



ministry to
» youth

MATTHEW

Writer: Mike Sheley
Project Supervisor: Annie Snyder

Created by Ministry to Youth
ministrytoyouth.com

Lesson 01

Lesson 1: God's Rescue
Operation for the World



Bible Verses: Matthew 5:13-16, 33-37,
43-47



Bottom Line: How do we live in God's
kingdom?



Topics: Made in God's image,
evangelism, faith conversations,
honesty



Notes: The beginning material in the next three sessions will have you ask your students what they did with the lessons they learned the previous weeks. Be sure to make notes while you do each week of what your students say they plan to do to live out the truth you'll be discussing, and follow up with them during the week! It's a great way to show them what healthy accountability and encouragement looks like.

INTRODUCTION

The book in the Bible called Matthew is one of four biographies about Jesus known as the gospels.

Matthew, the apostle who used to be a tax collector, compiled this one.

He chose some of his own experiences with Jesus and the teachings of Jesus, as well as those of other apostles, and assembled them together into this literary work to show how Jesus is the continuation and fulfillment of God's story that has been going on since creation and explained throughout the Old Testament.

Trying to read and study Matthew's twenty-eight chapters in the time we have together is crazy!

So, starting today and over the next three sessions, we're going to pick out four different sections in the gospel of Matthew to read and study.

However, keep in mind that this is a bit like showing you four different scenes from a movie that only make sense if you have seen the whole movie.

At the very least, you should check out these two videos from Bible Project which provide a solid overview of Matthew's Gospel:

Overview: Matthew 1-13: <https://youtu.be/3Dv4-n6OYGI>

Overview: Matthew 14-28: <https://youtu.be/GGCF3OPWN14>

[At the time of publication, these links are still active.]

At most, and best, you should read through the whole book.

I will give you a creative option for this – a special audio version with a hip-hop soundtrack.

Here's the thing – you can listen to or read the entire book of Matthew – all 28 chapters – in about the same time it takes to watch a movie – 2 hours and 30 minutes!

Apple Music: <https://music.apple.com/us/album/matthew/1442015138>

Spotify: <https://open.spotify.com/album/2PLT9xvK2Z8P7YbpDZ5rTi?si=5FACYDxhQtSOx9O00t8z7Q>

[At the time of publication, these links are still active.]



LESSON

These first two sessions we will be reading and studying **Matthew 5-7**, commonly called the Sermon on the Mount.

This section of Matthew teaches us how to live in God's Kingdom as we participate in God's rescue operation for all the people in the world.

In our third lesson, we'll look at individuals Jesus encountered and how He changed their lives.

Finally, in our last lesson, we'll look at four big events that close out Matthew's book: Passover, the Crucifixion, the Resurrection, and the Great Commission.

Discussion Questions

1. If someone wrote a book about you, what would be the funniest or strangest story in that book?

2. What do you already know or think you know about Matthew – the author of this book?

[You could ask students: If you have seen it, how does The Chosen depict Matthew?]

3. What are you hoping to learn about Jesus during this study?

4. Which of the four parts of this study are you most looking forward to and why?

[Weeks 1-2 are from the Sermon on the Mount, Week 3 is about individuals who experienced life change, and Week 4 is about Passover, the Crucifixion, the Resurrection, and the Great Commission.]

Read **Matthew 5:13–16** (New Living Translation) – Teaching about Salt and Light

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

14 You are the light of the world—like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden.

15 No one lights a lamp and then puts it under a basket. Instead, a lamp is placed on a stand, where it gives light to everyone in the house.

16 In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father.”

Jesus uses two metaphors here to describe one aspect of living in God’s Kingdom.

First, he talks about us being like salt.

Salt helps preserve food – or make it last longer. Salt also makes food taste better.

You probably have that one friend who just likes to eat salt by itself, but for most people the value of salt is that it draws out the flavor that is already in the food.

Back in **Genesis 1:26-27**, Moses shared how every human being was designed by God to have some of the characteristics of God.

Here’s what it says:

26 Then God said, “Let us make human beings in our image, to be like us. They will reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the wild animals on the earth, and the small animals that scurry along the ground.”

27 So God created human beings in his own image. In the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

So you can see how God created all humans in His own image ... every one of us has been made that way.

With that being true, then when followers of Jesus act like salt, we help to draw out the “flavors” of God that are already in every human being.

When we live the way God designed for us to live – loving Him and other people – then we’ll help people see God’s characteristics and begin the process of coming to know Him.

This is reinforced with the next metaphor: light.

A city that is high in elevation is easily able to be seen at night because of its light. In that situation, light draws people to a place.

With the house example, light helps everyone in the home to see.

Verse 16 is an interesting quote from Jesus. He says that our good deeds should shine – like a bright light.

However, they are not shining to draw attention to us.

In the city metaphor, the lights draw people to the city, not to the lights themselves.

In the house, the lamp isn't placed on a stand so everyone can see the lamp. It is placed there so that its light will help everyone see around the house.

And when our good deeds “shine,” they are like a spotlight. They help others see and praise God.

It's like going to a play and finding the person running the spotlight. They are usually in the dark and not noticeable. But the light they shine helps everyone see someone on stage.

Our good deeds help others see how much God loves and cares for them, drawing attention to Him, not us.

Discussion Questions

1. What characteristics that you normally associate with God have you seen in the lives of people who are following Jesus faithfully?
2. How can your words and actions this week help people to get a “taste” of the God flavors in your life and in theirs?
3. Describe a time a flashlight helped you find something or get somewhere that would not have been possible without it.
4. What can you do to remind yourself this week that your good deeds are to make Jesus famous and not yourself? How can you point people to Him when they want to give you the attention?

Read **Matthew 5:33-37** (New Living Translation) – Teaching About Vows

33 “You have also heard that our ancestors were told, ‘You must not break your vows; you must carry out the vows you make to the LORD.’

34 But I say, do not make any vows! Do not say, ‘By heaven!’ because heaven is God’s throne.

35 And do not say, ‘By the earth!’ because the earth is his footstool. And do not say, ‘By Jerusalem!’ for Jerusalem is the city of the great King.

36 Do not even say, ‘By my head!’ for you can’t turn one hair white or black.

37 Just say a simple, ‘Yes, I will,’ or ‘No, I won’t.’ Anything beyond this is from the evil one.”

Have you ever told someone you would do something and backed it up with “I promise!”?

Or have you heard someone say something that sounded too crazy to be true, and so they tried to support it with “I swear”?

Jesus pointed out how God’s people were known for making such statements, often swearing by heaven or Jerusalem – the city where the temple was located.

Instead, people who live in God’s Kingdom and follow Jesus are to be honest people.

When you break this down, it is really simple and makes sense.

If someone can be trusted, he or she doesn’t have to back up what they say with anything because those who hear them will believe them and trust what they say.

And if we’re going to help people understand the “crazy” claims of Christianity, we want to start by them trusting the basic things we say.

The only people who have to say “I swear” or “I promise” are people who can’t be trusted.

Do keep in mind this does not apply to a court of law where you are taking an oath.

Jesus' context here is for everyday life. He still tells us in other places to honor and respect authority.

His point is not rebellion.

His point is our character with the people we interact with on a day-to-day basis.

Live the way Jesus is challenging you to live – as honest and trustworthy no matter the situation.

Discussion Questions

1. What's something crazy someone told you they "swear" was true – and then you found out it was false?
2. Who in your life would you describe as being an honest person – someone whom you trust no matter what they tell you?
3. Do you know anyone, maybe even yourself, that tends to embellish or add to their stories? Without sharing names, do those people tend to "swear" that what they say is true?
4. What is something that is true about Jesus that someone may not believe unless they can trust you?

Read **Matthew 5:43–47** (New Living Translation) – Teaching About Love for Enemies

43 "You have heard the law that says, 'Love your neighbor' and hate your enemy.

44 But I say, love your enemies! Pray for those who persecute you!

45 In that way, you will be acting as true children of your Father in heaven. For he gives his sunlight to both the evil and the good, and he sends rain on the just and the unjust alike.

46 If you love only those who love you, what reward is there for that? Even corrupt tax collectors do that much.

47 If you are kind only to your friends, how are you different from anyone else? Even pagans do that.”

Jesus quotes the Old Testament with the command to “Love your neighbor.” (See **Leviticus 19:18.**)

However, nowhere does God command people to “hate your enemy.”

Yet it is the natural opposite to the first, and it’s lived out throughout history.

Whether anyone specifically had someone tell them to hate their enemy or not, they would have been familiar with the concept in word and actions.

Jesus calls for a radically different way of thinking and acting.

Loving enemies seems the opposite of what comes natural to us ... and that’s Jesus’ point.

He even goes on to instruct us to talk to God about the people who persecute us, and in a way where we are asking God to help them and do good for them!

Although it’s not in Matthew’s text, you can imagine the looks the people would have given Jesus as they heard these words.

Maybe that’s why He went on and described this kind of thinking and acting as the way the true children of God would act.

If children resemble their father, then God’s children should resemble God in how we think and act.

Because He cares for all kinds of people and provides for all kinds of people – here the example is agriculture, but is simply an example – then we care for all people too.

Look back at **verse 46**. Now, reread that verse keeping in mind what Matthew’s job was. Is it sinking in?

Matthew reports the common attitude towards tax collectors even though it describes how people used to think of him and his friends!

Loving people who love you is easy and natural. Jesus calls us to a higher way of living.

He closes this section by pointing out that everyone is kind to their friends. As Christians, we are to live differently.

The message here is simple to understand. But the instructions from Jesus are a challenge to put into practice in our thinking and actions.

Discussion Questions

1. What is the biggest rivalry you know of or have been a part of – especially related to sports?
2. Without sharing names, who are people you would consider “enemies” right now? (This could be for you personally or more generally.)
3. For most of us, the persecution Jesus talks about here is hypothetical – most of us have never experienced true persecution. How would you define the persecution that Jesus is talking about here?
4. Do you have trouble praying for your enemies even when they aren’t persecuting you? Why do you think that is?
5. Imagine that you were under persecution for your faith. How would you feel about praying for those who were persecuting you?

[Take a moment to pray for Christians around the world who are being persecuted for their faith. Then, pray for the people who persecute those Christians.]

6. Without sharing names, who is one “enemy” or “non-friend” that you can do something good for this week? Take some time for each of you to pray for him/her right now.