WORKbook

Matthew 14–28

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Welcome...

to this study on chapters 14–28 of the book of Matthew. The Gospel of Matthew is one of four biographies of Jesus in the Bible and the first book in our New Testament. It is the gospel most quoted by the early church fathers.

Each of the four biographies (The Gospels) highlights different aspects of who Jesus is. More than the other gospels, Matthew emphasizes Jesus as a teacher. In fact, Matthew's Gospel is organized around five discourses of Jesus: the Sermon on the Mount (chapters 5–7), the Missionary Discourse (chapter 10), the Parabolic Discourse (chapter 13), the Discourse on the Church (chapter 18), and the Olivet Discourse (chapters 23–25).

Along with Matthew's emphasis on Jesus' teaching is his emphasis on discipleship. In the first section of the book, we see Jesus' call to take up our cross and follow him and to take up his yoke and learn from him. In the second half of the gospel, Jesus fulfills that call to the cross.

THE WORKBOOK

This workbook is designed to prepare you for the upcoming class session. Each week has five days of homework, about 20–30 minutes of study, followed by space to take notes on the class lecture.

The homework and classroom time are both important parts of this class. Each class meeting will open with 30 minutes of homework question discussion. The best way to enrich your classroom experience is to complete the homework and come prepared to discuss it with your table group.

BIBLE READING SKILLS

The book of Matthew emphasizes Jesus' fulfillment of the Old Testament. In this class, we will learn a key Bible reading skill: observing carefully how New Testament authors use the Old Testament in their writing. Matthew's Scriptures were what we call the Old Testament, and he assumed his audience was reading it.

In addition to daily observation, interpretation, and application questions, each day's assignment will include a section called Old Testament Connections to explore relevant Old Testament background to the text for the day. This exercise will enhance your understanding of Matthew's Gospel and how the Bible works together as a whole.

We pray that these exercises and our time together in class will help us become better readers of the Bible while forming us more and more into the image of our Savior Jesus Christ. May God richly bless you as we encounter him in this study.

Christ Community Adult Ministries

1010 BC – 70 AD

Abbreviated Timeline: Israel/Palestine

1010 BC
King David

960 BC
King Solomon Builds Temple

722 BC
Assyria conquers Northern Kingdom (Israel)

586 BC
Babylon conquers Southern Kingdom (Judah)
Temple is demolished

539 BC–332 BC
Persia conquers Babylon;
Cyrus permits Jews to return
Second temple built (516); lingering effects of exile

332 BC
Greeks (Alexander the Great) conquer area – Hellenization

323 BC
Alexander dies, empire divided among generals

323–200 BC
Ptolemies (Egyptian) rule – administered by high priests

200–142 BC
Seleucid (Syrian rule)
or
Antiochus desecrates Temple (167)

166–142 BC
Maccabean revolt

164 BC
Temple restored and rededicated

142–64 BC
Hasmonaean Period – semi-independent

63 BC
Conquered by Rome
(Pompey enters the Holy of Holies)

37 BC
Herod the Great installed as client king for Rome, called “King of the Jews”

27–14 BC
Augustus reigns as first Roman Emperor, deemed “Son of God”

20 BC
Herod the Great begins reconstruction of Temple

4 BC
Jesus is born; Herod the Great dies;
rule divided among his three sons
(Son Herod Antipas, king of Galilee and Perea, mentioned in Gospels)

26–32 AD
Pontius Pilate appointed as Roman prefect over Judea

30 AD
Jesus is crucified and resurrected

63 AD
Temple restoration completed

70 AD
Temple destroyed

notes

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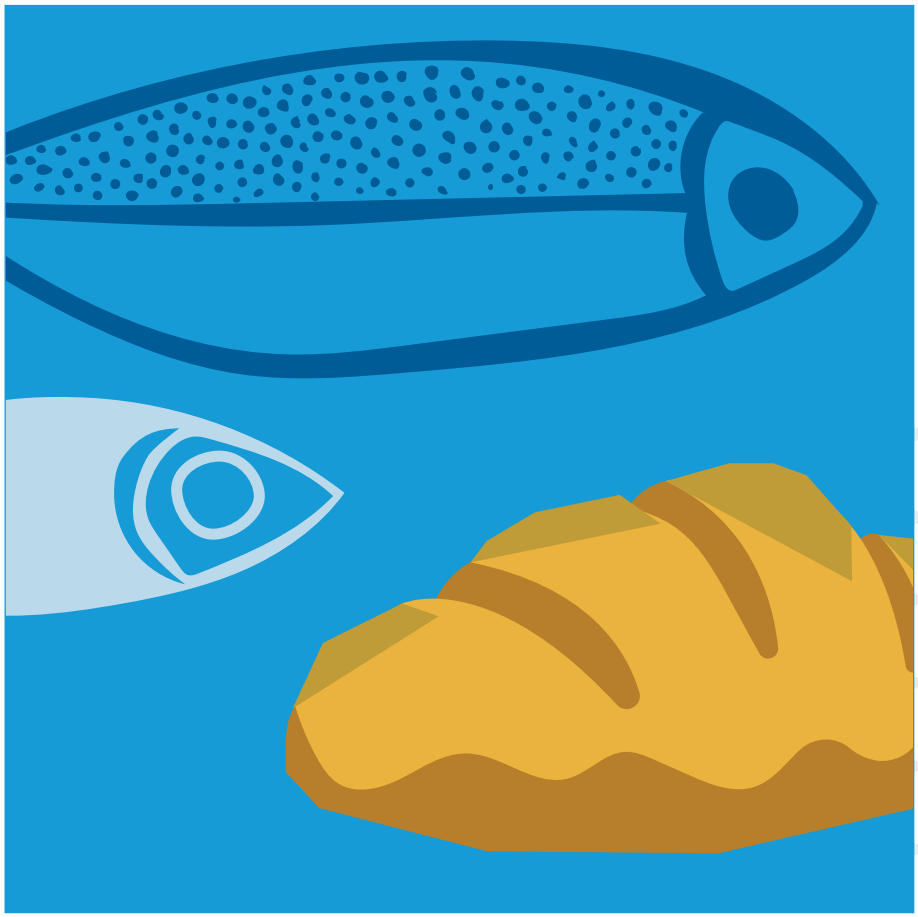
Purple, italicized text throughout the sessions indicates discussion questions.

Recommended resources for continued study.

Resources
cckc.church/matthew2/

session 2



Bread for Jews, Bread for Gentiles

Matthew 14:1 – 16:12

When Herod the Great (the Herod of Matthew 2) died in 4 BC, his kingdom was divided into four regions, each ruled by a "tetrarch." His son Herod Antipas ruled as tetrarch of Galilee, the region where Jesus grew up and did most of his early ministry.

CHARACTERIZATION | Write a few words or phrases that describe the following characters in these verses.

Jesus	Herod the tetrarch	Herodias	Herodias' daughter	John's disciples

OBSERVATIONS | What stands out to you about this story?

:

OLD TESTAMENT CONNECTIONS | Read Leviticus 18:16 for a law that prohibited the relationship between Herod and Herodias.

Read 1 Kings 17:17–24. Why might Herod have thought it plausible that John the Baptist had been raised from the dead?

INTERPRETATION | *What motivations underlie Herod's actions in this story?*

How does John's fate foreshadow the events of the rest of the book?

APPLICATION | When has fear led you to do something that you know is wrong or made it difficult to do the right thing?

Spend some time talking to God about it, and listen to what he might be saying to you.

Jesus' words in 14:27 "It is I" translates the Greek phrase ***egō eimi****, which can also be translated "I am" which is the root meaning of God's covenant name (Yahweh in Hebrew).*

CHARACTERIZATION | Write a few words or phrases that describe the following characters in these verses.

Jesus	Disciples	Crowds	Peter

OBSERVATIONS | What did Jesus do before each miracle of feeding the crowds and walking on water?

OLD TESTAMENT CONNECTIONS | *What connections exist between the following passages and today's reading?*

2 Kings 4:42–44

Exodus 16

Job 9:8

Psalm 107:23–32

INTERPRETATION | *How do the miracles of the feeding of the 5,000 and walking on water portray Jesus as the God of the Old Testament?*

Why do you think solitude was important to Jesus?

APPLICATION | Have you ever intentionally spent an extended time outside of your normal routine in solitude with God? If so, what was that like? Consider scheduling a period of solitude (at least an hour) in the next few months to get away and be with your heavenly Father.

The Canaanites were the peoples who lived in the promised land prior to the Israelite conquest under the leadership of Joshua. The term had fallen out of use by the first century. Matthew's intentional use of the term connects the Canaanites of the Old Testament to the woman in verses 21–28.

CHARACTERIZATION | Write a few words or phrases that describe the following characters in these verses.

Jesus	Pharisees and scribes	Disciples	Canaanite woman

OBSERVATIONS | *Where do you see the topic of bread/food continuing in this passage?*

Who do the dogs and children represent in Jesus' conversation with the Canaanite woman?

OLD TESTAMENT CONNECTIONS | Read the following passages to understand the Old Testament's portrayal of the Canaanites. How are the Canaanites characterized in the Old Testament?

Leviticus 18:24–25 | Deuteronomy 9:5 | Deuteronomy 12:29–31

INTERPRETATION | Summarize in your own words the issue being debated in verses 1–20. What is Jesus' response?

How does the story of the Canaanite woman's faith illuminate the issues debated in 15:1–20?

How would Jesus' response to her have challenged the disciples' predispositions?

APPLICATION | Imagine a person or people group that Christians today might perceive in the same way that first-century Jews thought about the Canaanites. Pray for that person or people group now.

The Pharisees and Sadducees were not typically allies. Sadducees tended to be from aristocratic families in Jerusalem, had more political power, and were friendlier with the Roman occupiers. The Pharisees were more representative of the common people in Israel. The groups differed from one another in certain interpretations of Scripture.

CHARACTERIZATION | Write a few words or phrases that describe the following characters in these verses.

Jesus	Disciples	Pharisees	Sadducees

OBSERVATIONS | *Where do you see the topic of bread/food continuing in this passage?*

Compare and contrast the two crowd-feeding miracles (14:13–21; 15:32–39).

Contrast Jesus' interaction with the Pharisees and Sadducees and his interaction with the Canaanite woman in yesterday's reading.

OLD TESTAMENT CONNECTIONS | What do you think Jesus meant by "the sign of Jonah"?

INTERPRETATION | Why do you think Matthew included the second account of a crowd-feeding miracle in his gospel?

Why do you think Jesus responded to the Pharisees and Sadducees the way he did in 16:2–4?

APPLICATION | Do you ever find yourself asking for just one more sign from Jesus to prove himself to you? How might remembering God's past faithfulness give you confidence that he'll be faithful again in the future?

OVERview

Design Patterns

Watch the BibleProject video ***Design Patterns*** and write down something you learned. Did you notice any of the design patterns in the reading this week?

Memorize the topic and reference of Matthew 16:24–25 (for example, "Matthew 16:24–25 is about taking up your cross."). Read the verses and reference out loud several times.

Write down one takeaway from the reading or homework this week.

What aspect of Jesus' character stood out to you this week?

Read Psalm 105. In the space provided, copy verses 37–42, meditating on each verse as you write it out.

[24]Then Jesus said to
his disciples,
"If anyone wants to
follow after me, let
him deny himself,
take up his cross, and
follow me.
[25]For whoever wants
to save his life will
lose it, but whoever
loses his life because
of me will find it.

— Matthew 16:24–25

notes

session 3

Who Is the Messiah?

Matthew 16:13 – 17:27

Caesarea Philippi lies at the northern end of ancient Israel, at the foot of Mount Hermon, and was well outside Jewish territory during Jesus' time. This city housed a temple dedicated to Augustus Caesar and was known for its worship of Pan, the hedonistic Greek fertility deity.

CHARACTERIZATION | Write a few words or phrases that describe the following characters in these verses.

Jesus	Peter	Disciples

OBSERVATIONS | What reason does Jesus give for his commendation of Peter in verse 17?

What things did Jesus say were necessary after Peter declared him as the Messiah?

OLD TESTAMENT CONNECTIONS | How do each of these Old Testament passages explain Peter's ideas of who the Messiah will be?

Daniel 7:13–14

Jeremiah 23:5–6

How does Isaiah 52:13–53:12 explain the things Jesus said were necessary?

INTERPRETATION | *Why do you think Jesus responded to Peter's statement by charging the disciples to tell no one he is the Messiah?*

Why do you think Jesus responded so harshly to Peter in 16:23?

What do you think Jesus means by "God's concerns" and "human concerns"?

APPLICATION | What are your doubts about Jesus and his mission as Messiah? Do you find it difficult to confess Jesus as the Messiah among certain crowds? Pray for humble confidence and boldness in naming him Savior.

The site of the transfiguration is possibly the nearby Mount Hermon. Both Moses' and Elijah's experiences with God were on Mount Sinai (also called Mount Horeb). In ancient cultures, climbing to the heaven-reaching heights of mountains brought one closer to the presence of God/ the gods.

CHARACTERIZATION | Write a few words or phrases that describe the following characters in these verses.

Jesus	God the Father	Peter

OBSERVATIONS | *What do you see happening in the transfiguration?*

What do you think it is about?

OLD TESTAMENT CONNECTIONS | Compare and contrast these Old Testament passages with Jesus' transfiguration:

Deuteronomy 18:15–19

Malachi 4:4–6

Exodus 34:29–35

Daniel 7:9–10

INTERPRETATION | *Why do you think Moses and Elijah appeared on the mountain with Jesus?*

As Jesus explains that the "Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father," he also says, "Some standing here will not see death until they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom." What do you think this second statement means?

What do you think God's interruption and the content of his message in 17:5–6 says about Peter's understanding of who Jesus is?

APPLICATION | Commentator Craig Keener writes, "Those who do not acknowledge Jesus as Lord—as having the right to demand of them anything, including their lives—have yet to be truly converted."[1] Write down your gut response to that statement. Are you ready to take up your cross? Ask God to remove any obstacles.

[1]Craig S. Keener, *Matthew*, IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Downer's Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1997), 276.

CHARACTERIZATION | Write a few words or phrases that describe the following characters in these verses.

Jesus	Father of the epileptic child	Disciples	Demon

OBSERVATIONS | *To which of the disciples had the father brought his boy for healing before speaking with Jesus? Why were they there?*

OLD TESTAMENT CONNECTIONS | In what ways does the lack of faith shown by the nine disciples compare to Israel's lack of faith in these Old Testament passages?

Exodus 17:3–7

Exodus 32:1–10

INTERPRETATION | *What do you think Jesus expected of his nine disciples while he was away on the mountain?*

How does faith move a mountain?

APPLICATION | What are your stubborn pain points? In what ways do you repeatedly doubt God's power to enable you to live out your faith, according to his will? Write out your answer as a prayer of confession.

prayer

CHARACTERIZATION | Write a few words or phrases that describe the following characters in these verses.

Jesus	Disciples	Peter	Temple tax collectors

OBSERVATIONS | Using the map on page 2, track Jesus' travels from Caeserea Philippi (Matthew 16:21) to the Galilee region and to Capernaum. What direction are they headed?

OLD TESTAMENT CONNECTIONS | Compare todays reading to Exodus 30:11–16. What details stand out to you?

INTERPRETATION | Consider the placement of the second announcement of Jesus' impending betrayal and death (17:22–23) right after yesterday's discussion of faith moving mountains (17:20–21). Why might Matthew have chosen to put these passages back to back?

What do you think Jesus means by "then the sons are free" in 17:26?

Why does Jesus choose to pay the temple tax to which he has no obligation?

APPLICATION | Does the Messiah you believe in know which fish have swallowed money and where to catch them? Ask the Lord to give you a renewed sense of his divine power and wisdom.

day 5 :: Matthew 16:13–17:27

OVERview

The Messiah

Watch the BibleProject video ***The Messiah*** and write down something you learned.

Draw picture representations for each phrase of Matthew 16:24–25. Study this visual aid to help you remember the order and content of the passage.

Write a few words about how each of these Old Testament passages provides context for Jesus' call to take up our cross.

Deuteronomy 21:22–23 (See also Acts 5:30.)

Psalm 49:6–9

Write down one takeaway from the reading or homework this week.

What aspect of Jesus' character stood out to you this week?

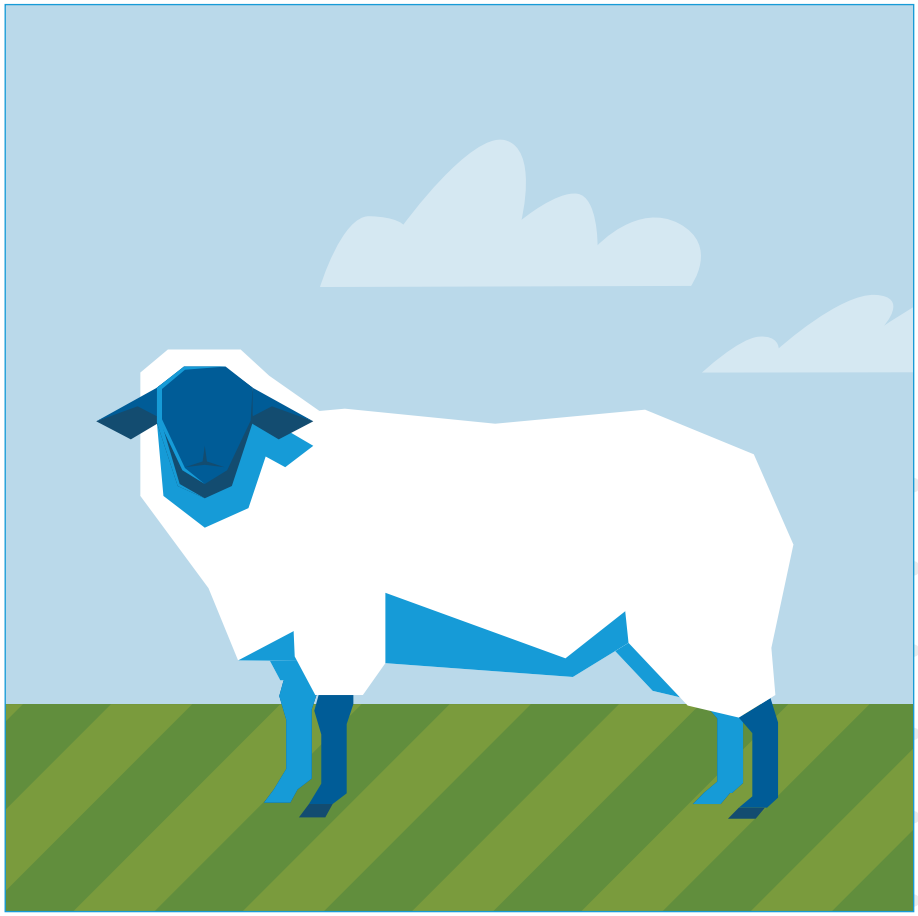
Find one or more persons to share what you have learned about Jesus as a Messiah. What was one positive outcome of that conversation?

[24]Then Jesus said to
his disciples,
"If anyone wants to
follow after me, let
him deny himself,
take up his cross, and
follow me.
[25]For whoever wants
to save his life will
lose it, but whoever
loses his life because
of me will find it.

— Matthew 16:24–25

notes

session 4



Fourth Discourse
The Church
Matthew 18

day 1 :: Matthew 18

Today is an overview of this discourse as a unit. These passages will be read in depth and in smaller sections in the days ahead.

OBSERVATIONS | *What are the themes of the discourse in Matthew 18? What ideas link the smaller units together?*

Matthew marks the end of five discourses of Jesus with the phrase "when Jesus had finished..." in 7:28, 11:1, 13:53, 19:1, and 26:1. Scholars refer to the discourse in chapter 18 as The Discourse on the Church.

How does Jesus continue to challenge the disciples' understanding of the nature of his kingdom?

OLD TESTAMENT CONNECTIONS | How does God's choosing of David as king in the following passage echo what Jesus says about greatness in God's kingdom?

1 Samuel 16:1–13

INTERPRETATION | ***Why do you think Jesus grouped this set of themes together in this discourse?***

What do you think the disciples were thinking about Jesus and his ministry at this point in the gospel?

Why do you think this discourse appears at this point in the gospel?

APPLICATION | What did you find personally challenging as you read this discourse? Read through that section again, and respond to God in prayer.

"A child was a person of no importance in Jewish society, subject to the authority of his elders, not taken seriously except as a responsibility, one to be looked after, not one to be looked up to."[2]

CHARACTERIZATION | Write a few words or phrases that describe the following characters in these verses.

Jesus	Disciples	The Father

OBSERVATIONS | How does the warning of 18:6–9 link what Jesus says about children and sheep?

OLD TESTAMENT CONNECTIONS | One of the most common metaphors in the Old Testament was of God as a shepherd. See the following references. Why was shepherd such an apt metaphor for God?

Psalm 23:1–4 | Psalm 78:52 | Isaiah 40:11 | Isaiah 53:6 | Ezekiel 34:11–16

[2] R.T. France, *Matthew: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 1, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (InterVarsity Press, 1985), 274.

INTERPRETATION | *What do you think it is about little children that Jesus wants his disciples to emulate?*

How might the disciples' concern about greatness be related to the warning about causing "little ones who believe in me" to fall away?

APPLICATION | Consider any areas in your life where you are concerned about status. Who might you be pushing aside or ignoring in your quest for status or recognition? Confess this to God and consider how you might become like a little child in this area instead.

CHARACTERIZATION | Write a few words or phrases that describe the following characters in these verses.

Jesus	Person at fault	Person sinned against

OBSERVATIONS | Compare the process outlined here with Matthew 5:23–26. What do these passages have in common? What is different?

In context, who are the "two or three" who are gathered in 18:20?

OLD TESTAMENT CONNECTIONS | Read the following passages. How is Jesus affirming the Old Testament law in Matthew 18?

Leviticus 19:17–18 | Deuteronomy 17:6 | Deuteronomy 19:15–19

INTERPRETATION | *What is the purpose of the witnesses? What are they witnesses of? What is being "bound" and "loosed" in heaven and earth in this passage?*

Jesus says to treat the brother who doesn't pay attention to the church's rebuke "like a Gentile and a tax collector." How did Jesus treat Gentiles and tax collectors? How should the church then treat them?

APPLICATION | Is there a brother or sister in Christ who has sinned against you that you need to talk to? What is a step you can take toward reconciling with them?

Ten thousand talents would have been an unpayable sum. According to Keener (1997, p. 201), "the poor man owes the king more money than existed in circulation in the whole country at the time!" One hundred denarii would have been a large but realistic debt.

CHARACTERIZATION | Write a few words or phrases that describe the following characters in these verses.

Jesus	Peter	King	First servant	Second servant

OBSERVATIONS | What kind of king might be able to loan more money than exists in the world?

OLD TESTAMENT CONNECTIONS | Read the following passage. Contrast Lamech's vengeful boast with Jesus' statement about forgiveness.

Genesis 4:19–24

INTERPRETATION | *How does this passage connect to 18:15–20? Why did Peter ask about forgiveness in light of what Jesus had just taught?*

Summarize Jesus' teaching about forgiveness in your own words.

What does the good news of God's forgiveness demand of us?

APPLICATION | Is there anyone in your life that you need to forgive? What is one step you can take toward forgiveness?

day 5 :: Matthew 18

OVERview

The Last Will Be First

Watch the BibleProject video ***The Last Will Be First*** and write down something you learned.

Memorize the first phrase of Matthew 16:24–25. Once you can recall this part easily, add additional phrases one by one.

Write down one takeaway from the reading or homework this week.

What aspect of Jesus' character stood out to you this week?

Why do you think God overturns cultural expectations like the right of the firstborn? What does this say about how God thinks about status? Read Philippians 2:1–11, note how Jesus emptied himself of his status, and spend a few moments praying in response.

[24]Then Jesus said to
his disciples,
"If anyone wants to
follow after me, let
him deny himself,
take up his cross, and
follow me.
[25]For whoever wants
to save his life will
lose it, but whoever
loses his life because
of me will find it.

— Matthew 16:24–25

notes

session 5

Toward Jerusalem

Matthew 19 – 20

Two schools of thought on divorce prevailed among the Jewish leaders. Those of the school of Hillel, the more popular view, permitted a man to divorce a wife for any reason, such as burning his dinner. Those of the school of Shammai permitted divorce only for unchastity (which may have included more than sexual infidelity). Wives had no power to divorce their husbands under Jewish law.

Issuing a divorce certificate in Moses's day to a woman effectively already rejected by her husband allowed her to legally seek the provision and security of another marriage, without which she would have been homeless and destitute.

CHARACTERIZATION | Write a few words or phrases that describe the following characters in these verses.

Jesus	Pharisees	Disciples

OBSERVATIONS | Look up the regions of Galilee and Judea on the map. Where does Jesus still seem to be headed?

Contrast the question being asked in 19:3 with the question Jesus effectively answers in 19:4–5. What are the differences?

OLD TESTAMENT CONNECTIONS | Compare and contrast the various attitudes about divorce in today's passage with these Old Testament passages:

Genesis 1:27

Genesis 2:18–24

Deuteronomy 24:1–4

Compare and contrast the various attitudes about celibacy (eunuchs) in today's passage with these Old Testament passages:

Deuteronomy 23:1

Isaiah 56:3–5

INTERPRETATION | *What do you think the Pharisees were hoping to accomplish by their test question?*

Why do you think the disciples reacted so strongly to Jesus' view on marriage?

What might be a reason to adopt lifelong celibacy "because of the kingdom of heaven"?

APPLICATION | Take a moment to pray about your marital status, whether you are single, married, divorced, remarried, celibate, etc. How has today's study challenged you to live out God's design for marriage and singleness?

If you are married (or want to be), what does it look like to approach a marriage relationship with a concern for building relational strength and intimacy rather than a concern for what offenses would be grounds for separation or divorce? If you are not married, how might that same ethic also strengthen other relationships?

CHARACTERIZATION | Write a few words or phrases that describe the following characters in these verses.

Jesus	Disciples	Children	Rich young man

OBSERVATIONS | Compare and contrast the characters of the children with the rich young man. What did they each come to Jesus with? Were they welcomed or turned away? Why?

How does the rich young man seem to think eternal life is gained? (See his question in 19:16.)

OLD TESTAMENT CONNECTIONS | Compare the disciples' and the young man's assumptions about the spiritual status of the rich with these Old Testament passages:

Deuteronomy 8:1–20

Deuteronomy 9:4–6

Deuteronomy 28:1–14

What does Genesis 18:9–14 tell us about God's view of the impossible?

INTERPRETATION | *What was Jesus' suggestion for the rich man designed to teach?*

Why do you think Jesus says that it is impossible for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God?

Why do you think the disciples were so shocked by Jesus speaking of the impossibility of a rich person entering the kingdom of God?

APPLICATION | What possessions, comforts, or relationships are obstacles for you, keeping you from obeying Jesus' call on your life? Ask God to help you reorder your loves to put him above all.

CHARACTERIZATION | Write a few words or phrases that describe the following characters in these verses.

Jesus	Disciples/ Peter	Landowner	Early-hire workers	Late-hire workers

OBSERVATIONS | Compare and contrast the first/last and last/first statements in 19:30 and 20:16. To whom is Jesus referring in each statement?

OLD TESTAMENT CONNECTIONS | What do these Old Testament passages tell us about God's view of status and his graciousness?

Psalm 107

Psalm 113

INTERPRETATION | *Why do you think Jesus tells the parable of the vineyard workers in response to Peter's question? Who do you think represents the disciples in the parable?*

Does the worker who was hired on at the beginning deserve more reward than those who came later? Why or why not?

APPLICATION | Ask God to reveal any assumptions of entitlement in your heart to his gifts of generosity. Examples could be comfort, safety, wealth, health, family, and even salvation. Write a prayer of thanksgiving for his gifts.

prayer

To be handed over to the Gentiles (here, the Romans) for execution meant specifically crucifixion, a horrific form of punishment reserved for slaves and political rebels.

CHARACTERIZATION | Write a few words or phrases that describe the following characters in these verses.

Jesus	Mother of Zebedee's sons	Sons of Zebedee (James & John)	Ten disciples	Two blind men

OBSERVATIONS | Where are Jesus and the disciples now in their journey (see 20:17, 29)? Refer to the map.

Compare and contrast the request of James and John (and their mother) to the request of the blind men. Who are the people who can see Jesus' upside-down kingdom, and who are the ones who are blind?

OLD TESTAMENT CONNECTIONS | How do these passages connect with the cup Jesus asks the sons of Zebedee about?

Isaiah 51:21–23

Isaiah 52:13–53:12

INTERPRETATION | *Do you think James and John understand at this point the reality of Jesus' upcoming crucifixion? Why or why not? What do you think they're seeking?*

Write a statement based on today's passage summarizing Jesus' teaching on the human need for status. Feel free to include ideas from the entire week's readings.

APPLICATION | Acknowledge your desire to preserve or increase your reputation. Ask God to hold that desire in his hands and be responsible for how others see you. Pray and ask him to help you only look to him for your sense of worth and reward.

day 5 :: Matthew 19–20

Jesus in the Divorce Debate

Watch the BibleProject video ***Jesus in the Divorce Debate*** and write down something you learned.

Write out Matthew 16:24–25 from memory, then check your work, crossing out and correcting any errors. Cover this first attempt and try again, writing the passage at least three times, even if you get all the words right.

Write down one takeaway from the reading or homework this week.

What aspect of Jesus' character stood out to you this week?

Jesus calls his disciples to a different measure than our cultural definitions of flourishing and integrity. Which of Jesus' teachings do you struggle with the most: generosity, dependence, relational faithfulness and sexual integrity, ambition, self-worth, or serving others? What is one step you can take this week to intentionally address that struggle?

OVERview

[24]Then Jesus said to
his disciples,
"If anyone wants to
follow after me, let
him deny himself,
take up his cross, and
follow me.
[25]For whoever wants
to save his life will
lose it, but whoever
loses his life because
of me will find it.

— Matthew 16:24–25

notes

session 6

Entry & Conflict

Matthew 21 – 22

The term hosanna comes from Psalm 118:25 and means "Save us now." Psalms 113–118 are the "Hallel," or Praise Psalms, a set of songs recited annually during Passover. The huge crowd that spreads out clothes and branches on the road in Matthew 21:8–9 are likely Galilean pilgrims coming to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover, who followed Jesus' caravan as they were leaving Jericho (see 20:29).

CHARACTERIZATION | Write a few words or phrases that describe the following characters in these verses.

Jesus	Disciples	Crowd

OBSERVATIONS | Who do the crowds say the man on the donkey and colt is?

Who does the prophetic passage that Matthew quotes in 21:5 say that this man is?

OLD TESTAMENT CONNECTIONS | *Compare the following Old Testament passages with the events in today's reading. What echoes do you see? What kind of king might the people have been expecting from these prophecies?*

Zechariah 9:9–10

Zechariah 14:1–9

Read these Old Testament passages echoed in today's reading and note what they may imply about Jesus:

2 Kings 9:12–13

Psalm 118:25–29

INTERPRETATION | *Do you think the crowds recognized Jesus as their king or the Messiah entering Jerusalem? Why or why not?*

What do you think Matthew wants his readers to understand from this passage?

APPLICATION | In our secular modern society, we can easily dismiss the fulfillment of prophecy as coincidence. Where do you stand on God's power to fulfill prophecy? Do these events in Jesus' life fulfill Scripture, or do the events merely echo common themes, liturgies, and practices from the Old Testament?

*The name **Bethphage**, the village where Jesus sent the disciples for the donkey and colt means "house of the unripe fig." Jesus would have passed by this village again on his way from Bethany to Jerusalem.*

CHARACTERIZATION | Write a few words or phrases that describe the following characters in these verses.

Jesus	The blind and the lame	Chief priests, scribes, elders	Disciples

OBSERVATIONS | How do each of Jesus' actions and responses in this passage show his ultimate authority over creation?

OLD TESTAMENT CONNECTIONS | *Read these context passages for Jesus' quote in 21:13. What do you think he's primarily concerned about happening in the temple?*

Isaiah 56:3–8

Jeremiah 7:1–11

Read these passages regarding the blind and lame in the temple. What new thing is Jesus instituting?

Leviticus 21:16–20

2 Samuel 5:4–12

Isaiah 35:1–6

INTERPRETATION | ***What do you think the barren fig tree has in common with the buyers and sellers in the temple and the chief priests and scribes? Why might Matthew tell these events back to back?***

What is the core concern of the priests and elders in Matthew 21:23–27? Do they really want an answer to their questions?

APPLICATION | Many times we know what Jesus wants from us, but we're not willing to acknowledge his authority over us or that part of our lives. Where have your actions and attitudes challenged Jesus' authority as Lord over you this week? Spend some time confessing your hard-heartedness.

CHARACTERIZATION | Write a few words or phrases that describe the following characters in these verses.

Jesus	Two sons	Farmers
First wedding guests	**Gathering servants**	**Guest without wedding attire**

OBSERVATIONS | *What is the common theme of all three parables?*

OLD TESTAMENT CONNECTIONS | *What connections do you see between Isaiah 5:1–7 and The Parable of the Vineyard Owner?*

What insights do these passages give you about the stone that Jesus references?

Psalm 118:19–24

Isaiah 8:11–15

Daniel 2:1–45

INTERPRETATION | What do you think the two contrastive parts of Jesus' statement in Matthew 21:44 mean?

Who are the guests that come to the wedding banquet? What do you think the presence of the man without wedding clothes symbolizes? Why is he thrown out?

APPLICATION | Which son (21:28–32) are you more like? Have you rebelled but want to approach Jesus with a softened heart, or do you profess your obedience and allegiance but fail to follow through? What is your stumbling block?

The Sadducees accepted only the Pentateuch (Genesis–Deuteronomy) as Scripture. They believed that physical death was final and no resurrection existed.

CHARACTERIZATION | Write a few words or phrases that describe the following characters in these verses.

Jesus	Pharisees	Sadducees	Crowds

OBSERVATIONS | Write down what Jesus has to say about the divine-human relationship in each of the four episodes in today's reading.

OLD TESTAMENT CONNECTIONS | Write down what stands out to you from these passages quoted in today's passage:

Genesis 1:26–27

Deuteronomy 25:5–6

Exodus 3:1–6, 13–15

Deuteronomy 6:5; Leviticus 19:18

Psalm 110:1–4

INTERPRETATION | *What do you think was the intent of the various challenges to Jesus in these passages? What were the Pharisees and Sadducees hoping to achieve?*

How does Jesus show his superiority in each episode?

What do you think Jesus means by the questions he asks in 22:41–45? What truth is he challenging his listeners to consider?

APPLICATION | Where do you take your questions about God? Do you trust God to answer you and give you wisdom? Take a moment to quiet your heart before him and ask him to help you better understand an area of concern.

day 5 :: Matthew 21–22

The Parables of Jesus

Watch the BibleProject video ***The Parables of Jesus*** and write down something you learned.

Pick out anchor words for each phrase or sentence in Matthew 16:24–25. Why might the author have chosen these words in particular? Think about those choices as you recite the verses.

Write down one takeaway from the reading or homework this week.

What aspect of Jesus' character stood out to you this week?

Read all of Psalm 118. Imagine singing this hymn on your way to Jerusalem to celebrate Passover. What stands out to you from these words of praise?

OVERview

[24]Then Jesus said to
his disciples,
"If anyone wants to
follow after me, let
him deny himself,
take up his cross, and
follow me.
[25]For whoever wants
to save his life will
lose it, but whoever
loses his life because
of me will find it.

— Matthew 16:24–25

notes

session 7

Fifth Discourse
Olivet Discourse, Part 1

Matthew 23:1 – 24:35

Phylacteries (23:5) were small boxes filled with parchment containing Scripture verses, which were fixed to a person's head or hand during prayers.

CHARACTERIZATION | Write a few words or phrases that describe the following characters in these verses.

Jesus	Scribes and Pharisees

OBSERVATIONS | How many "woes" are pronounced on the scribes and Pharisees? Do you see any significance to this number?

OLD TESTAMENT CONNECTIONS | *Read Deuteronomy 6:4–9. Do you think that phylacteries are an appropriate way of keeping these commands in Deuteronomy 6:4–9? Why or why not?*

What was wrong about the scribes and Pharisees' use of phylacteries?

Read the following Old Testament passages and note any similarities to Jesus' pronouncement of judgment on the scribes and Pharisees.

Amos 5:18–24

Isaiah 1:1–23

Isaiah 58

INTERPRETATION | *In a few sentences, summarize the reasons for Jesus' condemnation of the scribes and Pharisees.*

Why is it so destructive when our practice doesn't match our teaching (23:3)?

APPLICATION | Where in your life, or in your faith tradition, do you see incongruity between what is taught and what is practiced? Bring this to God in a prayer of confession.

day 2 :: Matthew 24:1–25:46

Today is an overview of all the parts of this discourse as a unit. These passages will be read in depth and in smaller sections in the days and week ahead.

OBSERVATIONS | What are "these things" that the disciples ask about in 24:2?

The fifth and final discourse in Matthew's Gospel begins in chapter 24. Scholars refer to it as the Olivet Discourse because of the location on the Mount of Olives.

OLD TESTAMENT CONNECTIONS | Read the following passages for some Old Testament background on the Day of the Lord. Note where the imagery overlaps with the Olivet Discourse.

Joel 1:15–2:11

Zephaniah 1

Zechariah 14

Malachi 4

INTERPRETATION | *What are some of the major themes in the Olivet Discourse?*

APPLICATION | What comes to your mind when you think of God as judge?

The temple in Jerusalem in Jesus' day is known as the Second Temple (or Herod's Temple) to distinguish it from the original temple built by Solomon. Solomon's temple was destroyed by the Babylonians about 586/587 BC. The Second Temple was destroyed by the Romans in AD 70, about four decades after Jesus' crucifixion.

CHARACTERIZATION | Write a few words or phrases that describe the following characters in these verses.

Jesus	Disciples

OBSERVATIONS | What building was Jesus referring to in 24:2?

OLD TESTAMENT CONNECTIONS | Read Jeremiah 26:1–11. What similarities do you see between Jesus and Jeremiah?

INTERPRETATION | *What do you think the disciples wanted to know in 24:3? How does Jesus answer (or not answer) their questions?*

What connection is there between Jesus' judgment on the religious leaders and his pronouncement of the destruction of the temple?

What would have been the significance of the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem for the Jewish people?

APPLICATION | What does enduring faith look like in the face of some of the things Jesus describes here? Spend a few minutes praying for endurance for yourself and others.

CHARACTERIZATION | Write a few words or phrases that describe Jesus in these verses.

OBSERVATIONS | Find the three times where the term ***elect*** is used. What is God's concern for the elect?

OLD TESTAMENT CONNECTIONS | *The term **abomination of desolation** appears three times in the Old Testament, all in the book of Daniel (Daniel 9:27, 11:31, and 12:11). Read some of the surrounding context of those passages and note any connections with the Olivet Discourse.*

What connections do you see between Daniel 7:1–14 and this passage in Matthew?

INTERPRETATION | *What is the purpose of the author's insertion "let the reader understand" into verse 15 of Jesus' speech?*

How might Christians recognize someone as a false messiah or false prophet (24:23–24)? See also Matthew 7:15–23.

What do you think is the time frame of the events described in Matthew 24:1–35? From our perspective in the 21st century, have they already occurred, or are they still to come? Cite some verses from the passage to support your answer.

APPLICATION | Read Revelation 22:10–17. Write a brief prayer asking Jesus to come back soon.

prayer

OVERview

The City

Watch the BibleProject video ***The City*** and write down something you learned.

Recite Matthew 16:24–25. Write out three times any phrases or verses where you stumble in your recitation.

Write down one takeaway from the reading or homework this week.

What aspect of Jesus' character stood out to you this week?

How is God's justice part of the good news? Why should we pray for it (Revelation 22:17)?

[24]Then Jesus said to
his disciples,
"If anyone wants to
follow after me, let
him deny himself,
take up his cross, and
follow me.
[25]For whoever wants
to save his life will
lose it, but whoever
loses his life because
of me will find it.

— Matthew 16:24–25

notes

session 8

Fifth Discourse
Olivet Discourse, Part 2

Matthew 24:36 – 25:46

CHARACTERIZATION | Write a few words or phrases that describe the following characters in these verses.

Jesus	Master of the household	Faithful servant	Wicked servant

OBSERVATIONS | *There are two widely held interpretations of who is "taken" in 24:40–41, the righteous or the unrighteous one. How do you read these verses? Who do you think is taken?*

OLD TESTAMENT CONNECTIONS | What do the flood story (Genesis 6:5–7, 7:11–24) and Jesus' words about the "coming of the Son of Man" have in common?

INTERPRETATION | *Summarize Jesus' teaching in each section of today's reading:*

Matthew 24:36–44

Matthew 24:45–51

What does it look like for Christians today to remain vigilant about Jesus' impending return?

APPLICATION | What is the job (24:46) that God has called you to do until Jesus returns? How does it relate to your paid or unpaid "Monday" vocation? What about beyond that?

Wedding processions escorted the bride from her house to the groom's house. The women in this parable are waiting for the groom to arrive to begin the escort.

CHARACTERIZATION | Write a few words or phrases that describe the following characters in these verses.

Wise virgins	Foolish virgins	Master

OBSERVATIONS | What is it that made the second set of virgins foolish?

OLD TESTAMENT CONNECTIONS | Read the following Old Testament passages. Who is depicted as the bride and groom in each passage?

Isaiah 54:1–10

Ezekiel 16:1–14

INTERPRETATION | *Why do you think the master says, "I don't know you!" at the end of the parable?*

Summarize the message of this parable.

How does the message of this parable connect to the reading from yesterday?

APPLICATION | Are you remaining vigilant about Jesus' return? What should you do (or continue to do) to be prepared for his return?

A talent was equivalent to many years' worth of wages for a day laborer.

CHARACTERIZATION | Write a few words or phrases that describe the following characters in these verses.

Jesus	First servant	Second servant	Third servant

OBSERVATIONS | What is the reward that the first two servants receive?

OLD TESTAMENT CONNECTIONS | *How does this parable illustrate the principle of Proverbs 9:9?*

INTERPRETATION | *Summarize the message of this parable.*

Does this parable seem fair to you? Why or why not?

APPLICATION | What does it look like to be given something by the Lord and do nothing with it? How are you stewarding the faith, grace, and gifts God has given you?

CHARACTERIZATION | Write a few words or phrases that describe the following characters in these verses.

King	Sheep	Goats

OBSERVATIONS | *Why are the sheep and goats surprised?*

OLD TESTAMENT CONNECTIONS | Read the following passages and note any connections with Matthew 25:31–46.

Ezekiel 34:1–11

Amos 8:4–7

Jeremiah 5:25–31

Jeremiah 22:13–17

INTERPRETATION | *What do all of the situations of 25:35–36 have in common?*

In what sense is it Jesus who is fed, clothed, cared for, and visited in verses 35–36?

What does this story teach about the relationship between faith and works?

APPLICATION | How are you caring for the least of Jesus' brothers and sisters? Take a moment to pray, asking God to show you how you can care for "the least" around you. Listen silently for his answer.

day 5 :: Matthew 24:36–25:46

Day of the Lord

Watch the BibleProject video ***Day of the Lord*** and write down something you learned.

Stand up and imagine reciting Matthew 16:24–25 to another person or audience. What gestures might you use with each phrase? Recite the verses using those motions.

Write down one takeaway from the reading or homework this week.

What aspect of Jesus' character stood out to you this week?

How are you going to better put your talents to use for God's kingdom? Imagine what it would feel like to have God say over you, "Well done, good and faithful servant!"

OVERview

[24]Then Jesus said to
his disciples,
"If anyone wants to
follow after me, let
him deny himself,
take up his cross, and
follow me.
[25]For whoever wants
to save his life will
lose it, but whoever
loses his life because
of me will find it.

— Matthew 16:24–25

notes

session 9

Arrest & Trial

Matthew 26:1 – 27:26

Expensive perfumes were kept in sealed alabaster jars to prevent evaporation. Once the long neck of the jar was broken, the perfume would have had to be used all at once.

CHARACTERIZATION | Write a few words or phrases that describe the following characters in these verses.

Jesus	Disciples	Chief priests and elders	Woman at Bethany	Judas

OBSERVATIONS | *Why didn't the religious leaders want to arrest Jesus during the Passover festival? Why did they change their mind?*

OLD TESTAMENT CONNECTIONS | Skim Exodus 12:1–13:16. What was the significance of the Passover to the Jewish people? What did it represent to the Israelites?

INTERPRETATION | *What is the symbolic significance of Jesus' death taking place during Passover?*

What does Jesus say we need rescue from? How does he expand on the meaning of Passover?

APPLICATION | What do you need rescue from? How does Jesus' death and resurrection give you hope? Spend some time praying to God for rescue.

Who do you know that needs rescue from slavery to sin? Spend some time praying for them now.

The Garden of Gethsemane was just east of Jerusalem, on the west side of the Mount of Olives.

CHARACTERIZATION | Write a few words or phrases that describe the following characters in these verses.

Jesus	Peter	Disciples	Mob

OBSERVATIONS | *List the different ways Jesus' disciples fail him in this passage.*

OLD TESTAMENT CONNECTIONS | How is the prophecy in Zechariah 13:1 and 13:7–9 fulfilled by the events in today's passage?

INTERPRETATION | Hebrews 4:14–15 says that Jesus is able to sympathize with us in our weaknesses. Where do you see that truth evident in this passage?

Why do you think one of Jesus' disciples initially responded to Jesus' arrest by attacking the mob?

What changed for Peter, from the beginning of this passage to the end? Why do you think he fled with the rest of the disciples?

APPLICATION | When have you failed because you didn't fully understand the circumstances? How can you lean into God's grace to forgive yourself or ask for forgiveness?

The Sanhedrin was a council in Jerusalem made up of the high priest and members of the wealthy Jerusalem aristocracy, especially the Sadducees.

In addition to their religious authority, Jewish high priests in the first century were also political figures and could be installed or removed by the Romans. Caiaphas was high priest from AD 18–36, longer than any other first century high priest, due to his ability to keep the peace for Rome.

CHARACTERIZATION | Write a few words or phrases that describe the following characters in these verses.

Jesus	Peter	Caiaphas	Religious leaders

OBSERVATIONS | *Though Jesus was in some ways at the mercy of the mob and the high priest, how do you see him continue to exercise control over his situation?*

OLD TESTAMENT CONNECTIONS | Read Deuteronomy 19:15–21. How does this Old Testament background amplify the corrupt nature of Jesus' trial?

Read Daniel 7:9–14 and Psalm 110:1–4. Do you think Caiaphas properly interpreted Jesus' response as blasphemy?

Read Leviticus 24:16. Why did the court issue a sentence of death?

INTERPRETATION | *Why do you think Jesus initially stayed silent about the false witness testimony against him?*

Where do you see irony in 26:66–68?

APPLICATION | Can you identify with Peter in this passage? When have you been afraid to acknowledge Jesus? Imagine yourself in that setting now. What price would it cost to acknowledge your Savior? How might you respond when confronted by such a scenario in the future?

Merriam Webster: *Irony is an incongruity between a situation developed in a drama and the accompanying words or actions that is understood by the audience but not by the characters in the story.*

Unlike Jesus' home region of Galilee, which was administered by an appointed regional king (Herod), Judea was administered by a Roman governor beginning in the year AD 6. The Romans administered Judea directly because it had become a hotbed for rebellion. Pontius Pilate was governor from AD 26–36/37. He was a cruel ruler who frequently provoked his Jewish subjects.

CHARACTERIZATION | Write a few words or phrases that describe the following characters in these verses.

Jesus	Judas	Peter
Chief priests and elders	**Pilate**	**Crowd**

OBSERVATIONS | *What was Pilate's goal by providing the choice of releasing Jesus or Barabbas? What persuaded him to release Barabbas?*

OLD TESTAMENT CONNECTIONS | Scholar and New Testament commentator Craig Blomberg calls Matthew 27:9–10 "perhaps the strangest fulfillment quotation in all of Matthew." He cites a number of possible Old Testament parallels and echoes. Read the following passages cited by Blomberg and write down any connections to Matthew 27.

2 Samuel 17:23

Zechariah 11:4–17

Jeremiah 19

Jeremiah 32:6–9

[3]Craig Blomberg, *"Matthew" in Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. Gregory Beale and D. A. Carson (Baker Academic, 2007), 95.

INTERPRETATION | *How does Jesus continue to be treated unjustly in this passage?*

How do you see various people try to absolve themselves from responsibility in this passage? Who ends up taking responsibility for Jesus' execution?

Throughout Matthew, the crowds have functioned as a single character, distinguished from Jesus' disciples and his opponents. How do the crowds illustrate the principle of Matthew 12:30?

APPLICATION | In what sense do we all bear responsibility for Jesus' death? Confess your responsibility to God and give thanks for his grace and mercy which covers our sin.

day 5 :: Matthew 26:1–27:26

Son of Man

Watch the BibleProject video ***Son of Man*** and write down something you learned.

Map the movement of the passage in Matthew 16:24–25. Does it move from small details to a universal concept? Cause and effect? Command and underlying principle? How would you describe the connections and flow?

Write down one takeaway from the reading or homework this week.

What aspect of Jesus' character stood out to you this week?

Listen to the song "How Deep the Father's Love For Us" by following the QR code. Copy the lyrics of the song, meditating on the meaning of each phrase as you write it.

OVERview

24 Then Jesus said to
his disciples,
"If anyone wants to
follow after me, let
him deny himself,
take up his cross, and
follow me.
25 For whoever wants
to save his life will
lose it, but whoever
loses his life because
of me will find it.

— Matthew 16:24–25

How Deep the
Fathers Love For Us

notes

Death, Resurrection, Commission

Matthew 27:27 – 28:20

Crucifixion was generally reserved for the most dangerous criminals and rebels against Rome. It was designed to inflict the maximum amount of shame and pain. Victims were crucified naked, and death occurred by asphyxiation once the victim's strength gave out and they were no longer able to support their own weight.

CHARACTERIZATION | Write a few words or phrases that describe the following characters in these verses.

Jesus	Soldiers	Two crucified criminals

OBSERVATIONS | *Compare 27:39–43 to Matthew 4:1–11. How do the words of the crowd and religious leaders echo the words of the devil in Matthew 4?*

OLD TESTAMENT CONNECTIONS | Compare 27:34 and 27:48 to Psalm 69:21. Then read the whole psalm. What connections do you see between what's happening in the psalm and what's happening to Jesus?

INTERPRETATION | Why did the Roman soldiers need to force another person to carry Jesus' cross?

What are some ways in which irony plays a role in this passage?

APPLICATION | Read Hebrews 4:14–15. Have you ever been rejected or humiliated by someone? What was that experience like? How is it comforting to know that Jesus experienced rejection and humiliation as well?

Crucifixion victims were normally thrown into common graves, but Joseph gave Jesus an honorable burial by wrapping him in fine linen and putting his body in a family tomb.

CHARACTERIZATION | Write a few words or phrases that describe the following characters in these verses.

Jesus	Centurion	Women disciples

OBSERVATIONS | *Look closely at 27:50. How does it indicate that Jesus is still in control of his situation?*

OLD TESTAMENT CONNECTIONS | Read Psalm 22. Why do you think Jesus quoted Psalm 22:1 while he was on the cross?

Read Isaiah 26:19–21 and Daniel 12:1–3. In what way do these passages shed light on what occurs in Matthew 27:52–53?

INTERPRETATION | *What do you think was the significance of the darkness and earthquake that occurred during the crucifixion?*

What do you think was the significance of the sanctuary curtain (that closed off the Holy of Holies) being torn in two?

APPLICATION | Do Jesus' words in 27:46 surprise you? Have you ever felt abandoned by God? Would you feel comfortable asking God, "Why have you abandoned me?" Why or why not? If there's something you need to express honestly to God today, do that now.

Both Jewish and the surrounding Mediterranean culture considered the testimony of women to be invalid. Scholars point out that all four Gospels pointing to women as the first witnesses to the resurrection lends credibility to their historicity. Had the Gospel authors invented the resurrection account, it is unlikely they would have had women play such a prominent role.

CHARACTERIZATION | Write a few words or phrases that describe the following characters in these verses.

Jesus	Chief priests and Pharisees	Pilate	Mary and Mary	Guards

OBSERVATIONS | What caused the earthquake in 28:2?

OLD TESTAMENT CONNECTIONS | Read the following passages. In each passage, what is the earthquake associated with?

Exodus 19:16–20

1 Kings 19:11–13

Zechariah 14:3–6

INTERPRETATION | *Look back over your characterization sections in the last two weeks' homework. In general, how have the female disciples been characterized versus Jesus' male disciples?*

Do you see any significance to the fact that Jesus' resurrection occurred "after the Sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning"?

APPLICATION | Write a short paragraph explaining the significance of the resurrection. Why does it matter whether Jesus was raised from the dead?

*The Greek word translated as **doubt** in 28:17 is **distazō**, which is used one other time in Matthew's Gospel (14:31). It means "to doubt or waver." It is not the same as disbelief, which is the word **apisteō**.*

CHARACTERIZATION | Write a few words or phrases that describe the following characters in these verses.

Jesus	Disciples

OBSERVATIONS | *Compare Matthew 28:16–20 to Matthew 10:5–7. What has changed about Jesus' instructions to his disciples?*

OLD TESTAMENT CONNECTIONS | *How do Jesus' final words echo the prophecy from Isaiah that Matthew quoted in Matthew 1:22–23?*

INTERPRETATION | *Why do you think some of Jesus' disciples doubted? What were they doubting?*

See the information in the box in the left margin. What is the difference between doubt/wavering and unbelief?

Compare 28:18 to Matthew 7:28–29. What are some of the ways in which Jesus demonstrated his authority in the Gospel of Matthew?

APPLICATION | In what ways are you obeying Jesus' commands in 28:18–20?

day 4 :: Matthew 27:27–28:20

Watch the BibleProject video ***Matthew 14–28*** and write down something you learned.

Recite Matthew 16:24–25 to a family member and a friend.

Write down one takeaway from the reading or homework this week.

What aspect of Jesus' character stood out to you this week?

How has this study of Matthew's Gospel impacted your life over the last ten weeks?

OVERview

[24]Then Jesus said to
his disciples,
"If anyone wants to
follow after me, let
him deny himself,
take up his cross, and
follow me.
[25]For whoever wants
to save his life will
lose it, but whoever
loses his life because
of me will find it.

— Matthew 16:24–25

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