

GOOD NEWS IN MATTHEW

CHRISTCHURCH
Homegroups
Spring 2014



christ church
moreton

2014

Trust in the Lord with all your heart
and lean not on your own
understanding;
in all your ways submit to him,
and he will make your paths straight.

Proverbs 3:5-6

GOOD NEWS IN MATTHEW

Our home groups this term will be a bit different from the past few studies. Usually we look at fairly short passages, and try to explore what they mean. But this term we are going to read through the whole of Matthew's gospel – all 28 chapters! That means each study will cover 3 or 4 chapters.

Obviously it won't be possible to discuss everything in them in depth. But the most important thing is to read the passages through. Some of it will be familiar – some you might never have read before. For each study there are some questions in this booklet – again, you probably won't get through all of them, and you might find things which you have questions about which I haven't covered.

Rather than ending each study with a 'Work' section, spend time at the end of each meeting praying about the things you have studied, and asking God how you can put into practice what he has been teaching you.

HOME GROUP PROGRAMME

Wed 8 th January	The Power House 7.45 in the Parish Centre
w/b Mon 13 th January	1. <i>Fulfilled</i>
w/b Mon 20 th January	2. <i>The Upside-down Kingdom</i>
w/b Mon 27 th January	3. <i>Discipleship</i>
Wed 5 th February	The Power House 7.45 in the Parish Centre
w/b Mon 10 th February	4. <i>Responses</i>
W/b Mon 17 th February	Free Week (Half term)
w/b Mon 24 th February	5. <i>Eternal Life</i>
Wed 5 th March	Ash Wednesday Informal Communion 7.45 in the Parish Centre
w/b Mon 10 th March	6. <i>The Last Days</i>
w/b Mon 17 th March	7. <i>The Cross</i>
w/b Mon 24 th March	8. <i>In all the Scriptures</i>
Wed 2 nd April	The Power House 7.45 in the Parish Centre
w/b Mon 7 th April	Spare week
Thurs 17 th April	Passover Meal 6.30 in the Parish Centre

1. FULFILLED

WELCOME

If you could do one new thing this year, what would it be?

WORSHIP

Proverbs 3:3 says *'Let love and faithfulness never leave you.'*
Praise God for his love and faithfulness to you, and ask him to help you understand more of it through this study.

WORD

Look at Matthew 1:1-17

(There is no need to read all those names unless you are feeling particularly ambitious!)

It seems a very strange way to begin a book. But in the way Matthew splits up Jesus' family tree into three sections, he highlights Abraham, David, and the Exile.

- What is the significance of each of these in understanding who Jesus is?

Read Matthew 1:18-2:2

It would be impossible to get through Christmas without hearing Matthew 1:18-25, and then we usually forget about it. But for Matthew, it is clearly an important part of introducing the Lord to us.

- What three titles is he given in these verses?

- Why is each significant?

Read Matthew 2:3-15

The coming of the Magi is such a key part of Nativity Plays at Christmas, that it often gets mixed in with the coming of the shepherds to the place where Jesus was born. But it could have taken place at any time in the following few months.

Later in his gospel, Matthew records that Jesus told people that there was a cost to following him (see Matthew 8:18-22, Matthew 16:24-25)

- How do the Magi show what this might mean in practice?

Read Matthew 2:16-23

Matthew frequently says that events in Jesus' life took place to fulfil scripture (Matthew 1:22, 2:6, 2:15, 2:18, 3:3 etc).

- How does the Old Testament help us to understand who Jesus is and why he came?

Read Matthew 3:1-12.

John the Baptist was the forerunner who prepared the way for the Lord.

- What was the main way in which he said that his hearers could themselves be ready for him?

John tells the crowd that they must 'produce fruit in keeping with repentance.'

- Why is this so important?

The Pharisees and Sadducees were good at pointing out the sins of other people, but were often blind to their own sin.

- How does what John says highlight the importance of recognising our own sin?

Read Matthew 3:13-17

- What are we told about Jesus in v.17?

- If this is what Jesus is like, why did he need to be baptised?

Read Matthew 4:1-11

3 times the devil tempts Jesus.

- But what would have been so wrong about doing these 3 things?

- How does Jesus respond to each of the temptations?

- How does Jesus' response differ from Adam & Eve's when they were tempted (see Genesis 2:16-17, 3:3-6)

- What does Jesus response to temptation show about his attitude to God?

Read Matthew 4:12-25

- How does the quotation from Isaiah 9 help us to understand more of who Jesus is?

2. THE UPSIDE-DOWN KINGDOM

WELCOME

What is the biggest surprise you have ever had?

WORSHIP

We live in a world where things seem constantly to change. It is good to know that the Lord our God never changes, and that what we read of him in the Bible is still true today. Praise God for revealing himself in his word; for his love, faithfulness, mercy, justice etc.

WORD

Read Matthew 5:1-12

Although people often take the Beatitudes as a series of unlinked statements, it is more likely that Jesus intended us to see a link between them.

To be 'poor in spirit' is to acknowledge our spiritual poverty, to admit that we have nothing with which we can deserve God's favour.

- Why is this where we have to start if we want to receive the kingdom of heaven?

- How do the other beatitudes follow on from this?
- Jesus says that we should be merciful, pure in heart, and peacemakers. Why would being like that earn the world's persecution?

Read Matthew 5:13-20

Jesus wants his followers to be both 'salt' and 'light'. What is the significance of each?

Jesus warns against losing our saltiness?

- What might cause this?
- In what ways might we hide our light?

Read Matthew 5:21-48

Jesus highlights 6 ways in which his followers need to be different from the society around them.

- Why should it matter what we think about someone, as long as we don't physically harm them?
- According to Jesus, how are we to treat our enemies? Why should we do this?
- Does this mean that as Christians we should let others walk all over us?

Read Matthew 6:1-18

In Matthew 5:16, Jesus said, 'Let your light shine before men, so that they may see your good deeds.' But now he says 'Be careful

not to do your 'acts of righteousness before men, to be seen by them.'

- Why the difference?
- What was wrong with the way the hypocrites prayed in Jesus' day?
- How might that happen today?

We live in a self-centred culture, where most people are preoccupied with their own wants and concerns.

- How does the Lord's Prayer challenge this attitude?

Jesus assumes that Christians will fast (though probably few of us do).

- Why and how should we fast?

Read Matthew 6:19-34

- Jesus warns us against 'storing up treasures on earth.' Obviously this can mean storing up money, but in what other ways might we be tempted to give earthly things too high a place?
- In contrast – what does it mean to 'store up for yourselves treasures in heaven'?
- What do you think it means to 'seek first the kingdom of God' (v.33)?

Read Matthew 7:1-12

Judging others is the bread and butter of the media. But Jesus says that we should not be like that.

- Why should we not judge others?
- What should we do if we want to truly help a brother or sister? (v.5)

Read Matthew 7:13-29

- What is so attractive about the wide gate and broad way?
- Why do people find it hard to find the small gate and narrow way?
- In what ways might we be tempted to hear the word but not put it into practice?

3. DISCIPLESHIP

WELCOME

Which person, either alive or from history, would you most want to be like?

WORSHIP

Psalm 63 is a great prayer of hunger for the Lord. Use it together as you ask him to teach you more of himself and his ways in this study.

WORD

Read Matthew 8:1-17

The man with leprosy knew that Jesus was able to heal him, but wasn't sure that he would be willing to.

- Why do you think he thought that?
- Have there been times when you have doubted Jesus' willingness to help you?
- Why was the Centurion's faith so surprising?

Read Matthew 8:18-22

What Jesus says here seems harsh.

- Why do you think he responded in this way?

Read Matthew 8:21 – 9:34.

This is a long passage, but in it we find Jesus showing his authority in different way. How would you describe each?

- Matthew 8:23-27
- Matthew 8:28-34
- Matthew 9:1-8
- Matthew 9:9-3
- Matthew 9:18-26
- Matthew 9:27-34

➤ Which of these impresses you most?

➤ Why?

Read Matthew 9:35-38

➤ What harvest is Jesus talking about?

➤ What sort of workers are needed for the harvest?

Read Matthew 10:1-42

➤ Why do you think Jesus sent the 12 only to the Jews (v.8). After all, right from the visit of the Magi in chapter 2 we've seen that he came for Gentiles as well as Jews.

➤ In what way is taking the good news out into the world like being sheep among wolves? (v.16).

➤ In this context, what does it mean to be shrewd as snakes and innocent as doves?

In Isaiah's great prophecy about Jesus (Isaiah 9:6) he is called 'Prince of Peace'. But now Jesus says that he hasn't come to bring peace, but a sword. (v.34)

➤ What do you think he meant?

➤ Have you had experience of the good news setting 'a man against his father, a daughter against her mother' and so on?

4. RESPONSES

WELCOME

What is your most treasured possession?

WORSHIP

Psalm 116 praises God for hearing and rescuing. We have even more reason to praise God for this; we know that in Jesus we have a new access to him in prayer, and that he has saved us from eternal death and given us new life. With these things in mind, use the psalm to praise God.

WORD

Read Matthew 11:1-19

After his glorious ministry as the forerunner to Jesus, John the Baptist had ended up in prison. This clearly wasn't what he had expected from the coming of the Messiah!

- How did Jesus' message to him (v.4-5) serve to reassure John (see Isaiah 61:1-3)?
- How might we be tempted to stumble on account of Jesus (v.6)?

Read Matthew 11:20-28

- How does Jesus reveal the Father to us (v.27)?
- What does it mean to take Jesus' yoke on us (v.29)?

Read Matthew 12:1-21

- How did Jesus' actions show that the Pharisees had misunderstood the meaning of the Old Testament Law?
- In what ways did Jesus' fulfill Isaiah's prophecy (v.18-21)?

Read Matthew 12:22-44

- What do you think Jesus meant by saying that everyone who is not for him is against him (v.30)?

Read Matthew 13:1-23

The sower is one of Jesus' best known parables, but it also gives us some clues as to why Jesus so often taught in parables.

- Can you think of people in Matthew's gospel who responded to Jesus' message in the ways that he highlights in the parable?
- How do parables help Jesus' followers understand his kingdom but hinder the understanding of those who don't follow him?
- The first three soils the seed landed on were unproductive. What was the problem in each case?

The farmer wouldn't have known beforehand where the soil was good and where it contained rocks and weeds, or else he would only have sown on the good soil.

- What does this tell us about our evangelism?

Read Matthew 13:24-43

- What problem does the farmer have at the beginning of the parable?

- The owner's servants offer to pull up the weeds. What is the owner's alternative, and why?
- What does this tell us about why God hasn't removed all that is wrong from the world?
- What hope does this parable give us as Christians?

Read Matthew 13:44-58

- What does Jesus want us to understand about the kingdom of heaven from the parables of the hidden treasure and the pearl?

5. TOWARDS JERUSALEM

WELCOME

What is the longest journey you have taken?

WORSHIP

Psalm 73 acknowledges that sometimes when we are following the Lord, our feet do almost slip. But it is also a reminder that we have a hope that lasts beyond this life – *my heart and my flesh may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever*. As you use the psalm, ask God to help you to trust in him.

WORD

Read Matthew 14:1-36

The importance of the miracle of feeding the 5000 is seen from the fact that it is the only miracle (except Jesus' resurrection) to be found in all four gospels.

- What does it teach us about Jesus and his power?
- What differences are there in the response to the crowd of Jesus and of the disciples?
- What great Old Testament event does this miracle have similarities with? (see Exodus 16:1-12)

- How does looking back to this Old Testament event help to explain what Jesus had come to do?
- In verses 22-33, how does Peter's experience give us a picture of what the Christian life is often like?
- Why did this event finally convince the disciples that Jesus really was the Son of God?

Read Matthew 15:1-20

Jesus emphasises that the problem which everyone has is what is in their heart.

- But why is what is in your heart important?
- What can you do to clean your own heart?

Read Matthew 15:21-39

- Why did Jesus respond as he did to the Canaanite woman?
- The disciples had only recently seen Jesus feed a crowd of 5000 – so why do they now have such a problem believing that he can feed 4000?

Read Matthew 16:1-12

Jesus says that he will give no sign except the sign of Jonah.

- What did he mean?

Jesus warns his followers about 'the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

- What did he mean?

Read Matthew 16:13-28

- Verses 18-20 are sometimes seen as the heart of Matthew's gospel. Why might this be?

Now that Jesus has been recognised as the Messiah, he goes on to teach the disciples what this implies.

- In verse 21, what does Jesus say will happen to him?
- Why do you think Peter the disciples was so surprised about this?
- What do you think Jesus meant when he said that if we want to follow him, we must deny ourselves and take up our cross?

Read Matthew 17:1-13

- How does what happened on the mountain confirm what Peter had realised in Matthew 16:16?
- What do you think is significant about Jesus talking with Moses and Elijah?

Read Matthew 17:14-27

- On their own, the disciples were unable to cure the sick boy. What does this tell us about our own work for Jesus?

6. JUDGMENT

WELCOME

TV reality shows – do you love them or hate them?

WORSHIP

1 Peter 2:24 reminds us that *'he himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness.* Praise God for what he has done for you through Jesus, and pray that he will help you to understand more of how to live that out.

WORD

Read Matthew 18:1-14

Verses 8-9 repeat something Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:29-30). Some Christians have taken these literally and have mutilated their bodies.

- How do you think Jesus intends us to understand his warnings?
- In what situations might you need to 'gouge out an eye' or 'cut off a hand'?

Read Matthew 18:15-35

- What should be done if 2 Christians fall out over something?

- How does the parable highlight what our response should be if another Christian does something against us?

In Matthew 6, Jesus had said that *'if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.'*

- What should we do in situations where we find it difficult to forgive someone else?

Read Matthew 19:1-15

As the Pharisees' question highlights, many Jews accepted a man's right to divorce his wife for any reason.

- Why does Jesus disagree with this?
- Again Jesus uses a little child to show a spiritual principle (see 18:3-4) What does it mean to become like a little child in order to enter the kingdom of heaven?

Read Matthew 19:16-30

- What is the one key thing that the rich man must do to inherit eternal life?
- Why must he do so?
- Does the same apply to us?

Read Matthew 20:1-16

- How does this parable follow on from the discussion with the rich man?
- Although the landowner's actions seem unfair, he claims they are not. Why aren't they unfair?

7 ARRIVAL

- The landlord clearly represents God. How does this parable put our service to God in perspective?

Read Matthew 20:17-34

- How does James' and John's mother's request show that she hasn't understood all that Jesus has just been teaching?
- What does Jesus mean by the cup he is going to drink?
- How does this help us understand who will sit at his right and his left?

WELCOME

What do you prefer – mountains, beaches, or cities?

WORSHIP

Colossians 1:15-20 is one of the Bible's great descriptions of Jesus. Use it to encourage you to praise him for his greatness, his power, and his grace.

WORD

Read Matthew 21:1-17

- At last the king rides into his city – Jesus rides into Jerusalem on a donkey. It is a scene full of excitement and joy – but what shows that the crowd still hadn't understood who Jesus really was?
- Are there ways in which our assumptions about Jesus might blind us to the truth?
- Why was it necessary for Jesus to drive out the traders from the temple?

Read Matthew 21:18-46

- What point was Jesus making in cursing the fig-tree and in the two parables (the two sons and the tenants)?

Read Matthew 22:1-14

- Who are the originally invited guests?
- And the ones invited later?
- What about the man who was not wearing wedding clothes? What warning does that have for us?

Read Matthew 22:15-46

The Pharisees were opponents of Roman rule; the Herodians supported it. Now they come together to try to trick Jesus.

- How does his answer reject the position of both of them?
- What sort of things are rightfully Caesar's (the government's) and what are God's?
- How is all the Old Testament Law summed up by loving God and loving neighbour?
- How does this help us to understand the Old Testament Law better?

Read Matthew 23:1-39

Jesus was savage in condemning the Teachers of the Law and the Pharisees.

- What was it about them which was so wrong?
- Are there ways in which we might fall into the same trap?

Read Matthew 24:1-51

This is definitely the most difficult part of Matthew to understand!

- We can't know when Jesus will come again (v.36). So what does this tell us about how we should live as disciples?

Jesus compares his coming to a thief breaking into a house (v.42-44) and a master returning home (v.45-51)

- What does each of these emphasize about what Jesus' return will be like, and our responsibility?
- If the Lord returned today, what would he hope to find us doing (v.45-46)?

8. THE CROSS

WELCOME

What is your favourite season of the year, and why?

WORSHIP

Stuart Townend's song 'How great the Father's love for us' helps us to see what it meant for Jesus to save us. Use the words of the song together.

WORD

Read Matthew 25:1-46

Jesus had just been talking about what would happen at his return, and helping his disciples to be ready.

In biblical times the bridegroom would come to the bride's home after dark, and then would take her and her bridesmaids (virgins) in procession to his home for the wedding feast.

- What was the difference between the wise and foolish virgins?
- What does this parable teach us about Jesus' return?
- In the parable of the bags of gold, what is the difference between the servants?
- How does what the three servants say to the master when he returns show how they felt about him?

- What does this parable tell us about how we should be living as we wait for Jesus' return?

The third parable refers to the things that we do or don't do in this life.

- Does it mean that salvation depends on us doing the right things to earn it?

Read Matthew 26:1 – 35

- Why would the woman anointing Jesus lead Judas to betray him?
- How would the bread and the wine help the disciples to understand Jesus' death?
- How can they help us today to remember Jesus?

Read Mathew 26:36-56

In Gethsemane, Jesus tells his disciples to watch and pray so they won't fall into temptation.

- What temptation were they about to face?
- How might prayer have changed the outcome?

Read Matthew 26:57-27:10

- How is Peter's betrayal of Jesus different from Judas'?
- In what circumstances are you most tempted to be ashamed of Jesus, or to deny him?

Read Matthew 27:11-44

Four groups or individuals are involved in Jesus' death – the soldiers, the Jewish leaders, Pilate, and Herod. How would you describe each one's attitude to Jesus?

- Soldiers
- Jewish leaders
- Pilate
- The crowd

➤ In what way do their attitudes parallel those of men and women today?

We know virtually nothing about Barabbas, except the brief comments in the gospels.

➤ But – in what way does Barabbas stand for every believer?

Read Matthew 27:43-66

What key things does Matthew tell us about as Jesus hung on the cross:

- v.45
- v.46
- v.51

➤ What is the significance of each of them?

Read Matthew 28:1-20

What great commission did Jesus give to his disciples (and to us)?

What does this mean in practice for us as a church?

CHRIST CHURCH, MORETON

We want to be a **W**elcoming Church

Because Jesus welcomed all who came to him

an **E**vangelising Church

*Because we believe that everyone has the right to hear
the Good News of Jesus*

a **L**oving Church

*Because Jesus commanded his followers to love one
another*

a **L**earning Church

*Because we are in the business of making disciples, and
disciples must always be learners*