

**Who is Jesus?**  
**Matthew 1:1-17**

Who is Jesus and how does he help you?

- I. The king who transforms you
  - A. Jesus the true king (v. 1, 17)
  - B. A genealogy of transformation (v. 2-6, 11-12)
  - C. Embracing change through Christ
- II. The king who honors you
  - A. A genealogy of obscurity (v. 3; 2 Cor. 6:9; 1 Cor. 12:22-24)
  - B. Embracing honor from Christ
- III. The king who protects you
  - A. A genealogy of wickedness (v. 8-10; 2 Kings 16:3)
  - B. Embracing the protection of Christ (Rom. 8:28)

**Application Guide:**

1. If you firmly believed the truth that God is changing you and changing those around you, how would it affect the way you treat yourself and the people around you?
2. When you feel insignificant, obscure, and unimportant, to what do you run to seek honor and significance? And when you run to people or things outside of Jesus to seek honor and significance, how does it affect the way you treat people?
3. When evil or affliction presses in on you, do you panic and take control to get rid of it, or do you rest on King Jesus' promise to protect you and use evil and affliction to conform you into the image of Christ?

## **Why Is Jesus Able To Save? Matthew 1:18-25**

Why is Jesus able to save you from your sins?

- I. The virgin birth
  - A. The supernatural conception (v. 18-23a, 24-25)
  - B. The significance of the virgin birth (Rom. 5:12; Ps. 51:5; Heb. 4:15; 2 Cor. 5:17)
- II. The incarnation
  - A. God with us (v. 22-23; Isa. 7:14; John 1:14)
  - B. The significance of the incarnation (Heb. 2:14-17)

### **Application Guide:**

1. How does the virgin birth grow your confidence and assurance in the salvation accomplished by Christ?
2. How does Immanuel (God with us) comfort you during your crisis? What weakness (Heb. 4:15) do you need Jesus to sympathize with?
3. In your crisis, how have you been focused on an outcome rather than the presence (with-ness) of Christ? How does your focus affect your attitudes and actions?

## **True Worship** **Matthew 2:1-12**

Why is true worship essential to your flourishing?

- I. True worship destroys the kingdom of self
  - A. Confronting the kingdom of self (v. 1-7; Matt. 16:25)
  - B. The danger of pride (James 4:6; Prov. 16:18)
- II. True worship destroys the kingdom of hypocrisy
  - A. The problem of hypocrisy (v. 4-6; Matt. 23:27-28)
  - B. Confessed vs. functional belief
- III. True worship unites you to the life-giving king
  - A. The joyful king (v. 9-10; 1 Peter 1:8)
  - B. The holy king (v. 11a; Isa. 6:5-7)
  - C. The generous king (v. 11b)

### **Application Guide:**

1. What are the signs that you are worshipping yourself? How do you typically respond when your kingdom of self is threatened?
2. Can you identify gaps between your confessed beliefs and your functional beliefs (differences between what you believe and how you live)? What are they? How does Jesus destroy your reasons to be hypocritical?
3. What we are worshipping we are becoming. How do you see this truth play out in your life?

**Sustained Through the Tears**  
**Matthew 2:13-23**

What sustains you through seasons of weeping?

- I. God's sovereignty
  - A. The evil behind the crisis (v. 13-15a, 19-22)
  - B. The God behind the crisis (v. 15b, 23; Ps. 2:2-6)
- II. God's unrelenting love
  - A. The expression of God's love (v. 15b-18; Hos. 11:1; Jer. 31:15; Deut. 32:9-10; Ezek. 16:8)
  - B. The evidence of God's love (Heb. 12:6-7)
- III. God's identification
  - A. Jesus the Nazarene (v. 23)
  - B. Jesus' identification with you

**Application Guide:**

1. In what situation are you struggling to trust God because you don't fully understand what he is doing?
2. Does your crisis cause you to question God's love for you? What do you typically see as evidence of God's love for you? Is this evidence consistent with the gospel?
3. How does Jesus' identification with the despised and rejected shape the way you live and relate to others?

**The Centrality of Repentance**  
**Matthew 3:1-17**

Why is repentance so central to life?

- I. The definition of repentance
  - A. Realigning your heart with the right authority (v. 2)
  - B. Realigning your heart with the right design (v. 3; Isa. 40:3)
- II. The evidence of repentance
  - A. The bad fruit produced by the flesh (v. 7, 9-10; Gal. 5:19)
  - B. The good fruit produced by the Spirit (v. 8, 11-12; Gal. 5:22; Ezek. 36:27)
- III. The goal of repentance
  - A. Jesus' baptism (v. 13-15; Isa. 53:11)
  - B. The delight of the Trinity (v. 16-17; Isa. 42:1; Acts 3:19-20)

**Application Guide:**

1. Who or what, other than Jesus Christ, serves as the ultimate authority in your life? When your ultimate authority is someone or something other than Jesus, how does this lead to break down in your life?
2. What are the signs of false repentance in your life? How can you tell when your repentance is driven by the flesh (self-effort) and not the Spirit?
3. Repentance brings you into the refreshing delight of the Trinity. Why is this so important to remember?

## **Hope for the Tempted** **Matthew 4:1-11**

What is your hope in the face of temptation?

- I. Jesus was tempted like you are
  - A. Tempted like you in 'kind' (v. 3, 5-6, 8-9)
  - B. Tempted like you in 'experience' (Heb. 4:15; James 1:14)
- II. Jesus resisted temptation for you
  - A. The second Adam and true Son (v. 1-2)
  - B. Jesus' response to temptation (v. 4, 7, 10; Deut. 8:2-3)

### **Application Guide:**

1. How are you currently being tempted in the same way Jesus was tempted? How does this give you courage?
2. How does the greater intensity of Jesus' temptation (since he never gave in) affect your dependence on him when you are tempted?
3. How does Jesus resisting temptation for you as the second Adam reassure you when you fail?
4. Into what difficult situation has God led you to cultivate Christ-dependence and not self-dependence in the face of temptation?

**The King is Near**  
**Matthew 4:12-25**

What is the evidence that King Jesus is near?

- I. He is moving into unexpected places
  - A. Despised Galilee (v. 12-15)
  - B. Darkness under the shadow of death (v. 16)
- II. He is calling unexpected people
  - A. The unlikely disciples (v. 18, 21; 1 Cor. 1:26-29; Acts 4:13; 2 Cor. 4:7)
  - B. The power of Christ's call (v. 19-20, 21b-22)
- III. He is healing in unexpected ways
  - A. The authority of Jesus (v. 23-24; Matt. 9:6)
  - B. The healing of Jesus

**Application Guide:**

1. What unexpected or dark places do you find yourself or others in? How do you see Jesus moving into these spaces?
2. Why is it so important to see yourself as an unlikely convert to Jesus? Why is it critical to place more emphasis on Jesus' call than your response?
3. How is Jesus healing you in unexpected ways? How are you resisting the healing he is bringing?

## **The Kingdom Made Visible** **Matthew 5:1-16**

How is the invisible kingdom of God made visible?

- I. The pattern of the kingdom
  - A. The poor in spirit (v. 3; Isa. 66:2-3)
  - B. Those who mourn (v. 4; Rev. 21:4)
  - C. The meek (v. 5; Num. 12:3; Ps. 37:10-11)
  - D. Those who hunger and thirst for righteousness (v. 6)
  - E. The merciful (v. 7)
  - F. The pure in heart (v. 8)
  - G. The peacemakers (v. 9; James 1:20)
  - H. Those who are persecuted (v. 10-12; Rom. 8:18)
- II. The pattern of the kingdom on display
  - A. Salt and light (v. 13-15)
  - B. Who is on display? (v. 16)

### **Application Guide:**

1. Which of the beatitudes is least descriptive of your life? Why? What makes this beatitude so difficult?
2. Why is it so important to understand “poor in spirit” as the anchor for all the beatitudes?
3. The pattern of the kingdom attracts attention because it is different from the pattern of the world. Are you reflecting the good works of the pattern of the kingdom to give glory to you or to give glory to God the Father?



**The Priority of Reconciliation**  
**Matthew 5:21-26**

Why is reconciliation so important and yet so difficult?

- I. The “why” of reconciliation
  - A. The sixth commandment (v. 21; Ex. 20:13; Gen. 9:6)
  - B. The seed of murder (v. 22)
- II. The “when” of reconciliation
  - A. The urgency (v. 23-25; 1 John 4:20)
  - B. The circumstance (v. 23b, 25a; Matt. 7:3)
- III. The “how” of reconciliation
  - A. Righteous vs. unrighteous anger (Eph. 4:26-27; 1 Pet. 2:23; Luke 23:34)
  - B. The power of forgiveness (v. 26)

**Application Guide:**

1. Have you ever been so angry with someone that you have rehearsed the speech in your mind that is intended to harm them? Have you ever been so angry with someone that you have thought of physically harming them? How does Jesus reshape your interpretation of the sixth commandment?
2. What comes more natural to you? To remember how someone has sinned against you, provoking your anger? Or to remember how you have sinned against someone, provoking their anger? Which of these creates more urgency for reconciliation?
3. How does your anger reveal what you functionally hold dear? How is that desire satisfied in Jesus? How does this empower you to forgive and seek reconciliation rather than revenge?

## **Faithfulness in Marriage** **Matthew 5:27-32**

Why is faithfulness in marriage so important?

- I. It reveals God's generosity
  - A. Redefining adultery (v. 27-28)
  - B. Consumption: the sin behind unfaithfulness (v. 29-30; Ex. 20:17)
  - C. Stewardship: the path towards faithfulness (James 1:17; Matt. 19:6)
- II. It reveals God's covenant love
  - A. The problem of divorce (v. 31-32; Deut. 24:1)
  - B. The marriage covenant (Gen. 2:24; Mal. 2:14, 16)
  - C. The greater marriage (Matt. 22:30; Rev. 21:2, 9)

### **Application Guide:**

1. How does the sin of consumption change the way you view the sin of lust and adultery? What is the evidence that your life is defined by consumption rather than stewardship?
2. Does your marriage resemble a consumer relationship or a covenant relationship? How do you know?
3. Marriage between a man and a woman will not exist in the new heavens and new earth. How does this truth, along with the fact that the church is the bride of Christ to be united to him when he returns, shape your marriage today?

**God's Love Revealed**  
**Matthew 5:33-48**

What kind of love reveals God's love to the world?

- I. Love that is honest
  - A. The way around truth (v. 33-36; Num. 30:2)
  - B. The call to truth (v. 37)
- II. Love that is not vindictive
  - A. The original design of "an eye for an eye" (v. 38)
  - B. Self-sacrifice not retaliation (v. 39-42; 1 Pet. 2:22-24)
- III. Love that is undeserved
  - A. Love that is earned (v. 43)
  - B. Love for enemies (v. 44-47; Rom. 5:10)

**Application Guide:**

1. In what ways are you hiding, distorting, or manipulating truths to work in your favor? How does this affect relationships, communities, and the world's perception of God?
2. What vindictiveness do you need to hand over to Jesus? In what situation do you need to entrust yourself to the God who judges justly? How can you replace retaliation with self-sacrifice?
3. Who are you withholding love from because you don't think they deserve it? How does God's love for you in Christ empower you to love your enemy?

## **The Danger of Hypocrisy** **Matthew 6:1-18**

Why should you pay careful attention to hypocrisy?

- I. The definition of hypocrisy
  - A. Pretending before others (v. 1, 2, 5, 16)
  - B. The danger of hypocrisy (2 Cor. 11:14)
- II. The reward of hypocrisy
  - A. A temporary reward (v. 2, 5, 16)
  - B. An unwise exchange (Gen. 25)
- III. The remedy for hypocrisy
  - A. The command to serve God (v. 3-4, 6-8, 17-18)
  - B. The reward (v. 4, 6, 18; Gen. 15:1; Ps. 73:25; Ps. 16:5)
  - C. Two rewards, two ways of life (Eph. 1:18)

### **Application Guide:**

1. In what ways do you seek the praise of others? How does this need for affirmation tempt you to pretend before others?
2. How have you seen a prolonged season of hypocrisy and pretending cause a person or a community to crumble?
3. How do the two different rewards in this passage produce two different ways of life? Are you living out of a deficit or surplus? How do you know?

## **Overcoming a Critical Spirit** **Matthew 7:1-12**

How do you overcome a critical spirit?

- I. The origin of a critical spirit
  - A. Defining the critical spirit (v. 1-2, 6; Rom. 14:10)
  - B. Identifying the cause of the critical spirit (v. 3-5; 2 Sam. 12:1-7)
- II. The remedy for a critical spirit
  - A. Persistent prayer (v. 7-8)
  - B. The generosity of God (v. 9-11; Gen. 32:22-32)
- III. The evidence of an uncritical spirit
  - A. The call to love (v. 12; Matt. 22:37-40)
  - B. Love that believes all things (1 Cor. 13:7b)

### **Application Guide:**

1. Are you quick to criticize people? To find fault in people? To point out the worst in people? How might this arise from your own suppressed guilt?
2. Do you persistently ask God for love, purity, humility, sincerity, contentment, and the strength to forgive? How have you seen him graciously and abundantly answer this prayer through hardship and suffering?
3. To love others well, you need two lenses: the lens of justice and the lens of mercy. Why are both necessary to overcoming a critical spirit? Which lens do you tend to neglect?

**Foundation for Life**  
**Matthew 7:13-29**

On what foundation are you building your life?

- I. Two kinds of comfort
  - A. Narrow vs. wide gate (v. 13-14; Acts 14:22)
  - B. The message of false prophets (v. 15-20; Jer. 6:14; 2 Tim. 4:3)
  - C. Earthly vs. heavenly comfort (2 Cor. 6:10)
- II. Two kinds of success
  - A. The danger of success (v. 21-23)
  - B. Faithfulness vs. outcomes (v. 24; Luke 10:20)
- III. Two futures
  - A. The storm of God's judgment (v. 24-27)
  - B. The foundation of Jesus' words (v. 24; Isa. 28:16)

**Application Guide:**

1. What earthly discomfort are you enduring? How is Jesus comforting you in the midst of this? What messages or influences push you away from Jesus towards seeking earthly comfort?
2. Are you building your life on faithfulness to Jesus or are you building your life on outcomes? How do you know? What kind of behaviors do these different foundations produce?
3. Are you a hearer and doer of Jesus' words in the Sermon on the Mount? What words of Jesus do you struggle to act upon?

## **The Healing Work of Jesus Matthew 8:1-17**

What do you need to know about the healing work of Jesus?

- I. Holistic
  - A. The pain of leprosy (v. 1-4; Lev. 13:45-46)
  - B. Physical, emotional, and spiritual healing
- II. Authoritative
  - A. The humility and faith of the centurion (v. 5-13)
  - B. The unmerited nature of Christ's healing (v. 13)
- III. Accomplished
  - A. The substitutionary nature of Christ's work (v. 14-17; Isa. 53:4)
  - B. Healing accomplished, but not fully applied

### **Application Guide:**

1. How is your view of Jesus' healing insufficient? And how does your insufficient view of his healing affect your relationship with him and others?
2. Do you struggle to believe that Jesus is able to heal or willing to heal? Does your faith rest on the authority of Jesus or the decisions Jesus makes with his authority? What's the difference and what's the result of each?
3. How does Christ's healing 'accomplished' versus Christ's healing 'applied' give you hope in the midst of your suffering?

**The Mission of Jesus**  
**Matthew 9:1-17**

Why did Jesus come?

- I. To forgive sin
  - A. The root of the problem (v. 1-8)
  - B. The gentle response of Jesus (v. 2)
- II. To call sinners
  - A. The “sinners” of the day (v. 9-11)
  - B. Your response to sinners (v. 12-13)
- III. To usher in the new
  - A. Feasting vs. fasting (v. 14)
  - B. The reasons for feasting (v. 15-17)

**Application Guide:**

1. What does it practically look like to treat the symptoms of sin rather than addressing the root of sin? What is the result?
2. When you are tormented and consumed by guilt, what do you hear from Jesus? Do you struggle to embrace the forgiveness of Jesus?
3. What are the implications of Jesus spending time with tax collectors and sinners? How does this affect the way you spend your time and how you view people?



## **When Life Spins Out of Control** **Matthew 9:18-34**

Why can you trust Jesus when life spins out of control?

- I. Jesus is faithful in the face of opposition
  - A. Attempts to sidetrack his mission (v. 27-31; Isa. 35:5; Isa. 53:7-10)
  - B. Mockery and slander (v. 24, 34; Matt. 10:24)
- II. Jesus is faithful when you are not perfectly faithful
  - A. The meaning of faith (v. 20-22, 29)
  - B. Strength of faith vs. object of faith (1 Kings 18; Exod. 12)

### **Application Guide:**

1. In what situation in your life do you feel desperately out of control? Why is it hard for you to trust Jesus in this situation?
2. How does Jesus' strength in the face of mockery and slander shape your response to people who are mocking and slandering you?
3. How does the emphasis on the object of your faith (Jesus Christ) versus the strength of your faith affect your relationship with Christ and your relationship with others in the body of Christ?

**A Mission of Compassion**  
**Matthew 9:35-10:15**

What characterizes the mission of Jesus and his followers?

- I. Compassion delivered
  - A. Harassed and helpless (v. 9:36; Zech. 10:2)
  - B. The compassion of Jesus (v. 9:35-36)
- II. Compassion received
  - A. Received by grace alone (v. 9:37-10:10)
  - B. Delivering what you receive
- III. Compassion uncompromised
  - A. Compassion and judgment (v. 10:11-15)
  - B. Word and deed (v. 9:35, 10:7-8)

**Application Guide:**

1. How do you feel “harassed and helpless, like a sheep without a shepherd”? Who or what is harassing you?
2. What does the troubledness of others draw out of you? Judgment or compassion? Are you receiving compassion from Jesus? If not, why not?
3. Is your mission as a follower of Jesus Christ characterized by the word and deed of the gospel? If not, which is lacking and why?

## **Unmet Expectations**

### **Matthew 11:1-19**

How do you deal with unmet expectations?

- I. Understanding unmet expectations
  - A. John the Baptist's wrong expectation (v. 1-6; 3:11; 4:12; Isa. 35:4-6; Isa. 61:1-2)
  - B. The right expectation (John 3:17; 1 Peter 4:12)
  - C. The result of unmet expectations (v. 16-19)
- II. Overcoming unmet expectations
  - A. Embracing the 'already but not yet' (v. 6-11; Mal. 3:1)
  - B. Embracing the battle (v. 12)

### **Application Guide:**

1. What are some unmet expectations in your life? How do you typically respond when an expectation is not met?
2. How do your wrong expectations come from a misunderstanding of the nature and work of Jesus?
3. How does the 'already but not yet' of the kingdom of heaven help you overcome your unmet expectations and create healthy longings?

## **Repentance**

### **Matthew 11:20-30**

What is repentance?

- I. Response to revelation
  - A. The presence of a holy God (v. 20-24; 2 Cor. 7:10; Ps. 51:3-4)
  - B. Responding to the presence of false gods
- II. Act of humility
  - A. The knowledge of God (v. 25-27; 1 Cor. 1:21)
  - B. The way of humility (2 Kings 5)
- III. Pathway to rest
  - A. Yokes that bring burden (v. 28)
  - B. The restful yoke of Jesus (v. 29-30)

#### **Application Guide:**

1. Is your life characterized by true repentance? When your repentance is a response to something other than the presence of God, how does it produce worldly sorrow rather than godly sorrow? What does this look like?
2. How do you see pride fighting against your ability or willingness to repent?
3. How have yokes, other than Jesus, left you weary and burdened? How have you experienced repentance as the pathway to Jesus' rest?

**A Different Kind of Authority**  
**Matthew 12:1-21**

How do you experience life under the authority of Jesus?

- I. Authority that brings condemnation
  - A. Instruments of condemnation (v. 1-14; 1 Sam. 21:1-6; Num. 28:9-10)
  - B. Signs of condemnation
- II. Authority that brings flourishing
  - A. Marks of Jesus' authority (v. 15-21)
  - B. Signs of conviction

**Application Guide:**

1. How have you experienced condemnation under the authority of something or someone other than Jesus? How has something good from God been used as an instrument to bring condemnation on you?
2. How does the distinction between condemnation and conviction help you discern whether you are functionally living under the authority of Jesus?
3. How do the marks of Jesus' authority challenge and shape the way you use your authority? Do those people under your authority experience condemnation or flourishing?

**The Greatness of Jesus**  
**Matthew 12:38-50**

How is evil purged from your heart?

- I. The greatness of Jesus' resurrection
  - A. The evil of control (v. 38-39)
  - B. Dying and rising with Christ (v. 40-42)
- II. The greatness of Jesus' presence
  - A. The evil of moralism (v. 43-45)
  - B. Putting on Christ (Col. 3)
- III. The greatness of Jesus' family
  - A. The evil of isolation (v. 46-48)
  - B. Embracing gospel community (v. 49-50)

**Application Guide:**

1. In your struggle with sin, how have you seen your “try harder” attempts to overcome sin fail? How is dying and rising with Christ different than trying harder? What does this practically look like?
2. How have you seen moralism fail to purge sin and evil? How do you create a culture in your home that is characterized by the “good news of Jesus” and not merely “a list of do nots”?
3. How are you attempting to purge sin and evil in isolation? What keeps you from embracing the gospel community around you?

## **Hearing the Word Matthew 13:1-23**

What is revealed when the word of God is proclaimed?

- I. The sovereign grace of God
  - A. God's kingdom revealed (v. 10-11; John 3:3)
  - B. Responding to God's word (v. 12-13)
- II. The condition of the heart
  - A. Two conditions (v. 14-17; Isa. 6:9-10)
  - B. Four responses (v. 3-9, 18-23)

### **Application Guide:**

1. Nobody can know the truths of God's kingdom unless they are revealed by God. What are the implications of this? How is this a source of deep encouragement and assurance?
2. Through what grid or lens do you interpret the word of God? What personal experiences and cultural realities impact the way you hear God's word?
3. Which soil best represents the condition of your heart? If you are in Christ (fourth soil), what affects the amount of fruit you bear? How do the first three soils help answer this?

**Hope in the Face of Evil**  
**Matthew 13:24-43**

What is your hope in the face of evil?

- I. God has worked
  - A. The center of history (v. 34-35; Ps. 78:2)
  - B. The center of your story (Rom. 8:35-37)
- II. God is working
  - A. When growth is hard to see (v. 31-33)
  - B. When growth seems slow (v. 31-33)
- III. God will work
  - A. The lingering presence of evil (v. 24-30)
  - B. Leaving vengeance to God (v. 36-43; Ps. 37:7-9; Rom. 12:19-21)

**Application Guide:**

1. What evil are you facing, or have you faced that is disturbing and unsettling? How does the crucifixion of Jesus Christ give you hope in the face of this evil?
2. Have you ever felt that evil is senseless and purposeless? Explain. How do the parables of the mustard seed and leaven give you hope?
3. In what situation are you seeking to avenge yourself? Why is God's vengeance good news? How does it empower you to overcome evil with good?



## **Matthew 14:1-12**

Why is truth so important in a 'your truth' world?

- I. The place of truth
  - A. The character of Herod (v. 1-4)
  - B. Truth in the public sphere (Rom. 1:18)
- II. The definition of truth
  - A. Truth is objective (v. 4)
  - B. Truth is a person (Eph. 5:25, 32; John 14:6)
- III. The cost of truth
  - A. The death of John the Baptist (v. 5-12)
  - B. The cost of bearing witness
  - C. The blessing of bearing witness (Phil 1:29, 3:8-10; Acts 5:41)

### **Application Guide:**

1. Into what public sphere are you failing to proclaim truth? In what ways are you buying into the cultural belief that truth is private? How are you keeping it to yourself and failing to boldly proclaim it?
2. What are the signs in your life that truth has become a set of rules and not a person? What is the evidence that you have disconnected truth from the person of Jesus?
3. What opportunities do you have to bear witness to Christ? To bear witness to the truth? What is the cost? What are the blessings?