



— THE —
GOOD
— NEWS —

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the
GOSPEL
of
MATTHEW
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NORTHEAST CHRISTIAN CHURCH
the GOSPEL *of* MATTHEW



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The Good News

The four “gospels” are theological biographies of the life of Jesus of Nazareth. They are biographies in the sense that they tell the story of His unique *life, death, and resurrection*.

But they are more than just biographical narratives. They contain a *message*. The authors communicate these messages by intentionally selecting specific stories from the life of Jesus, placing them in a specific order, and emphasizing specific aspects all to make their point.

Each of them has a unique structure, unique plot development, and unique purposes. And, most significantly, each paints a different and important picture of Jesus—of who He is and what that means for the world.

And all of them are Good News.

In fact, the term “gospel” simply means “good news.” We believe that the content, the messages, and the Person revealed in these sacred Texts are the best, most beautiful news the world has ever heard.

According to Matthew

One way to summarize the main point of the Good News according to Matthew is this:

JESUS IS THE SON OF DAVID WHO ESTABLISHES THE KINGDOM OF GOD

This is the picture we see of who Jesus is and what it means for the world. He is the King who establishes the Kingdom. There are also a number of other themes we will see within Matthew, including God at work, God as Father, the Fulfillment of the Hebrew Scriptures, Conflict, and the Cross and Resurrection.

How to Use this Tool

This tool covers a season of seven weeks.. Spend some time each Sunday reviewing the upcoming week. Begin the process of memorizing the Text. Read through the **Take Action** and **Family** sections. Read or skim over the week's readings. Spend some time praying and preparing your heart to grow. Then follow the tool throughout the week.

DISCIPLE MAKING: Discipleship is the process of coming to know and then increasingly following Jesus (in other words, it includes both what has been traditionally called evangelism and disciple making). This is a disciple making tool. It is designed for your growth. But even more than that, what if you could use this tool to help others grow? Who has the Lord placed around you in this season? Use all of this to help them know and follow Jesus more.

FAMILIES: There is a section aimed specifically at families with kids. Each week engage as a family in a creative activity related to the Text. One approach for families is (1) memorize the Scripture together, (2) to read the daily Text out loud together, (3) and to then pick one day to do the family oriented activity together. May it be a joyous time of growth that produces fruit in the next generation beyond what we could ask or imagine.



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WEEK 1

MATTHEW 1-4

MEMORIZE

Matthew 1:22-23

TAKE ACTION

As you read the Text this week, look for a portion that encourages you to have faith that God is at work in your life and the lives of others. It could be a single verse or an entire chapter. How is this Good News? Write out the Text or create a piece of art related to it and place it somewhere as a reminder of this important truth.

FAMILY

Design a family tree together. This can be as elaborate or as simple as you want it to be! Talk about parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents, perhaps even doing some research to go further back. Hopefully this will generate some good story-telling. Ask: Do you think our family is perfect? Why or why not. Connect Jesus' flawed family line with their own—ultimately pointing them to the redemption that Jesus does in a heritage.

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MONDAY :: MATTHEW 1:1-17

As you read the genealogy of Jesus, write down any information you know about the stories of those men and women in His family line. As you scan the list you made, what do you notice about His ancestry?

What is the significance of Jesus being the Son of David? (see 2 Samuel 7:4,12-16 for perspective). What is the global significance? What is the personal significance to you?

TUESDAY :: MATTHEW 1:18-25

How does Joseph respond to the circumstances and people around him? How does he respond to God? What can we learn from what Scripture says about Joseph's response to these intense events?

Jesus is *Immanuel*. This was prophesied 700 years earlier(!) by the Hebrew Prophet Isaiah (see Isaiah 9:6-7). Allow this to sink in, right now, wherever you are. Can you worship Him in this moment? What words or phrases or songs come to mind to describe a God like this?

WEDNESDAY :: MATTHEW 2

Gather from this chapter a list of all the things God uses to accomplish His purpose. What can we learn from this list? What things do you see God using in your life in this season? Who goes to great lengths to pursue Jesus here? For good? For evil? What do they have in common?

THURSDAY :: MATTHEW 3

Examine John the Baptizer's words here. What feelings do they invoke? Does anything make you uncomfortable? How do his words fit into the overall message of Scripture? Why do followers of Jesus get baptized? Have you been baptized? Think back on that time and/or share with others about it.

FRIDAY :: MATTHEW 4:1-11

Based on human experience, how may Jesus have been feeling at this time? What are your thoughts on physical circumstances and the connection to the soul? In other words, what opportunity for inner renewal is there when we are in the midst of vivid hardship? Use other Scripture verses to process this. Describe a time when you were being stretched and how it affected you. Be specific.

SATURDAY :: MATTHEW 4:12-25

Based upon Jesus' calling of His followers, what kind of people does Jesus use to change the world? Are you able to see your status, station, and location as useful by God to change the world?

What kind of people were drawn to Jesus? What kind of people are drawn to you? Are hurting people able to approach you?

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WEEK 2

MATTHEW 5-9

MEMORIZE

Matthew 5:3-10

TAKE ACTION

Throughout the Good News according to Matthew, there are four groups consistently identified: the leaders, the crowds, the demons, and the disciples. Matthew creatively invites the reader to identify her or himself according to these four groups. Are you like the leaders who often oppose Jesus? Are you like the crowds who were excited about Jesus but never fully commit? Are you under the influence of demons who are in a cosmic war with Jesus? Or are you like the disciples who are portrayed as following Jesus despite repeated failures. As you read this week, examine your life. How might you help someone this week move toward being a disciple? Be specific. Ask others around you to be part of these efforts.

FAMILY

Start this conversation off with a little dance party (we recommend the song "Happy"). Ask: what do you think makes people happy? Think about friends, characters in movies, or books. Read Matthew 5:3-12, emphasizing that "blessed" in these verses means "happy." Ask: What does the Bible say makes a person happy? The answer is: the King and His Kingdom.

/// THE TEXT //////////////////////////////////////

MONDAY :: MATTHEW 5:1-16

What is the ultimate source of blessing described in the Beatitudes?
Recall a time where you have experienced being "blessed" like those described in the passage. Make note of what you were going through and how you saw the Father bless you.

This passage refers to the “blessed” as the salt of the earth and light of the world. Speculate as to why this is.

TUESDAY :: MATTHEW 5:17-48

What thoughts or emotions come to your mind as you read Jesus explaining His beautiful way of living?

What is the correlation between Jesus' statements that he is the fulfillment of the law (vs. 17) and that we must be perfect as the heavenly Father is perfect (vs. 48)?

Multiple times Jesus says, “you have heard, but I say.” In thinking of your life now, what are ways that Jesus is directing you to live contrary to what you have heard?

WEDNESDAY :: MATTHEW 6:1-34

What practices does Jesus assume His Followers will be living in this passage?

How did Jesus address the manner in which they did these things?

How would seeking first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness (v. 33) change the way you are currently living in these areas? How could that mindset impact your worry and anxiety?

THURSDAY :: MATTHEW 7:1-29

Jesus uses comparison throughout this passage. What do you think he is trying to highlight?

What about Jesus' statements caused those who heard him to be “astonished”? How do you think He conveyed authority?

FRIDAY :: MATTHEW 8:1-34

Identify the different expressions of faith described in this passage. How did people come to Jesus?

Which of these demonstrations of faith do you most relate with in this season?

SATURDAY :: MATTHEW 9:1-38

How did Jesus respond to the faith of those coming to Him?

List some of the ways people reacted to the miracles Jesus performed. As you've experienced it yourself and seen it in others, what responses have you had to Jesus intervening in the lives of His people?

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WEEK 3

MATTHEW 10-12

MEMORIZE

Matthew 9:12-13

TAKE ACTION

Pray for and pursue at least two people this week to whom you will proclaim the Good News in both word and deed.

Sometime throughout the week, sit down with someone who knows you well and ask him or her to describe the kind of fruit he or she sees in your life. (Honesty is necessary here.) Follow up this time with some prayer and conversation about how you can spur one another on to good works (see Hebrews 10:24).

FAMILY

Have your kids talk about what they want to do or be when they grow up. For some ages, it may be appropriate to play dress-up or pretend what they hope to be someday. Ask: do you think Jesus can change the world with a [insert what they want to be]? Talk about some adults you know and what they do and how they might be part of God's Kingdom coming to earth. Discuss that and tell them who Jesus picked out to change the world when He was on earth.

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MONDAY :: MATTHEW 10:1-25

In what areas of your life might you depend more on your own strength to provide for yourself and/or your family than trusting God for his provision? (v. 9—10).

What might persecution look like in our American context for those who live out and proclaim the Good News of Jesus?

TUESDAY :: MATTHEW 10:26-42

How can you “tell” and “proclaim” Jesus’ words in the places you find yourself? (v. 27).
What relationships and/or comforts in your life might be holding you back from following Jesus more closely? (v. 37—39).

WEDNESDAY :: MATTHEW 11:1-19

What things exist in our culture that might cause us to misunderstand Jesus, his teaching, and what he came to accomplish?
How can we be a people who have “ears to hear” Jesus amidst the other voices vying for our attention? (v. 15).

THURSDAY :: MATTHEW 11:20-30

How are you taking on and living out Jesus’ “yoke” (i.e., his teaching) in your daily life?
When do you find “rest for your soul” while following Jesus’ way? (see also Jer 6:16).

FRIDAY :: MATTHEW 12:1-21

From this section of Scripture, what can you discern about God’s priorities?
If there are things in your life that hinder you from responding to others with compassion like Jesus did, what might they be?

SATURDAY :: MATTHEW 12:22-50

How do you think your coworkers, classmates, family, friends, and even strangers would describe the kind of fruit you produce in life?
How can you love and care for the family of God?

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WEEK 4

MATTHEW 13-17

MEMORIZE

Matthew 13:44

TAKE ACTION

On your knees, daily pray for a deepened faith and recognition that Jesus Christ is enough. “Faith means we believe that the kingdom of heaven has come to us in Christ. It means we believe there is hope in Jesus and only in him. It means we believe that rescue, healing, covering, acceptance, and cleansing are possible, and possible only in Jesus. Faith – means saying, ‘Jesus, I need you’” (Edward T. Welch).

FAMILY

Read the parable about the Kingdom of God being like the mustard seed in Matthew 13. If you are able, get some mustard seeds, or alternatively, look up some pictures of mustard seeds online. What does seeing a mustard seed teach us about the Kingdom of God? Brainstorm together about one small, mustard seed size thing you could do together as a family this week to see God's Kingdom come to earth.

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MONDAY :: MATTHEW 13:1-43

How have you recently seen the power of the Good News at work (in your life or in others)?

In the last six months, how has the soil of your heart changed?

How are your life choices reflecting your response to the Good News?

TUESDAY :: MATTHEW 13:44-58

How are you giving your time, talent, and treasure for the Kingdom of God?
Are there any ways you are like Jesus' hometown, rejecting all or pieces of Jesus' message?

WEDNESDAY :: MATTHEW 14:1-36

Specifically, how are others influencing you toward or away from the Lord?
In light of Matthew 14.18, how are you bringing people to Jesus?
How might you actively pursue Jesus and receive his healing touch (vs. 36)?

THURSDAY :: MATTHEW 15:1-39

What is your response to Jesus' focus on the heart (vs. 18-19)? Without filtering your answer, how do you feel Jesus responds to your heart?
From the Canaanite woman's example of faith, how does your faith need to grow?

FRIDAY :: MATTHEW 16:1-28

Like the Pharisees and Sadducees, are there ways you are testing God in this season?
Is there anything God is telling you that you need deny yourself of, in order to follow Him more passionately (vs. 24)?
What is most difficult for you: to come after me (Jesus), deny yourself, take up your cross, or follow me (Jesus)?

SATURDAY :: MATTHEW 17:1-27

From verse 5, how do you desire to live in response to God our Father's words about Jesus?
What steps will you take to live that out today?
How does your faith need to change in order to reflect the faith described in verses 20-21?
When in your life have you witnessed an example of this faith and how has it impacted you?

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WEEK 5

MATTHEW 18-22

MEMORIZE

Matthew 17:5

TAKE ACTION

Take some time to journal answers to the following questions. What in your life is aiding the forward movement of the God's kingdom? Do the components and themes of your life line up with the values of kingdom? Is the your focus directed towards justice, outrageous grace, lifting up the weak and broken, engaging with those who have "little to offer," and over-the-top giving? Or do collecting possessions, seeking after power and position, being consumed with fairness, and attaining wealth hold the attention of your heart?

FAMILY

Jesus was Jewish and Jews celebrate certain festivals in obedience to God. Every fall, they celebrate the feast of Sukkot. Each year the people would all go to Jerusalem, and all the families would build temporary dwelling places (like tents). This was to remember their time of wandering in the wilderness and God's Presence and provision for them. Build a fort indoors, or better yet, do a backyard campout sometime this week. Discuss the significance of God "dwelling" among us. How has God provided for your family?

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MONDAY :: MATTHEW 18

What are the values of the kingdom of God? In what ways are these "heavenly" values contrary to "earthly" priorities?

What is keeping you from walking in God's beautiful and complete righteousness?

Are there people or situations in your life that need to be shown the outlandish graciousness of the Kingdom? Are you behaving like the unmerciful servant or the gracious king?

TUESDAY :: MATTHEW 19

Are you seeing who is of great value to God and His kingdom? Who are you not engaging with that needs your attention? Is your life too busy to be “bothered” and “interrupted”? How much energy and time are you putting towards gaining possessions and wealth? Do your priorities and focus line up with the “economics of the kingdom of God”?

WEDNESDAY :: MATTHEW 20

Is fairness in your relationships and regarding social issues (e.g., immigration & healthcare) taking a high place in your life when gracious generosity should supersede? How are you specifically serving others in a humble and sacrificial way? Does concern for looking silly or how you might be perceived keep you from desperately expressing your need to God?

THURSDAY :: MATTHEW 21:1-28

Is there an area in your life that you need to step out and follow the simple direction(s) from God even though you can't see the larger purpose? In what way(s) may you be playing the role of the legalistic and condemning Pharisee? How might you be getting in the way of the kingdom of God advancing in the lives of others?

FRIDAY :: MATTHEW 21:29-46

Are you making space in order that you can hear and respond to God? Or are the distractions of life preoccupying you? Are you producing the fruit of the kingdom in your life? Name a couple practical, specific examples. What is an area that is lacking fruit?

SATURDAY :: MATTHEW 22

Are legitimate/good things of life keeping you from attending to what God is calling you into? Where do you need to see God act in power? Does the “neighbor” in your life know they are truly loved? How are you showing that beyond conversational pleasantries and general niceness?

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WEEK 6

MATTHEW 23-27

MEMORIZE

Matthew 26:12-13

TAKE ACTION

Tell another Jesus Follower your story. What does the suffering and death of Jesus mean to you personally?

Write down the names of two or three people who don't share life with Jesus. Spend some time in prayer for them each day this coming week, asking that they would understand Jesus' work on the cross.

FAMILY

The sermon last week was about a gift that a woman brought to Jesus. Encourage your kids to make something for Jesus as a gift. Really inspire them to be creative and do their best. Discuss the difference between doing something out of love, as opposed to earning favor. Really emphasize that we cannot bring a gift to God to earn His favor. Jesus has done that!

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MONDAY :: MATTHEW 23:1-39

This chapter contains some of Jesus' strongest words of rebuke in all the gospels. What is it about the Pharisees and their behavior that causes such a strong reaction from Jesus? What behaviors do we exhibit today that Jesus might have similarly strong words for? How do verses 37 and 38 relate to the rest of the chapter?

TUESDAY :: MATTHEW 24:1-51

When are we in danger of being deceived (v. 24)?

What should our personal response be to Jesus' warnings in these words?

WEDNESDAY :: MATTHEW 25:1-46

What does Jesus want us to understand about the Kingdom of God from the parable of the ten virgins? What about from the parable of the talents?

Look at verses 37-40. How do you see these verses apply to your life recently? Consider how you could do something significant for "the least of these" in the next week.

THURSDAY :: MATTHEW 26:1-46

When the woman pours perfume on Jesus' feet, his disciples rebuke her. What does Jesus' reaction say about what our priorities should be?

How is Peter's state of mind in this chapter contradictory to the Kingdom of God?

What does this chapter reveal about Jesus' humanity and his relationship with the Father?

FRIDAY :: MATTHEW 26:47-27:26

How do Peter and Judas each respond to their sin? What do their responses say about them?

Why was Jesus silent in the face of those questioning him? What does this say about his purpose? How do you tend to respond in the face of opposition?

SATURDAY :: MATTHEW 27:27-66

Write down all the ways Jesus suffered in this chapter. As you look over the list, thank God for Christ's loving obedience in fulfilling the Father's plan.

Re-read verses 55 through 61. Try to imagine yourself as a follower of Jesus during these days, not knowing what would come next. What would you have been thinking and feeling?

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WEEK 7

MATTHEW 28 & REWIND

MEMORIZE

Matthew 28:18-20

TAKE ACTION

Read or think back through your trek through Matthew in this season. Are there specific passages that come to mind? Are there specific truths about King Jesus or His Kingdom that have impacted you? How has this been Good News in your life or those around you? After considering these things, plan to share it with someone else. Seriously, pick at least one person and share what Jesus has been doing in and through you in this season.

FAMILY

Read or reread what Jesus said to His friends right before He left . Ask: who in your life do you want to see start following Jesus? What can you do to help them? As a family, dream of a step you can take together to help that person seek Jesus and become a disciple.

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MONDAY :: MATTHEW 28:1-10

Spend some time writing or thinking about Resurrection. What is it? What happened to Jesus' body? What does this mean for us?

Observe the forces at work to diminish the truth and power of the Resurrection. What forces do you see in your life or in the lives of others that succumb to these kinds of forces?

TUESDAY :: MATTHEW 28:11-20

What encourages you about what Jesus says in these verses? Work to find three things. What challenges you?

Who is part of your disciple making "family tree"? In other words, who has influenced you to follow Jesus more and more? Who are you influencing to follow Jesus?

WEDNESDAY :: REWIND

Throughout the remainder of this week, take some time to review what you have seen God do in or around you in this season? What has God done? How has this been Good News? Is there a specific Text from Matthew that has been part of this story? Go back, meditate upon it, and turn your heart to Jesus again today.

THURSDAY :: REWIND

In what ways have you seen more of Jesus over these seven weeks? How has His Kingdom come in or through your life? What, if anything, has changed in your life? Does any specific Text from Matthew come to mind? Go back and read it a few times.

FRIDAY :: REWIND

Which of the four groups (the leaders, the crowds, the disciples, the demons) has stood out to you as you have interacted with Matthew? Can you recall any specific Texts in which one or more of these groups responds to Jesus? Read over one of them and consider how this might impact you and those around you today.

SATURDAY :: REWIND

On this last day, return to the centrality of Jesus' death and resurrection. Read any part of chapters 27 and 28. How is this Good News for you and the people around you today? Spend some time praising God. Then go share all of this with someone! it is the best, most beautiful news the world has even heard.



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