

GOSPEL OF MATTHEW



THE KING GOES TO BATTLE

LIFEGROUP **STUDY GUIDE**

February 18 - April 7



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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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EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED

Lesson 1 • February 18

MAIN POINT

Jesus has both unexpected enemies and unexpected followers.

INTRODUCTION

When we think of the idea that in the Sermon on the Mount Jesus called for sexual purity, financial honesty, and observant prayer, we could easily conclude that his greatest supporters would be the religious people and that his greatest opponents would be those who are outcasts from the religious community. This would seem like a reasonable assumption.

But appearances can be deceiving. Jesus ends up having followers who have scandalous pasts (and sometimes their scandalous past is not a distant past). And Jesus ends up having opponents who are among the most religiously observant people on the planet.

This ought to give us pause today. When we think of the gospel call from Jesus, it could be easy to assume that those who will be on Jesus' side are those who are practicing clean living. And we could feel like it is a safe assumption that those who will reject him will be those who are living it up with wild parties. While things sometimes play out this way, this is not the way it played out in Jesus' day (and it is not always the way it plays out today).

In the passage that accompanies this lesson, we look at a parable from Jesus that challenges our assumptions about who is—and is not—truly doing the will of God.

GETTING STARTED

1. Share about a believer you know (it could be yourself) who, at one point, seemed very unlikely to follow Jesus.

2. Do you find yourself more tempted by open rebellion against God or by self-righteous pride?

DIGGING IN

Read Matthew 21:28-32.

28 “What do you think? There was a man who had two sons. He went to the first and said, ‘Son, go and work today in the vineyard.’

29 “‘I will not,’ he answered, but later he changed his mind and went.

30 “Then the father went to the other son and said the same thing. He answered, ‘I will, sir,’ but he did not go.

31 “Which of the two did what his father wanted?”
“The first,” they answered.

Jesus said to them, “Truly I tell you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you. **32** For John came to you to show you the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes did. And even after you saw this, you did not repent and believe 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. How would you describe the key characteristics of each of the two sons?

9. In Romans 7:7, the Apostle Paul says that God's law is good because "I would not have known what sin was had it not been for the law." How do you think Paul's statement there relates to the kind of person who is willing to respond to Jesus (like the first son in the parable)?

5. According to Jesus' words in verse 31, who do each of the sons represent?

CONNECTING TO THE GOSPEL

10. Consider if there is an area of life that your first response to God was disobedience. What would it mean now to choose obedience in that area?

6. Jesus says that John (the Baptist) showed the way of righteousness. Read Matthew 3:1-12. In what way did John show the way of righteousness?

TAKING IT TO HEART

7. According to Jesus' words in verse 32, what kind of a response is God looking for from his people? (In other words, what is involved with the kind of obedience that the first son in the parable shows?)

11. James 4:6 says, "God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble." How can you fight against the temptation toward pride and self-righteousness?

WRESTLING WITH ISSUES

8. Which do you think is more spiritually dangerous—self-indulgent sin or self-righteous complacency? Explain your answer.

JESUS' FAVORITE RULE

Lesson 2 • February 25

MAIN POINT

Love for God and others is the central command for the Christian life.

INTRODUCTION

We love Top 10 lists. We have Top 10 lists for movies, books, songs, vacation spots, apps, video games, wines, and pizza restaurants. We love to rank different categories of things in order to elevate the absolute best.

In the passage that accompanies this lesson, Jesus is asked to rank God's commandments. As opposed to a Top 10 list, though, he is simply asked for #1. Now, it seems like Jesus could easily have shrugged off this question, saying that all of God's commands are equally important. Instead, he gives an answer that is both profound and challenging.

As you walk through this lesson, pay special attention to what Jesus says about the greatest commandment, and to how this impacts how we look at all the commands and guidance that God has given us.

GETTING STARTED

1. How is the biblical idea of love different from the way love is commonly talked about in our culture?

2. How much control does a person have over whether or not they love someone? Explain your answer.

DIGGING IN

Read Matthew 22:34-40.

34 Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. **35** One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: **36** "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?"

37 Jesus replied: " 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' **38** This is the first and greatest commandment. **39** And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' **40** All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

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 comes in the midst of ongoing conflicts between Jesus and the Jewish religious leaders. According to verses 34-35, what motivated the question that Jesus was asked?

5. What do you think it means to love God in the following ways?

With all your heart

With all your soul

With all your mind

6. What does it mean to love your neighbor as yourself?

7. How do the commands to love God and love your neighbor serve as an umbrella for all the rest of the law (verse 40)? Give an example of how this might look.

WRESTLING WITH ISSUES

8. Since Jesus gave these two commands as “the greatest” commandments, does this mean that other commandments are less important? If so, in what way are they less important?

CONNECTING TO THE GOSPEL

9. Read 1 John 4:7-12. According to this passage, how do we become capable of loving God and loving other people?

TAKING IT TO HEART

10. Think of a biblical command that you struggle to obey. How can you reframe that command as it relates to the call to love God and love your neighbor?

11. How do you think God is calling you to cultivate a deeper love for him?

BAD LEADERS, GOOD LEADERS

Lesson 3 • March 3

MAIN POINT

Godless leaders are those who exalt themselves.

INTRODUCTION

During my senior year of high school I was in a play in which I was cast as the villain. When my friends came to watch us perform, they were surprised to see me in the role. I was pretty shy and reserved. They had never seen me act the way that I did when I was playing my character in the play. For me, it was a lot of fun pretending to be someone who was not very much like me. But playing this part was not a deceptive action on my part. Even though I was pretending to be a different person, everyone knew that it was all an act.

But what if someone pretends to be someone totally different from who they really are? What if your closest friends came to watch the way that you behaved around others, and they were surprised to see you acting different than you normally act. They would not call you an actor. They would call you a hypocrite.

“Hypocrite” is the word that Jesus used to describe the religious leaders in Israel during his lifetime. He called them hypocrites not because they sometimes failed to live up to their ideals. He called them hypocrites because they pretended to be different than they really were. They behaved differently in public than they did in private. They put on a show. Some people were fooled, but Jesus was not.

In Matthew 23 Jesus warned his disciples about the hypocrisy of the Jewish religious leaders. In doing this, Jesus revealed the characteristics of bad leaders. But he also revealed the flipside: the characteristics of godly leaders. In Matthew 23 we get a contrast between how good and bad leaders behave toward the people entrusted to their care.

GETTING STARTED

1. What qualities make someone a leader you are interested in following?

2. Share about an experience you’ve had with a bad leader. What made this person a bad leader?

DIGGING IN

Read Matthew 23:1-12.

- 1** Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples:
2 “The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat. **3** So you must be careful to do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach. **4** They tie up heavy, cumbersome loads and put them on other people’s shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them.
5 “Everything they do is done for people to see: They make their phylacteries wide and the tassels on their garments long; **6** they love the place of honor at banquets and the most important seats in the synagogues; **7** they love to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces and to be called ‘Rabbi’ by others.
8 “But you are not to be called ‘Rabbi,’ for you have one Teacher, and you are all brothers. **9** And do not call anyone on earth ‘father,’ for you have one Father, and he is in heaven. **10** Nor are you to be called instructors, for you have one Instructor, the Messiah.

11 The greatest among you will be your servant. 12 For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.

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 kind of perspective is needed if you are going to choose to listen to the words of a leader, while not following their example?

5. Look at verses 4-7 and list every example Jesus gives of the hypocrisy of the Jewish religious leaders.

6. How do Jesus' instructions in verses 8-10 provide a contrast with the description of the Pharisees in verses 4-7?

7. How does verse 12 provide a foundation for how Christians are meant to approach leadership?

WRESTLING WITH ISSUES

8. Focus on Jesus' words in verses 8-10. Do you think there are any acceptable times for a Christian to be called "teacher" or "father" or "instructor"? Explain your answer.

CONNECTING TO THE GOSPEL

9. How is Jesus the ultimate example of the kind of leader he tells his disciples to be? For a cross reference, look up Philippians 2:5-11.

TAKING IT TO HEART

10. In what contexts—whether formal or informal—has God given you opportunities to exercise godly leadership?

11. What do you think is the biggest obstacle that keeps you from being more Christlike in your leadership?

PART OF THE JOURNEY IS THE END

Lesson 4 • March 10

MAIN POINT

The best response to the mystery of Jesus' return is to be prepared each day.

INTRODUCTION

In 1988 a man named Edgar C. Whisenant wrote a book called *88 Reasons Why the Rapture is in 1988*. In the book he outlines reasons why Jesus' return would happen in that very year. As you can imagine, in 2024 the customer reviews of the book are not very high.

This book, though, is an example of how many Christians engage with the subject of the second coming of Jesus. We theorize about specifics, trying to figure out when he'll return, who the antichrist is, and how to interpret contemporary events. We want a chart to show us exactly how events will unfold as we await the return of our Savior.

In Matthew 24 Jesus teaches on the subject of his return. What we find, though, is that he seems less concerned with giving us a specific roadmap of what to expect, and more concerned with telling us to live in a way that makes us prepared for when he returns. He is less concerned with telling us dates and places and times, and more concerned with telling us how to live godly and faithful lives.

In this lesson we will explore the perspective that Jesus leads us to have as we await his return. And the good news is that his words bring us help and guidance whether he returns within our lifetime or long afterward.

GETTING STARTED

1. When Christians discuss and debate end times theories, what is your typical response? Are you interested? Annoyed? Frustrated? Passionate?

2. Name one potential benefit and one potential danger that can come along with discussing what the Bible teaches about the end times.

DIGGING IN

Read Matthew 24:36-51.

36 “But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. 37 As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. 38 For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; 39 and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. 40 Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. 41 Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left.

42 “Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. 43 But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. 44 So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.

45 “Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom the master has put in charge of the servants in his household to give them their food at the proper time?

46 It will be good for that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns. 47 Truly I tell you, he will put him in charge of all his possessions.

48 But suppose that servant is wicked and says to himself, ‘My master is staying away a long time,’ 49 and he then begins to beat his fellow servants and to eat and drink with drunkards. 50 The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of. 51 He

will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

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. In verses 36-41, what does Jesus communicate about the nature of the “day” of his coming (return)?

5. Many try to predict the timing of Jesus’ second coming. But in verses 42-44, what does Jesus actually command us to do in response to his return?

6. Focusing on verses 45-51, what differentiates the faithful wise servant from the wicked servant?

7. Why do you think the wicked servant ends up cast out specifically “with the hypocrites”?

WRESTLING WITH ISSUES

8. Jesus’ statements in verses 40-41 are often quoted in connection with the rapture (the idea that Christians will be removed from the earth before a time of tribulation). Others take these verses to be referring to the judgment from God that accompanies Jesus’ second coming. Looking at the verses in context, what do you think?

9. We are saved by grace and not by works (Ephesians 2:8-9). Yet in Matthew 24 (and many other passages) we are called to be faithful servants to Jesus. How can believers pursue faithfulness without turning this pursuit into a performance-based relationship with God?

CONNECTING TO THE GOSPEL

10. On a practical level, what can you do to be prepared for Christ’s return, whenever it may come?

TAKING IT TO HEART

11. What is one way that you can appropriately keep the end of the story (the return of Jesus and all that accompanies it) before your mind and your heart?

BURIED TREASURE

Lesson 5 • March 17

MAIN POINT

When we are faithful with what God entrusts to us, he will entrust us with more.

INTRODUCTION

When I was candidating for the role of Teaching Pastor at LBF Church, the leadership brought me in to preach a sermon. They wanted to see how I would do and how the congregation would respond to me and my preaching. I felt a lot of pressure as I prepared for this. I knew that if I had any hopes of being hired as the consistent teacher, then I needed to do well with the opportunity that was entrusted to me. After all, if I couldn't handle one sermon, why would I be entrusted with 40-50 sermons per year?

Most of us understand that concept. We won't entrust a promotion to an employee who never shows up on time. We won't entrust our children to a babysitter who is always staring at her phone. And we won't entrust our money to an investor who consistently incurs losses for his clients. We trust people who show themselves to be trustworthy.

But while we understand this concept, we often fail to consider that God works this way with us. Some of us want to be entrusted to play a big part in big things that God is doing. But if we want that, we must ask if we are being faithful with what he has currently entrusted to us. In the parable that accompanies this lesson, we see Jesus paint a picture of just how important our current faithfulness is if we want to be considered faithful to handle more in the future.

GETTING STARTED

1. How would you define the word "faithfulness"?

2. What are some areas of life in which people are expected to practice faithfulness?

DIGGING IN

Read Matthew 25:14-30.

14 "Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his wealth to them. 15 To one he gave five bags of gold, to another two bags, and to another one bag, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. 16 The man who had received five bags of gold went at once and put his money to work and gained five bags more. 17 So also, the one with two bags of gold gained two more. 18 But the man who had received one bag went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money.

19 "After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. 20 The man who had received five bags of gold brought the other five. 'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with five bags of gold. See, I have gained five more.'

21 "His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'

22 "The man with two bags of gold also came. 'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with two bags of gold; see, I have gained two more.'

23 "His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'

24 "Then the man who had received one bag of gold came. 'Master,' he said, 'I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. 25 So I was afraid and went out and hid your gold in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.'

26 “His master replied, ‘You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? **27** Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest.

28 “ ‘So take the bag of gold from him and give it to the one who has ten bags. **29** For whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them. **30** And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’

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 think might have been involved when the first two servants “put his money to work” (verse 16)?

5. What stands out to you about how the master responds to the first two servants (verses 21 and 23)?

6. According to the master, what was so bad about what the third servant did?

7. In verse 29 Jesus summarizes the message of this parable. What do you think are some different ways that you can be one of those who “has” so that you “will be given more”?

WRESTLING WITH ISSUES

8. According to verse 15 the master gave different amounts to the servants “each according to his ability.” Is this an example of God showing favoritism? If you don’t think so, explain why it is not.

CONNECTING TO THE GOSPEL

9. What do you think it looks like to have the peace that your salvation is fully secure in Jesus (Romans 5:1-2) and yet to pursue faithfulness in how you live your life in Jesus?

TAKING IT TO HEART

10. Give some examples of what the bags of gold can represent in your walk with Christ. In other words, what has God entrusted to you?

11. In what area of life is God calling you to—in the language of the parable—dig up your bag of gold and begin to put it to work?

ALL PART OF THE PLAN

Lesson 6 • March 24

MAIN POINT

The sacrificial death of Jesus was God's plan from the beginning.

INTRODUCTION

Within the last year I have been bitten by the pickleball bug. A friend taught me how to play and now I play every chance I get. If you don't know what pickleball is, I have heard it described as tennis for unathletic people or life-size ping pong. Either way, I love it.

Occasionally in pickleball, I'll hit a ball that hits the net and then drops over for an easy point. Because this is considered a lucky shot, it is polite to put up your hand to apologize to your opponent when this happens. It's a way of showing that you understand that you got a good break. When this happens to me, though, I like to jokingly say, "That's exactly where I was aiming." Obviously, it would be much more impressive if the shot was on purpose rather than a random accident.

In Matthew 26 we see events that are leading up to the death of Jesus. We see a betrayal, the preparation for a meal, and then a prediction about Jesus' sacrifice. But the amazing thing about each of these events is that they are presented not as random accidents, but as events that are all part of God's plan. When these things happen, God is not putting up his hand in apology for some lucky breaks. Instead he is (not jokingly) revealing that everything is happening according to his purpose. By the way, this makes it much more impressive.

As you read and discuss this passage, consider the fact that everything that unfolds is part of God's plan. And if it is all part of God's plan, consider what this means for how you can respond when you face difficulties and trials.

GETTING STARTED

1. What are some of the thoughts and emotions that you have when you think of the death of Jesus?

2. How does it impact your response to events around you (whether personal events or world events) if you believe that nothing happens that is outside of God's sovereign plan?

DIGGING IN

Read Matthew 26:14-30.

14 Then one of the Twelve—the one called Judas Iscariot—went to the chief priests **15** and asked, "What are you willing to give me if I deliver him over to you?" So they counted out for him thirty pieces of silver. **16** From then on Judas watched for an opportunity to hand him over.

17 On the first day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread, the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Where do you want us to make preparations for you to eat the Passover?"

18 He replied, "Go into the city to a certain man and tell him, 'The Teacher says: My appointed time is near. I am going to celebrate the Passover with my disciples at your house.' " **19** So the disciples did as Jesus had directed them and prepared the Passover.

20 When evening came, Jesus was reclining at the table with the Twelve. **21** And while they were eating, he said, "Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me."

22 They were very sad and began to say to him one after the other, "Surely you don't mean me, Lord?"

23 Jesus replied, "The one who has dipped his hand into the bowl with me will betray me. **24** The Son of Man will go just as it is written about him. But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born."

25 Then Judas, the one who would betray him, said, "Surely you don't mean me, Rabbi?"

Jesus answered, “You have said so.”

26 While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, “Take and eat; this is my body.”

27 Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you. **28** This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. **29** I tell you, I will not drink from this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.”

30 When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

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 at Jesus’ instructions to the disciples in verses 17-19. What strikes you about the strange—at least to us—way that he tells them to prepare for the Passover?

5. In verse 20 Jesus reveals that he will be betrayed. But what does he reveal in verse 24 about this betrayal?

6. What does it say about Jesus that he led through this Passover meal while he knew that Judas had agreed to betray him?

7. In verses 26-28 Jesus initiates what we now practice when we take communion (the Lord’s Supper). How does his statement in verse 29 shed light on his mindset while he was leading them through this practice?

WRESTLING WITH ISSUES

8. In this passage a number of events happen that, while they are performed by others, fulfill God’s plan. How do you think this idea relates to how much free will human beings actually have?

CONNECTING TO THE GOSPEL

9. As you reflect on Jesus’ words in verses 26-28, how can you keep the point of communion in your mind and heart the next time you take communion?

TAKING IT TO HEART

10. Take in the fact that Jesus not only died for our sins, but that he did it willingly, knowing that it was God’s plan all along. Write out a response of gratitude and worship to him.

11. In what areas of life right now do you need to embrace the truth that God has a perfect plan, and that no one can thwart this plan?

HE IS RISEN

Lesson 7 • March 31

MAIN POINT

The resurrection of Jesus is God's victory and our salvation.

INTRODUCTION

Most people know that Easter marks the celebration of Jesus being raised from the dead. Christians all over the world celebrate this day with worship, prayer, and thankfulness. Many others celebrate this day with candy, egg hunts, and family meals. In fact, many who celebrate Easter have no strong feelings about the resurrection of Jesus. If you asked them if they believed in it, they might shrug their shoulders. It is not that they are antagonistic. They simply haven't really thought about any reason why the question has any bearing on their lives today.

When we celebrate Easter, it is not just so that we can celebrate a victory over death that Jesus won for himself. We celebrate Easter because we believe that we are invited into the victory that he won. His resurrection is our resurrection because we are invited to be forgiven of our sins, to receive new life and adoption into God's family, and to embrace the promise of eternal life after we die. The victory of Jesus is the victory of all who belong to him.

In this Easter lesson, you will be invited to look at the story of Jesus' resurrection. Pay attention not only to the actual event, but to how the events are presented. And consider how this story speaks life and hope into your life right now.

GETTING STARTED

1. In your experience, are the non-Christians around you more skeptical of Jesus' resurrection (they don't think it happened) or more ambivalent to Jesus' resurrection (they simply don't care whether or not it happened)? Discuss your answer.

2. Why do you believe the resurrection of Jesus is so central to the Christian faith?

DIGGING IN

Read Matthew 28:1-10.

1 After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb.

2 There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. 3 His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. 4 The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men.

5 The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. 6 He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. 7 Then go quickly and tell his disciples: 'He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.' Now I have told you."

8 So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples. 9 Suddenly Jesus met them. "Greetings," he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him. 10 Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me."

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. Focus on verses 2-4. How does the way that Jesus was raised point to his power and his victory?

5. When the angel announces Jesus' resurrection to the women, he says, "He has risen, just as he said." Why is it significant that Jesus' resurrection was just as he said?

6. The women responded to the announcement with both fear and joy (verse 8). What do you think led to each of these emotions?

7. When Jesus appears to the women, they worship him. What does this say about the proper response to the risen Jesus?

WRESTLING WITH ISSUES

8. Why do you think Jesus appeared first to the women and only later to the larger group of disciples? Why wouldn't it have been more effective to appear to as many people as possible instantly?

CONNECTING TO THE GOSPEL

9. In verse 10, Jesus tells the women to go and tell "my brothers" to go to Galilee. What does Hebrews 2:10-12 say about the significance of Jesus seeing us as his brothers and sisters?

TAKING IT TO HEART

10. How does Jesus' victorious resurrection impact you in the following areas of life?

Your battle against sin and temptation.

Your struggles with fear and anxiety.

Your attitude toward money and possessions.

11. When Jesus appeared to the women, he tasked them with spreading the word about his resurrection. To whom do you think God is calling you to spread the good news of his resurrection?

THEREFORE GO

Lesson 8 • April 7

MAIN POINT

Jesus calls his disciples to make disciples.

INTRODUCTION

The end of any story is significant. There are many famous final lines of novels and closing lines from films. The final line of *The Great Gatsby* about how we are “beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past” sums up the message of the book. In a different—but just as memorable way—the original Iron Man movie ends with Tony Stark declaring, “I am Iron Man,” signifying his embrace of his new heroic identity, despite his self-indulgent past.

The end of the story often tells us a lot about how to understand the story as a whole.

Similarly, the end of the Gospel of Matthew has great significance. After we have experienced the birth, the life, the teachings, the death, and the resurrection of Jesus, we get one final passage. The passage is about Jesus, but it is also about the proper response that we are called to have to everything we’ve just read.

This final passage is often called The Great Commission. In this lesson, we will look to explore not only what Jesus calls us to do, but also how we are empowered to carry out this calling.

GETTING STARTED

1. What are some different ways that you’ve observed people responding to the story of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection?

2. What makes it so difficult for so many believers to participate in spreading the gospel to others?

DIGGING IN

Read Matthew 28:16-20.

16 Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. **17** When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. **18** Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. **19** Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, **20** and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

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 17 says that there was both worship and doubt among Jesus’ disciples. How do you think both of these could have occurred at the same time?

5. Why are Jesus’ words in verse 18 an important introduction to what he says in verses 19-20?

6. The primary command is to make disciples. In verses 19-20, how does Jesus describe what will be involved in making disciples?

7. Why are Jesus' final words at the end of verse 20 so important, in light of what he just commanded?

TAKING IT TO HEART

10. What truth about Jesus brings you the most security and peace when you think about participating in the call to make disciples of all nations?

11. What specific way do you sense that God is calling you to participate in this great commission that he gives in this passage?

WRESTLING WITH ISSUES

8. What do you think is the significance of Jesus' command to make disciples of all nations? What do you think is involved with fulfilling this great commission?

CONNECTING TO THE GOSPEL

9. In verse 17 we read that Jesus' disciples worshiped him and, apparently, he willingly received this worship. Why is this significant to how we today respond to Jesus?