

Bible Reading Plan – Matthew 1-7
September - October 2023

Jesus' first days
Jesus' first disciples
Jesus' first sermon
Matthew 1-7

September 11 – Matthew 1:1-17

1. Ok, I know. We're starting with a genealogy. Hardly exciting stuff right? To us, it may seem that way but to Matthew's audience this WAS exciting stuff. This was proof that the promise-keeping God was in it for the long-haul, proof that Jesus was in fact the legitimate and long-awaited Messiah! (This genealogy also locates Jesus within the flow of verifiable, historical people – this is no myth – this is well-attested history).*

2. Take a look at 2 Samuel 7:11-16. What does it mean that Jesus is 'the son of David'? Look at Genesis 12:7, 22:17-18 and Galatians 3:16-18. What's so special about being 'the son of Abraham'? How do these designations shape your understanding of the Gospel?

3. Each name on this list represents a story, a collection of stories really, about love and loss, triumph and failure, faithfulness and faithlessness. Through it all, God was working for good. How does your family's history reflect Jesus' family? What does it mean for your family that God works through even a lineage as dysfunctional as Jesus'?

4. Far from being pristine and perfect, there are some major dumpster-fires in Jesus' family tree. Are we destined to live as our parents did? How might this give hope to people who are stuck in generational poverty and trauma?

* If you're interested in exploring the details, you can find an annotated genealogy that points to Scripture passages here: <https://tinyurl.com/JesusGenealogy>. I put it together a few Christmases back.

September 13 – Matthew 1:18-25

1. What would you have done if you were in Joseph's shoes? What would you have done if you were in Mary's shoes? What do *their* actions teach us about stepping out in faith?

2. Humanly speaking, Mary's holy pregnancy was pretty hard to fathom: did it make sense for God to work in that way? How do you know whether to 'trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding' (when God calls you do to something unexpected) or to 'test everything and hold fast to what is good' (1 Thessalonians 5:21)?

3. Jesus is referred to by two names in this passage. What do Jesus' names tell us about His mission?

September 15 – Matthew 2

1. Herod and the magi are a great study in contrasts: Herod went to great lengths to eliminate a rival to the throne while the magi went to great lengths to bow before Him. What can we do to actively surrender the throne of our hearts to Jesus and find joy worshiping Him?
2. Why do you think God sent Mary and Joseph to Egypt? Why not for example Syria or Arabia?

September 18 – Matthew 3:1-12

1. John does not practice 'friendship evangelism,' getting to know people and sharing the Gospel with them. He just bluntly calls people to repentance. Is one method better than the other?
2. Why is he so hard on the Pharisees and Sadducees? How do we keep from becoming like them, hardened in their faith?

September 20 – Matthew 3:13-4:11

1. What can we learn about the Trinity from Jesus' baptism?
2. What do we learn about Jesus from His temptation in the wilderness? How does He demonstrate the importance of storing up God's Word in our hearts?

September 22 – Matthew 4:12-25

1. Imagine you were building a church. Who would your first choices be to staff the church? How does Jesus' choice of 'church leaders' open the door to you serving in His Kingdom?
2. Is there something specific about 'fishing' that led Jesus to choose fishermen as His first disciples? Could He have just as easily chosen farmers or merchants? How does your work uniquely equip you to be servants of the Kingdom?

September 25 – Mathew 5:1-16

1. When it comes to the Beatitudes, Jesus practiced what He preached. How does the realization that Jesus was meek, merciful and pure in heart (etc.) help you to follow Him in meekness, mercy and purity?
2. Are the benefits of the Beatitudes (comfort, inherit the earth, etc.) for this life or the next? If the latter, what does this tell us about eternity in the New Heavens and New Earth?
3. “16 In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:16). What can we do to highlight that our good deeds are motivated by God’s goodness and that HE is the one who is worthy of praise?

September 27 – Matthew 5:17-48

1. In what ways does Jesus legitimize and affirm Old Testament Law? In what ways does He supercede it?
2. Verse 20 is a challenging verse: “For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.” If that’s the case, what chance do we have? I’m not more righteous than a Pharisee! How does the Cross change how we read this? (Consider Romans 3:21-22, Romans 8:3-4, Philippians 3:8-9).

September 29 – Matthew 6:1-18

1. Today’s reading brings together three spiritual disciplines: giving to the needy, prayer and fasting. In each case, Jesus argues against ‘performative righteousness’: doing things to show others how virtuous you are (similar to our culture’s ‘virtue signalling’). Why is it more important to be seen and heard by God than by other people?
2. We pray the Lord’s Prayer every Sunday but we seldom include verses 14-15. Why is forgiving others so important for people who have been forgiven by God?

October 2 – Matthew 6:19-34

1. Where are your treasures? That’s where your heart is.
2. “No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money” (Matthew 6:24). What does your use of money say about who is in control?

October 4 – Matthew 7:1-12

1. Does Matthew 7:1 mean you should never judge (ie. hold people accountable for wrong actions)?
2. Are you embroiled in any relational conflicts? Invite the Lord to remove your blind spots.
3. When you pray, do you pray with the confidence that God hears and give good gifts to those who ask Him?

October 6 – Matthew 7:13-29

1. I like to call this portion of the Sermon on the Mount ‘Two ways, two trees, two foundations.’ Jesus shows us that there are only two ways to live – straight and narrow or wide and easy. There are two kinds of trees – fruit producers and pretenders. There are two foundations to build your life upon – the sand and the Rock. In each case, which are you?
2. Verse 23 is one of the most sobering passages in all of the Bible. It shows us that it’s possible to think you know Jesus without being one of His people. What does ‘Two ways, two trees, two foundations’ (and the rest of the Sermon on the Mount for that matter) tell us about the difference between people who THINK they know Jesus and people who truly do?