

Leader's Notes

JESUS CHRIST

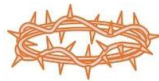
MATTHEW 22-28



TEACHER



SAVIOUR



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DATE	BIBLE	DATE	BIBLE
5-11 Feb	Start the Year	18-24 Mar	Matt 26:36-75
12-18 Feb	Matt 23:13-39	25-31 Mar	Matt 27:27-56
19-25 Feb	Matt 24:1-35	29 & 31 Mar	Good Fri & Easter Sun
26 Feb-3 Mar	Matt 24:36-25:13	1-7 Apr	Generosity, week 1
4-10 Mar	Choose your own	8-14 Apr	Generosity, week 2
11-17 Mar	Matt 26:1-35	15-28 Apr	Small Groups on Break

USING THESE NOTES

LCOMA: These notes use a bible reading approach called LCOMA.

Launch: This introduces the topic you'll unpack & gets everyone talking.

Context: This is about seeing how this passage fits in the book. What must we know from context to understand this piece properly?

Observe: This is about getting an overview of what the passage says.

Meaning: This is about deciding what big idea/s the author is explaining, what does it mean and why does it matter.

Apply: This is about reflecting on how the passage impacts your life – your head (beliefs), heart (emotions) and hands (actions).

The Code: these notes use a symbol-based code to help you easily work out which questions might best suit your Small Group.

→ **Simpler:** questions with this arrow symbol → trace 1 idea through a passage. So they're great if you have time pressures, less mature Christians in your group, or just want to unpack and apply 1 big theme.

++ **Bonus:** questions with this plus symbol ++ fill-in the picture more. So they're great if you want to dig deeper or explore a few extra ideas. You don't need to ask every bonus question; just pick the best ones.

The Goal: Remember, the purpose of a bible discussion is... to discuss the bible. It's not to ask every question in the notes and tick them all off. These notes will help you dig into the bible but don't let them get in the way of the actual goal – wrestling with the bible together, loving it and living it out.

MATTHEW OVERVIEW

Who wrote this book?

Although there's no statement in Matthew's gospel itself about who wrote it (unlike Luke's gospel for e.g.) early Christian tradition unanimously agrees that it was Matthew – not just any Matthew, but the former tax collector who left everything to follow Jesus (Matt 9:9-13)...

As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector's booth. "Follow me," he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him. While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house, many tax collectors and sinners came and ate with him and his disciples. When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" On hearing this, Jesus said, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

His name was Levi but Jesus changed it to Matthew which means 'gift of God'. Matthew probably wrote his book somewhere between 50-70 AD.

What's the purpose of this book?

This might feel like an odd question – surely the purpose of a gospel is to teach us about Jesus! Luke and John though tell us the reason they wrote their gospels – for Luke: so believing Gentiles like Theophilus '*may know the certainty of the things you have been taught*' (Luke 1:4); for John: '*these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name*' (John 20:31).

Matthew doesn't give us a clear statement like that about why he wrote his account of Jesus' teaching, life, death and resurrection. Instead his purpose shines through as we see the biggest themes in the book.

1. **Who is Jesus:** there's so many titles and descriptions of Jesus in this book. He's the Messiah / Christ, Immanuel (God incarnate with his people), the Son of God, King of Israel, Son of Man, Suffering Servant, Head of the Church, Lord of the universe.
2. **Fulfilment:** Jesus is the fulfilment of OT prophecy, expectations and even the Law itself. Matthew regularly writes things like this:
'All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet' (1:22). Jesus agrees: 'Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them' (5:17). God had spoken and made promises to His people in the past. Centuries later, Jesus arrives to fulfil all those promises.
3. **Jews and Gentiles:** Jesus is the end-point of all Ancient Israel's salvation hopes, but in Jesus salvation is now available to Gentiles too - notice the difference between this statement: *'these twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: "Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel. As you go, proclaim this message: The kingdom of heaven has come near" (10:5-7)* – and this statement: *"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations" (28:18-19).* Though Jesus comes to Israel first he's come to gather people for himself from all people-groups and sends his disciples and us to continue that mission.
4. **The Church:** The new people Christ forms is "the Church". Matthew is in fact the only gospel that explicitly uses the word "church". This is a new community of faith, made up of Jews and Gentiles as the 1 united and new people of God. The Church is built by Jesus: *'I will build my church' (16:18);* and is ongoingly sustained by him: *'where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them',* and *'surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age' (18:20, 28:20).*
5. **The Kingdom of Heaven:** much of Jesus' teaching is about "the kingdom of heaven". This is the realm where God's rule is acknowledged (so people 'enter the Kingdom' or 'receive the Kingdom' in Matthew), it is present now (since God is sovereign over His world and all creatures ought to serve God their King) and yet it is coming (so Jesus teaches us to pray God's Kingdom will come).

It's a radical Kingdom, where *'the last will be first, and the first will be last'* (20:16), where those who are blessed aren't the wealthy and powerful but *'the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven... those who mourn... the meek... those who hunger and thirst for righteousness... the merciful... the pure in heart... the peacemakers... those who are persecuted because of righteousness... theirs is the kingdom of heaven'* (5:3-10).

It's a Kingdom that makes 2 demands. The 1st demand is to enter it through Jesus: *'Not everyone who says to me, "Lord, Lord," will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven'* (7:21), with "God's will" here being ultimately Jesus' invitation and command: *'Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest'* (11:28). The 2nd demand is to follow the Kingdom's ethics. New birth leads to new behaviour, new life to a new lifestyle.

6. ***Being a Disciple:*** In terms of these kingdom ethics, the new people of God live as members of God's Kingdom on earth. God's love brought us into His Kingdom and that love transforms how we live. Being a disciple means following and obey Jesus: *'Go and make disciples... teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you'* (28:19-20).

So summing up, Matthew's purpose in writing his gospel is...

- A) To convince Jews that Jesus is their promised Messiah who brings salvation and to convince Gentiles that they can share in this salvation.
- B) For this new people of God, the Church, to learn from Jesus what it looks like to be Jesus' disciple, and to take comfort in Jesus' promise that He is with us in the opposition we'll inevitably face for Him.

What's the structure of the book?

Matthew structures his gospel around the timeline of Jesus' life: from birth to baptism, his public ministry, teaching, opposition, entry to Jerusalem, death and resurrection. But Matthew also includes 5 unique sections of Jesus' teaching not found in the other gospels (or at least not in the same depth). They're like a manual on what life following Jesus looks like.

- Chap 5-7 - The Sermon on the Mount
- Chap 10 - Sending his disciples on Mission to Israel
- Chap 13 - A collection of 5 Parables about the Kingdom of Heaven
- Chap 18-20 - Teaching to Jesus' disciples and opponents
- Chap 24-25 - The signs of Jesus' coming and commands to be watchful

KICK OFF THE YEAR • 5-11 FEB

DIRECTION: This'll be your first Small Group meeting for the year. So, kick it off with something fun (like a meal together) and with something important: talk about what sort of Small Group you want to be. Flesh out expectations together so your group can launch really well. Below is a suggested way to do this. Also check out the advice in chapter 2 of [Getting Started as a Small Group Leader](#) for more tips on how to have this convo.

PRAY TO START: That this year we'd be a Small Group who help each other know God better and learn to love each other like God loves us.

LAUNCH: → If you could spend 100 hours doing something this year, what would you spend those 100 hours on?

BIBLE: We'll spend about 100 hours together this year as a Small Group. As we kick off today, let's chat about how to use those hours really well to grow as Christians and in relationships with each other.

Best place to start is the bible, so (either as a group or in pairs)...

READ: Titus 2:11-14 | Col 3:16-17 | Heb 10:19-25 | Eph 4:11-16

- What is God's design for our lives as Christians?
- How do Christians work together to see this goal happen?
- In what ways are you hoping to grow as a Christian in our Small Group?
- What might stop you from coming regularly to Small Group this year?
- How do these verses motivate you to overcome those obstacles and commit to grow with our Small Group?

EXPECTATIONS CHAT: Small Groups are different in each church. Look at the [Small Groups Infographic](#) to see how they work at Salt Church.

- Is there anything that surprises you? That's unclear? That excites you?

→ We have Small Groups to help each other know God better & learn to love each other like God loves us; spiritual growth & genuine relationships. There're tonnes of practical ways we could do this, so let's share ideas.

- What worked well in another Small Group you've been part of?
- What didn't work so well?
- Got any creative ideas to help us grow as Christians and in relationships this year in our Small Group?

Note to Leaders: in this chat it'd be good to cover things like...

Online WhatsApp / Facebook msg group (what works? who can make it this week?)

Attendance (plan to come each week and post on our online group if you can't?)

Meals (will we have a meal together? Dessert? How often? Who's making a roster?)

Prayer (As a whole group? As guys & girls? After the bible time? Experiment?)

Socials (what would be fun to do? how regularly? who's organising them?)

Time (does the timing of our group work for the majority of us? Do we need a sharp start and end time? Do we want to be more flexible?)

Host (is our location good for the majority of us? Do we need to share who hosts?)

Participation (let's all share our thoughts from the bible to help each other grow)

Trust (we want to learn to trust each other so let's be real & take steps towards that)

FINISHING UP: Once you finish talking about these ideas make sure you land it – otherwise you'll have a case of “remember that great chat we had 1 week about the kind of Small Group we want to be” that everyone has since forgotten about. Some ways you could do this:

- Before you finish up, say back to the group: we've seen *this* is God's design for us as Christians so *this* is the kind of Small Group we want to be and *these* are the things we're committing to as a Small Group.
- Encourage and remind again (and hold people to these expectations) over the next few weeks as your group starts to meet.

PRAY TO END: Praise God we can know him! Ask for his help to know him better and to love each other like he loves us in this Small Group.

MATT 23:13-39 • 12-18 FEB

DIRECTION: Jesus longs to save people, so he's grieved when people reject him and furious when people are hindered from coming to him.

PRAY: That we'd love the lost as much as Jesus does.

LAUNCH:

→ When have you / someone you know acted hypocritically?

CONTEXT:

→ What have we seen about Israel's leaders so far? How is Jesus different?

READ: **Matthew 23:13-39**

OBSERVATION:

→ List all the things Jesus calls the religious leaders.

Hypocrites (6x), blind guides (2x), blind fools, blind men, blind Pharisee, like whitewashed tombs, full of hypocrisy and wickedness, snakes, brood of vipers

MEANING:

→ Do you feel uncomfortable with the language Jesus uses to describe the religious leaders? Why, why not?

→ Why do you think Jesus says these harsh things here?

He wants to warn people from following the religious leaders into error and evil, so they follow him instead into salvation and good. And he wants to see the religious leaders themselves repent and follow him too so calls out their error.

++ What are some of the marks and signs of fake religion here?

Focus on outward appearance (v15, v25-28), games with words instead of speaking truthfully (v16-22), focus on rule-keeping but forgetting what rules are for (v23-24).

++ “Woe” is a common word in the OT and NT to describe God’s judgement on someone. What judgement does Jesus predict here?

God will hold the religious leaders responsible for their evil hypocritical practises, rejection of the prophets and of Jesus, God’s Son. The judgement is that their “house will be left desolate” (v38) – this means first of all that Jerusalem will become a wasteland, which is probably referring to the events of 70 AD when the Romans destroyed and levelled the city; and second that God has forsaken the city and will no longer live with a people who persistently refused and reject him.

→ What do you think v37-39 teaches us about Jesus?

Jesus is not going on the offensive simply to offend people. He longs to save!

APPLY:

→ If someone said to you “Christians are hypocrites” what would you say?

Hypocrisy is saying one thing and doing the opposite. If Christians claimed to be “good people”, “perfectly sinless” or “better than others” then this accusation would be true! Instead, we claim to be bad people who’ve been forgiven by a perfect saviour and who are slowly being changed by God to be more like him.

→ Jesus longs to save people, so he’s grieved when people reject him and furious when people are hindered from coming to him.

- Do you weep over the lost as much as Jesus? How can you deepen your love and concern for those who don’t know Jesus?
- Are you as angry as Jesus when people block the sharing of the gospel? How can you deepen your concern to share the gospel?

++ Jesus says “Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye & pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, & then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.” (7:3-5)

Where might there be hypocrisy in your life at the moment?

++ Should Christians call out sin like Jesus does here? Why, why not?

See also 2 Corinthians 10:3-5 and 2 Timothy 2:24-26

PRAY: God guard us from false teachers & help us follow our good King.

MATT 24:1-35 • 19-25 FEB

DIRECTION: Over the next 2 weeks we'll unpack what Jesus says about judgement. After Jesus predicts the destruction of the temple (v1-2) his disciples ask 2 questions: "when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?" (v3). Jesus answers these 2 questions in reverse order in Matthew 24-25. First (for this week) what are the signs of Jesus' coming? Second (for next week) when is Jesus coming?

These verses use lots of OT judgement imagery and symbols, so it's difficult to work out what exactly is being said. "Christ's coming" also seems to include not just the final judgement at the end of time, but also the destruction of the Jerusalem and the temple in 70 AD, and even the cross.

A good goal for your discussion is to not get so caught up in all the details (important though they are!) that you miss the forest for the trees. The big picture is that Jesus is coming in glory and judgement, and he tells us what to expect so we'll be alert and not deceived by false claims of his coming.

PRAY: That we'd let the future God shows us shape how we live now.

LAUNCH: when have you been tricked / misled? Or you tricked others?

READ: Matthew 24:1-35

OBSERVATION:

++ Split your small group into 3 groups and have a debate. Using evidence you find in Matthew 24:1-35 each group has to argue that...

This part of the bible is talking about:

- GROUP 1 – The end of the world and final judgement
- GROUP 2 – The Romans destroying Jerusalem in 70 AD
- GROUP 3 – Jesus' death on the cross and resurrection

→ Why does Jesus launch into this big explanation? What questions do the disciples ask Jesus to initiate this explanation? (See 24:1-3)

MEANING:

→ List from the passage the big things Jesus wants us to be and to do.

Don't be deceived or alarmed that you missed Jesus' coming (v4-6,11,23-24,26-28).

Stand firm to the end amidst persecution and people rejecting Jesus (v9,12-13).

Flee and don't go back for anything when the temple is defiled (v15-21) – side note: “the abomination that causes desolation” in Daniel refers to a moment around 168 BC when the Greek King Antiochus Epiphanes IV built an altar to Zeus in Israel's temple and sacrificed pigs on it to his gods. When Jesus says in Matthew 24 that the same kind of thing will happen, it seems to refer either to the Romans desecrating and destroying the temple in 70 AD, and/or Christ's own death as he, the temple of the Lord (John 2:19-22), is murdered.

Learn the lesson from the fig tree: that this will be obvious & that as these signs happen it shows you Jesus' coming is near (v32-33).

→ Why do you think Jesus tells his disciples all of this?

Jesus is coming in glory and judgement, and he tells us what to expect so we'll be alert and not deceived by false claims of his coming.

APPLY:

→ What fears and concerns does this passage raise for you?

→ What difference does Jesus' teaching make for how we live now?

→ What warnings does he give us? How could we heed these today?

→ What priorities does he give us? How could we live those out now?

++ How does Jesus' knowledge of the future comfort you when you feel uncertain about your immediate future?

PRAY: Praise God that he controls the future and it won't surprise him. Ask for help to “stand firm to the end” (v13) and to not be deceived.

MATT 24:36-25:13 • 26 FEB-3 MAR

DIRECTION: Jesus' disciples asked 2 questions: "when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?" (24:3). Jesus answers them in reverse order in Matt 24-25. Last week we explored: *what are the signs of Jesus' coming?* This week we'll explore: *when is Jesus coming?* Jesus will certainly come but we don't know when. So, we need to be watchful, diligent, and faithful as we await the coming of our King.

LAUNCH:

→ Do you prefer to arrive early to events, on time, or late?

CONTEXT:

→ What were the 2 questions the disciples asked Jesus in Matthew 24:1-3?

→ What was the gist of Jesus' answer about the signs of his coming?

Now we'll look at Jesus' answer to the 2nd question: when will this happen?

READ: **Matthew 26:36-44**

→ When will the Son of Man come?

We don't know but it will be suddenly, at an hour when we don't expect him.

++ How will his coming be like the time of Noah?

It will interrupt normal life and people will be caught unprepared.

Side note: some see in 26:40-41 the idea of "the rapture", where Christians will be "taken" to be with the Lord at the start of the millennium (Revelation 20:1-6) and others left. Worth noting that, in the time of Noah, those who are "taken" are those who are judged and drowned in the flood – "the flood came and took them all away" (24:39). So when Jesus says "one will be taken and the other left" it seems to be the case that the ones "taken" are unbelievers taken in judgement, not Christians.

→ What does Jesus want us to do? Any ideas of how we could do this?

Keep watch (24:42) and be ready (24:44). How? 1st trust Jesus and be saved. 2nd see that our life in this world is fleeting and it's not our home. 3rd live for our King daily.

READ: Matthew 26:45-25:13

→ Jesus gives 2 illustrations to explain this more. Draw 2 pictures, 1 of:

- o The servant – from 24:45-51
- o The ten virgins – from 25:1-13

→ What big points is Jesus making in these 2 illustrations?

It would be foolish to forget Jesus is coming and to be caught unprepared. Worse, if you fail to be ready you will be severely judged and miss out on the kingdom. But if you are ready and respond rightly, you will be welcomed into the kingdom. So be watchful, diligent and faithful while you wait for Jesus to come.

++ What punishments are described? Why do you think they're so harsh?

The punishments are in 24:51 and 25:11-12 (missing out on the wedding banquet of heaven). They're God's righteous judgement for rejecting Jesus and choosing not to trust him as Saviour and Lord. See also 25:30, 46.

++ What rewards are mentioned? How do you feel about them?

'He will put him in charge of all his possessions' (24:47); and 'The virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet' (25:10).

APPLY:

→ Why is the future so important for Christian living?

→ How could you hold onto and apply these truths when:

- o Planning your next holiday?
- o Looking at your budget and spending habits?
- o Choosing some content to stream?
- o Your next go to work?

PRAY: that we'd have our King's priorities while we wait for his return.

CHOOSE YOUR OWN • 4-10 MAR

DIRECTION: Take this week to choose your own adventure. Options...

- Grab a feed and have social fun times (more on that below)
- Take it in turns to share testimonies of God saving or changing you.
- Write your own bible discussion on a topic the group wants to explore (more on that below)

WHY 'CHOOSE YOUR OWN' WEEKS:

One downside of the way we unpack books at Salt is we move quick! You might have started a great chat in your group 1 week, but by the next we've moved on. So we sprinkle these 'choose your own' weeks throughout the year to give you a chance to choose your own adventure – to have social fun times together, to continue 1 of those great chats, or to look at another topic / question / part of the bible your group wants to explore.

SOCIAL FUN TIMES:

Since we've only recently started meeting for the year in Small Groups, I'd highly recommend you do a social for this week. Remember though, not all socials are equal. The key is not simply to have fun together – though make sure you do that! Be intentional and use this moment to build trust and deeper relationships. That'll flow into the normal weeks where you share, pray and read the bible together. Deeper relationships allow everyone to be more open with what's really going on in our lives and more honest about what we think the bible means and how we're going living it out.

If you do a social refresh yourself on chapters 5-6 of [*Getting Started as a Small Group Leader*](#) (available at www.saltchurch.info/resources/small-group-leaders). There are dozens of tips there on how to use a social week to intentionally grow your Small Group.

DO YOUR OWN BIBLE DISCUSSION:

Alternatively, if you want to continue a previous discussion or dig into another topic / question / part of the bible here's how you could do that...

Getting Ideas: A week before, let your group know there's a 'choose your own' week coming up. Collect ideas, like a topic / question / part of the bible they want to explore. Vote to find the most popular 1 & get prepping.

Getting Prepped: Brainstorm where in the bible the topic / question comes up. Or for a part of the bible, read it a bunch of times to work out what it means. Ask your coach & other leaders if they know good places to go / what the passage means. If you're more experienced at this you can read a systematic theology or commentary (there's a bunch upstairs at 275 Keira St you can borrow). Plus, if you're keen to learn more about how to create studies, check out [Writing a Small Group Study](#) by Richard Sweatman.

Packaging a Discussion: Here's 3 options...

1. Use the COMA method: ask the group what's the *Context* | what you *Observe* | what you think it *Means* | how you think it *Applies* to us.
2. Use the [Swedish Method](#) to read the passage & ask [these questions](#):
 - a. What stands out to you?
 - b. What's a question you have?
 - c. What do you think the big point is?
 - d. What do you think this will mean for your life?
 - e. What from this passage can you share with someone else?
3. Just read a passage, ask 'what do you reckon?' & see where you go.

NEED HELP?

You don't have to have all the answers or be the expert to be a Small Group Leader, so don't stress out for this week. Just get people into God's word & let Him teach & transform us by His Spirit. Your Small Group Coach is always available & ready to give you help too.

MATT 26:1-35 • 11-17 MAR

DIRECTION: 2 big ideas today

- 1) Everyone here is preparing for Jesus' death, including Jesus. This shows us God is in control, using even evil people's plans to accomplish his goals.
 - 2) This section is full of OT references which show why Jesus will die – so God can forgive our sins and establish his new covenant with us.
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PRAY: For deeper understanding and trust in Jesus' work.

LAUNCH:

→ When have you felt 'out of control'? OR if you knew when you would die, what would you do to prepare?

These could be painful questions for some. Expect possibly intense answers.

READ: Matthew 26:1-35

IDEA 1: → There's lots of scenes of people preparing for Jesus' death. Fill in *where* the scene is, what *happens* in it & *how* it links to Jesus' death:

Where	What happens & how it links to Jesus' death
<i>Jesus with his disciples (v1-2)</i>	<i>Jesus predicts his crucifixion</i>
<i>Palace of the High Priest (v3-5)</i>	<i>Plans to murder Jesus secretly</i>
<i>Simon the leper's house (v6-13)</i>	<i>A "beautiful thing". Jesus is prepared for burial with perfume (worth about a year's wages)</i>
<i>With the chief priests (v14-16)</i>	<i>Judas plans to betray Jesus for 30 pieces of silver (roughly four months wages)</i>
<i>A certain man's house (v17-29)</i>	<i>The last meal Jesus will eat with them before he dies, & how his death will forgive their sins.</i>
<i>The Mount of Olives (v30-35)</i>	<i>All the disciples will desert Jesus when he's killed.</i>

→ Does Jesus' death take him by surprise? Is he outplayed or outsmarted by all the people who prepare for his death?

Not at all! God even uses the plans of evil people to achieve his purposes.

→ How does this give us hope in the midst of our difficulties or suffering?

Nothing takes God by surprise in our lives either, & nothing is outside his control.

++ What makes it hard for you to remember that when suffering?

We can get tunnel-vision and see only our circumstances rather than the power and goodness of the God who rules over them.

IDEA 2: → This section is loaded with OT references that show us why Jesus will die. Fill in the table to see what they are:

You could do this as a whole group, or split into pairs & allocate passages to pairs.

Reference	What is it about?	How does Jesus fulfil it?
Exodus 12:12-17	<i>Passover / Feast of Unleavened Bread celebrated God's rescue of Israel and God "passing over" Israel as he judged Egypt.</i>	<i>Jesus is the lamb slaughtered for the Passover to save God's people from judgement – his body is broken and blood poured out for them and us.</i>
Jeremiah 31:31-34	<i>God promises a new covenant.</i>	<i>Jesus says 'this is my blood of the [new] covenant' (Matt 26:28) so he brings this covenant about! (See also Hebrews 9:11-15)</i>
Psalms 41:7-13	<i>David is betrayed by a friend who shared bread with him, but God will ultimately raise him up.</i>	<i>Jesus is betrayed by Judas who shared bread with him, but will be raised up from the dead to rule.</i>
Zechariah 13:7-9	<i>The shepherd close to God will be struck, his sheep will be scattered, judged and ultimately refined and made again into God's people.</i>	<i>Jesus is the shepherd-king of Zechariah who's struck, abandoned, judged on behalf of God's people but ultimately victorious in refining & rescuing God's people / sheep.</i>
Zechariah 11:12-13	<i>30 silver pieces is the insulting price Israel pays Zechariah, as a visual-sign of them rejecting God as their shepherd.</i>	<i>In planning Jesus' murder Israel again undervalues, insults & rejects their God, for the same insulting price. (See also Matt 27:3-10)</i>

→ What new insights or reminders did you get from these things about:

- Who Jesus is?
- Why Jesus died?
- What Jesus achieved?

→ How do these things make you want to admire & love Jesus even more?

++ How might your life be different if God never sent his Son to die?

PRAY:

→ Spend some time in prayer giving thanks to our Lord Jesus for who he is, what he has achieved and his willingness to die for us.

MATT 26:36-75 • 18-24 MAR

DIRECTION: Jesus stands firm in the midst of extremely unfair trials. And now he stands firm seated at the right hand of God, interceding on our behalf. In the midst of our own trials, Jesus remains with us so we can stand firm and strive to do God's will like Jesus did.

PRAY: That we'd stand firm and submit to God because Jesus is with us.

LAUNCH: → Who would you take a bullet for? I.e. the person/s you'd stand by and stick with no matter what?

READ: Matthew 26:36-75

OBSERVATION:

→ Gethsemane is an Aramaic word that means 'oil press,' which sets up a big theme of this passage. What kinds of pressure do you see in this story?

Pressure from "temptation" & "the flesh" (v.41); the "crowd" (v.47); authorities (v.57) & false witnesses (v.60); pain (v.67-68); questioning (v.69); & conscience (v.75, 27:3).

MEANING:

→ How does Jesus see himself fulfilling these OT references and ideas?

You could do this as a whole group, or split into pairs & allocate passages to pairs.

The Cup Job 21:20, Isaiah 51:17, Jer 25:15	<i>The cup Jesus doesn't want to drink but drinks for us, is a picture of all God's judgement on sin.</i>
Son of Man Daniel 7:13-14	<i>In his death and resurrection Jesus gains the authority, power and glory of the Son of Man.</i>
The Suffering Servant Isaiah 50:5-9, 53:3-7	<i>Jesus suffers as the servant of the Lord, obedient to God's will even in a brutal shameful death.</i>

→ What new insights or reminders did you get from these things about:

- Who Jesus is?
- Why Jesus died?
- What Jesus achieved?

++ Why do you think Matthew gives so much attention to Jesus' struggle in Gethsemane?

See Hebrews 2:14-18. "Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted" (2:18). It also sets up the failure of the disciples in v.56 and v.74 despite their promises in v.35.

++ v.69 starts with "now" which might be better translated "meanwhile". Why do you think Matthew inserts Peter's story here?

To show the stark contrast between the 2: of Jesus' integrity and submission to God's will, compared to Peter's denial.

APPLY:

→ When did you last pray "yet not as I will but as you will" (26:39)?

→ How can we help each other to pray this and submit to God more?

→ 36:41 is a powerful reminder to Christians: "pray so that you will not fall into temptation." How often do you pray when you are tempted?

→ Matthew finishes his book with Jesus' promise: "And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (28:20). How can this promise give us hope when we're under pressure, or finding it hard to submit to God?

++ Jesus has such integrity in the face of enormous pressure. How might that help us trust him?

All Jesus' promises hang on whether or not he will keep his word. He shows incredible integrity here, so he can be trusted with everything else he promises.

++ "Peter followed [Jesus] at a distance" (v.58) but "there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother." (Prov 18:24). When we lose friends or feel left out, what comfort can this passage in Matthew bring?

PRAY TO END: Our flesh is weak, so thank God for the steadfast integrity of Jesus! Ask God to strengthen our resolve as Jesus stands by us.

MATT 27:27-56 • 25-31 MAR

DIRECTION: The death of Jesus is deeply ironic: his death as “king of the Jews” is genuinely his coronation as king, the crowds say save them and come down from the cross but if he’s going to do that 1st thing he can’t do that 2nd thing, they mock the one they will soon honour as resurrected Lord. No matter how many times you read this account it is awe-inspiring and yet deeply harrowing. The result of reading this again is huge gratitude at the work of Jesus, and deep grief for our sin that took him to the cross.

PRAY: For a fresh vision of this awesome, awful event.

LAUNCH:

→ What are you the “king” of? i.e. an area or skill where you excel.

CONTEXT:

→ Read **Psalm 22:1-18** to get some background on what’s going on here.

READ: **Matthew 27:27-56**

OBSERVATION & MEANING:

→ Try and list all the ways that Psalm 22 maps on to this passage

E.g. cast lots for his clothes, etc. (my fave is “wagging their heads” v.39 & Ps 22:7)

→ This passage is full of irony. What ironic statements can you see?

Some ironies are that Jesus’ humiliating death is actually his coronation. He can’t ‘come down’ and at the same time ‘save them’ as his death is how he saves.

→ Matthew seems to spend more time on the mockery of Jesus rather than the pain he experienced. Why do you think he might do this?

I think it’s maybe to highlight how much Ancient Israel reject their king and miss what God is really doing here. They miss the whole point of Jesus’ sacrificial death!

→ Why didn't Jesus listen to the taunts and come down?

He stayed there for us! And to complete his Father's plan to reconcile the world.

++ What do you think each of the miracles surrounding Jesus' death might symbolise or represent?

Darkness – judgement (Exodus 10:22); Curtain torn – reconciliation (Heb 9:2-8);

Earthquake – God is present (Exodus 19:18, Isa 29:6, Matt 28:2, Acts 16:26);

Resurrection – victory over death (Hosea 13:14)

++ There is one un-ironic statement made by the centurion after Jesus' death (27:54). What do you think this means? Why is it significant?

A Roman centurion is the first to recognise Jesus' lordship. Truly the Gospel is ready to go out to "all nations" (28:19).

APPLY:

→ What makes it hard for your unbelieving friends / family / work-mates to trust in Jesus as their saviour?

→ What would your unbelieving friends think of this passage? How would you feel sharing it with them?

→ How might this passage encourage us to share the Gospel with others?

Jesus experienced worse ridicule for us than we will ever experience. We can face embarrassment and shame because our king experienced it first.

→ This story brings people to life as they believe it. Who could you share this with this week? Who could you invite to Easter at Salt?

PRAY TO END: Praise God for all that we've seen in Matthew's gospel about Jesus – our Teacher, Saviour and King. Pray God will help us to keep hearing our Teacher, trusting our Saviour and following our King.

GENEROSITY WEEK 1 • 1-7 APR

DIRECTION: We're thinking about generosity for the next 4 weeks on Sun & next 2 weeks in Small Group. Why? Because God wants us to be generous like he is. We want to be a church full of generous Christians because God wants us to be a generous church of generous Christians. That includes our money but is much bigger – our time, energy, care for others, all our lives! This week we'll see that we give because God is a giver.

PRAY: That we'd become generous like our generous giving God.

LAUNCH: → Race each other to find “generous” & 11 synonyms

Abundant
Bountiful
Bumper

Copious
Generous
Inexhaustible

Lavish
Overflowing
Rich

Selfsacrifice
Thoughtful
Unselfish

Z J G N V N C L M T G N J L O S
O T C E T H A O N W W O Q U B E
Z H J I N V S A P O L N H F O L
U O C R I E D I Z I L P I I S F
D U O S C N R V F W O T D T P S
I G H Q U R P O B L I U O N B A
N H N B S C W B U N E W S U C C
Y T A C E X E L U S F S U O S R
O F P V H Z L Z Y E X O N B H I
R U U A U L H O U K R R Y U A F
T L U B T E W I U G C U N H B I
E L B I T S U A H X E N I U Q C
Z O V E R F L O W I N G M L I E
M X U W O I I M A W S P G O Y Q
L X J S S O K V O X E X O P D T
G D R C S S J L F R H C I R R L

→ Look up these bible verses and write down what they teach us about generosity / giving and God.

You could do this as a whole group, or split into pairs & allocate passages to pairs.

Verses	God's Generosity
1 Chron 29:12-14	<i>Wealth comes from God, even as Israel give to build the temple they're only giving back to God what he already gave to them.</i>
Psalms 145:15-16	<i>God feeds and satisfies every living thing.</i>
Matt 5:43-45	<i>God generously gives even to his enemies and evil people.</i>
Matt 6:31-33	<i>God promises to provide us with what we need.</i>
John 3:16	<i>God gives us his greatest gift – His Son!</i>
Acts 17:24-25	<i>God made everything and gives everything to us.</i>
Romans 8:31-32	<i>By grace (as an undeserved gift) God gave us his Son so will certainly give us everything else too.</i>
2 Cor 8:9	<i>Christ became poor (giving up his glory in heaven) so we might become (spiritually) rich.</i>
Eph 2:4-7	<i>God is incomparably rich in giving us mercy and grace.</i>
1 Tim 6:17	<i>God richly provides us with everything we enjoy.</i>
James 1:17	<i>Every good gift comes from God.</i>

APPLY:

- What challenges, confronts or scares you most from these verses?
- What inspires, motivates or encourages you most from these verses?
- What is 1 change you'd love God to bring about in your heart?

PRAY TO END:

→ Spend time giving thanks to God for all that he has given to us. See how many things you can come up with and pray about!

To keep it fresh you could try "popcorn prayers" where you all take it in turns to "pop up" a real short prayer, e.g. "Thanks God for sunny days. Amen"

GENEROSITY WEEK 2 • 8-14 APR

DIRECTION: This week we'll look at bible verses about using money to invest in the Kingdom, and contentment with what God has given us. There's nothing inherently wrong with money; it is the love of money and worship of money that is the problem. In the gospel God frees us from selfishness and greed so we can use money as he intended: to love and serve others with and to invest in what God cares most about.

PRAY: That we'd use our resources for the things God cares most about.

LAUNCH:

→ Would your life be better if you were given a gift of \$10k? Why, why not?

→ What would you spend it on?

OBSERVATION & MEANING:

→ Look up these bible verses and write down what they teach us about money, contentment and investing in the Kingdom.

You could do this as a whole group, or split into pairs & allocate passages to pairs.

Verses	Money, contentment and investing in the Kingdom
Deut 15:7-8	<i>Give generously to God's people from what God gives them.</i>
Ecclesiastes 5:10-15	<i>Hoarding wealth is meaningless as it brings stress and you can't take it with you after death.</i>
Matt 6:19-21	<i>Storing treasures in heaven makes sense compared to storing them on earth where they're destroyed or stolen.</i>
Luke 12:32-34	<i>Sell your possessions and store treasure in heaven instead.</i>
Luke 16:10-15	<i>You can't serve God and money, and it seems as if God entrusts more wealth to Christians based on how well we can faithfully and generously handle it.</i>

Acts 20:33-35	<i>Paul's life is modelled off Jesus', who said it's better to give than to receive / grasp.</i>
1 Cor 7:29-31	<i>This world is passing away, so don't invest in it or hold tightly to the things of this world.</i>
Phil 4:11-13	<i>The secret to contentment in any circumstance is asking for and making use of Christ's strength enabling you to do this.</i>
1 Tim 6:6-10	<i>Love of money causes all kinds of evil, but contentment with what God gives us is glorious.</i>
1 Tim 6:17-19	<i>Wealth is uncertain so put your hope and security in God; and be rich in good works which last into eternity.</i>
Hebrews 13:5-6	<i>Since God will never leave us, be content with what we have.</i>

APPLY:

- What challenges, confronts or scares you most from these verses?
- What inspires, motivates or encourages you most from these verses?
- What is 1 change you'd love God to bring about in your heart?
- What is 1 change you want to make this week in how you handle your \$?
- How can we encourage and keep each other accountable in this area?

PRAY TO END: That God would help us invest in what lasts.

NOTES



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Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Matthew 28:18-20