



# **new believer's Bible**

**NEW TESTAMENT**

**First steps  
for new Christians**

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**Greg Laurie**

**GENERAL EDITOR**



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# Welcome!

**CONGRATULATIONS!** You are holding in your hands the best-selling book in the history of humanity—the Bible. Although the Bible has been around for some time, the wisdom and knowledge contained within are still relevant today. In fact, everything you need to know about God and life is found in the pages of this book. It is the “user’s manual of life” that we have all been searching for.

The Bible does not just teach us about life, though. It also shows us how to come into a *personal* relationship with the very God who inspired this book. This particular Bible contains features that have been specially designed to help you understand, discover, and deepen the relationship that God wants to have with you.

Perhaps you are not yet a believer in Jesus Christ, but you want to know more about Jesus Christ and the Christian faith. You may even want to be a believer, but you just don’t know how to become one. Turn to the section titled “How You Can Know God” (page A9) to learn how to establish a life-changing relationship with Jesus.

Maybe you have just discovered the Christian faith, and you are a new believer. This New Testament and its study notes will help you lay a good foundation for your faith and learn how to walk closely with God in the years ahead. You may be a believer who is mature in the faith. You will be refreshed and reminded of the essentials of the Christian faith and life.

## Main Features

After the article “How You Can Know God,” you will find a list of Big Questions and the pages where you find answers to them. In the pages of the Bible itself, you will find three different kinds of study notes: Cornerstones, First Steps, and Off & Running. You can follow specific topics through the Bible by starting with the first note in each topic and turning to the next note in that topic by following the page direction at the end of the note. Or you can choose a book of the Bible to read, and consider each study note in that book as you come to it.



### **BIG QUESTIONS:** *What the Bible Says about Troubling Issues*

Life often presents us with difficult situations that cause us to ask hard questions. For instance, you may wonder how a good God could let something bad—even tragic—happen to you. Or you may wonder why Jesus Christ is the only way to God. Aren't other religions just as good? Everything from alternative lifestyles to the second coming of Christ is covered here. *Turn to page A16 for the list of Big Questions.*



### **CORNERSTONES:** *Foundational Truths of the Faith*

Cornerstones—actual blocks of stone—were traditionally used to start a building's foundation. Likewise, the Cornerstones reading track helps you to begin to lay a solid foundation for your faith. Here you will learn about God's character, Jesus' life, and the Holy Spirit's role in the lives of believers. Cornerstones also contains notes on essential Christian character traits that are developed and nurtured by a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Some of those traits are love, forgiveness, purity, honesty, wisdom, peace, and joy. *Turn to page A19 for a description of the Cornerstones topics and where to find these notes.*



### **FIRST STEPS:** *What to Do after You Have Accepted Christ*

The phrase *first steps* brings to mind the image of a young child learning to walk. Like young children, new believers in Christ need to learn how to walk, so to speak. For most people, the Christian life is a completely new way of living. To help you learn to live this new life, the First Steps study notes give you valuable building blocks for growing in faith. Here you will discover the importance and “how to” of studying the Bible, praying, finding the right church, resisting temptation, and seeking God's will for your life. *Turn to page A29 for a description of the First Steps topics and where to find these notes.*



### **OFF & RUNNING:** *How Your Faith Affects the Daily Aspects of Your Life*

“How does God's Word apply to my everyday life?” This is one of the most widely asked questions about the Bible today. The Off & Running study notes answer this question. Here you will discover how to put your faith into action. You will see what the Bible has to say about important topics like marriage, parenting, priorities, conversation, and job performance. By helping you apply biblical principles to these aspects of your life, Off & Running takes you to the next level of the Christian life—living it day to day. *Turn to page A36 for a description of the Off & Running topics and where to find these notes.*

## **Additional Features**

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At the back of the *New Believer's Bible New Testament*, you will find several features that will help you understand the Bible and your faith better. These features include:

- **How to Study the Bible**—a practical way to read through the Bible and a list of questions to ask yourself as you read
- **The One Year New Testament Reading Plan**—an outline for reading the New Testament in one year, spending just a few minutes each day
- **Great Bible Stories**—a list of well-known Bible stories, where you can find them, and the main lesson you can learn from them
- **Memory Verses**—a list of key Bible verses to commit to memory
- **Prophecies about Jesus**—a list of Old Testament passages that contain prophecies about Jesus, and the New Testament references that record his fulfillment of those prophecies
- **Glossary of Christian Terms**—a quick-reference guide to help you understand the meanings of words like *atonement*, *justification*, *redemption*, and *sanctification*
- **Topical Index**—a way to find selected Scripture passages and notes focused on a particular topic that may be of special interest to you

# How You Can Know God

FROM THE MOMENT YOU WERE BORN, you have been on a quest. At the beginning, you probably didn't have a clear idea about what you were after, but you knew you wanted your life to have some kind of purpose. You wanted to know the meaning of life . . . and you wanted to be happy.

All of us want exactly the same thing.

A philosopher named Hugh Moorhead once wrote to 250 of the best-known philosophers, scientists, writers, and intellectuals in the world, asking them, "What is the meaning of life?" Some offered their best guesses; some admitted they just made up a purpose for life. Others were honest enough to say they had no clue. Several even asked Moorhead to write back and tell them if *he* had discovered the purpose of life!

Clearly, we all need to know where we are going in life and why. If we have no goals, no purpose, and no guiding principles, we will waste our lives (and many have!). If you're young and looking ahead to life, you *should* be asking these questions, because life goes by more quickly than you can now imagine.

We search for meaning and happiness in relationships, sex, possessions, accomplishments, fame, drugs, drink, and even religion. We are all searching for meaning and purpose in life.

I'd like to relate a famous story that Jesus told some two thousand years ago on this very topic. His story tells us what God is like. That's important, because some people envision God as an angry, hostile, uptight Supreme Being who is perpetually in a bad mood, just waiting to nail you to the wall when you fail or sin. But nothing could be further from the truth.

Others look at God with a jaded eye because they have seen hypocrites who claimed to be Christians. May I apologize for all those people right now? That is *not* who God is.

So what is God like? Is he a smiling God or a frowning one? How does he look at us? Does he approve or disapprove of us?

Because the Bible often refers to the Almighty as "Father," we normally associate God with our earthly fathers—and that can be good or bad, depending on what kind of fathers we had. If your father was distant and aloof, or even harsh and abusive, you may feel that God is, too. If your father was kind and approachable and fun loving, then you may transfer those positive associations to God. But regardless of how good or poor a job our earthly fathers have done with us, we must look at God in an entirely different way. We must look at God through the pages of Scripture, where he reveals himself most clearly.

In fact, we need to go to an expert on the subject. And who is a better expert on this topic than Jesus himself?

In a beloved story, Jesus gave us a clear snapshot of God that shows us he is personally and deeply interested in every aspect of our lives. We can think of this story as a “divine selfie.” It’s called the parable of the Lost Son, but it might better be called the parable of the Loving Father. In this story, Jesus portrays God as a loving heavenly Father who deeply cares for us and greatly misses us when we go astray.

As the story begins, we see a young man deciding to leave home. This boy came from an affluent family with many servants. Despite the love in this home, the young boy wanted nothing to do with it. He grew tired of the rules and regulations and decided his dad had been keeping him back from enjoying the life he wanted. When the boy saw the bright lights of the big city calling his name, he wanted to experience everything this world had to offer. No doubt he thought, *What could Dad know about this sort of thing?*

Perhaps you come from a broken home or you have suffered through a divorce. You feel betrayed and hurt. You are out on your own, trying to find meaning and purpose in life. You feel lonely and isolated. You are looking for someone or something to fill that void in your life. You have probably discovered that this world doesn’t have the answers to life’s deepest questions. Why not? Because the heart of the problem is a problem of the heart.

In fact, the problem is inside us. That’s why it is almost laughable when people say, “The answer is within.” The Bible plainly teaches that the *problem* is within! A lot of people think that if they could just escape their problems, they’d be fine. Then—SURPRISE—they find their problems following them!

That’s because we all have a heart problem, which is part of the lesson Jesus wanted to teach us through his story about the Lost Son. Listen to him tell it:

*A man had two sons. The younger son told his father, “I want my share of your estate now before you die.” So his father agreed to divide his wealth between his sons. A few days later this younger son packed all his belongings and moved to a distant land, and there he wasted all his money in wild living. About the time his money ran out, a great famine swept over the land, and he began to starve. He persuaded a local farmer to hire him, and the man sent him into his fields to feed the pigs. (Luke 15:11-15)*

This boy thought his father was keeping him back from the good life. Over time a strong curiosity about the outside world grew within him, a restlessness to go out and sample the forbidden. He wanted to break the taboos and see for himself. So he told his father in so many words, “Dad, I figure you’re going to



drop dead one day, but I don't want to wait around before I get my inheritance. So give me my money *now!*"

This kid was a spoiled, selfish brat who couldn't have cared less about hurting his father's feelings. That father could have stopped his foolish son, but he did not. The boy had something we all have, namely, free will.

Jesus' story pictures all of us trying to run from God. God says, "I love you, so you're free to go." God will not force salvation on us; it's our choice. So the father in Jesus' story did not stop the prodigal, any more than God stopped Adam and Eve from eating the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden. He loves you and me and will allow us to make our own decisions—and face the consequences, whether good or bad. Clearly, he wants us to make the right choice.

But it's still a choice!

God says to each of us, "I have given you the choice between life and death, between blessings and curses. Now I call on heaven and earth to witness the choice you make. Oh, that you would choose life, so that you and your descendants might live!" (Deuteronomy 30:19). In Jesus' story, the prodigal made the wrong choice. No doubt, when he hit town he instantly became one popular guy. But when the prodigal's money ran out, his "friends" ran out with it. Before long, this foolish young man hit rock bottom.

Maybe you, too, have hit bottom recently. Perhaps you have reaped the results of what you have sowed. At first, the prodigal was living high on the hog, but soon he found himself living *with* the hogs . . . and as he fed them, their food began to look good to him. Even so, he still didn't come to his senses and go home! Instead, he prolonged his miserable situation and sank even deeper.

That's sin for you. It promises freedom but brings slavery. It offers success but delivers failure. It pledges life, but "the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). It guarantees pleasure but ultimately yields only misery. Oh, it can bring some pleasure for a season, . . . but the seasons change. Sin often begins in the bright days of summer but always ends in the biting cold of winter.

Maybe you are doing everything this world tells you to do in order to be happy. Have you discovered yet that this world does not have what you are looking for? In time, you certainly will; I just hope you don't wait until the end of your life. Or worse yet, when your life is cut short. None of us has any guarantee of growing old.

Fortunately, in Jesus' story, one day the boy realized his mistake. Jesus said that "he finally came to his senses" (Luke 15:17). He woke up and smelled the coffee. While originally he thought he had it tough in his father's house, he came to realize that life outside his father's house was simply insane. Even more, he realized that his own actions had brought on his troubles.

We live in an age when few individuals want to take responsibility for their

own actions. There is always someone or something to blame. If it's trouble at home, we say, "The problem is my parents." If it's trouble at school, we say, "The problem is my teachers." Trouble at work? Then it's the fault of a boss or colleagues. We always find someone or something to blame. "I wouldn't have done this if you hadn't done that." "I act like that because it's the way my father (or mother) acted." "Maybe I shouldn't have done it, but you're just as bad!"

But there has to come a point where we own up to what we have done. The Bible says, "The human heart is the most deceitful of all things, and desperately wicked. Who really knows how bad it is?" (Jeremiah 17:9).

It's an amazing thing when we ditch the excuses and stop the blame shifting and admit the problem is us. Sometimes this happens gradually, dawning on us over a period of time. But often it's instantaneous. Like a flash, it comes to you: "It's not these Christians who are crazy. It's *me!*"

It happened that way with the Lost Son. Suddenly, like a flash, it dawned on him that it was not his father who was wrong, but him. He recognized the love and patience of his father and how he had offended him. Once that happened, immediately he saw his old, confining home in a very new light. The lonely boy longed for his family.

You may say, "But I have no family to return to!" Perhaps your parents are divorced, or your dad is abusive, or your mom left you. Maybe you have already lost your parents to death. But I want to assure you: You *do* have a family. It's called the family of God, the church. And you do have a Father, a Father in Heaven who even now is waiting for you.

This boy eventually realized that everything he was looking for he already had in his father's house. In the same way, everything *you* need in life is found in a relationship with God!

How did the father in the story feel when his son left? He was sad. He missed his son. Now remember, this story is a snapshot of God. How does God feel about people like us wasting our lives? He also feels sad. He also misses us.

The boy in the story said, "I will go home to my father." He could have repeated this resolution daily and yet never have done anything about it, but he acted on his plan. In a similar way, a lot of people who have fallen into sin say, "One of these days, I am going to get right with God." But nothing ever changes, and they sink deeper into sin as their hearts grow harder and harder. To get right with God, we need to utter three difficult words: "I have sinned" (Luke 15:21). God cannot forgive the sin we will not confess!

And how does the father in Jesus' story react to his returning prodigal? Listen again to Jesus:

*When he finally came to his senses, he said to himself, “At home even the hired servants have food enough to spare, and here I am dying of hunger! I will go home to my father and say, ‘Father, I have sinned against both heaven and you, and I am no longer worthy of being called your son. Please take me on as a hired servant.’”*

*So he returned home to his father. And while he was still a long way off, his father saw him coming. Filled with love and compassion, he ran to his son, embraced him, and kissed him. His son said to him, “Father, I have sinned against both heaven and you, and I am no longer worthy of being called your son.”*

*But his father said to the servants, “Quick! Bring the finest robe in the house and put it on him. Get a ring for his finger and sandals for his feet. And kill the calf we have been fattening. We must celebrate with a feast, for this son of mine was dead and has now returned to life. He was lost, but now he is found.” So the party began. (Luke 15:17-24)*

Notice that the father accepted his son just as he was. Even without a bath! In the same way, God receives us *as we are*. Jesus said, “Those the Father has given me will come to me, and I will never reject them” (John 6:37) and, “Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28).

Perhaps you say, “I need to clean up my life before I come to God.” God effectively says, “No, you need to come to me, and I will clean up your life.”

Notice that Jesus says the father *ran* to the son. Understand that in this ancient culture, it was considered undignified for an older man to run. (It was hard, too!) Yet the father pulled his beautiful robe up above his knees and sprinted to his son.

You may have walked away from God, but he has not walked away from you. In fact, he will run to you if you will turn back to him. Just like the father of the Lost Son, God will see you coming, even if you are still a long way off.

**So, what do you need to do in order to  
come into a close relationship with God?**



## **1. Recognize and confess that you are a sinner.**

No more excuses! What is sin? It is to fall short of God's standard, which is perfection itself. It is also to cross a line. All of us have done that and more. We have broken God's commandments and fallen short of his glory. The Bible tells us, "Everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard" (Romans 3:23). It also says, "If we claim we have no sin, we are only fooling ourselves and not living in the truth" (1 John 1:8).

God gave us his law, the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1-17), not to make us righteous, but to show us how miserably we all fall short of his perfection. His laws are like a moral mirror that shows us our flaws and sin.

## **2. Recognize that Jesus died on the cross for you.**

The Bible tells us,

*When we were utterly helpless, Christ came at just the right time and died for us sinners. Now, most people would not be willing to die for an upright person, though someone might perhaps be willing to die for a person who is especially good. But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners. (Romans 5:6-8)*

There was simply no other way to satisfy the righteous demands of God. We have no ability to improve ourselves, much less save ourselves, and therefore we faced a future of permanent separation from God because of our sin. But God, in his great love, sent his own Son to come down from Heaven and die on the cross in our place.

I love the way the apostle Paul personalized it when he wrote, "the Son of God, who loved *me* and gave himself for *me*" (Galatians 2:20, emphasis added). God loves *you* and gave himself for *you*, too! There was no other way to resolve this serious sin issue that we all face. Jesus was the only one who could ever accomplish that, which is why he said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). Christ is the only way to the Father. He himself said so.

The apostle Peter echoed these words: "There is salvation in no one else! God has given no other name under heaven by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). It's not about what I did to please God or reach him on my own efforts. In fact, I did everything to *displease* him, and so I failed to reach him. "There is one God and one Mediator who can reconcile God and humanity—the man Christ

Jesus” (1 Timothy 2:5). Jesus Christ, the Son of God, willingly laid down his life when he went to the cross to die for our sins. In probably the best-known verse in the Bible, we read, “For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16).

### **3. Repent of your sin.**

What does it mean to “repent”? It means to turn from all known sin. It’s being sorry for your sin. But not only that! It’s being sorry enough to stop. The Bible says, “The kind of sorrow God wants us to experience leads us away from sin and results in salvation” (2 Corinthians 7:10).

Repentance is like hanging a U-turn in the road of life. You have been running *from* God, like the Lost Son; now it’s time to run *to* him. The Bible says, “Now repent of your sins and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped away” (Acts 3:19).

### **4. Receive Christ into your life.**

Salvation comes not merely by believing that Jesus is the Son of God, but by receiving him into your life. Being a Christian is not just knowing about God; it’s knowing God himself. It’s a relationship, a friendship with Jesus, who will come into your heart and take up permanent residence there. Jesus said, “Look! I stand at the door and knock. If you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in, and we will share a meal together as friends” (Revelation 3:20).

The Bible says, “To all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God” (John 1:12). And how do you receive him into your life? Through prayer. If you want to ask him to take up residence in your heart right now, you might offer the following prayer:

*Lord Jesus,*

*I know that I am a sinner. I have broken your commandments and fallen short of your standards. Right now I turn from that sin and ask you to come into my life. Be my Lord, Savior, friend, and God. I put my faith in Jesus Christ, and in him alone, to save me from my sins. Thank you for loving me and calling me. In Jesus’ name I pray, amen.*

# Matthew

AUTHOR: Matthew (Levi) • DATE WRITTEN: AD 60–65 • GENRE: Gospel

**MATTHEW WROTE HIS GOSPEL** approximately thirty years after the death and resurrection of Jesus (AD 60–65), in order to prove to the Jewish people that this Nazarene born in Bethlehem was indeed the Messiah they had been waiting many centuries for. Matthew therefore frequently quotes the Hebrew Scriptures to show how Jesus fulfilled ancient prophecies about the Messiah (he includes at least 129 quotations or allusions from the Old Testament).

Only Matthew tells us about Joseph's dream (Matthew 1:20–24), the visit of the Magi (Matthew 2:1–12), and the escape to Egypt (Matthew 2:13–15). His account of Jesus' genealogy (Matthew 1:1–17) traces the Savior's lineage through Joseph, rather than Mary, and has an interesting focus on grace (compare Luke 3:23–38). Matthew mentions four women in Jesus' line, all of them outcasts whom God had redeemed through his grace (Tamar, Genesis 38; Rahab, Joshua 2; 6:17–23; Ruth; and Bathsheba, 2 Samuel 11). Matthew is one of the synoptic Gospels, along with Mark and Luke. This means that they include many of the same stories and often in a similar sequence, which differs from the Gospel of John. Of the three synoptic Gospels, only Matthew was written as an eyewitness account by one of the twelve apostles.

Matthew also records many specific teachings and sermons given by Jesus. It is the only Gospel in which we find the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7), a clear blueprint for how to live as an effective disciple of Christ. In this famous sermon we encounter the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3–10), the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9–13), and Jesus' teachings about anger, lust, divorce, love, money, charity, and worry. And in what is often called the Olivet discourse (Matthew 24), we hear what Jesus has to say about the future and his second coming. Matthew closes his Gospel with a compelling description of Christ's arrest, trial, crucifixion, and resurrection and a final challenge by the risen Jesus to his church to "make disciples of all the nations"—what is often called the great commission.

## The Ancestors of Jesus the Messiah

**1** This is a record of the ancestors of Jesus the Messiah, a descendant of David and of Abraham\*:

2 Abraham was the father of Isaac.

Isaac was the father of Jacob.

Jacob was the father of Judah and his brothers.

3 Judah was the father of Perez and Zerah (whose mother was Tamar).

Perez was the father of Hezron.

Hezron was the father of Ram.\*

4 Ram was the father of Amminadab. Amminadab was the father of Nahshon.

Nahshon was the father of Salmon.

5 Salmon was the father of Boaz (whose mother was Rahab).

Boaz was the father of Obed (whose mother was Ruth).

Obed was the father of Jesse.

6 Jesse was the father of King David.

David was the father of Solomon (whose mother was Bathsheba, the widow of Uriah).

7 Solomon was the father of Rehoboam.

Rehoboam was the father of Abijah.

Abijah was the father of Asa.\*

8 Asa was the father of Jehoshaphat.

Jehoshaphat was the father of Jehoram.\*

Jehoram was the father\* of Uzziah.

9 Uzziah was the father of Jotham.

Jotham was the father of Ahaz.

Ahaz was the father of Hezekiah.

10 Hezekiah was the father of Manasseh.

Manasseh was the father of Amon.\*

Amon was the father of Josiah.

11 Josiah was the father of Jehoiahin\* and his brothers (born at the time of the exile to Babylon).

12 After the Babylonian exile: Jehoiahin was the father of Shealtiel.

Shealtiel was the father of Zerubbabel.

1:1 Greek *Jesus the Messiah, Son of David and son of Abraham*. 1:3 Greek *Aram*, a variant spelling of Ram; also in 1:4. See 1 Chr 2:9–10. 1:7 Greek *Asaph*, a variant spelling of Asa; also in 1:8. See 1 Chr 3:10. 1:8a Greek *Joram*, a variant spelling of Jehoram; also in 1:8b. See 1 Kgs 22:50 and note at 1 Chr 3:11. 1:8b Or *ancestor*; also in 1:11. 1:10 Greek *Amos*, a variant spelling of Amon; also in 1:10b. See 1 Chr 3:14. 1:11 Greek *Jecooniah*, a variant spelling of Jehoiahin; also in 1:12. See 2 Kgs 24:6 and note at 1 Chr 3:16.

- <sup>13</sup> Zerubbabel was the father of Abiud.  
Abiud was the father of Eliakim.  
Eliakim was the father of Azor.
- <sup>14</sup> Azor was the father of Zadok.  
Zadok was the father of Akim.  
Akim was the father of Eliud.
- <sup>15</sup> Eliud was the father of Eleazar.  
Eleazar was the father of Matthan.  
Matthan was the father of Jacob.
- <sup>16</sup> Jacob was the father of Joseph, the  
husband of Mary.  
Mary gave birth to Jesus, who is called the  
Messiah.

<sup>17</sup>All those listed above include fourteen generations from Abraham to David, fourteen from David to the Babylonian exile, and fourteen from the Babylonian exile to the Messiah.

### *The Birth of Jesus the Messiah*

<sup>18</sup>This is how Jesus the Messiah was born. His mother, Mary, was engaged to be married to Joseph. But before the marriage took place, while she was still a virgin, she became pregnant through the power of the Holy Spirit.

<sup>19</sup>Joseph, to whom she was engaged, was a righteous man and did not want to disgrace her publicly, so he decided to break the engagement\* quietly.

<sup>20</sup>As he considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream. “Joseph, son of David,” the angel said, “do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife. For the child within her was conceived by the Holy Spirit.

<sup>21</sup>And she will have a son, and you are to name him Jesus,\* for he will save his people from their sins.”

<sup>22</sup>All of this occurred to fulfill the Lord’s message through his prophet:

- <sup>23</sup> “Look! The virgin will conceive a child!  
She will give birth to a son,  
and they will call him Immanuel,\*  
which means ‘God is with us.’”

<sup>24</sup>When Joseph woke up, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded and took Mary as his wife. <sup>25</sup>But he did not have sexual relations with her until her son was born. And Joseph named him Jesus.

### *Visitors from the East*

**2** Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the reign of King Herod. About that time some wise men\* from eastern lands arrived in Jerusalem, asking, <sup>24</sup>“Where is the

newborn king of the Jews? We saw his star as it rose,\* and we have come to worship him.”

<sup>3</sup>King Herod was deeply disturbed when he heard this, as was everyone in Jerusalem. <sup>4</sup>He called a meeting of the leading priests and teachers of religious law and asked, “Where is the Messiah supposed to be born?”

<sup>5</sup>“In Bethlehem in Judea,” they said, “for this is what the prophet wrote:

- <sup>6</sup> ‘And you, O Bethlehem in the land of Judah,  
are not least among the ruling cities\*  
of Judah,  
for a ruler will come from you  
who will be the shepherd for my  
people Israel.’”

<sup>7</sup>Then Herod called for a private meeting with the wise men, and he learned from them the time when the star first appeared. <sup>8</sup>Then he told them, “Go to Bethlehem and search carefully for the child. And when you find him, come back and tell me so that I can go and worship him, too!”

<sup>9</sup>After this interview the wise men went their way. And the star they had seen in the east guided them to Bethlehem. It went ahead of them and stopped over the place where the child was. <sup>10</sup>When they saw the star, they were filled with joy! <sup>11</sup>They entered the house and saw the child with his mother, Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasure chests and gave him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

<sup>12</sup>When it was time to leave, they returned to their own country by another route, for God had warned them in a dream not to return to Herod.

### *The Escape to Egypt*

<sup>13</sup>After the wise men were gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. “Get up! Flee to Egypt with the child and his mother,” the angel said. “Stay there until I tell you to return, because Herod is going to search for the child to kill him.”

<sup>14</sup>That night Joseph left for Egypt with the child and Mary, his mother, <sup>15</sup>and they stayed there until Herod’s death. This fulfilled what the Lord had spoken through the prophet: “I called my Son out of Egypt.”\*

<sup>16</sup>Herod was furious when he realized that the wise men had outwitted him. He sent soldiers to kill all the boys in and around Bethlehem who were two years old and under, based on the wise men’s report of the star’s first

1:19 Greek to divorce her. 1:21 Jesus means “The LORD saves.” 1:23 Isa 7:14; 8:8, 10 (Greek version). 2:1 Or royal astrologers; Greek reads magi; also in 2:7, 16. 2:2 Or star in the east. 2:6a Greek the rulers. 2:6b Mic 5:2; 2 Sam 5:2. 2:15 Hos 11:1.



appearance. <sup>17</sup>Herod's brutal action fulfilled what God had spoken through the prophet Jeremiah:

<sup>18</sup> "A cry was heard in Ramah—  
weeping and great mourning.  
Rachel weeps for her children,  
refusing to be comforted,  
for they are dead."<sup>\*</sup>

### *The Return to Nazareth*

<sup>19</sup>When Herod died, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt. <sup>20</sup>"Get up!" the angel said. "Take the child and his mother back to the land of Israel, because those who were trying to kill the child are dead."

<sup>21</sup>So Joseph got up and returned to the land of Israel with Jesus and his mother. <sup>22</sup>But when he learned that the new ruler of Judea was Herod's son Archelaus, he was afraid to go there. Then, after being warned in a dream, he left for the region of Galilee. <sup>23</sup>So the family went and lived in a town called Nazareth. This fulfilled what the prophets had said: "He will be called a Nazarene."

### *John the Baptist Prepares the Way*

**3** In those days John the Baptist came to the Judean wilderness and began preaching. His message was, <sup>2</sup>"Repent of your sins and turn to God, for the Kingdom of Heaven is near."<sup>\*</sup> <sup>3</sup>The prophet Isaiah was speaking about John when he said,

"He is a voice shouting in the wilderness,  
'Prepare the way for the LORD's coming!  
Clear the road for him!'"<sup>\*</sup>

<sup>4</sup>John's clothes were woven from coarse camel hair, and he wore a leather belt around his waist. For food he ate locusts and wild honey. <sup>5</sup>People from Jerusalem and from all of Judea and all over the Jordan Valley went out to see and hear John. <sup>6</sup>And when they confessed their sins, he baptized them in the Jordan River.

<sup>7</sup>But when he saw many Pharisees and Sadducees coming to watch him baptize,<sup>\*</sup> he denounced them. "You brood of snakes!" he exclaimed. "Who warned you to flee the coming wrath? <sup>8</sup>Prove by the way you live that you have repented of your sins and turned to God. <sup>9</sup>Don't just say to each other, 'We're safe, for we are descendants of Abraham.' That means nothing, for I tell you, God can create children of Abraham from these very stones. <sup>10</sup>Even

now the ax of God's judgment is poised, ready to sever the roots of the trees. Yes, every tree that does not produce good fruit will be chopped down and thrown into the fire.

<sup>11</sup>"I baptize with<sup>\*</sup> water those who repent of their sins and turn to God. But someone is coming soon who is greater than I am—so much greater that I'm not worthy even to be his slave and carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire."<sup>\*</sup> <sup>12</sup>He is ready to separate the chaff from the wheat with his winnowing fork. Then he will clean up the threshing area, gathering the wheat into his barn but burning the chaff with never-ending fire."

### *The Baptism of Jesus*

<sup>13</sup>Then Jesus went from Galilee to the Jordan River to be baptized by John. <sup>14</sup>But John tried to talk him out of it. "I am the one who needs to be baptized by you," he said, "so why are you coming to me?"

<sup>15</sup>But Jesus said, "It should be done, for we must carry out all that God requires."<sup>\*</sup> So John agreed to baptize him.

<sup>16</sup>After his baptism, as Jesus came up out of the water, the heavens were opened<sup>\*</sup> and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and settling on him. <sup>17</sup>And a voice from heaven said, "This is my dearly loved Son, who brings me great joy."

### *The Temptation of Jesus*

**4** Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted there by the devil. <sup>2</sup>For forty days and forty nights he fasted and became very hungry.

<sup>3</sup>During that time the devil<sup>\*</sup> came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become loaves of bread."

<sup>4</sup>But Jesus told him, "No! The Scriptures say,

'People do not live by bread alone,  
but by every word that comes from the  
mouth of God.'<sup>\*</sup>

<sup>5</sup>Then the devil took him to the holy city, Jerusalem, to the highest point of the Temple, <sup>6</sup>and said, "If you are the Son of God, jump off! For the Scriptures say,

'He will order his angels to protect you.  
And they will hold you up with their  
hands  
so you won't even hurt your foot on  
a stone.'<sup>\*</sup>

2:18 Jer 31:15. 3:2 Or *has come, or is coming soon.* 3:3 Isa 40:3 (Greek version). 3:7 Or *coming to be baptized.* 3:11a Or *in.* 3:11b Or *in the Holy Spirit and in fire.* 3:15 Or *for we must fulfill all righteousness.* 3:16 Some manuscripts read *opened to him.* 4:3 Greek *the tempter.* 4:4 Deut 8:3. 4:6 Ps 91:11-12.





## We need to recognize our true condition read MATTHEW 5:3-5



Jesus shows us the way to true happiness in this text. And believe it or not, it has nothing to do with personal fulfillment. Here Jesus gives us a three-step prescription to spiritual health and happiness:

**1. SEE YOURSELF AS YOU REALLY ARE.** This is the first step. When we realize our need for God (Matthew 5:3), we see ourselves as we really are: sinners in desperate need of God's forgiveness. The verb translated *need for [God]* in this verse speaks of being destitute, completely dependent on others. To realize our need for God is to admit that we are spiritually destitute apart from God.

**2. TAKE ACTION.** Another way to translate verse 4 is "happy are the unhappy." When we see ourselves as we really are, we mourn over our condition. This leads us to begin making changes in our lives. Scripture tells us, "For the kind of sorrow God wants us to experience leads us away from sin and results in salvation" (2 Corinthians 7:10). True sorrow will lead to joy—salvation in Jesus Christ.

**3. PURSUE HUMILITY.** Seeing ourselves as we really are produces two vital spiritual qualities: gentleness and lowliness (Matthew 5:5). We have an accurate and honest assessment of ourselves that, in turn, affects how we approach others. This contradicts the world's way of thinking, which advocates standing up for your rights and asserting yourself in order to get what you deserve. The humbleness Jesus describes here is not weakness or cowardice, but rather power under constraint, much like a powerful stallion submitting to the control of the bit.

The more we realize our need for God and admit our weaknesses, the more we will rely on God's grace—and the happier we will be.

*For the next note on "Attitude toward Self" turn to page 22.*

<sup>7</sup>Jesus responded, "The Scriptures also say, 'You must not test the LORD your God.'\*"

<sup>8</sup>Next the devil took him to the peak of a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. <sup>9</sup>"I will give it all to you," he said, "if you will kneel down and worship me."

<sup>10</sup>"Get out of here, Satan," Jesus told him. "For the Scriptures say,

'You must worship the LORD your God and serve only him.'\*"

<sup>11</sup>Then the devil went away, and angels came and took care of Jesus.

### *The Ministry of Jesus Begins*

<sup>12</sup>When Jesus heard that John had been arrested, he left Judea and returned to Galilee.

<sup>13</sup>He went first to Nazareth, then left there and moved to Capernaum, beside the Sea of Galilee, in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali.

<sup>14</sup>This fulfilled what God said through the prophet Isaiah:

<sup>15</sup> "In the land of Zebulun and of Naphtali, beside the sea, beyond the Jordan River,

in Galilee where so many Gentiles live, <sup>16</sup> the people who sat in darkness have seen a great light.

And for those who lived in the land where death casts its shadow, a light has shined."\*

<sup>17</sup>From then on Jesus began to preach, "Repent of your sins and turn to God, for the Kingdom of Heaven is near."\*

### *The First Disciples*

<sup>18</sup>One day as Jesus was walking along the shore of the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers—Simon, also called Peter, and Andrew—throwing a net into the water, for they fished for a living. <sup>19</sup>Jesus called out to them, "Come, follow me, and I will show you how to fish for people!" <sup>20</sup>And they left their nets at once and followed him.

<sup>21</sup>A little farther up the shore he saw two other brothers, James and John, sitting in a boat with their father, Zebedee, repairing their nets. And he called them to come, too.

<sup>22</sup>They immediately followed him, leaving the boat and their father behind.

**Crowds Follow Jesus**

<sup>23</sup>Jesus traveled throughout the region of Galilee, teaching in the synagogues and announcing the Good News about the Kingdom. And he healed every kind of disease and illness. <sup>24</sup>News about him spread as far as Syria, and people soon began bringing to him all who were sick. And whatever their sickness or disease, or if they were demon possessed or epileptic or paralyzed—he healed them all. <sup>25</sup>Large crowds followed him wherever he went—people from Galilee, the Ten Towns,\* Jerusalem, from all over Judea, and from east of the Jordan River.

**The Sermon on the Mount**

**5** One day as he saw the crowds gathering, Jesus went up on the mountainside and sat down. His disciples gathered around him, <sup>2</sup>and he began to teach them.

**The Beatitudes**

- <sup>3</sup> “God blesses those who are poor and realize their need for him,\* for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs.  
<sup>4</sup> God blesses those who mourn, for they will be comforted.  
<sup>5</sup> God blesses those who are humble, for they will inherit the whole earth.  
<sup>6</sup> God blesses those who hunger and thirst for justice,\* for they will be satisfied.

4:25 Greek Decapolis. 5:3 Greek poor in spirit. 5:6 Or for righteousness.

- <sup>7</sup> God blesses those who are merciful, for they will be shown mercy.  
<sup>8</sup> God blesses those whose hearts are pure, for they will see God.  
<sup>9</sup> God blesses those who work for peace, for they will be called the children of God.  
<sup>10</sup> God blesses those who are persecuted for doing right, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs.

<sup>11</sup>“God blesses you when people mock you and persecute you and lie about you and say all sorts of evil things against you because you are my followers. <sup>12</sup>Be happy about it! Be very glad! For a great reward awaits you in heaven. And remember, the ancient prophets were persecuted in the same way.

**Teaching about Salt and Light**

<sup>13</sup>“You are the salt of the earth. But what good is salt if it has lost its flavor? Can you make it salty again? It will be thrown out and trampled underfoot as worthless.

<sup>14</sup>“You are the light of the world—like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden. <sup>15</sup>No one lights a lamp and then puts it under a basket. Instead, a lamp is placed on a stand, where it gives light to everyone in the house. <sup>16</sup>In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father.

**Beware of the sins of the heart** read MATTHEW 5:27-30

Some people have the mistaken notion that unless you commit the actual act of adultery you have not really sinned. They think it is okay to fantasize about or look at someone lustfully so long as you don't become involved with that person. But Jesus cuts straight to the core. He lets us know that even a lustful glance is as sinful as committing adultery.

In the original Greek, one of the meanings for the word Jesus uses for *look* is “intentional and repeated gazing.” Jesus' remedy for someone who has a problem in this area seems rather harsh, but you really have to look at the context and the culture of the day to understand this radical but important statement.

In the Jewish culture, the right eye (translated here as “your good eye”) represented one's best vision, and the right hand (“your stronger hand”) represented one's best skills. In essence, Jesus is saying that you should be willing to give up whatever is necessary to keep you from falling into this sin. That may mean terminating a relationship, getting rid of extra television channels, throwing out your smartphone, or changing how or where you spend your spare time. Remove yourself from those things that can have a spiritually destructive effect on your life. Then take practical steps to fill your mind with the things of God: “Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise” (Philippians 4:8).

For the next note on “Purity” turn to page 182.

**Teaching about the Law**

17“Don’t misunderstand why I have come. I did not come to abolish the law of Moses or the writings of the prophets. No, I came to accomplish their purpose. 18I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not even the smallest detail of God’s law will disappear until its purpose is achieved. 19So if you ignore the least commandment and teach others to do the same, you will be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven. But anyone who obeys God’s laws and teaches them will be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven.

20“But I warn you—unless your righteous-

5:21 Exod 20:13; Deut 5:17. 5:22a Some manuscripts add *without cause*. 5:22b Greek uses an Aramaic term of contempt: *If you say to your brother, ‘Raca.’* 5:22c Greek *if you say, ‘You fool.’* 5:22d Greek *Gehenna*; also in 5:29, 30. 5:23 Greek *gift*; also in 5:24.

ness is better than the righteousness of the teachers of religious law and the Pharisees, you will never enter the Kingdom of Heaven!

**Teaching about Anger**

21“*You have heard that our ancestors were told, ‘You must not murder. If you commit murder, you are subject to judgment.’* 22But I say, if you are even angry with someone,\* you are subject to judgment! If you call someone an idiot,\* you are in danger of being brought before the court. And if you curse someone,\* you are in danger of the fires of hell.\*

23“*So if you are presenting a sacrifice\* at the altar in the Temple and you suddenly*

**Forgiveness is not selective** *read MATTHEW 5:43-48*

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In this passage, Jesus tells us we must love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us. Before we can love those who have hurt us, we must forgive them. New research on forgiveness suggests that those who do not forgive are more likely to experience high blood pressure; bouts of depression; and problems with anger, stress, and anxiety. One expert said there are robust psychological differences between non-forgiving people and forgiving people.

It comes down to this: *Forgiven* people should be *forgiving* people.

It’s been said that refusing to forgive is like drinking rat poison and waiting for the rat to die. If there is one thing we all could use more of these days, it’s forgiveness and mercy. Jesus said, “God blesses those who are merciful, for they will be shown mercy” (Matthew 5:7).

Loving our enemies certainly does not come easily—or naturally. In fact, if we wait for some feeling of love to suddenly overtake us, it simply won’t happen. We must begin to pray for our enemies even before we are conscious of loving them. This is absolutely impossible to do apart from the help of the Holy Spirit. If you feel you fall short in the area of forgiveness, take heart. The Bible is full of examples of that divine ability to forgive, which can only come from the working of the Holy Spirit in our lives:

- God’s Spirit enabled Abraham to give the best land to his traveling partner and nephew, Lot (see Genesis 13:1-12).
- God’s Spirit gave Joseph the ability to embrace and kiss his brothers, who had sold him into slavery (see Genesis 45:1-15).
- God’s Spirit kept David from taking advantage of an opportunity to kill King Saul, who was seeking David’s life (see 1 Samuel 24).
- God’s Spirit caused Stephen (the first Christian martyr) to pray for those who were stoning him to death (see Acts 7:59-60).

Just as God’s Spirit worked in the lives of these individuals, he will enable you to love, pray, and do good to those who hate and hurt you.

The ultimate example of forgiving one’s enemies comes from Jesus himself. While hanging on the cross, he prayed, “Father, forgive them, for they don’t know what they are doing” (see Luke 23:34). If the cruel torture of crucifixion would not silence Jesus’ prayer for his enemies, what pain, prejudice, or unfair treatment could justify the silencing of our prayers for our enemies?

*For the next note on “Forgiveness” turn to page 24.*

remember that someone has something against you, <sup>24</sup>leave your sacrifice there at the altar. Go and be reconciled to that person. Then come and offer your sacrifice to God.

<sup>25</sup>“When you are on the way to court with your adversary, settle your differences quickly. Otherwise, your accuser may hand you over to the judge, who will hand you over to an officer, and you will be thrown into prison. <sup>26</sup>And if that happens, you surely won’t be free again until you have paid the last penny.\*

### Teaching about Adultery

<sup>27</sup>“You have heard the commandment that says, ‘You must not commit adultery.’\* <sup>28</sup>But I say, anyone who even looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart. <sup>29</sup>So if your eye—even your good eye\*—causes you to lust, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. <sup>30</sup>And if your hand—even your stronger hand\*—causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.

### Teaching about Divorce

<sup>31</sup>“You have heard the law that says, ‘A man can divorce his wife by merely giving her a written notice of divorce.’\* <sup>32</sup>But I say that a man who divorces his wife, unless she has been unfaithful, causes her to commit adultery. And anyone who marries a divorced woman also commits adultery.

### Teaching about Vows

<sup>33</sup>“You have also heard that our ancestors were told, ‘You must not break your vows; you must carry out the vows you make to the LORD.’\* <sup>34</sup>But I say, do not make any vows! Do not say, ‘By heaven!’ because heaven is God’s throne. <sup>35</sup>And do not say, ‘By the earth!’ because the earth is his footstool. And do not say, ‘By Jerusalem!’ for Jerusalem is the city of the great King. <sup>36</sup>Do not even say, ‘By my head!’ for you can’t turn one hair white or black. <sup>37</sup>Just say a simple, ‘Yes, I will,’ or ‘No, I won’t.’ Anything beyond this is from the evil one.

### Teaching about Revenge

<sup>38</sup>“You have heard the law that says the punishment must match the injury: ‘An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.’\* <sup>39</sup>But I say, do not resist an evil person! If someone slaps

you on the right cheek, offer the other cheek also. <sup>40</sup>If you are sued in court and your shirt is taken from you, give your coat, too. <sup>41</sup>If a soldier demands that you carry his gear for a mile,\* carry it two miles. <sup>42</sup>Give to those who ask, and don’t turn away from those who want to borrow.

### Teaching about Love for Enemies

<sup>43</sup>“You have heard the law that says, ‘Love your neighbor’\* and hate your enemy. <sup>44</sup>But I say, love your enemies!\* Pray for those who persecute you! <sup>45</sup>In that way, you will be acting as true children of your Father in heaven. For he gives his sunlight to both the evil and the good, and he sends rain on the just and the unjust alike. <sup>46</sup>If you love only those who love you, what reward is there for that? Even corrupt tax collectors do that much. <sup>47</sup>If you are kind only to your friends,\* how are you different from anyone else? Even pagans do that. <sup>48</sup>But you are to be perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect.

### Teaching about Giving to the Needy

**6** “Watch out! Don’t do your good deeds publicly, to be admired by others, for you will lose the reward from your Father in heaven. <sup>2</sup>When you give to someone in need, don’t do as the hypocrites do—blowing trumpets in the synagogues and streets to call attention to their acts of charity! I tell you the truth, they have received all the reward they will ever get. <sup>3</sup>But when you give to someone in need, don’t let your left hand know what your right hand is doing. <sup>4</sup>Give your gifts in private, and your Father, who sees everything, will reward you.

### Teaching about Prayer and Fasting

<sup>5</sup>“When you pray, don’t be like the hypocrites who love to pray publicly on street corners and in the synagogues where everyone can see them. I tell you the truth, that is all the reward they will ever get. <sup>6</sup>But when you pray, go away by yourself, shut the door behind you, and pray to your Father in private. Then your Father, who sees everything, will reward you.

<sup>7</sup>“When you pray, don’t babble on and on as the Gentiles do. They think their prayers are answered merely by repeating their words again and again. <sup>8</sup>Don’t be like them, for your Father knows exactly what you need even before you ask him! <sup>9</sup>Pray like this:

5:26 Greek *the last kodrantes* [i.e., quadrans]. 5:27 Exod 20:14; Deut 5:18. 5:29 Greek *your right eye*. 5:30 Greek *your right hand*. 5:31 Deut 24:1. 5:33 Num 30:2. 5:38 Greek *the law that says: ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’* Exod 21:24; Lev 24:20; Deut 19:21. 5:41 Greek *million* [4,854 feet or 1,478 meters]. 5:43 Lev 19:18. 5:44 Some manuscripts add *Bless those who curse you. Do good to those who hate you*. Compare Luke 6:27-28. 5:47 Greek *your brothers*.

## Christ modeled for us how to pray

read MATTHEW 6:5-15

Jesus gave us the Lord's Prayer to show us how to pray. Though it might be more accurate to call it the Disciples' Prayer, because Jesus gave it to his disciples when they asked, "Lord, teach us to pray" (see Luke 11:1). To better understand this prayer, we can break it down into two sets of petitions. Make it a point to include these important aspects in your personal prayers:

### FIRST FOCUS ON THE GLORY OF GOD.

- "Our Father in heaven": Recognize that you are addressing a holy God who sees you as his child.
- "May your name be kept holy": Begin your prayers with reverence and praise for who God is. This helps keep your needs or problems in perspective.
- "May your Kingdom come soon. May your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven": Ask God for his will to rule your life. We cannot pray "your Kingdom come" until we pray "my kingdom go."

### THEN FOCUS ON YOUR PERSONAL NEEDS.

- "Give us today the food we need": Tell God your physical and personal needs. Remember, Scripture tells us that God will provide for all of our needs (see Philippians 4:19).
- "And forgive us our sins, as we have forgiven those who sin against us": Confess your sins to God. If you are clinging to some sin, your prayer life will suffer.
- "And don't let us yield to temptation, but rescue us from the evil one": Recognize your inclination to fall into sin, and pray that the opportunity to sin will not lead to committing the sin.

For the next note on "Pray" turn to page 186.

Our Father in heaven,  
 may your name be kept holy.  
 10 May your Kingdom come soon.  
 May your will be done on earth,  
 as it is in heaven.

- 11 Give us today the food we need,\*  
 12 and forgive us our sins,

as we have forgiven those who sin against us.

- 13 And don't let us yield to temptation,\*  
 but rescue us from the evil one.\*

14 "If you forgive those who sin against you, your heavenly Father will forgive you. 15 But if you refuse to forgive others, your Father will not forgive your sins.

16 "And when you fast, don't make it obvious, as the hypocrites do, for they try to look miserable and disheveled so people will admire them for their fasting. I tell you the truth, that is the only reward they will ever get. 17 But when you fast, comb your hair\* and wash your face. 18 Then no one will notice that you are fasting, except your Father, who knows what you do in private. And your Father, who sees everything, will reward you.

### Teaching about Money and Possessions

19 "Don't store up treasures here on earth, where moths eat them and rust destroys them, and where thieves break in and steal. 20 Store your treasures in heaven, where moths and rust cannot destroy, and thieves do not break in and steal. 21 Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be.

22 "Your eye is like a lamp that provides light for your body. When your eye is healthy, your whole body is filled with light. 23 But when your eye is unhealthy, your whole body is filled with darkness. And if the light you think you have is actually darkness, how deep that darkness is!

24 "No one can serve two masters. For you will hate one and love the other; you will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and be enslaved to money.

25 "That is why I tell you not to worry about everyday life—whether you have enough food and drink, or enough clothes to wear. Isn't life more than food, and your body more than clothing? 26 Look at the birds. They don't plant or harvest or store food in barns, for your heavenly Father feeds them. And aren't you far more valuable to him than they are? 27 Can all your worries add a single moment to your life?

28 "And why worry about your clothing? Look at the lilies of the field and how they grow. They don't work or make their clothing,

6:11 Or Give us today our food for the day; or Give us today our food for tomorrow. 6:13a Or And keep us from being tested. 6:13b Or from evil. Some manuscripts add For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen. 6:17 Greek anoint your head.

<sup>29</sup>yet Solomon in all his glory was not dressed as beautifully as they are. <sup>30</sup>And if God cares so wonderfully for wildflowers that are here today and thrown into the fire tomorrow, he will certainly care for you. Why do you have so little faith?

<sup>31</sup>“So don’t worry about these things, saying, ‘What will we eat? What will we drink? What will we wear?’ <sup>32</sup>These things dominate the thoughts of unbelievers, but your heavenly Father already knows all your needs. <sup>33</sup>Seek the Kingdom of God\* above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need.

<sup>34</sup>“So don’t worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring its own worries. Today’s trouble is enough for today.

### Do Not Judge Others

**7** “Do not judge others, and you will not be judged. <sup>2</sup>For you will be treated as you treat others.\* The standard you use in judging is the standard by which you will be judged.\*

<sup>3</sup>“And why worry about a speck in your friend’s eye\* when you have a log in your own? <sup>4</sup>How can you think of saying to

6:33 Some manuscripts do not include of God. 7:2a Or For God will judge you as you judge others. 7:2b Or The measure you give will be the measure you get back. 7:3 Greek your brother’s eye; also in 7:5. 7:4 Greek your brother. 7:6 Greek Don’t give the sacred to dogs.

your friend,\* ‘Let me help you get rid of that speck in your eye,’ when you can’t see past the log in your own eye? <sup>5</sup>Hypocrite! First get rid of the log in your own eye; then you will see well enough to deal with the speck in your friend’s eye.

<sup>6</sup>“Don’t waste what is holy on people who are unholy.\* Don’t throw your pearls to pigs! They will trample the pearls, then turn and attack you.

### Effective Prayer

<sup>7</sup>“Keep on asking, and you will receive what you ask for. Keep on seeking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened to you. <sup>8</sup>For everyone who asks, receives. Everyone who seeks, finds. And to everyone who knocks, the door will be opened.

<sup>9</sup>“You parents—if your children ask for a loaf of bread, do you give them a stone instead? <sup>10</sup>Or if they ask for a fish, do you give them a snake? Of course not! <sup>11</sup>So if you sinful people know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give good gifts to those who ask him.

## Our walk should match our talk read MATTHEW 7:21

In this verse, Jesus gets to the heart of every person’s belief. He states that calling him Lord is not enough to get into Heaven. That is because anyone can say the word and not mean it. What counts is a changed person living in obedience to God’s will.

Regarding the Christian life, it has been said, “It is not how high you can jump that matters, but how straight you can walk when you hit the ground again.” You may be able to say all of the right things, but if your faith does not impact the way you live, it is meaningless—even offensive. In truth, you do not have a real relationship with God.

An engraving on a cathedral wall in Germany bears these soul-searching words:

*Thus speaketh Christ our Lord to us,  
“You call me Master and obey me not;  
You call me light and see me not;  
You call me the Way and walk me not;  
You call me life and live me not;  
You call me wise and follow me not;  
You call me fair and love me not;  
You call me rich and ask me not;  
You call me eternal and seek me not;  
If I condemn you, blame me not.”*

The more we learn about what God has done for us, the more we will want to know about how to live for him. Our motives will come from a pure heart, not from selfish ambition. God is looking for genuine believers whose walk matches their talk. Are you one?

*For the next note on “Faith and Works” turn to page 180.*



## How should you view material wealth?

read MATTHEW 6:19-34

This section of Jesus' famous Sermon on the Mount deals with possibly the greatest distraction to following him wholeheartedly: wealth. He gives us at least three warnings about wealth and one prescription to overcome its enslaving effects:

### 1. WE MUST WATCH HOW AND WHAT WE STORE.

Matthew 6:19 says that we should not "store up treasures here on earth." Jesus is not condemning being careful with your resources and providing for your family (see Proverbs 6:6 and 1 Timothy 5:8). He is condemning the mere accumulation of possessions—stockpiling them. Enjoy what God has given you without making their acquisition your primary focus. And understand that we have a responsibility that comes with those resources. In another of his letters, Paul writes that believers should "use their money to do good. They should be rich in good works and generous to those in need, always being ready to share with others" (1 Timothy 6:18).

**2. WE MUST KEEP OUR VISION CLEAR.** While we can enjoy what God gives us, we need to understand that the material things of this world are only temporary. Our possessions can lose their value, be destroyed by natural disasters, get lost, or be stolen. That is the problem with making the accumulation of "things" your life's passion. It is fleeting, unfulfilling, and even enslaving. Without proper perspective, we can easily become ensnared. Then we are no longer serving God but money (Matthew 6:24).

**3. WE SHOULD NOT WORRY ABOUT MATERIAL THINGS.** Jesus tells us to stop worrying because God will always meet our needs (Matthew 6:25-30). Quite simply, worry is a waste of our valuable time.

**4. WE MUST PUT GOD FIRST.** Rather than focusing on acquiring material things, we should seek to put Jesus Christ first in our lives (Matthew 6:31-34).

For the next note on "Give to God" turn to page 56.

### The Golden Rule

<sup>12</sup>"Do to others whatever you would like them to do to you. This is the essence of all that is taught in the law and the prophets.

### The Narrow Gate

<sup>13</sup>"You can enter God's Kingdom only through the narrow gate. The highway to hell\* is broad, and its gate is wide for the many who choose that way. <sup>14</sup>But the gateway to life is very narrow and the road is difficult, and only a few ever find it.

### The Tree and Its Fruit

<sup>15</sup>"Beware of false prophets who come disguised as harmless sheep but are really vicious wolves. <sup>16</sup>You can identify them by their fruit, that is, by the way they act. Can you pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? <sup>17</sup>A good tree produces good fruit, and a bad tree produces bad fruit. <sup>18</sup>A good tree can't produce bad fruit, and a bad tree can't produce good fruit. <sup>19</sup>So every tree that does not produce good fruit is chopped down and thrown into the fire. <sup>20</sup>Yes, just as you can identify a tree by its fruit, so you can identify people by their actions.

### True Disciples

<sup>21</sup>"Not everyone who calls out to me, 'Lord! Lord!' will enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Only those who actually do the will of my Father in heaven will enter. <sup>22</sup>On judgment day many will say to me, 'Lord! Lord! We prophesied in your name and cast out demons in your name and performed many miracles in your name.' <sup>23</sup>But I will reply, 'I never knew you. Get away from me, you who break God's laws.'

### Building on a Solid Foundation

<sup>24</sup>"Anyone who listens to my teaching and follows it is wise, like a person who builds a house on solid rock. <sup>25</sup>Though the rain comes in torrents and the floodwaters rise and the winds beat against that house, it won't collapse because it is built on bedrock. <sup>26</sup>But anyone who hears my teaching and doesn't obey it is foolish, like a person who builds a house on sand. <sup>27</sup>When the rains and floods come and the winds beat against that house, it will collapse with a mighty crash."

<sup>28</sup>When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, <sup>29</sup>for he taught with real authority—quite unlike their teachers of religious law.

7:13 Greek *The road that leads to destruction.*

### Jesus Heals a Man with Leprosy

**8** Large crowds followed Jesus as he came down the mountainside. <sup>2</sup>Suddenly, a man with leprosy approached him and knelt before him. “Lord,” the man said, “if you are willing, you can heal me and make me clean.”

<sup>3</sup>Jesus reached out and touched him. “I am willing,” he said. “Be healed!” And instantly the leprosy disappeared. <sup>4</sup>Then Jesus said to him, “Don’t tell anyone about this. Instead, go to the priest and let him examine you. Take along the offering required in the law of Moses for those who have been healed of leprosy.\* This will be a public testimony that you have been cleansed.”

### The Faith of a Roman Officer

<sup>5</sup>When Jesus returned to Capernaum, a Roman officer\* came and pleaded with him, <sup>6</sup>“Lord, my young servant\* lies in bed, paralyzed and in terrible pain.”

<sup>7</sup>Jesus said, “I will come and heal him.”

<sup>8</sup>But the officer said, “Lord, I am not worthy to have you come into my home. Just say the word from where you are, and my servant will be healed. <sup>9</sup>I know this because I am under the authority of my superior officers, and I have authority over my soldiers. I only need to say, ‘Go,’ and they go, or ‘Come,’ and they come. And if I say to my slaves, ‘Do this,’ they do it.”

<sup>10</sup>When Jesus heard this, he was amazed. Turning to those who were following him, he said, “I tell you the truth, I haven’t seen faith like this in all Israel! <sup>11</sup>And I tell you this, that many Gentiles will come from all over the world—from east and west—and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob at the feast in the Kingdom of Heaven. <sup>12</sup>But many Israelites—those for whom the Kingdom was prepared—will be thrown into outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

<sup>13</sup>Then Jesus said to the Roman officer, “Go back home. Because you believed, it has happened.” And the young servant was healed that same hour.

### Jesus Heals Many People

<sup>14</sup>When Jesus arrived at Peter’s house, Peter’s mother-in-law was sick in bed with a high fever. <sup>15</sup>But when Jesus touched her hand, the fever left her. Then she got up and prepared a meal for him.

<sup>16</sup>That evening many demon-possessed people were brought to Jesus. He cast out the evil spirits with a simple command, and he

healed all the sick. <sup>17</sup>This fulfilled the word of the Lord through the prophet Isaiah, who said,

“He took our sicknesses  
and removed our diseases.”\*

### The Cost of Following Jesus

<sup>18</sup>When Jesus saw the crowd around him, he instructed his disciples to cross to the other side of the lake.

<sup>19</sup>Then one of the teachers of religious law said to him, “Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go.”

<sup>20</sup>But Jesus replied, “Foxes have dens to live in, and birds have nests, but the Son of Man\* has no place even to lay his head.”

<sup>21</sup>Another of his disciples said, “Lord, first let me return home and bury my father.”

<sup>22</sup>But Jesus told him, “Follow me now. Let the spiritually dead bury their own dead.\*”

### Jesus Calms the Storm

<sup>23</sup>Then Jesus got into the boat and started across the lake with his disciples. <sup>24</sup>Suddenly, a fierce storm struck the lake, with waves breaking into the boat. But Jesus was sleeping. <sup>25</sup>The disciples went and woke him up, shouting, “Lord, save us! We’re going to drown!”

<sup>26</sup>Jesus responded, “Why are you afraid? You have so little faith!” Then he got up and rebuked the wind and waves, and suddenly there was a great calm.

<sup>27</sup>The disciples were amazed. “Who is this man?” they asked. “Even the winds and waves obey him!”

### Jesus Heals Two Demon-Possessed Men

<sup>28</sup>When Jesus arrived on the other side of the lake, in the region of the Gadarenes,\* two men who were possessed by demons met him. They came out of the tombs and were so violent that no one could go through that area.

<sup>29</sup>They began screaming at him, “Why are you interfering with us, Son of God? Have you come here to torture us before God’s appointed time?”

<sup>30</sup>There happened to be a large herd of pigs feeding in the distance. <sup>31</sup>So the demons begged, “If you cast us out, send us into that herd of pigs.”

<sup>32</sup>“All right, go!” Jesus commanded them. So the demons came out of the men and entered the pigs, and the whole herd plunged

8:4 See Lev 14:2-32. 8:5 Greek *a centurion*; similarly in 8:8, 13. 8:6 Or *child*; also in 8:13. 8:17 Isa 53:4. 8:20 “Son of Man” is a title Jesus used for himself. 8:22 Greek *Let the dead bury their own dead*. 8:28 Other manuscripts read *Gerasenes*; still others read *Gergesenes*. Compare Mark 5:1; Luke 8:26.



down the steep hillside into the lake and drowned in the water.

<sup>33</sup>The herdsmen fled to the nearby town, telling everyone what happened to the demon-possessed men. <sup>34</sup>Then the entire town came out to meet Jesus, but they begged him to go away and leave them alone.

### *Jesus Heals a Paralyzed Man*

**9** Jesus climbed into a boat and went back across the lake to his own town. <sup>2</sup>Some people brought to him a paralyzed man on a mat. Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the paralyzed man, “Be encouraged, my child! Your sins are forgiven.”

<sup>3</sup>But some of the teachers of religious law said to themselves, “That’s blasphemy! Does he think he’s God?”

<sup>4</sup>Jesus knew\* what they were thinking, so he asked them, “Why do you have such evil thoughts in your hearts? <sup>5</sup>Is it easier to say ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or ‘Stand up and walk’? <sup>6</sup>So I will prove to you that the Son of Man\* has the authority on earth to forgive sins.” Then Jesus turned to the paralyzed man and said, “Stand up, pick up your mat, and go home!”

<sup>7</sup>And the man jumped up and went home! <sup>8</sup>Fear swept through the crowd as they saw this happen. And they praised God for giving humans such authority.

### *Jesus Calls Matthew*

<sup>9</sup>As Jesus was walking along, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at his tax collector’s booth. “Follow me and be my disciple,” Jesus said to him. So Matthew got up and followed him.

<sup>10</sup>Later, Matthew invited Jesus and his disciples to his home as dinner guests, along with many tax collectors and other disreputable sinners. <sup>11</sup>But when the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, “Why does your teacher eat with such scum?\*

<sup>12</sup>When Jesus heard this, he said, “Healthy people don’t need a doctor—sick people do.” <sup>13</sup>Then he added, “Now go and learn the meaning of this Scripture: ‘I want you to show mercy, not offer sacrifices.’\* For I have come to call not those who think they are righteous, but those who know they are sinners.”

### *A Discussion about Fasting*

<sup>14</sup>One day the disciples of John the Baptist came to Jesus and asked him, “Why don’t your disciples fast\* like we do and the Pharisees do?”

<sup>15</sup>Jesus replied, “Do wedding guests mourn while celebrating with the groom? Of course not. But someday the groom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast.

<sup>16</sup>“Besides, who would patch old clothing with new cloth? For the new patch would shrink and rip away from the old cloth, leaving an even bigger tear than before.

<sup>17</sup>“And no one puts new wine into old wineskins. For the old skins would burst from the pressure, spilling the wine and ruining the skins. New wine is stored in new wineskins so that both are preserved.”

### *Jesus Heals in Response to Faith*

<sup>18</sup>As Jesus was saying this, the leader of a synagogue came and knelt before him. “My daughter has just died,” he said, “but you can bring her back to life again if you just come and lay your hand on her.”

<sup>19</sup>So Jesus and his disciples got up and went with him. <sup>20</sup>Just then a woman who had suffered for twelve years with constant bleeding came up behind him. She touched the fringe of his robe, <sup>21</sup>for she thought, “If I can just touch his robe, I will be healed.”

<sup>22</sup>Jesus turned around, and when he saw her he said, “Daughter, be encouraged! Your faith has made you well.” And the woman was healed at that moment.

<sup>23</sup>When Jesus arrived at the official’s home, he saw the noisy crowd and heard the funeral music. <sup>24</sup>“Get out!” he told them. “The girl isn’t dead; she’s only asleep.” But the crowd laughed at him. <sup>25</sup>After the crowd was put outside, however, Jesus went in and took the girl by the hand, and she stood up! <sup>26</sup>The report of this miracle swept through the entire countryside.

### *Jesus Heals the Blind*

<sup>27</sup>After Jesus left the girl’s home, two blind men followed along behind him, shouting, “Son of David, have mercy on us!”

<sup>28</sup>They went right into the house where he was staying, and Jesus asked them, “Do you believe I can make you see?”

“Yes, Lord,” they told him, “we do.”

<sup>29</sup>Then he touched their eyes and said, “Because of your faith, it will happen.” <sup>30</sup>Then their eyes were opened, and they could see! Jesus sternly warned them, “Don’t tell anyone about this.” <sup>31</sup>But instead, they went out and spread his fame all over the region.

<sup>32</sup>When they left, a demon-possessed man who couldn’t speak was brought to Jesus. <sup>33</sup>So

Jesus cast out the demon, and then the man began to speak. The crowds were amazed. “Nothing like this has ever happened in Israel!” they exclaimed.

<sup>34</sup>But the Pharisees said, “He can cast out demons because he is empowered by the prince of demons.”

### *The Need for Workers*

<sup>35</sup>Jesus traveled through all the towns and villages of that area, teaching in the synagogues and announcing the Good News about the Kingdom. And he healed every kind of disease and illness. <sup>36</sup>When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them because they were confused and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. <sup>37</sup>He said to his disciples, “The harvest is great, but the workers are few. <sup>38</sup>So pray to the Lord who is in charge of the harvest; ask him to send more workers into his fields.”

### *Jesus Sends Out the Twelve Apostles*

**10** Jesus called his twelve disciples together and gave them authority to cast out evil\* spirits and to heal every kind of disease and illness. <sup>2</sup>Here are the names of the twelve apostles:

first, Simon (also called Peter),  
then Andrew (Peter’s brother),  
James (son of Zebedee),  
John (James’s brother),

<sup>3</sup> Philip,  
Bartholomew,  
Thomas,  
Matthew (the tax collector),  
James (son of Alphaeus),  
Thaddaeus,\*

<sup>4</sup> Simon (the zealot\*),  
Judas Iscariot (who later betrayed him).

<sup>5</sup>Jesus sent out the twelve apostles with these instructions: “Don’t go to the Gentiles or the Samaritans, <sup>6</sup>but only to the people of Israel—God’s lost sheep. <sup>7</sup>Go and announce to them that the Kingdom of Heaven is near.\* <sup>8</sup>Heal the sick, raise the dead, cure those with leprosy, and cast out demons. Give as freely as you have received!

<sup>9</sup>“Don’t take any money in your money belts—no gold, silver, or even copper coins. <sup>10</sup>Don’t carry a traveler’s bag with a change of clothes and sandals or even a walking stick. Don’t hesitate to accept hospitality, because those who work deserve to be fed.

<sup>11</sup>“Whenever you enter a city or village, search for a worthy person and stay in his home until you leave town. <sup>12</sup>When you enter the home, give it your blessing. <sup>13</sup>If it turns out to be a worthy home, let your blessing stand; if it is not, take back the blessing. <sup>14</sup>If any household or town refuses to welcome you or listen to your message, shake its dust from your feet as you leave. <sup>15</sup>I tell you the truth, the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah will be better off than such a town on the judgment day.

<sup>16</sup>“Look, I am sending you out as sheep among wolves. So be as shrewd as snakes and harmless as doves. <sup>17</sup>But beware! For you will be handed over to the courts and will be flogged with whips in the synagogues. <sup>18</sup>You will stand trial before governors and kings because you are my followers. But this will be your opportunity to tell the rulers and other unbelievers about me.\* <sup>19</sup>When you are arrested, don’t worry about how to respond or what to say. God will give you the right words at the right time. <sup>20</sup>For it is not you who will be speaking—it will be the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.

<sup>21</sup>“A brother will betray his brother to death, a father will betray his own child, and children will rebel against their parents and cause them to be killed. <sup>22</sup>And all nations will hate you because you are my followers.\* But everyone who endures to the end will be saved. <sup>23</sup>When you are persecuted in one town, flee to the next. I tell you the truth, the Son of Man\* will return before you have reached all the towns of Israel.

<sup>24</sup>“Students\* are not greater than their teacher, and slaves are not greater than their master. <sup>25</sup>Students are to be like their teacher, and slaves are to be like their master. And since I, the master of the household, have been called the prince of demons,\* the members of my household will be called by even worse names!

<sup>26</sup>“But don’t be afraid of those who threaten you. For the time is coming when everything that is covered will be revealed, and all that is secret will be made known to all. <sup>27</sup>What I tell you now in the darkness, shout abroad when daybreak comes. What I whisper in your ear, shout from the housetops for all to hear!

<sup>28</sup>“Don’t be afraid of those who want to kill your body; they cannot touch your soul. Fear only God, who can destroy both soul and body in hell.\* <sup>29</sup>What is the price of two

10:1 Greek *unclean*. 10:3 Other manuscripts read *Lebbaeus*; still others read *Lebbaeus who is called Thaddaeus*. 10:4 Greek *the Cananean*, an Aramaic term for Jewish nationalists. 10:7 Or *has come, or is coming soon*. 10:18 Or *But this will be your testimony against the rulers and other unbelievers*. 10:22 Greek *on account of my name*. 10:23 “Son of Man” is a title Jesus used for himself. 10:24 Or *Disciples*. 10:25 Greek *Beelzeboul*; other manuscripts read *Beezeboul*; Latin version reads *Beelzebub*. 10:28 Greek *Gehenna*.

sparrows—one copper coin\*? But not a single sparrow can fall to the ground without your Father knowing it. <sup>30</sup>And the very hairs on your head are all numbered. <sup>31</sup>So don't be afraid; you are more valuable to God than a whole flock of sparrows.

<sup>32</sup>“Everyone who acknowledges me publicly here on earth, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven. <sup>33</sup>But everyone who denies me here on earth, I will also deny before my Father in heaven.

<sup>34</sup>“Don't imagine that I came to bring peace to the earth! I came not to bring peace, but a sword.

<sup>35</sup> ‘I have come to set a man against his father,  
a daughter against her mother,  
and a daughter-in-law against her  
mother-in-law.

<sup>36</sup> Your enemies will be right in your own household!\*

<sup>37</sup>“If you love your father or mother more than you love me, you are not worthy of being mine; or if you love your son or daughter more than me, you are not worthy of being mine. <sup>38</sup>If you refuse to take up your cross and follow me, you are not worthy of being mine. <sup>39</sup>If you cling to your life, you will lose it; but if you give up your life for me, you will find it.

<sup>40</sup>“Anyone who receives you receives me, and anyone who receives me receives the Father who sent me. <sup>41</sup>If you receive a prophet as one who speaks for God,\* you will be given the same reward as a prophet. And if you receive righteous people because of their righteousness, you will be given a reward like theirs. <sup>42</sup>And if you give even a cup of cold water to one of the least of my followers, you will surely be rewarded.”

### Jesus and John the Baptist

**11** When Jesus had finished giving these instructions to his twelve disciples, he went out to teach and preach in towns throughout the region.

<sup>2</sup>John the Baptist, who was in prison, heard about all the things the Messiah was doing. So he sent his disciples to ask Jesus, <sup>3</sup>“Are you the Messiah we've been expecting,\* or should we keep looking for someone else?”

<sup>4</sup>Jesus told them, “Go back to John and tell him what you have heard and seen—<sup>5</sup>the blind see, the lame walk, those with leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised to

life, and the Good News is being preached to the poor.” <sup>6</sup>And he added, “God blesses those who do not fall away because of me.\*”

<sup>7</sup>As John's disciples were leaving, Jesus began talking about him to the crowds. “What kind of man did you go into the wilderness to see? Was he a weak reed, swayed by every breath of wind? <sup>8</sup>Or were you expecting to see a man dressed in expensive clothes? No, people with expensive clothes live in palaces. <sup>9</sup>Were you looking for a prophet? Yes, and he is more than a prophet. <sup>10</sup>John is the man to whom the Scriptures refer when they say,

‘Look, I am sending my messenger ahead of you,  
and he will prepare your way before you.\*’

<sup>11</sup>“I tell you the truth, of all who have ever lived, none is greater than John the Baptist. Yet even the least person in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than he is! <sup>12</sup>And from the time John the Baptist began preaching until now, the Kingdom of Heaven has been forcefully advancing,\* and violent people are attacking it. <sup>13</sup>For before John came, all the prophets and the law of Moses looked forward to this present time. <sup>14</sup>And if you are willing to accept what I say, he is Elijah, the one the prophets said would come.\* <sup>15</sup>Anyone with ears to hear should listen and understand!

<sup>16</sup>“To what can I compare this generation? It is like children playing a game in the public square. They complain to their friends,

<sup>17</sup> ‘We played wedding songs,  
and you didn't dance,  
so we played funeral songs,  
and you didn't mourn.’

<sup>18</sup>For John didn't spend his time eating and drinking, and you say, ‘He's possessed by a demon.’ <sup>19</sup>The Son of Man,\* on the other hand, feasts and drinks, and you say, ‘He's a glutton and a drunkard, and a friend of tax collectors and other sinners!’ But wisdom is shown to be right by its results.”

### Judgment for the Unbelievers

<sup>20</sup>Then Jesus began to denounce the towns where he had done so many of his miracles, because they hadn't repented of their sins and turned to God. <sup>21</sup>“What sorrow awaits you, Korazin and Bethsaida! For if the miracles I did in you had been done in wicked Tyre and Sidon, their people would have repented of their sins long ago, clothing themselves in burlap and

10:29 Greek *one assarion* [i.e., one “as,” a Roman coin equal to 1/16 of a denarius]. 10:35-36 Mic 7:6. 10:41 Greek *receive a prophet in the name of a prophet*. 11:3 Greek *Are you the one who is coming?* 11:6 Or *who are not offended by me*. 11:10 Mal 3:1. 11:12 Or *the Kingdom of Heaven has suffered from violence*. 11:14 See Mal 4:5. 11:19 “Son of Man” is a title Jesus used for himself.

throwing ashes on their heads to show their remorse. <sup>22</sup>I tell you, Tyre and Sidon will be better off on judgment day than you.

<sup>23</sup>“And you people of Capernaum, will you be honored in heaven? No, you will go down to the place of the dead.\* For if the miracles I did for you had been done in wicked Sodom, it would still be here today. <sup>24</sup>I tell you, even Sodom will be better off on judgment day than you.”

### *Jesus' Prayer of Thanksgiving*

<sup>25</sup>At that time Jesus prayed this prayer: “O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, thank you for hiding these things from those who think themselves wise and clever, and for revealing them to the childlike. <sup>26</sup>Yes, Father, it pleased you to do it this way!

<sup>27</sup>“My Father has entrusted everything to me. No one truly knows the Son except the Father, and no one truly knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.”

<sup>28</sup>Then Jesus said, “Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. <sup>29</sup>Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. <sup>30</sup>For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light.”

11:23 Greek to *Hades*. 12:7 Hos 6:6 (Greek version). 12:8 “Son of Man” is a title Jesus used for himself.

### *A Discussion about the Sabbath*

**12** At about that time Jesus was walking through some grainfields on the Sabbath. His disciples were hungry, so they began breaking off some heads of grain and eating them. <sup>2</sup>But some Pharisees saw them do it and protested, “Look, your disciples are breaking the law by harvesting grain on the Sabbath.”

<sup>3</sup>Jesus said to them, “Haven’t you read in the Scriptures what David did when he and his companions were hungry? <sup>4</sup>He went into the house of God, and he and his companions broke the law by eating the sacred loaves of bread that only the priests are allowed to eat. <sup>5</sup>And haven’t you read in the law of Moses that the priests on duty in the Temple may work on the Sabbath? <sup>6</sup>I tell you, there is one here who is even greater than the Temple! <sup>7</sup>But you would not have condemned my innocent disciples if you knew the meaning of this Scripture: ‘I want you to show mercy, not offer sacrifices.’\* <sup>8</sup>For the Son of Man\* is Lord, even over the Sabbath!”

### *Jesus Heals on the Sabbath*

<sup>9</sup>Then Jesus went over to their synagogue, <sup>10</sup>where he noticed a man with a deformed hand. The Pharisees asked Jesus, “Does the law permit a person to work by healing on the

## Peace begins when we let God take control read MATTHEW 11:28-30

In this passage, Jesus teaches us three things we must do to find true peace. Yet, for some odd reason, we sometimes find these things difficult to do. Make a point of concentrating on practicing these three necessary actions:

**1. COME TO CHRIST.** If you have already accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior in your life, you have already completed this step. If you are still searching, you might be right at the door. But know this: You will not find peace from anyone or anything else. Sure, you can achieve temporary peace of mind, but when the bottom falls out, what happens then? Only Christ can guarantee you unending peace.

**2. EXCHANGE YOUR YOKE FOR HIS YOKE.** A yoke is a heavy wooden harness that is placed over the neck of one or more oxen in order to help pull a wagon or any other piece of equipment. It enables a farmer to direct the oxen. Shifting the analogy to humans, our “heavy yoke” could be the weight of guilt or the burden of trying to please God through our own good works. Jesus wants you to exchange that load for his lighter load—God’s grace. You can rest in knowing that you do not have to work for God’s favor; you need only to accept his Son.

**3. LET JESUS LEAD.** This is undoubtedly one of the hardest parts of this promise because we want to be in control. But God says that we need to give him the reins so that he can teach us. Are you ready and willing to leave every aspect of your life in God’s hands? Then you will experience God’s promised “rest” for your soul.

*For the next note on “Peace” turn to page 183.*