

GOSPEL OF MATTHEW



*THE KING ON THE MOVE*

# LIFEGROUP **STUDY GUIDE**

October 22 - November 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](http://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](mailto:danfranklin@lbfchurch.com)

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# YOUR GIFT IS NOT YOURS

October 22

## MAIN POINT

Our spiritual gifts belong to the whole church of Jesus Christ.

## INTRODUCTION

A few months ago, my wife made chocolate chip cookies for our family. Then she set aside a couple dozen of them for me to take to work. She said, “These are for you and all your coworkers.” So, I went to the office and brought the cookies with me. But I realized that I wasn’t crazy about the idea of sharing them with my co-workers. After all, I love chocolate chip cookies, and so I figured that I could enjoy them myself. After all, a couple dozen cookies could last me several days. And so I chose to keep them to myself.

And I can’t understand why anyone would have a problem with what I did. After all, the cookies were given to me, so I got to decide what to do with them.

Obviously (at least I hope it’s obvious), this never actually happened. I made up this story just to make a point. The point is that none of us would be okay with what I did in this story. In fact, we’d feel outraged. True, the cookies were given to me. But the cookies were given to me with the specific intention of having me share them with others. By keeping them to myself, I robbed others of the gift that my wife prepared for them. I treated the gift as if it was mine, but it really didn’t belong to me. It belonged to my coworkers.

When we think of spiritual gifts, most of us think of God giving gifts to us, and then we think of us having those gifts. But when we stop there, we miss a crucial truth. The truth is that God didn’t give us spiritual gifts simply so that we would have them. He gave us spiritual gifts so that we would share them.

We can be tempted to treat serving in the church as something optional to us as Christians. After all, our gifts are our gifts, and we can choose to do with them what we want. But the passage we’ll study in this lesson reveals to us that our gifts don’t actually belong to us. They were given to us for a purpose. And we are called to use them in light of God’s divine purpose for our spiritual gifts.

## GETTING STARTED

1. What do you think your spiritual gifts are? For help, you can read Romans 12:6-8 and 1 Corinthians 12:8-10.

2. What are some reasons why someone might receive a spiritual gift, and yet not put it to good use?

## DIGGING IN

Read 1 Corinthians 12:4-7.

**4** There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. **5** There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. **6** There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work. **7** Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.

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 do you notice about how Paul structures verses 4-6?

5. Why do you think it is important that God gives different spiritual gifts to different people?

## **CONNECTING TO THE GOSPEL**

9. Spiritual gifts are one expression of God's grace to us (1 Peter 4:10). How does reflecting on the grace God has given us in Jesus impact your attitude toward using your gifts to serve others?

6. According to verse 7, why has God given each one the manifestation of the Spirit?

## **TAKING IT TO HEART**

10. Share about a time that you experienced God bringing benefits to others through you using your spiritual gifts.

7. How can a spiritual gift be used "for the common good"?

11. What next step do you think God is calling you to take in terms of using your spiritual gifts "for the common good"?

## **WRESTLING WITH ISSUES**

8. What are some ways to tell the difference between a person who is rightly using their gift to serve others and a person who is foolishly saying yes to every serving opportunity without any discretion?

# MANNA FROM HEAVEN

## Lesson 1 • October 29

### MAIN POINT

Jesus has the power to provide for all our needs.

### INTRODUCTION

Recently, Iranian American businessman Patrick Bet-David was interviewed. The headline on the interview said, “From \$0 to \$200 million.” This was to draw attention to his current net worth, and also to draw attention to the fact that he was not born rich. He took the very small amount of money he had, and he made it into a fortune.

This is what we see successful people do. They start with a little, and they make it into a lot. This is true of farmers who maximize their crops, business owners who maximize their loans, or athletes who maximize their talents. We are always impressed with people who start with a little and make it into something huge.

What would impress us even more is if those people were able to do what they did instantaneously. But they couldn't. It takes a great amount of time to turn something small into something large.

But not with Jesus. In Matthew 14:13-21 we see Jesus take a small amount of food and feed thousands with it. And he doesn't do this through timely investments and strategic networking. He does this through his miraculous power. He multiplies bread until it fulfills every need, and then there are still basketfuls left over.

If we would be interested in knowing someone who took a small loan and turned it into a fortune, what kind of interest should we have in someone who can take a few loaves of bread and feed thousands? In this story, Jesus reveals his miraculous power to provide.

### GETTING STARTED

1. What do you think were Jesus' reasons for telling us to pray, “Give us today our daily bread”? (Matthew 6:11)

2. Name an area of life where you experience doubt about God's ability to provide for what you need?

### DIGGING IN

Read Matthew 14:13-21.

**13** When Jesus heard what had happened, he withdrew by boat privately to a solitary place.

Hearing of this, the crowds followed him on foot from the towns. **14** When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them and healed their sick.

**15** As evening approached, the disciples came to him and said, “This is a remote place, and it's already getting late. Send the crowds away, so they can go to the villages and buy themselves some food.”

**16** Jesus replied, “They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat.”

**17** “We have here only five loaves of bread and two fish,” they answered.

**18** “Bring them here to me,” he said. **19** And he directed the people to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the people. **20** They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over.

**21** The number of those who ate was about five thousand men, besides women and children.

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. Verse 13 begins our story with Jesus receiving the news that John the Baptist has been executed (Matthew 14:1-12). How does this context bring significance to Jesus' compassion for the crowd?

5. Looking at verses 15-17, what seems to be the difference in perspective between Jesus and his disciples?

6. Focus on the details surrounding the miracle in verses 18-20. What stands out to you in how the miracle came about?

7. This story is connected to the story of God providing manna for the Israelites in the wilderness. Read Exodus 16:13-20. What similarities and what differences do you notice between these two stories?

## **WRESTLING WITH ISSUES**

8. If Jesus can always provide what we ask for, why do you think he sometimes does and sometimes doesn't?

## **CONNECTING TO THE GOSPEL**

9. In Deuteronomy 18:18 God promised to raise up a prophet like Moses. Jesus fulfills this prophecy. From what you know of Moses, in what ways is Jesus like him?

## **TAKING IT TO HEART**

10. If Jesus can multiply bread in order to feed thousands, what other miracles can he work in your life?

11. In what way do you need to look to God to be your provider right now? How can you pray in light of this need?

# TABLE SCRAPS

## Lesson 2 • November 5

### MAIN POINT

Every gift that we receive from God is an undeserved gift of grace.

### INTRODUCTION

In the United States we love to talk about our rights. We know our rights. We demand our rights. And no one is going to take our rights away from us.

This very common American attitude can impact how we think about our relationship with God. It is easy for us to begin to think in terms of rights and entitlements. We think that we have a right to a successful marriage, a right to a good-paying job, and a right to a life free from serious illness and injury. We see these as our rights and we feel cheated when God does not seem to cooperate with these rights.

In this passage in this lesson, we encounter a woman who—shockingly—does not seem to think she has a right to anything from Jesus. And yet she passionately asks him to grant a request. She doesn't seem to think that she has a leg to stand on, and yet she perseveres in asking.

As we see how Jesus engages with this woman, we have an opportunity to learn something important about Jesus and about the nature of faith.

### GETTING STARTED

1. As an American, what are some rights that you feel entitled to?

2. What are some dangers that can emerge when we have a sense of entitlement?

### DIGGING IN

Read Matthew 15:21-28.

**21** Leaving that place, Jesus withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon. **22** A Canaanite woman from that vicinity came to him, crying out, “Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is demon-possessed and suffering terribly.”

**23** Jesus did not answer a word. So his disciples came to him and urged him, “Send her away, for she keeps crying out after us.”

**24** He answered, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel.”

**25** The woman came and knelt before him. “Lord, help me!” she said.

**26** He replied, “It is not right to take the children’s bread and toss it to the dogs.”

**27** “Yes it is, Lord,” she said. “Even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master’s table.”

**28** Then Jesus said to her, “Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted.” And her daughter was healed at that moment.

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. Read a similar story in Matthew 8:5-13. What similarities and differences do you see between these two stories?



5. At the center of this story is a Canaanite (non-Jewish) woman. What do you notice about how she cries out to Jesus in verse 22?

6. Initially, what seems to be Jesus' reason for not granting the woman's request? What is your reaction to his reasoning?

7. Focus on the woman's words in verse 27. Why do you think her words here led Jesus to compliment her faith and heal her daughter (verse 28)?

## **WRESTLING WITH ISSUES**

8. Many people believe that Jesus' initial resistance to the woman was a way of him testing her faith and resolve. If this was the case, what do you think this says about how God engages with us when we ask him for things?

## **CONNECTING TO THE GOSPEL**

9. If the woman in this story serves as an example for us all, what must we believe about ourselves when we approach Jesus by faith?

## **TAKING IT TO HEART**

10. What positive impact would it have on your life if you viewed the good things in your life as gracious, unearned gifts from God, instead of viewing them as what you deserve?

11. Take time to write down (and share with your group) some of the undeserved gifts that God has chosen to give you.

# WHO DO YOU THINK JESUS IS?

## Lesson 3 • November 12

### MAIN POINT

What we believe about Jesus will determine what we're willing to do to follow him.

### INTRODUCTION

By the time we reach Matthew 16, Jesus' disciples have known him for years. They have traveled with him, listened to him, worked alongside him, and had countless conversations with him. And yet he asks the, "Who do you say I am?"

Obviously, they all knew his name, his parents, and his hometown. But this didn't mean that they really knew who he was. Today we might know a lot of stories about Jesus, and we might even know a lot of things that Jesus said. But this doesn't mean that we really know who Jesus is.

What we believe about Jesus will determine what we are willing to sacrifice in order to follow him. If he is a teacher or prophet, we might feel free to sift through his words and take the good while leaving the bad. But if he truly is the Son of God, then a whole different approach is called for.

As you read through the passage in this lesson, allow yourself to explore your own answer to the question, "Who is Jesus?" And don't just give the answer that you know you should. Give the answer that your life reflects. If someone observed your life for a month, what would they conclude about who you think Jesus is.

This might be scary to do, but it is a powerful way for us to see where things really stand, and then to decide how to respond to the truth that Jesus reveals about himself.

### GETTING STARTED

1. In Southern California today, what are some different opinions that people have about who Jesus is?

2. What truth about Jesus do you find most tempting to stop believing?

### DIGGING IN

Read Matthew 16:13-27.

**13** When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?"

**14** They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets."

**15** "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?"

**16** Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God."

**17** Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven. **18** And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.

**19** I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." **20** Then he ordered his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah.

**21** From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.

**22** Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.

“Never, Lord!” he said. “This shall never happen to you!”

23 Jesus turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns.”

24 Then Jesus said to his disciples, “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. 25 For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it. 26 What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? 27 For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father’s glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what they have done.

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 was the biggest difference between who the people thought Jesus was (verse 14) and who Peter said that Jesus was (verse 16)?

5. What do you think is most significant about what Jesus tells Peter (and the disciples) in verses 17-20?

6. Focus on verses 21-23. Why do you think Jesus has such a strong, negative response to Peter in verse 23?

7. Use one sentence to summarize Jesus’ message to his disciples (and to us) in verses 24-27?

## WRESTLING WITH ISSUES

8. There is much discussion about Jesus’ words to Peter in verse 18. Do you think Jesus was saying that he would build his church (a) on Peter, (b) on Peter’s statement, (c) on himself, (d) on the disciples as a whole, or (e) something else?

## CONNECTING TO THE GOSPEL

9. In verses 24-27 Jesus lays out the perspective that is necessary for us to have if we are going to place our faith in Jesus. In Southern California in 2023, what are some things that we must be prepared to “lose” in order to “find” eternal life?

## TAKING IT TO HEART

10. If you are a believer in Jesus, what has convinced you that he is the Son of God?

11. Jesus says that we must lose our life in order to find it. Today, what specific area of your life do you sense that God is calling you to yield to him?

# WHO JESUS REALLY IS

## Lesson 4 • November 19

### MAIN POINT

We place our trust in Jesus because he is the unique Son of God.

### INTRODUCTION

In Matthew 16 Jesus gives his disciples the hard news that he is going to be put to death. This news is so devastating to them that Peter rebukes Jesus for talking about it (imagine rebuking the Son of God!). Then, to really ratchet things up, Jesus tells his disciples that they must be ready to die if they are going to gain the life that Jesus came to bring.

This is hard stuff. Take it in for a moment. Jesus says that we must be ready to lose our lives—our dreams, our plans, our ambitions, our safety—in order to gain eternal life. Most of us are tempted to respond to this by looking for a less extreme option. Jesus truly put himself in a position where he needed to demonstrate a compelling reason why we should do what he said.

Enter Matthew 17. In this chapter, we see the veil of Jesus' humble humanity peeled back, and we get a glimpse of the Son of God in all his glory. We get to see how the disciples respond to this, and then we get to see the kind of response that Jesus wants to bring about in his disciples—and in us.

As we read this story, that is typically called the “transfiguration,” we get to see the connection between the identity of Jesus and our obedient faith in him.

### GETTING STARTED

1. Do you find yourself more drawn to Jesus because of his power or because of his compassion? Explain your answer.

2. In what area of life do you find it difficult to listen to (and obey) what Jesus says?

### DIGGING IN

Read Matthew 17:1-8.

**1** After six days Jesus took with him Peter, James and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. **2** There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light. **3** Just then there appeared before them Moses and Elijah, talking with Jesus.

**4** Peter said to Jesus, “Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you wish, I will put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.”

**5** While he was still speaking, a bright cloud covered them, and a voice from the cloud said, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!”

**6** When the disciples heard this, they fell facedown to the ground, terrified. **7** But Jesus came and touched them. “Get up,” he said. “Don’t be afraid.” **8** When they looked up, they saw no one except 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. Look back at what Jesus says in Matthew 16:28, which is the verse right before this passage. How do you think those words of Jesus tie into this story?

5. Focus on verses 1-3. What do you think these verses reveal about Jesus?

6. In verses 4-5, what do you see as the difference between Peter's perspective in verse 4 and what the Father reveals in verse 5?

7. Looking at verses 6-8, how does it seem that Jesus wants us to respond to this amazing story?

## **WRESTLING WITH ISSUES**

8. Of all the famous Old Testament figures, why do you think Moses and Elijah were the ones who appeared to speak with Jesus?

## **CONNECTING TO THE GOSPEL**

9. Luke 9:31, which tells this same story, says that Moses and Elijah were talking to Jesus "about his departure, which he was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem." What does it tell you about Jesus that this moment of his glory being revealed was preparation for his upcoming death?

## **TAKING IT TO HEART**

10. In this passage, Jesus is shown in all his glory. How does this picture of Jesus impact you as you think about different challenges you're facing in your life right now?

11. When the Father spoke during this story, his simple message was that we should listen to his Son. In what specific ways do you need to listen to Jesus right now?

# WHEN THERE'S SIN IN THE CHURCH

## Lesson 5 • November 26

### MAIN POINT

The witness of Jesus' church depends on believers dealing with one another's sin.

### INTRODUCTION

*Do not judge!* This is the rallying cry of most people living in Southern California in 2023. The #1 sin in our world is not lust, not envy, not vanity, but judgmentalism. And we label anyone judgmental if that person expresses disapproval of another person's beliefs, attitudes, or actions.

This makes Matthew 18:15-20 shocking to our system. Is Jesus really telling his disciples that they need to "go and point out" the "fault" of other disciples? Does he really expect us not only to bring up the subject, but to be willing to involve others as witnesses, and possibly even the whole church? This seems unthinkable to us today. People have been sued for less. And even if the actions Jesus calls for do not make us liable in a lawsuit, they certainly break our culture's cardinal rule to avoid judging others.

In order to understand this counter-cultural passage, we need to make sure we understand not only the actions that Jesus is calling for, but also the ultimate goal behind his teaching here. He is not looking to create a church full of condemnation and nit-picking. He is looking to create a church that can shine his light to the world.

### GETTING STARTED

1. What are some things that can go wrong when one believer confronts another believer on their sin?

2. Have you ever had another believer confront you on your sin? If so, describe what happened and what resulted.

### DIGGING IN

Read Matthew 18:15-20.

**15** "If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. **16** But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.' **17** If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector.

**18** "Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

**19** "Again, truly I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything they ask for, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. **20** For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them."

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. According to verse 15, what is the result we are working toward when we choose to talk to a fellow believer about their sin?

5. How might the “witnesses” (verse 16) be helpful in the scenario in this passage? How might they serve as witnesses?

6. In practical terms, what do you think it could look like to “tell it to the church” (verse 17)?

7. How do you think verses 18-20 relate to verses 15-17?

## **WRESTLING WITH ISSUES**

8. Do you think Jesus is giving this model as a way to respond to all sins or just certain kinds of sins? Explain your answer.

## **CONNECTING TO THE GOSPEL**

9. Why do you think it is so important to Jesus that believers deal with one another’s sin instead of choosing to “live and let live”?

## **TAKING IT TO HEART**

10. How can you make sure to keep an open heart to others so that you can be won over if someone confronts you on your sin?

11. Take a moment to consider if you know about any brother or sister who is caught in sin right now. What attitude and action do you sense that God is calling you to take?