

Hatfield Christian Church

2010

Moved by Love
Devotional Workbook

Book 1

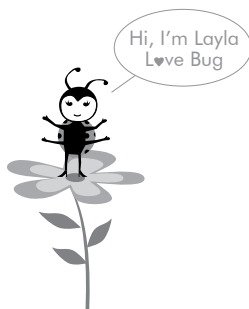
Matthew

Compiled by the pastoral ladies
of Hatfield Christian Church.

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Greetings in Jesus' Name! We pray that both grace and peace may be your companions in 2010.

It is with a sense of excitement and expectation that we have prepared this devotional workbook for the first quarter of 2010. During the course of this year we will be looking at the parables in each of the four gospels, focusing specifically on the words of Jesus and their impact on our lives.

The overarching theme for the year is **MOVED BY LOVE**, and our confident expectation is that we will be moved by the gospel stories; stirred in our thinking and emotions, taking deliberate action, changing our position where necessary, and stepping out to be more involved socially.

Matthew is about the kingship of Jesus, and this is always a good place to start! May you hear His clear, kind voice as you work your way through these workbooks.

Our prayer is that you will be both encouraged and challenged as you follow Jesus, the Lord.

Hatfield Pastoral Ladies Team

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Chapter 1

The Lord's Prayer

Matthew 6:1-18

Objective

To examine our motives when we give, fast and pray.



Word and Discussion

Read through Matthew 6:1-18, then continue with the workbook.

♥ Giving

“Be careful not to do your ‘acts of righteousness’ before men, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven. So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honoured by men. I tell you the truth; they have received their reward in full. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

Matthew 6:1-4 (NIV)

Proper action with improper motive does not please God. In fact giving and doing good for personal gain or honour will not be rewarded by God, as you would already have received your reward **from man**. In all our good deeds our attention should not be placed on ourselves, instead we should always be moved by love and give God the glory.

Is your giving prayer-based or do you just give? Who gets the honour for what you give, and for what you do?

♥ Praying

“And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth; they have received their reward in full. But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

Matthew 6:5-8 (NIV)

Prayer is an important part of our relationship with our Father. Jesus disapproves of the motives of those who are out to impress and He condemns incessant (never-ending) prayers. We do not need to get God’s attention – He already knows what we need even before we ask. Personal private prayer time with Father God is vital because it is an expression of the level of your relationship with Him. Set aside time to be alone with Him and open your heart to Him.

What heart attitude pleases God?

♥ The Lord’s Prayer

“This then is how you should pray: ‘Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today, our daily bread. Forgive us our debts, as we have also forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.’ For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

Matthew 6:9-15 (NIV)

- **Our Father in Heaven.** We can approach God as a child would approach his/her father. Father, which means ‘abba’ or daddy, speaks of a close relationship with God. He is not some distant figure but is with us all the time, unlike some earthly fathers. We should direct our prayers to the Father.
- **Hallowed be your name.** We need to honour God and use His name with respect, despite the intimacy of our relationship.

- **Your kingdom come.** God’s kingdom has already been established through Jesus, but we are to pray for the day when the whole world acknowledges His rule and reign. We should also be praying for His Kingdom to be lived out in the hearts and lives of people today.
- **Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.** We need to pray that God’s will (His declarations, purposes, commands and desires) are accomplished and perfected here on earth.
- **Give us today our daily bread.** We are encouraged to ask God daily for our material provisions.
- **Forgive us our debts.** We fall into sin so easily and make bad decisions that land us in trouble and damage relationships, both with God and with others. We need to ask for forgiveness from God and those we have harmed.
- **As we have also forgiven our debtors.** This not only applies to those who owe us money but also those who have offended us – it is a reminder that we should forgive and keep short accounts, remembering that if you do not forgive men their sins then your Father will not forgive your sins.
- **Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from the evil one.** God does not tempt us – Satan does. Satan wants us to fail and we need God’s help to overcome his attacks on us.
- **Forgiveness.** This is often easier said than done. How does one forgive murder, rape or abuse? Do you blame God for miscarriages, sickness or allowing a loved one to die after many hours of prayer? It is also hard to forgive when unfaithfulness and words spoken in anger cause damage to families. Forgiveness is a command of God and we need to be obedient. He knows that we are set free from the chains of bitterness when we forgive. We also need to receive forgiveness both from others and from God.

Why is it so difficult to forgive or ask for forgiveness? Is there **someone** you need to forgive who has done you wrong, either in deed or word? Or do **you** need forgiveness for something you have said or done? Ask for God’s help and wisdom in these areas.

♥ Fasting

“When you fast, do not look sombre as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show men they are fasting. I tell you the truth; they have received their reward in full. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to men that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen, and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

Matthew 6:16-18 (NIV)

Fasting is intended as a preparation for closer communion with God, in times of crisis and in intense prayer, for protection and in times of bereavement. It is personal and powerful and not to be flaunted.

Have you ever fasted? Describe your experience.

Conclusion

God looks at the heart of man. He sees the inner attitude and the deeds done in secret. He hears your prayers but most of all, He knows your heart and He judges accordingly. You can either please man or you can please God – you cannot always do both.

The light of a Christian character will shine before men and win glory for God without the artificial aid of public advertisement. Ostentatious* religion may have its reward here, but it receives none from God. – A Plummer

(*Ostentatious – a show in an attempt to impress others, intended to attract attention.)

Prayer Focus

- Spend time examining your heart. Define your motives for doing what you do. What drives you – are you a man pleaser or a God pleaser? Wait on God to refine your heart so that when you do what He asks you are moved by love for Him and for others.



Chapter 2

Many Healed

Matthew 8:1-34; 9:18-25; 14:14, 35-36 and 15:30-31

Objective

To study these passages of Scripture and discover how Jesus' **love** for people **moved** Him to heal them.

Word and Discussion

Read through Matthew 8:1-34; 9:18-25; 14:14, 35-36 and 15:30-31, then continue with the workbook.

♥ Moved with compassion

Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.

Matthew 9:35-36 (NIV)

- Jesus was always willing to heal people – Matthew 8:7;
- Distance did not deter Him – Matthew 8:28;
- Jesus had compassion on everyone regardless of threats from the Pharisees, or the time of day – Matthew 8:16; 12:15; and
- Jesus desires to give the weary rest – Matthew 11:28-29.

What is your definition of *compassion*? Write it down.

Name any situation that has stirred up compassion in your heart.

♥ Jesus had the same heart as His Father

Read John 3:16 and John 6:38.

- God is not willing that **any** should perish, Jesus came to bring all people salvation – 2 Peter 3:9; and
- Jesus also came to bring physical and emotional healing.

“ The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed ...

Luke 4:18 (NIV)

Does God’s love have boundaries?

♥ Jesus healed the outcasts of society

When he came down from the mountainside, large crowds followed him. A man with leprosy came and knelt before him and said, “Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean.” Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. “I am willing,” he said. “Be clean!” Immediately he was cured of his leprosy. Then Jesus said to him, “See that you don’t tell anyone. But go, show yourself to the priest and offer the gift Moses commanded, as a testimony to them.”

Matthew 8:1-4 (NIV)

- Jesus touched the leper despite his bodily ‘uncleanness’;
- Jesus rewarded the Centurion and crossed the ethnic barrier – Matthew 8:5-13; and
- Jesus healed Peter’s mother-in-law and overcame the gender taboo – Matthew 8:14-15.

How would you respond if you were confronted with ministering to an ‘outcast of society’ today? Relate any challenges that you have experienced.

♥ Jesus took authority over Satan's destructive power

- Jesus stilled a violent storm: authority over disaster – Matthew 8:23-27;
- Jesus delivered men from Gedara: authority over demons – Matthew 8:28-34; and
- Jesus healed the paralytic: authority over disease – Matthew 9:2-8.

For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.

2 Timothy 1:7 (NIV)

Jesus has given us power and authority over Satan and demonic forces. He wants His compassion to flow through us bringing deliverance to people who are in demonic bondage. What do you think about the above scripture?

♥ Jesus brought healing in spite of public negativity or hostility

When Jesus entered the ruler's house and saw the flute players and the noisy crowd, he said, "Go away. The girl is not dead but asleep." But they laughed at him. After the crowd had been put outside, he went in and took the girl by the hand, and she got up. News of this spread through all that region.

Matthew 9:23-26 (NIV)

- Jesus healed an 'unclean' woman and raised the dead – Matthew 9:18-26;
- Jesus gave sight to the blind – Matthew 9:27-31;
- Jesus gave speech to the mute – Matthew 9:32-34; and
- Jesus healed on the Sabbath day – Matthew 12:10-13.

What do you think caused Jesus to heal people despite strong criticism and opposition?

♥ Jesus wants us to be moved by compassion

As you go, preach this message: 'The kingdom of heaven is near'. Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received, freely give.

Matthew 10:7-8 (NIV)

- Obey Him – Mark 16:15-18; and
- See the results. (Also read Mark 16:20)

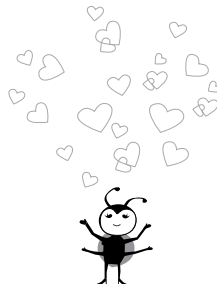
Write down a practical task that you can do this week to help someone who is hopeless or in need of God's love and healing.

Conclusion

Let us seek to do the will of our Father, filled with His love and with the power of the Holy Spirit, bringing healing to the sick and to the hopeless.

Prayer Focus

- Ask God for **His** heart for people.
- Pray for boldness to obey the promptings of the Holy Spirit.



Chapter 3

Burst, Wineskins

Matthew 9:16-17

Objective

To understand and recognize the **divine shifts** in your life, the moments when God changes times and seasons.

Word and Discussion

Read through Matthew 9:16-17, then continue with the workbook.

♥ Old versus new

“No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment, for the patch will pull away from the garment, making the tear worse. Neither do men pour new wine into old wineskins. If they do, the skins will burst, the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved.”

Matthew 9:16-17 (NIV)

We need to understand the seasons and timing God ordains for our personal lives, ministries, cities and even the nation. Too often we miss out on God's purpose by trying to reap during planting season, plant during harvest time or even go to war when it's actually time to rest! In the passage of Scripture above, together with some of the preceding passages Jesus tries to teach us that **His coming** has brought new practices (ways) appropriate to the circumstances of Him being with us. His coming inaugurated a season of **joy** and **celebration** rather than **sorrow** and **fasting**.

The **first** new season Jesus brought about in your life and mine was our salvation. He died for us, was moved by love, and made a way for us to be **'new'** in Him.

Understanding God's timing is key to taking the appropriate action to facilitate the new. We need to recognize the new things God is doing and the **divine shifts** in our lives.

Have you ever done the right thing at the wrong time? What was the outcome of that and what did you do to get back on track with God's timing?

Read the following passages in Isaiah that speaks of God's change into new seasons:

- Isaiah 42:9;
- Isaiah 43:19; and
- Isaiah 48:6.

God always announces the change before the 'new things' take place. The challenge for us is to wait and discern the right time because God often waits until the last moment to move. So never give up trusting Him for the new, He likes to surprise us!

What promises of new things has the Lord given you? Take time to write down what comes to mind.

♥ Containing versus bursting

Neither do men pour new wine into old wineskins. If they do, the skins will burst, the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved."

Matthew 9:17 (NIV)

When we are born again we become new. We are changed, brand new creations which are new in **kind** and **quality** – new on the inside. We even get a new name – 'Christian'. This process brings a series of changes, moving from the old to the new.

This is like the 'new' wineskins:

The Holy Spirit is the wine. He is perfect, He can't improve or change! We have to change to be able to hold more of the Holy Spirit.

Why then do the wineskins have to change?

When we put new wine (that has not yet fermented) into old wineskins, the wine will start to bubble, fizz, expand and emit gas. The old, brittle wineskins will explode. New wineskins are still able to stretch, change shape and expand, so they can handle the change of the new wine. Once settled the wineskin can no longer expand. Jesus is saying that He wants to put more of His Spirit into us, so we need to change in order for that to happen.

Take a few minutes to ponder on the following question:

Does your lifestyle and the words you speak convey the joy of salvation and the living presence of Jesus (the new wine) to others?

We must also remember that the message of the Gospel stays the same, but during a new season the methods of how we do things might change. For example the way we evangelise, worship, church structures and preaching etc.

♥ Growth versus stagnation

And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the new wine will burst the skins, the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. No, new wine must be poured into new wineskins. And no one after drinking old wine wants the new, for he says, 'The old is better.'"

Luke 5:37-39 (NIV)

In order for us not to miss the 'new' season or time, God will put us through processes of change. We will be changed morally and spiritually. It is important that we do not stagnate in order for us to get a new dose of the Holy Spirit. Change is not always comfortable in the beginning (Verse 39).

If we think of a lobster or a snake, they both have to get rid of the old or they will die. In order for a lobster to grow bigger it has to shed its shell at regular intervals. During this time the lobster is vulnerable to danger. There are dangers in the sea, such as currents and other predators. This same principle applies to us – we need to **change or we stagnate and burst!**

What are some hindrances to change, to bring the new into your life?

- Confusion;
- Weariness;
- Disillusionment – the Israelites in the desert;
- Loss of expectation – think of Abraham and Sarah;
- Complacency; and
- Fear.

What do you need to **'shed'** in your life: fear, pride, and religiosity? Take some time to ask God to show you, and then write it down.

A Divided Kingdom

Matthew 12:22-45

Objective

To understand how a kingdom divided against itself will fall, and that one that works in harmony will stand.



Word and Discussion

Read through Matthew 12:22-45 two to three times.

The same story is recorded in Mark 3:22-27 and Luke 11:14-26, 29-32.

♥ Standing or falling

Then they brought him a demon-possessed man who was blind and mute, and Jesus healed him, so that he could both talk and see. All the people were astonished and said, "Could this be the Son of David?" But when the Pharisees heard this, they said, "It is only by Beelzebub, the prince of demons, that this fellow drives out demons." Jesus knew their thoughts and said to them, "Every kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and every city or household divided against itself will not stand. If Satan drives out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then can his kingdom stand? And if I drive out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your people drive them out? So then, they will be your judges. But if I drive out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

Matthew 12:22-28 (NIV)

It is interesting to note that the Jews did not deny the genuineness of His miracles but ascribed it to the power of the devil. Jesus was being branded as a sorcerer and worthy of death. But Jesus knew their thoughts and He immediately confronted them with the statement that **a kingdom divided among itself will not stand**. Internal conflict within a country, town or family will eventually cause ruin and destruction.

Can you think of a situation where division has brought ruin? Do you have a situation in your family where there is division? Take time to write down the circumstances and ask the Lord to heal and restore the brokenness.

♥ Binding or loosing

“Or again, how can anyone enter a strong man’s house and carry off his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man? Then he can rob his house. He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters.

Matthew 12:29-30 (NIV)

In the above scripture we see that the strong man or the guard needs to be bound before the plunder can be taken. This teaches us that **Satan needs to be bound** before we can cast out the demons in Jesus Name – before we can plunder the enemy’s territory and lead unbelievers to the Lord.

In the following scripture Jesus clearly states that we need to bind or loose some **situations**.

“I tell you the truth, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

Matthew 18:18 (NIV)

Do you have situations that you have prayed into for a long time and seen minimal results? Perhaps it is time for you to bind the activity of the enemy and invite Jesus to reign in that area. Take time to pray right now.

♥ Good fruit or bad fruit

“Make a tree good and its fruit will be good, or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad, for a tree is recognized by its fruit.

Matthew 12:33 (NIV)

Our lives are **known by our fruit**. So often we think that we can hide our short comings but our fruit will still be of a poor quality. Sometimes a piece of fruit looks beautiful but when you pick it up and turn it over there is a bad spot. We need to ask the Lord to show us our weak spots, teach us and restore us, so that we are known by our wholeness and good fruit because of Him.

Do you have bad spots that need healing? Write them down and then ask the Lord to come and restore you.

No cloud can overshadow a true Christian but his faith will discern a rainbow in it. – Bishop Horne

♥ Speaking life or speaking death

You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks. The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him. But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken. For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned.”

Matthew 12:34-37 (NIV)

In the NKJV the word ‘tongue’ is repeated 115 times in the Bible, and mostly in the context of **taming our tongue** and considering what we say.

Some amazing facts about the tongue are:

- It is disproportionately powerful – James 3:3-5;
- It is inherently evil – James 3:6;
- It is humanly untameable – James 3:7-8; and
- It is contrastingly productive – James 3:9-12.

We need to ask the Lord to help us to tame our tongues:

- Pause – Proverbs 10:19, 21:23;
- Ponder – Proverbs 23:7; and
- Pray – Isaiah 6:1-8.

If we are to be **moved by love**, what we say needs to be life bringing and not causing death in the lives of others.

♥ Wisdom of man or wisdom of God

Then some of the Pharisees and teachers of the law said to him, “Teacher, we want to see a miraculous sign from you.” He answered, “A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a miraculous sign! But none will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and now one greater than Jonah is here. The Queen of the South will rise at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for she came from the ends of the earth to listen to Solomon’s wisdom, and now one greater than Solomon is here. When an evil spirit comes out of a man, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it.

Matthew 12:38-43 (NIV)

The Pharisees clearly lacked faith and did not understand who Jesus was. They continually questioned His integrity. This is just one of the many occasions recorded where they asked for signs. They did not have the **wisdom of the Spirit**. In Proverbs 1:7 (NKJV) the Word says, 'The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, *But* fools despise wisdom and instruction.'

♥ Clean or dirty

Then it says, 'I will return to the house I left.' When it arrives, it finds the house unoccupied, swept clean and put in order. Then it goes and takes with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there. And the final condition of that man is worse than the first. That is how it will be with this wicked generation."

Matthew 12:44-45 (NIV)

Jesus now returns to consider the incident that started this whole discussion. He wants the man who was liberated, along with everyone else present to realize that freedom from demon possession is not enough, but ownership by the devil must be replaced with **ownership by Jesus**. If this replacement doesn't take place the change will be temporary and squatters will move in.

Are there any areas in your life that Jesus is not Lord of? Take time to write down these areas and ask Jesus to be in complete control so that squatters can't move in.

Conclusion

It is clear that division causes malfunction and harmony calls forth blessing.

Prayer Focus

- Pray that you will have the insight to see where changes need to take place, and have the courage to make the necessary changes.



The Pearl of Great Price

Matthew 13:44-50

Objective

To better understand the values according to which the kingdom of heaven operates by looking at the parables of the hidden treasure, the costly pearl and the fishnet.

Word and Discussion

Read through Matthew 13:44-50, then continue with the workbook.

♥ Hidden treasure

“The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field.

Matthew 13:44 (NIV)

Previously in the same chapter of Matthew the kingdom of heaven is compared to small things, namely a mustard seed and yeast. Now the focus changes to the **great value** of the kingdom and how precious it is to those who embrace it.

Jesus Christ is the true Treasure. When we find Him, we discover:

- **Wisdom and knowledge**

‘... that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.’

Colossians 2:2b-3 (NIV)

Proverbs 2:4 encourages us to look for wisdom and understanding as for _____ and to search for it as for _____.

- **Fullness of God**

‘For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him ...’

Colossians 1:19(NIV)

- **Promises of God**

‘For no matter how many promises God has made, they are **“Yes”** in Christ.’ 2 Corinthians 1:20 (NIV)

The kingdom is hidden and one has to look deeply to see its incredible value. – Unknown.

Many never look deeper than the surface of the field and miss the treasures buried beneath. How is the Bible better than other books? How can the Gospel carry more wisdom than the teachings of Plato and other philosophers? How is your beloved better than others? (See Song of Songs 5:9)

After having a glimpse of the value of our precious treasure, these questions are clearly answered for us. Jesus states that the treasure carries such a high value, that the one who finds it joyfully sells everything to get hold of it – clearly **the cost is worth it!**

Have you had to give up anything in order to fully embrace the Kingdom? What moved you to find the **treasure** of Jesus? Are you glad you made the sacrifice? Write down some of your thoughts.

♥ The pearl of great price

“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it.

Matthew 13:45-46 (NIV)

It is interesting to see that in the parable of the hidden treasure the man stumbles across wealth, while the man **in this parable** is searching for it. Jesus reaches out in these parables to both spiritual seekers and those who are apathetic unbelievers.

- **Jesus Christ is the Pearl of great price** who makes those who have Him truly rich and fulfilled on earth and forever.
- **A true Christian is like a spiritual merchant** who not only seeks until he finds the pearl, but is prepared to pay whatever the cost to obtain it.

Have you ever thought of digging deep in any other person’s life to find the treasure that God has placed within them? When we are **moved by love**, taking time to befriend people and perhaps even help them to discover the **‘treasure’** should be something we do regularly.

‘For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.’

Matthew 6:21 (NIV)

Your heart follows your treasure like a sunflower follows the sun. Your treasure will determine whether your heart is set on fleshly or on spiritual things. Where our treasure lies, there are our:

- **Cares and fears**

Are you more concerned about losing His presence and joy than about material things? List some of your material cares, as well as the precious things of the Spirit that you cannot afford to lose. Set these things into the correct order of priority in your heart today.

- **Joys and delight**

Psalm 119:24 ... your statutes (laws or rules) are:

- **Thoughts**

Colossians 3:1-2 ... set your minds on:

♥ The net

“Once again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was let down into the lake and caught all kinds of fish. When it was full, the fishermen pulled it up on the shore. Then they sat down and collected the good fish in baskets, but threw the bad away. This is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous and throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Matthew 13:47-50 (NIV)

You have made men like fish in the sea, like sea creatures that have no ruler.

Habakkuk 1:14 (NIV)

Men in their natural state are like the fish of the sea that do not have a ruler over them. In this parable **‘all kinds of fish’** are mentioned, which means more literally **‘all races’**. This would seem strange if one were speaking about fish, but reveals God’s gracious heart for all nations, when applied to the Kingdom being preached by ministers who are **fishers of men**.

The net gathers everything – rubbish, dirt and weeds as well as fish. In the same way, we cannot always discern what is in the net while it is in the sea, but we keep on casting the net out (spreading His Word), for the sake of the good to be found. Until the time when God will gather together the righteous for safekeeping and cast away those who are unredeemed. At the set time the net will be full and the Gospel shall fulfil that for which it has been sent.

Read the following scripture, and consider how it is applicable here.

As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.

Isaiah 55:10-11 (NIV)

Conclusion

We should become more aware of the great value of the kingdom of heaven of which we are citizens, and the role we play in it. Let us determine to set Christ apart as our **treasure** of greatest worth.

Pursue the things over which Christ presides. Don't shuffle along, eyes to the ground, absorbed with the things right in front of you. Look up, and be alert to what is going on around Christ – that's where the action is. See things from his perspective. Your old life is dead. Your new life, which is your real life – even though invisible to spectators – is with Christ in God. He is your life.

Colossians 3:1-3 (MSG)

Prayer Focus

- Pray for each other about our priorities, especially if there is any reshuffling to be done as we considered again where our true treasure lies.

Chapter 6

The Unforgiving Servant

Matthew 18:21-35

Objective

To realize that the only thing that can stand in the way of God's forgiveness is our refusal to forgive the sins of others.



Word and Discussion

Read through Matthew 18:21-35, then continue with the workbook.

♥ Peter approaches Jesus on the subject of forgiveness

It is important to understand the context in which Peter approaches the subject of forgiveness. Jesus had just been teaching his disciples about forgiving your fellow disciple or a fellow believer.

Read the following three verses that forego the parable:

"If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.' If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector.

Matthew 18:15-17(NIV)

Here Jesus offers guidelines to the disciples on how to handle sin and restore a fellow believer.

- **Firstly**, sin is to be handled between the two people in **private** (Verse 15);
- **Secondly**, if he will not listen it should be resolved in the presence of **two or three witnesses** (Verse 16); and
- **Thirdly**, if the offender still refuses to respond then he will be **dealt with very harshly**, even to the extent of treating him as a non-believer (Verse 17).

Consider the above teaching of Jesus. Is there still sin in your life that has not been dealt with, or has a fellow believer committed an offense or sin against you that still has not been resolved? Ponder on this quietly for a few minutes, write down what still needs to be dealt with and resolve to make short account of it.

♥ God's boundless grace

With Jesus' teaching still fresh in Peter's mind, he approaches Jesus with the following question:

"Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?"

Matthew 18:21 (NIV)

Peter used the number **'seven'** because seven is a common biblical number in the Hebrew writings used to illustrate **perfection**. Peter thought that to forgive seven times was generous. After all, he goes well beyond the rabbinic maxim of forgiving three times.

Peter did not expect the answer that followed:

"I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.

Matthew 18:22 (NIV)

Jesus stuns him with his reply, making the point that forgiveness should be unconditional, and far more than seventy seven times. We should not even keep track of how many times we forgive.

If forgiveness does not take place unconditionally, then we face a terrible consequence.

For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

Matthew 6:14-15 (NIV)

♥ Settle accounts

“Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand talents (denarii) was brought to him. Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt. The servant fell on his knees before him. ‘Be patient with me,’ he begged, ‘and I will pay back everything.’ The servant’s master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go.

Matthew 18:23-27 (NIV)

- The **king** in a story or parable usually depicts God and servants are God’s people;
- **Obedient** and **disobedient** servants are usually used to contrast **righteous** and **wicked** behaviour; and
- **Settling accounts** is a metaphor to illustrate **judgement**.

The amount of ten thousand talents that the servant owed was a debt that would be impossible for him to repay in his lifetime. Therefore the only way that the king would have received **some** of the payment was to sell the servant along with his wife, children and all their belongings. In the ancient world it was common to sell servants to raise funds in order to pay debt.

♥ Cultivate compassion

The servant begs for mercy and the king has **compassion** on the man. He extends grace to him, and not only does he keep the servant as well as his family, he also **cancels all the debt that he owed**. The king was moved by love.

Jesus showed **compassion** in many instances. Consider the following verses:

When he saw the crowds, he had **compassion** on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.

Matthew 9:36 (NIV)

When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had **compassion** on them and healed their sick.

Matthew 14:14 (NIV)

Let us consider people whom we need to extend **compassion** towards, for example someone who continually irritates you. Write down any names that come to mind.

Think about how one can cultivate **compassion**.

♥ The Consequences of unforgiveness

“But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii. He grabbed him and began to choke him. ‘Pay back what you owe me!’ he demanded. His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, ‘Be patient with me, and I will pay you back.’ But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt.

Matthew 18:28-31 (NIV)

The servant who had just received such generous forgiveness from the king, does not return the grace that had just been shown to him. Though his fellow servant pleads for mercy, he has the audacity to have him locked up in jail for a sum of money that was much smaller than the sum he owed to the king. The servant made a conscious choice to **harden his heart** and he refused to forgive.

Ponder on the unfairness of the treatment that the first servant showed to his fellow servant. Write down a few points to highlight this.

♥ God’s judgement

Other servants who observed this despicable act reported it to the king, who in turn withdrew the mercy given to the first servant.

The final part of this parable illustrates the consequence of refusing to forgive:

“Then the master called the servant in. ‘You wicked servant,’ he said, ‘I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. Shouldn’t you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?’ In anger his master turned him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed. This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart.”

Matthew 18:32-35 (NIV)

Because of the unforgiving attitude of the first servant the king handed him over to the jailers to be tortured. Since the servant would never be able to pay back the amount owed, the king's orders guaranteed a life sentence.

The torture we go through if we do not forgive others can be manifested in two ways:

- We chain ourselves with chains of bondage if we choose to live in unforgiveness; and
- We cannot be forgiven by Father God if we do not forgive those who require our forgiveness.

Forgiveness is unlocking the door to set someone free and realising that you were the prisoner. – Max Lucado.

Take a moment to consider if you need to forgive someone, remembering that a part of being **moved by love** is forgiving. Write down any names that come to mind.

Conclusion

The mercy of God is there for anybody to receive, and the **judgement** of God will follow those who do not forgive others. Let us daily strive to live in God's grace and forgive others as we have so graciously been forgiven.

Prayer Focus

- Pray that we may open our hearts towards God in order that we will have love and compassion for others, enabling us to readily forgive and live in freedom.
- If there is anyone who needs our forgiveness, then we should pray that we will have the courage to extend forgiveness and ask for forgiveness where necessary.



Labourers in the Vineyard

Matthew 20:1-16

Objective

To understand that no matter how late in life one comes to salvation, you will receive an equal reward with those who have been faithful for a long time.



Word and Discussion

Read through Matthew 20:1-16, then continue with the workbook.

“For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire men to work in his vineyard. He agreed to pay them a denarius for the day and sent them into his vineyard. About the third hour he went out and saw others standing in the marketplace doing nothing. He told them, ‘You also go and work in my vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.’ So they went. He went out again about the sixth hour and the ninth hour and did the same thing. About the eleventh hour he went out and found still others standing around. He asked them, ‘Why have you been standing here all day long doing nothing?’ ‘Because no one has hired us,’ they answered. He said to them, ‘You also go and work in my vineyard.’ When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, ‘Call the workers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last ones hired and going on to the first.’ ‘The workers who were hired about the eleventh hour came and each received a denarius. So when those came who were hired first, they expected to receive more. But each one of them also received a denarius. When they received it, they began to grumble against the landowner, ‘These men who were hired last worked only one hour,’ they said, ‘And you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the work and the heat of the day.’ But he answered one of them, ‘Friend, I am not being unfair to you. Didn’t you agree to work for a denarius? Take your pay and go. I want to give the man who was hired last the same as I gave you. Don’t I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I am generous?’ So the last will be first, and the first will be last.”

Matthew 20:1-16 (NIV)

♥ The first shall be last, and the last shall be first

But many who are first will be last, and many who are last will be first.

Matthew 19:30 (NIV)

This parable is an explanation of the above scripture as mentioned by Jesus in His answer to Peter's question in Chapter 19. Read Chapter 19 in order to be able to understand this parable.

In your opinion, should the 'late comers' be allowed into the Kingdom of God and rewarded in the same manner as those who lived a good Christian life for many years? Would that be 'fair'?

♥ Hiring/Invitation

"For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire men to work in his vineyard. He agreed to pay them a denarius for the day and sent them into his vineyard. About the third hour he went out and saw others standing in the marketplace doing nothing. He told them, 'You also go and work in my vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.' So they went. He went out again about the sixth hour and the ninth hour and did the same thing. About the eleventh hour he went out and found still others standing around. He asked them, 'Why have you been standing here all day long doing nothing?' "Because no one has hired us," they answered." He said to them, 'You also go and work in my vineyard.'

Matthew 20:1-7 (NIV)

This parable is about people responding to God's call, some sooner, and some later, but all will be equally welcome as children of God. This does not mean that people can deliberately put off repentance until later in life. The different times of the parable represents the time when people are called, and when called they must obey immediately. Some people gain knowledge of the truth early, some discover it later, but whenever the truth is heard is when it needs to be acted upon and the choice made.

Discuss who you think the 'labourers' are and give a few examples.

♥ Paying/Reward

“When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, ‘Call the workers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last ones hired and going on to the first.’
“The workers who were hired about the eleventh hour came and each received a denarius. So when those came who were hired first, they expected to receive more. But each one of them also received a denarius. When they received it, they began to grumble against the landowner. “These men who were hired last worked only one hour’, they said, ‘and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the work and the heat of the day.’

Matthew 20:8-12 (NIV)

This portion of the parable expresses profound truths about the nature of God as explained in the following quote:

Little seems more unequal than the equal treatment of unequals. – Unkown.

In contrast to God’s nature, we observe the attitudes of **grumbling** or **complaining**.

Read these scriptures:

- Deuteronomy 1:27;
- Exodus 16:7-12; and
- Numbers 14:27.

Write down your understanding of these scriptures in relation to this parable.

♥ Equal in God’s eyes

“But he answered one of them, ‘Friend, I am not being unfair to you. Didn’t you agree to work for a denarius? Take your pay and go. I want to give the man who was hired last the same as I gave you. Don’t I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I am generous?’ “So the last will be first, and the first will be last.”

Matthew 20:13-16 (NIV)

The labourers who have worked the whole day felt as if they had been cheated.

Read **Luke 15:29** to see the prodigal son's brother's attitude towards his father's decision to welcome the prodigal back with a party. Compare the following scripture with this story.

Don't I have the right to do what I want with my own money?
Or are you envious because I am generous?

Matthew 20:15 (NIV)

Think about your feelings when others are being blessed or promoted and you are still trusting for your long awaited breakthrough. Do you find yourself being envious when God is generous?

Read the following rap, ponder on it and listen to what God is saying to you about your attitude and feelings about other people in the Kingdom.

There once was a man who owned a vineyard
And needed some men to work very hard
He hired some men early in the day
And told them a denarius would be their pay
And every few hours he hired more men
Telling them the same again and again
Then in the evening he gave them their wage
But the ones who came early expressed outrage
"We worked harder than anyone here.
Aren't you being just a bit unfair."
"I'm not being unfair to you.
A denarius was what you agreed to.
Now take your pay and go.
Even though you think it's low.
For I'll be gracious to whom I want.
I'll be generous even though you aren't.
For many who are victims of circumstance.
And hiring you early was a matter of chance."
There are Christians who live quite a long time
Laboring all day taking care of the vine
But some get saved after they are old
Or live a short while after entering the fold
But nonetheless on judgement day
Both may end up receiving the same pay
For the point is not simply doing his biz
But rather revealing how gracious he is.

Unknown

Chapter 8

The Marriage Feast: joy or judgement

Matthew 22:1-14

Objective

To recognize how we allow the busyness of our lives to rob us from **feasting** with the Lord.



Word and Discussion

Read through Matthew 22:1-14, then continue with the workbook.

Extra reading: Luke 14:15-24

♥ Invitation to a wedding

Jesus spoke to them again in parables, saying: "The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son. He sent his servants to those who had been invited to the banquet to tell them to come, but they refused to come.

Matthew 22:1-3 (NIV)

These verses describe the standard custom concerning a wedding feast. The father would send invitations to his guests informing them of a wedding feast but the time was not stated. When everything was prepared and ready, he would send his servants with the final summons. In this parable, the guests refused to come. They were **'not willing'**.

Frequently in Scripture, a wedding feast depicts the fellowship of the Messiah with His people – particularly the wedding feast of Jesus, the bridegroom and His bride, the Church. Read the following:

- Matthew 8:11;
- Luke 13: 29; and
- Revelations 19:9.

What is your reaction to a wedding invitation and how do you usually respond?

♥ The second invitation

“Then he sent some more servants and said, ‘Tell those who have been invited that I have prepared my dinner: My oxen and fattened cattle have been slaughtered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding banquet.’

Matthew 22:4 (NIV)

The king displays much patience by sending his servants once again to summons the original guests. This time he describes the feast he has prepared – he has prepared only the very best for them, it is ready! **The invitation is to ‘come’.**

♥ The people’s response

“But they paid no attention and went off – one to his field, another to his business.

Matthew 22:5 (NIV)

“But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said ‘I have just bought a field, and I must go see it. Please excuse me.’ Another said, ‘I have just bought five yoke of oxen, and I’m on my way to try them out. Please excuse me’. Still another said, ‘I have just got married, so I can’t come.’

Luke 14:18-20 (NIV)

Think about the excuses made to the king’s invitation. Were they intrinsically ‘bad’ reasons?

The first tenant had **places to go**, the second had **work to do** and the third had **people to see**.

How often have we used these reasons as an excuse not to do the things of God? The ordinary activities of daily living were more important than their obedience and loyalty to their king’s invitation. They refused to come – they were just not willing to answer His call to come.

The rest seized his servants, ill-treated them and killed them.

Matthew 22:6 (NIV)

There were others who did not only ignore the invitation; they were actively **resistant** and **hostile**. They attacked and killed the king’s messengers.

Prayerfully consider the ways we ignore Father's invitation today and the consequences thereof in our lives.

♥ Consequences of their refusal to the king's invitation – judgement

The king was enraged. He sent his army and destroyed those murderers and burned their city.

Matthew 22:7 (NIV)

For the Jewish nation the complete destruction of Jerusalem came in A.D.70 as a result of their refusal to recognize their bridegroom, Jesus the Son of God.

♥ Father's invitation to the Gentiles

"Then he said to his servants. 'The wedding banquet is ready, but those I invited did not deserve to come. Go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find.' So the servants went out into the streets and gathered all the people they could find, both good and bad, and the wedding hall was filled with guests.

Matthew 22:8-10 (NIV)

The Father's heart is for every one.

♥ How should we respond to the invitation?

Father God's invitation to the wedding feast of His Son, Jesus, is still relevant today. It goes out **to all who will accept**. His **amazing grace** extends to those who would not be considered worthy, except for the blood of Jesus. It is an invitation to be partakers in the joy, love, hope and peace He brings. It is also a reminder that we can be so busy with the things of the world which are temporary, and lose sight of eternity.

Have you accepted Father's invitation to come to the wedding feast? How has your life changed?

♥ Changed lifestyles

“But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing wedding clothes. “Friend’, he asked, ‘How did you get in here without wedding clothes?’ The man was speechless. Then the king told the attendants, ‘Tie him hand and foot and throw him outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’ “For many are invited, but few are chosen.”

Matthew 22:11-14 (NIV)

The door into God’s kingdom is open to all, both Jews and Gentiles but when we enter, we cannot continue to live as sinners. We need to be clothed in a new purity, goodness and holiness – with the garments of praise (Isaiah 61:3) and with the garments of salvation and the robe of righteousness (Isaiah 61:10). There **must** be a change in our lifestyle!

We need to also become aware of others who need to be invited to the feast with our King. It would be very sad if we were to just enjoy ourselves and never **move out in love** to include those who are ready to become **guests of the King**.

Conclusion

We should be vigilant concerning our relationship with our Father God and how we live – ever mindful of our Father’s eternal purposes and eager to obey.

Prayer Focus

- Pray for one another that we may be willing and eager to answer the Lord’s invitation and daily seek out His presence.

Wise and Foolish Virgins

Matthew 25:1-13

Objective

To always be ready and prepared in our hearts for the return of the King and to be faithful with the talents God has given us to further His Kingdom.



Word and Discussion

Read through Matthew 25:1-13, then continue with the workbook.

♥ Preparing for the Bridegroom's arrival

"At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish and five were wise. The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any oil with them. The wise, however, took oil in jars along with their lamps. The bridegroom was a long time in coming, and they all became drowsy and fell asleep.

Matthew 25:1-5 (NIV)

From the phrase **'At that time, the kingdom of heaven will be like ...'** we can deduce that this is a picture of the Lord's return. And we have here a suspenseful picture of what it will be like. The role of the virgins was to light the way for the bride and bridegroom to the wedding celebration and banquet. However, it is important to note that the charge was not to go without sleep, but to be **prepared** whether they were asleep or awake!

The **foolish** virgins gave no thought to the future. The wise, on the other hand, took every precaution to avoid being caught unprepared. Both **wise** and foolish knew what was expected, but the wise were prepared in case something outside of their control and responsibility happened.

How can you be prepared for things that might happen to you that you have no control over?

♥ Prepared versus unprepared

“At midnight the cry rang out: ‘Here’s the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!’ Then all the virgins woke up and trimmed their lamps. The foolish ones said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil; our lamps are going out.’ “‘No,’ they replied, ‘there may not be enough for both us and you. Instead, go to those who sell oil and buy some for yourselves.’

Matthew 25:6-9 (NIV)

While the wise virgins may have felt compassion for their peers, their answer was clear and decisive. And not just out of spite, but because they had given thought to their preparation, while the foolish had not.

Here Jesus is making the link between just having **wisdom for everyday life** and **eternal life choices**. While we need to make wise choices every day, some of those choices have eternal consequences, even though we may not notice it. The foolish virgins made seemingly everyday choices, but the actual consequences were much greater than they thought.

Write down some of the seemingly everyday choices in your life that would actually have eternal consequences.

♥ Therefore keep watch

“But while they were on their way to buy the oil, the bridegroom arrived. The virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet. And the door was shut. Later the others also came. ‘Sir! Sir!’ they said. ‘Open the door for us!’ But he replied, ‘I tell you the truth, I don’t know you.’ Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour.

Matthew 25:10-13 (NIV)

If this parable is about the Lord’s return, then we’re talking about people that get into heaven and people that don’t. We cannot assume that when Jesus comes back we can quickly go out and buy oil, or make our relationship right with Him. In that time the doors may be shut. It is important to note that the words the bridegroom uses, **‘I don’t know you ...’** are repeated in other parables, for example Luke 13:27, signifying that it is about being in relationship with God, not just performing a task or being in the right place at the right time.

Tasks are important, but relationship with God is even more so. Is your balance appropriate? If not what can you do about it?

The Ten Talents

Read through Matthew 25:14-30, then continue with the workbook.

♥ Distribution of talents

“Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his property to them. To one he gave five talents of money, to another two talents, and to another one talent, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. The man who had received the five talents went at once and put his money to work and gained five more. So also, the one with the two talents gained two more. But the man who had received the one talent went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master’s money.

Matthew 25:14-18 (NIV)

Here Jesus tells a story which describes how we have each received valuable gifts in His kingdom, these have been entrusted to us to glorify God, not for our personal gain.

Write down what gifts you believe you have, and if and how you are using them.

♥ Accounting for the talents

“After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. The man who had received the five talents brought the other five. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘You entrusted me with five talents. See, I have gained five more.’ His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’ The man with the two talents also came. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with two talents; see, I have gained two

more.’ His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’ Then the man who had received the one talent came. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. So I was afraid and went out and hid your talent in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.’ His master replied, ‘You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest.

Matthew 25:19-27 (NIV)

Jesus uses the first two servants as an example of how we should use and increase our talents. The first two servants received the same reward as a result of their actions – greater responsibility and an invitation to share in the master’s happiness. But the last servant is called lazy and wicked. He did not return any profit on his master’s investment.

There are many potential reasons for his actions. Perhaps he was **fearful** of **punishment**, or he was **fearful** of **failure**. Whatever his motivation, he was still punished. We cannot let ourselves be paralysed by our insecurities.

Are your fears holding you back from developing your talents? If yes, how and what should you do to rectify it?

♥ Final judgement

“Take the talent from him and give it to the one who has the ten talents. For everyone who has will be given more and he will have abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him. And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’

Matthew 25:28-30 (NIV)

Jesus emphasizes the point that if you are faithful with little you will be given more responsibility, by giving the one talent to the man who had ten.

The man with 11 has now reaped where he hasn't sown. Jesus then directly moves from telling the parable and speaks very frankly about eternal life. The wicked servant is not just fired and asked to leave the property, he is sentenced to be thrown out into the darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth (a description often used for hell). The other option – the happiness of the master – is now not just a temporary blessing, it is the gift of eternal life.

Just as with the ten virgins we should not only be prepared at all times, but when the Lord comes again He should find us operating in the gifts and talents He has given us.

Using these talents while being **moved by love** are necessary for the advancing of the Kingdom of God here on earth. We are God's ambassadors and we need to be moving out, reaching others and making sure that our lives and the lives of others are ready for the Lord's return.

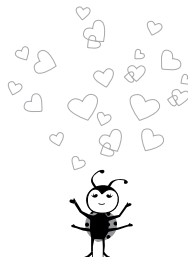
What practical steps can you put in place to ensure eternal life?

Conclusion

We as Christ's followers are called to be vigilant and watchful, to be prepared spiritually for the coming of Christ so that we may rejoice in His presence. We should also be eager to use the gifts that God has given us and not be hindered by our fears or inadequacies.

Prayer Focus

- Pray for grace that you will be faithful in all tasks that God gives you to do.



The Book of Matthew

Ice Breakers and Ministry

Week 1 – The Lord’s Prayer

Ice Breaker

We have all heard the saying, ‘There is a time and a place for everything.’ Sometimes we say something and then realize afterwards that it was not the appropriate time or the right person to discuss it with. Share any such experience with the group.

Ministry

Find a photo or picture of a father and daughter, and put it out on the coffee table. Direct the ministry and prayer time to focus on pleasing our Father, and being willing to change to please Him.

Week 2 – Many Healed

Ice Breaker

If a small girl was skipping along a pathway, then fell and grazed her knees, how would you comfort her?

Ministry

Have a pair of glasses to be used in the prayer time. Allow those who want to, to put it on as a prophetic action of being open to see people through the Lord’s eyes of compassion.

Week 3 – Burst Wineskins

Ice Breaker

Did you ever buy food at a shop and when you came home and opened it, it was bad or rotten? Share how you felt. What was your reaction and what did you do with it?

Ministry

Set out any contrasting old and new items of the same kind like an old telephone or cellphone and a new one, old and new kitchen appliances, handbags, cutlery, birthday cards, candle holders or dresses to remind everybody of the need to change to the new at the right time.

The Book of Matthew

Ice Breakers and Ministry

Week 4 – A Divided Kingdom

Ice Breaker

Do you remember a time during a family meeting when there were differing opinions regarding a specific situation? Share such an incident, then say if and how it was resolved.

Ministry

Arrange a piece of rope or chain, as well as a knife or scissors in an obvious place. Invite people to hold any of these as a physical reminder of what is happening in the spiritual realm as you bind and loose things in prayer. Agree in prayer on any situations that stand out from today's topic.

Week 5 – The Pearl of Great Price

Ice Breaker

What things would you try to save first should your house catch alight? What things do you think your loved ones would try to save?

Ministry

Hide pearl beads or round chocolates under each teacup or glass as a reminder of the hidden treasure that is found in Christ.

Week 6 – The Unforgiving Servant

Ice Breaker

Recall the first time you received any kind of punishment from your parents. What was the offense, and was the punishment appropriate for the offense?

Ministry

In large handwriting, write the number 77 on a paper as a reminder of Jesus' answer on forgiveness. You can also make use of polystyrene letters sold at party stores. You could line up 77 pieces of paper, apples, CDs or books as a clear reminder of how continuously the Lord wants us to forgive.

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Ice Breakers and Ministry

Week 7 – Labourers in the Vineyard

Ice Breaker

You are working as one of seven clerks in a company and the last one to be hired gets promoted as your department's manager. Discuss your feelings about this appointment.

Ministry

Take two glass jars, one much larger than the other. Fill the smaller one with water and a few drops of food colouring, then place it within the bigger jar. The small jar will now be quite visible within the bigger jar. Explain to your group that the jars represent how God's grace and His measure of equality are so much bigger than ours and that God's generosity is so much greater than we can comprehend and quantify. Ask the ladies to remember the jars whenever God's measures of grace seem unfair in our human terms.

Week 8 – The Marriage Feast: Joy or Judgement

Ice Breaker

Most weddings are carefully planned, but things don't always go according to plan. Describe an incident at a wedding you attended where this happened.

Ministry

Make an arrangement of any items to do with marriage such as an invitation, a photo, maybe your own marriage photo album, a piece of fruitcake or a ribbon and two rings to remind your group of the heavenly wedding feast one day.

Week 9 – Wise and Foolish Virgins

Ice Breaker

What is your most embarrassing story concerning being late for an event?

Ministry

Cut out squares of carton roll and stick a five cent coin on each one with Prestik. Give these out as your group settles down, introducing today's topic of talents and being faithful in little things entrusted to you.