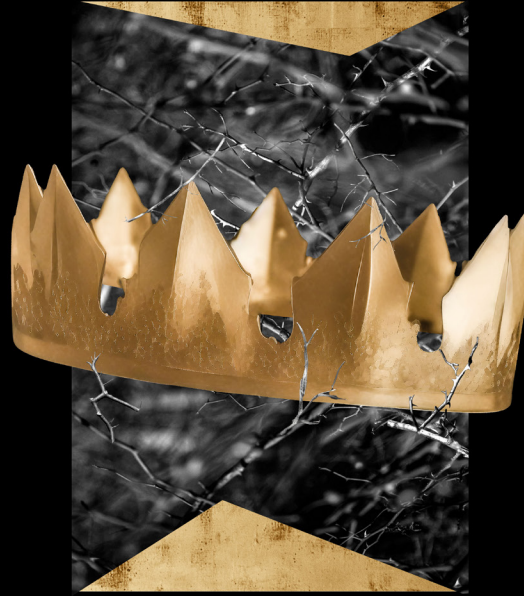


GOSPEL OF MATTHEW



*THE KING WE'VE BEEN
WAITING FOR*

LIFEGROUP **STUDY GUIDE**

February 5 - March 26



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LIFEGROUP STUDY GUIDE

by Dan Franklin

This study guide follows along with LBF Church's current Sunday message series and is intended to be a supplement in your daily passionate pursuit of Jesus.

- *Watch last Sunday's message video:*
www.lbf.church/messages

Is your group stumped? Did you come to a question that you feel needs clarification? Our church isn't too big. Contact Pastor Dan with your questions.

- *Contact Pastor Dan:*
danfranklin@lbfchurch.com

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THE KING WE'VE BEEN WAITING FOR

Who Will Lead Us?

Every April millions of football fans watch the NFL Draft. To be clear, they are watching not a football game, but live coverage of the teams drafting college players. Why do they watch hours of coverage of men in suits speaking into microphones? It is because they all wonder, "Is this the year that we get the player who will lead us to a title?"

Similarly, every four years Americans vote for a president. Most of them are not likely ever to meet the president in person, and yet tens of millions turn out to vote. Why? Because they wonder, "Is this the time that we get a president who will lead us to peace and prosperity and justice?"

In both of these cases people find themselves sitting on the edge of their seats to see who it is who will emerge to lead them. Despite the fact that we Americans pride ourselves on independence, we know that we need someone to lead us to the life we've been longing for.

We may think we need a quarterback, a governor, or a president. The truth, though, is that we need a King.

Matthew's Gospel

In the Bible we have four accounts of the life of Jesus: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Each tells the same story, but from different angles and with different emphases. The Gospel of Matthew is written by Matthew (surprise, surprise), who is one of the twelve apostles (sometimes also called Levi). Matthew's Gospel not only tells the beautiful story of Jesus, but it emphasizes Jesus as the one who came to fulfill all of the Jewish prophecies about the Messiah. He came as the promised King of Israel, while also coming to bring salvation to the whole world.

Matthew's Gospel is full of Old Testament quotations. It also actively demonstrates how Jesus has come to be God's true Son, just as Israel was referred to as God's son, and yet Jesus will succeed where Israel failed. We see this theme strongly in the first four chapters. Just as Israel was brought out of Egypt, Jesus and his family flee to Egypt before coming home to the land of Israel (Matthew 2). Just as Israel passed through the waters of the Red Sea, Jesus passes through the waters of baptism (Matthew 3). Just as Israel wandered in the wilderness for 40 years, Jesus spends 40 days in the wilderness and then is tempted (Matthew 4). But where Israel failed the test, Jesus succeeds. He succeeds not only so that he can be our example, but so that he can win the victory on our behalf.

Matthew 1-4

This series through Matthew will come in several parts. The first 8 lessons will cover Matthew 1-4. This section is titled, "The King We've Been Waiting For." Jesus truly was the King that Israel had been promised. And while many did not recognize him, Jesus was the King that they'd been waiting for. Similarly, many of us may be tempted to place our hope in an athlete, a politician, a job, or a spouse. But whether we know it or not, Jesus is the King we've always been waiting for. He alone can bring life and hope and salvation.

These lessons will cover Jesus' genealogy, his birth, his tumultuous early days, his baptism, his temptation, and his initial ministry. By the end of chapter 4 we will see Jesus publicly preaching. And what is he preaching about? The Kingdom. Why? Because he is the King!

Fixing Our Eyes on Jesus

It can be easy for believers in Jesus begins to think about morality or habits as being the center of our faith. It can be easy to focus on theoretical questions about doctrine and policy. While morality and habits and doctrine all matter intensely, we must never forget that a person is at the center of our faith. Our faith is not primarily about a what, but about a who. That who is Jesus.

Enter into this series with a heart to know Jesus more deeply, to love him more fully, and to walk with him more closely. Let's fix our eyes on Jesus (Hebrews 12:1-2) and rejoice in the reality of him being the King we've always been waiting for.

ANTICIPATED

Lesson 1 • February 5

MAIN POINT

Jesus came to fulfill the purpose of God for the world.

INTRODUCTION

We don't usually seek out genealogies when we read the Bible. They are easy sections to skip over. After all, they are just lists of names. And yet they show up consistently in the Bible. While they seem unimportant to us, they clearly seem important to God.

The Gospel of Matthew begins with the genealogy of Jesus. Matthew presents Jesus' genealogy in a unique way. He traces the line from Abraham to Jesus through 3 14-person sections. While there are theories about all of the reasons, one thing is not up for debate: Matthew is showing that there is great order and planning in how the birth of Jesus came about. Jesus did not arrive by accident or by chance. He arrived as the fulfillment of God's plan to bring salvation to the world.

As you look through the first 17 verses of Matthew, don't rush through it. Take time to notice the orderliness, the unexpected persons listed, and the indications of Jesus' identity. And get ready to see how this sets us up for the unfolding of the life of the Lord Jesus.

GETTING STARTED

1. From what you know about Jesus, describe what kind of a king he is.
2. What do you think are some of God's purposes for making us wait for the fulfillment of his promises?

DIGGING IN

Read Matthew 1:1-17.

- 1 This is the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah the son of David, the son of Abraham:
- 2 Abraham was the father of Isaac, Isaac the father of Jacob, Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, 3 Judah the father of Perez and Zerah, whose mother was Tamar, Perez the father of Hezron, Hezron the father of Ram, 4 Ram the father of Amminadab, Amminadab the father of Nahshon, Nahshon the father of Salmon, 5 Salmon the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab, Boaz the father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth, Obed the father of Jesse, 6 and Jesse the father of King David. David was the father of Solomon, whose mother had been Uriah's wife, 7 Solomon the father of Rehoboam, Rehoboam the father of Abijah, Abijah the father of Asa, 8 Asa the father of Jehoshaphat, Jehoshaphat the father of Jehoram, Jehoram the father of Uzziah, 9 Uzziah the father of Jotham, Jotham the father of Ahaz, Ahaz the father of Hezekiah, 10 Hezekiah the father of Manasseh, Manasseh the father of Amon, Amon the father of Josiah, 11 and Josiah the father of Jeconiah and his brothers at the time of the exile to Babylon. 12 After the exile to Babylon: Jeconiah was the father of Shealtiel, Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel, 13 Zerubbabel the father of Abihud, Abihud the father of Eliakim, Eliakim the father of Azor, 14 Azor the father of Zadok, Zadok the father of Akim, Akim the father of Elihud, 15 Elihud the father of Eleazar, Eleazar the father of Matthan, Matthan the father of Jacob, 16 and Jacob the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary, and Mary was the mother of Jesus who is called the Messiah.

17 Thus there were fourteen generations in all from Abraham to David, fourteen from David to the exile to Babylon, and fourteen from the exile to the Messiah.

3. What stood out to you in this passage? If you listened to the sermon, feel free to share something significant that you remember.

4. What does verse 1 tell you about what Matthew is trying to accomplish through this genealogy?

5. Look through the names in the genealogy. Some names you will probably recognize, while others may be unfamiliar to you. Choose a name that stands out to you, and write down why this name stands out.

6. Women and Gentiles are both listed in Jesus' genealogy. What do you think is significant about this?

7. Look up 2 Samuel 7:11-16 and Isaiah 9:6-7. In light of these passages, what were the Jewish people awaiting in the promised "son of David"?

WRESTLING WITH ISSUES

8. People debate why Matthew breaks his genealogy into three groups of fourteen generations. Some speculate that this is because in Judaism the numerical value of David's name is 14. Others see this simply as a way to demonstrate the orderliness of God's plan. What explanation makes the most sense to you?

CONNECTING TO THE GOSPEL

9. Three times in the genealogy Jesus is called "the Messiah." How does it impact your response to God that Jesus didn't simply show up with his own idea of how to save us, but that he was the culmination of a promised plan of God?

TAKING IT TO HEART

10. The men and women who trusted God's promises lived in anticipation of Jesus. What promises from God can you live in anticipation of today?

11. As we start this series through the Gospel of Matthew, what are you most excited to learn, see and explore through the life of Jesus?

MIRACULOUS

Lesson 2 • February 12

MAIN POINT

The miraculous origin of Jesus points to his miraculous mission.

INTRODUCTION

God calls us to exercise faith, but he never calls us to blind faith. So as Matthew writes his Gospel in order to invite us to place our faith in Jesus, he gives us evidence of why we should do so. In these short 8 verses we see that Jesus' birth is surrounded by miraculous events. It is as if God is putting blinking lights around Jesus and telling us to pay attention. His miraculous birth points to his divine identity.

These verses walk through the birth of Jesus from the perspective of Joseph. Joseph starts as a happily engaged man, changes into being a disappointed man ready to break off his engagement, and ends as a happily married man with a son. This isn't because Joseph was fickle and chaotic. This is because God intervened and Joseph responded.

Pay attention to Joseph in this passage but, more importantly, pay attention to what this passage says about the identity of Jesus. This passage sets us up for Jesus' royal identity, which then sets us up for the miraculous mission that Jesus will carry out.

GETTING STARTED

1. What is the difference between taking a step of faith and taking a blind leap of faith?

2. What are some of the factors that have led you to place your trust in Jesus?

DIGGING IN

Read Matthew 1:18-25.

18 This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. **19** Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

20 But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. **21** She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

22 All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: **23** "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" (which means "God with us").

24 When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. **25** But he did not consummate their marriage until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.

3. What stood out to you in this passage? If you listened to the sermon, feel free to share something significant that you remember.

4. Name all the different miraculous events that are either described or alluded to in this passage.

5. In verse 21, how does the angel describe the mission that Jesus will have?

6. Throughout this passage, what do you notice about Joseph, and what do you think we are meant to learn from how he responds to the events he experiences?

7. Look at the prophecy that is quoted in verse 23 and then look at the final verse of Matthew (28:20). What theme do these verses bring out, and what do you think is the significance of Matthew starting and ending with this theme?

WRESTLING WITH ISSUES

8. The virgin birth of Jesus is an incredible miracle, and yet God gave evidence of this miracle only to Mary and Joseph. Why do you think he did not reveal this miracle more overtly to more people?

CONNECTING TO THE GOSPEL

9. The Jews in Jesus' day were probably looking to be saved from many dangers and difficulties. The case is the same for us today. Why do you think it is significant that Jesus came specifically to save us from our sins?

TAKING IT TO HEART

10. Reflect on the reality of Jesus being "God with us." In what specific area of your life does this bring you help today?

11. When you think of the miracles that surround the life of Jesus, what impact does this have on your daily walk with him?

UNIVERSAL

Lesson 3 • February 19 • by Gabe Aguirre

MAIN POINT

Jesus was sent to save everyone who comes to him.

INTRODUCTION

Many of us have nativity sets at home that depict wise men (Magi) visiting Jesus while he was in the manger. We celebrate their part in the Christmas story. After all, these are men of great status. So, seeing them bow before the baby Jesus reminds us of the humility that is required if we receive him as our king. Also, the Magi were not Jewish, so this story demonstrates God's heart for the whole world. He intentionally led the Magi to Jesus so that they could see the Messiah. God's heart shines through in this passage.

Fair warning, though: If you read this passage carefully you will see that we often don't depict the visit of the Magi very accurately. Keep an eye open for what actually happened—and does not happen—in this passage.

At the heart of this passage, though, is a reminder of the fact that God brings near those who were previously far off. We were far off because of our sin, our ignorance, and our hard-heartedness. But God loves to bring near those who were far away.

GETTING STARTED

1. What are some reasons why someone might believe that they cannot be included in the salvation that God brought through Jesus?
2. Based on cultural representations of them, what would you conclude about the Magi (the wise men) in the Christmas story?

DIGGING IN

Read Matthew 2:1-12

1 After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem **2** and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him."

3 When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. **4** When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born. **5** "In Bethlehem in Judea," they replied, "for this is what the prophet has written:

6 "But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel."

7 Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. **8** He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him."

9 After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. **10** When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. **11** On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. **12** And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

3. What stood out to you in this passage? If you listened to the sermon, feel free to share something significant that you remember.

4. Refer back to how you answered question 2. Now that you've read the passage, what was different from what you have heard about the Magi based upon outside sources in culture?

5. Various commentators speculate about the star the Magi saw. The passage does not make clear exactly what was happening. Read Romans 1:19-20, and share about what connection you see between that passage and the way that God led the Magi to Jesus.

6. Why was Herod's reaction to the news of the Messiah so different from that of the Magi? What lesson do you think we can take from the response of Herod?

7. God directed the Magi through both a star and through a dream. What does this tell us about God's power and wisdom?

WRESTLING WITH ISSUES

8. The commentators connect the infanticide in this text by the hands of Herod (Matthew 2:16-18) with the infanticide ordered by Pharaoh in Exodus (Exodus 1:15-22). What similarities do you see between those monarchs and the abortion movement of our modern society?

CONNECTING TO THE GOSPEL

9. What does the background, lifestyle, and ethnicity of the Magi tell us about who the saving work of Jesus on the cross is for? How should that impact how we evangelize?

TAKING IT TO HEART

10. God loves to overcome obstacles in order to bring people into his family. What obstacles has God overcome in order to love you and save you?

11. The Magi's ability to get an audience with Herod and their lavish gifts illustrate their status and wealth. Despite this they humbly kneel and worship Jesus. Share with the group in what areas of your life you need to humble yourself to not hinder your worship of Jesus?

OPPOSED

Lesson 4 • February 26

MAIN POINT

The opposition that Jesus faced was part of his fulfillment of the story of God.

INTRODUCTION

Jesus' entire life was marked by opposition. Even while he was a small child he suffered danger from Herod (2:13-18) and from Herod's son (2:19-23). The fierceness of this opposition suggests that it did not merely arise from human beings, but that it was spiritual as well. Yet God continually protected his Son from danger through warning Joseph in dreams.

But if we are tempted to think that this opposition to Jesus was random, Matthew makes sure that we will not land on this conclusion. These eleven verses give three examples of Jesus fulfilling prophecy about him, even in his early childhood.

The first fulfillment involves a quotation from Hosea 11:1, which refers to God calling Jesus out of Egypt after his family fled there for safety. But the Hosea quotation was originally about God calling the nation of Israel out of Egypt after their time of slavery there.

The second fulfillment involves a quotation from Jeremiah 31:15, which refers to grief in Israel over the deaths of Israelite children. But this quotation was also originally about the nation of Israel, and about their grief when they were taken into exile.

You'll have a chance to think through the third fulfillment when you get to question number 7.

Is Matthew playing fast-and-loose with the Old Testament here? Is he saying that these verses are about Jesus when they really aren't? At first glance we might think so. But pay close attention to what Matthew is doing. He is presenting the story of Jesus as paralleling the story of Israel. Just as Israel was called out of Egypt, so Jesus is called out of Egypt. Just as Israel mourned a slaughter when the exile came, so now Israel mourns another slaughter. In other words Matthew is presenting Jesus not only as the fulfillment of certain isolated prophecies, but as the fulfillment of the entire story that God has been telling through the nation of Israel. He truly is the king that they've been waiting for,

and his life will show his identification with them.

As you study this passage, notice this unique presentation of Jesus, and keep it in mind through the rest of the book of Matthew. Also notice how God shows his divine power to protect his Son, despite the fact that his Son will eventually go to the cross.

GETTING STARTED

1. When you encounter someone who is constantly facing opposition from others, what do you tend to think about that person?

2. In the United States today, what kind of opposition do you think Christians will face if they truly love and follow Jesus?

DIGGING IN

Read Matthew 2:13-23.

13 When they had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. "Get up," he said, "take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him."

14 So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt, **15** where he stayed until the death of Herod. And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: "Out of Egypt I called my son."

16 When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to

kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi. 17 Then what was said through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled:

18 “A voice is heard in Ramah,
weeping and great mourning,
Rachel weeping for her children
and refusing to be comforted,
because they are no more.”

19 After Herod died, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt 20 and said, “Get up, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who were trying to take the child’s life are dead.”

21 So he got up, took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel. 22 But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning in Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. Having been warned in a dream, he withdrew to the district of Galilee, 23 and he went and lived in a town called Nazareth. So was fulfilled what was said through the prophets, that he would be called a Nazarene.

3. What stood out to you in this passage? If you listened to the sermon, feel free to share something significant that you remember.

4. This passage tells us that Jesus’ life was in deep danger from his earliest years. What does this tell you (a) about Jesus and (b) about the nature of the spiritual realm?

5. Matthew says that Jesus fulfilled Old Testament verses that were originally about the nation of Israel (Hosea 11:1 and Jeremiah 31:15). Why do you think it is significant that the story of Jesus parallels the story of the nation of Israel?

6. What does this passage teach you about God when you consider his constant warnings to Joseph that there is danger (verse 13, verse 19, and verse 22)?

7. Matthew quotes no specific prophecy in verse 23 about Jesus being a Nazarene. Some think that he instead is referring to a general truth that Jesus will be despised by others (Isaiah 53:3, John 1:46), while others think Matthew is doing a word play because the word “Nazareth” is related to the word “branch” used in a prophecy in Isaiah 11:1. Which seems most likely to you?

WRESTLING WITH ISSUES

8. A major theme of this passage is Jesus being protected from danger. Jesus sometimes walked into dangerous situations, and other times he avoided dangerous situations. How do you think those of us who follow Jesus should discern when to walk into danger and when to avoid it?

11. What is one way that you are experiencing opposition today because of your faith in Jesus? How do you think God is calling you to respond to this opposition?

CONNECTING TO THE GOSPEL

9. The Son of God went from safety and worship in heaven to danger and opposition on the earth. This started from the beginning of his life but it culminated at the cross. What is your heart response to Jesus enduring danger and opposition for our sake?

TAKING IT TO HEART

10. How does Jesus fulfilling prophecies in his day impact your confidence in him today?

AUTHORITATIVE

Lesson 5 • March 5

MAIN POINT

We prepare our hearts for Jesus by having a spirit of repentance.

INTRODUCTION

In the United States, most of us do not respond well to authority. We don't want anyone ordering us around, and we want to make our own decisions about our lives. Pause for a moment and consider how you normally respond in your heart to authorities in your life.

Because of our aversion to authority—and because we may want to have a positive view of Jesus—we have a tendency to turn Jesus' commands into suggestions. We want him to be our guide, but not necessarily our Lord. We accept him as a wise friend, but we're tempted to reject him as our final authority.

Enter John the Baptist. John was a relative of Jesus and played a pivotal role in preparing the nation of Israel to respond to Jesus. Thus far in the Gospel of Matthew, we've encountered Jesus only as a child. In the passages that follow this one, we will be introduced to him as an adult and we will begin to hear his words. This passage prepares us for that encounter.

As you study this passage, you will notice the themes of (1) the kingdom and (2) repentance being introduced. These will be major themes of the entire Gospel of Matthew because they are central to Jesus' message. But also pay close attention to how John presents Jesus to us in this passage. As we prepare to encounter him through the rest of this book, how are we told to orient ourselves toward him?

GETTING STARTED

1. What are some practical differences between someone who accepts Jesus as a helpful guide and someone who accepts Jesus as the Lord of their life?

2. How would you define the word "repent"?

DIGGING IN

Read Matthew 3:1-12.

1 In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea **2** and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near." **3** This is he who was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah:

"A voice of one calling in the wilderness,
'Prepare the way for the Lord,
make straight paths for him.' "

4 John's clothes were made of camel's hair, and he had a leather belt around his waist. His food was locusts and wild honey. **5** People went out to him from Jerusalem and all Judea and the whole region of the Jordan. **6** Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River.

7 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to where he was baptizing, he said to them: "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? **8** Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. **9** And do not think you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.'

I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. **10** The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.

11 "I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me comes one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. **12** His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor,

gathering his wheat into the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”

3. What stood out to you in this passage? If you listened to the sermon, feel free to share something significant that you remember.

4. Summarize in one sentence of what you conclude from this passage about the mission of John the Baptist.

5. What stands out to you about the approach of John the Baptist versus the approach of many American preachers today?

6. What do verses 7-10 tell us about the true nature of repentance?

7. What does John say about the identity and mission of Jesus in verses 11-12?

WRESTLING WITH ISSUES

8. In verse 2 John introduces the theme of the “kingdom of heaven,” which is a major theme in the Gospel of Matthew (Matthew 4:17). To the best of your understanding, what is meant when John and Jesus refer to the kingdom of heaven? (Remember that this message is presented as “good news.”)

CONNECTING TO THE GOSPEL

9. If we cannot receive Jesus without repentance, what does this say about the condition of human beings apart from Jesus?

TAKING IT TO HEART

10. It is a big deal to treat Jesus’ guidance as authoritative instead of as mere suggestions. What could help you to trust Jesus enough that you would more consistently treat his guidance as authoritative?

11. What “fruit in keeping with repentance” needs to show up in your life, and how can you pursue that fruit?

ENDORSED

Lesson 6 • March 12 • by Gabe Aguirre

MAIN POINT

The identity of Jesus is divinely affirmed.

INTRODUCTION

We are a culture of celebrity endorsements. We frequently see commercials in which athletes and actors tell us to buy certain products. We frequently see singers and business people endorsing political candidates for office. In our culture we clearly believe in the power of endorsement.

The story of Jesus' baptism has many facets to it. It is confusing that the perfect God-man would do something that connects to the symbol of having our sins washed away. As you will see, even John—Jesus' baptizer—seemed to be confused about why Jesus was pursuing baptism. Pay attention to Jesus' response in order to get a sense of his motives.

On top of this, the story of Jesus' baptism shows him being publicly endorsed. Pay close attention to who exactly endorses him, and be ready to dig into what this means for how we respond to Jesus.

GETTING STARTED

1. What kinds of endorsements do you take seriously, and what kinds do you not take seriously?

2. Before looking at the passage, tell why you think Jesus—the Son of God—would get baptized.

DIGGING IN

Read Matthew 3:13 -3:17.

13 Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. **14** But John tried to deter him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?"

15 Jesus replied, "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness." Then John consented.

16 As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. **17** And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."

3. What stood out to you in this passage? If you listened to the sermon, feel free to share something significant that you remember.

4. John shows reluctance about baptizing Jesus. What does this tell us both about John and about Jesus?

5. Jesus says that his reason for being baptized is to fulfill all righteousness.' R.T. France translates the Greek word for "righteousness" as "what is required." Based on this, why do you think Jesus got baptized.

6. What significance do you draw from the fact that all three members of the Trinity appear in this passage (the Son being baptized, the Spirit descending, the Father speaking from heaven)?

7. The four hundred years of silence between the last Old Testament prophet to the arrival of John Baptist's ministry is often referred to as the Intertestamental period. Look at this quote from D.A. Carson: "This voice is God's from heaven and testifies that God himself has broken silence and is again revealing himself to men – a clear sign of the dawning of the messianic age." Put yourself in the shoes of those who witnessed this and discuss how this would have impacted their lives.

WRESTLING WITH ISSUES

8. As Christ followers we understand Jesus to be the only way to the Father and the only way to salvation. This is highly offensive to our pluralistic society. How does the understanding of this passage fortify the truth that Jesus is the only way?

CONNECTING TO THE GOSPEL

9. Read Psalm 2:7, Isaiah 42:1, and Genesis 22:2 and discuss how these texts were fulfilled in or pointed to the baptism of Jesus and ultimately point to him being foretold to bring salvation to all who would believe?

TAKING IT TO HEART

10. How do the events in this passage fill you with greater confidence about the identity of Jesus?

11. In this passage we find Jesus modeling obedience to the Father's will, and we see John modeling humility. In what areas of your life can you grow in the aspects of humility and obedience? Talk with your group about how you plan to do this moving forward?

VICTORIOUS

Lesson 7 • March 19 • by Rich Shores

MAIN POINT

Jesus' victory over temptation was won on our behalf.

INTRODUCTION

Candidates for the prestigious title of US Navy SEAL must go through a grueling course of training. Early in this training cycle is Basic Underwater Demolition School (aka BUDS) where the legendary "Hell Week" occurs. This is where the candidates are subjected to a week's worth of no food, no sleep, no breaks and very cold temperatures. Each candidate is required to complete extremely physically taxing activities. The purpose of this phase is to identify individuals who do not have the mental resilience to overcome adversity or their discomfort.

During this week, the instructors barrage the candidates with all kinds of opportunities to quit. Everything from hot beverages, a cup of soup, or even simply sitting in a vehicle with the heat running on the beaches of Coronado Island located near San Diego, CA. And just what is it that they must do? Ring the bell. To demonstrate that the candidate is ready to stop all of the stress, there is a ship's bell that, when rung three times, indicates that the candidate is done. Novels and movies have portrayed this assumingly easy task. But what is the cost? Every SEAL wears, with well-deserved pride, his Trident. It is a golden emblem that says to the world, I passed the test. When a candidate rings that bell, he loses all opportunity to get that pin to wear on his uniform.

Now, when Jesus was in the wilderness being tempted by the devil, he was not trying to pass a test of candidacy like being a Navy SEAL. But what Jesus was doing was demonstrating the behavior that leads to victory through courage and trust in the written Word of God. Three times, Jesus was tempted and three times he quoted scripture to combat the temptation. And what was the reward? Like a Navy SEAL candidate who passes "Hell Week" and is rewarded with relief, Jesus was comforted, and he did not even have to take care of it himself. Matthew 4:11 tells us that angels came and attended to him. Now that is something worth struggling for.

GETTING STARTED

1. It was not until after 40 days of fasting that Jesus was tempted. How often do you feel that you have experienced temptation while things were "going well"?
2. What sorts of temptations do you have the hardest time resisting?

DIGGING IN

Read Matthew 4:1-11.

1 Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. **2** After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. **3** The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread." **4** Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" **5** Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. **6** "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written:

"He will command his angels concerning you,
and they will lift you up in their hands,
so that you will not strike your foot against a

stone.”

7 Jesus answered him, “It is also written: ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’” 8 Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. 9 “All this I will give you,” he said, “if you will bow down and worship me.” 10 Jesus said to him, “Away from me, Satan! For it is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.’” 11 Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him.

3. What stood out to you in this passage? If you listened to the sermon, feel free to share something significant that you remember.

4. What is the significance of the three ways Jesus was tempted?

5. The Holy Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted. What lessons about temptation does this teach us?

6. Verse 8 says the devil offered Jesus all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. Why would this have been significant to the Son of God?

7. Jesus says to the devil “Away from me, Satan!” and the devil leaves him. What does this say about the authority of Jesus?

WRESTLING WITH ISSUES

8. This passage says Jesus intentionally fasted for 40 days and nights prior to his temptation. Considering what we know and experience with our own nutrition, how is it even possible that Jesus could have endured this experience?

CONNECTING TO THE GOSPEL

9. Scholars have pointed out that Jesus’ temptations paralleled the story of the nation of Israel (they were in the wilderness for 40 years to parallel Jesus’ 40 days). Jesus succeeded where Israel failed. Jesus, then, is more than a model for how to handle temptation. He is the one who wins the victory over temptation on our behalf. His victory is our victory. How does this impact how you view your personal battles with temptation?

TAKING IT TO HEART

10. How can you set yourself up to successfully endure the temptations that you will face?

11. While this passage is about temptation, in an even more central way, it is about the identity of Jesus. How does this passage lead you to greater worship and wonder toward Jesus?

ANNOUNCER

Lesson 8 • March 26

MAIN POINT

Jesus shows us what God's kingdom is like.

INTRODUCTION

When you think of the gospel of Jesus, what comes to your mind? Many of us go straight to the teaching that Jesus, the Son of God, died for our sins and rose victorious from the grave. This is certainly an understandable (and a good) answer to the question. But, curiously enough, this bears very little resemblance to how Jesus announced his message to the world. Jesus' message typically contained two parts: (1) A call to repentance and (2) an announcement that the kingdom of God has come.

This doesn't mean that Jesus' message is in contradiction to the good news that he has died for our sins. Instead, it means that the message of Jesus' sacrificial death and resurrection is part of a bigger story. It is at the center of the story of God establishing his kingdom on the earth and inviting people to receive this kingdom.

In the passage that accompanies this lesson we will get to see Jesus announcing the kingdom, and we will also get to see the beginnings of him putting this kingdom on display through both words and actions.

GETTING STARTED

1. What comes to your mind when you hear the phrase "kingdom of heaven" (or "kingdom of God")?
2. If Jesus was ruling the world today, how would things be different than they are right now?

DIGGING IN

Read Matthew 4:12-25.

- 12 When Jesus heard that John had been put in prison, he withdrew to Galilee. 13 Leaving Nazareth, he went and lived in Capernaum, which was by the lake in the area of Zebulun and Naphtali—14 to fulfill what was said through the prophet Isaiah:
- 15 "Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali, the Way of the Sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles—
- 16 the people living in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned."
- 17 From that time on Jesus began to preach, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near."
- 18 As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. 19 "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will send you out to fish for people." 20 At once they left their nets and followed him.
- 21 Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee, preparing their nets. Jesus called them, 22 and immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him. 23 Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people. 24 News about him spread all over Syria, and people brought to him all who were ill with various diseases, those suffering severe pain, the demon-possessed, those having seizures, and

the paralyzed; and he healed them. **25** Large crowds from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea and the region across the Jordan followed him.

3. What stood out to you in this passage? If you listened to the sermon, feel free to share something significant that you remember.

4. What does the Old Testament quotation in verses 15-16 say about the mission Jesus came to fulfill?

5. Verse 17 presents the central message that Jesus proclaimed. What do you notice about his message?

6. When Jesus calls his first disciples in verse 19, he invites them to fish for people. How does this relate to Jesus' mission to announce the arrival of the kingdom of heaven?

7. In verses 23-25 we have Matthew's first mention of miracles performed by Jesus. How do you think his miracles relate to his announcement of the kingdom of heaven?

WRESTLING WITH ISSUES

8. Bible scholars often talk about the kingdom of heaven being "already" and "not yet." It is not yet in the sense that one day Jesus will rule on the earth and bring final peace and justice and perfection. In what sense, then, is the kingdom "already" here?

CONNECTING TO THE GOSPEL

9. "Repent" can feel like a very negative word. And yet Jesus used the word as a core part of his message. Why do you think repentance is so central to embracing the gospel of Jesus?

TAKING IT TO HEART

10. Share one area of life in which you have need for ongoing repentance in order to embrace Jesus and his kingdom.

11. What do you see as your role in announcing Jesus' kingdom to the world?