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The Genealogy of Jesus - Matthew 1:1-17

Topics: Family, Heritage, History, Jesus Christ, Messiah, Name, Sovereignty

Open It

- * 1. Why do you think genealogical research is such a growing and popular hobby?
- 2. If you have ever researched your family tree, what can you tell the group about your heritage or about any especially interesting or famous ancestors?

Explore It

- * 3. Whose genealogy is Matthew tracing? (1:1)
- * 4. What prominent ancestors of Christ are mentioned? (1:1)
 - 5. Who is listed first in the various sections? (1:2, 6, 12)
 - 6. What significant women were ancestors of Christ? (1:5-6, 16)
 - 7. Who is the only person in the record who is listed with his title? (1:6)
 - 8. How does Solomon figure into the genealogy? (1:6)
 - 9. The genealogical record is divided into what three periods? (1:17)
 - 10. What span of time does the genealogical record cover? (1:17)
- * 11. What important event and three people are used as a basis for marking the generations? (1:17)
- 12. How many generations are cited in all? (1:17)

Get It

- 13. Why do you think the Bible includes long genealogical lists like this?
- 14. Why do you think Matthew traces Christ's ancestors back only to Abraham and not all the way back to Adam?
- 15. If God works sovereignly and graciously even when we sin and make poor choices, why should we make the effort to live righteously? (1:6)
- 16. Why do you think God waited so many generations to send Christ?
- * 17. How do ancestors and family histories affect who we are?
- 18. How might this passage encourage those who suffer from a dubious family history?
- * 19. What can you do to minimize your family's past mistakes and maximize your family's potential in the future?
- 20. How important is family heritage to you?

Apply It

- * 21. What actions do you need to take (or choices do you need to make) this week so that your descendants look back on your life as something to live up to and not something to live down?
- 22. How can you encourage a friend who is struggling in relationships with parents and/or children?

The Birth of Jesus Christ - Matthew 1:18-25

Topics: Abortion, Adoption, Angels, Commitment, Courage, Embarrassment, Gossip, Holy Spirit, Miracles, Name, Obedience, Trust

Open It

1. What are the tabloid headlines this week?
- * 2. Why is our society so drawn to gossip and scandal?
3. How do people typically react when facing embarrassing situations?

Explore It

- * 4. What happened to Mary while she and Joseph were engaged? (1:18)
5. What do you think Joseph initially thought upon hearing this news about his bride-to-be? (1:18-19)
- * 6. What positive character qualities did Joseph possess? (1:19)
7. How did Joseph plan to handle this delicate situation? (1:19)
8. How was Joseph's ancestry significant? (1:20)
- * 9. Why did Joseph change his plans to divorce Mary? (1:20)
10. If Joseph wasn't the actual father of Christ, who was? (1:18, 20)
11. What did the angel command Joseph to name the child and why? (1:21)
12. What significant mission in life would Mary's child have? (1:21)
13. Why is Mary's virginal conception of Christ significant? (1:22-23)
14. What does Immanuel mean? (1:23)
15. How did Joseph respond to the angelic message? (1:24)

Get It

- * 16. How might you have responded in Mary's situation?
17. What would have been your reaction had you been in Joseph's situation?
18. How do you think a typical church might have handled Mary's pre-marriage pregnancy?
19. How do you imagine the "grapevine" treated the Mary-Joseph situation?
20. How does it feel to be the victim of unsubstantiated rumors and gossip?
21. How does it feel to know that you are innocent and yet have people attacking your character and whispering behind your back?
- * 22. How does our desire for approval or acceptance keep us from doing the right thing?

Apply It

23. What difficult, hard-to-swallow command of God do you need to obey today?
- * 24. How will you respond the next time someone begins to tell you a juicy bit of gossip?

The Visit of the Magi - Matthew 2:1-12

Topics: Deceit, Ego, Gifts, Guidance, Motives, Prophecy, Sacrifice, Worship

Open It

1. Why do we give gifts at Christmas?
- * 2. If you could give any gift to anyone, what would you give, to whom, and why?
3. What prompts people to make great sacrifices for others?

Explore It

4. Where was Jesus born? (2:1)
5. During whose reign was Jesus born? (2:1)
- * 6. Who came to visit the young Jesus? (2:1)
7. What external and internal factors prompted the Magi to search for Jesus? (2:2)
8. What title did the Magi give to Jesus? (2:2)
9. How did King Herod react to the visit of the Magi? (2:3-4)
- * 10. Why was a powerful king disturbed by the presence of a helpless baby? (2:3-6)
11. Why is it significant that Christ was born in Bethlehem? (2:5-6)
12. What were King Herod's instructions to the Magi? (2:8)
13. How were the Magi led to Christ? (2:9-10)
- * 14. What was the Magi's reaction when they realized they had found the Christ? (2:10)
15. Where was Jesus when the Magi found Him? (2:11)
16. How did the Magi react upon seeing Jesus? (2:11)
17. What gifts did the Magi bring to Jesus? (2:11)
18. Why didn't the Magi report back to Herod as he had requested? (2:12)

Get It

19. How would you define worship?
- * 20. What sort of activities does worship involve?
- * 21. What are some various "presents" we might give to Christ?
22. How does it feel to have a rival—to feel as though you are being overlooked or replaced?
23. How can a competitive, prideful, or insecure spirit alter a person's behavior?
24. Why are many people reluctant to donate money to religious causes?
25. What are some specific ways Christians can serve as "stars" and lead others to Christ?

Apply It

26. What starlike, shining deed can you do today to point a non-Christian friend to Christ?
27. What sacrifice do you need to make for Christ this week?
- * 28. What gift of time, effort, or money would demonstrate your love for Jesus this week?

The Escape to Egypt - Matthew 2:13-18

Topics: Anger, Ego, Escape, Government, Guidance, Jealousy, Mourning, Murder, Obedience, Prophecy

Open It

- * 1. What are the pros and cons of fierce competition and rivalry?
- 2. Why does the death of a child seem especially tragic?
- 3. What was your most frightening brush with death?

Explore It

- 4. What happened after the Magi left the home of Mary, Joseph, and Jesus? (2:13)
- 5. How did God communicate with Joseph? (2:13)
- * 6. Where did the angel tell Joseph to go? Why? (2:13)
- 7. How long was Joseph to keep his family in hiding? (2:13)
- * 8. Why was it necessary for Joseph to take his family and flee? (2:13)
- 9. How did Joseph respond to the warning he received? (2:13)
- 10. What event allowed Joseph to depart from Egypt with his family? (2:15)
- 11. Why was the “escape to Egypt” significant in the life of Christ? (2:15)
- 12. What was King Herod’s emotional state when he realized the Magi had tricked him? (2:16)
- * 13. What orders did King Herod give in an attempt to eliminate his competition? (2:16)
- 14. Who prophesied the horrible episode of infanticide in Bethlehem? When? (2:17)
- 15. What was the response to Herod’s mass execution of children? (2:18)

Get It

- 16. How might our lives be different if Herod’s death plot against Christ had succeeded?
- 17. What happens when people try to thwart God’s plan?
- 18. Why is it important to listen to God?
- 19. Why is it important to obey God immediately?
- 20. What are some wise ways to handle anger?
- * 21. What is it about competition that makes us feel so threatened?
- * 22. What is the best response to “rivals” or “opponents”?
- 23. How can Christians serve those who are the victims of senseless violence?

Apply It

- * 24. In what area of your life do you need to trust God more instead of being driven by competition?
- 25. What action could you take today to minister to someone who is in mourning?

The Return to Nazareth - Matthew 2:19-23

Topics: Family, Fear, God's Will, Guidance, Listening, Moving, Obedience, Prophecy, Security, Sovereignty

Open It

1. To what sources do people often look for guidance?
- * 2. What do you like most and least about your hometown?
3. Why is it so difficult to move to another place?

Explore It

4. What happened when Herod died? (2:19)
5. In what manner did God communicate with Joseph? (2:19)
- * 6. Where were Joseph, Mary, and Jesus at the time? (2:19)
- * 7. What did the angel tell Joseph to do? (2:20)
- * 8. What was the reason behind the angel's command? (2:20)
9. How did Joseph respond to the angel's instructions? (2:21)
10. Who was reigning in Herod's place when Joseph, Mary, and Jesus left Egypt? (2:22)
11. Why was it significant to Joseph that Archelaus was ruling in Judah? (2:22)
12. What was Joseph's emotional response when he heard about Archelaus? (2:22)
13. What did Joseph do when he heard the news of Archelaus's reign? (2:22)
14. To what town did Joseph, Mary, and Jesus go? Why? (2:23)
15. Why was it significant that Jesus' family settled in Nazareth? (2:23)

Get It

16. What modern-day forces threaten the institution of the family?
- * 17. How has your hometown influenced who you are?
- * 18. Why might God lead you to live in a certain area?
19. How is your present location affecting your children?
20. How can families reduce the stress and upheaval caused by a move or relocation?
21. Which would you choose: a high-paying job in a big city that required long hours, or a lower-paying job in a smaller town that enabled you to spend more time with your family? Why?

Apply It

- * 22. What specific act of kindness can you do this week for a new family in your neighborhood?
23. As you look back over your life and see how God has guided you, how can you show your appreciation?

John the Baptist Prepares the Way - Matthew 3:1-12

Topics: Confession, Holiness, Holy Spirit, Hypocrisy, Jesus Christ, Judgment, Repentance, Zeal

Open It

1. What phrases, words, or images spring to mind when you hear the term “preacher”?
- * 2. What preacher has influenced you most?
3. Why are many people uncomfortable with “fire and brimstone”-type preaching?

Explore It

4. What famous preacher is described in this passage? (3:1)
5. Where was John the Baptist’s “sanctuary” or “pulpit”? (3:1)
- * 6. What was John’s message? (3:2)
7. Why was John’s ministry significant? (3:3)
8. What did John look like? (3:4)
9. What kind of unusual diet did John follow? (3:4)
- * 10. How did people receive John’s message? (3:5)
11. Besides strong preaching, what went on at John’s “desert revival meetings”? (3:6)
12. Where did John perform his baptisms? Who came? (3:5-6)
13. What kinds of religious leaders came to listen to John? (3:7)
- * 14. What harsh name did John call the religious leaders? Why? (3:7-10)
15. What was John’s message to the local “men of the cloth”? (3:7-10)
16. What was the purpose of John’s water baptism? (3:11)
17. How did John compare himself to the one who would come after him? (3:11)
18. How did John describe the type of baptism Jesus would bring? (3:11)
19. With what images did John describe Jesus? (3:12)

Get It

20. Why is it that coming from a religious family doesn’t guarantee spiritual security?
- * 21. What does it mean to repent?
22. Why do you think John lived such an eccentric life?
23. Why was John the Baptist so harsh with the religious leaders of his day?
- * 24. What is the significance of the images “winnowing fork,” “gathering His wheat,” and “burning up the chaff”?
25. What was John trying to communicate by using the word “fire” three times in this passage?
26. What is the difference between God’s discipline and God’s punishment?
27. What kind of “fruit” or character do repentant people produce?

Apply It

28. What could you do this week to encourage your pastor or preacher?
- * 29. What first step could you take toward obeying God better today?
30. What particular sin(s) do you need to repent of today?

The Baptism of Jesus - Matthew 3:13-17

Topics: God, Heaven, Holy Spirit, Humility, Jesus Christ, Obedience

Open It

1. What are some initiation rites or affiliation procedures that organizations make new members go through?
2. Why are transfers of power in some governments fragile?
- * 3. How would you feel if the world's leading, most renowned expert in your field publicly solicited your help?

Explore It

4. Where did Jesus come from? Why? (3:13)
5. Why did Jesus leave Galilee and travel to the Jordan River? (3:13)
- * 6. How did John react to Jesus' request? (3:14)
7. What exactly did John say to Jesus? (3:14)
- * 8. How did Jesus respond to John's reluctance? (3:15)
- * 9. Why was it important for John to comply with Jesus' request? (3:15)
10. What change took place in heaven after the baptism of Jesus? (3:16)
11. How did the Spirit of God play a role in the baptism of Jesus? (3:16)
12. What was the Spirit's appearance? (3:16)
13. What kind of voice was heard at the baptism of Jesus? (3:17)
14. What was the relationship between Jesus and the Father? (3:17)
15. What did God the Father say about Jesus? (3:17)

Get It

- * 16. Why do you think John felt awkward about baptizing Jesus?
17. In what ways are many Christians concerned about "proper" behavior and striving for righteousness?
18. What does this passage show about God's triune nature?
19. What do we tell the world by being baptized?
20. If God spoke in an audible voice about you today, what might He say?
21. What pleases God?
- * 22. How are you able to please God?

Apply It

- * 23. What could you do today for Christ out of obedience and respect for Him?
24. What needs to change this week in order for you to see the Spirit of God work in and through your life?

The Temptation of Jesus - Matthew 4:1-11

Topics: Angels, Bible, Deceit, Holy Spirit, Jesus Christ, Obedience, Satan, Temptation, Victory

Open It

- * 1. What are some common food cravings?
- 2. Why are some temptations harder to resist than others?
- 3. Why do different people struggle with different types of temptations?

Explore It

- 4. Who led Jesus into the wilderness? Why? (4:1)
- 5. Where was Jesus led? By whom? (4:1)
- 6. For what purpose was Jesus led into the desert? (4:1)
- 7. What made Jesus weak at this time? (4:2)
- 8. What three names are given to Jesus' adversary in the desert? (4:3, 5, 10)
- 9. What was the first temptation presented to Jesus? (4:3)
- * 10. How did Jesus respond to the first temptation? (4:4)
- 11. Where did the devil take Jesus for the second temptation? (4:5)
- 12. What tempting offer was made to Christ at the highest point of the temple? (4:6)
- * 13. How did Jesus answer the second temptation? (4:7)
- 14. To what final destination did Satan take Christ? (4:8)
- 15. What did the devil show Jesus from a very high mountain? (4:8)
- 16. What did the devil promise Jesus in exchange for worship? (4:9)
- * 17. How did Jesus react to the third temptation? (4:10)
- 18. What happened after Jesus had resisted Satan three times? (4:11)
- 19. Who came and ministered to Jesus when all was said and done? (4:11)

Get It

- 20. How would you define temptation?
- 21. Besides physical appetite, what are some other sins of the flesh?
- 22. What would have been appealing to Christ about the devil's second temptation?
- 23. What would have been appealing to Christ about the offer of all the kingdoms of the world?
- 24. How can memorizing Scripture help us combat temptation?
- * 25. What role does the Word of God play in resisting temptation?
- 26. What happens when a Christian consistently resists temptation?
- 27. What situations make us especially vulnerable to temptation?
- 28. In what ways can we make temptation more difficult to resist?
- * 29. What can we do to make temptation more manageable?
- 30. What temptations are inevitable for most people?
- 31. What temptations are inevitable for you?

Apply It

- 32. In what specific area of your life is temptation the strongest these days?
- * 33. What steps can you take this week to resist the temptations you are facing now?

Jesus Begins to Preach - Matthew 4:12-17

Topics: Darkness, Evangelism, Heaven, Light, Mission, Moving, Persecution, Prophecy, Repentance

Open It

1. What is the best sermon you have ever heard preached?
2. If you could stand up and preach one sermon to your church, what would you like to say?
- * 3. What do you remember about your first job?

Explore It

4. What happened to John the Baptist? (4:12)
5. What did Jesus do when He heard the news about John? (4:12)
6. Where in Galilee had Jesus been living? (4:13)
7. What is revealed here about the geography of Jesus' new home? (4:13)
8. Where in Galilee did Jesus relocate? (4:13-14) Why?
- * 9. What happened where Jesus relocated? (4:13-16)
- * 10. Why was Christ's move significant? (4:14)
11. Who foretold that Jesus would live in Capernaum? (4:14)
12. In what spiritual state were the inhabitants of this region before Jesus moved there? (4:16)
13. How is Jesus' arrival in Capernaum described? (4:16)
- * 14. What did Jesus do in His new hometown? (4:17)
15. What was Christ's message from that time on? (4:17)

Get It

16. How do you react when you hear that Christians in other countries are being persecuted for their faith?
17. Why do you think so many of God's people become bold (instead of fearful) during times of persecution?
18. What would you do if you learned your pastor was in jail for preaching?
19. In what ways have you been ridiculed or hassled for your belief in Christ?
20. How would you respond if you sensed God was leading you to pack up your family and move to an unevangelized area to be a missionary?
- * 21. In what ways are your neighbors like the people of Zebulun and Naphtali?
- * 22. How can you help your neighbors come to see the light of Christ?

Apply It

- * 23. To what places and people do you need to go this week as a light for Christ?
24. In what way can you encourage a missionary today, this week, or this month?

The Calling of the First Disciples - Matthew 4:18-22

Topics: Commitment, Evangelism, Excuses, Giving Up, Leadership, Obedience, Submission, Witnessing

Open It

1. If you could pass on some skill or knowledge to an apprentice, what would you want to pass on?
- * 2. What kind of leader do you prefer to follow?
3. What are some examples of well-functioning teams?

Explore It

4. Where did these particular events take place? (4:18)
5. Who did Jesus see as He walked by? (4:18)
6. What nickname did one of Jesus' new disciples have? (4:18)
- * 7. What were Simon and Andrew doing when Jesus approached them? (4:18)
8. What did these brothers do for a living? (4:18)
- * 9. What exactly did Jesus say to Simon and Andrew? (4:19)
10. What was Simon and Andrew's response to Jesus' words? (4:20)
11. How long did Simon and Andrew deliberate over Jesus' offer? (4:20)
12. Whom did Jesus see next? (4:21)
13. Who was Zebedee? (4:21)
14. In what activity were James and John involved? (4:21)
- * 15. What did Jesus do when He saw the two brothers, James and John? (4:21)
16. How did James and John react to Jesus' challenge? (4:22)

Get It

17. What does it mean to be a "fisher of men"?
18. How risky was it for Peter, Andrew, James, and John to drop everything (jobs and families) to go with Jesus?
19. What thoughts do you think were racing through their minds as they headed off down the beach with Jesus?
20. How do you think you might have responded had you been fishing with these men and heard Jesus direct this challenge to you?
21. What are some reasons people make career changes?
22. How do you think Jesus calls people into the ministry today?
23. What do you think Jesus saw in these men?
24. Why did Jesus handpick blue-collar fishermen to be the leaders of the Christian church?
25. For what would you be willing to leave your family and go far away?
- * 26. What possessions, goals, dreams, or relationships are keeping you from following Jesus wholeheartedly today?
27. What does it mean for us to follow Jesus?
- * 28. What does it mean for you to follow Jesus?

Apply It

- * 29. In what area of your life will you follow Jesus more consciously this week?
30. What can you do or stop doing today in order to become a more expert "fisher of men"?

Jesus Heals the Sick - Matthew 4:23-25

Topics: Good News, Handicapped, Health, Jesus Christ, Kingdom of God/Heaven, Pain, Sickness, Sorrow

Open It

1. How do you feel about doctors and hospitals?
- * 2. If you could find the cure to any one disease, what illness would it be and why?

Explore It

3. Where did the incidents in this passage take place? (4:23)
- * 4. What did Jesus do at the synagogues of this region? (4:23)
5. About what did Jesus preach? (4:23)
6. What activities was Jesus involved in during this ministry tour? (4:23)
7. How would you describe the publicity surrounding Jesus' ministry in Galilee? (4:24)
- * 8. How did the masses react to the news of what Jesus was doing? (4:24)
9. What kind of physically and spiritually ill people sought out Jesus? (4:24)
- * 10. What did Jesus do for the suffering individuals who came to Him? (4:24)
11. Jesus' audience grew to include people from what surrounding regions and cities? (4:25)
12. How are the crowds described? (4:25)
13. What did the people do after hearing Jesus and experiencing His healing touch? (4:25)

Get It

- * 14. What assorted reactions do people have to life-threatening illnesses?
15. Which is worse in your opinion and why: to be physically ill, or to be spiritually sick?
- * 16. How might God use sickness, pain, or difficulty to bring about good in a person's life?
17. In times of sickness, why do we often pray or seek spiritual help only as a last resort?
18. Why do people want to be healed of their illnesses?
19. Why is it significant that Jesus was able to heal all the ailments people brought to Him?

Apply It

- * 20. What can you do today to encourage someone who is ill?
21. What realistic step can you take this week to share the good news of Christ with a non-Christian friend?

The Beatitudes - Matthew 5:1-12

Topics: Blessing, Character, Comfortable, Endurance, Enemies, Greatness, Heaven, Humility, Mercy, Mourning, Persecution, Purity, Rewards, Righteousness

Open It

- * 1. What are some ways people typically try to find happiness or fulfillment in life?
- 2. What person (living or dead) do you respect most? Why?

Explore It

- 3. What was the setting for this sermon? (5:1)
- 4. Who was Jesus addressing? (5:1-2)
- 5. According to Jesus, what is the reward for those who are poor in spirit? (5:3)
- 6. Why are those who mourn blessed? (5:4)
- 7. What is the reward for those who are meek? (5:5)
- 8. What can those who hunger and thirst for righteousness expect? (5:6)
- 9. What does God promise to those who are merciful? (5:7)
- 10. According to this passage, who will see God? (5:8)
- 11. Why are peacemakers blessed? (5:9)
- * 12. What does the future hold for those who are persecuted because of righteousness? (5:10)
- * 13. What unexpected command is given to Christians who are insulted, hassled, and lied about? (5:11-12)
- * 14. What people in history have endured nasty persecution? (5:12)

Get It

- 15. How does it pay in the present to walk with God?
- 16. What do you think it means to be poor in spirit?
- 17. What does it mean to be meek?
- 18. How would a person behave if he or she were hungering and thirsting after righteousness?
- 19. What are some examples of showing mercy?
- 20. How does society's list of admirable virtues compare and contrast with these kingdom virtues?
- 21. How (if at all) does the promise of future blessing affect us in the present?
- * 22. Which of these promises means the most to you today? Why?
- * 23. What is the most common type of persecution that you face?
- 24. What peacemaking responses work well at diffusing hostility?

Apply It

- 25. What realistic steps can you take this week to make you hungrier and thirstier for righteousness?
- * 26. What can you do this week to encourage a friend who is under fire due to his or her stand for the Lord?

Salt and Light - Matthew 5:13-16

Topics: Abortion, Culture, Darkness, Evil, Immorality, Influence, Involvement, Light, Morality, Reputation, Righteousness

Open It

- * 1. What is your favorite spice?
- 2. What is it about darkness that frightens people?
- 3. Why do people commit crimes and evil acts under cover of darkness?
- 4. What are the top five moral problems our country is facing?

Explore It

- 5. To what valuable substance did Jesus compare His disciples? (5:13)
- 6. What is an essential characteristic of salt? (5:13)
- 7. How did Jesus imply that a Christian's positive influence can wane or disappear? (5:13)
- 8. What happens to salt that loses its flavor? (5:13)
- 9. To what did Jesus compare His followers? (5:14)
- * 10. How are we like light? (5:14)
- 11. What are improper and proper uses for a lamp? (5:15)
- 12. What use of a lamp teaches us about living? How? (5:15)
- * 13. According to Jesus, how exactly are Christians to be like lamps? (5:16)
- 14. What kind of behavior should other people see Christians exhibiting? (5:16)
- * 15. If believers live as they are supposed to live, how will others respond toward God? (5:16)

Get It

- 16. What did Jesus mean when He called His followers salt?
- 17. What sort of effect does salt have on food?
- 18. How do salty things affect us?
- 19. How can a Christian lose his or her saltiness?
- 20. What does it mean to "let your light shine"?
- 21. How might a believer hide his or her light?
- 22. What is the effect of bright light in a dark place?
- 23. What does light reveal?
- * 24. What specific behaviors mark the life-style of a salty, shining Christian?
- * 25. In light of your gifts, abilities, and interests, what specific problem in our world can you counteract as a representative of Christ?

Apply It

- * 26. What phone calls or letters would you be willing to make or write this week in order to be salt and light in a decaying, dark world?
- 27. To whom in your neighborhood, family, or workplace can you be salt and light this week?
- 28. How can you be salt and light to the people God has placed in your life?

The Fulfillment of the Law - Matthew 5:17-20

Topics: Authority, Bible, Consistency, Criticism, Freedom, Heaven, Law, Legalism, Obedience, Rationalizing, Teaching

Open It

- * 1. What is the worst rule or law you've ever been aware of?
- 2. When in your life did you feel closest to God?

Explore It

- 3. What rumor was apparently being spread about Jesus and His view of the Old Testament? (5:17)
- * 4. What did Jesus say was His goal with regard to the Law and the Prophets? (5:17)
- 5. How much of the Law did Jesus say would be fulfilled or accomplished? (5:18)
- 6. According to Jesus, what cataclysmic event would have to happen before God's Word could be invalidated in even a tiny way? (5:18)
- 7. What two things result in one being called least in the kingdom of heaven? (5:19)
- 8. What happens if a person lives a good life and breaks only minor commandments of God? (5:19)
- * 9. What warning was given to those who would encourage others to disregard the Word of God? (5:19)
- * 10. Who is considered great in the kingdom of heaven? (5:19)
- 11. To what groups of religious leaders did Jesus make reference? (5:20)
- 12. What degree of righteousness is necessary for entrance into the kingdom of heaven? (5:20)

Get It

- 13. How trustworthy are the words of Scripture?
- 14. Why did Jesus talk about the righteousness of the Pharisees in this context?
- 15. In discussing sin, why did Jesus make a point of saying, "one of the least of these commandments"?
- * 16. What are some ways we occasionally encourage each other to bend or break God's rules?
- 17. What level of reverence and submission do you think most people have toward the Bible?
- * 18. What does it mean to "practice" the commandments of God?
- 19. What are some ways to teach others about the righteousness of God?
- 20. What good can we do to be acceptable to God?
- 21. Why is it difficult for us to practice what we preach?
- 22. What ideals are most difficult for you to uphold?

Apply It

- 23. When and how this week can you consult the Bible for guidance on how to live?
- 24. What should you do in the near future about someone who tends to "drag you down"?
- * 25. What command of God will you commit to memory this week?

Murder - Matthew 5:21-26

Topics: Anger, Bitterness, Conflict, Enemies, Forgiveness, Hatred, Hell, Judgment, Murder, Punishment, Quarrels, Reconciliation

Open It

- * 1. When do you tend to get angry?
- 2. Why do people murder each other over trivial matters—a parking space, a cigarette lighter, a crude remark?
- 3. If you were given full governmental authority and resources, how would you go about reducing the amount of violent crime in this country?

Explore It

- 4. What age-old prohibition was Jesus addressing in this context? (5:21)
- 5. What was the penalty for violators of this law? (5:21)
- 6. How did Jesus explain the meaning of the law against murder? (5:22)
- 7. According to Jesus, what kind of name-calling made one answerable to the Sanhedrin? (5:22)
- 8. What kind of angry name-calling puts one in eternal danger? (5:22)
- 9. How did Jesus describe hell? (5:23)
- * 10. What sort of realization did Jesus say should interrupt our worship? (5:23)
- 11. If a person becomes aware of a relational problem, how quickly should he or she act? (5:24)
- * 12. What should be a believer's goal in strained or shattered relationships? (5:24)
- * 13. When is it best to settle disputes? (5:25)
- 14. Where is it best to settle disputes? (5:25)
- 15. What bad consequences can occur if a dispute escalates into a full-blown court battle? (5:25-26)

Get It

- * 16. Why did Jesus zero in on the emotions behind our violent actions?
- 17. What modern-day equivalents to "Raca" do we level at others?
- 18. What attitudes and emotions tend to lead to name-calling?
- 19. Which of our religious activities would be closely akin to "offering your gifts at the altar"?
- 20. According to Jesus, how do problems in our relationships with others affect our relationship with God?
- * 21. Why is it necessary to get things right with people before we come to worship God?
- 22. Why is it preferable for Christians to quietly resolve their differences rather than battle over them publicly?
- 23. How might Christians be encouraged to reconcile with each other before coming to a Communion service?

Apply It

- * 24. What relational conflict do you need to straighten out today?
- 25. How can you help yourself remember this week to keep your anger under control?

Adultery - Matthew 5:27-30

Topics: Adultery, Commitment, Hardheartedness, Husbands, Immorality, Loyalty, Lust, Purity, Thinking, Vows, Wives

Open It

1. How is marriage commonly portrayed in the media?
- * 2. What evidence have you seen that sexual standards have declined over the last ten years?
3. What are some danger signs that a marriage is in trouble?

Explore It

4. What commandment was Jesus interpreting? (5:27)
5. How did Jesus explain the meaning of adultery? (5:28)
- * 6. How does adultery start? (5:28)
- * 7. When does looking at someone become inappropriate? (5:28)
8. What did Jesus suggest we do with a sinning eye? Why? (5:29)
9. Why did Jesus make this radical statement about eyes? (5:29)
10. Where does sin ultimately lead if it is not dealt with? (5:29-30)
11. What did Jesus recommend for a sinning hand? Why? (5:30)
12. What was the rationale behind this graphic comment about hands? (5:30)
- * 13. Why are our moral choices important? (5:30)

Get It

14. Why is adultery common in our society?
15. Why are people willing to commit adultery?
16. Why are people willing to harbor lust in their hearts?
17. What are the devastating effects of adultery?
- * 18. What does it mean to gouge out a habit for lust or to cut off a sinful practice?
19. How does pornography feed the problem of adultery?
20. What is wrong with the argument, "It's OK to look as long as you don't touch"?
21. How might you respond to the popular claim that sexual fantasies are healthy and should be encouraged?
22. What would you say to a friend in a bad marriage who was contemplating an affair?
23. What does it mean to dress modestly?
- * 24. What changes do you need to make in your reading or viewing habits to avoid temptations to lust?

Apply It

25. What three steps can you take this week to insulate your marriage against affairs?
- * 26. In what situations is it important for you to dress modestly this week?

Divorce - Matthew 5:31-32

Topics: Adultery, Commitment, Divorce, Faithfulness, Marriage, Remarriage, Unfaithfulness

Open It

- * 1. What commitments do adults commonly make?
- 2. What commitments do adults sometimes break?
- 3. What causes people to break their commitments?

Explore It

- * 4. Why did Jesus need to say this about marriage and divorce? (5:31-32)
- * 5. What is the best way to think about marriage and divorce? (5:31-32)
- 6. Who is guilty of adultery? (5:31-32)
- 7. What does God want us to do when we feel tempted to divorce a partner? (5:31-32)
- 8. According to Jesus, what is the only acceptable reason for divorce? (5:32)
- 9. When can a person divorce his or her partner? (5:32)
- 10. When can a person not divorce his or her partner? (5:32)
- 11. How can adultery affect a marriage commitment? (5:32)
- 12. Why did Jesus give an exception to His “no divorce” command? (5:32)
- * 13. What conditions are placed on divorce? (5:32)
- 14. In what way does a person who divorces a partner “cause” the other to commit adultery? (5:32)

Get It

- 15. In what way can adultery damage a marriage?
- * 16. Why is it important to try to hold a marriage together?
- 17. In what ways can divorce hurt people?
- 18. Why do people get divorced?
- 19. Why do people commit adultery?
- 20. What enables people to stay faithful to their partners?
- 21. What can people do to strengthen their marriage?
- * 22. In what ways can people show respect for marriage?
- 23. What causes people to get divorced?
- 24. For what reasons do people get divorced?
- 25. On what or whom can a Christian depend to help him or her solve marriage problems?
- 26. What can a person do when his or her marriage is in trouble?

Apply It

- * 27. What can you do this week to strengthen your marriage or the marriage of a friend?
- 28. How can you show respect for marriage this week?
- 29. What can you do today or tomorrow to lessen the likelihood of ever getting divorced?

Oaths - Matthew 5:33-37

Topics: Character, Conversation, Faithfulness, Follow-through, Integrity, Swearing, Truth, Vows, Words

Open It

- * 1. Persons in what occupations (for example, ministers, insurance agents, lawyers, car salesmen, and politicians) are often distrusted for what they say?
- 2. How do you determine if someone is telling the truth?

Explore It

- 3. What ancient teaching did Jesus bring up? (5:33)
- 4. What oaths did Jesus' audience consider especially important to keep? (5:33)
- * 5. How did Jesus update the ancient proverb about oaths? (5:34)
- 6. What exceptions did Jesus permit in vow making? (5:34)
- 7. Why was it inappropriate to swear by heaven? (5:34)
- 8. Why was it inappropriate to swear by earth? (5:35)
- 9. According to Jesus, why shouldn't people swear by Jerusalem? (5:35)
- 10. Why not swear by one's own head? (5:36)
- * 11. How should believers respond to questions? (5:37)
- * 12. What's wrong with swearing oaths? (5:37)

Get It

- 13. How much does swearing on a Bible guarantee that a legal witness will tell the truth?
- 14. Why do we swear?
- * 15. In what situations do people typically swear?
- 16. What are some ways that our society takes the name of God lightly or frivolously?
- 17. What statements of assurance ("Trust me," "Would I lie to you?" "I really mean it this time," etc.) do you hear most often?
- 18. How does lying in the name of God affect the reputation of God?
- * 19. How should we respond when people try to get us to make promises or extra assurances?
- 20. What does it imply when people don't take you at your word?

Apply It

- * 21. What steps can you take this week to become known as a person who keeps his or her word?
- 22. What unfulfilled promise have you made in the last week that you need to carry out today?

An Eye for an Eye - Matthew 5:38-42

Topics: Bitterness, Enemies, Gentleness, Humility, Oppressed, Persecution, Revenge, Strength, Unfairness

Open It

1. Why are movies about vengeance or vigilante justice so popular?
- * 2. What is appealing about revenge?

Explore It

- * 3. To what familiar saying was Jesus referring in this context? (5:38)
4. What did the ancients require if a person put out someone else's eye? (5:38)
5. What was the judgment for knocking out another's tooth? (5:38)
- * 6. How did Jesus say we should respond to people who do us evil? (5:39)
- * 7. What should we do to protect our rights and possessions? (5:39)
8. What should be the Christian's response to physical violence? (5:39)
9. What should a person do if someone else sues him or her? (5:40)
10. What should a person do if someone else forces him or her to "go one mile"? (5:41)
11. How should followers of Christ deal with those who ask them for things? (5:42)
12. What is the proper response to a request to borrow something? (5:42)

Get It

13. What are the drawbacks to an "eye for eye" mentality?
- * 14. Where do we draw the line between our rights and our responsibility to be forgiving and patient?
15. What is the rationale behind Jesus' idea that love overcomes evil?
- * 16. How can doing good change a bad situation?
17. How should we respond to violent attacks?
18. When are we responsible to stop an evil person from committing violent acts?
19. What advice would you give to the little kid who is constantly being bullied at school?
20. What do you think would happen if Christians followed these principles to the letter?
21. What items would you find difficult to loan out or give away?
22. In what ways have you been seeking vengeance or an opportunity to pay someone back for a wrong done to you?
23. What grudge or personal vendetta do you need to lay aside?

Apply It

24. What prayer will help you forgive someone wrong you've had difficulty letting go of?
- * 25. What act of kindness or reconciliation could you perform by next weekend to help "bury the hatchet"?

Love for Enemies - Matthew 5:43-48

Topics: Bitterness, Enemies, God, Hatred, Neighbor, Oppressed, Perfect, Persecution, Prayer, Righteousness

Open It

1. What TV character is most despicable to you? Why?
- * 2. What underlying emotions and attitudes create cliques or cause divisions between groups of people?
3. What character quality more than any other says to the world, “This person is a Christian”?

Explore It

4. What ancient rule of life did Jesus challenge here? (5:43)
- * 5. How did Jesus say we ought to treat our enemies? (5:44)
6. What did Jesus say we ought to do for those who persecute us? (5:44)
7. Why did Jesus suggest modifying this universally accepted law? (5:45)
- * 8. How does God treat evil and good people in the same way? (5:45)
9. How does God treat righteous and unrighteous people equally? (5:45)
10. What type of people did Jesus cite as loving those who love them? (5:46)
11. What does God think of us when we love those who love us? (5:46)
12. Why is friendliness to friends and relatives not considered exceptional behavior? (5:47)
13. What kinds of people are mentioned as greeting only their brothers? (5:47)
14. What exceptional standard did Christ give us? (5:48)
- * 15. Who has set an example for us? How? (5:48)

Get It

- * 16. If our holy God is able to exhibit grace and mercy to everyone, why is it difficult for us to be like Him?
17. What does it mean for us to be perfect?
18. How is it possible for us to love our enemies?
- * 19. What would have to happen in your heart in order for you to be able to pray for an enemy?
20. What might praying for your enemy change?
21. In what ways does a loving spirit demonstrate that we are God’s people?

Apply It

22. What are some specific ways you can show love today to someone whom you dislike?
- * 23. For which of your “enemies” will you pray every day this week?

Giving to the Needy - Matthew 6:1-4

Topics: Ego, Generosity, Hypocrisy, Money, Motives, Poor, Pride, Rewards, Tithing

Open It

- * 1. What would you do if you discovered that a long-lost relative had left you a million dollars?
- 2. Who are the needy people in our world?
- 3. What is your favorite charity?
- 4. How do you feel when a wealthy individual gives a large sum of money with the stipulation that a building be named after him or her?

Explore It

- 5. What kind of acts was Jesus discussing? (6:1)
- * 6. What specific motives did Jesus warn against? (6:1)
- 7. What happens to the person who operates with impure motives? (6:1)
- 8. Who can judge whether a person's actions are pure? (6:1)
- 9. How did some individuals in Jesus' day publicize their generosity? (6:2)
- 10. What name did Jesus give to insincere individuals? Why? (6:2)
- 11. Where did people advertise their "acts of righteousness"? (6:2)
- 12. What deep-seated desire prompted some people to give? (6:2)
- 13. What future reward can showy givers expect? (6:2)
- * 14. What style of giving did Jesus command us to adopt? (6:3-4)
- 15. Who notices when we give according to Jesus' guidelines? (6:4)
- * 16. What happens to those who give as Jesus told us to give? (6:4)

Get It

- 17. What motivates people to give money to churches or Christian ministries?
- 18. Why are many people more apt to give money to an organization than to a needy individual?
- 19. Why do most Christian organizations have their highest income at the end of the year?
- 20. How much are your giving habits affected by the knowledge that charitable contributions are tax-deductible?
- * 21. What are some specific ways Christians could be more secretive in their giving?
- 22. Why do we value the recognition people give us?
- * 23. What is difficult about giving secretly?
- 24. How do some churches encourage showy giving?
- 25. Why is it difficult for us to do a good deed and keep quiet about it?

Apply It

- 26. What anonymous gift can you give today?
- * 27. What steps could you take to ensure that your giving is not done for show?

Prayer - Matthew 6:5-15

Topics: Bitterness, Depend, Ego, Forgiveness, God, Humility, Hypocrisy, Motives, Prayer, Self-righteousness

Open It

1. What images or thoughts spring to mind when you hear the word “prayer”?
- * 2. What role did prayer play in your family’s life when you were growing up?

Explore It

3. According to Jesus, what wrong motivation prompts some individuals to pray? (6:5)
- * 4. What name did Jesus call people who pray for show? Why? (6:5)
5. Where do hypocrites prefer to do their praying? (6:5)
6. What type of reward will religious showmanship bring? (6:5)
- * 7. How did Jesus command His followers to pray? (6:6)
8. Where did Jesus suggest we talk to God? (6:6)
- * 9. What type of reward will humility in prayer bring? (6:6)
10. What did Jesus have to say about repetitive or long, windy prayers? (6:7)
11. What insights or facts about God are revealed in this passage? (6:6, 8, 9)
12. To whom did Jesus tell us to pray? (6:9)
13. What should be our attitude toward God? (6:9)
14. What should be our attitude toward God’s kingdom and will? (6:10)
15. What should be our attitude toward life’s necessities? (6:11)
16. What should be our attitude toward those who have wronged us? (6:12)
17. What should be our attitude toward temptation? (6:13)
18. Why is it crucial for us to forgive those who wrong us? (6:14-15)

Get It

19. What common or overused phrases do you hear frequently repeated in people’s prayers?
20. If God knows what we need before we ask, why should we pray?
- * 21. If Jesus commands us to pray in secret, what is the value of public prayer?
22. Why do many Christians feel uncomfortable praying out loud?
- * 23. When you pray in front of a group, how can you concentrate fully on what you are saying to God rather than how your prayers sound to others?
24. Why do we often use special language or words for talking to God?
25. What sins or offenses by others do we find especially difficult to forgive?

Apply It

- * 26. What changes do you need to make in your prayer life?
27. What strained relationship will you seek to repair this week by forgiving an offense?

Fasting - Matthew 6:16-18

Topics: Commitment, Dedication, Discipline, Giving Up, Humility, Hypocrisy, Motives, Preparation, Spiritual Disciplines

Open It

- * 1. What is your all-time favorite meal?
- 2. What is the hungriest you have ever been in your life?

Explore It

- 3. What mood did certain individuals in Jesus' day assume when they fasted? (6:16)
- * 4. What facial expressions did some people wear? Why? (6:16)
- 5. Why did some people take on gloomy expressions when they fasted? (6:16)
- * 6. What harsh name did Jesus give to people who made a public show of their fasting? Why? (6:16)
- 7. According to Jesus, what rewards await people who show off their fasting? (6:16)
- 8. What repeated phrase in this passage suggests that fasting is not an option? (6:16, 17)
- 9. How should a person conceal the fact of his or her fasting? (6:17)
- * 10. Who should know about an individual's fasts? Why? (6:18)
- 11. Who alone can see what people do in secret? How? (6:18)
- 12. Why are believers to be secretive about fasting? (6:18)

Get It

- 13. What is the modern day equivalent of putting "oil on your head"?
- 14. How do God's rewards differ from the recognition we receive from others?
- 15. What are some good reasons for fasting?
- 16. Why do you believe this spiritual discipline is seldom discussed in Christian circles?
- 17. What spiritual benefits might we receive from fasting?
- * 18. Why is it tempting to show others that you are fasting?
- * 19. What is the advantage of keeping your spiritual disciplines secret?
- 20. For what need in your own life or in the life of a loved one would you be willing to skip a meal in order to devote yourself to prayer?

Apply It

- 21. For what reason could you fast this week?
- * 22. What steps can you take to devote your spiritual disciplines to God alone?
- 23. What specific steps could you take this week in order to gain a better understanding of fasting?

Treasures in Heaven - Matthew 6:19-24

Topics: Darkness, Desires, Earth, Generosity, Heaven, Money, Perspective, Priorities, Resources, Rewards, Submission, Wealth

Open It

- * 1. If you were stranded on a desert island and could have only three possessions with you, what would you choose and why?
- 2. What valuable possessions do you have that cannot be replaced?
- 3. What are some things you'd never give up, no matter how much money you were offered for them?

Explore It

- * 4. Where did Jesus urge His followers not to “store up treasures”? Why? (6:19)
- 5. Why did Jesus discourage stockpiling things? (6:19)
- 6. What can happen to a person's material possessions? (6:19)
- * 7. Where did Jesus encourage us to invest our wealth? Why? (6:20)
- 8. Why is heaven a better place to “bank” than earth? (6:20)
- 9. What does the location of a person's treasure say about that person? (6:21)
- 10. What is described as the “lamp of the body”? How is this so? (6:22)
- 11. What is the result of “good eyes”? (6:22)
- 12. When will people's lives be full of darkness? (6:23)
- * 13. What did Jesus say about serving two masters? (6:24)
- 14. Why did Jesus say we cannot serve two masters? (6:24)
- 15. What two masters did Jesus mention in this context? Why? (6:24)

Get It

- 16. How have you felt whenever you have lost a valued possession?
- * 17. How can we “store up . . . treasures in heaven”?
- 18. How can we determine where our treasure is (and thus where our hearts are)?
- 19. What sort of things do you think about most?
- 20. Where does your mind naturally gravitate to in those moments just before you go to bed?
- 21. How clear is your spiritual vision right now?
- 22. What masters most often fight for your allegiance?
- 23. In what ways do you serve money?
- * 24. In what ways can you master your money?

Apply It

- * 25. How could you make an investment in eternity today?
- 26. What committed Christian friends could help you evaluate your use of money in the next month?

Do Not Worry - Matthew 6:25-34

Topics: Contentment, Creation, Faithfulness, Future, God, Materialism, Needs, Peace, Prayer, Trust, Worry

Open It

- * 1. What are your top three worries?
- 2. What is your favorite kind of food?
- 3. How would you describe your tastes in fashion?

Explore It

- 4. What three worries did Jesus discourage among His followers? Why? (6:25)
- 5. Why is food a trivial matter? (6:26)
- 6. According to Jesus, how do clothes stack up as a subject of great concern? (6:26)
- * 7. What creatures did Jesus use to illustrate God's reliability as a provider? Why? (6:26)
- 8. Why are God's creatures consistently "fed and clothed"? (6:26)
- * 9. Why should we take great comfort from the way the animal and plant kingdoms operate? (6:26)
- 10. What benefits does worry bring? (6:27)
- 11. What fact from nature did Jesus use to illustrate the folly of worrying over clothes? (6:28)
- 12. How did Solomon's wardrobe measure up to the beauty of nature? (6:29)
- * 13. What comfort can followers of Christ find in the beauty of nature? (6:30)
- 14. Who is consumed by concern over food, water, and clothing? (6:32)
- 15. What priorities should we have in life? (6:33)
- 16. What does God do for His children when they keep the right perspective, refuse to worry, and trust Him? (6:33)
- 17. Why is it silly to fret over the future? (6:34)

Get It

- 18. Why do some of us worry about clothes more than others?
- 19. How do you think God feels about our society's preoccupation with food?
- * 20. If God is really in control of the universe, why do we worry so much about so many things?
- 21. How do you think worry is affecting you emotionally, physically, and spiritually?
- 22. How would you answer someone who interprets this passage to mean that God promises to give His children everything their hearts desire?
- 23. In light of this passage, what would be some good principles on food and clothing for us to follow?
- 24. What is the difference between planning for the future and worrying about the future?
- 25. What worries do you struggle to keep under control?
- * 26. What can help you entrust your worries to God?

Apply It

- * 27. What worry will you entrust to God today?
- 28. What steps can you take today to change your priorities from worldly ones to kingdom ones?

Judging Others - Matthew 7:1-6

Topics: Church, Criticism, Faults, Hypocrisy, Judgment, Mercy, Opinions, Pride, Relationships, Wisdom, Words

Open It

- * 1. What are your pet peeves (at work, home, or in your community)?
- 2. What kinds of things do people criticize you for most commonly?
- 3. How do you tend to respond when someone calls you on the carpet or corrects you?
- 4. What would your friends say is your biggest fault?

Explore It

- 5. What happens to those who are judgmental or critical? (7:1)
- 6. In what way will we be judged? (7:2)
- * 7. By what measure will we be judged? (7:2)
- 8. What kind of faults do we notice in others? (7:3)
- 9. How did Jesus illustrate the foolishness of the way we find fault with others? (7:3)
- 10. What figure of speech did Jesus use to illustrate how blind we are to the shortcomings in our own lives? (7:4)
- * 11. What did Jesus call those who ignore their own imperfections and focus on the flaws of others? Why? (7:5)
- 12. When is it good to confront others with their faults? (7:5)
- * 13. Why is it necessary to deal with one's own sins first? (7:5)
- 14. What are we not to do with sacred things? Why? (7:6)
- 15. What may happen if we disregard Jesus' warning? (7:6)

Get It

- * 16. When, if ever, should we criticize or judge someone else?
- 17. What sacred or valuable things should we withhold from people who have no concern for God?
- 18. Why is it that the traits of others that irritate us most are often the very faults that are present in our own lives?
- 19. What happened the last time you criticized someone else or judged another's actions?
- 20. What causes us to become critical, judgmental people?
- * 21. How can we become more merciful and nonjudgmental?
- 22. What faults block your spiritual vision?

Apply It

- * 23. How can you begin this week to get in the habit of examining your own life before you start criticizing others?
- 24. What fault of your own can you focus attention on this week?

Ask, Seek, Knock - Matthew 7:7-12

Topics: Children, Endurance, Evil, Generosity, Gifts, God, Goodness, Humanness, Kindness, Law, Persistence, Prayer, Promises

Open It

- * 1. What sort of letters did you write to Santa Claus as a kid?
- 2. What is the best answer to prayer you ever received?
- 3. If you could make up one rule that everyone in the world had to live by, what would it be and why?

Explore It

- 4. What did Jesus say will happen if we bring our requests to Him? (7:7)
- 5. What happens when we seek in Christ's name? (7:7)
- * 6. According to Jesus, what is the result for those who "knock" on God's door? (7:7)
- 7. How do loving parents respond to a child's request for bread? (7:9)
- 8. How do loving parents respond to a child's request for fish? (7:10)
- * 9. What is true about the character of even the best human parent? (7:11)
- * 10. How can we be encouraged by the sight of godless parents doing good things for their children? (7:11)
- 11. What is the likelihood of God giving His praying children what they need? (7:11)
- 12. How are we to treat others? (7:12)
- 13. In what specific situations are we to follow the Golden Rule? (7:12)
- 14. Why is the command to treat others as you want to be treated so significant? (7:12)

Get It

- * 15. What do you tend to pray about?
- * 16. For what are you reluctant to pray?
- 17. How do you react when your child comes to you with a legitimate need?
- 18. What motivates you to want to provide for your children?
- 19. In spite of their imperfection, how would you rate your parents as providers?
- 20. If earthly parents generally attempt to care for their children, what can you conclude about God?
- 21. How would the world be different if we all lived by the Golden Rule?
- 22. When is it hardest for you to treat others with kindness and respect?

Apply It

- * 23. What request will you bring to God every day this week?
- 24. To what relationship do you most need to apply the Golden Rule this week?

The Narrow and Wide Gates - Matthew 7:13-14

Topics: Eternal Life, Evangelism, Grace, Guidance, Heaven, Hell, Lost, Pride, Rebellion, Unbelievers, Witnessing

Open It

- * 1. Why are most people apt to believe in heaven but quick to dismiss the reality of hell?
- 2. If you were setting the standards for who gets into heaven, what requirements would you establish?
- 3. What do you think heaven will be like?

Explore It

- * 4. What command did Jesus give His followers in this passage? (7:13)
- 5. What exactly are we called to enter? Why? (7:13)
- 6. How did Jesus describe the gate to the kingdom of God? Why? (7:13)
- * 7. In what way did Jesus describe the gate that leads to destruction? (7:13)
- 8. What was said about the road that leads to destruction? (7:13)
- 9. How many people are said to travel the path to destruction? (7:13)
- 10. What kind of gate leads to life? (7:14)
- 11. The small gate is attached to what kind of road? (7:14)
- 12. Where does the narrow road lead? (7:14)
- * 13. How many people find and follow the narrow road? Why? (7:14)

Get It

- 14. What is encouraging about Christ's words?
- 15. What broad roads did you travel before you met Christ?
- 16. How did you find Christ?
- 17. What was your entry through the narrow gate like?
- * 18. What wide gates and broad roads are some of your acquaintances following?
- 19. How should we fit or not fit into the world?
- 20. How might you respond to the charge that Christians are narrow-minded and arrogant?
- * 21. In what sense is it narrow-minded to believe in Christ?
- 22. Why do many people prefer the broad way that leads to destruction?
- 23. Why is it difficult to stay on the narrow road?

Apply It

- 24. What can you do this week to point someone toward the small gate?
- 25. How can you show God your appreciation for His mercy and grace in leading you to the path of eternal life?
- * 26. What action can you take this week to help you stay on the narrow path?

A Tree and Its Fruit - Matthew 7:15-23

Topics: Deceit, Discernment, Evil, Fruit, Heaven, Hypocrisy, Rejection, Religion, Unbelievers

Open It

- * 1. What do you know about vegetable gardening?
- 2. What kind of inner alarm (if any) alerts you to the fact that a person is a phony?
- 3. What is your favorite fruit?

Explore It

- 4. Against whom did Jesus warn us? Why? (7:15)
- 5. What do false prophets look like on the outside? (7:15)
- 6. What are false prophets like inwardly? (7:15)
- 7. How did Christ say we could recognize false prophets? (7:16, 20)
- * 8. What does nature reveal about a tree and its fruit? (7:16)
- 9. What kind of fruit do good trees bear? Why? (7:17-18)
- 10. What type of produce grows on bad trees? Why? (7:17-18)
- * 11. What happens to trees that fail to produce good fruit? (7:18)
- * 12. Who will enter the kingdom of heaven? (7:21)
- 13. How will some people try to talk their way into heaven? (7:22)
- 14. What credentials or accomplishments will some people claim? (7:22)
- 15. How will Jesus respond to these impostors? (7:23)
- 16. What is necessary for entry into heaven? (7:23)

Get It

- 17. Why do we continue to sin if we have Christ in our heart and the Holy Spirit in our lives?
- * 18. What does this passage tell us about the importance of doing good works?
- 19. How do good works and salvation fit together?
- * 20. How can people be “religious” yet not follow Christ?
- 21. What kind of good works have you been producing lately?
- 22. What evidence in your life points to your relationship with Jesus?

Apply It

- 23. What spiritual disciplines can you use to cultivate your soul this week?
- * 24. In what area of your life can you place more emphasis on doing good works each day this week?

The Wise and Foolish Builders - Matthew 7:24-29

Topics: Attitude, Disobedience, Effort, Foundation, Hardheartedness, Obedience, Quality, Responsibility, Security, Stubbornness

Open It

1. What is the secret to building great sand castles?
2. What is it like to ride out a violent thunderstorm, hurricane, or tornado?
- * 3. How do you feel when you offer sound advice and it is rejected?

Explore It

4. Who did Jesus say is wise? (7:24)
5. Besides hearing the words of Christ, what else must a person do in order to be considered wise? (7:24)
6. Jesus compared wise living to building a house on what kind of foundation? (7:24)
- * 7. What sets fools apart from wise people? (7:24, 26)
8. In Jesus' analogy, what strong forces of nature pounded on the wise person's house? (7:25)
9. What was the effect of the wind and rain on the house? (7:25)
10. Why wasn't the house part of a "disaster area"? (7:25)
- * 11. What kind of people did Jesus talk about in contrast to the wise person? (7:26)
- * 12. What individuals are like a man who builds a house on sand? (7:26)
13. According to Jesus, foolish living is like building a house on what kind of foundation? (7:26)
14. In Jesus' analogy, what happened when the wind and water crashed against the fool's house? (7:27)
15. How did the crowd respond to Jesus' teaching? (7:28)
16. Why did the crowd react with amazement to Jesus' teaching? (7:29)

Get It

- * 17. Why is it difficult to apply God's truth to our lives?
- * 18. How does obedience to God bring security to our lives?
19. What foundation are you building your life on?
20. How can you build your life on Christ?
21. What are some sandy foundations you have seen people base their lives on?
22. How do you feel when you see people (friends or family members) ignoring God and making bad decisions?
23. What is the most amazing thing to you about all that Jesus ever said?

Apply It

24. What can you do today to encourage someone to listen to the voice of Jesus and obey what he or she hears?
- * 25. What neglected command of Christ will you begin obeying this week?

The Man With Leprosy - Matthew 8:1-4

Topics: Alone, Attitude, Compassion, Healing, Help, Hopelessness, Humility, Love, Miracles, Sensitivity, Shame, Sickness, Sovereignty

Open It

1. How do you think you would react if you were disabled in an automobile accident?
- * 2. Why are people afraid of AIDS?
3. What illnesses are people often afraid of?

Explore It

4. Where did Jesus go after He finished the Sermon on the Mount? (8:1)
- * 5. What happened when Jesus came down from the mountain? (8:1)
6. What was Jesus' audience like? (8:1)
7. What was distinctive about the man who came and blocked Jesus' path? (8:2)
8. What did the kneeling man say to Christ? (8:2)
- * 9. What daring deed did Christ do for the man with leprosy? (8:3)
10. What compassionate words did Christ say? (8:3)
11. What happened when Christ finished speaking? (8:3)
12. How long did this healing process take? (8:3)
13. What strange instructions did Jesus give the man whom He healed? (8:4)
- * 14. For what reasons did Jesus want the man to show his healed body to the priests? (8:4)

Get It

15. If you had an incurable disease, where would you turn for support?
- * 16. How does this story about Christ encourage you?
- * 17. How does the example of Christ challenge you?
18. Why do you think Christ told the healed man to "show but not tell"?
19. How is Christ's healing of this man with leprosy similar to the manner in which He forgives us?
20. What is the benefit of personal testimony about God's deeds?
21. Who are often treated like modern-day lepers?
22. How can we follow Christ's example in our behavior toward modern-day lepers?
23. What sort of attitude must we have when we come to God for help?
24. What story of God's acts on your behalf could you use as a testimony to others?

Apply It

- * 25. What sick or suffering person can you visit or talk to this week?
26. Whom could you encourage this week with a testimony of something God has done for you?

The Faith of the Centurion - Matthew 8:5-13

Topics: Authority, Confidence, Faith, Healing, Humility, Initiative, Instructions, Kingdom of God/Heaven, Miracles, Trust, Unbelievers

Open It

1. Who is the most amazing person you've ever met?
- * 2. For whom would you not hesitate to give blood or otherwise help recover from a severe illness?
3. What did your mother do for you when you got sick as a child?

Explore It

4. Where did the incident described in this passage take place? (8:5)
- * 5. Who approached Jesus and asked for help? (8:5)
6. What did the centurion tell Jesus? (8:6)
7. What did Jesus promise the soldier? (8:7)
8. What humble, surprising suggestion did the man make? (8:8)
9. What rationale did the centurion have for making his request? (8:9)
10. What effect did the soldier's words have on Jesus? (8:10)
11. According to Jesus, how many Israelites had as much faith as the centurion? (8:10)
12. What insight did Jesus give about the guest list of the kingdom of heaven? (8:11)
13. What eternal destiny did Jesus suggest awaited many in His audience? (8:12)
- * 14. What instructions did Jesus give the centurion? (8:13)
- * 15. What happened to the centurion's servant? (8:13)

Get It

- * 16. How should you respond when friends or relatives have needs?
- * 17. How does Jesus' ready willingness to help the centurion's servant encourage you?
18. What keeps you from having the faith that God can do anything?
19. How can we have greater faith in God?
20. Why are we so often filled with doubt?
21. What assurance do you have that you will be at the great heavenly feast Jesus mentioned in this passage?

Apply It

- * 22. For what person who is sick or in trouble can you intercede today?
23. What can you do every day this week to build your faith in God?
24. For what promise of Jesus will you trust God and expect Him to work this week?

Jesus Heals Many - Matthew 8:14-17

Topics: Compassion, Demons, Despair, Family, Healing, Hospitality, Occult, Sensitivity, Serving, Thankfulness, Victory

Open It

- * 1. What kind of patient are you (squeamish, brave, stoic, etc.)?
- 2. For what disease do you wish there were a cure right now?
- 3. What is the most amazing story of physical healing you have ever heard?

Explore It

- 4. What kind of building was Jesus in when the incidents of this passage took place? (8:14)
- 5. Who owned the building? (8:14)
- 6. Who was bedridden and sick with a fever? (8:14)
- 7. What does the identity of the sick woman reveal about Peter's personal life? (8:14)
- 8. What did Jesus do to the sick woman? (8:15)
- 9. What happened when Jesus touched the woman's hand? (8:15)
- 10. What did the woman immediately begin to do? (8:15)
- * 11. What kinds of people were brought to Jesus that evening? (8:16)
- * 12. What did Jesus do for the people who were brought to Him? (8:16)
- * 13. What procedure or technique did Jesus use to help the people who were brought to Him? (8:16)
- 14. How were these events significant in Jewish history? (8:17)

Get It

- 15. How patient are you with sick family members?
- 16. How would you handle living with an ill in-law?
- 17. How do we typically show appreciation for all the ways God has blessed our lives?
- 18. How would you rate yourself as a servant?
- * 19. What are some ways we can assist those who are ill?
- * 20. What ill or suffering people do you know?
- 21. How can you help those with needs?

Apply It

- * 22. What will you do for someone who is sick or hurting this month?
- 23. Who in your family can you touch today with the love of Christ?
- 24. In what ways can you help a hurting family member this week?

The Cost of Following Jesus - Matthew 8:18-22

Topics: Abandon, Barriers, Commitment, Compromise, Expectations, Family, Invitation, Popularity, Procrastination, Rationalizing, Temptation, Zeal

Open It

- * 1. What excuses do people give for neglecting common responsibilities?
- 2. What are the pros and cons of travelling all the time—always living out of a suitcase?
- 3. Why do only a few people follow Christ for a lifetime?

Explore It

- 4. What observation prompted Jesus to cross to the other side of the lake? (8:18)
- 5. What orders did Jesus give? (8:18)
- 6. What did the teacher of the law call Jesus? (8:19)
- 7. What did the teacher of the law claim he would do? (8:19)
- * 8. Who approached Jesus? (8:19-20)
- 9. What did Jesus tell the teacher of the law he would have to do without? (8:20)
- * 10. What animals did Jesus say were more secure than He? Why? (8:20)
- 11. Who offered to follow Jesus? (8:21)
- 12. What did one of Jesus' disciples request? (8:21)
- * 13. What command did Jesus give to the disciple that offered to follow Him under certain conditions? (8:22)
- 14. How did Jesus handle the disciple's request? (8:22)

Get It

- 15. Why do we value popularity?
- 16. What are some places you would not want to go under any conditions?
- 17. Why do we value home ownership?
- 18. What are the pros and cons of putting down roots and getting settled into a community?
- * 19. In what ways might a family (parents, siblings, or children) get in the way of following Jesus?
- * 20. In what ways can our love for Christ cost us?

Apply It

- 21. How can you model commitment to Christ for your children this week?
- * 22. What can you do this week to encourage a Christian who has made sacrifices to follow Christ?

Jesus Calms the Storm - Matthew 8:23-27

Topics: Believe, Faith, Fear, God's Will, Help, Jesus Christ, Learning, Miracles, Nature, Security, Sovereignty, Trust

Open It

- * 1. What is your scariest “bad weather story”?
- 2. When was the last time you were speechless?
- 3. Why is it difficult for parents to watch their children go through hard times?
- 4. What kind of sleeper are you?

Explore It

- 5. What did Jesus do with His disciples? (8:23)
- 6. Who accompanied Jesus in the boat? (8:23)
- * 7. What surprise did the boaters encounter in this scene? (8:24)
- 8. How severe was the weather? (8:24)
- 9. What was Jesus doing during the storm? (8:24)
- 10. What did the disciples do? (8:25)
- 11. What did the disciples say? (8:25)
- * 12. How did Jesus reply to the disciples' expression of fear? (8:26)
- 13. What did Jesus do when the disciples expressed fear? (8:26)
- 14. What was nature's response to the command of Jesus? (8:26)
- * 15. How did the disciples react to this astonishing sequence of events? (8:27)
- 16. What excellent question did the disciples raise? (8:27)

Get It

- 17. Why do you think most people—even nonreligious folks—turn to God when things really fall apart?
- * 18. What nerve-wracking situations have you faced lately?
- 19. How do you typically react when circumstances get out of control?
- 20. Why is it necessary for us to go through scary times in life?
- * 21. Why do we panic about the storms swirling around us when the God of the universe lives inside us?
- 22. How does it make you feel to remember that you have a Savior who is greater than anything this world can throw at you?
- 23. What amazing acts has God done for you?

Apply It

- 24. How can you strengthen your faith in God today?
- * 25. This week, what specific ways can you demonstrate your belief that Jesus will see you through the storms in your life?
- 26. For what amazing acts do you need to thank God today?

The Healing of Two Demon-possessed Men - Matthew 8:28-34

Topics: Blindness, Compassion, Demons, Evidence, Hardheartedness, Healing, Miracles, Occult, Oppressed, Priorities, Rejection, Satan, Unbelievers

Open It

1. What is your favorite farm animal?
2. What effect (if any) do you think violent horror movies have on people?
- * 3. Why are Satan and the occult increasingly popular topics among young people?

Explore It

4. Where did Jesus and the disciples come ashore? (8:28)
5. Who met Christ and his men? (8:28)
6. What was the spiritual state of the two individuals Jesus met? (8:28)
7. Where did the strangers live? (8:28)
8. What kind of behavior did the Gadarene men exhibit? (8:28)
- * 9. What did the two Gadarene men shout at Jesus? (8:29)
10. What was nearby? (8:30)
11. Who spoke to Jesus about the nearby herd of pigs? Why? (8:30)
12. What request was made of Jesus? Why? (8:31)
13. How did Jesus respond to the request that he cast the demons into the herd of pigs? (8:32)
- * 14. What happened as soon as Jesus spoke? (8:32)
15. How did news of this event reach town? (8:33)
- * 16. How did the townspeople react to what happened? (8:34)

Get It

17. How do you think you'd react if you encountered a demon-possessed person?
- * 18. How does Christ's power over Satan encourage and comfort you?
19. What do you think this passage says about the relative worth of a human soul compared to the value of an animal?
20. Why do so many people want nothing to do with Christ?
21. In what areas of your life is Jesus working?
22. What areas of your life do you want Jesus to leave alone?
23. If Jesus is powerful enough to drive out demons, why don't we see much evidence of His power in our lives?
- * 24. How can we show confidence in Christ's power?

Apply It

- * 25. What individuals in your town are in the grip of Satan and need your prayers today and every day this week?
26. Into what specific area(s) of your life do you need to invite Jesus to work today?

Jesus Heals a Paralytic - Matthew 9:1-8

Topics: Authority, Blindness, Faith, Forgiveness, Friendship, Healing, Hypocrisy, Miracles, Power, Praise, Questions, Religion, Worship

Open It

1. What qualities do you look for in a friend?
2. Why do most people take their physical health for granted?
- * 3. What people did God use to bring you to Jesus?

Explore It

4. What means of transportation did Jesus use to get to His own town? (9:1)
5. What was Jesus' destination? (9:1)
- * 6. Upon His arrival, whom did Jesus encounter? (9:2)
7. What attribute did the men exhibit in coming to Christ? (9:2)
8. What unexpected comment did Jesus make to the disabled person among them? (9:2)
9. Who observed the exchange between the paralytic and Jesus? (9:3)
- * 10. What did the teachers of the law think about Jesus' declaration? (9:3)
11. What supernatural ability did Jesus use? (9:4)
- * 12. What did Jesus say about the teachers' opinions? (9:4-6)
13. What was Jesus' argument for His authority to forgive sins? (9:5-6)
14. What did Jesus do to prove His authority to forgive sins? (9:6)
15. What happened to the paralytic? (9:7)
16. What did the paralytic do? (9:7)
17. What was the crowd's reaction to this event? (9:8)

Get It

18. How can we see a person's faith?
19. What do you think it would be like to be a paraplegic or quadriplegic?
20. How does it make you feel to realize that Jesus knows your every thought?
- * 21. What experiences led up to you meeting Christ and having your sins forgiven?
22. What emotions did you feel when you realized your sins were forgiven?
- * 23. How do you typically react when someone else becomes a Christian?

Apply It

24. What can you do for a hurting friend this week?
- * 25. How can you show your appreciation to God today for His saving work in your life?

The Calling of Matthew - Matthew 9:9-13

Topics: Ambassadors, Backslide, Compassion, Darkness, Discernment, Effort, Evangelism, Foolishness, Good News, Involvement, Limitations, Lost, Obedience, Obligation, Purpose, Risk, Unbelievers, Witnessing

Open It

1. If you were starting your own business, what qualities would you look for in prospective employees?
- * 2. What past misdeeds would disqualify someone from: your job? elected office? the Supreme Court? the ministry?
3. What qualities make for a great leader?

Explore It

4. Who did Jesus see sitting at a tax collector's booth? (9:9)
5. What was Matthew's job? (9:9)
6. What did Jesus tell Matthew to do? (9:9)
7. How did Matthew respond to Jesus' statement? (9:9)
8. Where did Jesus and Matthew go? Why? (9:10)
- * 9. What kind of people joined Jesus and His new follower for dinner? (9:10)
10. What did the Pharisees think of Jesus' attendance at Matthew's social function? (9:11)
11. Who reported the Pharisees' comments to Jesus? (9:12)
12. What was Jesus' response to the Pharisees? (9:12)
- * 13. What did Jesus tell His listeners they needed to learn? (9:13)
- * 14. What did Jesus say He had come to earth to do? (9:13)

Get It

15. What, in your opinion, are some respectable jobs, and what are some questionable careers for believers to pursue?
16. How do you think you might react if several gang members or street people attended your church this Sunday?
17. What do you think people would say if you associated with a "wild crowd" in order to be a witness for Christ?
18. Why should we not follow this example of Christ if we are weak in our faith?
- * 19. What dangers do we face when we befriend non-Christians?
- * 20. What will happen if we never reach out to those outside the church?
21. What surprises you about Jesus' actions in this passage?
22. What individuals need your encouragement and support as they seek to minister to those who don't know Christ?

Apply It

- * 23. How can you cultivate a relationship with a non-Christian friend this week?
24. What can you do to remind yourself to view others as they can be, instead of seeing only their faults?

Jesus Questioned About Fasting - Matthew 9:14-17

Topics: Celebration, Change, Fasting, Freedom, Grace, Jesus Christ, Judging Others, Law, Legalism, Mourning, New Covenant, Simplicity, Traditions

Open It

1. What makes a party successful?
- * 2. What are some traditions or customs from the past that you feel we ought to revive?
3. Why do we feel uncomfortable with change?

Explore It

4. Who approached Jesus after the dinner party at Matthew's house? (9:14)
5. What topic were John's disciples interested in discussing with Christ? (9:14)
- * 6. What did John's disciples want to know? (9:14)
- * 7. How did Jesus explain the fact that His disciples did not fast? (9:15)
8. What imagery did Jesus use as an illustration? (9:15)
9. To what did Jesus compare Himself? (9:15)
10. What did Jesus suggest would happen? (9:15)
11. What sewing illustration did Jesus use? (9:16)
- * 12. Using an illustration from the world of wine making, Jesus talked about the need to do what? (9:17)
13. What did Jesus say would happen if new wine was poured into old wineskins? (9:17)

Get It

- * 14. Why is it that wonderful spiritual traditions can turn into dull, lifeless rituals?
15. What are some reasons you might consider fasting?
16. In what ways are you guilty of being legalistic?
17. What legalistic habits or practices do you need to get rid of?
18. How can we Christians do a better job of demonstrating the joy of Christ to the world?
- * 19. Why is it wrong for us to measure our performance as Christians by a list of dos and don'ts?
20. How would you explain this passage to a friend?

Apply It

- * 21. Throughout this week, how can you embrace God's grace and acceptance in Christ?
22. What specific steps can you take today to experience the joy that comes from appreciating Christ's saving work?

A Dead Girl and a Sick Woman - Matthew 9:18-26

Topics: Death, Doubt, Faith, Healing, Hope, Miracles, Patience, Resurrection, Trust, Unbelievers, Waiting

Open It

1. What epitaph would you like on your tombstone?
- * 2. What punishment should be meted out to those who prey on weak or defenseless individuals?
3. What do you think about people who claim to have died and then come back to life?

Explore It

4. Who approached Jesus? (9:18)
5. What did the man do? (9:18)
6. With what startling situation and request did the man present Jesus? (9:18)
7. How did Jesus react? (9:19)
8. Who accompanied Jesus? (9:19)
- * 9. While Jesus and the others made their way to the man's house, who touched Jesus' cloak? (9:20)
10. From what kind of ailment did the woman suffer? (9:20)
- * 11. What was the woman's reasoning for touching Jesus' cloak? (9:21)
12. What happened as the woman made contact with Jesus? (9:22)
13. What did Jesus do for the woman? (9:22)
- * 14. Why was the woman healed? (9:22)
15. Upon arriving at the ruler's house, what did Jesus say to the crowd? (9:24)
16. What was the crowd's response to Jesus' unexpected statement? (9:24)
17. What did Christ do after He put the crowd outside? (9:25)
18. What happened after Christ left? (9:26)

Get It

19. What personal encouragement and comfort do you find in Christ's ability to heal the sick and raise the dead?
- * 20. How is your faith challenged by the people in this story?
21. What are some ways we "laugh at Jesus" in our beliefs and behavior?
22. How do you think a twelve-year illness would affect your faith in God?
23. What does this passage teach you about Jesus' sensitivity to the needs of a lonely, hurting individual?
- * 24. What impossible situation are you facing?
25. How can we follow Jesus' example?

Apply It

- * 26. How can you trust God today to work in the impossible situation you are facing?
27. What act of kindness can you show this week to someone who is ill or grieving?

Jesus Heals the Blind and Mute - Matthew 9:27-34

Topics: Awe, Blasphemy, Demons, Disobedience, Faith, Healing, Jealousy, Miracles, Opposition, Persistence, Rejection, Unbelievers, Worship

Open It

- * 1. Which of your senses would be the hardest to do without?
- 2. On what recent occasion were you so excited about something that you could not resist telling everyone?

Explore It

- 3. Who was following Jesus? (9:27)
- 4. What were the men calling Jesus? (9:27)
- 5. What were the men asking Christ to do? (9:27)
- * 6. What question did Jesus ask the men who were following Him? (9:28)
- * 7. How did the men respond to Jesus' question? (9:28)
- * 8. What did Jesus do to grant the men's request? (9:29)
- 9. What did Jesus say to the men? (9:30)
- 10. What was the effect of Jesus' actions on the men? (9:30)
- 11. What stern warning did Jesus give the men? (9:30)
- 12. How well did the men heed Jesus' command? (9:31)
- 13. Who was brought to Jesus for healing after the two blind men were healed? (9:32)
- 14. What happened to the demon-possessed man? (9:33)
- 15. What was the reaction of the onlookers when the demon was driven out? (9:33)
- 16. How did the Pharisees explain what happened? (9:34)

Get It

- 17. How would you have handled the command not to tell anyone that you had been miraculously healed of blindness?
- * 18. How can we be more persistent in asking God to help us or bless us?
- 19. How can you be involved in spreading the news of Christ around the region in which you live?
- 20. What commands of God are difficult for you to obey?
- 21. Of what ailments would you like God to heal you?
- * 22. In what area of your life do you need to have more faith in God?

Apply It

- * 23. What is the first step you need to take in obeying one command that you have found difficult to obey?
- 24. How might you demonstrate the love of Christ this week to someone who is disabled?

The Workers Are Few - Matthew 9:35-38

Topics: Ambassadors, Compassion, Evangelism, Healing, Lost, Miracles, Mission, Prayer, Priorities, Timing, Witnessing, World

Open It

1. In what situations do you tend to feel compassion?
2. What missionaries do you know personally?
- * 3. What do you pray about on a regular basis?

Explore It

4. Where did Jesus go? To do what? (9:35)
5. Where did Jesus teach? (9:35)
6. What did Jesus preach about? (9:35)
7. What kinds of disease and sickness did Jesus heal? (9:35)
- * 8. What emotion did Jesus feel when He saw the crowds of people around Him? (9:36)
9. Why did Jesus feel as He did? (9:36)
- * 10. What helpless animals were the people compared to? (9:36)
11. In what terms did Jesus describe the situation He and His disciples were observing? (9:37)
12. How did Jesus describe the number of people helping others come to Him? (9:37)
13. Who did Jesus tell His disciples to discuss the lack of workers with? (9:37)
- * 14. For whom did Jesus tell His disciples to pray? (9:37)

Get It

15. For what non-Christians do you feel compassion?
16. How would you describe the spiritual and moral state of the majority of the people in your town or on your campus?
- * 17. Who are the non-Christians in your life?
- * 18. What can you do to help people see their need for Christ?
19. What skills, gifts, abilities, or talents can you use to help others come to Christ?
20. What barriers stand in the way of people you know listening to the gospel?
21. What can you do to overcome your friends' and neighbors' objections or reservations about following Jesus?

Apply It

- * 22. For what non-Christians will you pray regularly from now on?
23. What missionaries can you pray for this week?
24. How can you make a difference today in the life of someone who is "harassed and helpless"?

Jesus Sends Out the Twelve - Matthew 10:1-42

Topics: Ambassadors, Approval, Challenge, Commitment, Confidence, Convictions, Danger, Depend, Discouragement, Endurance, Enemies, Faithfulness, Fear, Fruit, God's Will, Gospel, Holy Spirit, Instructions, Last Days, Persecution, Persistence, Problems, Purpose, Rejection, Results, Rewards, Risk, Sacrifice, Serving, Stress, Suffering, Unbelievers, Victory, Witnessing

Open It

- * 1. How might a parent feel sending his or her child off to school for the first time?
- 2. What activity or responsibility absolutely terrifies you?
- 3. Why do you think certain people are antagonistic to the gospel?

Explore It

- 4. What kind of authority did Jesus give His twelve disciples? (10:1)
- 5. What were the names of the twelve men with Jesus? (10:2-4)
- 6. To what audience did Jesus command these men to go? (10:5-6)
- 7. What last-minute ministry instructions did Jesus give His disciples? (10:7-10)
- 8. What sort of accommodations were the disciples to seek in their travels? (10:11-13)
- 9. How were the disciples supposed to respond to those who rejected them? (10:14-15)
- 10. To what kind of animal did Jesus compare His disciples? (10:16)
- * 11. What warnings of danger or hardship did Christ give His disciples? (10:17-23)
- * 12. Why did Jesus predict trouble for the disciples? (10:24-25)
- * 13. What kinds of things did Jesus say to bolster His disciples' courage? (10:26-31)
- 14. Why did Christ tell His disciples that it was important for them to take a stand for Him? (10:32-33)
- 15. What surprising comments did Jesus make about the goal of His ministry? (10:34-36)
- 16. What radical requirements did Christ make of those who would follow Him? (10:37-38)
- 17. What did Jesus promise those who obeyed Him fully? (10:39-42)

Get It

- * 18. Where specifically do you think Jesus wants you to minister?
- 19. What things act as security blankets in your life and keep you from stepping out in faith?
- 20. How can you be shrewd and innocent in your dealings with non-Christians?
- * 21. How do you react when someone makes jokes about your faith or when people treat you harshly?
- 22. How has Jesus created division in your family?
- 23. In what ways have you been putting human relationships before your relationship with Christ?
- 24. What do you think it means to lose your life for Christ's sake?

Apply It

- 25. In what specific situations do you need to rely more on the Holy Spirit to give you the right words to say?
- * 26. What promises from this chapter can you meditate on this week to make you a more effective minister for Christ?
- 27. What are three or four concrete ways you can be more bold in standing up for Christ this week?

Jesus and John the Baptist - Matthew 11:1-19

Topics: Assumptions, Beliefs, Circumstances, Confusion, Doubt, Feelings, Greatness, Hope, Kingdom of God/Heaven, Maturity, Miracles, Surprises, Trust, World, Zeal

Open It

- * 1. What causes people to second-guess themselves?
- 2. Other than Jesus Christ, who, in your opinion, was the greatest person who ever lived? Why?
- 3. Of everything you know about Christ, what surprises you most?

Explore It

- 4. What did Jesus do while His disciples were out on their mission trip? (11:1)
- * 5. What message or question did John the Baptist send to Christ from prison? (11:2-3)
- * 6. What instructions did Jesus give to John's messenger? (11:4)
- * 7. What kind of proof did Jesus offer to establish His claim to be the Messiah? (11:5)
- 8. What things did Jesus say John the Baptist was not? (11:7)
- 9. How did Jesus identify John? (11:9-10)
- 10. What high compliment did Jesus pay John? (11:11)
- 11. Why was John's life and ministry significant? (11:10)
- 12. What did Jesus claim about the kingdom of heaven? (11:12)
- 13. Whose prophetic role did Jesus say John was fulfilling? (11:14)
- 14. How did Jesus compare His generation to children? (11:16-17)
- 15. What criticism did John the Baptist receive? Why? (11:18)
- 16. What frequent charge was leveled at Jesus? Why? (11:19)

Get It

- 17. If you faithfully lived for God and were thrown in jail, how do you think you might react?
- * 18. Based on this passage, how do you think Jesus reacts when we have moments of weakness and doubts about our faith?
- * 19. How do you personally handle doubts when they come?
- 20. Why do you believe that Jesus is God's Son and the Savior of the world?
- 21. What have you seen and heard about Jesus that you could tell others?
- 22. If Jesus were physically here today and began talking about you at a press conference, what kinds of remarks would he make?
- 23. In what ways is the work of God advancing in your life or in your circle of influence?

Apply It

- 24. What words of comfort could you share this week with a Christian who happens to be dealing with doubt?
- * 25. What specific actions can you take today to strengthen a weak area of faith?
- 26. What immature attitude or action do you need to change today in order to develop more fully in your faith?

Woe on Unrepentant Cities - Matthew 11:20-24

Topics: Denial, Judgment, Miracles, Pride, Punishment, Rebellion, Rejection, Repentance, Sin, Unbelievers

Open It

1. What are the pros and cons of living in a big city?
- * 2. What city would you most like to visit? Why?
3. What is your favorite city in the world? Why?
4. How effective do you feel large evangelistic crusades are?

Explore It

5. After His praise of John, what did Jesus begin to do? (11:20)
6. Who was Jesus condemning? (11:20)
- * 7. Why was Jesus denouncing the cities in which He performed most of His miracles? (11:20)
8. What two cities did Jesus condemn first? Why? (11:21)
- * 9. How did Jesus say Korazin and Bethsaida were different from Tyre and Sidon? (11:21)
10. What did Jesus say would happen on the day of judgment? (11:22)
11. What city did Jesus single out for comparison with Sodom? (11:23)
12. What did Jesus predict for Capernaum? (11:23)
13. Why did Capernaum have a bleak future? (11:23)
- * 14. To what ancient, evil city did Jesus compare Capernaum? Why? (11:23-24)
15. What city did Jesus say would face the sterner judgment than Sodom? Why? (11:24)

Get It

- * 16. How do you think God views our country's evil bent—especially in light of all the ways He has blessed us?
17. As people who have experienced the goodness of God, how should we be living?
18. In what ways are you treating the mercies of God or his blessings in your life as no big deal?
19. Why is it dangerous for us to know the truth about God and yet continue to sin?
- * 20. What would Jesus say if He came and preached in our city today?
21. Why do you think we sometimes become indifferent toward God?

Apply It

22. What specific sin do you need to repent of today?
- * 23. What are three things you could do this week to be a brighter light for Christ in your city or town?
24. In light of the certain judgment of God, what step could you take this week to reach a lost neighbor or friend?

Rest for the Weary - Matthew 11:25-30

Topics: Balance, Burdens, Commitment, Effort, Foolishness, God, Growth, Help, Humility, Legalism, Listening, Obedience, Partnerships, Rest, Submission, Wisdom

Open It

- * 1. If you had one week of vacation in which to recharge your physical and emotional batteries, where would you go to rest, relax, and get rejuvenated?
- 2. What sorts of activities absolutely drain the life out of you?
- 3. Why are many Christians frazzled and burned out?

Explore It

- 4. After pronouncing woe on several unrepentant cities, what did Jesus do? (11:25)
- 5. When did Jesus pray? (11:25)
- 6. How did Jesus address God? (11:25)
- 7. Why did Jesus say He was praising God? (11:25)
- 8. What did Jesus say God had entrusted or committed to Him? (11:27)
- 9. Who alone did Jesus say knew Him? (11:27)
- 10. Besides himself, who did Jesus say could know God? (11:27)
- 11. Who claimed to reveal God to the world? (11:27)
- 12. What general invitation did Christ make at this time? (11:28)
- * 13. What kind of people was Jesus addressing? (11:28)
- * 14. What promise did Jesus make to those who would accept His offer? (11:28)
- 15. What farming imagery did Jesus use to encourage people to come to Him? (11:29)
- 16. How did Jesus describe Himself? (11:29)
- * 17. How is walking with Christ described? (11:30)

Get It

- 18. In your eyes, what about Christ seems so obvious that everyone ought to be able to see it?
- 19. Why do you think God hides certain truths from “the wise”?
- * 20. In what ways do you feel weary and burdened right now?
- 21. What aspects of the Christian life do you find especially taxing or burdensome?
- * 22. What is it like to experience the promised “rest” of Christ?
- 23. How would you describe your walk with Christ right now?

Apply It

- 24. What are two specific ways you can work with Christ tomorrow instead of going in your own direction?
- 25. Besides praying, what are some ways you can get to know your Father in heaven more intimately this week?
- * 26. What burdens will you entrust to Christ today?

Lord of the Sabbath - Matthew 12:1-14

Topics: Bitterness, Blindness, Complaining, Criticism, Envy, Hatred, Healing, Hypocrisy, Judging Others, Legalism, Mercy, Rejection, Religion, Sacrifice, Stubbornness

Open It

- * 1. What do you like to do on your day off?
- 2. What are some ways laws or rules are twisted to hurt the very people they were designed to help?
- 3. What makes certain people in authority behave insensitively or rudely to the very people they ought to be serving?

Explore It

- 4. Where were Jesus and His disciples when they were eating? (12:1)
- 5. What difference did the day of the week make? (12:1)
- 6. What activity were the disciples involved in? (12:1)
- * 7. How did the Pharisees react when they saw the disciples eating? (12:2)
- 8. What biblical precedent did Jesus cite to justify the actions of His followers? (12:3-4)
- 9. What, according to Jesus, did the law say about priests and the temple and the Sabbath? (12:5)
- 10. Over what honored religious symbol did Jesus claim superiority? (12:6)
- * 11. What did Jesus accuse the Pharisees of failing to understand? (12:7)
- * 12. What did Jesus claim about Himself? (12:8)
- 13. Where did Jesus go after clashing with the Pharisees? (12:9)
- 14. What miracle did Jesus perform in the synagogue? (12:10, 13)
- 15. How did Jesus justify His actions? (12:11-12)
- 16. What was the response of the Pharisees? (12:14)

Get It

- 17. What kinds of lawful behavior are Christians often quick to condemn in others?
- * 18. What are some ways we trample over the feelings of others in our quest to be righteous?
- * 19. How do you need to be more compassionate and merciful in your relationships with others?
- 20. How do you use God to justify wrong attitudes such as snobbery, jealousy, prejudice, or selfishness?
- 21. Why are we unwilling to bend rules for others but quick to rationalize when the rules adversely affect us?
- 22. How do you think you would react if an undesirable person (a homeless person or drunk, for example) staggered into your church on Sunday and interrupted your worship service?
- 23. What are some man-made symbols or traditions (like the Pharisee's views on the Law, the temple, and the Sabbath) that we value more than people?

Apply It

- 24. In what specific ways can you show mercy and compassion to a hurting person today?
- * 25. What legalistic rules that keep you from loving people do you need to ignore?
- 26. Without being showy, how can you demonstrate today to a non-Christian friend the freedom that you have in Christ?

God's Chosen Servant - Matthew 12:15-21

Topics: Enemies, Expectations, Healing, Holy Spirit, Humility, Intimidation, Justice, Messiah, Ministry, Miracles, Prophecy, Rejection, Serving, Victory

Open It

- * 1. What kind of person (character, skills, knowledge) would make for a great national leader?
- 2. How would you define justice?
- 3. In what ways is our society unjust?
- 4. Why do we often get disappointed?

Explore It

- 5. How did Jesus respond to the hostility of the Pharisees? (12:15)
- 6. Who accompanied Jesus? (12:15)
- 7. What did Jesus do for the people who followed Him? (12:15)
- 8. What did Jesus instruct the people He helped to do? (12:16)
- 9. Who had foretold this event? (12:17)
- * 10. In the prophetic passage quoted here, how did God identify the Messiah? (12:18)
- 11. What message did the prophecy say Christ would preach? (12:18)
- 12. How was the personality of Christ described by Isaiah? (12:19)
- 13. How did Isaiah predict people would respond to this coming servant of God? (12:19)
- * 14. According to Isaiah, what type of ministry would the Messiah have? (12:20)
- * 15. According to the prophet Isaiah, how would the nations ultimately respond to Christ? (12:21)

Get It

- 16. If you were in charge of scripting the first and second comings of Christ, how would you have arranged them differently?
- * 17. If God were to describe your life and influence right now, what might he say?
- 18. What changes, events, and experiences in your life do you attribute to the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit?
- 19. In what ways do you seek to bring justice or fairness to your relationships?
- 20. How demanding are you?
- * 21. What is the danger in our being quiet, humble, and submissive?

Apply It

- 22. What are three practical ways you can serve God this week?
- * 23. What specific areas of your life do you need to surrender to the control of the Holy Spirit today?
- 24. Over the next few days, how can you bring God's justice and love to someone who is oppressed?

Jesus and Beelzebub - Matthew 12:22-37

Topics: Bitterness, Blasphemy, Demons, Denial, Enemies, Evil, Fruit, Hatred, Healing, Holy Spirit, Insults, Jealousy, Judging Others, Legalism, Messiah, Opposition, Rejection, Satan, Sickness, Stubbornness, Unbelievers, Words

Open It

1. Why are people prone to criticize those who are popular or successful?
- * 2. Why do you think our mouth frequently gets us in trouble?
3. How would you be affected if someone followed you around and taped all your conversations?
4. How much demonic activity do you think goes on today?

Explore It

5. What kind of man did Jesus heal? (12:22)
6. How did the onlookers respond? (12:23)
7. What kind of reaction did the Pharisees have to the miracle Christ did? (12:24)
8. How did Jesus show the Pharisee's argument to be illogical? (12:25-26)
9. What did Jesus say to show the significance of His ability to drive out demons? (12:28)
10. What rationale did Jesus give for casting out demons? (12:29)
11. What criteria did Jesus give for determining who supported and opposed Him? (12:30)
12. What did Jesus discuss with the Pharisees? (12:31-32)
- * 13. What did Jesus say a tree's "fruit" reveals? (12:33)
14. What harsh name did Jesus call the Pharisees? Why? (12:34)
- * 15. What did Jesus claim a person's words reveal? (12:34-35)
- * 16. What will every single person do on the day of judgment? (12:36-37)

Get It

17. What is it that convinced you that Jesus is the Son of God and the Savior of the world?
- * 18. How does it make you feel to know that Jesus knows every thought you have?
19. What are some ways you see Satan at work in the world today?
20. How do you see the kingdom of God overcoming the evil one?
21. What evidence could others cite that you are in fact a follower of Jesus Christ?
- * 22. What sins of the tongue are you currently struggling with that indicate a deeper problem in your heart?

Apply It

23. When and how can you best bring your unconfessed sins to God?
- * 24. What are some specific steps you can take this week to avoid sinning in your speech?
25. What can you begin doing today to develop a pure heart so that your life produces good fruit?

The Sign of Jonah - Matthew 12:38-45

Topics: Arguments, Believers, Blindness, Demons, Denial, Evidence, Foolishness, Hardheartedness, Holy Spirit, Rationalizing, Rejection, Stubbornness, Unbelievers, Wisdom

Open It

1. What are some common uses for signs?
- * 2. Why do some people say they want to see proof that God exists before they will believe in Him?
3. In your opinion, what is the strongest evidence for God?

Explore It

4. Who approached Jesus and demanded a sign? (12:38)
- * 5. What did a hostile group of people ask Jesus to do? (12:38)
- * 6. What kind of people did Jesus say asked for additional miraculous signs? (12:39)
7. How did Jesus respond to the request for a sign? (12:39)
- * 8. To what proof from history did Jesus point? (12:39-40)
9. How did Jesus compare Himself to Jonah? (12:40)
10. Who did Jesus say would one day stand and judge His generation? Why? (12:41)
11. Why will the “men of Nineveh” be in a position to judge? (12:41)
12. To what example from history did Jesus point as evidence for His identity? (12:42)
13. How did “the Queen of the South” respond to Solomon? (12:42)
14. How did Jesus compare Himself to Solomon? (12:43)
15. What example did Jesus use to show the importance of ridding one’s life of evil attitudes and filling one’s life with love for God? (12:43-45)
16. What did Jesus warn would happen to those who refused to open themselves up to the Lord? (12:45)

Get It

- * 17. What acts of God do you feel would strengthen your faith?
- * 18. What evidence of God is there in your life that could point others to Christ?
19. What areas of your life need cleansing?
20. What specific areas of your life need the filling of the Holy Spirit?
21. Why is it sometimes hard to believe in God without hard evidence?
22. What are some subtle ways Satan gains a foothold in the lives of Christians?
23. Why do you think certain “religious” people are sometimes skeptical about God?

Apply It

- * 24. How can you demonstrate the reality of God in your life today?
25. In what areas of your life do you need the Spirit of God to fill you this week?
26. In what area has God already revealed to you that you need to obey Him more faithfully?

Jesus' Mother and Brothers - Matthew 12:46-50

Topics: Affections, Body, Conflict, Family, Feelings, God's Will, Home, Involvement, Obedience, Pressure, Priorities, Purpose, Unity

Open It

- * 1. What is your fondest family memory?
- 2. If you had to belong to a family other than your own, what family would you choose to join? Why?
- 3. What is ideal Christian fellowship or community to you?

Explore It

- 4. What was Christ doing when His mother and brothers came to speak to Him? (12:46)
- 5. Who was in the crowd? (12:38-46)
- * 6. Who came to find Jesus? Why? (12:46)
- 7. Why did Jesus' family want to see Him? (12:46)
- 8. How did Jesus find out about His visitors? (12:47)
- * 9. What two rhetorical questions did Jesus pose when He heard about His family's arrival? (12:48)
- 10. How did Jesus answer His own questions? (12:49)
- 11. What makes a person a member of Jesus' family? (12:50)
- * 12. Who can become a member of Jesus' family? (12:50)
- 13. How did Jesus refer to God? (12:50)

Get It

- 14. In what ways (if any) are you closer to certain Christian friends than you are to your own family members?
- * 15. What circumstances led you to want to become a member of God's family?
- * 16. What special bonds does the family of God have that earthly families do not?
- 17. What are the dangers if we neglect our families?
- 18. What are the risks if we become obsessed with our families?
- 19. How are we sometimes guilty of neglecting our blood relatives?
- 20. In what ways is it possible to idolize the family?

Apply It

- * 21. What could you do today to strengthen the bonds you have with another Christian brother or sister?
- 22. To what family member could you communicate your love and concern this week?
- 23. What steps can you take this week to ensure that your family ties do not hinder God's will for you?

The Parable of the Sower - Matthew 13:1-23

Topics: Bible, Blessing, Compromise, Evangelism, Evidence, Fruit, Growth, Heart, Impulsiveness, Joy, Listening, New Life, Productivity, Prophecy, Timing, Witnessing, World

Open It

- * 1. When was the last time you “tuned out” a speaker?
- 2. What are some spiritual cliches or religious catch-phrases that people often use?
- 3. What misconceptions do non-Christians have about Christianity?

Explore It

- 4. Where was Jesus when the crowds came? (13:1-2)
- 5. Why did Jesus get on a boat to speak? (13:2)
- 6. What kind of stories did Jesus use to teach the crowds? (13:3)
- 7. The first story that Jesus told His audience was about what? (13:3)
- 8. Into what various places did the seed fall? (13:4-5)
- 9. Which seed ended up sprouting and bearing fruit? Why? (13:8)
- 10. To whom did Jesus direct His story about the four soils? (13:9)
- 11. How did the disciples respond to the Parable of the Four Soils? (13:10)
- 12. How did Jesus defend His use of parables? (13:11-13)
- 13. Why was the majority’s inability or unwillingness to understand Christ’s message significant? (13:14-15)
- 14. Why did Jesus say the disciples were blessed? (13:16-17)
- * 15. Whom did Jesus liken to seed along the path? Why? (13:19)
- * 16. According to Christ, who is like the seed sown on rocky soil? Why? (13:20-21)
- * 17. What kind of people were compared to seed sown among the thorns? Why? (13:22)
- 18. Of whom is the fruitful seed a picture? How? (13:23)

Get It

- 19. How do stories and illustrations help us to understand more clearly the message of the Bible?
- 20. How involved are you in “sowing the seed” of God’s Word?
- 21. What kind of soil would you say you are at this point in your life?
- * 22. What are some thorns that tend to choke out your Christian faith?
- * 23. What circumstances have a tendency to scorch your faith and cause it to wither?
- 24. How long did it take for you to understand the gospel of Christ?
- 25. How could you listen more faithfully and intently to the voice of God?

Apply It

- * 26. What one action could you do this week to improve the way you listen to God’s Word?
- 27. How could you become a more effective sower of God’s Word over the next month?
- 28. How can you show gratitude to God today for opening your eyes to the truth of the gospel?

The Parable of the Weeds - Matthew 13:24-30

Topics: Appearance, Danger, Enemies, Fruit, Hell, Image, Judging Others, Judgment, Kingdom of God/Heaven, Life-style, Lost, Majority, People, Punishment, Satan, Unbelievers

Open It

1. What kind of gardening have you done?
2. What is your least favorite type of yard work? Why?
- * 3. Why do people dislike weeds?

Explore It

4. What did Jesus use to communicate His point? (13:24)
5. What was Jesus talking about in this passage? (13:24)
6. To what did Jesus compare His topic? (13:24)
7. In the Parable of the Weeds, what happened while the farmer slept? (13:25)
8. What appeared in the farmer's field besides the wheat he had planted? (13:26)
9. How did the owner's servants react when they found weeds in the field? (13:27)
10. How did the owner reply to his servants? (13:28)
- * 11. What did the servants volunteer to do for the owner of the field? (13:28)
- * 12. On what grounds did the owner turn down the servant's suggestion? (13:29)
- * 13. What plan of action did the owner choose? (13:30)

Get It

14. How would you respond if you tried to get a Bible study going and a group of non-Christians showed up to give you a hard time?
15. What are some ways Christians blend in with non-Christians?
16. What do you think about Christians who try to isolate themselves completely from non-Christians?
17. What opportunities do you have by living among all different kinds of people?
- * 18. In what ways does Satan try to mess up God's plan and your part in that plan?
19. What dangers lie in trying to label people as either "weeds" or "wheat" (non-Christians or Christians)?
20. Whose responsibility is it to label the weeds and deal with them?
- * 21. Under what circumstances are you to live for Christ?

Apply It

- * 22. In what ways do you need to alter your life-style (either attitude or action) today in order to be more like wheat and less like a weed?
23. Whom do you need to judge and label less today?
24. For what non-Christian coworkers, neighbors, and friends will you pray this week?

The Parables of the Mustard Seed and the Yeast - Matthew 13:31-35

Topics: Expectations, Growth, Influence, Kingdom of God/Heaven, Power, Prophecy, Quality, Results, Simplicity, Success, Surprises

Open It

- * 1. What small or seemingly insignificant possession is worth a great deal to you? Why?
- 2. What are some big or important events that start out very small?
- 3. What ingredients make for great storytelling?
- 4. What is one fairytale you remember from childhood that you still enjoy today?

Explore It

- 5. What did Jesus tell the crowd? (13:31)
- 6. In the Parable of the Mustard Seed, what did the man do with the seed? (13:31)
- * 7. To what kind of seed did Christ compare the kingdom of heaven? Why? (13:31-32)
- * 8. How does the mustard seed compare to others in size? (13:32)
- * 9. What is a mustard seed like when it is fully grown? (13:32)
- 10. Besides bearing fruit, how is a mustard plant useful? (13:32)
- 11. In the Parable of the Yeast, to what did Christ liken the kingdom of heaven? (13:33)
- 12. How does yeast work? (13:33)
- 13. In addition to parables, how else did Jesus get His point across to the crowd? (13:34)
- 14. Why was Jesus' use of parables significant? (13:35)

Get It

- 15. In what small or seemingly insignificant ways has God worked in your life?
- * 16. How can a Christian be a positive presence among his or her non-Christian friends and relatives?
- 17. What are some ways God might use a person to spread the gospel in a place where there is little Christian influence?
- 18. What are some little things we can do to make a big impact for Christ?
- * 19. What does this passage say to those who don't feel talented, gifted, or brilliant?
- 20. In what ways has your Christian life grown to bless others (like the mustard seed becoming a big tree)?

Apply It

- * 21. What is one way you could quietly help the gospel permeate your family, workplace, or circle of friends?
- 22. What illustrations, examples, or stories can you share with someone today to help him or her understand your faith in Christ?
- 23. What prayer can you begin praying this week to cause the gospel to spread?

The Parable of the Weeds Explained - Matthew 13:36-43

Topics: Angels, Enemies, Future, Grief, Hell, Jesus Christ, Judgment, Kingdom of God/Heaven, Listening, Lost, Majority, Mourning, Punishment, Righteousness, Satan, Sin, Unbelievers, World

Open It

1. What school subject or subjects did you find difficult? Why?
- * 2. What are your beliefs about the future of the world?
3. Why are many people eager to believe in heaven but reluctant to believe in hell?

Explore It

4. Where did Jesus go upon leaving His audience? (13:36)
5. Who came to Jesus for further discussion? Why? (13:36)
6. What specific story did Jesus' audience want explained to them? (13:36)
- * 7. In the Parable of the Weeds, whom did the sower represent? How? (13:37)
- * 8. What did the field represent? In what way? (13:38)
- * 9. What groups of people are illustrated by good seed and weeds? (13:38)
10. Whom does the enemy who sowed the bad seed represent? (13:39)
11. What future event is symbolized by the harvest? (13:39)
12. Whom do the harvesters represent? (13:39)
13. The burning of the weeds symbolizes what future event? (13:40-42)
14. What will happen to those who are thrown "into the fiery furnace"? (13:42)
15. What is the future for the righteous? (13:43)

Get It

16. How do you study the Bible in order to understand better what Christ has said?
17. If we seldom pick up the Bible or spend time praying, what do our actions say about us?
- * 18. If you had to guess, what would you estimate to be the ratio of "wheat" to "weeds" in your office, town, neighborhood, or school?
- * 19. How do these kinds of passages (threats of judgment for unbelievers) make you feel?
20. In which category (wheat or weed) would your associates place you? Why?
21. What does this passage say to you about the prospect of the world getting better and better?

Apply It

- * 22. In what ways can you "shine like the sun" in your contacts with unbelievers?
23. What passage of Scripture do you need to ask God about and study this week?
24. How could you minister to someone today with a quote or insight from the Bible?

The Parables of the Hidden Treasure and the Pearl - Matthew 13:44-46

Topics: Celebration, Commitment, Dedication, Desires, Joy, Kingdom of God/Heaven, Perspective, Priorities, Satisfaction, Value, Wealth

Open It

- * 1. What two or three expensive items do you wish you could afford?
- 2. What are some good ways to determine what our priorities really are?
- 3. What is the difference between value and price?
- 4. How is the value of something determined?

Explore It

- * 5. What is like treasure hidden in a field? How? (13:44)
- 6. What is the kingdom of heaven like? Why? (13:44)
- 7. Where was treasure hidden? (13:44)
- 8. What happened when the man uncovered the hidden treasure? (13:44)
- * 9. How did the man feel when he discovered the treasure? (13:44)
- 10. How badly did the man want the treasure? (13:44)
- 11. To what did Christ compare the kingdom of heaven? Why? (13:45)
- 12. What did the man in the parable find? (13:46)
- 13. How valuable was the pearl? (13:47)
- * 14. How did the man who found the pearl react to its discovery? (13:47)

Get It

- * 15. If the gospel is true and heaven is our destiny, why are we often “ho-hum” about Christ and the Christian life?
- * 16. How can we recover the joy and excitement that we had when we first met Christ?
- 17. What sacrifices are you willing to make in order to fully embrace Christ and his kingdom?
- 18. When, if ever, has your faith cost you something?
- 19. What relationships, possessions, or personal ambitions are you reluctant to give up for Christ?
- 20. What would you say to a someone who says that you can be a good Christian without completely “selling all” to follow Christ?
- 21. Other than buried treasure or a precious pearl, what illustrations could you use to explain to a friend the value of knowing Christ?

Apply It

- 22. What items do you need to “sell off” this week in order to follow Christ and His kingdom?
- 23. With what person will you try to share the wealth you have in Christ today or tomorrow?
- * 24. What first step will you take today to recover the joy of knowing Christ?

The Parable of the Net - Matthew 13:47-52

Topics: Angels, Evil, Future, Grief, Hell, Judgment, Kingdom of God/Heaven, Mourning, Punishment, Righteousness, Surprises, Unbelievers

Open It

- * 1. What is your favorite “fish story”?
- 2. When someone says the word “angel,” what kind of images come to mind?
- 3. What one question would you like to ask God about heaven?

Explore It

- * 4. To what did Jesus compare the kingdom of heaven? (13:47)
- * 5. How was the net used, and what was the result? (13:47)
 - 6. In the Parable of the Net, what did the fishermen do with the full net? (13:48)
 - 7. What happened to the good fish? (13:48)
 - 8. What happened to the bad fish? (13:48)
- * 9. Why did Jesus use this analogy? (13:49)
 - 10. What group did the fishermen in the story represent? (13:49)
 - 11. Jesus interpreted His parable to say that wicked people can expect what kind of eternal destiny? (13:50)
 - 12. What question did Jesus ask His disciples when He finished teaching? (13:51)
 - 13. How did the disciples answer Jesus’ question? (13:51)
 - 14. To what did Jesus compare those in His audience who knew about the Old Testament law and the kingdom of heaven to come? (13:52)

Get It

- 15. What do you think it would have been like to hear Jesus teach about heaven?
- 16. Since Jesus is in the fishing business, what can you do to help him catch men and women?
- 17. Why are we often reluctant to talk about hell?
- 18. What could you say to a friend who expressed doubts about hell?
- * 19. How would it alter the way we live if we kept in mind the fact that God will judge us?
- * 20. How can we live more often with the wonder of heaven in mind?
- 21. What new insight into God’s kingdom do you have as a result of studying this passage?

Apply It

- 22. What reminders can you use today to help you pray for non-Christian friends and relatives?
- 23. In what way can you remind yourself of heaven this week?
- * 24. How can you show your gratitude to God today for making you a “good fish”?

A Prophet Without Honor - Matthew 13:53-58

Topics: Acceptance, Accusation, Change, Conversation, Criticism, Doubt, Faithfulness, Family, Forgiveness, Habits, History, Honor, Image, New Life, Perseverance, Reputation, Surprises

Open It

- * 1. What do you like best and least about your hometown?
- 2. What would your family say you were like as a little kid?
- 3. How would your high school or college friends react if they heard you were in a serious Bible study?
- 4. What former classmate has surprised you since you graduated from high school? Why?

Explore It

- 5. What did Jesus do when He finished telling His parables? (13:53)
- 6. Where did Jesus go? (13:54)
- * 7. What did Jesus do in His hometown? (13:54)
- 8. Where exactly did Jesus preach? (13:54)
- 9. What was the public response to Jesus' message? (13:54)
- 10. What kinds of questions were the folks in Nazareth asking? (13:55)
- 11. What family ties did the townspeople of Nazareth recognize Jesus as having? (13:55)
- * 12. How did the people feel about "one of their own" saying wise things and doing amazing miracles? (13:57)
- 13. How did Jesus explain their reaction to Him? (13:57)
- * 14. What did Jesus not do in Nazareth—at least in any great amount? Why? (13:58)
- 15. What caused Jesus to refrain from doing miracles in Nazareth? (13:58)

Get It

- 16. How would you react if a guy from your neighborhood started doing miracles and claiming to be God?
- 17. What are some ways we limit the work of Christ by our unbelief?
- 18. Why are we more often impressed by people we don't know than by people we do know?
- 19. Why do we have a tendency to downplay the accomplishments of people we are close to?
- * 20. How did your family react when you placed your trust in Christ?
- * 21. In what ways do you struggle to live down your past?

Apply It

- 22. What are three things you need to trust Christ for in the coming week?
- 23. How can you strengthen your faith in Jesus during this time so that He can work in and through you?
- * 24. What family members or old friends will you commit to visit or call in the next month to tell them about the change Christ is making in you?

John the Baptist Beheaded - Matthew 14:1-12

Topics: Adultery, Bitterness, Consequences, Correction, Danger, Deceit, Discipline, Embarrassment, Foolishness, Impulsiveness, Injustice, Motives, Obedience, Peer Pressure, Pride, Responsibility, Sin, Stubbornness, Toleration

Open It

1. What, in your opinion, would be the preferred way to die?
- * 2. What do you remember from your junior high and high school dances?
3. What makes peer pressure difficult to resist?
4. How does peer pressure become more sophisticated as we get older?

Explore It

5. What powerful political figure heard about all the things Christ was doing? (14:1)
6. What explanation did Herod have for the miracles Christ was doing? (14:2)
7. What had Herod done to John the Baptist? (14:3)
- * 8. Why did Herod put John in prison? (14:3)
9. For what reason had John been rebuking Herod? (14:4)
10. How did Herod react to John's reprimand? (14:5)
- * 11. Why didn't Herod act on his wishes? (14:5)
12. What happened on Herod's birthday? (14:6-7)
13. What promise did Herod make to the daughter of Herodias? (14:7)
14. Who was behind the plot to murder John? (14:8)
15. How did Herod feel when he realized he'd been tricked? (14:9)
- * 16. Why did Herod carry out the execution of John? (14:9)
17. What happened in the aftermath of John's execution? (14:12)

Get It

- * 18. What situations make you most susceptible to peer pressure?
19. In what ways do you promise more than you can (or should) deliver?
20. Why do people hate to be corrected?
21. What grandiose promises have you made and later regretted?
- * 22. What should you do if you make a promise that pressures you to compromise or to do the wrong thing?
23. What does a person's reaction to correction tell you about him or her?
24. In what ways have you sensed danger or risk just by living for Christ?
25. What impulsive words have later come back to haunt you?
26. How would you react if your pastor or a spiritual mentor was brutally murdered?
27. What correction have you recently received from an older and more mature Christian?

Apply It

- * 28. What can you do to strengthen yourself against peer pressure this week?
29. What reminder can help you refrain from making foolish promises in coming weeks?
30. What can you do this week to respond to some correction you recently received?

Jesus Feeds the Five Thousand - Matthew 14:13-21

Topics: Compassion, Confidence, Delegation, Gifts, Help, Learning, Limitations, Ministry, Miracles, Quiet, Selfishness, Thankfulness, Trust

Open It

- * 1. What is your favorite restaurant in all the world? Why?
- 2. What food do you never seem to tire of?
- 3. Where do you go when you want to be alone?

Explore It

- 4. How did Jesus respond to the death of John the Baptist? (14:13)
- 5. Who came looking for Jesus? Why? (14:13)
- 6. Who met Jesus at the shore? (14:14)
- 7. What did Jesus do for the people that came to see Him? (14:14)
- 8. What happened when it started getting dark? (14:15)
- * 9. What did the disciples want Jesus to tell the crowds? Why? (14:15)
- * 10. How did Jesus respond to the disciples' suggestion? (14:16)
- 11. What did Jesus tell the disciples to do for the crowds? (14:16)
- 12. How did the disciples react to Jesus' unusual request? (14:17)
- 13. After having the crowd sit on the grass, what did Jesus do? (14:19)
- 14. How much food did Jesus begin with? (14:19)
- 15. How was the food distributed? (14:19)
- 16. How much food was available to each person? (14:20)
- 17. How much food was left over? (14:20)
- * 18. How large a crowd was fed? (14:21)

Get It

- 19. Why is it important for us to spend regular time alone with God?
- 20. What thoughts typically run through your mind when you see a big crowd of people?
- 21. Why is it harder to be kind at certain times than at others?
- 22. Why should we pray before meals?
- 23. What is it about food that breaks down barriers between people and gives us opportunities to talk with them?
- * 24. How would you have felt in the disciples' shoes?
- * 25. What does this passage tell you about God?

Apply It

- * 26. What gift, ability, or resource (no matter how insignificant) will you give to God today so that he can bless it and multiply it?
- 27. To what quiet place will you go this week for a couple of hours to get away from your busyness, review your priorities, and let God renew your spirit?
- 28. How can you minister to someone in need today?

Jesus Walks on the Water - Matthew 14:22-36

Topics: Believe, Challenge, Courage, Depend, Faith, Fear, Healing, Help, Miracles, Perspective, Protection, Security, Strength, Trust, Victory

Open It

- * 1. What is the most frightening experience you've ever had?
- 2. What is the most worshipful experience you have ever had?
- 3. Of all of Christ's miracles, which one would you most like to have witnessed? Why?

Explore It

- 4. After feeding the crowd of five thousand people, what instructions did Jesus give His disciples? (14:22)
- 5. Where did Jesus go after He dismissed the crowd? Why? (14:23)
- 6. What did Jesus do on the mountain? (14:23)
- 7. Where were the disciples when evening came? (14:24)
- * 8. What conditions were the disciples encountering? (14:24)
- * 9. What miracle did Christ perform? (14:25)
- * 10. How did the disciples react to what they saw? (14:26)
- 11. How did Jesus try to calm the disciples' fears? (14:27)
- 12. What did Peter ask Jesus to do? (14:28)
- 13. How did Jesus respond to Peter's request? (14:29)
- 14. What happened to Peter as he made his way toward Jesus? (14:29-30)
- 15. What did Jesus do and say when Peter got in trouble? (14:31)
- 16. What was the consensus reaction to this amazing sequence of events? (14:33)
- 17. What happened when Jesus and His disciples arrived at their destination? (14:35-36)

Get It

- 18. Why do you think Jesus spent time alone praying?
- 19. How is your devotional life right now?
- 20. What causes you to doubt and waver in your faith?
- * 21. What situations cause you the most fear in life?
- 22. How would you rate your faith on a scale from one to five (one being weak, five being strong)? Why?
- 23. What events or experiences have led you to trust in Jesus?
- * 24. What does this passage teach you to do?

Apply It

- 25. What specific step could you take this week to improve your devotional life?
- * 26. In what practical way can you demonstrate faith as you go through the coming week?
- 27. What step of trust do you need to take today?
- 28. What will help you remember to keep your eyes on Jesus and off your fears?

Clean and Unclean - Matthew 15:1-20

Topics: Appearance, Deceit, Disobedience, Hypocrisy, Interpretation, Law, Legalism, New Covenant, Pride, Purity, Rebellion, Religion, Self-righteousness, Stubbornness, Teaching, Thinking, Traditions, Worship

Open It

- * 1. What traditions have special meaning to you?
- 2. Why do people value tradition?
- 3. If you had to rank the five worst sins, what would your list include?

Explore It

- 4. Who came from Jerusalem to see Christ? Why? (15:1)
- 5. What complaint did the Pharisees and teachers of the law level against Jesus? (15:2)
- 6. What did the Pharisees and teachers of the law value more than the Word of God? (15:2)
- 7. What did Jesus cite as examples of the Pharisees' disobedience? (15:4)
- 8. How did the Pharisees get around the requirements of the Law? (15:5)
- * 9. What was wrong with the Pharisees? (15:7-9)
- 10. What Scripture did Jesus apply to the Pharisees? (15:8-9)
- * 11. How did Jesus shift the emphasis away from external issues like unclean and clean foods? (15:10-11)
- 12. How did the Pharisees like Jesus' statements? (15:12)
- 13. What advice did Jesus give to followers of the Pharisees? (15:14)
- 14. Why did Jesus explain His statements to His disciples? (15:15)
- * 15. How did Jesus redefine "unclean"? (15:17-20)

Get It

- * 16. How is it possible for us to be "religious" and yet be far from God?
- 17. In what ways are we sometimes like the Pharisees?
- * 18. What are some ways we "go through the motions" of the Christian life?
- 19. Why do we sometimes use loopholes or rationalizations to avoid doing the right thing?
- 20. What matters more: how people behave or their motives and attitudes?
- 21. In what way do Christians get bogged down in unnecessary rules?
- 22. What advice would you give a Christian friend who is far away from God?
- 23. In what ways have you allowed man-made rules to obscure the spirit of the law (and the work of the Holy Spirit in your life)?

Apply It

- 24. What is one step you can take to develop a pure heart this week?
- 25. How can you nurture your love for God through your actions at work and at home over the next few days?
- * 26. This week, what could help you keep your focus on Christ rather than mere outward conformity to rules?

The Faith of the Canaanite Woman - Matthew 15:21-28

Topics: Answers, Believe, Caring, Compassion, Delay, Demons, Determination, Faith, Healing, Help, Insensitivity, Perseverance, Persistence, Results, Testing, Victory

Open It

- * 1. What is it like to be on the outside of a group looking in?
- 2. What behavior on the part of others absolutely drives you up the wall?
- 3. What is your greatest success (in the sense of pursuing a goal for a long time and finally reaching it through persistence and determination)?
- 4. What is the most desperate feeling and/or situation you have ever experienced?

Explore It

- 5. To what place did Jesus withdraw? When? (15:21)
- 6. Who approached Jesus when he reached Gentile territory? (15:22)
- 7. What frantic request did the Canaanite woman make of Jesus? (15:22)
- 8. What was Jesus' response to the Canaanite woman's request? (15:23)
- 9. What did the disciples urge Jesus to do? (15:23)
- 10. How did Jesus answer His disciples? (15:24)
- 11. How did the discussion between Christ and His disciples deter the woman in need of help? (15:25)
- * 12. What reason did Jesus give for being reluctant to help the woman? (15:26)
- * 13. What quick and insightful reply did the woman make to Christ? (15:27)
- * 14. How did Jesus praise the woman? (15:28)
- 15. What happened in the end? (15:28)

Get It

- 16. In what ways do you tend to be insensitive to those who are different?
- 17. Why do you think Christ responded to this woman as he did?
- 18. What kinds of lessons do we learn from waiting?
- * 19. How does our persistence in prayer show God's character?
- * 20. How persistent are you in your prayers to God?
- 21. What would Jesus say about your faith today?

Apply It

- * 22. What long-term, unanswered prayer request do you need to continue bringing before God on a regular basis?
- 23. What encouraging principle from this passage can you share today with a Christian brother or sister?
- 24. What individual in need of help do you need to assist today?

Jesus Feeds the Four Thousand - Matthew 15:29-39

Topics: Compassion, Delegation, Healing, Instructions, Miracles, Obedience, Praise, Resources, Serving, Submission, Worship

Open It

1. At what kind of restaurants do you like to eat?
2. What is your favorite food?
- * 3. What recent news regarding hunger or poverty have you heard?

Explore It

4. When Jesus left the region of Tyre and Sidon, where did He go? (15:29)
5. At what specific place did Jesus set up His “doctor’s office”? (15:29)
6. How many people came to Jesus? Why? (15:30)
7. What are some of the diseases and ailments that Jesus cured? (15:30)
8. How did the healings affect all those who watched? (15:31)
- * 9. What note of concern did Jesus share with His disciples after He healed the people? (15:32)
10. How did the disciples respond to Jesus’ desire? (15:33)
- * 11. Where did Jesus turn to feed the crowd? (15:34)
12. How did the disciples’ resources at that moment compare with the food at their disposal the last time they fed a hungry crowd (see Matthew 14:13-21)? (15:34)
13. What instructions did Jesus give the crowd? (15:35)
14. What procedures did Jesus follow in feeding this large crowd? (15:36)
- * 15. How much food was left over? (15:37)
16. How many people participated in this all-you-can-eat meal? (15:38)
17. Where did Jesus then go? (15:39)

Get It

18. Why do you think the disciples failed to remember the previous instance of Christ feeding a large crowd?
19. How do you think you would have responded if you had been with Jesus on this occasion?
20. How can we remember God’s past actions?
- * 21. What feelings do you have toward the less fortunate?
- * 22. Why do you think God works through us when he could get things done better and faster by doing miracles?
23. How can we develop love for Christ so we avoid taking his blessings for granted?
24. What small thing or resource can you offer to God?
25. What experience from the past reminds you of God’s work in your life?

Apply It

26. What can you do today to feed someone spiritually?
- * 27. How does God want you to meet the physical needs of someone in your life?
28. For what specific blessings do you need to express your gratitude to God today?

The Demand for a Sign - Matthew 16:1-4

Topics: Answers, Attitude, Barriers, Discernment, Disobedience, Ego, Expectations, Humility, Knowledge, Learning, Pride, Rationalizing, Respect, Satisfaction, Understanding, Wisdom

Open It

- * 1. What are some examples of signs?
- 2. What is your favorite season of the year? Why?
- 3. What positive signs give you reason to be optimistic about the days ahead?
- 4. What negative signs tell you that the world is getting worse?

Explore It

- * 5. Who approached Jesus? (16:1)
- 6. What were the people who approached Jesus really doing? (16:1)
- * 7. What request did the people make of Jesus? (16:1)
- 8. Jesus answered the Pharisees and Sadducees by talking about what? (16:2)
- 9. What did a red sky at night mean in this context? (16:2)
- 10. What did a red sunrise indicate in this context? (16:3)
- * 11. Why did Jesus chastise the Pharisees and Sadducees? (16:3-4)
- 12. What kind of generation did Jesus say looks for a sign? (16:4)
- 13. What single sign did Jesus offer? (16:4)
- 14. What did Jesus do after speaking with the Pharisees and Sadducees? (16:4)

Get It

- 15. What signs do we already have of Jesus' power?
- 16. Why do you think these religious leaders sought a miraculous sign?
- 17. What are some ways we try to put God to the test?
- * 18. What demands or performance requirements do we sometimes place on God?
- 19. Why would many of your non-Christian friends still not believe in Jesus even if they saw Him do a miracle?
- 20. How would you answer someone who said, "I'll believe in God when I see Him do a miracle right before my eyes"?
- * 21. What signs or proofs of God's power does our generation already have?

Apply It

- * 22. What are some ways you could use nature or the Bible to share the truth of Christ with a friend?
- 23. In what way can you show your faith in Christ this week?
- 24. What has God done in your life that you can use as a sign to others?

The Yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees - Matthew 16:5-12

Topics: Beliefs, Blindness, Danger, Deceit, Discernment, Evil, Faith, Heresy, Ignorance, Influence, Listening, Purity, Separation, Truth, Understanding

Open It

1. What dates or events do you have a hard time remembering?
- * 2. How has a simple case of misunderstanding recently created problems for you?
3. What philosophies or widely believed ideas do you feel are dangerous?

Explore It

4. Where were Jesus and His disciples traveling? (16:5)
5. What did the disciples forget to pack? (16:5)
6. What warning did Jesus issue to His followers? (16:6)
- * 7. Whom did Jesus mention in His warning? (16:6)
- * 8. How did the disciples misunderstand Jesus' comments? (16:7)
9. What did Jesus say the disciples lacked? (16:8)
10. What did Jesus' disciples fail to understand? (16:9)
11. What did Jesus' disciples forget? (16:9)
12. What recent incidents did Jesus cite to make His point? (16:9-10)
13. How did Jesus clarify His remarks about yeast? (16:11)
- * 14. What was Jesus encouraging His disciples to avoid? Why? (16:11-12)
15. What happened when Jesus explained His words? (16:12)

Get It

- * 16. What truths about God do you have a hard time understanding?
17. What spiritual lessons and truths do you have a tendency to forget?
18. How can one wrong idea get us into trouble?
19. What are some ways we get so caught up in the mundane details of life that we miss the bigger-than-life lessons God wants to teach us?
20. What forgotten experiences or neglected truths do you need to reflect upon more?
- * 21. How can we judge whether the spiritual teaching we receive is healthy or dangerous?

Apply It

- * 22. What can you do today to become more sensitive to what God is trying to teach you through His Word?
23. What nonjudgmental and nonthreatening step can you take this week to warn a friend who is being led astray by unsound teaching?
24. What small evil do you need to root out of your life this week before it spreads and causes much trouble?

Peter's Confession of Christ - Matthew 16:13-20

Topics: Assumptions, Beliefs, Blindness, Church, Confusion, Discernment, Ignorance, Insight, Jesus Christ, Knowledge, Leadership, Messiah, Opinions, Trust, Words

Open It

- * 1. If you could ask any person any question, whom would you ask, and what would you want to know?
- 2. In what ways do you consider yourself blessed?
- 3. How would you describe an ideal church?

Explore It

- 4. In what region did the events of this passage take place? (16:13)
- 5. What broad, impersonal question did Jesus ask His disciples? (16:13)
- 6. What different answers did Christ get to His question? (16:14)
- * 7. What pointed personal question did Christ ask His followers? (16:15)
- 8. Who spoke up in answer to Christ's question? (16:16)
- * 9. What answer did Peter give? (16:16)
- 10. Why was Peter blessed? (16:17)
- * 11. In what way is coming to faith and understanding the gospel a supernatural event? (16:17)
- 12. What kind of leadership role did Jesus predict for Peter? (16:18)
- 13. What did Jesus promise about the Church? (16:18)
- 14. What authority did Jesus promise to Peter? (16:19)
- 15. Against what did Jesus warn His disciples at the conclusion of this discussion? (16:20)

Get It

- * 16. What are some common views of Jesus among our generation?
- 17. Who do you say Jesus is?
- 18. What happened the first time you spoke publicly about your faith in Christ?
- * 19. What difference does it make what we believe about Jesus?
- 20. What forces try to hinder God's work today?
- 21. Why should churches not be discouraged in their efforts to carry out God's work?

Apply It

- 22. What part in the building of Christ's Church do you have now?
- * 23. What can you do or say to help a friend overcome an erroneous idea about Jesus this week?
- 24. What are three ways you could make a public statement of your faith in Christ?

Jesus Predicts His Death - Matthew 16:21-28

Topics: Affections, Angels, Basics of the Faith, Commitment, Courage, Dedication, Devotion, Enemies, God's Will, Jesus Christ, Kingdom of God/Heaven, Last Days, Loyalty, Opposition, Perspective, Priorities, Resurrection, Sacrifice, Second Coming, Sin, Submission, Victory

Open It

- * 1. What are some ways people try to “find themselves”?
- 2. What is the most surprised you have ever been?
- 3. What is the best reward you've ever received?

Explore It

- 4. What did Christ begin telling His disciples would eventually happen to Him? (16:21)
- 5. How did Christ say He would suffer? (16:21)
- 6. Who did Christ say would oppose Him and make Him suffer? (16:21)
- 7. What did Christ say would happen after He was killed? (16:21)
- 8. How did Peter react to the news that Jesus would suffer and die? (16:22)
- 9. How did Jesus characterize Peter's objections? (16:23)
- * 10. What is required of the one who would follow Jesus? (16:24)
- * 11. What two ways can a person lose his or her life? (16:25)
- * 12. A person's soul is more valuable than what? How? (16:26)
- 13. What did Jesus say would happen after His death and resurrection? (16:27)
- 14. What will happen after Christ returns? (16:27)
- 15. What did Jesus promise His disciples? (16:28)

Get It

- 16. How would you live differently if you knew exactly when and how you were going to die?
- 17. How does it make you feel to realize that Jesus willingly died for your sins?
- 18. If a person's soul is worth more than the whole world, how ought that affect the way we spend our time?
- 19. What would change in your life if you denied yourself for Christ's sake?
- * 20. What does it mean to you to “take up your cross” and follow Jesus?
- * 21. In what situations do you find it difficult to follow Christ?
- 22. How should eternal rewards motivate us to live for Christ?

Apply It

- 23. What do you need to do this week to center your thoughts on the things of God?
- 24. What is one way you can deny yourself today for Christ's sake?
- * 25. What change in your weekly schedule could you make to better reflect what God considers important?

The Transfiguration - Matthew 17:1-13

Topics: Appearance, Devotion, Experience, Glory, God, Heaven, Holiness, Jesus Christ, Kingdom of God/Heaven, Listening, Power, Words, Worship

Open It

- * 1. What is the most spectacular event you have ever witnessed?
- 2. What is the most embarrassing thing you've ever done or said?
- 3. If you received an all-expense-paid trip for four to Europe, who would you take with you?

Explore It

- 4. How much time elapsed between Christ's prediction of his death and the Transfiguration? (17:1)
- 5. Which three disciples were with Christ on the mountain? (17:1)
- * 6. Where did Christ and his three disciples go? (17:1)
- * 7. What happened to Christ on the mountain? (17:2)
- 8. Who else appeared and began talking to Jesus? (17:3)
- 9. What did Peter volunteer to do? (17:4)
- 10. What do you think prompted Peter to say he would build shelters? (17:4)
- 11. What happened while Peter was speaking? (17:5)
- * 12. How did the disciples react when God spoke out of the cloud? (17:6)
- 13. Who calmed down the disciples? (17:7)
- 14. What did Jesus say to the disciples as they departed? (17:9)
- 15. What question did the disciples ask Jesus? (17:10)
- 16. How did Jesus answer the disciples? (17:11-12)
- 17. What did the disciples learn about John the Baptist? (17:13)

Get It

- 18. How would you have reacted if you had been with Christ for the Transfiguration?
- 19. What does this passage tell you about the relationship between Jesus and God the Father?
- * 20. What memories or insights do you think Peter, James, and John took home with them from this incident?
- * 21. In what way is it difficult for us to worship God?
- 22. How might seeing Christ in all His glory prompt us to obey Him more completely?
- 23. In what ways does God reveal Himself to us today?

Apply It

- 24. How can you make an effort to listen to Jesus this week?
- 25. What could you do today to give Christ the glory He deserves?
- * 26. What could you do over the next three months to become more adept and more faithful in worshiping God?

The Healing of a Boy With a Demon - Matthew 17:14-23

Topics: Abilities, Atonement, Authority, Death, Demons, Faith, Fasting, Grief, Healing, Miracles, Power, Prayer, Resurrection, Sin, Spiritual Disciplines, Trust

Open It

- * 1. How does it feel to have a problem you can't solve?
- 2. Where is the line between being obsessed with death and never coming to grips with your mortality?
- 3. Why do some people seem to have greater faith than others?

Explore It

- 4. When Jesus returned with Peter, James, and John from the scene of the Transfiguration, what did he find? (17:14)
- 5. Who approached Jesus? How? (17:14)
- 6. What did the man who approached Jesus say? (17:15)
- * 7. How did the man describe his child's situation? (17:15)
- * 8. Who had already been unable to help the man's son? (17:16)
- * 9. What reply did Jesus give when the man said Jesus' disciples had been unable to help? (17:17)
- 10. How did Jesus resolve the problem presented to Him? (17:17-18)
- 11. What question did the disciples ask Jesus? When? (17:19)
- 12. How did Jesus answer his disciples' question? (17:20)
- 13. What did Jesus say is the answer to the impossible? (17:20)
- 14. What spiritual disciplines did Jesus recommend for confronting serious obstacles? (17:21)
- 15. What sober subject did Jesus again bring up when the disciples came together in Galilee? (17:22-23)

Get It

- 16. How do you imagine the nine disciples felt as they attempted to cast the demon out of this man's boy?
- 17. How do you think the disciples felt later when Jesus rebuked them?
- * 18. Why do you think Jesus was upset by His disciples' lack of faith?
- 19. What do you see as the purpose for fasting?
- * 20. In what areas of your life do you find it difficult to believe and trust in God?
- 21. If we truly believe in heaven and that we'll see our fellow Christians again in eternity, why do we grieve when a Christian dies?

Apply It

- * 22. What impossible task can you assault with your faith this week?
- 23. What spiritual discipline will you practice this week?
- 24. How can you help someone who is hurting today?

The Temple Tax - Matthew 17:24-27

Topics: Citizenship, Government, Influence, Integrity, Miracles, Obedience, Obligation, Reputation, Responsibility, Submission

Open It

- * 1. How would you go about reforming the tax laws in this country?
- 2. Why is it tempting to cheat on our taxes?
- 3. How involved should Christians be in government?

Explore It

- 4. When did Jesus and His disciples speak with the tax collectors? (17:24)
- 5. Whom did Jesus and His disciples encounter upon their arrival in Capernaum? (17:24)
- 6. What question did the tax collectors ask Peter? (17:24)
- * 7. How did Peter respond to the tax collectors' questions? (17:25)
- 8. Who spoke to Peter first when Peter entered the house? Why? (17:25)
- 9. What tax question did Jesus ask Peter? (17:25)
- 10. How did Peter answer Jesus? (17:26)
- * 11. What did Jesus say about the obligation to pay taxes? (17:26)
- * 12. Why did Jesus agree to pay the temple tax? (17:27)
- 13. What unusual directions did Jesus give Peter for coming up with the money to pay the temple tax? (17:27)

Get It

- 14. In what ways do Christians not fit in or belong in our culture?
- * 15. Why should we pay taxes?
- 16. How do God's laws and human laws fit together?
- 17. In what ways (if any) are Christians "above the law"?
- 18. How do non-Christians react when Christians act as if they don't have to comply with worldly laws?
- * 19. What are the pros and cons of churches being exempt from taxes?
- 20. How is it possible for us to both serve Christ and obey the government?

Apply It

- 21. How does your behavior need to change this week so you can better represent Christ as his ambassador in the world?
- * 22. What changes do you need to make the next time you do your taxes to make sure you pay all that you owe?
- 23. What areas of your life do you need to place under the control of the Holy Spirit today?

The Greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven - Matthew 18:1-9

Topics: Children, Evil, Example, Greatness, Humility, Influence, Purity, Responsibility, Simplicity, Sin, World

Open It

1. Who is the greatest person you know?
2. Why is our culture so competitive—obsessed with the best and the greatest?
3. What is your favorite childhood memory?
- * 4. What do you miss most about being a little kid?
5. What advice would you give to a thousand third graders?

Explore It

- * 6. What question did the disciples ask Jesus? (18:1)
- * 7. What did Christ do to illustrate His answer to the disciples' question? (18:2)
8. What did Jesus say one had to be like in order to enter the kingdom of heaven? (18:3)
9. How did Jesus finally answer the question that had been put to Him? (18:4)
- * 10. What quality makes for true greatness? (18:4)
11. Why did Jesus say a person's treatment of children was significant? (18:5)
12. What advice did Jesus give to those who would cause a young follower of Christ to sin? (18:6)
13. What "woes" did Jesus pronounce in this situation? (18:7)
14. What comment did Jesus make that suggests the inevitability of sin in this world? (18:7)
15. What radical figures of speech did Christ use to show the severity of sin? How? (18:8-9)
16. What are the consequences of sin? (18:8-9)

Get It

- * 17. What is it about children that Christ wants us to emulate?
18. What charming qualities do children possess?
19. How does age and maturity cause us to lose our innocence and sense of humility?
20. What danger is there for us if we influence children in a negative way?
21. In what ways are you still like a child (in a good sense)?
- * 22. What prevents us from being more childlike in our faith?
23. In what ways can you be more childlike?

Apply It

- * 24. What can you do today to humble yourself?
25. To what children in your life will you demonstrate the love and acceptance of Christ this week?
26. What habits or actions do you need to abolish this week because of their negative influence on children?

The Parable of the Lost Sheep - Matthew 18:10-14

Topics: Angels, Celebration, Effort, Eternal Life, Evangelism, God's Will, Grace, Help, Initiative, Kindness, Patience, Reconciliation, Restoration

Open It

1. How does it feel to be lost and have no idea where you are?
- * 2. To what lengths would you go to recover: a lost piece of jewelry? a missing pocketbook or wallet? an important misplaced document? a winning lottery ticket? your missing child?
3. What do you believe about angels?

Explore It

4. How does God protect children? (18:10)
5. Who is especially important to God? Why? (18:10)
6. What command about children did Jesus give the disciples? (18:10)
7. What kind of guardians did Jesus suggest children have? (18:10)
8. To whom do angels have constant access? (18:10)
9. What kind of pastoral imagery did Jesus use to illustrate His point about the value of a soul? (18:12)
- * 10. How did Jesus say the owner of one hundred sheep would react if just one of his sheep wandered off? (18:12)
- * 11. According to Jesus, how would the owner of a lost sheep react upon finding his lost sheep? (18:13)
- * 12. How did Jesus compare sheep to the way God views lost children? (18:14)
13. How did Jesus describe God? Why? (18:14)

Get It

14. How would you convince a skeptic that children have guardian angels?
- * 15. Why is it important for us to teach our children about God from the time they are very little?
16. Why do you think children are more receptive than adults to spiritual truth?
- * 17. How does it change your image of God to see Him described as a caring shepherd who searches frantically for one lost individual?
18. How does it change your image of God to see Him described as a compassionate Father who doesn't want to see even one person lost?
19. What does God's concern for each and every individual say to you about the way you treat certain people?
20. How do you feel knowing that God is more concerned about finding a lost person than punishing him or her?

Apply It

21. What "lost sheep" can you search for and try to round up this week by demonstrating the love and acceptance of Christ?
22. To whom do you need to show more sensitivity and attentiveness this week?
- * 23. How can you become a better role model for a young person today?

A Brother Who Sins Against You - Matthew 18:15-20

Topics: Accusation, Authority, Church, Compassion, Consequences, Correction, Disagreements, Friendship, Humility, Instructions, Judging Others, Mercy, Pain, Prayer, Quarrels, Reconciliation, Stubbornness, Unity

Open It

- * 1. What are some typical approaches people adopt in conflicts or disagreements?
- 2. What is the greatest “miracle answer to prayer” you’ve ever experienced?
- 3. What societal forces work to divide families, friendships, and churches?
- 4. What is it like to be in the middle of a church split?

Explore It

- 5. What situation was Jesus addressing in this context? (18:15)
- * 6. What did Jesus set forth as the first step in resolving conflict? (18:15)
- 7. What positive consequences can result from resolving conflict? (18:15)
- * 8. What should we do if a person will not listen to correction and does not want to work things out? (18:16)
- 9. What Old Testament principle is in view here? (18:16)
- 10. What did Jesus say to do if a person doing wrong won’t listen to correction? (18:17)
- * 11. What extreme measures should be used if a wrongdoer turns a deaf ear to all pleas to reconcile? (18:17)
- 12. How can Christians and/or churches be certain they have authority to exercise discipline? (18:18)
- 13. What assurance did Jesus give His disciples about answered prayer? (18:19)
- 14. What special promise did Jesus make to groups that gather in His name? (18:20)

Get It

- * 15. Why is it best to resolve conflicts in private?
- 16. What attitudes can eliminate or help reduce friction in disagreements?
- 17. How can a third party help resolve a conflict?
- * 18. When should we air our grievances in public?
- 19. How can gossip cause our conflicts to escalate?
- 20. How can your church play a role in difficult or very serious quarrels?
- 21. If Christ is with us always (Matthew 28:20), in what unique way is He with us when we gather in His name?
- 22. Why is praying in a group a good idea?

Apply It

- 23. What biblical principles can you practice today so as to avoid conflicts with others?
- * 24. To what relationships or in what specific ways do you need to apply today’s passage?
- 25. What seemingly hopeless situation will you begin praying for today?

The Parable of the Unmerciful Servant - Matthew 18:21-35

Topics: Application, Attitude, Bitterness, Confession, Courage, Feelings, Forgiveness, Grace, Mercy, Obedience, Obligation, Procrastination, Rationalizing, Reconciliation, Risk, Wisdom

Open It

- * 1. What makes forgiveness difficult?
- 2. What acts of mercy have you seen or heard about recently?
- 3. What are some situations others have faced that you would find difficult to forgive?

Explore It

- 4. What question did Peter ask Jesus? (18:21)
- 5. What surprising answer did Jesus give Peter? (18:22)
- 6. How did Jesus illustrate His answer to Peter's question? (18:23)
- 7. To what did Jesus compare the kingdom of heaven? (18:23)
- 8. In the Parable of the Unmerciful Servant, what did the king want to do? (18:23)
- 9. How was the king prepared to get the large amount of money owed him by a particular servant? (18:24-25)
- 10. What did the indebted servant do? (18:26)
- 11. How did the king graciously respond to the indebted servant's desperate plea? (18:27)
- 12. What did the servant go do after his debt was cancelled? (18:28)
- 13. How did the second servant respond to the demand for payment? (18:29)
- 14. What effect did the second servant's pleas have on the first servant? (18:30)
- * 15. Who watched with dismay as the first servant refused to have mercy on the second? Why? (18:31)
- 16. How did the onlookers respond when they saw the first servant throw the second in jail? (18:31)
- * 17. How did the king react to the news he heard? (18:32-34)
- * 18. How did Jesus apply this parable to His followers? (18:35)

Get It

- 19. How likely are we to forgive someone once, twice, or even three times?
- 20. How likely are people to forgive someone beyond three times?
- 21. How are we to interpret Jesus' answer, "seventy-seven times"?
- 22. Why is an unforgiving spirit so deadly?
- * 23. In what ways has God shown mercy in forgiving our sins?
- * 24. If God is so willing to forgive us, why are we sometimes unwilling to forgive others?
- 25. How do we sometimes forgive with strings attached?
- 26. What should we do if we don't feel like forgiving others?
- 27. How is it possible for us to forget the wrongs others have done to us?

Apply It

- 28. What individual(s) do you need to "release from their debts" today?
- * 29. What are some practical ways you can show mercy today to someone who has wronged you?

Divorce - Matthew 19:1-12

Topics: Blessing, Celebration, Compromise, Conflict, Culture, Ego, Example, Forgiveness, God's Will, Hardheartedness, Marriage, Obligation, Protection, Purity, Unity, World

Open It

- * 1. Whose marriage do you most admire? Why?
- 2. What ingredients make for a happy marriage?
- 3. What factors tend to undermine a marriage and make a couple more susceptible to divorce?

Explore It

- 4. Where did Jesus go after telling the Parable of the Unmerciful Servant? (19:1)
- 5. Who accompanied Jesus? (19:2)
- 6. Who approached Jesus with the motive of testing Him? (19:3)
- 7. What trick question did the Pharisees ask Jesus? (19:3)
- * 8. How did Jesus respond to the Pharisees' question? (19:4-6)
- 9. What did Jesus quote? Why? (19:4-5)
- 10. What did Jesus say is God's ideal for marriage? (19:6)
- 11. What follow-up question did Jesus' enemies ask? (19:7)
- * 12. How did Jesus respond to the second question about divorce? (19:8)
- 13. Jesus allowed for divorce under what condition? (19:9)
- * 14. What did the disciples think about Jesus' view of marriage and divorce? (19:10)
- 15. What did Jesus teach about those who never marry? (19:11-12)

Get It

- 16. What are the most devastating consequences of divorce?
- * 17. Which would be worse: to be unhappily married or never to be married?
- 18. What is the ideal even in a marriage that was stained by adultery?
- 19. How does the previous passage (Matthew 18:21-35) have application in this one?
- * 20. What do you think churches can and should do to build stronger marriages and to reduce the divorce rate among their members?
- 21. In what ways is singleness a great advantage?
- 22. How would you feel if you never married?

Apply It

- * 23. What habits can you develop, beginning today, that will make you a better marriage partner?
- 24. How can you communicate to your children the sanctity and sacredness of the marriage relationship?
- 25. What specific service can you (and will you) render to God in the coming year because of the freedom your singleness permits?

The Little Children and Jesus - Matthew 19:13-15

Topics: Blessing, Children, Complaining, Correction, Criticism, Eternal Life, Insight, Kingdom of God/Heaven, Ministry, Perspective, Plans, Schedule, Understanding

Open It

1. What are some ways people abuse positions of authority?
2. Where do we draw the line between being productive and being rushed, or between being dedicated and being driven?
3. What are the most exciting and the most frightening aspects of parenthood?
- * 4. What would you do differently if you could live your childhood over again?

Explore It

5. What people were being brought to Jesus? Why? (19:13)
- * 6. Why were children being brought to Jesus? (19:13)
7. To whom did some parents bring their children? Why? (19:13)
8. How did the disciples react to the fact that children were being brought to Jesus? (19:13)
9. On whom did the disciples vent their displeasure? (19:13)
- * 10. How did Jesus correct the disciples? (19:14)
11. Why did Jesus command the disciples to allow the children to come to Him? (19:14)
12. According to Jesus, what kind of people will possess the kingdom of heaven? (19:14)
- * 13. What did Jesus do for the little children? (19:15)
14. What did Jesus do after He spent time with the children? (19:15)

Get It

- * 15. Why do you think the disciples got irritated about the children being brought to Jesus?
16. What are some ways you get so caught up in your schedule or “to do” list that you are insensitive or even rude to the people around you?
17. What is the purpose behind the church practice of “baby dedication”?
18. What are some ways we might hinder children from coming to Christ?
- * 19. What did Jesus mean by saying that “the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these”?
20. What are the advantages to trusting in Christ at an early age?
21. How early can a child truly comprehend the gospel?

Apply It

22. What are some specific ways you could bless a child today?
- * 23. How can you become more childlike in your faith over the next month?

The Rich Young Man - Matthew 19:16-30

Topics: Confusion, Ego, Eternal Life, Generosity, Judgment, Law, Legalism, Materialism, Miracles, Perfect, Perspective, Possessions, Questions, Rewards, Righteousness, Wealth

Open It

- * 1. What would you do (buy, spend, give, save) if you suddenly received a million dollars?
- 2. Which is more dangerous and why: being very rich or being very poor?
- 3. What does a individual's checkbook reveal about him or her?

Explore It

- 4. What question was asked of Jesus at the beginning of this story? (19:16)
- 5. How did Jesus respond to the man's question? (19:17-19)
- 6. What astonishing claim did the young man make? (19:20)
- 7. What further assignment did Jesus give the man who came to Him? (19:21)
- 8. How did the man react to Jesus' demands? (19:22)
- * 9. What amazing statement did Jesus make to His disciples about riches and the kingdom of God? (19:23-24)
- * 10. How did the disciples respond when they heard how hard it is for a rich person to enter the kingdom of heaven? (19:25)
- 11. How did Christ explain His statement about rich people and heaven? (19:25)
- 12. When he applied the truth about riches to the disciples, Peter asked what question? (19:27)
- 13. What insights into the future did Christ give in His promise? (19:28)
- * 14. What did Jesus promise the twelve disciples? (19:28-29)
- 15. What further promise did Jesus make to Christians through the ages who make sacrifices for Him? (19:29)
- 16. How are spiritual values different from worldly values? (19:30)

Get It

- 17. Why do many poor people have a great love for God and many rich people have no interest in God?
- 18. Why do many poor people long to be rich?
- 19. What would you say to the person who claims, "See, this passage teaches that eternal life is something we receive in exchange for the good things we do"?
- 20. What point do you think Jesus was making with this rich man?
- 21. Why can't moral, decent, good people make it to heaven on their own merit?
- * 22. Why is it that we often do not become more generous as our wealth increases?
- * 23. If we truly believe that God will one day reward his children in heaven, why are we reluctant to make sacrifices for God?

Apply It

- * 24. What sacrifice are you willing to make for Christ this week, in the knowledge that you will be rewarded in heaven?
- 25. What promise from this passage do you want to claim (or even memorize) today?
- 26. How can you decrease your spending over the next month in order to increase the amount of money you can give to the work of God?

The Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard - Matthew 20:1-16

Topics: Appreciation, Benefits, Blessing, Character, Complaining, Contentment, Criticism, Employment, Generosity, Good News, Justice, Kingdom of God/Heaven, Perspective, Resentment, Salvation, Thankfulness, Unfairness

Open It

1. What do you think of deathbed or death-row conversions?
2. What is the most generous thing anyone has ever done for you?
- * 3. Who is the best employer you ever had? Why?

Explore It

4. To what situation did Jesus compare the kingdom of heaven? (20:1)
5. Who was the central character in this parable? (20:1)
6. What did the landowner go out and do? (20:1)
7. What wages were agreed upon by the landowner and his hired hands? (20:2)
8. In the parable, what happened at about 9:00 a.m.? (20:3)
9. What wage was agreed upon between the landowner and his workers? (20:4)
10. How many additional times did the landowner go out and hire workers? (20:5-6)
11. What explanation did the last group of workers give when asked why they were standing around doing nothing? (20:7)
12. What happened to the last group of workers? (20:7)
13. What did the landowner tell his foreman at the end of the day? (20:8)
14. What wages did the workers hired at the eleventh hour receive? (20:9)
- * 15. What did the landowner pay to the men who worked all day? (20:10)
- * 16. How did the workers respond to the landowner's system of payment? (20:11-12)
- * 17. What rationale did the landowner give for his actions? (20:13-15)

Get It

18. In what ways does God's grace seem unfair?
19. How do our cultural values resist the idea of grace?
20. Why is it dangerous to compare your own situation with someone else's?
21. How would you answer the argument that God isn't fair in the way He forgives?
22. How does it make you feel to know that heaven will include ex-murderers, former child molesters, and people who put their trust in Christ only minutes before death?
- * 23. What would happen if God gave each of us what we deserve?
- * 24. How can focusing on God's grace in our lives keep us from becoming jealous of others?

Apply It

25. What can you do today to help someone who needs God's grace begin to understand the love of God?
- * 26. In what way can you say thank you to God every day this week for his amazing grace in your life?
27. In what way could you help a new Christian get oriented to life in the Master's kingdom sometime in the next month?

Jesus Again Predicts His Death - Matthew 20:17-19

Topics: Barriers, Danger, Death, Determination, Enemies, Evil, Future, Giving Up, Mission, Murder, Opposition, Preparation, Rejection, Resurrection, Sacrifice, Suffering, Victory

Open It

1. What funeral/burial arrangements do you want for yourself?
2. Why are some people unshakable in their pursuit of goals, while others are easily deterred?
- * 3. When do you feel safe enough to confide in a person?

Explore It

- * 4. Who was traveling with Jesus at this time? (20:17)
- * 5. Where was Christ going when He spoke of His death for the third time? Why? (20:17-18)
6. How can you tell that the disciples weren't sure what lay ahead? (20:17-18)
7. What title did Jesus use to refer to Himself? (20:18)
8. To whom did Jesus say He would be betrayed? (20:18)
- * 9. What did Jesus say the chief priests and teachers of the law would ultimately do? (20:18)
10. Who did Jesus say would kill Him? (20:19)
11. What pain and shame did Jesus predict for Himself before the actual crucifixion? (20:19)
12. What did Jesus say would happen three days after His death? (20:19)
13. When would Jesus be raised from the dead? (20:19)

Get It

14. How would you respond to someone who talked about their own death several times?
- * 15. Why is the death of Christ significant to us?
- * 16. Why is Christ's death significant to you?
17. If Christ knew suffering and death awaited him in Jerusalem, why was He determined to go there?
18. What goals in life are you committed to pursuing no matter what?
19. Why would people who saw Christ's deeds and heard his words still reject Him?
20. About what other future events has God given us some warning or glimpse?

Apply It

21. What can you do this week to come to a greater appreciation for the death of Christ?
- * 22. What can you do to say thank you to Christ for suffering for you?

A Mother's Request - Matthew 20:20-28

Topics: Ambition, Anger, Atonement, Authority, Divisions, Ego, Fairness, God, Honor, Jealousy, Kingdom of God/Heaven, Leadership, Motives, Position, Pride, Privilege, Rewards, Serving

Open It

1. What is it inside us that recoils at the idea of serving others?
2. Why do some parents try so hard to plan and run their children's lives?
- * 3. What are the pluses and minuses of ambition?

Explore It

- * 4. Who came to Jesus? Why? (20:20)
5. What favor did James and John's mother ask Jesus? (20:21)
6. How did Jesus respond to the request that James and John get special treatment? (20:22)
- * 7. What curious question did Jesus ask James and John? (20:22)
8. How did James and John answer Jesus' cryptic question? (20:22)
9. What did Jesus promise James and John? (20:23)
10. What did Jesus refuse to promise James and John? (20:23)
11. According to Jesus, who will decide the positions of honor and authority in the kingdom of God? (20:23)
- * 12. What was the reaction of the other disciples to this whole dialogue? (20:24)
13. Whose leadership style did Jesus condemn? (20:25)
14. How did Jesus define leadership? (20:26-27)
15. What did Jesus say was His mission in life? (20:28)

Get It

- * 16. When does honorable ambition become dishonorable?
- * 17. Who among the people in your church do you think will receive the greatest rewards in heaven?
18. How does our culture follow the "Gentile pattern of leadership"?
19. How can jealousy and pride destroy the unity of a group of people?
20. On what basis should honors, awards, and rewards be given?
21. What do you think about people who use connections to try to get favors?
22. In what ways might you have to suffer for the sake of Christ?
23. What opportunities do you have to serve others as Christ taught?
24. In what ways do you need to back off and let your children lead their own lives and make their own decisions?

Apply It

- * 25. What three acts can you do today in service to others?
26. What is one specific way you could build unity among your circle of Christian friends this week?

Two Blind Men Receive Sight - Matthew 20:29-34

Topics: Call, Compassion, Embarrassment, Handicapped, Healing, Messiah, Miracles, Peer Pressure, Persistence, Prayer, Reputation, Submission, Zeal

Open It

1. Which is more humiliating: being with someone who makes a scene, or losing control yourself and causing a scene?
- * 2. What one miracle do you wish God would do for you?
3. What makes some people quiet and others loud?

Explore It

4. Where did the incident in this passage take place? (20:29)
5. Who was with Jesus? When? (20:29)
6. Who was following Jesus? When? (20:29)
7. Who happened to be sitting by the roadside when Jesus passed by? (20:30)
- * 8. What did the people sitting by the roadside do when they heard Jesus was nearby? (20:30)
- * 9. What was the crowd's reaction to the scene that developed? (20:31)
- * 10. How did the crowd's words affect the two blind men? (20:31)
11. What did Jesus do in the midst of all the commotion? (20:32)
12. What did Jesus ask the two blind men? (20:32)
13. What request did the blind men make of Jesus? (20:33)
14. Why did Jesus grant the request made of Him? (20:34)
15. How did the men who were healed show their gratitude? (20:34)

Get It

16. Why would people discourage two blind men from seeking help from God?
17. In what ways does the fear of embarrassment prevent us from following Christ?
18. In what ways are we spiritually blind?
- * 19. In what ways have people tried to discourage you from seeking Jesus or praying in a certain way?
- * 20. How does it test our faith to hear others doubt God?
21. To what area of your life does this passage apply most clearly?
22. How would you define compassion?
23. How are you doing in the area of showing compassion?
24. What means has God given you for showing compassion in concrete gestures of kindness?
25. After all that Christ has done for us, in what ways can we show our gratitude?

Apply It

26. What person in your life needs your compassion today?
27. How can you show love and kindness to a hurting individual?
- * 28. What step of trust in God do you need to take today regardless of how foolish others might think it to be?

The Triumphal Entry - Matthew 21:1-11

Topics: Acceptance, Approval, Celebration, Glory, Messiah, Obedience, Peer Pressure, People, Praise, Prophecy, Worship

Open It

- * 1. What do you like best and least about parades?
- 2. How would you define worship?
- 3. Why do many Christians cheer like crazy at sporting events on Saturday and sheepishly sing praise songs to the Lord the next morning?

Explore It

- 4. To where was Jesus traveling? With whom? (21:1)
- 5. Through what village were Jesus and His disciples passing? (21:1)
- 6. How were the disciples instructed to answer anyone who might object to their actions? (21:2)
- 7. Jesus sent two of His disciples to find and return with what? Why? (21:2-3)
- 8. Why was this incident significant? (21:4-5)
- 9. How did the two disciples respond to Jesus' instructions? (21:6)
- 10. When the men returned with the donkey and colt, what did Jesus do? (21:7)
- * 11. What did the gathered crowd place on the road? Why? (21:8)
- 12. What size crowd participated in welcoming Jesus? (21:8)
- * 13. What did the crowds shout as Jesus entered Jerusalem? (21:9)
- * 14. How did this "parade" affect those living in Jerusalem? (21:10)
- 15. What did the crowd accompanying Jesus say about Him to those in the city? (21:11)

Get It

- 16. If you had lived in Jerusalem during that time, do you think you would have been a follower of Christ or one of the people who looked skeptically at all His activities?
- 17. How much do you think "the crowds" today understand Jesus' purpose and mission?
- * 18. In what ways do we simplistically "cheer" Jesus?
- 19. Why did Jesus request a donkey instead of a big white stallion or a chariot?
- 20. How would you answer if a friend asked, "Who is Jesus?"
- 21. How might we be able to change our city or campus or country if we honored Christ as King over all?
- * 22. How should worship play a role in your daily life?

Apply It

- 23. How can you honor Jesus as King this week?
- * 24. What special gift (time, money, possessions, effort, etc.) of worship can you present to Jesus today?
- 25. What does the Lord "need" from you (see Matthew 21:3) today to accomplish His plan in your life?

Jesus at the Temple - Matthew 21:12-17

Topics: Accusation, Authority, Conflict, Ego, Evil, Handicapped, Hardheartedness, Hypocrisy, Jealousy, Messiah, Miracles, Popularity, Praise, Pride, Religion, Traditions, Zeal

Open It

- * 1. Why does the church have a reputation for being “money hungry”?
- 2. What convictions of yours are so strong that you sometimes feel you’d like to do something radical to express your views?
- 3. What gets you really angry?
- 4. When do you tend to lose your temper?

Explore It

- * 5. After entering Jerusalem, where did Jesus go? What happened there? (21:12)
- 6. What did Jesus do in the temple area? (21:12)
- 7. What sort of goods were being sold in the temple courts? (21:12)
- * 8. What did Jesus quote to those in the temple? (21:13)
- * 9. Jesus accused the merchants of turning the temple into what? Why? (21:13)
- 10. What kinds of handicaps and infirmities did Jesus heal while at the temple? (21:14)
- 11. What were the children in the temple area shouting? (21:15)
- 12. How did the chief priests and teachers of the law feel when they heard the children shout praise to Jesus? (21:15)
- 13. What did the religious leaders ask Jesus? (21:16)
- 14. How did Jesus answer the religious leaders? (21:16)
- 15. What did Jesus do when He left the temple? (21:17)

Get It

- * 16. How do you think God would like to alter some of the practices churches and ministries use to raise money?
- * 17. How do you think God would like to alter some of the ways you use money?
- 18. What is the most appropriate way for churches to fund their activities?
- 19. Why is it easy to become jealous when others get recognized, praised, or rewarded?
- 20. Why do people often honor their money above God?
- 21. In what situations is your behavior altered or stymied by what others might think?
- 22. Why do children sometimes have the ability to see more clearly than adults?
- 23. In what areas do you have the prerogative to stand up for the righteousness and holiness of God?

Apply It

- * 24. What change in your giving do you need to make this month?
- 25. What hymn of praise would help you praise and worship God this week?
- 26. What impure habits or practices are taking place in your temple (i.e. your body) that you need to drive out this week?

The Fig Tree Withers - Matthew 21:18-22

Topics: Appearance, Confusion, Deceit, Dishonesty, Faith, Fruit, Hypocrisy, Integrity, Lying, Miracles, Power, Prayer, Sin

Open It

1. What is the worst case of false advertising you've ever seen?
2. Why do you think there are so many religious hypocrites?
- * 3. When in your life were you the most disappointed?

Explore It

4. Where was Jesus going? When? (21:18)
5. What was Jesus feeling? When? (21:18)
- * 6. What caught Jesus' attention? Why? (21:19)
7. What did Jesus discover when he made a closer inspection of the fig tree? (21:19)
8. What did Jesus do to the fig tree? (21:19)
9. What happened immediately after Jesus cursed the fig tree? (21:19)
10. How did the withered fig tree incident affect the disciples? (21:20)
- * 11. What did the disciples ask Jesus? (21:20)
12. What did Jesus cite as the necessary ingredient to doing "impossible" things? (21:21)
13. What even more amazing feat than causing a fig tree to wither did Jesus claim was possible? (21:21)
- * 14. What attitude did Jesus encourage us to have in prayer? (21:22)

Get It

15. How is religious legalism like a barren fig tree?
16. What types of "fruit" should appear in our lives as we grow as Christians?
17. What fruit has your life borne in the last couple of months?
18. What are some ways Christians can look good to others from a distance and yet still be fruitless?
- * 19. Why is the invitation to pray at the end of this passage not a blank check to ask for anything?
- * 20. What requirements must our prayers meet?
21. In what ways might you be giving others a false idea of what the Christian life is all about?

Apply It

- * 22. What prayer of faith do you need to begin praying on a regular basis this week?
23. What change in your life today would enable you to become more fruitful?

The Authority of Jesus Questioned - Matthew 21:23-27

Topics: Authority, Challenge, Conversation, Danger, Hardheartedness, Hypocrisy, Jealousy, Knowledge, Motives, Questions, Reputation, Resentment, Testing, Unbelievers, Wisdom

Open It

1. What comes to mind when you hear the word “authority”?
- * 2. Why are people so resistant to authority?
3. What do you like or dislike about debates (either presidential debates or TV shows where guests bat around a controversial topic)?

Explore It

4. Where was Jesus when the incidents of this passage occurred? (21:23)
5. What was Jesus doing when He was interrupted? (21:23)
- * 6. Who interrupted Jesus? Why? (21:23)
7. What questions did the chief priests and the elders ask Jesus? (21:23)
- * 8. What deal did Jesus make with his accuser? (21:24)
9. Jesus’ question dealt with what subject? (21:24)
10. What were the only two possible answers the religious leaders could give? (21:25-26)
11. What was the drawback to claiming that John’s ministry was divinely inspired? (21:25)
12. What was the risk of claiming that John had no divine authority? (21:26)
- * 13. How did the religious leaders finally respond to Jesus? (21:27)
14. What reply did Jesus give to the chief priests and elders? (21:27)

Get It

15. What do you think is behind many people’s “confrontations” with Jesus?
16. Why do we feel threatened when someone challenges our beliefs or actions as Christians?
17. How do we typically feel when our motives are exposed as selfish?
- * 18. How can religious traditions, rules, and habits sometimes blind us to the truth?
19. What are some ways we outright defy what Jesus has said?
- * 20. In what ways do we try to rationalize our way out of submitting to Christ’s authority?
21. How does pride keep us from acknowledging our mistakes?

Apply It

- * 22. In what area of your life do you need to submit to Jesus’ authority today?
23. How can you humble yourself before God today?

The Parable of the Two Sons - Matthew 21:28-32

Topics: Believe, Blessing, Change, Children, Eternal Life, Humility, Impulsiveness, Lying, Obedience, Perspective, Procrastination, Repentance, Sincerity, Stubbornness, Trust, Words

Open It

1. As you recall all the TV families you've ever seen, which character would make the best child? Why?
- * 2. What is the best illustration you've ever seen of the old saying, "Actions speak louder than words"?
3. In what ways can knowledge be dangerous?

Explore It

- * 4. Who are the main characters in this parable? (21:28)
5. In the Parable of the Two Sons, what did the man say to his first son? (21:28)
6. How did the first son respond to his father's words? (21:29)
- * 7. What happened to the first son later? (21:29)
8. What did the man say to his second son? (21:30)
9. How did the second son respond to his father's words? (21:30)
- * 10. What did the second son actually do? (21:30)
11. What question did Jesus ask His audience at the end of the parable? (21:31)
12. Who did Jesus claim would be in heaven before the religious leaders in His audience? (21:31)
13. According to Jesus, who came to show the Jews the way of righteousness? (21:32)
14. How did the religious leaders respond to John's message? (21:32)

Get It

15. If the Jewish religious leaders were trained in the Law and familiar with the Old Testament, why did they oppose Jesus?
- * 16. Why doesn't religious knowledge or information guarantee that we'll be godly?
17. If Jesus really is the King of kings and Lord of lords, why do we often drag our feet doing what He has told us to do?
18. What does it mean to repent?
19. If, as Jesus claimed, many "unrighteous" people will enter the kingdom of God, and many "righteous" people won't, what does that say to you about God's system of justice?
- * 20. When is it too late to do the right thing?

Apply It

21. What step can you take this week toward correcting a mistake?
- * 22. What command of Christ that you have been neglecting do you need to obey today?
23. What promise that you made to Christ can you keep today?

The Parable of the Tenants - Matthew 21:33-46

Topics: Attitude, Blessing, Deceit, Enemies, Evil, Hardheartedness, Hatred, Intimidation, Kingdom of God/Heaven, Murder, Popularity, Prophecy, Punishment, Rejection, Sin, Submission, Unbelievers

Open It

- * 1. In what way does each of these hurt: being told an uncomfortable truth, and being told a lie?
- 2. What was your favorite bedtime story as a child?
- 3. What attitudes in others make you want to be mean instead of nice?

Explore It

- 4. How did the landowner in this parable prepare his vineyard? (21:33)
- 5. What did the landowner do at harvest time? (21:34)
- 6. How did the tenants of the vineyard treat the landowner's servants? (21:35)
- 7. What did the landowner do after his servants were attacked? (21:36)
- 8. How did the landowner's alternative plan work? (21:36)
- * 9. What solution did the landowner finally decide on? (21:37)
- * 10. How did the tenants react to the landowner's choice? (21:38-39)
- * 11. What end did Jesus predict for the wicked tenants of the parable? (21:40-41)
- 12. What did Jesus quote to the religious leaders? (21:42)
- 13. How did Jesus personalize or apply this parable and Scripture to the nation of Israel? (21:43-44)
- 14. What did the religious leaders realize when they heard Jesus' parable? (21:45)
- 15. What did the chief priests and elders try to do? (21:46)
- 16. Why didn't the chief priests and elders carry out their plan at that moment? (21:46)

Get It

- 17. What does the vineyard in this parable represent?
- * 18. Who do the tenants of the parable symbolize?
- * 19. Of whom are the servants and the son representative?
- 20. How would you feel if you were extremely kind and giving to someone for a long time and that person repeatedly scorned your kindness?
- 21. Why does Christ's kindness often fail to impress people?
- 22. Does God's Word soften your heart like wax or harden your heart like clay?
- 23. What are some ways we react when God's Word convicts us or tells us to take demanding, difficult, or risky steps?
- 24. In what area of your life do you tend to resist God's authority?

Apply It

- 25. What is one practical step you can take to submit to God and obey His Word this week?
- * 26. Today or tomorrow, how can you show God your appreciation for His goodness toward you?

The Parable of the Wedding Banquet - Matthew 22:1-14

Topics: Ambassadors, Apathy, Attitude, Celebration, Evil, Excuses, Grace, Hardheartedness, Hell, Indifference, Kingdom of God/Heaven, Marriage, Murder, Opposition, Punishment, Rejection, Sorrow, Unbelievers

Open It

- * 1. What do you like or dislike about weddings?
- 2. What tips might you give to someone planning a big wedding?
- 3. What is your funniest wedding story?
- 4. How do you tend to react when long-awaited plans fail to materialize?

Explore It

- 5. What preparations were being made in this parable? (22:2)
- 6. What did the king send his servants to do? (22:3)
- * 7. How did people respond to the king's invitation? (22:3)
- 8. Upon hearing that no one would come to the wedding, what did the king do? (22:4)
- * 9. How did the invited guests react to the king's second appeal? (22:5)
- 10. To what shocking acts did some of the people who were invited resort? (22:6)
- 11. How did the king deal with the lawbreakers? (22:7)
- 12. The king went to a "Plan B" that included what changes? (22:8-9)
- 13. How did the king's alternative plan work out? (22:10)
- 14. What did the king say when he spotted an improperly dressed wedding guest? (22:11)
- 15. What did the king order his servants to do with the man who was improperly dressed? (22:11-13)
- * 16. Why did the king throw out the unwelcome wedding guest? (22:13-14)

Get It

- 17. What keeps people from accepting Jesus' offer of eternal life?
- 18. The wedding clothes in the parable that were needed for admittance to the banquet are meant to symbolize what quality that is necessary for entry into the kingdom of heaven?
- 19. What events led to your acceptance of Jesus' offer of forgiveness and heaven?
- 20. For what reason are there impostors in the church?
- 21. Why would a non-Christian want to be around Christians?
- 22. How does God demonstrate His patience to unbelievers?
- * 23. What will happen to those who either reject Christ or try to enter His kingdom on their own terms?
- * 24. In what area(s) of your life have you been putting off a response to what God has asked you to do?

Apply It

- * 25. What response should you give to God this week?
- 26. To what individuals this week can you extend Jesus' offer of forgiveness and eternal life?

Paying Taxes to Caesar - Matthew 22:15-22

Topics: Accusation, Challenge, Composure, Dishonesty, Embarrassment, Flattery, Frustration, Government, Hardheartedness, Hypocrisy, Insight, Integrity, Motives, Obligation, Questions, Rejection, Responsibility, Testing, Unbelievers, Wisdom

Open It

1. What could governments do to make their citizens less opposed to paying taxes?
2. What qualities mark a person of integrity?
- * 3. What individuals would you like to see pictured on our money?

Explore It

4. What group sought to trap Jesus? How? (22:15)
5. What two groups were sent to Jesus? Why? (22:16)
6. How did the Pharisees address Jesus? (22:16)
7. How did the Pharisees describe Jesus' character? (22:16)
8. How did the Pharisees describe Jesus' manner of teaching? (22:16)
9. After all the flattery, what question did the Pharisees' disciples and the Herodians finally ask Jesus? (22:17)
10. How did Jesus respond to all the false adulation He received in this incident? (22:18)
- * 11. What did Jesus say to the men who questioned Him? (22:18)
12. What object did Jesus use to illustrate His answer? How? (22:19-20)
- * 13. How did Jesus answer the question without getting Himself in political hot water? (22:21)
- * 14. How did Jesus' opponents respond to Jesus' words? (22:22)

Get It

15. In what situations are you guilty of flattery?
16. Why do we resort to flattery?
17. How does it make you feel to realize that Jesus can see right into your heart and tell when your motives are insincere?
- * 18. What do you think Jesus called us to do when He said, "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and give to God what is God's"?
- * 19. How can you be careful and wise in what you say to unbelievers?
20. What responsibilities do you have to the government?

Apply It

- * 21. What neglected civic responsibilities do you need to begin fulfilling today?
22. What might be the first step in better living up to your obligations as a citizen of God's kingdom?

Marriage at the Resurrection - Matthew 22:23-33

Topics: Angels, Assumptions, Beliefs, Bible, Blindness, Children, Confusion, Death, Eternal Life, Future, God, Heaven, Ignorance, Law, Motives, Power, Resurrection, Testing, Traditions, Zeal

Open It

1. What topics often spark arguments among people?
- * 2. What ideals do many people have about marriage?
3. What are some secrets to a long and healthy marriage?

Explore It

- * 4. What group confronted or opposed Jesus? How? (22:23)
- * 5. What distinctive belief did the Sadducees hold? (22:23)
 6. To what authority did the Sadducees appeal in asking their question? (22:24)
 7. To what kind of law did the Sadducees defer? (22:24)
 8. What rare, unlikely scenario did the Sadducees describe for Jesus? (22:25-27)
 9. What question did the Sadducees finally put to Jesus? (22:28)
- * 10. What two important facts did Jesus charge the Sadducees with not knowing? (22:29)
 11. What did Jesus say about the institution of marriage in eternity? (22:30)
 12. What did Jesus say about angels and marriage? (22:30)
 13. How did Jesus prove that people will be raised from the dead? (22:31-32)
 14. How did the crowd react to this exchange? (22:33)

Get It

15. What makes you think the Sadducees were not really interested in knowing the truth?
16. What do you think their purpose was in confronting Jesus?
17. How does it make you feel to realize that marriage as we know it will not exist in eternity?
18. In what ways do all these groups questioning Jesus remind you of today's talk-show circuit?
19. How well do you know the Scriptures and the power of God?
- * 20. In what ways can our doctrinal beliefs blind us to the truth?
 21. How do you typically respond when you are attacked because of your faith?
- * 22. What questions asked by unbelievers do you have the most difficult time answering?

Apply It

- * 23. What area of Bible doctrine will you read about and study this week?
24. To whom do you need to apologize for arguing about your faith or for browbeating with the Bible?
25. What needs to change in your life today to reflect the fact that you serve a living God?

The Greatest Commandment - Matthew 22:34-40

Topics: Answers, Attitude, Blindness, Challenge, Commitment, Devotion, Hardheartedness, Hypocrisy, Law, Legalism, Listening, Love, Motives, Rationalizing, Rejection, Sin, Stubbornness, Unbelievers

Open It

1. What is the best advice your mother or father ever gave you?
2. If you could give a four-sentence speech on worldwide television, what would you say in order to have the greatest possible impact?
- * 3. If you had to summarize this past week, how would you describe it?

Explore It

4. Who heard that the Sadducees had been embarrassed by Jesus? How did they respond? (22:34)
5. What did the Pharisees do? Why? (22:34)
6. What sort of person was selected to address Jesus? (22:35)
7. What was the Pharisee's purpose in asking Jesus a question? (22:35)
- * 8. What specific question did the man ask Jesus? (22:36)
- * 9. How did Jesus answer the Pharisee's question? (22:37)
10. What kind of love did Jesus describe? (22:37)
- * 11. What important footnote did Jesus add to His answer? (22:39)
12. What kind of love for one's neighbor did Jesus require? (22:39)
13. How important did Jesus say these two principles were? (22:40)

Get It

14. How do you feel when people ask you a question which you're pretty sure they already know the answer to?
15. In what ways do we sometimes try to sidestep our responsibility to obey God?
16. How do you think some of the Pharisees who opposed Christ feel now—knowing that they were face to face with the Truth and they rejected Him?
17. How do we measure the magnitude of our love for Jesus?
- * 18. What does it mean to "love your neighbor as yourself"?
19. How often do you argue just for the sake of arguing?
20. Why do you think we like to debate what the Bible means, yet often resist changing our lives based on what it says?
- * 21. How can we keep our focus on what really matters?
22. What does God want you to do more than anything else in your job, family, church, and neighborhood?

Apply It

23. What can you do today to love Christ with all your heart, soul, and mind?
- * 24. What loving act will you plan to do soon for a neighbor in need?

Whose Son Is the Christ? - Matthew 22:41-46

Topics: Answers, Blindness, Conversation, Embarrassment, Enemies, Giving Up, Hardheartedness, Holy Spirit, Law, Legalism, Messiah, Opposition, Questions, Rejection

Open It

1. What is the most ingenious trick or prank you have ever played on anyone?
- * 2. If you could ask anyone any question at all, what would you want to know?
3. What is satisfying about “stumping the expert” or seeing a pro make a mistake?

Explore It

4. In what setting did this conversation take place? (22:41)
- * 5. What religious group had gathered? Why? (22:41)
6. Who did the interrogation of Jesus? When? (22:41)
- * 7. What questions did Jesus ask? (22:42)
8. What important fact did the Pharisees admit about Christ? (22:42)
- * 9. How did Jesus enlighten the Pharisees? (22:43-44)
10. According to Jesus, under what special condition did David write? (22:43)
11. What was important about the way David referred to Christ? (22:43-44)
12. What final question did Jesus use to make His point? (22:45)
13. What happened after Jesus silenced the Pharisees? (22:46)

Get It

- * 14. What objections to Jesus’ identity do people raise today?
- * 15. What are good ways to respond to people who doubt Jesus’ identity?
16. How would you answer a friend who says, “Prove to me that Jesus is God”?
17. In telling people about Christ today, what are some of the more important details to include?
18. Why is the question, “Who is Jesus?” far more significant than any other issue?
19. To what issues do you tend to get sidetracked when you try to witness for Christ?
20. What emotions or thoughts prompt people to stop talking about their relationship with God?

Apply It

21. What area(s) of your life do you need to surrender to the lordship of Christ today?
- * 22. What can you do (or stop doing) this week to become more effective in introducing your non-Christian friends to Christ?

Seven Woes - Matthew 23:1-39

Topics: Appearance, Barriers, Blindness, Confusion, Criticism, Danger, Dishonesty, Hardheartedness, Hypocrisy, Intimidation, Legalism, Opposition, Priorities, Punishment, Rejection, Sin, Stubbornness, Tithing, Traditions, Unbelievers

Open It

- * 1. What topic(s) or situations really get you upset?
- 2. What is the worst name or label that someone could pin on you?
- 3. Why do some people object to “organized religion”?

Explore It

- 4. To whom was Jesus speaking? (23:1)
- 5. About whom was Jesus speaking? (23:2)
- * 6. Of what did Jesus accuse the religious leaders? (23:3)
- 7. What motivation did Jesus say governed the behavior of the Pharisees? (23:5-7)
- * 8. What eternal destiny did Jesus pronounce on religious hypocrites? (23:13)
- 9. What are some of the names Jesus used to describe the respected, powerful, national leaders of Israel—the Pharisees? (23:13, 15-16, 27, 33)
- 10. What did Jesus say about the Pharisees’ evangelism? (23:15)
- 11. What kind of picky man-made traditions did Jesus accuse the religious leaders of following blindly? (23:16-22)
- * 12. What evidence of twisted priorities among the religious elite did Jesus give? (23:23-26)
- 13. What analogies did Jesus use to show that Israel’s religious leaders were more interested in external credentials than internal character? (23:25-28)
- 14. How did Jesus argue that the Pharisees had failed to learn the lessons of Israel’s history? (23:29-36)
- 15. Because of her awful leadership, how did Jesus lament over Jerusalem? (23:37)

Get It

- * 16. How can a spiritual leader affect his or her followers?
- 17. What kinds of nitpicky rules and regulations tend to blind us to more serious sins?
- 18. In what ways do people sometimes fake the Christian life?
- * 19. What are some of the dangers of having a “checklist” of dos and don’ts that go beyond God’s written Word?
- 20. What temptations are faced by those in positions of spiritual authority?
- 21. Which feeling best describes how you view non-Christians: sadness or anger?
- 22. In what area(s) have you been failing to practice what you preach?
- 23. How would you reach out to someone who has become embittered by religious hypocrites or empty religion?

Apply It

- 24. What attitudes or “matters of the heart” do you need to confess to God today so that your inside looks as good as your outside?
- 25. What could you do to help a young Christian grow stronger this week?
- * 26. What older, more mature Christian can you spend time with this week to seek advice and wisdom?

Signs of the End of the Age - Matthew 24:1-35

Topics: Angels, Awe, Backslide, Believers, Blasphemy, Confusion, Courage, Culture, Danger, Darkness, Death, Deceit, Earth, Endurance, Eternal Life, Evangelism, Evil, Experience, Faithfulness, Future, Good News, Hatred, Heaven, Hell, Idolatry, Insecurity, Instructions, Jesus Christ, Kingdom of God/Heaven, Last Days, Majority, Miracles, Mourning, Nature, Occult, Pain, Persecution, Perseverance, Prophecy, Punishment, Rebellion, Religion, Rewards, Satan, Second Coming, Sovereignty, Victory, World, Worship

Open It

1. What is the most beautiful building or structure you've ever seen?
2. What is the popular press saying about the immediate and long-range future of planet Earth?
3. Why are people interested in the future?
- * 4. Why do many people consult psychics, palm readers, horoscopes, and other so-called sources of guidance?

Explore It

5. When did the disciples approach Jesus with their question? (24:1)
6. What topic of conversation did the disciples raise with Jesus? When? (24:1)
7. What prophetic statement did Jesus make in reference to the temple? (24:2)
8. As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, what questions did the disciples pose? (24:3)
9. What wide-scale calamities did Jesus predict would occur near the end of the world? (24:6-8)
10. What various events did Jesus say would happen to believers in the end times? (24:9-13)
11. What did Jesus say about the moral state of the world in the end? (24:12)
12. To what extent will the gospel be preached in the last days? (24:14)
13. According to Jesus, what will the final days on earth be like? (24:15-22)
- * 14. What important warning about spiritual deception did Jesus issue? (24:23-26)
- * 15. How will true believers recognize Jesus' return? (24:27-30)
- * 16. What heavenly signs and aberrations will accompany the return of Christ? (24:29)
17. What part did Jesus say the angels of God would play in His return? (24:31)

Get It

18. What are some ways the world tries to desecrate or profane the holy things of God?
19. How does talk of the end times motivate us to live a holy life?
20. In what ways can we become sidetracked by discussion of the end times?
- * 21. How is it helpful that Jesus didn't give us a specific time or date for His return?
- * 22. What are some current examples of false prophets deceiving people?
23. What signs do you see that we may be close to the beginning of the end?
24. How could you use this passage to talk to a nonbeliever about Jesus Christ?
25. In what specific ways does this passage encourage you to pray?

Apply It

26. For what Christians around the world who are suffering because of their faith can you pray?
- * 27. What step can you take this week to guard yourself from false teaching?
28. What is one thing you can do in the next month to spread the gospel to your part of God's world?

The Day and Hour Unknown - Matthew 24:36-51

Topics: Blindness, Celebration, Delay, Eternal Life, Expectations, Hell, Hypocrisy, Ignorance, Judgment, Last Days, Mercy, Preparation, Second Coming, Sin, Surprises, Waiting

Open It

- * 1. What is the most surprised you've ever been in your life?
- 2. What are some ways people show their unbelief in God?
- 3. With what mysteries are people intrigued today?

Explore It

- 4. Who knows when the end times will come? (24:36)
- 5. When did Jesus say these end time events would occur? (24:36)
- 6. Who did Jesus say knows the day and hour of the end? (24:36)
- 7. To what did Jesus compare the end of the world? (24:37)
- 8. How will most people react when the end comes? (24:38-41)
- 9. What illustrations did Jesus use to show the suddenness of His return? (24:40-41)
- 10. What warning did Jesus give His disciples? (24:42)
- * 11. To what did Jesus liken His coming? Why? (24:43-44)
- * 12. What qualities did Jesus say His servants will need to be ready for His coming? (24:45-47)
- * 13. What did Jesus warn would happen to those who doubt His coming? (24:48-51)

Get It

- 14. What would you do if you hired a house sitter/caretaker to watch your home and children, left for a week-long vacation, and then returned a day early only to find that your caretaker had neglected your kids, destroyed your property, and ignored all your other instructions?
- 15. What does it mean for us to be watchful?
- 16. How can you tell when you are being watchful?
- 17. What difference does it make whether we believe in the imminent return of Christ?
- 18. Even if we claim to believe in Christ, what are some ways we live as though we were atheists?
- 19. How might a non-Christian look at your life and accuse you of not believing in the imminent return of Jesus Christ?
- * 20. How would you react if you knew a thief would try to burglarize your home or apartment tonight?
- * 21. How can we have a sense of expectation about the return of Christ?
- 22. How do you know that hell is a horrible place?

Apply It

- * 23. How can you use your time today to honor the Lord's imminent return?
- 24. What steps can you take today to be a better steward of the gifts and information God has entrusted to you?

The Parable of the Ten Virgins - Matthew 25:1-13

Topics: Celebration, Delay, Eternal Life, Expectations, Future, Hell, Judgment, Last Days, Marriage, Mercy, Preparation, Second Coming, Sin, Surprises, Waiting

Open It

1. What is the most elaborate or important social function you have ever been invited to?
2. When was a time you were late to an important event, and why were you delayed?
- * 3. How do you react when you are made to wait?

Explore It

4. To what did Jesus compare the kingdom of heaven in this parable? (25:1)
5. How were the ten women described? (25:1-2)
6. Why were some of the virgins described as “foolish”? (25:3)
7. What made some of the virgins “wise”? (25:4)
8. What happened to the bridegroom? (25:5)
9. What happened at midnight? (25:6-7)
10. What did the foolish virgins ask of the others? (25:8)
- * 11. How did the wise virgins respond when asked to help the ones who weren’t prepared? (25:9)
12. When did the bridegroom arrive and the wedding banquet begin? (25:10)
13. What did the foolish virgins discover and do when they returned? (25:11)
- * 14. How did the bridegroom respond when some virgins wanted to come to the wedding late? (25:12)
- * 15. With what warning did Jesus conclude this parable? Why? (25:13)

Get It

- * 16. In what ways do you tend to count on more mature Christians or try to ride their coattails?
- * 17. What responsibility does each Christian have before God?
18. Why is continual preparation for Christ’s return better than “last minute cramming”?
19. Why do we tend to think (and act like) we have all the time in the world to get ready for Christ’s return?
20. What does this passage say about the need for individual readiness?
21. What are the possible consequences of putting off thinking about Christ and spiritual growth until later?

Apply It

- * 22. What spiritual preparation do you need to make today in order to “keep watch”?
23. How can you change your attitude this week in order to reflect your belief in the imminent return of Christ?
24. What Christian should you lovingly warn about the imminent return of Christ?

The Parable of the Talents - Matthew 25:14-30

Topics: Accomplishments, Accountability, Approval, Discernment, Effectiveness, Excuses, Generosity, Ignorance, Judgment, Laziness, Management, Opportunities, Possessions, Productivity, Resources, Rewards, Serving, Success

Open It

1. What are some typical images people have of God?
2. What are your five best traits or greatest attributes?
- * 3. What would you do for God if you knew you could not fail at it?

Explore It

4. To what did Jesus liken the kingdom of God in this parable? (25:14)
5. What did the man in the parable give to his servants? (25:15)
6. What did the servant who received five talents do with his money? (25:16)
7. What kind of return on his investment did the servant with two talents get? (25:17)
8. What did the third servant do with the one talent his master gave him? (25:18)
- * 9. How did the master react to the report of the first servant? (25:20-21)
- * 10. What was the response to the report of the second servant? (25:22-23)
11. What excuse did the third servant give for not investing his talent? (25:24-25)
- * 12. How did the master respond to the third servant's explanation? (25:26-27)
13. What orders did the master give about the third servant's one talent? (25:28-29)
14. What judgment was handed down to the "wicked, lazy" servant? (25:30)

Get It

- * 15. With what talents or resources has God entrusted you?
16. What gifts or talents has God given your church?
17. Besides money or material possessions, what are some resources God has placed in our care?
18. What thoughts or attitudes cause us to be lazy in carrying out our Christian responsibilities?
19. What are the risks of investing our gifts for God's service?
20. What are the rewards of investing our gifts for God's service?
- * 21. In what ways can you be a "good and faithful" servant?
22. Where are you able to invest your gifts?
23. What people can benefit most from the gifts and abilities you have?
24. What discourages you from investing your talents?
25. What encourages you to serve God with your talents?
26. How would you grade yourself in your Christian stewardship over the last year?

Apply It

- * 27. What resource do you need to commit to Christ's use at this time in your life?
28. How can you invest your talents in serving God this week?
29. What reminder can you use to hold yourself accountable for the way you manage your God-given resources?

The Sheep and the Goats - Matthew 25:31-46

Topics: Angels, Blessing, Consequences, Demons, Eternal Life, Heaven, Hell, Judgment, Mercy, Messiah, Punishment, Righteousness, Satan, Second Coming, Self-righteousness, Separation

Open It

1. What are some ways we label or categorize others?
2. Why is the belief in heaven and hell waning, while the belief in reincarnation becomes more popular?
- * 3. What are some common examples of separating clean from dirty, fresh from spoiled, or good from bad?

Explore It

4. How did Jesus describe His Second Coming? (25:31)
5. Where will all the nations be at Christ's return? (25:32)
6. According to Jesus, how will the people of the earth be divided? (25:32-33)
7. How will Jesus divide humanity? (25:33)
- * 8. What will Jesus say to those on His right? (25:34-36)
9. Why will the group on Jesus' right be blessed? (25:35)
- * 10. How will the "sheep" respond to Jesus' words on that day? (25:37-39)
- * 11. What criterion will Christ use to judge people? (25:40)
12. What will Jesus say to the "goats" on His left? (25:41)
13. Why will the goats be judged? (25:42)
14. What will cause the goats to be judged? (25:42-43)
15. What defense will those on Christ's left use to justify themselves? (25:44)
16. What will hell be like? (25:46)

Get It

- * 17. How do people usually determine whether they will be nice to somebody?
- * 18. How would your behavior change if you treated each person in your life as if he or she were Jesus?
19. In what way does this parable motivate you to tell your friends about Christ?
20. How would you counter the idea that this passage teaches salvation by good works?
21. What change does true faith make in a person's life?
22. In what specific ways has your faith in Christ changed you?
23. Who are the needy people around you?
24. What resources do you have available to you for serving the needs of others?

Apply It

- * 25. What act of kindness or mercy toward the needy can you do today?
26. In what practical, realistic way can you begin today to treat each person you meet as though he or she were Jesus Himself?
27. Without being overbearing or pushy, how can you serve your non-Christian friends this week?

The Plot Against Jesus - Matthew 26:1-5

Topics: Conversation, Death, Determination, Enemies, Fear, Future, Hardheartedness, Hatred, Motives, Murder, Opposition, Plans, Rejection, Resentment, Revenge, Sin, Sovereignty

Open It

1. What famous assassinations can you recall?
- * 2. What is your theory about the assassination of John F. Kennedy?
3. Why do “good people” get caught up in bad situations?

Explore It

4. To whom was Jesus talking? When? (26:1)
5. How close was the Feast of the Passover? (26:2)
6. What did Jesus say would happen at the Feast of the Passover? (26:2)
7. Who presided over the gathering of chief priests and elders? (26:3)
8. Where did the chief priests and elders assemble? Why? (26:3-4)
- * 9. What group got together in secret? Why? (26:3-4)
10. What did the chief priests and elders gather to do? (26:4)
11. What was the chief priests’ and elders’ ultimate desire concerning Jesus? (26:4)
- * 12. Whom did the religious leaders plan to arrest? Why? (26:4-5)
- * 13. When did the religious leaders not want to carry out their plan? (26:5)
14. Why were the religious leaders reluctant to act during the feast? (26:5)

Get It

- * 15. Why would devout religious leaders plot to murder someone like Jesus?
16. Historically, what other evil deeds have been done in God’s name?
17. How can we avoid justifying evil acts with the belief that we are serving God?
- * 18. When might a Christian be tempted to take matters into his or her own hands instead of trusting God?
19. What kinds of opposition do Christians face today?
20. How should we respond to opposition to our faith?
21. In what ways do these incidents tell us that God is sovereignly in control of all events?
22. How can we show our trust in God when events turn against us?

Apply It

- * 23. What uncertain situation will you entrust to God today?
24. What can you do today to show your thankfulness for Christ’s voluntary sacrifice?

Jesus Anointed at Bethany - Matthew 26:6-13

Topics: Actions, Devotion, Embarrassment, Example, Faith, Generosity, Kindness, Love, Praise, Preparation, Rationalizing, Sacrifice, Worship

Open It

- * 1. What is the most colossal waste of money you have ever witnessed?
- 2. What is the most valuable possession you own?
- 3. In what situations might it be wiser to be extravagant than frugal?

Explore It

- 4. In what kind of place was Jesus when this scene opened? (26:6)
- 5. Where was Jesus staying? (26:6)
- 6. The woman who came to see Christ had what with her? Why? (26:7)
- * 7. What did the woman do with her perfume? (26:7)
- * 8. How did the disciples react to the sacrifice they witnessed? (26:8)
- 9. What did the disciples claim would have been a better use for the perfume? (26:9)
- * 10. How did Jesus respond to the disciples' indignation and muttering? (26:10)
- 11. What did Jesus call the woman's act? Why? (26:10-11)
- 12. Why did Jesus say the woman did the right thing? (26:11)
- 13. How did Jesus describe this anointing? (26:12)
- 14. What recognition did Jesus promise for the woman? (26:13)

Get It

- 15. What evidence is there that among Jesus' followers, only Mary understood that Jesus would soon be dead?
- 16. How might Jesus' statement about the poor (verse 11) be used as a justification to do nothing to help them?
- 17. For what reasons do you think the disciples criticized Mary?
- 18. When are we most likely to bad-mouth the efforts of other believers?
- 19. What frequently happens when Christians become concerned about pleasing everyone around them?
- * 20. What prompts us to sacrifice our time and goods for God?
- 21. How can we increase our love for Jesus so that we will be willing to sacrifice for Him?
- 22. What are the dangers in making a generous public gift?
- * 23. What attitudes would make you more generous?

Apply It

- * 24. What act of costly service can you give to Christ this week?
- 25. What attitudes that keep you from being more generous do you need to renounce and repent of today?
- 26. How can you begin to view the good works of others in a positive light rather than in a critical fashion?

Judas Agrees to Betray Jesus - Matthew 26:14-16

Topics: Abandon, Character, Convictions, Deceit, Friendship, Hatred, Lost, Plans, Rebellion, Rejection, Separation, Sin, Timing

Open It

1. What does it mean to be committed to something or someone?
2. What images does the word “betrayal” bring to mind?
- * 3. What does it take to build a lasting friendship?

Explore It

4. Who is the central character in this passage? (26:14)
5. To what elite group did Judas belong? (26:14)
6. How did the meeting between Judas and the priests get started? (26:14)
- * 7. With what group did Judas meet? Why? (26:14-15)
8. What offer did Judas make to the chief priests? (26:15)
9. How did Judas refer to Jesus? (26:15)
10. How did the chief priests show they were interested in Judas’s offer? (26:15)
- * 11. What did Judas get for betraying Jesus? (26:15)
12. What did Judas do once he struck a deal with the chief priests? (26:16)
- * 13. How did Judas spend his last days with Jesus? (26:16)

Get It

14. What motives or feelings would prompt someone to betray a man like Jesus?
15. In what ways does our behavior betray whether we truly love and serve Jesus?
16. If Jesus knew everything, why do you think He picked as one of His disciples a man who would eventually betray Him?
17. How does it make you feel to realize that Judas apparently was at one time a very devoted follower of Jesus?
18. In what ways are we vulnerable to the temptations that snagged Judas?
19. For what temporary thrills or situations have you “sold out” Jesus at one time or another?
- * 20. How can we avoid making Judas’s mistake?
- * 21. In what ways can you rely on more mature Christians to keep you accountable so that you do not drift in your commitment to Jesus?

Apply It

22. To whom can you turn this week for accountability in your walk with God?
- * 23. In what area of life this week can you make your deeds more closely match your stated loyalty to Jesus?

The Lord's Supper - Matthew 26:17-30

Topics: Atonement, Celebration, Covenant, Despair, Example, Feelings, Future, Habits, Important, Instructions, Love, New Covenant, Preparation, Sacrifice, Traditions, Victory, Worship

Open It

1. In what ways does sharing a meal bind people together?
2. What names, dates, or events do you have a hard time remembering?
3. If you were dying, what would you want for a last meal?
- * 4. How do you hope people will remember you after you are gone?

Explore It

5. What was going on during the time of the incidents described in this passage? (26:17)
6. What question did the disciples ask Jesus? (26:17)
7. What instructions did Jesus give His followers? (26:18)
8. What was the response of the disciples to Jesus' instructions? (26:19)
9. What did Jesus and His disciples do that evening? (26:20)
10. What shocking statement did Jesus utter during His meal with the disciples? (26:21)
11. How did the disciples react to Jesus' announcement? (26:22)
12. How did Jesus identify the one who would betray Him? (26:23)
13. What sobering statement did Jesus make about His betrayer? (26:24)
14. How did Judas respond to the words of Christ? (26:25)
- * 15. What did Jesus say about the bread on the table? (26:26)
- * 16. What remarks did Jesus make about the wine they were drinking? (26:27-28)
- * 17. When did Jesus say He would eat with His disciples again? (26:29)
18. What did the group do after they finished eating? (26:30)

Get It

19. In what ways might Christ be uncomfortable to eat a meal in your home?
20. When we respond to Christ's commands, do you think we tend to fulfill them completely, or only so far as we feel like it?
21. How does it make you feel to realize that Christ's body was battered and broken because of your sin?
- * 22. How do you feel when you remember that Jesus shed His blood on the cross for you?
23. What do you imagine it would have been like to have been one of the participants at that first Lord's Supper, to have heard those men sing a hymn, to have looked Christ in the eyes?
24. Why do you think Judas asked if he was the one who would betray Jesus?
- * 25. What does Communion or the Eucharist mean to you personally?

Apply It

- * 26. What do you want to change about the way you participate in the Lord's Supper the next time it is celebrated at church?
27. What do you need to do today (or stop doing) to be a fully obedient servant of Jesus Christ?
28. How can you encourage a friend this week with the message of this passage?

Jesus Predicts Peter's Denial - Matthew 26:31-35

Topics: Abandon, Commitment, Courage, Danger, Determination, Embarrassment, Endurance, Failure, Foolishness, Impulsiveness, Loyalty, Peer Pressure, Persecution, Promises, Rejection, Vows, Weaknesses, Words

Open It

- * 1. Why is it dangerous to begin a sentence with the words, "I would never . . ."?
 - 2. Why is it possible for a mature believer in Christ to sin?
 - 3. What do you think about the expression, "Talk is cheap"?

Explore It

- * 4. What prediction about His followers did Jesus make on the Mount of Olives? (26:31)
 - 5. To what did Jesus compare Himself and His disciples? (26:31)
 - 6. What was significant about Jesus' statement and His situation? (26:31)
 - 7. What did Christ predict about Himself? (26:32)
 - 8. Where did Jesus say He would go? When? (26:32)
- * 9. How did Peter respond to Jesus' statement that all the disciples would abandon Him? (26:33)
 - 10. What prediction did Jesus make about Peter? (26:34)
 - 11. What did Peter have to say when Jesus said Peter would disown Him? (26:35)
- * 12. How did the rest of the disciples react to these depressing comments by Christ? (26:35)

Get It

- 13. How committed do you think the disciples were to Jesus?
- 14. How is the commitment of many Christians today much like that of the eleven disciples with Jesus in the garden?
- * 15. What is admirable about a promise never to abandon Christ?
- * 16. What is foolish about a vow never to abandon Christ?
 - 17. What situations might tempt you to be quiet or low-key about your relationship with Jesus Christ?
 - 18. If wide-scale persecution of Christians broke out in this country, as it has in so many others, how do you think many Christians would respond? Why?
 - 19. What do you learn about God from the fact that Jesus did not yell at His disciples or disown them even though He knew they would abandon Him?
 - 20. Why is human willpower inadequate to keep us from sinning?
 - 21. What vow have you made to God that you need to fulfill?

Apply It

- 22. In what particular situation(s) this week do you need to make it clear—for the first time—that you are a follower of Jesus Christ?
- 23. How can you encourage a Christian brother or sister who has recently denied Christ and is feeling discouraged?
- * 24. What first step in fulfilling your vow to God do you need to take this week?

Gethsemane - Matthew 26:36-46

Topics: Backslide, Carelessness, Comfortable, Compromise, Danger, Desires, Endurance, Friendship, God's Will, Help, Inadequacy, Intentions, Loyalty, Perseverance, Prayer, Selfishness, Sleep

Open It

- * 1. In what particular situations is it hardest for you to stay awake?
- 2. How do you react emotionally and physically when you are facing extreme stress?
- 3. What friends do you turn to when your world is turned upside down?

Explore It

- 4. Who was Jesus with? When? (26:36)
- * 5. Where did Jesus and His companions go together? Why? (26:36)
- 6. What did Jesus tell the disciples? (26:36)
- 7. With which disciples did Jesus choose to pray? (26:37)
- 8. What was Jesus' state of mind at the time? (26:37)
- 9. What kind of pain did Jesus confess to His friends? (26:38)
- 10. When Jesus went on a bit further and fell to the ground, what did He do? (26:39)
- 11. What scene greeted Jesus when He returned from praying? (26:40)
- 12. What kind of warning did Jesus give Peter? (26:40-41)
- 13. What did Jesus do after speaking with Peter? (26:42)
- 14. What were the disciples doing while Jesus was praying the second time? (26:43)
- * 15. How did Jesus react when He found His disciples sleeping a second time? (26:44)
- * 16. When Jesus finished praying, what did He say to His disciples? (26:45)
- 17. What event happened after Jesus prayed? (26:46)

Get It

- * 18. Why would it have been very advantageous for the disciples to have stayed awake and prayed?
- 19. What clues from the passage suggest that Christ was grieving about what lay ahead for Him?
- * 20. What is amazing about Christ's attitude?
- 21. What kind of help would friends get from you if they called you in the middle of the night?
- 22. What generally wins out as you face decisions in life—your feelings or your commitments?
- 23. What is the most agonizing situation you have ever faced?
- 24. How might a faithful prayer life keep you strong in the faith?
- 25. What are the barriers to your prayers?
- 26. How can you improve your prayer life?

Apply It

- 27. What changes do you need to make in your schedule this week so that you become more regular in prayer?
- * 28. How can you be a better friend today to someone who is going through a difficult situation?
- 29. In what area of your life do you need to say to God, "Your will be done"?

Jesus Arrested - Matthew 26:47-56

Topics: Challenge, Danger, Darkness, Enemies, Evil, Failure, Friendship, God's Will, Impulsiveness, Jesus Christ, Motives, Prophecy, Protection, Rejection, Sacrifice, Sin, Sovereignty

Open It

1. What is the fastest you have ever run in your life?
- * 2. What is one time your beliefs or convictions were tested?
3. What types of situations tend to make your heart sink?
4. What prompts some people to rescue others in trouble, while others are interested only in helping themselves?

Explore It

5. What happened just as Jesus finished praying in the garden of Gethsemane? (26:47)
6. Who accompanied Judas? (26:47)
7. What kind of crowd accompanied Judas? (26:47)
8. How did Judas greet Jesus? (26:49)
9. What was significant about the signal Judas used to point out Jesus? (26:48)
10. What command did Jesus give Judas? (26:50)
11. What did the men in the crowd do when Jesus spoke? (26:50)
- * 12. What did one of Jesus' disciples do in an attempt to protect his master? (26:51)
13. What did Jesus tell the disciple who attacked? (26:52)
14. What truthful "boast" did Jesus make? (26:53)
- * 15. Why didn't Jesus take advantage of His disciple's brave attack? (26:54)
16. What did Jesus say to the crowd? (26:55)
- * 17. What happened when it became obvious that Jesus would be arrested? (26:56)

Get It

18. What do you think the disciples were feeling as they saw the armed mob approaching?
19. Why do you think this mob came at night to arrest Jesus?
20. What is especially awful about the way Judas betrayed Jesus?
21. What do you think would have been your reaction had you been in the garden that night?
22. Whose trust have you violated recently?
- * 23. When are we tempted to take matters into our own hands out of "devotion" to God?
24. How has your faith been tested recently?
- * 25. How can we stand firm when our faith is tested?
26. How do you tend to react in frightening situations?

Apply It

- * 27. What can you do today to ensure that you will stand strong the next time your faith is tested?
28. In what specific situations this week do you need to trust God instead of resorting to human wisdom and tactics?

Before the Sanhedrin - Matthew 26:57-68

Topics: Accusation, Blasphemy, Challenge, Deceit, Enemies, Evil, Hatred, Humiliation, Insults, Jesus Christ, Lying, Messiah, Rejection, Second Coming, Suffering

Open It

- * 1. What is the most famous “miscarriage of justice” you have ever witnessed or heard about?
- 2. When in your life have you ended up suffering because you tried to help someone else?
- 3. In what ways are lies and gossip damaging?

Explore It

- * 4. After being arrested, where was Jesus taken? (26:57)
- 5. Who was assembled where Jesus was taken? Why? (26:57, 59)
- 6. Who had followed Jesus at a distance? Where was he? (26:58)
- 7. What did Peter do in an attempt to observe the proceedings against Jesus? (26:58)
- 8. What were the chief priests and Sanhedrin hoping to find? (26:59)
- * 9. Who came forward to testify at this “trial”? (26:60)
- * 10. What did one witness claim to have heard Jesus say? (26:61)
- 11. When the high priest first began questioning Jesus, how did Jesus respond? (26:62-63)
- 12. What question did the high priest finally ask Jesus about His identity? (26:63)
- 13. How did Jesus answer the high priest? (26:64)
- 14. What prophetic statement did Jesus make in His defense? (26:64)
- 15. How did Jesus’ claim affect the high priest? (26:65-66)
- 16. What emotional and physical abuse did Christ endure at the hands of these spiritual leaders? (26:67-68)

Get It

- * 17. How is it possible for an innocent person to be accused and convicted of a crime?
- * 18. When have you been harmed by false accusers spreading malicious lies?
- 19. How can we respond when attacked for no just reason?
- 20. What is it like to be ganged up on?
- 21. Why do you think Christ didn’t argue with his accusers and make some sort of defense?
- 22. In what situations are we tempted to water down or soft-pedal the truth?
- 23. What is it that sometimes causes groups of people to become vicious and cruel?
- 24. What do you think about Jesus’ claim to be the Son of God?

Apply It

- 25. In what group situations might you be able to act as a calming and peacemaking voice this week?
- * 26. In what situation this week do you need to tell the truth, even if it may cost you?
- 27. To what friend(s) in trouble can you show support by your physical presence?

Peter Disowns Jesus - Matthew 26:69-75

Topics: Accusation, Backslide, Compromise, Conversation, Denial, Depression, Embarrassment, Fear, Forsake, Grief, Loyalty, Peer Pressure, Pressure, Risk, Sorrow, Swearing, Trust, Words

Open It

- * 1. What does loyalty mean to you?
- 2. What are some of your greatest fears?
- 3. What examples could you cite to prove the old adage, “There is strength in numbers”?

Explore It

- 4. Where was Peter? (26:69)
- * 5. Who approached Peter? Why? (26:69)
- 6. What did the servant girl say to Peter? Why? (26:69)
- * 7. How did Peter respond to the servant girl’s question? (26:70)
- 8. What did Peter do after his exchange with the servant girl? (26:71)
- 9. When another girl approached Peter, what did she say? (26:71)
- 10. How did Peter handle the second girl’s claim? (26:72)
- 11. Why did a third group of folks insist that Peter had to be a follower of Christ? (26:73)
- 12. What extreme reaction did Peter have to the allegation that he was a follower of Jesus? (26:74)
- * 13. What happened when Peter denied knowing Christ? (26:74-75)
- 14. What memory did the cock’s crow trigger in Peter’s mind? (26:75)
- 15. How did Peter react when he realized what he had done? (26:75)

Get It

- 16. What do you think Peter was hoping to accomplish by hanging around the trial of Jesus?
- 17. What happened through a couple of young girls to scare Peter into silence?
- 18. How would you have felt in Peter’s place?
- * 19. When do you find you are most tempted to downplay or even deny your Christian beliefs?
- * 20. When has your faith in Jesus cost you something?
- 21. Why do some Christians seem to be able to stand up for Christ with no problem, while others stumble often?
- 22. If you were accused of being a close follower of Jesus Christ and were put on trial, would witnesses be able to come forward to present evidence against you?
- 23. How can close friendships with committed believers keep you from falling away from Christ?

Apply It

- * 24. To what person should you demonstrate your loyalty this week? How?
- 25. Whom might you be able to engage in a conversation about Jesus Christ this week?
- 26. In what settings do you need to acknowledge Christ more consistently by your actions (or nonactions)?

Judas Hangs Himself - Matthew 27:1-10

Topics: Actions, Change, Despair, Feelings, Jesus Christ, Messiah, Pain, Prophecy, Religion, Repentance, Shame, Sin, Sorrow, Soul

Open It

1. Over what kinds of situations or mistakes do people decide to kill themselves?
- * 2. What are some ways people try to deal with guilt?
3. Who is the most compassionate and caring friend you know?
4. What are inappropriate sources of income for churches and ministries?

Explore It

5. When did the religious leaders decide to put Jesus to death? (27:1)
6. What did the religious leaders do with Christ? (27:2)
7. Where did the religious leaders take Jesus? (27:2)
8. Why was it significant that Jesus was taken to Pilate? (27:2)
- * 9. How did Judas feel when he saw that Jesus had been condemned to die? (27:3)
- * 10. What action did Judas take in an attempt to undo his crime? (27:3)
11. What did Judas say to the religious leaders? (27:4)
- * 12. How did the religious leaders act when they heard Judas express second thoughts? (27:4)
13. What did Judas do when the leaders rejected his offer to return the money? (27:5)
14. What did the leaders do with the bounty they had paid Judas? (27:6-8)
15. Why was Judas's suicide significant? (27:9-10)

Get It

16. Why do you think the chief priests were so insensitive to Judas's remorse?
17. In what situations do we sometimes offer token compassion or ignore altogether those who are hurting?
- * 18. What would you say to someone who was feeling extremely guilty and depressed?
- * 19. How can we avoid (or break out of) a downward spiral of sin, guilt, depression, more sin, greater guilt, deeper depression, etc.?
20. How does sin, if allowed to go unchecked, cause us to lose all sense of rightness and kindness?
21. What practical steps can we take when confronted with wrongdoing?

Apply It

- * 22. What big decision do you need to pray about this week so that you do not end up making a choice you will later regret?
23. What can you do today or tomorrow to encourage a friend who is feeling especially low because of a bad or sinful choice?

Jesus Before Pilate - Matthew 27:11-26

Topics: Accusation, Answers, Authority, Blindness, Conscience, Death, Evil, Favoritism, Foolishness, God's Will, Government, Hardheartedness, Intimidation, Jesus Christ, Pressure, Rebellion, Rejection, Silence, Sin, Unbelievers, World

Open It

- * 1. What is the most ingenious or creative excuse you have heard someone give in an attempt to avoid responsibility?
- 2. What is your opinion of politicians?
- 3. What governmental customs or laws do you like best and least?
- 4. How much stock do you put in dreams?

Explore It

- 5. What title and position did Pilate have? (27:11)
- 6. What question did Pilate ask Jesus? (27:11)
- 7. How did Jesus answer the Roman authority? (27:11)
- 8. How did Jesus answer the Jews when they made accusations against Him? (27:12)
- 9. What did Pilate think of Christ's silence? (27:13-14)
- 10. What custom did the governor follow at this particular time of year? (27:15)
- 11. Who was in prison at the time? (27:16)
- 12. What choice did Pilate put before the crowd? (27:17-18)
- 13. What message did Pilate's wife send him? (27:19)
- 14. How did the religious leaders influence the crowd? (27:20)
- 15. What choice did the crowd make? (27:21)
- * 16. What did the crowd ask Pilate to do to Christ? (27:22)
- * 17. How did Pilate attempt to evade any responsibility in the condemnation of Jesus? (27:24)
- 18. What ironic statement did the crowd make about Jesus' blood? (27:25)
- * 19. What happened to the two prisoners—Barabbas and Jesus? (27:26)

Get It

- 20. How would you rate Pilate's performance?
- 21. Why is it difficult not to defend yourself when people are saying mean and untrue things about you?
- 22. What attitudes, emotions, or perspective must a person have in order to stay calm while being attacked?
- 23. In what way is not defending an innocent person the same as condemning him or her?
- 24. When might you be called upon to defend someone who is innocent?
- 25. What risks are there in defending an innocent person?
- 26. In what relationships do you need to trust more in the power and sufficiency of Christ?
- 27. In what situations do you need to quit arguing and defending yourself?
- * 28. What decisions have you been putting off for fear of the responsibility?
- * 29. What helps you face your responsibilities?

Apply It

- 30. How can you prepare yourself for the next time you have an opportunity to defend an innocent person?
- * 31. What decision do you need to make today and then take responsibility for?

The Soldiers Mock Jesus - Matthew 27:27-31

Topics: Accusation, Authority, Blasphemy, Blindness, Evil, Government, Hardheartedness, Hatred, Intimidation, Jesus Christ, Pain, Persecution, Rejection, Sin, Unbelievers, World

Open It

- * 1. What effect do you think violence in the media has on our society?
- 2. Which is worse, physical or emotional pain? Why?
- 3. What are the most common ways Christians are mocked?

Explore It

- * 4. Who took charge of the flogging and crucifixion of Jesus? (27:26-27)
- 5. How many people were involved in torturing Jesus? (27:27)
- * 6. Where did the guards take Jesus? Why? (27:27-28)
- * 7. Once they had Jesus inside, what did the guards do? (27:27-31)
- 8. What did the guards make Jesus wear? (27:28-29)
- 9. What did the soldiers put on Jesus' head? Why? (27:29)
- 10. In what way did these soldiers mock Jesus? (27:29)
- 11. With what did the soldiers ridicule Christ? (27:29)
- 12. What types of emotional and physical abuse did the guards inflict on Christ? (27:30)
- 13. After mocking Jesus, what did the soldiers do? (27:31)

Get It

- 14. Why did Christ put up with torture when He could have destroyed all His attackers?
- 15. What do you think the soldiers were thinking as they mocked, taunted, and assaulted Jesus?
- 16. What would you do if you came upon a group of friends who were abusing (either verbally or physically) some helpless individual?
- 17. What can we do to curb the abusive mentality of others?
- 18. Why do people pick on helpless individuals?
- 19. In what ways does evil become easier to justify when many people are doing it?
- * 20. What evils have become legitimized by consensus in our society today?
- * 21. What can Christians do to resist the tendency for evil to spread once it becomes common?
- 22. What sorts of opposition should we expect to face when resisting popular evils?

Apply It

- 23. Whom can you encourage this week who has been facing persecution?
- 24. What can you do or say to speak out against an evil that is being accepted as normal?
- * 25. In what way can you be a peacemaker this week at home, at work, or among your neighbors?

The Crucifixion - Matthew 27:32-44

Topics: Atonement, Bitterness, Blasphemy, Blindness, Criticism, Death, Endurance, Foolishness, Hatred, Humiliation, Jesus Christ, Pain, Rejection, Sacrifice, Sin, Strength, Unbelievers

Open It

1. What do you think would be the most horrible way to die?
2. Where do you stand in the ongoing debate over capital punishment?
3. How accurate is the old saying, "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words can never hurt me"?
- * 4. What is the weakest and most exhausted you've ever been?

Explore It

5. When did these events take place? (27:32)
6. Whom did Jesus and his executioners meet as they were making their way to the site of the crucifixion? (27:32)
7. What was Simon forced to do? For whom? (27:32)
8. Where did the group take Jesus? (27:33)
9. What is the meaning of "Golgotha"? (27:33)
10. What was offered to Jesus? (27:34)
11. After nailing Jesus to the cross, what did the soldiers do? (27:35-36)
12. What did the soldiers place above Jesus' head? (27:37)
13. Who was executed that day? (27:38)
- * 14. What did onlookers shout at Jesus? (27:39-40)
- * 15. What was the behavior of the religious leaders like as they watched Jesus die? (27:41-43)
- * 16. How did the robbers act toward Jesus? (27:44)

Get It

17. In a passage where many people are anonymous, why do you think Simon of Cyrene is mentioned by name?
- * 18. Why does it hurt to be mocked and laughed at and scorned?
19. In what way were the soldiers showing mercy by offering Jesus wine?
20. What are some ways we attempt to numb ourselves to the reality of the harsh world around us?
- * 21. How does it make you feel to realize that Jesus underwent horrible abuse for you?
22. How is it possible to love the very people who are the most cruel and vicious to us?
23. When are you sometimes insulted?
24. When is it worth undergoing unjustified abuse?

Apply It

25. What "cross" (burden, problem, difficulty, grief) can you unselfishly agree to bear for someone else today?
- * 26. In what way can you show your gratitude to Jesus today in light of all He suffered for you?
27. What steps can you take this week to help you overlook insults and verbal taunts?

The Death of Jesus - Matthew 27:45-56

Topics: Atonement, Believe, Blindness, Darkness, Death, Devotion, God, Grief, Hopelessness, Loneliness, Mediator, Miracles, Mourning, Pain, Questions, Sacrifice, Separation, Unbelievers

Open It

- * 1. What is it like to be separated from someone you love?
- 2. When in your life did you ever feel abandoned?

Explore It

- 3. What happened from the sixth to the ninth hour (from 12 noon until 3 p.m.)? (27:45)
- * 4. What did Jesus cry out at the ninth hour? Why? (27:46)
- * 5. What did Jesus' last words mean? (27:46)
- 6. What did some of the bystanders think Christ had yelled? (27:47)
- 7. What did one man in particular try to do for Jesus? (27:48)
- 8. How did the rest in the crowd respond to the gesture of kindness toward Jesus? (27:49)
- 9. What happened the next time Jesus cried out in a loud voice? (27:50)
- 10. What supernatural event took place inside the temple when Jesus died? (27:51)
- 11. How were things in Jerusalem at that time? (27:51)
- 12. How did the death of Jesus affect activity in some of the area's cemeteries? (27:52-53)
- * 13. How did a Roman centurion react to the way Jesus died? (27:54)
- 14. Who else was in the crowd watching the crucifixion? (27:55)
- 15. Who in the crowd was most prominent at Jesus' death? (27:56)

Get It

- * 16. What did it mean that the sky turned black as Jesus hung on the cross?
- 17. How would you explain to an inquiring friend the significance of the veil in the temple tearing in two as Jesus died?
- 18. Why does it often take drastic measures or life-threatening upheavals to bring people to their senses and persuade them to follow Christ?
- 19. What situations or events did God use to convince you that Jesus is the Son of God?
- 20. Why are the women followers of Jesus mentioned, and not the male disciples?
- * 21. What did Jesus accomplish for you with His death?

Apply It

- * 22. What steps can you take this week to allow the profound truth of this passage to sink in?
- 23. In the near future, with whom can you share the good news of Christ's payment for sin on the cross?

The Burial of Jesus - Matthew 27:57-61

Topics: Actions, Commitment, Courage, Danger, Fear, Generosity, Integrity, Ministry, Peer Pressure, Reputation, Strength, Witnessing

Open It

1. What do you think about fair-weather friends who depart at the first sign of trouble?
2. What would your coworkers say if they found out that you were in this Bible study?
- * 3. Where do you want to be buried? Why?

Explore It

4. Who came to the execution site? When? (27:57)
5. What was true about Joseph of Arimathea? (27:57)
6. What did Joseph think about Jesus and His message? (27:57)
- * 7. What kind of help did Jesus receive at His death? (27:57-58)
8. How did Joseph ask for the body of Jesus? (27:58)
9. How did Pilate respond to Joseph's request? (27:58)
- * 10. What did Joseph do with Jesus' body? (27:59-60)
11. Where did Joseph put Jesus' body? (27:60)
12. How did Joseph seal the tomb? (27:60)
- * 13. Who watched Joseph bury Jesus? (27:61)

Get It

14. Where were Jesus' disciples when all these events were going on?
15. As a respected Jewish religious leader (see Mark 15:42-43 and John 19:38), what risk was Joseph taking in coming forward to bury Jesus?
- * 16. In what ways are you a secret disciple of Christ, afraid to publicly follow him?
17. How might your reputation suffer if you let it be known that your top desire in life is to love and serve Jesus Christ?
18. When, if ever, is it inappropriate to use your power and position to support Christ and his work?
- * 19. What brand-new possessions would you be willing to part with for the sake of Christ?

Apply It

- * 20. What gift (of time, money, effort, possession, etc.) can you give this week out of love and devotion to God?
21. In what setting today, tomorrow, or over the next week do you need to let it be known—maybe for the very first time—that you are a follower of Jesus Christ?

The Guard at the Tomb - Matthew 27:62-66

Topics: Authority, Bitterness, Blindness, Deceit, Determination, Effectiveness, Expectations, Hatred, Insecurity, Lost, Opposition, Plans, Power, Protection, Strength, Waiting

Open It

- * 1. If you could have five personal bodyguards (any people on earth) whom would you choose and then where would you go?
- 2. Where do you feel the safest or most secure and why?
- 3. When in your life have you been “taken for a ride”?

Explore It

- 4. When did the chief priests go to Pilate? (27:62)
- * 5. Who went to Pilate the day after Christ was buried? Why? (27:62-63)
- 6. What words of Jesus did the chief priests remember and report to Pilate? (27:63)
- 7. What did the religious leaders call Jesus? (27:63)
- 8. What did the religious leaders want Pilate to do? (27:64)
- * 9. For how long did the religious leaders want help from Pilate? Why? (27:64)
- 10. What were the Jewish leaders afraid would happen if Pilate refused their request? (27:64)
- 11. What were the chief priests afraid would happen if Jesus’ body disappeared? (27:64)
- 12. What command did Pilate give? (27:65)
- * 13. What did the religious leaders do to secure the tomb where Jesus was buried? (27:65-66)

Get It

- 14. Knowing the attitudes and the actions of the Jews, what is ironic about them calling Jesus a “deceiver” guilty of “deception”?
- 15. What man-made precautions are giving you a false sense of security that everything in your life is under control?
- 16. In what ways do we trust in our own plans instead of in God?
- * 17. In what areas of life are we prone to try to cover up the truth?
- * 18. Why are we sometimes afraid to admit the truth?
- 19. What claim or promise of Christ do you need to take more seriously?

Apply It

- * 20. What truth do you need to face today?
- 21. What foolish, fleshly attempts to control God and your own life do you need to repent of today?

The Resurrection - Matthew 28:1-10

Topics: Angels, Basics of the Faith, Believe, Celebration, Evangelism, Feelings, Gentleness, Good News, Gospel, Jesus Christ, Miracles, Power, Praise, Prophecy, Resurrection, Salvation, Success, Victory, Witnessing, Worship

Open It

- * 1. In your opinion, what is the most significant event in history?
- 2. If you could go back in time and witness any historical event, which one would you choose? Why?
- 3. What is the most awesome display of power you have ever seen?

Explore It

- 4. When did the events of this passage occur? (28:1)
- 5. Who went to Jesus' tomb? (28:1)
- 6. What significant events took place that morning? (28:2)
- 7. Where did the angel go, and what did he do? (28:2)
- 8. What did the angel look like? (28:3)
- 9. What effect did the angel have on the guards at the tomb of Jesus? (28:4)
- * 10. What amazing news did the angel announce to the women at the tomb? (28:5-6)
- 11. What invitation did the angel give the women? (28:6)
- * 12. What command did the angel give Mary Magdalene and "the other Mary"? (28:7)
- 13. How did the women feel as they left the tomb? (28:8)
- * 14. What kind of meeting took place as the women were going to tell the disciples about Jesus? (28:9)
- 15. How did the women respond when Jesus met them? (28:9)
- 16. What words of challenge and comfort did the women receive? (28:10)

Get It

- 17. If you can mentally place yourself at the tomb of Christ on that first "Easter morning," what emotions would you be feeling?
- * 18. Why is the Resurrection important to us as Christians?
- * 19. What attitude should we have in light of the fact of Jesus' resurrection?
- 20. How might you answer a skeptic who argued that Jesus didn't really rise from the dead?
- 21. Why should we be interested and motivated to tell others about this amazing historical fact?
- 22. How does Jesus' warm, loving attitude—even toward the disciples who deserted him—give you comfort?

Apply It

- * 23. When and where could you spend a few minutes meditating on the truth of this passage over the next week?
- 24. In what practical and realistic ways can you become more effective this week in spreading the good news about Christ?

The Guards' Report - Matthew 28:11-15

Topics: Answers, Blindness, Deceit, Details, Embarrassment, Excuses, Government, Interpretation, Lying, Motives, Plans, Rejection, Religion, Words

Open It

- * 1. How much of what goes on in the world (in government, in business, on the street, in families) is hidden or covered up?
- 2. When you hear two wildly different versions of the same event, how do you determine which one is true?
- 3. What bit of news or information do you remember more than any other?
- 4. As a child, what elaborate cover-ups did you devise in order to hide your misbehavior?

Explore It

- 5. While the women were going out to spread the good news, what did the guards from the tomb do? (28:11)
- 6. What groups met to discuss the “emergency” of Jesus’ missing body? (28:12)
- 7. What did the meeting of religious leaders produce? (28:12)
- * 8. What did the chief priests give the soldiers? Why? (28:12-13)
- 9. Whom did the chief priests bribe? Why? (28:12-13)
- 10. Whom did the chief priests and elders use? Why? (28:12-13)
- 11. What did the religious leaders tell the soldiers to say? (28:13)
- * 12. How did the religious leaders reassure the guards that they would not get in trouble with the Roman government? (28:14)
- 13. What did the soldiers think about the plot? (28:15)
- * 14. To what degree was the story made up by Jesus’ enemies spread and believed? (28:15)

Get It

- 15. How do you think the soldiers felt as they made their way back to headquarters?
- 16. To what do you account the Jewish leaders’ stubborn unwillingness to acknowledge the Resurrection?
- 17. If you had been living at the time, how might you have “poked holes” in the “official account” of the Resurrection?
- 18. What are some other man-made explanations for the Resurrection?
- * 19. How does money or the promise of wealth alter our ability to think clearly and reason purely?
- * 20. Why are we willing to go to great lengths to cover up unpleasant truths?
- 21. In what area(s) of your life have you been covering up the truth and living a lie?

Apply It

- 22. What can you do this week to prepare for discussions with those who don’t believe Jesus rose from the dead?
- * 23. What first step do you need to take today to live with more integrity, no matter how much it costs you?

The Great Commission - Matthew 28:16-20

Topics: Authority, Believe, Call, Challenge, Evangelism, God's Will, Good News, Gospel, Help, Jesus Christ, Ministry, Plans, Purpose, Salvation, Witnessing, Worship

Open It

- * 1. What is the most exciting news you have received in the last month?
- 2. What images spring to mind when you hear the words "missionary" or "evangelism"?
- 3. What is the loneliest time you have ever experienced?

Explore It

- 4. Who went to Galilee? When? (28:16)
- 5. Where did the disciples gather? Why? (28:16)
- 6. Why did the disciples assemble on the specific mountain they chose? (28:16)
- 7. Who appeared to the disciples? When? (28:16-17)
- 8. What responses did Jesus' appearance elicit? (28:17)
- 9. What did Jesus say about Himself? (28:18)
- 10. Where did Jesus tell His disciples to go? (28:19)
- * 11. What did Jesus tell His disciples to make? (28:19)
- * 12. What activities were the disciples to be involved in? (28:19-20)
- * 13. With what words of comfort did Jesus leave His disciples? (28:20)

Get It

- 14. What insight into the triune nature of God do you find in this passage?
- 15. Why do you think some of the disciples doubted when they saw Christ?
- 16. What causes Christians to doubt God today?
- 17. How do you think you might have reacted to the appearance of the risen Christ?
- 18. What does it mean to us that Jesus has "all authority"?
- 19. Over what does Jesus have all authority?
- 20. Over whom does Jesus have all authority?
- * 21. What does it mean to "make disciples"?
- * 22. What role do you have in making disciples?
- 23. How can knowing that Jesus is always with us make a difference in our daily lives?
- 24. What specific teaching of Christ do you need to obey more consistently?

Apply It

- 25. What older and wiser Christian can you approach in the next couple of days to ask for help in spiritual learning, training, and growing?
- * 26. What step can you take this week in the process of making disciples?