

TERM 3
2026



THE GOSPEL
OF
Matthew

“

Matthew's Gospel tells the story of Jesus – Immanuel, God with Us; Israel's Messiah and the hope of all nations. Matthew's Gospel is something of a training manual to show you how you can and should live within this wonderful story.

”

— Tim Chester, *Matthew For You*

These studies contain several helpful insights from *Matthew* (TNTS) by R.T. France, and *Matthew For You* (The Good Book Company) by Tim Chester, as well as the studies *Matthew: Kingdom Treasure* (Good Book Guide) by Tim Chester, and *Matthew: Being Discipled By Jesus* (Lifeguide) by Stephen and Jacalyn Eyre.

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Introduction

Matthew, Mark and Luke are known as the 'Synoptic Gospels' (i.e. they can be compared together). While they have content unique to each of them, they agree extensively in language, in the material they include, and in the general order in which events and sayings from the life of Christ are recorded. The most straightforward reason for this seems to be that they shared a common source for their information. It is most likely that Mark's Gospel was written first and that Matthew and Luke used it as the basis for their accounts. This dates Matthew's writing in the late 50s or early 60s AD.

AUTHOR

The early church fathers were unanimous in holding that Matthew, one of the twelve apostles, was the author of this Gospel. Despite some modern critical studies questioning it, this continues to be the overwhelming majority view. Matthew was a tax collector who left his work to follow Jesus (Matthew 9:9–13). In Mark and Luke he is called by his other name, Levi.

PURPOSE AND THEMES

Matthew's main purpose is to prove to his readers that Jesus is their Messiah. He does this primarily by showing how Jesus is a descendant of David, and how in his life and ministry he fulfilled the OT Scriptures. Although all the Gospel writers quote the OT, Matthew includes nine additional proof texts to drive this home (1:22–23; 2:15; 2:17–15; 2:23; 4:14–16; 8:17; 12:17–21; 13:35; 27:9–10).

STRUCTURE OF MATTHEW'S GOSPEL

The Gospel is woven around five great teaching discourses (see below). That this is deliberate is clear from the refrain that concludes each discourse: *When Jesus finished saying these things*, or similar words. The narrative sections appropriately lead up to the discourses. The fivefold division may suggest that Matthew has modelled his book on the Pentateuch (the first five books

of the OT). He may also be presenting the gospel as a new Torah (law) and Jesus as a new and greater Moses.

THIS STUDY SERIES

This study concerns itself with Mathew 4–9, which includes the famous sermon on the mount (chs. 5–7) and the narrative blocks on either side of it.

MATTHEW: NARRATIVE AND DISCOURSE BREAKDOWN

Matthew 1 – 2 Prologue/Infancy Narratives

Matthew 3 – 4 Narrative

Matthew 5 – 7 Discourse #1

When Jesus had finished saying these things (7:28–29)

Matthew 8 – 9 Narrative

Matthew 10 Discourse #2

After Jesus had finished instructing his twelve disciples (11:1)

Matthew 11 – 12 Narrative

Matthew 13 Discourse #3

When Jesus had finished these parables (13:53)

Matthew 14 – 17 Narrative

Matthew 18 Discourse #4

When Jesus had finished saying these things (19:1)

Matthew 19 – 23 Narrative

Matthew 24 – 25 Discourse #5

When Jesus had finished saying all these things (26:1–2)

Matthew 26 – 28 Climax and Epilogue

STUDY 1

TESTED IN THE WILDERNESS

MATTHEW 4:1-17

1. Life, including our Christian life, is a struggle at times. When you're feeling under the pump, what are some sources or resources you look to for help?

CONTEXT

The very beginning of Jesus' public ministry. Just prior to this Jesus has been baptised in the Jordan by John.

READ Matthew 4:1-11

2. Who leads Jesus into the desert/wilderness, and why (what reason is given)? What does this indicate?
3. What time detail does Matthew include in v.2? What does this recall? How does it help us understand the significance of what Jesus is doing?

Like the Hebrew for 'Satan', the Greek for 'devil' means 'accuser' or 'slanderer'. These all remind us that the devil is a *personal* being, not a mere force or influence. He is the great archenemy of God. It's also important to note that the devil is 'the tempter'. God in his sovereignty may 'test' his people, but it is the devil who tempts them to evil.

4. In verses 3 and 6, what do you make of, *If you are the Son of God?* Is the devil questioning Jesus' divinity? If not, what is he saying?
5. Consider the three ways Jesus is tempted. What significance is there in each of these?
6. How does Jesus 'combat' each temptation?
 - What encourages you about this?

READ Matthew 4:12–17

7. These verses describe the transition from testing to ministry. What details does Matthew include?
8. What do you think these details might signify?
 - What do you think it means to *Repent, for the Kingdom of heaven is near?*

FINAL THOUGHTS AND APPLICATION

- 9.** What would the consequences have been if Jesus had said yes to any of Satan's offers? What was at stake?
- 10.** How does Jesus' temptation experience help us when we face temptation?

STUDY 2

CALLING THE FIRST DISCIPLES

MATTHEW 4:18-25

1. Imagine a friend asks you: *What does it mean to be a 'disciple' of Jesus?*
How would you answer them?

CONTEXT

After his testing in the wilderness and returning to Galilee, Jesus puts the final pieces in place to begin his public ministry by calling his first disciples. This is the end of the first narrative section, just prior to the first discourse (the sermon on the mount).

READ Matthew 4:18–22

2. What does Matthew tell us about Simon and Andrew (v.18)? What sort of people does this suggest they were?
3. What is Jesus' call to them? What does it indicate about Jesus?
4. Jesus' call suggests the disciples of a Rabbi who literally followed behind to absorb their teaching. Jesus calls his followers not just to listen and learn, though.
What else does Jesus' call to follow include? What do you think he means?
5. What's Simon and Peter's response? What's striking or surprising about it?

6. Jesus continues down the seashore and sees two more fishermen, James and John. What does Matthew tell us about them?
7. Jesus 'calls them', too (in the context, the same call as before: *Follow me*). What's their response – and what's striking/surprising about it?
 - How could they make such a life changing response so quickly?

READ Matthew 4:23–25

8. In vv.23–25 Matthew gives us a summary statement of Jesus' initial public ministry.
 - i. What three activities of Jesus does he highlight, and how do they sum up Jesus' identity and mission?
 - ii. What is the effect of Jesus' teaching, preaching and healing?

FINAL THOUGHTS AND APPLICATION

9. Discipleship for the first disciples meant leaving job and family and following Jesus wherever he went.
 - Does it look the same for us? Why/why not?
 - How has discipleship affected your life?

10. We saw earlier that 'fishing for people' means *evangelism* – calling others to follow Jesus as well.

- What does this look like in practice?
- Is this something you find a struggle to do? Why/why not?
- What encouragement can you take from this passage?

STUDY 3

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT: OVERVIEW

MATTHEW 5 — 7

5:1–12	The Beatitudes
5:13–48	The Law Fulfilled and Truly Lived Out
6:1–18	Acts of Righteousness: Giving, Prayer, Fasting
6:19–34	Heavenly Attitudes: Treasures and Worry
7:1–6	Judging Others
7:7–29	The Choice of Faith

READ Matthew 5 – 7

THE BEATITUDES

The 'sermon on the mount' begins with the Beatitudes. The word 'blessed' which begins each statement (and which in Latin is *beatitudo*, hence *the beatitudes*) means 'happy' or 'flourishing'. These are not the entrance requirements of Christ's kingdom nor rewards for good behaviour; they're descriptions of how we can live a good life under Christ's kingship.

SOME REFLECTION QUESTIONS AS YOU READ...

Consider who's listening as Jesus delivers the 'sermon on the mount' (5:1–2) and what that might tell us about how we should understand and apply this teaching today.

Note the refrain Jesus uses in the second half of chapter 5 and what Jesus is saying about fulfilling the law and living by it (cf. 5:17–20).

Jesus warns against hypocrisy in chapters 6 and 7. Consider what Jesus says is wrong with hypocrisy (spiritual and otherwise) and the alternatives he gives.

Think about how the sermon ends (7:13–27).

FINAL THOUGHTS AND APPLICATION

How have you seen the ethics and attitudes of the sermon on the mount lived out in our church community/Christians' lives?

What are some of the practical implications of this teaching with regard to:

- Our finances and material wealth?
- Our relationships with one another?
- Our worship and witness?

STUDY 4

FAITH AND HEALING (PART 1)

MATTHEW 8:1-17

1. The expertise of top doctors is often relied upon to shape public health policy. And doctors, nurses and other health practitioners consistently top lists of the 'most trustworthy' professions. Why do you think this is?

CONTEXT

Matthew closes off Jesus' first main section of teaching in his customary way: *After Jesus had finished saying these things* (5 times throughout his Gospel; see Introduction). This acts as a literary link that gives continuity to the whole. The previous focus has been on the call to, and nature of, discipleship. In the narrative that follows we get a glimpse of a world 'recreated' by God's Saviour-King.

READ Matthew 8:1–17

2. Briefly describe how Jesus demonstrates his authority in these verses.
3. Consider the first account of the man with leprosy (vv.1–4). Leprosy sufferers were both physical and religious outcasts (highly contagious and ceremonially unclean). What do you notice about (a) how Jesus and the man engage with one another, and (b) what happens as a result?
 - What might be a modern equivalent to such an experience? (Infectious diseases continue to exist with accompanying social stigma; perhaps think back to Covid; what else has social stigma?)

4. What things stand out to you in the second account (vv.5–13)? What about the centurion's response 'astonishes/amazes' Jesus, and why?
5. Jesus commends the centurion for his 'great faith'. What is Jesus saying about faith? What *isn't* he saying about faith?
 - What do you find encouraging about this? What do you find challenging?
6. The third main account involves Peter's mother-in-law (vv.14–15). What do you notice about this healing?
7. In vv.16–17 Matthew says that Jesus' healing ministry was yet another fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy. What prophecy does he say this fulfils, and in what way do you see Jesus fulfilling it here?

FINAL THOUGHTS AND APPLICATION

8. Jesus performs several acts of 'recreation' in these verses. Which of the ways most resonates with you? Why is that, do you think?
9. How should Jesus' ministry in these verses shape our ministry attitudes and activities today, both individually and as a church? (Think of 2 practical things/areas)

STUDY 5

THE COST OF FOLLOWING JESUS

MATTHEW 8:18-22

1. What are some reasons (or excuses) people might have for not actually following Jesus – even if they find him compelling in one way or another?

CONTEXT

This encounter sequentially follows the healings at Peter's house. It probably didn't happen the very next day, just around this time generally.

READ Matthew 8:18–22

2. What order does Jesus give in v.18, and what reason does Matthew give for it?
3. What might explain the growing crowds at this point (consider what we've just read in vv.16–17) and Jesus' choice to avoid them here?
4. After crossing the lake Matthew records two encounters with would-be followers of Jesus.
 - i. What does the first man say (v.19)? What do you make of it?
 - ii. What is Jesus' response (v.20)? What's his point?

5. 'Another disciple' makes a slightly different comment/request (v.21). What is it, and what do you think of it?
6. What do you make of Jesus' response? Is it reasonable? Why/why not?

FINAL THOUGHTS AND APPLICATION

7. Jesus' power to heal is what initially draws a large following. How do you understand the place of miraculous healing in the Christian life? Should it be something we expect?
8. What do these verses (in addition to the calling the first disciples, 4:18–22) teach us about the cost and urgency of following Jesus? What real-world sacrifices might we need to make?
9. In light of this encounter, Tim Chester writes: *Are there ways in which you're putting off following Jesus or evading aspects of obedience? You can't pick and choose the teaching of Jesus. His call is all or nothing.*

How do you answer this challenge?

STUDY 6

NATURAL AND SUPERNATURAL AUTHORITY

MATTHEW 8:23-34

1. Share a time where you had a brush with an important person, or even a celebrity. What was it like? How did you respond?

CONTEXT

This appears to be part of the same boat trip that Jesus took in the previous verses (18–22). Whether it happened immediately after the previous discussion or some time later, Jesus gets back into the boat *and his disciples follow him* (a not-insignificant detail in the context).

READ Matthew 8:23–27

2. What happens after Jesus and disciples get back into the boat? What details does Matthew include to give us a sense of it?
3. What follows is really a series of 'responses'. Let's look at them in turn:
 - i. How do the disciples react to the storm? Does it seem reasonable? Why/why not?
 - ii. What is Jesus' response to his disciples. Does it seem reasonable? Why/why not?
 - iii. What is Jesus' response to the wind and waves (and their response to him)?

4. The disciples' final response to all this is utter (and understandable) amazement (v.27a). What question do they ask one another? What thoughts do you think lie behind it?

READ Matthew 8:28–34

The boat lands on another shore, the region of the Gaderenes, about 10 kms southeast of the Sea of Galilee but including territory up to the Jordan River outflow. All three Synoptic Gospels have variant readings, meaning the exact location could have been anyway along this section of shoreline. The region had a large Gentile population (as the large herd of pigs indicates).

5. Jesus meets two more men. What is their condition? What details does Matthew give?
6. What further demonstration of Jesus' authority do we get here (consider what is said to Jesus and what Jesus does)?
7. After what happens to the demon-possessed men, what is the townspeople's response? Why do you think they respond this way?

Jesus' sending of the demons into the pigs and their subsequent drowning raises questions: does Jesus not care for pigs? Or for the livelihoods of those who own them? Did this 'kill' the unclean spirits? These aren't completely irrelevant questions, but they're simply not the focus – the restoration of the men is. The self-destructive frenzy of the pigs also gives us a hint of the torment they were inflicting upon the men – and no longer are.

FINAL THOUGHTS AND APPLICATION

8. Think of your life as a boat. Where is Jesus in your boat? Swimming beside it, sleeping in the back, or sailing it?
9. How can a knowledge of Jesus' power and authority strengthen our faith?
10. Consider the various responses to Jesus' authority in this passage (and the ones before it).
 - Which of them should we *not* seek to mirror, and why?
 - Which of them *should* we seek to mirror, and why?

STUDY 7

DIAGNOSING AND DEALING WITH SIN

MATTHEW 9:1-13

1. How do you feel about going to the dentist? Few of us wake up and say, 'The day I've been looking forward to: I get to see the dentist!' But why is it still important?

CONTEXT

This section involves another healing which appears to happen after Jesus and his disciples return from the Gadarenes. As a miracle it can be grouped with the previous two (Jesus' authority over nature and demons). However, it also displays an aspect of spiritual need that connects it with the subsequent account of Matthew the tax collector.

READ Matthew 9:1-8

2. Jesus is back in Capernaum ('his own town', i.e. where he was based), and a man is brought to him.
 - i. Who is brought to Jesus, and why?
 - ii. What 'motivates' Jesus to respond (cf. 8:10)? And what does Jesus do?
 - iii. What is the response of the scribes/teachers of the law to this? Is it right? Why/why not?

3. How does Jesus respond to this charge? What's his point, and how do his actions prove it?
4. Consider the whole encounter from start to finish. What do Jesus' words and actions (forgiving the man's sin, talking with the scribes, healing the man's legs) tell us:
- i. About Jesus' identity?
 - ii. About sickness and sin from God's point of view?
- What are some examples of things that we may be prone to thinking are big problems over and above the problem of our sin?

READ Matthew 9:9–13

We're told that Jesus 'went on from there' and came upon Matthew 'sitting at the tax office' ('tax collector's booth' in NIV). The office/booth was probably a table (with or without a roof). Typically located along major roads, they effectively operated as toll booths. The Matthew here is, according to tradition (and with good reason), the author of this Gospel.

5. What does Jesus say to Matthew, and what's Matthew's response? What does it remind you of?

6. Where does the setting move to? What does this indicate (consider the Pharisees' question in v.11)?
7. How does Jesus' response both explain his actions and rebuke the Pharisees' attitude (consider his quote from Hosea 6:6)?

FINAL THOUGHTS AND APPLICATION

8. Jesus said he didn't come to call the righteous, but sinners. What implications does this have for us:
 - As individuals?
 - As a church?
9. Consider the response of the healed man and people (awe and praise). Where have you seen/experienced this sort of response to God's being at work? What might it look like for us to respond in this way:
 - As individuals?
 - As a church?
10. What practical ways can we, as individuals and as a church, meet people's non-spiritual needs and brokenness?

STUDY 8

THE NEW HAS COME

MATTHEW 9:14-17

4

1. Can you remember a time you purchased or were given something 'brand new'? What was that new purchase/gift, what was the reason for it, and how did it make you feel?

CONTEXT

Matthew begins with 'Then'. This could mean this interaction happened immediately following v.13, or it could simply mean it happened 'next' (but was later; contrast with v.18 which is clearer with the time). More important to Matthew, it seems, is the *thematic* link within this section, namely: that Jesus is bringing restoration and newness to people and to their relationship with God.

READ Matthew 9:14-17

2. What do you understand about the practice of fasting?
 - Have you ever fasted for any reason? What was that reason? how did you find the experience?
3. Consider the question put to Jesus about fasting:
 - i. Who asks it (and to whom else do they refer)?
 - ii. What is their question? How do they frame it?

4. What is the significance of this? That is, by asking the question, what do you think is the concern behind it (cf. 3:1–3)?

Jesus responds with several metaphors, each addressing a slightly different aspect of the question.

5. What is Jesus' first metaphor, and what do you think is its primary point?
6. What are Jesus' other metaphors? Do you understand them?
7. So, how would you sum up Jesus' answer to question about why his disciples don't fast?
- Do you think Jesus is therefore saying there's no place for sorrow/repentance now that he has come? Why/why not?
 - Do you think Jesus is saying there's no place for religious traditions and devout practices? Why/why not?

FINAL THOUGHTS AND APPLICATION

8. What are some ways in which you have experienced the joy and newness Jesus brings?
9. How could you maintain a pattern of both 'feasting' and 'fasting' in your life (spiritual and otherwise)?
10. Does Jesus' teaching give us guidance as to what happens at church (in our services and within our community at large)? In what way?

STUDY 9

FAITH AND HEALING (PART 2)

MATTHEW 9:18-26

4

1. Can you think of someone (other than Jesus!) whom you look up to with awe because of their compassion for others? Who are they and what is their story?

CONTEXT

This incident does come immediately after the conversation about fasting (v.18 *While Jesus was saying this...*). As before, though, of more significance to Matthew (and so to us!) is what this incident demonstrates about Jesus' authority and work.

This story is found in both Luke 8:40–56 and Mark 5:21–43 (Mark's being the likely source for both Matthew and Luke). While Matthew's account is significantly abbreviated compared to other two, its key details are the same. This includes the 'sandwich' structure, whereby the account of the ruler's daughter is interrupted by the encounter with the woman, before returning to the ruler's daughter. Matthew (along with Luke, and their mutual source, Mark) clearly wants us to see a connection between the two events.

READ Matthew 9:18–26

2. What does the ruler tell Jesus/ask Jesus? What does this show?
3. On the way a woman enters the picture. What are we told about her physical condition? What implications would this have had for her?

4. What does the woman do, and why (vv.20b, 21)?

- What does this show about the woman? How does it make you feel towards her?

5. What do you notice about Jesus' response (v.22)?

- What does this show about Jesus? How does it make you feel towards him?

6. Consider Jesus' words, *Your faith has healed you*:

i. In what sense has the woman been healed?

ii. Is Jesus saying there's power in the faith itself (its strength; its purity)? Why/why not?

When Jesus arrives at the ruler's house there are 'flute players and a crowd lamenting loudly' (v.23). These would have been professional mourners, a peculiarly Jewish custom at the time. Even the poorest families hired them. It indicates that the girl has certainly died.

7. What do you make of Jesus' words and the crowd's response (v.24)?

8. How do Jesus' subsequent actions show his authority?

As with the paralysed man, the physical ailments Jesus heals here are all symptoms of a deeper and bigger need: to be healed from our sin, restored in right relationship with our God, and given new and eternal life. These all point towards the cross and the resurrection as the ultimate healing miracle, the most profound act of grace. Central to how we receive that healing? Faith in Jesus.

FINAL THOUGHTS AND APPLICATION

- 9.** Faith isn't mere intellectual assent, it's lived out. What are some ways your faith in Jesus as Lord and Saviour expresses itself in your life?
- 10.** Given people still suffer in material ways today, should we ask and expect God to heal as Jesus did here? Why/why not?

