure that his message to the twelve was delivered with some soberness as he anticipated the betrayal and rejection he was about to endure. The conversation that ensues immediately afterwards boggles the mind. James and John (and their mother) are asking to have positions of special honor in the kingdom, seated to the left and right of Jesus. They were so consumed with basking in the glory Jesus they did not consider the need to share in his suffering. We, likewise are quick to expect glorification while ignoring the call of Jesus to pick up our cross and follow him, but it should not be so. We should look to serve rather than to be honored.

### QUESTIONS |

1. What part of the text or sermon had the greatest impact on you? Where were you most encouraged, intrigued, or challenged?
2. What does Jesus mean when he asks, "Are you able to drink the cup that I am to drink?"
3. Jesus again emphasizes that the order of greatness in the kingdom of heaven is opposite of what is common in the world. Why would God want you to hear this message again and again?
4. **Read 1Peter 2:21-24.** Spend a moment in prayer thanking Jesus for suffering willingly for you.
5. What might it look like for you to participate in the sufferings of Jesus?

# MATTHEW 14.22-36

## WEEK 2 | JESUS SUPPORTS

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*But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid. V. 27*

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Just after Jesus feeds 5000 people with a few fish and handful of bread loaves, He seeks to get away and heads up to the mountains to pray. His disciples take the boat across the sea. When Jesus comes out to meet them they are terrified, but He reassures them. Peter steps out on the water to greet Jesus, and after succeeding a few steps begins to sink into the water; Jesus reaches and out and rescues him. In both of these instances we see the absolute inability of the disciples to overcome their fear. They have witnessed what Jesus can do, they have heard Him teach, and yet even with this proof, they are unable to have a faith that rids them of doubt. Jesus is a patient Savior: He encourages them, He comforts them, and He rescues them.

### QUESTIONS |

1. What part of the text or sermon had the greatest impact on you? Where were you most encouraged, intrigued, challenged?
2. Why does Jesus need to pray?
3. What prevented the disciples from being able to trust Jesus? How does this help us to understand the nature of our own faith?
4. Read Hebrews 2.17-18. What does Jesus experience as a human mean for His mercy toward us? How does Jesus understand humanity better than we do?
5. What parts of your life seem more powerful than God? How do these things rob joy from you? What can you do to overcome these fears?



# MATTHEW 20.1-16

## WEEK 16 | JESUS, REWARDS, & THE KINGDOM

*"... 'Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or do you begrudge my generosity?' So the last will be first and the first last."*  
V. 15

Jesus now teaches with a parable. He says "the kingdom of heaven is like a master of a house who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard." The master agrees on a fair price for the laborers and they go to work. The master then goes on to hire more workers throughout the day – even up to the point where there is only one hour of work remaining. The master decides to pay all workers the same wage – the wage he had agreed upon with the first workers. When one of the first workers complain, the master replies, "Friend, I am doing you no wrong... I choose to give to this last worker as I give to you." In this parable, we're reminded that the kingdom is not fair. Rather, God graciously rewards according to his generosity instead of our merit. Now, *that* is good news!

### QUESTIONS |

1. What part of the text or sermon had the greatest impact on you? Where were you most encouraged, intrigued, or challenged?
2. Assuming Jesus is telling this parable in response to the discussion that precedes it, what might Matthew 19:27-28 suggest about the point Jesus had in mind for this parable?
3. When reading this parable, do you identify more with the workers who began first or last? Why is that?
4. **Read Romans 9:14-16.** What is the basis for the way God sovereignly chooses to deal with men? How does this make you feel?
5. In what ways are you expecting God's ways to be fair? How has this harmed your relationship with God and others?

# MATTHEW 15.1-20

## WEEK 3 | JESUS CLARIFIES

*And he called the people to him and said to them, "Hear and understand: it is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but what comes out of the mouth; this defiles a person." V. 10-11*

The law of God is not the measure of our holiness. As Jesus has made clear before in His confrontations with the Pharisees, the law is necessary to guide us because we are blind to the goodness of God. If we put God's goodness into the dos and do nots of the law it does not make us pure; purity is living in perfect submission to God. What this means for us is that moral behavior is a means and not the end. God wants us to obey His law, but it is to draw us into perfect relationship with Him, not to replace it. The law helps to push away bad habits and connect us to the character of God so that our hearts and minds can be changed by our love for Him. The law is a temporary placeholder, but our relationship with God is eternal. We must put our time into pursuing Him, not just avoiding potential sin. The act of seeking Him WILL sanctify and cleanse us of all unrighteousness.

### QUESTIONS |

1. What part of the text or sermon had the greatest impact on you? Where were you most encouraged, intrigued, challenged?
2. What is the issue that Pharisees have? How does Jesus turn this around on them?
3. What happens when we make the means (the law) the focus of the Christian life (v.8-9, 14)?
4. Read **Colossians 2.16-23**. How does Paul define answer the same accusation that Jesus does here? What is his solution to the dead end of legalism?
5. Talk about some ways that we can elevate the means of the Bible in a way that obscures the gospel. What areas of your life need to be re-tuned by the gospel?

# MATTHEW 19.16-30

## WEEK 15 | JESUS, WEALTH, & THE KINGDOM

*Jesus said, "...go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." When the young man heard this he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. V.22*

Pretend for a moment you don't know this story. Jesus is approached by a man while setting out on a journey. This man wants something from Jesus. One might expect him to request that Jesus heal him or someone he cares about. After all, that has typically been the case so far. This man, however, is looking for something else. He asks Jesus, "Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?" It seems that the stage is being set for an amazing conversion story. Certainly, Jesus is capable of closing this deal, right? In an interesting twist, we learn that this man walks away sorrowful. What happened? How is it possible that someone could come to Jesus asking for eternal life but not receive it? In this near-paradox, we see the danger of great wealth and are reminded that the greatest riches on earth are no comparison to what awaits those who submit all of who they are to Jesus Christ.

### QUESTIONS |

1. What part of the text or sermon had the greatest impact on you? Where were you most encouraged, intrigued, or challenged?
2. Read verse 26 again. How does living with a conviction that "with God all things are possible" help rid our hearts of idols?
3. What are you not willing to submit to the lordship of Jesus? What does this reveal?
4. **Read Ecclesiastes 5:10-12 and 1Timothy 6:10.** What do we learn from these verses about wealth and possessions?
5. Do you give to the church? Why or why not?

# MATTHEW 15.21-31

## WEEK 4 | JESUS HEALS

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*And great crowds came to him, bringing with them the lame, the blind, the crippled, the mute, and many others, and they put them at his feet,*

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When we think of Jesus healing our minds go to the lame walking, the mute talking, and the sick being made well. For good reason, this is what He did, but there was much more to healing than taking away infirmaries. Jesus is revealing in individual and physical ways what He will do to the whole earth: bring restoration. In this story we are treated to much more than physical healing; we see Jesus overcoming prejudice and social limitations. We see Jesus breaking down the perceived limits of God's people, making it clear that the faith of the Canaanite woman will receive mercy. We see Jesus acting against the perception of the Messiah. What He reveals to us is that healing the world is much greater and more complex than we usually give it credit for. To overturn ALL injustice and brokenness requires and act equally as gracious.

### QUESTIONS |

1. What part of the text or sermon had the greatest impact on you? Where were you most encouraged, intrigued, challenged?
2. Why does Jesus ignore and insult the woman? Why does He change His attitude toward her?
3. What was the disciples attitude toward the woman? Are there people groups or subcultures that you have cast off as unredeemable?
4. Read **2 Corinthians 5.16-21**. How does the gospel change our perspective of people? How are we to act as ambassadors of the message of reconciliation?
5. How does seeing the healings of Jesus as more than physical miracles give us a larger role in bringing healing to this world? What brokenness are you specifically positioned to address?



# MATTHEW 19.13-15

## WEEK 14 | JESUS, CHILDREN, & KINGDOM

*Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven." v. 14*

While Jesus - the King of all Kings... the Great Deliverer - was busy teaching the crowds that followed him around, children are brought to him so that he could pray for them. Once more, the disciples demonstrate that though they mean well, they don't quite get it. Jesus was a busy guy, and was in high demand. The disciples knew he had a kingdom to build, people to heal, and things to teach. Certainly, he should not be bothered by little children. Jesus makes it clear: "...let the little children come to me." The very fact that Jesus prayed for these children shows us that praying and otherwise caring for the souls of our children today is a valuable exercise. We should find great encouragement in the willingness of Jesus to care for these little children because we know that he will likewise receive us - even when we have nothing to offer.

### QUESTIONS |

1. What part of the text or sermon had the greatest impact on you? Where were you most encouraged, intrigued, or challenged?
2. What does Jesus mean when he says, "...for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven"?
3. Why is it that the disciples are upset that children are being brought to Jesus? How are we like that today?
4. **Read Galatians 4:4-6.** How does the gospel shape our relationship with the Father? His relationship with us?
5. Whether you have children or not, what are some ways that you can care for the souls of the "little children" God has placed in your life?

# MATTHEW 15.32-39

WEEK 5 | JESUS FEEDS

When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest." v. 36-38

The view of the world that Jesus models for us is compassion. We should not look to wage a war with people over various issues. We should not view the culture with an us versus them mentality. Instead, we should see all people in the world as *harassed and helpless*. All people are in need of a shepherd to guide them through the reality of sin and brokenness. All people need a savior. The world is not simply a battleground on which to win a culture war, but a great garden with souls that need to be harvested. As Jesus sends out His disciples, He sends them out with this mission in mind: call the sheep back to the shepherd. Many will ignore you. Some will ridicule you. The mission doesn't change. All people need to be called into loving relationship with their Father God.

1. What part of the text or sermon had the greatest impact on you? Where were you most encouraged, intrigued, challenged?
2. Why does Jesus tell His disciples to *pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest*, instead of just giving them marching orders? What is the importance of prayer to mission?
3. How does the view of the world as *sheep without a shepherd* help us to understand all of the chaos of the world?
4. Read **2 Corinthians 5.11-21**. How does Paul define our mission to a broken world? What does it mean to live out *the ministry of reconciliation*?
5. Do you see yourself as a laborer for the harvest? What does your labor look like?

THE MESSENGERS OF THE KING

# MATTHEW 19.1-12

## WEEK 13 | JESUS, MARRIAGE, & KINGDOM

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*Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh V. 5*

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After a time of teaching, Jesus moves away from the crowds at Galilee... so the crowds follow him. Among the crowd are the Pharisees who seek to trap Jesus in a contradictory interpretation of the Law of Moses – they ask him about divorce. Deuteronomy 24 permits divorce in cases when a husband has 'found some indecency' in his wife. In the many years that passed since the time of Moses, the Jews had completely distorted this aspect of the law to the point that it was socially acceptable for a man to divorce his wife for something as trivial as a poorly-cooked meal. As is usually the case, distortion of God's law brings about abuse, pain, and affliction. Marriage was created by God for our good, but it was also created to reflect the elective, intimate, and everlasting union of God with His Church. In today's average home, the institution of marriage is badly broken. As builders of God's Kingdom on earth, we are called to something different... something better.

### QUESTIONS |

1. What part of the text or sermon had the greatest impact on you? Where were you most encouraged, intrigued, or challenged?
2. What is the point Jesus is making in verses 11-12?
3. Married People: In what way(s) is your heart hardened against your spouse? Sin leads to death. Confess this to him/her as sin, ask for forgiveness, and repent. If you're single, apply this question to close friends or family members.
4. **Read Malachi 2:13-16.** What implications are given for unfaithfulness in marriage?
5. Do you have any experience with divorce? How might that impact your interpretation of this passage? Share your answer with someone.

# MATTHEW 16.1-12

## WEEK 6 | JESUS WARNS

*Jesus said to them, "Watch and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees." V. 6*

Being Christians in the world is not an easy task. The Christian life forces us to be discerning; we have to not just be reactionary, but wise. Too often Christians are known for being gullible: connect the name of Jesus to it, put a cross on it and you can sell it to the church. Jesus reminds His disciples that we need to be prudent. We must know what we believe, use this to test and measure the multitude of other things that are sold to us as truth. In the same way that sailors learn how to read the sky for signs, we must use our knowledge of God and His Word to read the world. We must be ready for people, even (especially) religious people to be leading us astray. Not necessarily because they mean to, but because bad theology destroys. False things create problems. Like leaven, false ideas spread through and affect everything. Our role in all of this is to know what is right and to be prepared to fight for it.

### QUESTIONS |

1. What part of the text or sermon had the greatest impact on you? Where were you most encouraged, intrigued, challenged?
2. Why does Jesus refuse to give the Pharisees a sign? How does Jesus' comments to the Pharisees relate to His warning to the disciples?
3. What is the sign of Jonah? How is this sign enough?
4. Read **Romans 12.2**. What role does discernment play in the Christian life? Why is this important?
5. What parts of your theology are weak spots? How can you know where you need know God more? How can we strengthen our ability to discern?



# MATTHEW 18.15-35

## WEEK 12 | JESUS & FORGIVENESS

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*“So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart.” V. 35*

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Even though we know it is something that God has called us to do, forgiveness is hard. In this passage Jesus doesn't tell us to ignore it when someone sins against us, but rather go and tell your brother his fault. Often times this is hard to do because no one likes to admit they are wrong. Jesus says if they won't listen to bring two or three more people and then finally the church. It is really a mission of mercy, to help someone get out of the sin they are caught in. Sin is such a big problem that we cannot afford to let it go. Not only do we need to address the sin of others, we need to forgive from our side. When Jesus is asked how many times we need to forgive, Jesus tells a parable. This parable reminds us that God has forgiven us so much already, that it would be unthinkable for us to not forgive others.

### QUESTIONS |

1. What part of the text or sermon had the greatest impact on you? Where were you most encouraged, intrigued, challenged?
2. Have you ever had to approach someone about their sin? How did it go? Is there someone who has sinned against you that you need to talk to?
3. Why is it so difficult to forgive? What excuses do we most often use for now forgiving?
4. Is there someone that you need to forgive? Are you holding resentment and bitterness toward that person? Is there someone you have sinned against that you need to make right?
5. Take a minute to reflect on your own sin. Have you accepted God's forgiveness for your sin? Have you let go of the need to earn God's forgiveness? How does this motivate you to forgive those who haven't earned your forgiveness?

# MATTHEW 16.13-20

## WEEK 7 | JESUS & BUILDING THE CHURCH

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*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. 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." V.*

**18-19**

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There is a narrative that has become popular that describes the church as a human industrial response to the concept of God. It gives credit to the Catholic Church or Constantine or the Middle Ages to making something that replaces God's original plan. We can see here that the church was very much created by and established by Jesus Christ Himself. Jesus makes a few things clear here as He sets His disciples out to build the church. First, their appointment comes from God (and their qualification is being confident in who God is). Second, they have an authority on earth that it reflected in heaven (God has tasked specific people with spiritual oversight). Third, that no matter how bleak things look, the church will prevail; the church will accomplish the mission of God. This should give us great confidence in who we are and what we are doing as the people of God in this world.

### QUESTIONS |

1. What part of the text or sermon had the greatest impact on you? Where were you most encouraged, intrigued, challenged?
2. What does Peter say that gets a blessing from Jesus?
3. What is Jesus talking about when He says binding and loosing? Why would God give this task to human beings?
4. Read **Ephesians 1.15-23**. What description of the church do we see here? What is its connection to Jesus? How does the church the fullness of Jesus?
5. What are things that annoy you about the church? Where does the church need the most help? What role do you play in that?

# MATTHEW 17.24-18.14

## WEEK 11 | JESUS & VALUE

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*“Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.” V.4*

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What is most important? Our answer to this question is not what we say is most important, but how we live. We are constantly getting our priorities mixed up. In this section of Scripture Jesus reveals our tendency to pursue the wrong thing. We have a tendency to defend our rights. Jesus denies his right to be exempt and pays the tax. We desire greatness, but Jesus says to be great we need to be more like children. We are lazy about sin. Jesus challenges us to be ruthless with our sin. We tend to ignore the marginalized, but Jesus is concerned about even the smallest sheep. We need to have a different set of values. Ones that proceed from the heart of God.

### QUESTIONS |

1. What part of the text or sermon had the greatest impact on you? Where were you most encouraged, intrigued, challenged?
2. What is something that is too high of a priority to you? What should your priorities be?
3. What “rights” has God called you to deny in order to better accomplish His mission?
4. In what ways do you desire “greatness”? What does it mean to be humble like a child? Why does God consider that great?
5. Do you have a strategy for resisting sin and temptation in your life? Are you willing to make drastic changes in order to keep yourself from sin? What does this look like in your life?

# MATTHEW 16.21-28

## WEEK 8 | JESUS & THE DYING TO LIVE

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*Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. V.*

**24-25**

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Jesus describes His death to the disciples in a more complete way than He ever has before and they are shocked. It isn't just that they don't want Him to suffer, but their entire understanding of His kingship is based on His authoritative rule. Their hope is built on His power. Jesus rebukes Peter because his reaction is short-sighted and based on what he will lose. Jesus then prepares them for a shift; He makes it clear that to take on Christ is to rethink what success is. If you want to be known for what you have done on this earth, it is not going to go well for you. If you want to be known as a follower of Jesus, it means you must set aside your identity. You must sacrifice your desire. You must see the world in a new way. Jesus came, not only to usher in the Kingdom, but to change the measure of what power is.

### QUESTIONS |

1. What part of the text or sermon had the greatest impact on you? Where were you most encouraged, intrigued, challenged?
2. Why is Jesus so offended by Peter's concern?
3. Jesus makes a distinction between those who save their life and those who lose it. What does it mean to save your life? What does it mean to lose it?
4. Read **John 12.24-26**. How does the life we give up produce new life?
5. What parts of yourself have you given up in order to follow Christ? What part of your life is the most difficult to deny?

# MATTHEW 17.14-23

## WEEK 10 | JESUS & FAITH

*"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." V.20*

After the disciples fail to cast out a demon out of a child, the boy's father asks Jesus to have mercy on his son. Jesus first rebukes his disciples for being faithless and twisted before casting out the demon. Later in private Jesus explains to his disciples that their lack of faith prevented them from casting out the demon. We would do well to be the father in this story. He acknowledges Jesus as Lord and then begs for Jesus' mercy. I am convinced that we are all too often the disciples in this story. We are the faithless generation that tries to do ministry on our own strength and intellect. Our faith rarely goes past what we can see or explain. We fail to acknowledge that we desperately need the Lord's help, and we fail to call out for his mercy.

### QUESTIONS |

1. What part of the text or sermon had the greatest impact on you? Where were you most encouraged, intrigued, challenged?
2. In what ways do you acknowledge Jesus as Lord? Do people know that you have given your life to Jesus?
3. In what ways do you need Jesus to have mercy on you? Besides conquering sin, is there something you need Jesus' power to accomplish? Are you depending on Jesus or yourself to do what God has called you to do?
4. What are some things you are asking Jesus was good at challenging and rebuking people in order that they might change. If Jesus was rebuking you, what do you think he would point out in your life?
5. Read Hebrews 11:1. What does it mean to have faith? What are some of the obstacles to our faith? What does it look like to live out our faith?

# MATTHEW 17.1-13

## WEEK 9 | JESUS & THE MOUNTAINTOP

*"This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him." When the disciples heard this, they fell on their faces and were terrified. V.5-6*

For those who have been in the church for some time, our attitude toward Jesus can become too familiar. We can forget that Jesus is not just our friend but He is the Almighty God. In this section, Jesus takes his best friends Peter, James, and John on a hike up a high mountain away from the crowds and other disciples. Alone with Jesus, they have a supernatural experience where they see Jesus for who he really is. His face shining like the sun and his clothes turned white. They also hear God's voice saying "this is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased, LISTEN to Him" and find themselves face down in terror. They are overwhelmed with the truth about who this "friend" actually is. Jesus touches them and tells them to not fear. As they walk back down the mountain, their outlook has been significantly altered. They begin to listen to their Creator and seek out His plan.

### QUESTIONS |

1. What part of the text or sermon had the greatest impact on you? Where were you most encouraged, intrigued, challenged?
2. When you think about what Jesus is like, what do you think of first? What characteristics are easiest to imagine? In what ways is your view of Jesus insufficient?
3. **Read 1 Sam 4:3-10.** What was your experience like when you first met Jesus? Have you ever heard God's voice calling to you?
4. What is the difference between approaching Jesus as a good teacher rather than the creator of the universe?
5. What does it mean to **listen** to Jesus? How does our attitude affect how we listen? How can we actively pursue this?