

Reflection Guide to the Gospel of Matthew

Meeting is Tuesday, November 12 at 7:30 p.m.

As you read Matthew notice the particular way in which the gospel portrays Jesus' community. Notice the references to his Jewish faith, and the ways in which he is the legitimate heir of King David. Read the Hebrew scriptures which are cited as revealing that Jesus is the fulfilment of the promises made through the prophets. Read each chapter and reflect on the question. You might journal your answers. Make sure to note other observations and questions that come up for you, which might not be covered in these questions.

Week One: Birth, call, and early ministry

Read Matthew Chapters 1 – 7

Reflection questions:

1. Which names do you recognize in Jesus' genealogy? Who are the women named in Jesus' genealogy? Why are they mentioned?
2. Pay attention to the news this week. Who are the men, women and children whose lives are changed or who are suffering as a result of decisions made by the rich and powerful?
3. How has your heritage (parents, schooling, culture, nationality) shaped who you are and how you live your life?
4. What have you counted on to save your life? Has it worked? What does our culture promise will make our lives better/happier/perfect?
5. What ethical/religious rules were you taught as a child? Have those remained true for you? Have any harmed or limited your spiritual growth?
6. What worries you the most? What would it mean to let go of that worry?
7. Ask God for what your heart most desires.

Week Two: Jesus' preaching and teaching

Read Matthew Chapters 8 – 13

Reflection questions:

8. Have you experienced healing in your life? What do you need healing for right now? What would you lose if your life changed for the better?
9. Do you have a friend or loved one that would stand by you in a time of need? Have you ever been that kind of friend?
10. Where and when has God called you to tell your story of healing, mercy and love? How have you shared your story? What or whom do you fear if you tell your story?
11. Pay attention to the news this week. Who has suffered because of telling the truth or exposing wrongdoing? Where did their courage come from?
12. How does Jesus react to religious authorities who put rules over people's needs? How do you discern what is good from what is evil? Do you listen to your head, your heart and/or your gut?

13. Jesus' preaching was mainly parables, stories, most of which he told without explanation. Pick your favorite one from this chapter. What is God saying to you in this parable?

Week Three: The stage is set

Read Matthew Chapters 14 – 20

Reflection questions:

14. What is Jesus' response to the death of John the Baptist? What is your response to fear?
15. What is Jesus' response to the outsider? What is your response to outsiders?
16. The Jewish faith is steeped in the promise of a Messiah who will save them from their enemies, both political and spiritual. At the same time the core belief that God is the only God means that to call someone a God is blasphemous. How does Jesus respond to this tension?
17. Have you had a "mountain top," a spiritual or mystical experience of God's presence? Have you had an experience of "the valley of the shadow of death?"
18. When have you had to face a difficult truth with someone? What is your experience of being forgiven or forgiving someone?
19. Examine your relationship with money. What do you spend the most money on? How much do you give away? In what ways is money a tool? In what ways does money (or lack of it) control your life or decisions?
20. Reflect on a time when life seemed unfair. How did you feel? Was it resolved? How has your idea of fairness changed over your life?

Week Four: Journey to Jerusalem

Read Matthew Chapters 21 – 28

Reflection questions:

21. Do you think Jesus knew what was going to happen to him in Jerusalem?
22. Some Biblical scholars posit that Jesus was a Pharisee, or at least began by following their teachings. In what way do the Pharisees help Jesus to teach?
23. Pay attention to the news. Who are the scribes, Pharisees, and hypocrites of our time? What is God asking you to do in response to their actions?
24. As a child what did you learn about the end of times? In what ways are our times like the end times described in this gospel?
25. What are your gifts, talents, and abilities? How have you/do you use them to make the world more like the world God intended? What gifts, talents and abilities have you buried or wasted? Ultimately what actions does Matthew suggest we will be judged by?
26. From an historical and political point of view, why was Jesus arrested and condemned to death?
27. What does Jesus' crucifixion mean to you?
28. Have you experienced resurrection in your own life? Do you wish to?