

Matthew 16-20

Walking with Jesus

TERM 4 2019
BIBLE STUDY GUIDE



Study 1: Matthew 16:21 - 17:13

When we last studied Matthew, we reached a significant turning point in 16:16 when Peter acknowledges that Jesus is “the Christ, the Son of the Living God”. It’s a significant turning point in the story, because from that time on, Jesus begins to tell his disciples how the story is going to end.

Read Matthew 16:21-23

1. What things does Jesus say must happen in Jerusalem?
2. When Peter objects, Jesus responds very strongly. What exactly is Jesus’ criticism of Peter? Does this explain why he addresses him as “Satan”?

Read Matthew 16:24-27

3. What two alternatives does Jesus lay out here?
4. What rationale does he give for taking up your cross and losing your life?
5. For you personally, what will it mean to deny yourself and take up your cross to follow Jesus?

Verse 28 is tricky! *“Truly I tell you, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom”. The previous verse seems like a clear reference to the final judgement. But if v28 is about judgement day, then Jesus got his timing wrong. And, it would contradict what he says later about nobody including himself knowing the timing of judgement day (Matt 24:36). So it seems that verse 28 must be talking about a different kind of “coming”. Scholars suggest he could be referring to the fall of Jerusalem in AD70, or his resurrection from the dead, or the transfiguration scene that follows. The transfiguration option seems strong. It explains why Jesus speaks of “some of those standing there” seeing his kingdom (or ‘kingship’). Also, “after six days” in 17.1 is an unusually precise time-connection for Matthew, suggesting he’s signalling a link between the stories.*

Read Matthew 17:1-18

6. Imagine you are one of the disciples there on the mountain. Describe what you’re feeling and why. For example, a few sentences in the form “I was feeling _____ because _____”
7. God commands the disciples “This is my Son... listen to him!”. When has Peter *not* been listening properly to Jesus recently?

Read Matthew 17:9-13

8. What future events does Jesus mention as he talks with the disciples?

9. On the way down the mountain, Jesus tells his disciples not to tell people what they’ve seen. He issued a similar command in 16:20, just after Peter confessed that Jesus is the Christ. Why might Jesus have wanted his disciples to keep silent? Does the argument in 16:21-22 give us a clue?
10. Jesus’ contemporaries were expecting the prophet Elijah to return ahead of judgement day, as promised in Malachi 4. It seems the appearance of Moses and Elijah has reminded the disciples of that chapter. Jesus tells the disciples “Elijah has already come”. What did this “coming of Elijah” look like? See Matt 3.1-8; 14.3-12.
11. At the top of the mountain, the disciples were given a picture of Jesus’ coming glory. As Jesus pointed back to John the Baptist, they saw the road of suffering and rejection that he will be walking. How do these two things together help us to “take up our cross and follow”?

Notes and Prayer Points

Study 2: Matthew 17:14-27

In 17:1-13 Peter, James and John have been on the mountaintop with Jesus. They saw him glorified, they saw Moses and Elijah talking with him and finally they heard God acknowledging him as his beloved Son to whom they must listen. Now they have come down from the mountaintop.

1. Share a time when you have had a "mountaintop experience" in your Christian life that was quickly blown away by the daily realities of living.

Read Matthew 17:14-20

2. a. From his words and actions, what do you learn about the man who approached Jesus?

b. The disciples had previously been given authority to drive out demons. See Matthew 10:1 and 8. What was the main cause of the man's frustration?
3. Jesus now speaks in a harsh way to his disciples. How does Psalm 78:34-43 help us to understand why he spoke like this?
4. After the healing of the boy, Jesus talks in private to his disciples. Does this mean that God will give us everything we ask for? Explain your response.

Read Matthew 17:22-23

Jesus again speaks to his disciples about his death.

- 5. a. Compare what Jesus says about himself in vv.22-23 to what he said in 16:21. What are the similarities and differences?

Similarities	Differences

- b. What do the disciples now understand about the journey to Jerusalem?

Read Matthew 17:24 - 27

Now Jesus enters Capernaum for the last time and it is likely that he again stays in Peter's house. See Matthew 8:14-15. This narrative about the Temple tax is unique to Matthew who was of course very interested in tax matters.

- 6. Peter admits to the tax collectors that Jesus does pay the Temple tax. After entering the house Jesus questions Peter.
 - a. What is Jesus teaching Peter to understand about the payment of taxes?

- b. What does Jesus' payment of the tax show about his mission?

- 7. How might we apply the attitude/teaching of Jesus in our society today?

Notes & Prayer Points

Study 3: Matthew 18:1-14

1. When Fred goes to church, he looks around at the other Christians and thinks “they all seem smarter and more accomplished than me. I’d better be on guard”. When Doris goes to church, she looks around at how helpless and vulnerable everyone else seems, and thinks “it’s lucky I’m here to look after things”. Are you more like Fred or more like Doris? How?

Read Matthew 18:1-5

2. The disciples come to Jesus with a question about greatness in the kingdom. How does Jesus throw them off balance?
3. Jesus tells his disciples to “change and become like little children”.
 - a. Write down 10 words that come into your mind when you think of the word “child”.
 - b. In light of the question the disciples were asking, what aspect of childhood is Jesus likely to have in mind when he tells them to become like little children?

4. Verse 5 talks about welcoming "one such child", meaning a humble believer rather than a young person per se. How does Jesus give dignity and value to such little ones?

Read Matthew 18.6-9

This section talks about people or things who cause believers to "stumble". NIV84 and ESV have "sin" instead of stumble, but the kind of downfall in view here includes losing faith as well as moral failure.

5. How are the "little ones" described in this section?
6. There are two distinct warnings in this section. What are they?
7. Why would Jesus portray such a serious punishment for those who cause believers to stumble?
8. If you cut off your hand or foot, or removed your eye, would it actually stop you from sinning? What is Jesus getting at?
9. What are some ways that we might apply this to ourselves today?

Read Matthew 18:10-14

10. What does the story about the lost sheep tell us about God's attitude towards his "little ones"?
11. Do you see yourself as a "little one"? According to this chapter, should you?
12. If we are believers who have indeed humbled ourselves and become like little children, how does this passage comfort and encourage us?

Study 4: Matthew 18:15-35

1. Think about how you tend to respond when you have a conflict with someone. Are you more inclined to be a 'peace-breaker' who attacks and escalates, or a 'peace-faker' who retreats and avoids the issue?

Read Matthew 20:15-17

2. What three phases of dealing with sin/conflict does Jesus prescribe?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

3. Are all three phases always necessary? What would be the effect of leaving out a phase and skipping to the next one?
4. How do Jesus' words challenge us if we are naturally 'peace-fakers'?
5. How do they challenge us if we are naturally 'peace-breakers'?

Further reading online:

Bruce Burgess, "[The hope of biblical peacemaking](#)" *The Briefing* 386.

Read Matthew 18:18-20

This is a challenging passage to understand. The "you" in v18 is plural, referring either to the whole church or a collection of church leaders.

6. How might this passage connect to the previous section?

Read Matthew 18.21-35

7. Would the average person be willing to forgive someone seven times, as Peter suggests in verse 22? What sort of answer do you think Peter is expecting?
8. Look at the interaction between the first servant and the king
 - a. How much did the servant owe his master?
 - b. What did the servant ask for, and what did he get?

9. Look at the interaction between the first servant and the second servant.

a. How much did the second servant owe the first servant?

b. What did the second servant ask for, and what did he get?

10. How would you explain the purpose of this story?

11. In what situations should we apply Matthew 18.15-17, about confrontation and escalation, and in what situations should we apply Matthew 18.21-22 about forgiveness? How do they fit together?

Notes & Prayer Points

Study 5: Matthew 19:1-12

Matthew has completed his account of what Jesus did and taught in Galilee. Now we see Jesus closer to Jerusalem, spending time in Judaea, the region controlled by Herod (See Matthew 14:1-12)

Read Mathew 19:1-12

The Pharisees now come to test Jesus on a hot contemporary issue - divorce on demand. This was a particularly dangerous topic in the region of Herod Antipas, who had cast aside his wife for Herodias his brother's wife and then killed John the Baptist who condemned his actions.

1. a. What does Jesus refer to in answering their first question?

See also Genesis 1:27; Genesis 2:24.

- b. What does this reference to the creation events teach us about marriage?

2. Read Deuteronomy 24:1-4, which the Pharisees refer to.

- a. For what reason did Moses allow divorce?

- b. What does Jesus say about the words of Moses?

3. What have the disciples learnt about marriage from this dialogue between Jesus and the Pharisees?

4. What does this section show us about how we should approach marriage today?

5. In what ways do the words of Jesus about singleness complement his words on marriage?

For further reading: [Joined Up Life](#) by Andrew Cameron provides useful insight into this and other ethical situations we encounter.

Notes & Prayer Points

Study 6: Matthew 19:13-30

Read Matthew 19:13-15

1. Why would the disciples have rebuked the parents bringing their children to Jesus?
2. Why is Jesus in favour of the children being brought to him? What do you think he means by "such as these"?

Read Matthew 19:16-24

3. Jesus points the man to some of the ten commandments. Read Exodus 20:1-17. Which of the ten commandments does Jesus quote, and which does he omit at this point?
4. Earlier, Jesus has radically lowered the threshold for the sins of adultery, murder etc (Matt 5:21-30). Why might he accept, for now, the man's claim to have kept all these commandments?
5. You might expect Jesus to go on to list the rest of the ten commandments. But instead, he gives the man a unique command to sell all his possessions and give away all his money. Why would he do this?
6. What is it about being rich that makes it so hard to enter the kingdom? Consider how Jesus has uncovered this rich man's heart.

Notes & Prayer Points

7. The New Testament never tells every believer to give up all possessions and money. What practical application regarding money should we take away from this passage?

Read Matthew 19:23-30 (*deliberate overlap*)

For centuries there has been speculation about the "eye of a needle" being a gate in the wall of Jerusalem so narrow that a camel would need to shed its load to get through. However, there is zero evidence that such a gate ever existed! Jesus' colourful imagery is of something that's completely impossible.

8. What Jesus says is bad news for rich people. Is it therefore good news for poor people? Consider the disciples' reaction.
9. What good news is delivered here?
10. According to Jesus, what is the way to get rich and powerful? When do riches and power come?
11. This story about a rich man who couldn't enter the kingdom comes straight after the scene with the little children to whom the kingdom belongs. What message about entering the kingdom should we take away from this overall passage?

Study 7: Matthew 20:1-16.

Still replying to Peter's question in 19:27, Jesus reinforced and expanded on the reversal of values set out in Matthew 19:30 with this parable of the workers in the vineyard.

Read Mathew 20:1-16

1. According to 'normal human wisdom' how does our society explain the concept of fairness/justice in life?

2. a. From this parable what do you learn about the conditions for casual workers in Palestine at this time?

b. What was expected behaviour from the landowner and what might have seemed unusual in his behaviour? See also Leviticus 19:13 and Deuteronomy 24:14-15

3. The complaint of the workers hired first is based on 'normal human wisdom'. What does the response of the landowner in vs.13-15 teach us about the Kingdom of Heaven?

4. Look at the parable of the lost son in Luke 15.11-31. How does this story compare?

5. Look at Ephesians 2:8-10. How does this story relate?

6. Share Illustrations or examples of how you or another person has been able to put the message of God's grace into a 21st century context to make the explanation relevant and clearer to the listener.

Notes & Prayer Points

Study 8: Matthew 20:17-34

As Jesus moved from the Jordan Valley up towards Jerusalem (v17), he once again reminded his disciples of what would happen at their destination.

Read Matthew 20:17-20

1. Compare this passage to Jesus' original prediction back in 16:21. What is new here? What is its significance? (See also Leviticus 26:32-33 & 38 and Psalm 106:40-41)

Read Matthew 20:20-29

2. Mum brings her boys with her to see Jesus.
 - a. What does she want for them?

 - b. Why would she ask for this? See also 17:1, 16:23 & 19:30

3. Look at Isaiah 51:17 & Jeremiah 25:17-18. How do these verses help us understand Jesus' use of the word "cup" to describe what is ahead of him?

4. What does verse 23 teach us about Jesus' own understanding of the future, of his own role and of his relationship with his Father?

5. This squabble by the disciples provides Jesus with the opportunity to explain more about his mission.
 - a. Jesus responds first to the nature of the request. What illustration does he use of temporal power?

 - b. How does Jesus turn this illustration upside down and use it to talk about the significance of what he is about to do? Compare Isaiah 53:3-5.

 - c. Where in our world can we see people grasping for rewards for themselves in life?

 - b. Why does God's grace seem so strange in such a world?

Read Matthew 20:29-34

Matthew now includes a healing by Jesus at Jericho which is illustrative of what he had been talking about to his disciples,

6. Looking at the actions of the two blind men, what do they understand about Jesus?

7. Look back over the whole passage from verse 17 onwards. What has most provoked your thinking about the nature of your relationship with Jesus?