



# MATTHEW 8-12

SEEING THE KINGDOM

Gympie Presbyterian Church  
Growth Groups - Term 3 2024

# Welcome to Growth Group for Term 3

## How to get the most out of Growth Groups

As we meet together in Growth Groups our goal is to *grow* in Christ—to *grow* in our knowledge of God, our love for one another, and our passion and ability to reach our region with the gospel.

Central to Growth Groups is God's Word because God grows his people through his Word. God is also at work through one another, as we share our lives, encourage each other, and pray for each other.

So how can you get the most out of Growth Groups?

1. Be praying for your Growth Group. Pray for other members, pray for the group times, that God would be working to grow us in Christian maturity.
2. Read the Bible passage(s) before the group meets and begin thinking about what the *main thing* God says in the passage.
3. Get into the discussion by asking questions. A key part of how we dig into God's Word together is through discussion—and asking questions is the best way to get the discussion going. That's why our study booklets are mainly questions...they're a tool to help us dig! And it's good to remember there are no silly or wrong questions—if it's something you're wondering about, someone else is probably wondering the same thing (or they'd love to work with you to find the answer).
4. Beware of study notes. Study Bibles are great resources—they have tools like maps, indexes, timelines, and diagrams that can help summarise and illustrate parts of the Bible. But sometimes in Growth Groups, Study Bible notes can prevent us from digging into God's Word. They take the discussion away from looking closely at God's Word and away from engaging with and encouraging one another. They can be a good tool—but only if handled with care!
5. Share what God's doing in your life. Things that are encouraging and you want to thank God for, things that are concerning and you need supportive prayer.

## Helpful Books

Here are a few books that have helped in preparing these studies. If our Growth Groups and sermons whet your appetite, these are a great place to start digging deeper into Matthew 8-12.

Don Carson, *When Jesus Confronts the World*



Peter Bolt, *Matthew: A Great Light Dawns*



# Personal Evangelism Pipeline<sup>1</sup>

A Church that is Reaching Our Region

## Getting Started

What kind of person comes to mind when you hear the word *evangelist*?

Think about some of the people who were most influential in you coming to Christ. What were they like?

## The *Why* of Evangelism

**Read Matthew 28:16-20**

1. What has just happened that has changed everything?
2. Who is Jesus commanding?
3. What does he call them to do?
4. Why does he call them to do this?

Matthew 28:16-20 is often called *The Great Commission* Jesus' well known command for 'evangelism' (proclaiming the good news that Jesus is King). However, some people notice that Jesus' command is specifically to the 11 disciples/apostles. Does this mean proclaiming the good news is only for apostles or other specially gifted believers?

**Read 1 Peter 2:9-12**

5. Who are the 'you' in this passage (reading the opening of the letter might help)? And how does God describe these people?
6. What are they called to do?

---

<sup>1</sup> This is based on ideas from Maroochydore Presbyterian Church (amongst many others)!

7. Why are they called to do this (v12)?
8. From Matthew 28 and 1 Peter 2, *why* do Christians evangelise?

## The *Who* of Evangelism

### *Read Ephesians 2:1-7*

9. Without Jesus, how is every single person (Gentile or Jew) described?
10. According to this passage, who changes/saves sinners?

A story is told of American evangelist Dwight Moody. He decided that every day he would pray for 100 of his friends, family, and acquaintances—praying that God would save them. During his life, 96 were converted and the final 4 confessed their faith in Christ at his funeral!<sup>2</sup>

If people are dead in their sin and only God has the power to raise the dead, evangelism is a work dependent on prayer. Inspired by Moody and because we know only God can, let's commit ourselves to prayer for two people to come to faith, for two minutes each day: **2-4-2**.

11. Who are the 2 (or more) people you will commit to praying for?
12. What will you pray for them?

## A *Plan* for Evangelism

Prayer is the 'non-negotiable' of evangelism, but as Romans 10 says, no one will hear unless someone speaks. We need a plan to give our friends and family an opportunity to hear the gospel.

Next Steps	Person 1	Person 2	Other People
<b>PRAY for opportunities</b> Because it is God who saves, we pray!			

<sup>2</sup> Source: <https://theothercheek.com.au/praying-them-into-heaven/>

Next Steps	Person 1	Person 2	Other People
<p><b>BUILD relationships</b> This is about intentionally investing in relationships. Make opportunities to spend time together, getting to know them at more than a superficial level.</p>			
<p><b>SHOW love</b> How can you show Christ-like love this person? Can you share a meal? Help in a specific and practical way?</p>			
<p><b>DEEPEN conversation</b> Ask about their values, spirituality, or 'worldview'. Share how your faith has changed you. Ask about their struggles. Maybe offer to pray or give Biblical reflections.</p>			
<p><b>EXPAND the network</b> What other Christians does this person know? How could you introduce them to other believers?</p>			
<p><b>INVITE to a gospel event</b> What event would be appropriate for your friend? Could it be a regular church service, or Easter/Christmas? Could our church run a one-off event or kick-off an evangelistic course?</p>			
<p><b>SHARE the gospel</b> Everyone needs to hear the gospel message. How can you talk clearly about God, sin, death, Jesus, faith, repentance, forgiveness, and eternal life? Could you invite your friend to read a Gospel with you?</p>			
<p><b>LIVE each day on mission</b> Every day we come across people who don't know Jesus. How can we find 'natural' ways to spiritual conversation with them?</p>			

Each week at Growth Group we'll be starting with a *PEP Talk*—sharing how God has answered our prayers, opportunities we've had to take steps in speaking about Jesus, and praying for our 2-4-2.

# Seeing Jesus' Authority

Matthew 8:1-34

## To Get Started

Who are some of the people who have (or have had) *authority* in your life?

## Read Matthew 7:28-8:1

1. How do the crowd respond to all they've heard Jesus teach? What is their assessment of Jesus?

Matthew 8 needs to be in the context of what's come before: the birth of Jesus and the beginning of his ministry, and most of all the *Sermon on the Mount*. In chapters 8-10, Jesus is showing the reality of life in the Kingdom of Heaven.

## Read Matthew 8:2-17

2. How is Jesus' authority and power shown in each of these miraculous events?
3. Jesus' miracles have been said to be 'sermons in action'. What does Jesus proclaim about himself (and particularly his relationship to 'outsiders') by each miracle?

Jesus said he did not 'come to abolish [the Law and the Prophets] but to fulfil them.' (Matthew 5:17) Jesus' fulfilment of the *Law and Prophets* doesn't only occur in his teaching, but it's also in what he does.

We'll look at a couple of Old Testament passages and see how Jesus fulfils them.

4. **Read Isaiah 25:6-9.** Isaiah 25 begins with God warning he will bring ruin on 'the foreigners' stronghold'. But with judgment, what does God promise in verse 6? Who is included in this promise?
5. Look again at Matthew 8:11-12. What would have been surprising about Jesus' teaching about who will enjoy the feast of the Kingdom of Heaven? How is this a warning for us today?

6. **Read Isaiah 53:4-6, 11.** Isaiah 53 is a song about the LORD's servant (see 52:13). List what the servant does *for* God's people. Why does *the servant* need to do this? And how does he do it?
7. Look again at Matthew 8:17. What does Matthew's application of Isaiah 53:4 to Jesus tell us about his authority and identity? If Jesus is the one spoken of in Isaiah 53, what else should we expect Jesus to do?

Isaiah 53:4 and its application to Jesus in Matthew 8:17 has caused much debate: is there 'healing in the atonement' of Jesus? Don Carson notes that although this statement is true it has been 'much abused'. He continues,

The question is *not* whether or not the atonement stands as the basis for all blessings that come to God's children, but which of those benefits are applied *now* and which of them can be counted on *only later*. Healing [...] is one of those benefits that has been secured by the cross, occasionally applied now, and promised for the new heaven and the new earth.<sup>3</sup>

## Read Matthew 8:18-34

8. Jesus sets the bar for following him very high. What does he say is required for those who would follow him (looking at Deuteronomy 5:16; 27:16 might show the significance of vv21-22)? Why do you think Jesus requires this?
9. **Read Daniel 7:13-14.** Verse 20 is the first time in Matthew's gospel that Jesus has called himself *the Son of Man*. What is surprising about what Jesus says about the *Son of Man* in this verse? Why do you think Jesus starts to call himself by this title at this moment?
10. How do the disciples respond to Jesus stopping the storm? Why do you think they asked this question?

---

<sup>3</sup> *When Jesus Confronts the World*, p 30-31

11. **Read Psalm 89:5-9.** Who has the authority and power to still the raging sea? What does this miracle reveal about Jesus?

After bringing peace to the raging seas, Jesus' disciples are amazed by him—what kind of *man* is Jesus? But as he arrives in gentile territory, the demons know exactly who Jesus is.

12. Who do the demons know Jesus to be? **Look back at Matthew 3:17-4:7.** Why do you think the demons call Jesus 'Son of God'?

13. Jesus stopped the disciples from perishing at sea but not the pigs. How do the residents of the Gadarenes respond to what Jesus does?

## Bring it Together

14. When have you felt like an 'outsider'? How does Jesus' response to outsiders (the leper and the centurion) give comfort? How should it inform the way we relate to people our society makes into 'outsiders'?

15. Dallas Willard said, 'grace is opposed to earning not effort'. What do you think of this in the light of what Jesus says in vv19-22?

16. Has following Jesus cost you? Why has it been worth it?



# Feasting with Jesus

Matthew 9:1-26

## To Get Started

1. What is the best party/celebration you've ever been to? What was being celebrated? What made it a great party?

## Read Matthew 9:1-26

2. What is *new* in how Jesus responds to the paralysed man? Why do the scribes find it confronting?
3. What does Jesus' authority to forgive sins mean for you?
4. Why are the Pharisees shocked by who Jesus eats with? (You might also want to look back at 8:11-12)) What does Jesus' response to them mean? What does this teach us about who will be part of the Kingdom of Heaven and how we're to approach Jesus?
5. Why did John's disciples and the Pharisees fast? Why don't Jesus' disciples (at that time)? (You might want to look at **Isaiah 54:5** to think more of the *bridegroom* image.)
6. How is Jesus like a new patch or new wine? How is this parable a rebuke to the Pharisees? How is it a warning to us?
7. What do the girl's father and the bleeding woman show about faith? Why is Jesus able to be trusted?

## Bring it Together

8. We see people celebrating in these events because Jesus is here. How can we (as individuals/as a church) grow in our sense of celebrating Jesus?
  
9. Because of their joy and celebration, people 'gossip the gospel' (c.f. vv8, 26). How can we be better 'gospel gossips'?
  
10. Jesus is the great physician, who's come to call the sick. Would you say our church is 'not calling the righteous but sinners'? If not, what do we need to repent of and change?



# Seeing the Fields

Matthew 9:27-10:15

## To Get Started

What was the last thing you did (e.g something you bought or place you went) because of a 'word of mouth' recommendation?

## Read Matthew 9:27-34

1. Before they even meet him, the blind men know about Jesus. Who do they say he is? What have we already seen in Matthew that might make them say this?
2. What impact does Jesus have on the different people (the once-blind men, the crowds, and the Pharisees)? What do they say about him and who do they speak to?

## Read Matthew 9:35-10:15

3. How does Matthew sum up Jesus' ministry in 9:35? How is that the same/different from what he sends his disciples to do (10:1, 7)?
4. What do we learn of Jesus 'heart' and priorities? How does this shape Jesus' and the disciples' mission?
5. What expectations does Jesus give his disciples for their mission to the 'lost sheep of Israel'?

## Bring it Together

6. Read Matthew 28:19-20. Just before his Ascension, Jesus again ‘commissions’ his disciples. How is this commission the same/different from when he sent them out in Matthew 10? From this, in what way are Jesus’ instructions in Matthew 9 & 10 applicable to his followers today?
  
7. What makes it hard for you to speak of Jesus? What things could we (Growth Group/church) that could help you live ‘on mission’?
  
8. Jesus says ‘the mouth speaks what the heart is full of’ (Matthew 12:34). Although the context for this statement is negative, it’s proverbially true. What do you mainly speak about? What does this reveal of your heart? How can we fill our hearts so our mouths speak of Jesus?
  
9. Jesus calls his disciples to pray for labourers to be sent into the harvest. Does this (or should this) shape our prayers? How can we grow our prayers so they embrace Jesus’ ministry priorities?



# Finding True Life

Matthew 10:16-42

## To Get Started

1. Do you have any fears/phobias? Have you ever tried to do something to overcome a fear?

In this study, Jesus continues to prepare his disciples to 'go to the lost sheep of Israel' (10:6). Having told them some of what to expect, Jesus now speaks of some of the negative responses they might encounter... though that's not the whole story.

## Read Matthew 10:16-42

2. As Jesus began his instructions, he described Israel as 'lost sheep' (v6) but now he warns of other animal encounters! Although Jesus is preparing them for significant opposition, what hope does he give in verses 16-25?
3. What could followers of Jesus fear? What is the impact of this fear? Who should we fear instead? What will be the impact of this fear?

Although it's a central teaching of the Bible, the *fear of God* is not easy to understand. Read **Exodus 20:18-20** noticing the two different ways the word fear/afraid is used. Michael Reeves says about these verses:

Moses here sets out a contrast between being afraid of God and fearing God: those who have the fear of him will not be afraid of him. [...] Evidently there are different types of fear. Indeed, there are different types of fear of God. There is a fear of God that is good and desirable, and there is a fear of God that is not.<sup>4</sup>

4. What does the *good and desirable* fear of God look like? How is it different from being *afraid* of God? How can we grow a proper *fear of God*?

---

<sup>4</sup> Reeves, M, *Rejoice and Tremble: The Surprising Good News of the Fear of the Lord*, Crossway

5. What comfort does Jesus give for those living in anxious times? How 'real' is this comfort to you?
  
6. Jesus says he's come to bring a sword. How does this fit with his teaching that *peacemakers* are blessed (Mt 5:9)? How are you inclined to misapply either of these teachings?
  
7. According to verses 37-42, how can we receive the reward of finding life? What parts of our church/Christian culture work against taking up our cross in following Jesus?

## Bring it Together

8. Historically, Christian churches and para-church organisations have had some privileges in Australian society (and continue to do so) but some of these privileges have been or may soon be removed. How is the loss of privileges the same/different from the persecution Jesus speaks of here?
  
9. Following Jesus is costly. How has it cost you? What has helped you persevere?
  
10. Following Jesus is costly. What form does persecution and opposition take in our context? What form do you think it may take in the future? What can we do to help our brothers and sisters persevere and find true life?

# Seeing the One

Matthew 11:1-30

## To Get Started

1. What kinds of things have caused you to have doubts about Jesus?

## Read Matthew 11:1-24

2. What is John's question? Why do you think he doubts Jesus?
3. What is Jesus' response? **Read Isaiah 35** (esp. vv5-6). In the light of Isaiah's prophecy, what do you think Jesus is saying about himself? How do you think John would have received this answer?
4. Jesus now speaks to the crowd and contrasts John the Baptist with King Herod. How is John more than a prophet (see Malachi 3:1 and 4:5)?
5. How are believers *greater* than John the Baptist? What does this show about what God values?
6. How has 'this generation' responded wrongly to both John and Jesus?
7. What is the warning to those who haven't responded rightly to the *mighty works* Jesus has done in them? How does this relate to the parable about children playing in the marketplace and linking John the Baptist with Elijah?

John the Baptist may have doubted Jesus because, although he'd heard of the 'deeds of the Messiah' had not yet seen the 'unquenchable fire' of the Messiah's judgment (Mt 3:12). But as Jesus taught the crowds, the fire was coming on those who do not repent.

Jesus' denouncement of the people of his time might unsettle us—what hope is there for those of us who doubt?

## Read Matthew 11:25-30

8. Who is able to know the Father? What does this show about what God values?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
9. What does Jesus promise to those who come to him? How have you experienced that promise? Have there been times you've questioned Jesus' words about the *easy yoke*?

## Bring it Together

10. Jesus has strong words for those who don't respond rightly to what they know of him. How can we grow to feel the urgency of this truth for our friends and family who don't trust in Jesus?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
11. How does knowing that God reveals the truth of the gospel give hope and comfort with evangelism? How do you hold together the urgency of evangelism because of judgment and the comfort in knowing that God reveals his truth?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
12. If Jesus is *gentle and humble in heart* and his burden is light, how can we learn to rest in him?



# Seeing Mercy

Matthew 12:1-21

## To Get Started

1. How would you define *legalism*? How is it different from *doing the right thing*? What are the problems (or benefits) that come with legalism?

## Read Matthew 12:1-21

2. On this Sabbath day, what did the Pharisees and the people in the synagogue see?
3. **Read Exodus 31:12-17, Numbers 15:32-36.** What does the Law of Moses say about working on the Sabbath?
4. What three examples does Jesus give to show the people's misunderstanding (or hypocrisy) in applying the Sabbath law?
5. **Read Leviticus 24:5-9, 1 Samuel 21:1-6, Numbers 28:9-10, and Exodus 23:4-5.** How do these examples inform how Jesus applies the Sabbath law?
6. Jesus quotes the prophet Hosea, 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice'. How does this help us understand how Jesus fulfils the Law and the Prophets (Matthew 5:17)? What do you think this means for how Christians relate to the Law of Moses?

'The legalist condemns lawbreakers. The moralist condemns the immoral. But the one who learns about mercy meets the Messiah and cries, like the blind men, 'Son of David, have mercy on me!'<sup>5</sup>

7. Look again at verses 15-21. How is the character of what Isaiah prophesied different from the character of the Pharisees?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
8. How does Jesus fulfil this picture? How have you found this to be true of Jesus?

## Bring it Together

9. We know the Pharisees are the 'bad guys' so we shake our heads at how they misapply the Law of Moses. But maybe we can be like them. How do we tend to turn obeying God into something that is opposed to 'doing good'?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
10. How can our church show God desires mercy not sacrifice? How might we not fall into a similar trap of using religious traditions and 'rules' to hinder us from doing good?

---

<sup>5</sup> Peter Bolt, *Matthew: A Great Light Dawns*, p 121

# Seeing the Signs

Matthew 12:22-50

## To Get Started

1. Is there a particular 'apologetic'<sup>6</sup> evidence or reason that convinces you of the truth of the gospel? What is it and have you found it convincing when you talk about it with others?

## Read Matthew 12:22-37

2. What do the people see in Jesus' miracle? Who do they think Jesus could be and what makes them think this?
3. How do the Pharisees explain away Jesus' miracles? How does Jesus answer their accusation?
4. Jesus' statement about the person who won't be forgiven has troubled many Christians. How does the context help us understand speaking against (blaspheming) the Holy Spirit? Why is this not able to be forgiven?
5. How would you help someone who thinks God is unable or unwilling to forgive his/her sin?

## Read Matthew 12:38-50

6. How can we tell the religious leaders' request for a sign wasn't genuine?

---

<sup>6</sup> *Apologetic* doesn't mean 'saying sorry'. It means to have a 'reasoned defence' for your hope in Jesus. It's a word that comes from a word in the original language of 1 Peter 3:15.

7. How is Jonah a sign to them?

8. Who will condemn the religious leaders in the judgment? Why do you think Jesus chose these examples?

In verses 43-45, Jesus gives another warning to the religious leaders. He uses a parable/illustration about unclean spirits and concludes that the parable is like 'this evil generation'.

9. What part of the parable/illustration relates to Jesus' ministry? What is the warning to the religious leaders?

In verses 25-45, Jesus warned people about rejecting him: if you speak against the Holy Spirit there's no forgiveness, if you've got 'bad fruit' you'll be condemned, if you don't see the signs the Ninevites and the Queen of Sheba will speak against you, and those who reject the work of Jesus will be in a worse place than before. There have been lots of warnings of rejecting Jesus, but in the final scene, we're reminded that Jesus has come to welcome people into his family.

10. Who is part of Jesus' family? In the context of Jesus' criticism of religious leaders, what might be surprising about this?

## Bring it Together

11. This passage is full of warnings. How are these warnings useful for believers in Jesus?

12. Although this passage is full of warnings to those who reject Jesus, what comfort do you find in Jesus' words?

13. This is our final study in Matthew (for now)—looking back over the studies, how have your eyes been opened to *see the kingdom* of Jesus?



## **Copyright**

This work (other than images) is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0).

For details visit <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/>.

Gympie Presbyterian Church

<https://gympiepresbyterian.org.au>

<https://facebook.com/gympiepresbyterian>