

The
New
Testament
in a Year

Week 28

Matthew 6-10

This week's reflections were written by
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General Questions for Reflection

You might pick one part of each chapter and think about these questions.

- What does this tell me about God (including Jesus and the Holy Spirit)?
- What does this tell me about our world?
- What does it tell me about me?
- What does it say about following Jesus?
- Is there something here I'd like to learn more about?

Why not use these thoughts to shape your prayer today.

Monday

Matthew 6

Chapter 6 continues Jesus' teachings collected in His Sermon on the Mount. Jesus continues to challenge all those who gather to hear Him by overturning their conventional understanding of the laws that governed the practices of their religious community—practices that kept their community in covenant relationship with God.

Notice the repetition of the words "not like the hypocrites." Public displays of almsgiving, praying and fasting were acceptable and typical ways of showing devotion to God. But God isn't interested in shows of devotions. God is interested in lives of devotion. Jesus is telling his listeners that living a life for the kingdom means living a life of humility. Such a life does not call attention to itself, rather, it is a life that reflects God's loving, compassionate presence in the world. Jesus wants people to be dedicated to God while living out of their sincere faith.

As you reflect...Think about times in your life when you have just "gone through the motions." How did that affect the quality of your relationships—especially your relationship to God, through Jesus Christ? Today, do something that benefits someone else secretly. Be sure to give thanks to God for the opportunity.

Tuesday

Matthew 7

In Chapter 6, Jesus urged his listeners to shift their priorities and vision so that what they would do and seek in life would be of God.

In Chapter 7, Jesus teaches the crowd to live this new life in relationship with one another and the world. He tells them not to judge people; instead they should treat them as they themselves would like to be treated. But He doesn't just leave it at that. Jesus describes this way of relating to others as the law and prophets---summarized!

Jesus focuses on relationships---within marriage, with God, within community and beyond. How we interact with one another matters to God. He concludes his sermon with a warning. We can either build our lives on the rock-solid foundation of his words or we can ignore them and fall disastrously when life's storms rage

With that, Jesus finishes his teaching, leaving us to ponder what He said.

As you reflect...In a world that seems increasingly individualistic, secular and competitive, how can we cultivate and nurture meaningful relationships rooted in compassion? Does this begin at home, in the church or in the heart.

Wednesday

Matthew 8

One of the motifs of the Gospel of Matthew is its depiction of Jesus as “The Messiah”. (Matthew 1:17). It was believed that the Messiah would be known by his abilities to heal, to cast out demons and control the elements. Jesus, as the fulfillment of the Messianic prophecies, has all of these abilities.

In Chapter 8, we see that He cleanses the leper, heals the centurion’s servant (not to mention Peter’s mother and “the many at his house”), calms the storm and casts out demons. In the midst of this work, Jesus attracts followers. But when they ask what they must do to follow him, He tells them they must leave their homes and their loved ones—forsaking a sense of earthly security and social custom.

The path of Jesus, at this point, may look exciting to would-be-followers. As was said in Chapter 7, His way is not an easy way. That’s why faith requires courage.

As you reflect....What role does courage play in your faith? When have you stepped out in faith to bring healing to a marginalized person or calm to a stress-filled situation?

Thursday

Matthew 9

The healings in Chapter 8 continue in Chapter 9. In the midst of the healings—as was the case in the previous chapter—the question of following Jesus is raised. Unlike Chapter 8, it’s not the followers who initiate the discussion. It is Jesus.

Matthew is a tax collector. Tax collectors were social outcasts. Notice how tax collectors are grouped with sinners. They were despised in their communities. Yet, Jesus approaches him — not to condemn him but to invite him to dinner. Once again, Jesus overturns conventional understanding of the law, prophets and keeping the covenant by keeping company with him.

As you reflect...The chapter concludes with Jesus saying that more help is needed to do the work of God; the labourers are few. What does it mean to be a labourer of God’s harvest? How can we be labourers?

Friday

Matthew 10

Chapter 9 ended with Jesus’ prayer for more labourers in God’s fields. Chapter 10 focuses on discipleship.

Jesus calls his 12 disciples and gives them a mission. But before they can retrieve the lost sheep of the house of Israel and cast out demons, Jesus tells them where to go, how to dress and what to do if they’ve been somewhere that rejects them.

Jesus describes the people they will meet as wolves and the disciples as sheep. In other words, the disciples will face danger. He reminds them not to worry because the Spirit will give them the words to say. Those who stood against them will suffer God’s wrath.

One can’t help but be reminded again of the narrow gate and the difficult way. Especially when the disciples are told that Jesus does not see himself as a peace bearer; he’s wielding a sword that will slice through relationships that are bonded by ties of blood (not bonded in His blood). But all they will lose, they will gain in righteousness.

As you reflect....Do you know what your mission in life is? What have you given up to follow carry it out?