

# Matthew Devotionals & Sermon Illustrations

Matthew Commentaries 4 - F B Meyer, Today in the Word Devotionals

Our Daily Bread  
>300 Devotionals/Illustrations

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## DEVOTIONAL ILLUSTRATIONS

### On the Gospel of Matthew

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## MATTHEW 1

- “Kingdom of heaven”—used thirty-two times in Matthew.
- Sixty-five quotations from the Old Testament.
- In the first two chapters the evangelist sees the fulfilment of five prophecies.
- Two genealogies of our Lord:—
- Matthew, the first: a king must have a genealogy.
- Mark, none: all a servant needs is character.
- Luke, the second: a perfect man must have one.
- John, none: God needs none.

Matthew 1:23.

- “They shall call his name Emmanuel ... God with us.”
- This gospel closes with the promise—“Lo, I am with you always!”—Emmanuel.

[Above are from D L Moody's Bible notes](#)

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### Matthew 1:18-25 Marred

She will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins. —Matthew 1:21

During an all-night festival in Paris, five young people, apparently drunk, broke into the Orsay Museum and left a 4-inch gash in a priceless painting by Claude Monet. Culture Minister Christine Albanel said the painting could be restored, but she was deeply disturbed at the damage done by “a purely criminal act.”

One news headline read: “Monet Masterpiece Marred.” To mar is to injure or damage; to spoil, disfigure, or impair. It’s an apt description of sin’s effect on us. We know well the results of our own choices made in ignorance or defiance of God.

As we approach Christmas, it’s good to remember why Jesus was born. The Son of God did not come to establish a nostalgic, family-oriented, commercially successful holiday. The angel told Joseph: “[Mary] will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins” (Matt. 1:21).

Christmas began with a present from God to His sin-damaged world: “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 6:23).

The masterpiece of God’s human creation, marred by turning away from Him, can be restored when we give our hearts to Christ.

He came into this world a babe,  
This world that He Himself had made;  
He came to do the Father’s will,  
That ended on dark Calvary’s hill. —Newstrom

Jesus came to earth to repair our sin-damaged lives.

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### Jesus: Unique In All The World

Read: Philippians 2:5-11

In [Jesus] dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. —Colossians 2:9

Bible in a year:

Job 34-35; Acts 15:1-21

A new Christian sent an e-mail to a Web site that answers questions about faith. She said, “I struggle with the claim of other Christians that Jesus Christ is the only way to heaven and to God. What will happen to those who believe otherwise?”

This kind of question challenges us to examine our view of Jesus. A scriptural review of Jesus and His uniqueness can help us

stand strong in our belief that He is the only way.

Jesus is unmatched in history—His very being cries out for us to entrust our lives to Him. Jesus Christ is:

Unique in substance: He alone is both God and man (John 10:30). Unique in prophecy: No other leader's life was foretold so clearly and accurately (Micah 5:2). Unique in mission: Jesus alone came to save us from our sins (Matthew 1:21). Unique in birth: Only Jesus was born of a virgin (Matthew 1:23). Unique in ability: No one but Jesus has the power to forgive sins (Mark 2:10). Unique in existence: Jesus alone existed before the beginning of time (John 1:1-2). Unique in position: No one else is equal with God (Philippians 2:5-6). Unique in reign: Only Jesus reigns forever (Hebrews 1:8).

No one in history is like Jesus. He alone deserves our trust, and He alone is the path to God.

No other name can save me,  
No other name beside,  
But Jesus Christ the risen Lord,  
Who once was crucified. —Brandt

Only one road leads to heaven—Jesus Christ is the way.

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## **Earth Walk**

December 25, 1996 — by Mart De Haan

Our Daily Bread Radio is hosted by Les Lamborn

Read: Matthew 1:18-25, John 1:11-18

The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory. —John 1:14

Bible in a year: Zephaniah 1-3; Revelation 16

After the Apollo XV mission, Colonel James Irwin related some of the high points of his experience. He told of weightless bodies floating free in the space capsule, the rising crescent of the earth as seen from the moon, and the triumphal splashdown before a watching world.

Irwin also spoke of the impact the experience had on his spiritual life. He said that from the lunar surface he sensed both the glory of God and the plight of earthbound man. As he came back to earth, he realized he couldn't content himself with being merely a celebrity. He would have to be a servant, telling his fellowman of a better way to live. Irwin concluded by saying that if we think it a great event to go to the moon, how much greater is the wonder that God came to earth in the person of Jesus Christ!

Because man walked on the moon, science and technology have made tremendous advances. But because God walked on earth, we know both our origin and our destiny. We can know our Creator personally (Jn. 1:1,14,18), and we can live in His light (v.9). Through Jesus' sinless life and sacrificial death we have the joy of sins forgiven and an abundant life—all because God walked on earth.

Down from His glory, ever-living story,  
My God and Savior came, and Jesus was His name.  
Born in a manger, to His own a stranger,  
A Man of sorrows, tears, and agony. —Booth-Clibborn

God made His home with us that we might make our home with God.

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## **'I Found Jesus'**

May 11, 2002 — by Vernon C. Grounds

Read: Acts 9:1-6

You shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins. —Matthew 1:21

Bible in a year:  
2 Kings 13-14; John 2

Sundar Singh was an angry young man. After his mother died when he was 14 years old, he became a fierce opponent of

Christianity in his northern India community. But then, in a dramatic conversion, he turned in faith to Jesus Christ. For the next 25 years he exerted a far-reaching, international influence.

Once he was visited by a professor of comparative religions from Europe. When that agnostic scholar asked Singh with curiosity, "What have you found in Christianity that you did not find in your traditional religion?" Singh replied, "I found Jesus." "Yes, I know," the professor said impatiently. "But what particular teaching or doctrine did you find?" Singh simply repeated his answer, "I found Jesus."

Singh later wrote, "When people ask me, 'What made you a Christian?' I can only say, 'Christ Himself made me a Christian.' When He revealed Himself to me, I saw His glory and was convinced that He was the living Christ."

Have you, like Saul in today's Bible reading, had a life-changing experience with the Lord Jesus? (Acts 9:1-6). Have you been convinced that He is the only way to God?

Jesus Christ is the difference between all religions and Christianity. —VCG

I've found a Friend, oh, such a Friend!  
He loved me ere I knew Him;  
He drew me with the cords of love,  
And thus He bound me to Him. —Small

Many religious leaders have risen to greatness; only Jesus has risen from the grave.

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## The Name

October 30, 2001 — by Dave Branon

Read: Philippians 2:5-11

God also has highly exalted Him . . . , that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow. —Philippians 2:9-10

Bible in a year:  
Jeremiah 20-21; 2 Timothy 4

Jesus! No other name draws people together so closely, while at the same time evoking hatred in others.

In 1999, a political candidate answered a question about who had the greatest effect on his life by saying, "Jesus Christ. He changed my heart." This person's honest answer was met with disdain from people who detest the name of Jesus.

On the other hand, people all over the world who love Christ meet every week to honor and praise Jesus' name. To them, His name means love, joy, peace, hope, and forgiveness.

What is it about this name that divides people so clearly? Why do some treat the name of Jesus with contempt while others hold it in highest esteem? I think the reason some people can't stand Jesus' name is that they don't want to be reminded of their sins. Jesus is "the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6), the One who saves us from our sins (Matthew 1:21). People who refuse to ask for forgiveness from sin cannot love the name of Jesus. Yet His name "is above every name," and one day "every tongue [will] confess that Jesus Christ is Lord" (Philippians 2:9,11).

Jesus! Do you love that name? Praise God for that holy name—and tell others what Jesus has done for you.

Jesus—O how sweet the name,  
Jesus—every day the same;  
Jesus—let all saints proclaim  
Its worthy praise forever. —Martin

We honor God's name when we call Him our Father and live like His Son.

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## Matthew 1:18-25 The Spirit Of Giving

Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel. —Isaiah 7:14

Yes, there are people who believe in Santa Claus. According to a poll taken by KRC Research in 1996 and cited in U.S. News & World Report, nine percent of American adults say they really do believe in the jolly old North Pole resident.

Perhaps that's not surprising when we realize that at no other time of the year do we focus so much attention on a single theme as

during the Christmas season. The fictional character of Santa Claus has become an integral part of the celebration in our culture because he symbolizes gift-giving, the centerpiece of most holiday gatherings. What many people believe in at Christmas is the spirit of giving.

As admirable as that spirit may be, there is something more grand and life-changing to believe in. At Christmas we need to focus on truths like these:

- The prophecies of Jesus' birth (Isa. 7:14; 9:1-7).
- The miracle of Jesus' conception (Mt. 1:18).
- The perfection of the holy Christ-child (Lk. 1:35).
- The mission of that baby boy (Mt. 1:21).

The Creator of the world miraculously became man on that first Christmas morning so He could provide us with the gift of eternal life. Now, that's something to believe in at Christmas!

The greatest gift in history:

Almighty God becoming man;

He left His throne and slept on straw,

In keeping with salvation's plan. —Sper

The best gift in the world was wrapped in a manger.

By Dave Branon

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### **Matthew 1:18-25 A Joyous Celebration**

Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. —Luke 2:10

When God shows His goodness, He loves to see us respond with joy. For example, when God brought the Israelites back from captivity, He told them to hold a festival to commemorate the rebuilding of the temple and the walls of Jerusalem (Nehemiah 8). And celebrate they did!

If God wanted the Israelites to rejoice because of His goodness, would He condemn us for a festive spirit at Christmas? Was not the angel's message to the shepherds one of "good tidings of great joy"? (Luke 2:10).

It's true that the Bible does not tell us to celebrate Jesus' birthday. We don't even know the exact date, and much about the season has a pagan background. But that doesn't make it wrong to celebrate if Christ is kept uppermost in our lives. We don't think of mistletoe, holly, and evergreens as being pagan any more than we associate Sunday and Monday with the worship of the sun and the moon gods after which these days are named. Just because unbelievers abuse Christmastime doesn't mean that we can't enjoy the holiday.

Keep Christ central. Celebrate His birth. Sing carols. Gather for family fun. Even make shopping an occasion for remembering God's goodness. When we love Jesus and put Him first, He blesses our festivities.

Joyful, all ye nations, rise,

Join the triumph of the skies;

With the angelic hosts proclaim,

Christ is born in Bethlehem. —Wesley

We can enjoy Christmas because we know the joy of Christ.

By Herbert VanderLugt

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### **Two Bethlehems**

December 13, 2005 — by David C. Egner

Read: Luke 1:26-35

The power of the Highest will overshadow you. —Luke 1:35

The birth of Jesus Christ was unlike any other. Mary's was an "other world" conception. The angel told her, "The Holy Spirit will come

upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you” (Luke 1:35). The child conceived in her was from outside our world. And it had to be so, because the boy born to Mary was Immanuel, “God with us” (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:23).

The baby born in Bethlehem was of heavenly origin. God had entered the earth in the form and nature of Mary’s little son. He came into the world from above, and His incarnation made possible our redemption.

Now think about it. Our own new birth-our regeneration-comes from outside the world. Jesus said that we are born again “of the Spirit” (John 3:3,7-8). Our salvation is not from an earthly source, but from God Himself through Jesus by means of His Spirit. In a sense, then, our heart becomes a “Bethlehem stable,” a place where Jesus comes into the world. We open the door to Him by faith, and He is born in us by the blessed Holy Spirit.

We make Him known to others by His power in us. He affects every aspect of our lives. We are a “Bethlehem,” His place of entrance into today’s world.

Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine!  
O what a foretaste of glory divine!  
Heir of salvation, purchase of God,  
Born of His Spirit, washed in His blood. -Crosby

Christ was born here below that we might be born from above.

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## What to Name the Baby

The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel. Isaiah 7:14

Isaiah 9:2–7

Dave Branon

December 21, 2020

TODAY’S SCRIPTURE Isaiah 9:2–7

Today’s Insights

King Ahaz of Judah, threatened by the armies of Israel and Syria (Isaiah 7:1–7), refused to trust God and instead turned to Assyria for help (2 Kings 16:7–9). Yet God assured Ahaz of victory by giving him the ultimate proof: “The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel [God with us]” (Isaiah 7:14). God promised to be with His people if they’d only trust Him. Some scholars believe this sign was first fulfilled during the time of Ahaz and fully fulfilled in Jesus some seven hundred years later (Matthew 1:23). Isaiah 9:6–7 describes this child with royal titles: “Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.” Kings often took titles that described their roles. For example, we see this in the title “Defender of the Faith” which British monarchs receive as head of the Church of England. Isaiah prophesied that a descendant of David would rule the whole world “with justice and righteousness” (v. 7).

Today’s Devotional

Here’s one conversation Mary didn’t have to have with Joseph as they awaited the birth of the baby she was carrying: “Joseph, what should we name the baby?” Unlike most people awaiting a birth, they had no question about what they would call this child.

The angels who visited Mary and then Joseph told them both that the baby’s name would be Jesus (Matthew 1:20–21; Luke 1:30–31). The angel that appeared to Joseph explained that this name indicated that the baby would “save his people from their sins.”

He would also be called “Immanuel” (Isaiah 7:14), which means “God is with us,” because He would be God in human form—deity wrapped in swaddling clothes. The prophet Isaiah revealed additional titles of “Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace” (9:6), because He would be all of those things.

It’s always exciting to name a new baby. But no other baby had such a powerful, exciting, world-changing name as the one who was “Jesus who is called the Messiah” (Matthew 1:16). What a thrill for us to be able to “call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 1:2)! There’s no other name that saves (Acts 4:12).

Let’s praise Jesus and contemplate everything He means to us this Christmas season!

Reflect & Pray



How does reflecting on the name of Jesus encourage you? Which of His titles from Isaiah 9:6 means the most to you this season? Why?

Thank You, heavenly Father, for sending us One who is our Savior, our Counselor, our Prince of Peace, and our Messiah. I celebrate His birth because I know that His life and death and resurrection purchased eternal life for me.

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## **An Appropriate Name**

You shall call His name Jesus. —Matthew 1:21

Bill Crowder

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE Matthew 1:18-25

Today's Insights -In his book *Miracles*, C. S. Lewis answers the argument against the virgin birth that suggests first-century people did not understand natural law. To this, Lewis responds that the whole motive for Joseph considering breaking the engagement was that he understood where babies come from (v.19). It took an angel in a dream to point to the supernatural source of Mary's conception. First-century people, like believers today, understood that for a virgin to give birth would require a miracle.

Today's Devotional

The name of the southeastern Asian nation of Indonesia is formed by combining two Greek words which together mean "island." That name is appropriate because Indonesia is made up of more than 17,500 islands spanning nearly 750,000 square miles. Indonesia—an appropriate name for a nation of islands.

In the Bible, we find that people were often given names—sometimes at birth, sometimes later—that made a statement about them or their character. Barnabas, whose name means "son of encouragement," continually encouraged those he encountered. Jacob, whose name means "schemer," repeatedly manipulated people and situations for his own selfish ends.

And no one has ever been more appropriately named than Jesus. When the angel of the Lord spoke to Joseph about Mary's soon-to-be-born Son, he told Joseph, "You shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21).

Jesus means "the Lord saves" and defines both who Jesus is and why He came. He was also called Immanuel, which means "God with us" (1:23). His name reveals our eternal hope!

Reflect & Pray

How sweet the Name of Jesus sounds

In a believer's ear!

It soothes his sorrow, heals his wounds,

And drives away his fear. —Newton

The name of Jesus is at the heart of our faith and our hope.

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## **Matthew 1:18-25 Getting Personal**

The virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel, which is translated, "God with us." —Matthew 1:23

You may have received a letter recently and stared in surprise at the stamp. Instead of seeing the face of a famous person or historical figure, it was your brother and his dog.

In a test case, the US Postal Service licensed a private company to sell official stamps. For twice the value of the postage, customers could upload a digital photo of their choosing to a Web site, and in about a week they could stick first-class pictures of their wedding on their thank-you notes. Many people hope that technology will revive the lost art of sending a personal message by mail.

It's good to recall that the birth of Jesus was the most personal message possible from God. An angel told Joseph that this miracle baby would be a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy: "Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which is translated, "God with us" (Matthew 1:23).

Paul confirmed Jesus' identity when he wrote: "[Jesus] is the image of the invisible God," and that all of God's fullness dwells in Him (Colossians 1:15,19).

God Himself came to earth in the person of Jesus Christ to save us from our sins. Could it be any more personal than that?

Once from the realms of infinite glory,  
Down to the depths of our ruin and loss,  
Jesus came, seeking—O Love's sweet story—  
Came to the manger, the shame, and the cross. —Strickland

God reached out to mankind with the arms of Jesus.

By David McCasland

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### **Matthew 1:1-18 Genealogy**

These four women have an important place in the genealogy of Jesus to demonstrate that Jesus identifies with sinners in His genealogy, even as He will in His birth, baptism, life, and His death on the cross. "Jesus is heir of a line in which flows the blood of the harlot Rahab, and of the rustic Ruth; he is akin to the fallen and to the lowly, and he will show his love even to the poorest and most obscure. - Spurgeon

There was no other way of his being born; for had he been of a sinful father, how should he have possessed a sinless nature? He is born of a woman, that he might be human; but not by man, that he might not be sinful. - Spurgeon

Men and women, notorious for their evil character, lie in the direct line of his descent. This was permitted, that He might fully represent our fallen race. - F B Meyer

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### **Matthew 1:18-25 God's Guidance**

An angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid." —Matthew 1:20

The Christmas story contains a surprising glimpse into the way God guides those who trust in Him. When the Lord was about to turn the lives of Mary and Joseph upside down, He revealed His plans to them at different times and in different ways.

Mary received advance notice from the angel Gabriel that she would conceive the Son of God by the power of the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:30-35).

But Joseph, her fiancé, seems to have received no word from God at that time. Later, when he learned of Mary's pregnancy and pondered how to end their engagement without publicly disgracing her, "an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, 'Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit'" (Matthew 1:20).

Such is the mystery of God's guidance. Mary was told beforehand and Joseph had to struggle with what must have seemed a crushing blow. But no matter when God's word came to them, Mary and Joseph both faithfully obeyed.

We cannot predict all of what the Lord wants us to do nor how He will direct our lives, but we can be confident that He will guide us. And, like Mary and Joseph, we must be ready to follow His leading.

God holds the future in His hands  
With grace sufficient day by day,  
Through good or ill He gently leads,  
If we but let Him have His way. —Rohrs

You don't need to know where you're going if you let God do the leading.

By David McCasland

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### **Matthew 1:18-25 The Forgotten Man**

Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding. —Proverbs 3:5

Amid all the Christmas activities, one man is often forgotten.

No, I don't mean the person whose birthday we're celebrating. Although we often fail to give Jesus first place as He deserves, we don't usually forget Him. I'm talking about Joseph—the man God trusted so much that He placed His Son in his home to love and

nurture. What a responsibility!

Joseph truly is the forgotten man in the Christmas story. Yet his task was an important component of God's incredible plan. As we read the story of the birth of Jesus, we find that Joseph was just, righteous, merciful, protective, and courageous. But most of all—he was obedient. When the angel told him to take Mary as his wife, he obeyed (Matt. 1:24). And when the angel told him to flee to Egypt with Mary and Jesus, he did (2:13-14).

Just as Mary was carefully chosen to bear the Son of God, Joseph was deliberately chosen to provide for his young wife and the Christ-child. And trusting God, Joseph followed through on everything God asked him to do.

What is God asking of you today? Are you willing to commit yourself to do whatever He wants you to do?

We can learn much about obedience from Joseph, the forgotten man of Christmas.

It matters not the path on earth  
My feet are made to trod;  
It only matters how I live:  
Obedient to God. —Clark

The proof of our love for God is our obedience to the commands of God.

By Cindy Hess Kasper

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What shall I give for Christmas  
To Him who gave Himself for me?  
To Him I give my life, my love,  
For time and for eternity. —Anon.

Give your all to Christ; He gave His all for you.

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### **Matthew 1:18-25 The Baby Grew Up**

You shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins. —Matthew 1:21

Even Christians can miss the point of the Christmas story if they aren't careful. Halford E. Luccock warned of that danger in a thought-provoking essay. He wrote: "We can become so charmed with the story of a baby that we grow sentimental about it. It does not ask that we do anything about it; it does not demand any vital change in our way of thinking and living.

"The great question for us is this: Is our Christmas still only a story about a baby, or is it more, a deathless story about a Person into whom the baby grew, who can redeem the world from its sins, and who calls us into partnership with His great and mighty purposes?"

When the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph, he said, "You shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins" (Mt. 1:21). It is only as we see the birth of Jesus in light of His crucifixion and resurrection that we are able to grasp the full meaning of Christ's coming.

With your eyes wide open this Christmas, respond to God with love and commitment for the gift of His Son. Focus your thoughts and actions and motivations toward honoring the Baby who grew up and died for all our sins.

Christ the Savior is born!

When we look beyond the manger  
To the cross of Calvary,  
We will know the reason Christmas  
Brings such joy to you and me. —DJD

The mission of the cross is hidden in the message of the cradle.

By David McCasland

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### **Matthew 1:19 put her away secretly.**

When we have to do a severe thing, let us choose the tenderest manner. Maybe we shall not have to do it at

### **Matthew 1:21 Big Plans**

You shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins. —Matthew 1:21

Two thousand years ago, there were no earthly plans for celebrating Jesus' birth. Quietly and unannounced, Joseph and Mary entered Bethlehem and searched for a place to spend the night.

It was a busy time in the Judean village, but the excitement had nothing to do with the upcoming birth. The crowds had gathered to take part in a census. They didn't know that Mary was about to deliver the Savior.

As the year 2000 approaches, the story has changed. There are serious discussions going on about how Bethlehem can get ready for the estimated 4 million tourists who will converge on the Israeli city during Christmas 2000. One estimate puts the price tag at \$3.5 billion to prepare for the big day.

What a contrast to that first Christmas! It's almost as if people want to make up for missing His birth. Yet, a proper preparation has nothing to do with money or motels or shrines. It's a matter of the heart. If we want to honor Christ for who He is, we will put our complete faith in His death, burial, and resurrection.

You can make all the plans you want to, but the best way to celebrate the birth of the baby is by trusting Him as your Savior.

The Christmas season comes again.

Let all the earth with one accord

Rejoice that God has given to men

A Savior, who is Christ the Lord. —Baker

You can't truly celebrate Christ's birth until you've invited Him into your heart.

By Dave Branon

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### **Matthew 1:21 'I Found Jesus'**

You shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins. —Matthew 1:21

Sundar Singh was an angry young man. After his mother died when he was 14 years old, he became a fierce opponent of Christianity in his northern India community. But then, in a dramatic conversion, he turned in faith to Jesus Christ. For the next 25 years he exerted a far-reaching, international influence.

Once he was visited by a professor of comparative religions from Europe. When that agnostic scholar asked Singh with curiosity, "What have you found in Christianity that you did not find in your traditional religion?" Singh replied, "I found Jesus." "Yes, I know," the professor said impatiently. "But what particular teaching or doctrine did you find?" Singh simply repeated his answer, "I found Jesus."

Singh later wrote, "When people ask me, 'What made you a Christian?' I can only say, 'Christ Himself made me a Christian.' When He revealed Himself to me, I saw His glory and was convinced that He was the living Christ."

Have you, like Saul in today's Bible reading, had a life-changing experience with the Lord Jesus? (Acts 9:1-6). Have you been convinced that He is the only way to God?

Jesus Christ is the difference between all religions and Christianity. —VCG

I've found a Friend, oh, such a Friend!

He loved me ere I knew Him;

He drew me with the cords of love,

And thus He bound me to Him. —Small

Many religious leaders have risen to greatness; only Jesus has risen from the grave.

By Vernon C. Grounds

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What will you do with Jesus?

Neutral you cannot be;

Someday your heart will be asking,

"What will He do with me?" —Simpson

If you make room for Jesus in your heart, He will make room for you in heaven.

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Mild He lays His glory by,  
Born that man no more may die.  
Born to raise the sons of earth,  
Born to give them second birth. —Wesley

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### **Matthew 1:19 Another Hero Of Christmas**

Read: Matthew 1:18-25

Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly. — Matthew 1:19

For most of my life, I missed the importance of Joseph in the Christmas story. But after I became a husband and father myself, I had a greater appreciation for Joseph's tender character. Even before he knew how Mary had become pregnant, he decided that he wasn't going to embarrass or punish her for what seemed to be infidelity (Matt. 1:19).

I marvel at his obedience and humility, as he not only did what the angel told him (v.24) but also refrained from physical intimacy with Mary until after Jesus was born (v.25). Later we learn that Joseph was willing to flee his home to protect Jesus (2:13-23).

Imagine the pressure Joseph and Mary must have felt when they learned that Jesus would be theirs to raise and nurture! Imagine the complexity and pressure of having the Son of God living with you every moment of every day; a constant call to holiness by His very presence. What a man Joseph must have been to be trusted by God for this task! What a wonderful example for us to follow, whether we're raising our own children or those born to others who are now entrusted to us.

May God grant us the strength to be faithful like Joseph, even if we don't fully understand God's plan.

We know, Father, that Your wisdom is far above our limited understanding. We thank You that we can rely on You to carry out Your good plans for us. You are worthy of our faithfulness.

The secret of true service is absolute faithfulness wherever God places you.

INSIGHT: Each of the two New Testament accounts of Jesus' birth has a different focus. Luke focuses on Mary and the angel's message to her, the journey to Bethlehem, and the birth of Jesus. Matthew focuses on Joseph, telling of the angelic messenger who assured Joseph of the miraculous nature of the Christ child.

By Randy Kilgore

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### **Matthew 1:18-2:16 Newborn Babe**

What a paradox that a babe in a manger should be called mighty! Yet even as a baby, Jesus Christ revealed power. His birth affected the heavens as that star appeared. The star affected the Magi, and they left their homes and made that long journey to Jerusalem. Their announcement shook King Herod and his court. Jesus' birth brought angels from heaven and simple shepherds from their flocks on the hillside. Midnight became midday as the glory of the Lord appeared to men. —Warren W. Wiersbe in His Name is Wonderful.

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### **Matthew 1:18-25 God's Answer To Loneliness**

The virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel. —Matthew 1:23

Most of us have experienced loneliness in some form or another. I remember the deep sense of aloneness that swept over me during my first day in the military when I was exposed to almost constant cursing and foul language.

People with physical disabilities have said that their greatest pain is loneliness. It is also felt by parents who have been neglected by their children, by husbands or wives who have lost their mate, and by people from a minority group who have been excluded from social activities.

If we want to be followers of our Savior, we should be reaching out to the lonely all around us. But we can't be with them all the time, nor can we fully know their pain. Our presence may help, but we are never enough. Only God can meet the needs of the lonely. And here is the good news. In Jesus He has revealed Himself as "Immanuel," which means, "God with us."

One day G. Campbell Morgan visited an elderly woman who lived alone. Before leaving, he read, "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20). "A great promise," he said. With a twinkle in her eye she retorted, "Dr. Morgan, that's not a promise. It's reality!" For her, Immanuel was the ultimate cure for loneliness.

Though all around me is darkness  
And earthly joys have flown,  
My Savior whispers His promise—  
Never to leave me alone. —Anon.

God said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." —Hebrews 13:5

By Herbert VanderLugt

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## Immanuel

December 14, 2003 — by Herbert Vander Lugt

Read: Isaiah 8:1-10

"The virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which is translated, "God with us." — Matthew 1:23

Bible in a year:

Joel 1-3; Revelation 5

Since that first Christmas day 2,000 years ago, the assurance that God is with His people has taken on new meaning. Before Jesus was born, the Israelites were assured that even in judgment they could have hope because God was with them (Isaiah 8:8,10). Yet they didn't know God as fully as we can today.

We have a great advantage because through reading the New Testament we can see the glory of God "in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Corinthians 4:6). And we can sense His presence in all situations of life because He is made real to us by the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:10-16).

When I need to be reassured that God is with me, I think about Jesus as He is revealed in the New Testament. I recall how He took little children in His arms and blessed them (Matthew 19:13-15). Then I think of His crucifixion, which reminds me of all He endured to be my Savior (27:27-54). Finally, I reflect on His promise, "I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (28:20).

The birth of Jesus gave new significance to the name Immanuel, which means "God with us" (1:23). Because He lived among us, died for us, and sent His Spirit to indwell us, we can rejoice!

Veiled in flesh the Godhead see,  
Hail the incarnate Deity!  
Pleased as man with men to dwell,  
Jesus, our Immanuel. —Wesley

God came to live with us so we could live with Him.

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## Matthew 1:23 "They shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us."

John Wesley died with this on his tongue, and let us live with it on our hearts—"The best of all is God is with us."

Do you know what "God with us" means? Has it been God with you in your tribulations by the Holy Ghost's comforting influence? Has it been God with you in searching the Scriptures? Has the Holy Spirit shone on the Word? Has it been God with you in conviction, bringing you to Sinai? Has it been God with you in comforting you, by bringing you again to Calvary? Do you know the full meaning of that name, Emmanuel, "God with us"? No, he who knows it best knows little of it. He who knows it not at all is so ignorant that his ignorance is not bliss, but will be his damnation. "God with us"—it is eternity's sonnet, heaven's hallelujah, the shout of the

glorified, the song of the redeemed, the chorus of angels, the everlasting oratorio of the great orchestra of the sky.

Spurgeon

Then, if Jesus Christ be 'God with us,' let us come to God without any question or hesitancy. Whoever you may be you need no priest or intercessor to introduce you to God, for God has introduced himself to you.

Spurgeon

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**Related Resource - [Immanuel-Emmanuel](#)**

## MATTHEW 2

Matthew 2:1.

- "Bethlehem" means "house of bread." Out of Bethlehem came the "Bread of Life."

Matthew 2:2.

- God caught the magi with a star, the fishermen with a fish.
- Wise men—philosophers—were the first who came to worship Christ.

Matthew 2:13.

- Obedience requires sometimes activity—"flee;" sometimes patient waiting—"be thou there."

Matthew 2:14.

- Even in his infancy Christ suffered for us.
- God sent one man into the world without sin, but none without sorrow.

[Above are from D L Moody's Bible notes](#)

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### Matthew 2:1-12 Be A Star

Those who turn many to righteousness [shall shine] like the stars forever and ever. —Daniel 12:3

Many today seek stardom by trying to get into the media spotlight. But a young Jewish captive achieved "stardom" in a better way.

When Daniel and his friends were taken captive by a ruthless invading nation, it was unlikely that they would be heard from again. But the godly young men soon distinguished themselves as intelligent and trustworthy.

When the king had a dream that his wise men could not repeat nor interpret, he condemned them to death. After a night of prayer with his friends, Daniel received from God the content of the dream and its interpretation. As a result, the king promoted Daniel to be his chief advisor (see Dan. 2).

If the story ended there, it would be remarkable enough. But some scholars believe that Daniel's influence in Babylon made people aware of messianic prophecies about a Savior who would be born in Bethlehem. Daniel's teaching may have been the reason that 500 years later wise men from the East followed a star to a remote and unfamiliar part of the world to find an infant King, worship Him, and return to their country with the good news of God's incredible journey to earth (Matt. 2:1-12).

By turning others to righteousness, we, like Daniel, can become a star that will shine forever.

Make me a blessing, make me a blessing!

Out of my life may Jesus shine;

Make me a blessing, O Savior, I pray,

Make me a blessing to someone today. —Wilson

You can attract people to Jesus when you have His light in your life.

By Julie Ackerman Link

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## Matthew 2:1-12

A stir begins as soon as Christ is born. He has not spoken a word; he has not wrought a miracle; he has not proclaimed a single doctrine; but 'when Jesus was born,' at the very first, while as yet you hear nothing but infant cries, and can see nothing but infant weakness, still his influence upon the world is manifest. 'When Jesus was born, there came wise men from the east,' and so on. There is infinite power even in an infant Savior. - Spurgeon

It has been truly remarked that the shepherds did not miss their way; they came to Christ at once, while the wise men, even with a star to guide them, yet missed their way, and went to Jerusalem instead of to Bethlehem, and enquired at the palace of Herod, instead of at the stable where the Christ was born." - Spurgeon

They said, 'Where is he that is born King of the Jews?' 'Jews?' Who cared for Jews? Even in those days, Jews were the subject of contempt, for they had aforetime been carried captive into the east. Although they are the very aristocracy of God, his chosen people, yet the nations looked down upon the Jews.- Spurgeon

His kingly status was not conferred on him later on; it was from birth. - D A Carson

**Mt 2:3 "Herod...was troubled"** - This trouble is again testimony to the greatness of Jesus, even as a young child. "Jesus of Nazareth is so potent a factor in the world of mind that, no sooner is he there in his utmost weakness, a now-born King, than he begins to reign. Before he mounts the throne, friends bring him presents, and his enemies compass his death.....Herod heard a good Bible study about the birthplace of the Messiah, but it did him no good. "When the earth-king dabbles in theology, it bodes no good to truth. Herod among the priests and scribes is Herod still. Some men may be well instructed in their Bibles and yet be all the worse for what they have discovered....Mark that the wise men never promised to return to Herod; they probably guessed that all this eager zeal was not quite so pure as it seemed to be, and their silence did not mean consent. - Spurgeon

**Matthew 2:2 "We saw His Star"** - We believe it to have been a luminous appearance in mid-air; probably akin to that which led the children of Israel through the wilderness, which was a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. Whether it was seen in the daylight or not we cannot tell. - Spurgeon

**Matthew 2:10-11** - Those who look for Jesus will see him: those who truly see him will worship him: those who worship him will consecrate their substance to him. - Spurgeon

**Matthew 2:23 "called a Nazarene"** - He meant that the prophets have described the Messiah as one that would be despised and rejected of men. They spoke of him as a great prince and conqueror when they described his second coming, but they set forth his first coming when they spoke of him as a root out of a dry ground without form or comeliness, who when he should be seen would have no beauty that men should desire him. The prophets said that he would be called by a despicable title, and it was so, for his countrymen called him a Nazarene.....Certainly he has long been called a 'Nazarene,' both by Jews and violent unbelievers. Spitting on the ground in disgust, many a time has his fierce adversary hissed out the name 'Nazarene,' as if it were the climax of contempt.....There is always some city or village or another whose inhabitants seem to be the butt of every joke and the object of scorn. The people of such places are thought to be low, uncultured, not-very-smart. That is the kind of place Nazareth was. - Spurgeon

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**SILENT NIGHT** - Franz Gruber was distraught. It was Christmas Eve, 1818, when Gruber, the church organist in the little town of Oberndorf, Bavaria, discovered that his organ was broken. The town was snowbound, and no one in Oberndorf could fix the organ. So Gruber asked church vicar Joseph Mohr to compose a song the congregation could sing without the organ. Early on Christmas Day, Mohr handed his new poem to Gruber, who quickly composed a melody. The people sang the song, and loved it. What Mohr gave Gruber, and what the two of them gave the world, has become a treasured Christmas gift around the world: Silent Night.

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## Matthew 2:1-12

It remains to be seen whether our generation will witness another transfer of power as extraordinary as the passing of Hong Kong from British to Chinese control. The final days and weeks before the July 1 transfer this year were hectic and, at times, tension-filled.



Hong Kong governor Christopher Patten packed his last days in office with a dizzying schedule of events and appearances, then departed the city in style on board the British royal yacht Britannia, accompanied by Prince Charles spectacular, transfer of power in the universe is still ahead. It will come when Jesus Christ returns to claim the kingdoms of this world from Satan and usher in His millennial kingdom. Then all earthly powers, and Satan himself, will be shown to be merely temporary usurpers. Even though Jesus came the first time to die as a sacrifice rather than reign as a King, His birth signaled the end of Satan's kingdom of Jerusalem into a panic (Mt 2:3). The murderous monarch wasn't about to put up with any rival, baby or adult. As we will see on Sunday, he lashed out violently in a futile attempt to do away with heaven's King. adoration that are due Jesus. No distance, inconvenience, or expense was too great a price for them to pay to see the newborn King. The time they actually arrived in Bethlehem is open to interpretation. What they did when they got there is not. They worshiped Jesus and brought Him their finest gifts (v11).in his Jerusalem palace, the Magi followed God's leading and went back home by a different route. Satan had been trying to stamp out God's promised Redeemer since the Garden of Eden—a move that was doomed to frustration. We can see Satan's human ally, Herod, sputtering with rage as he shared his master's frustration. Some day, the baby of Bethlehem will be crowned King of kings and Lord of lords church and Lord of all those who claim Him as their Savior. Is Jesus ruling in your heart today as Lord? He will take no lesser title. The celebration of Christmas and approach of a new year is a great time for you to reaffirm your submission to the Lordship of Christ in your heart and in your home. (Today in the Word)

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**Matthew 2:2** - We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him. - Matthew 2:2

Astronomers as well as theologians have long been fascinated by the star that the Magi followed. If it was an actual scientific event, what could it have been? Historical records and computer simulations have been used to try to help solve this mystery. One suggestion is that the "star" was a time when Jupiter, Saturn, and Mars appeared near one another in the sky, starting about 6 b.c. Another idea is that it was a supernova recorded by Chinese historians in 5 b.c. Law professor Rick Larson believes it was a conjunction of Jupiter and Venus in 2 b.c., since in the culture of that day Jupiter represented kingship and Venus represented motherhood or birth. The Bible doesn't tell us exactly what the star was. Here's what we do know: despite what our Nativity sets show us, the Magi did not arrive on the night of Jesus' birth, but sometime later. The Magi were scholars or wise men, perhaps astronomers or astrologists. They came from the east, presumably meaning east of Palestine, so many scholars guess that the Magi came from Persia or southern Arabia. They certainly seemed unfamiliar with the local political context, particularly the infamous brutality of King Herod in response to any perceived challenge to his rule. Whatever "his star" was, the Magi read an announcement or a story there. They knew a king had been born, and they also knew in what country it happened. We don't know what prophecies or traditions led them to their interpretations and conclusions, but we do know that nature is a witness to the Creator (Ps. 19:1-6) and that God has set eternity in our hearts (Eccl. 3:11). No matter how it happened, we know that God had led these Magi to testify about the birth of His Son as an integral part in this story. Though we aren't Magi being physically guided by a star, we can still look at the stars in the sky to marvel at God's magnificent creation and His creative power. If you have a telescope and weather permits, spend time looking at the night sky. As you gaze at the stars, reflect on how God directed the Magi and protected Joseph, Mary, and Jesus. If there's a planetarium nearby, you could visit a star show with a friend and then discuss the way that God used a star as part of the story of the birth of Jesus. (Today in the Word)

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### **Matthew 2:1 with Micah 5:2 Perfect Predictions**

At the beginning of a new year and a new millennium, we hear many predictions. But then, making predictions is nothing new. In 1983, US News & World Report magazine had a section titled "What The Next 50 Years Will Bring." It had the usual suggestions about the growing importance of computers, about new medical breakthroughs, and about the sleeker, faster ways of getting around. The introduction said, "Prediction is at best a risky business." Then it quoted Sir Francis Bacon, who said, "Dreams and predictions ought to serve but for winter talk by the fireside."

That may be true of man's predictions, but not of God's prophecies. Man may speculate about what will happen next week, but God showed us in the Bible that He knows the future. This truth is one reason we can have absolute confidence in the Book of books. The Old Testament contains hundreds of prophecies about people, events, and nations that have already been fulfilled. The chance of that many predictions coming true is astronomical.

Do you lack confidence in the Bible? Spend some time examining its many fulfilled prophecies. I predict you'll be convinced that it truly is God's Word, and that you can rely on it for everything in your future.

For Further Study

Look up the following prophecies and their fulfillment:

Isaiah 7:14 & Luke 1:26-35;

Micah 5:2 & Matthew 2:1;

In a changing world you can trust God's unchanging Word.

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### **Matthew 2:1-12 Wrapped Up In Greed**

When they had come into the house, they saw the young Child . . . and fell down and worshiped Him. —Matthew 2:11

As followers of Jesus, we must be careful to guard our hearts from greed during this holiday season. In a society that has secularized Christmas, that's not easy.

USA Today reported the results of three polls signaling the erosion of the meaning of Christmas. In a survey of Americans, only one-third said the birth of Jesus is what makes the holiday important.

What is important, then? The presents, of course! According to the poll, 97 percent of us purchase gifts.

While there's nothing wrong with commemorating the gift of God's Son by giving gifts to those we love, this pleasant tradition can easily become greed-infected. Remember the toy-of-choice in 1996, the Tickle Me Elmo doll? Some people bought one for a child or grandchild but gave up that loving idea after learning they could turn the toy into a big profit. Newspapers were soon carrying columns of ads offering the fad-of-the-season doll for many times its purchase price.

If you find yourself caught up in the greed of Christmas, take a moment to sit quietly. In your mind's eye, walk with the wisemen to the Christ-child. Bow before Him and offer Him the gift of your love and worship. Instead of a greedy Christmas this year, let's make it a worshipful one.

Take time this Christmastide to go  
A little way apart,  
And with the hands of prayer prepare  
The house that is your heart. —Anon.

Selfishness makes Christmas a burden; love makes it a delight.

By David Egner

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### **Matthew 2:1-10 Wishing On Stars**

A Star shall come out of Jacob; a Scepter shall rise out of Israel. —Numbers 24:17

On the night Jesus was born, the bright light of a single star announced His birth. It was an announcement that many had hoped and prayed for, yet many missed.

Perhaps they were like me. Perhaps their hopes were more like dreams and their prayers were more like wishes. Maybe they were looking for a star that would grant every whim, not a light that would reveal their sin.

Every Christmas when I sing in our church's annual Festival of Lights program, I wish for several things. I wish for those few magic moments when the choir is so perfectly in tune that I can't hear anyone, yet I can hear everyone. I think that's what the music of heaven will be like.

Every night when people are laughing at the drama, I wish that I could see what's so funny. But I always get stuck in a part of the choir loft that's behind the set.

Yes, I wish for these things, but I know that instead of wishing to hear the pure strains of a few songs, I ought to pray that I will hear God when He speaks.

Instead of wishing I could see the drama, I should pray that my eyes would see Jesus and not be distracted by the world.

Wishing is hoping I'll get what I want from God. A prayer is a plea that God will get what He wants from me.

What Does God Want From Me?

Trust (Psalm 37:3; Proverbs 3:5-6)

Praise (Psalm 67:3; 100:3-4)

Obedience (John 15:8-14; James 1:22-25)

Christmas is a time to think of what God gave to us and what we can give to Him.

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### **Matthew 2:13-21 Out Of Egypt**

Take the young Child and His mother, flee to Egypt. —Matthew 2:13

One year when our family was traveling through Ohio on the way to Grandma's house, we arrived in Columbus just as a tornado warning was issued. Suddenly everything changed as we feared that our children might be in danger.

I mention that story to help us imagine what it was like for Joseph's family as he, Mary, and their young child traveled to Egypt. Herod, not a tornado, threatened them as he sought to kill their little boy. Imagine how frightening it was for them, knowing that "Herod [sought] the young Child to destroy Him" (Matt. 2:13).

We usually take a more idyllic view of Christmastime—lowing cattle and kneeling shepherds in a peaceful scene. But there was no peace for Jesus' family as they sought to escape Herod's horror. Only when an angel told them it was safe did the family go out of Egypt and back home to Nazareth (vv.20-23).

Consider the awe we should feel for the incarnation. Jesus, who enjoyed the majesty of heaven in partnership with the Father, set it all aside to be born in poverty, to face many dangers, and to be crucified for us. Coming out of Egypt is one thing, but leaving heaven for us—that's the grand and amazing part of this story!

Jesus our Savior left heaven above,  
Coming to earth as a Servant with love;  
Laying aside all His glory He came,  
Bringing salvation through faith in His name. —Hess

Jesus came to earth for us so we could go to heaven with Him.

INSIGHT: Today's passage is both a harrowing and a comforting account of early events in Jesus' life. Verse 15 reminds us that the threat to His life and His family's hasty escape to Egypt were within God's plan.

By Dave Branon

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## Matthew 2:2 A Russian Legend

Where is He that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen His star in the east, and are come to worship Him"—Matt. 2:2

The Russian peasantry have a curious tradition. It is that an old woman, the Baboushka, was at work in her house when the wise men from the East passed on their way to find the Christ-child. "Come with us," they said; "we have seen His star in the East, and go to worship Him." "I will come, but not now," she answered; "I have my house to set in order; when this is done I will follow and find Him." But when her work was done the three kings had passed on their way across the desert, and the star shone no more in the darkened heavens. She never saw the Christ-child, but she is living and searching for Him still. For His sake she takes care of all His children. It is she who in Russian and Italian houses is believed to fill the stockings and dress the tree on Christmas morn. The children are awakened by the cry of "Behold the Baboushka!" and spring up hoping to see her before she vanished out of the window. She fancies, the tradition goes, that in each poor little one whom she warms and feeds she may find the Christ-child, whom she neglected ages ago, but is doomed to eternal disappointment.

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## Matthew 2:10 Ready for the Judgment

"When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy."—Matt. 2:10

When they saw the star, they rejoiced. A cause of terror to one person is a cause of joy to another. The baying of a hound on his track strikes dismay to a hunted robber in the woods. The same sound would give cheer to a lost child, when he knew it was his father's hound in search of him. It makes all the difference in the world at which end of the cannon you stand when it is being fired in battle. Its belching fire is the same in either case; but in one instance it is against your enemies, and in the other against you. There is no more terrible thought possible, to the opposer of God, than that the LORD reigneth, and that He is sure to put down all His enemies. There is no thought more comforting than this to the Christian believer. There was an under-witted but a faith-filled Scotch lad in this country, at the time of the great meteoric shower of November, 1833. When on every side men and women were that night in terror at the thought that the hour of final doom had come, this lad's mother aroused him from his sleep with a cry: "Sandy, Sandy, get up, will you? The Day of Judgment has come." Instantly the boy was alive to that call, and was on his feet, shouting, "Glory to God! I'm ready." When the loving followers of Jesus see signs of His appearance, they rejoice with exceeding great joy.

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## Wise men today worship not only the Child of Bethlehem, but also the Man of Calvary.

How wonderful that we on Christmas morn,  
Though centuries have passed since Christ was born,  
May worship still the Living Lord of men,  
Our Savior, Jesus, Babe of Bethlehem. —Hutchings

In his portrayal of the nativity scene, Rembrandt focused attention entirely on the Babe in the manger. He did this by painting a shaft of light so that it falls exclusively on the Christ-child. Although he included other figures, they are shrouded in shadows. Rembrandt wanted nothing to detract from the significance of that baby—who was God in the flesh. He Wanted Christ to be the sole object of adoration.

## GOD'S HIGHEST GIFT

## AWAKENS MAN'S DEEPEST GRATITUDE.

## MATTHEW 3

Matthew 3:2.

- We don't believe in a dry-eyed faith; repentance is the tear in the eye of faith.

Matthew 3:5.

- Sensational preaching.

Matthew 3:11, 12.

- Those baptized with fire escape burning by fire.

Matthew 3:16. The first time the Spirit rested upon man!

- A dove the emblem of peace. Gen. 8:11.
- Of harmlessness. Matt. 10:16.
- Of purity. Song of Solomon 6:9.
- Of beauty. Ps. 68:13

[Above are from D L Moody's Bible notes](#)

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### Matthew 3:11

**ONE GLIMPSE OF GOD'S HOLINESS** - As we become more like the Savior, we become more deeply aware of our own sinfulness. This paradox is not the result of morbid introspection nor evidence of a warped self-image. It's an honest recognition of who we are, who Christ is, and how much we long to be like Him.

The caretaker of the home where Beethoven spent his final years led a group of tourists to the room that housed a stately old piano.

Lifting the cover with an air of reverence, he said, "This was Beethoven's piano!"

A young woman stepped forward, sat down on the music stool, and began playing one of Beethoven's sonatas. Concluding, she spun around and said to the shocked caretaker,

"I suppose many people who visit here like to play Beethoven's piano."

"Well, Miss," he replied, "last summer the world famous Paderewski was here, and some of his friends wanted him to play, but he said, 'No, I am not worthy.'"

After a glimpse of God's holiness, Isaiah cried out, "Woe is me!" (Isa. 6:5) . At the end of his suffering, Job humbly confessed, "Therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes" (Job 42:6). And John the Baptist said of the Messiah, "He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry." A healthy sense of our unworthiness before God makes us rely more than ever on the worthiness of Jesus. That's the secret of becoming like Him. —D. J. De Haan

It is only when men begin to worship that they begin to grow.

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### Matthew 3:2 A Boy's Rebuke

"And sayings Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."—Matt. 3:2

In the neighborhood of Hoddam Castle, Dumfriesshire, Scotland, there was once a tower called the "Tower of Repentance." What gave the tower its name we are not told, but it is said that an English baronet, walking near the castle, saw a shepherd lad lying upon the ground, reading attentively. "What are you reading, lad?" "The Bible, sir." "The Bible, indeed!" laughed the gentleman; "then you must be wiser than the parson. Can you tell me the way to heaven?" "Yes, sir, I can," replied the boy, in no way embarrassed by the mocking tone of the other; "you must go by way of yonder tower." The gentleman saw that the boy had learned right well the lesson of his book, and, being rebuked, he walked away in silence. Does the reader know anything of the Tower of Repentance? If not, let him learn.

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### Matthew 3:3-4 "THE VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS"

Men's hearts were like a wilderness, wherein there is no way; but as loyal subjects throw up roads for the approach of beloved princes, so were men to welcome the Lord, with their hearts made right and ready to receive him.....Lord, let not my meat, my drink, or garments, hinder me in thy work!" - Spurgeon

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**Matthew 3:5--6 Confessed their sins** - The 'Confessing their sins' which went with baptism in the Jordan gave it its meaning. Apart from the acknowledgement of guilt, it would have been a mere bathing of the person without spiritual significance. - Spurgeon

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**Matthew 3:10** - No mere pruning and trimming work did John come to do; he was the handler of a sharp axe that was to fell every worthless tree. - Spurgeon

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**Matthew 3:16-17** - It was the Spirit of God who gave success to Jesus Christ's ministry. - Spurgeon **Ed-** If this is true, which it is,

how much more important is it for all believers to daily die to self and rely wholly on the Holy Spirit for ministry to and through us to a world dead in sin and enemies of God?!)

## MATTHEW 4

Matthew 4:5.

- The devil sets most of us on a pinnacle of self-confidence so that we fall.

Matthew 4:7.

- "It is written again." Do not blot out one passage of Scripture, but set another alongside of it. The Bible is self interpreting. John 19:37.

God must be trusted, not tempted.

Matthew 4:11.

- The first Adam was tempted in a garden, and fell:
- The second Adam in a wilderness, and he came off victorious.

Matthew 4:19.

- If you would be fishers of men, you must leave your old nets.

[Above are from D L Moody's Bible notes](#)

Mt 4:1. Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil.

Only those temptations which we encounter on the way of duty, in the path of consecration, only those has our Lord promised us that we shall conquer.... If you are in temptation for temptation's sake, with no purpose beyond it, you are lost.

Phillips BROOKS.

Mt 4:5, 6, 11. The devil ... saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.... Then the devil leaveth him.

Faith melts promises into arguments as the soldier doth lead into bullets, and then help the Christian to send them with a force to heaven in fervent prayer; whereas a promise in an unbeliever's mouth is like a shot in a gun's mouth without any fire to put to it.

GURNALL.

Mt 4:9. All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.

Rowland Hill once began his sermon by saying, "My friends, the other day I was going down the street, and I saw a drove of pigs following a man. This excited my curiosity so much that I determined to follow. I did so; and, to my great surprise, I saw them follow him to the slaughter-house. I was anxious to know how this was brought about; and I said to the man, 'My friend, how did you manage to induce these pigs to follow you here?'—'Oh! did you not see?' said the man. 'I had a basket of beans under my arm; and I dropped a few as I came along, and so they followed me.' "Yes," said the preacher; "and I thought, so it is the devil has his basket of beans under his arm; and he dropsthem as he goes along; and what multitudes he induces to follow him to an everlasting slaughterhouse! Yes, friends; and all your broad and crowded thoroughfares are strewn with the beans of the devil."

Above from Moody's [One Thousand and One Thoughts from My Library](#)

Before I was old enough to get a driver's license, I had a haunting fear of getting behind the wheel of a car. When I thought about driving with an open stretch of road before me, I was afraid I'd be overwhelmed by an obsession to go as fast as the car would go. I couldn't imagine having the self-control to drive no faster than road conditions and the speed limit would allow. When I turned sixteen, though, I learned that I could control the accelerator instead of being controlled by it. Just because I was able to press the pedal to the floor didn't mean I had to do so.

Many times I've heard people try to justify sin by claiming that a sudden, unusual, and irresistible temptation had confronted them. And sometimes we reason that a certain questionable action might actually be all right because the opportunity came along at just the right time and provided just what we thought we needed.

One of the lessons we learn from the temptation of Jesus is that God will always provide a way of escape from temptation or He will give us the strength to resist it. He expects us to be discerning and to be conscious of the meaning of temptation. Beyond that, He wants us to know that we can rely on His Spirit and His Word, the way Jesus did, and to resist temptation rather than be ruined by it.  
—M. R. De Haan II

Every temptation is an opportunity to get nearer to God.

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#### **Matthew 4:1-11 -**

Luther's remark stands true, that prayer, meditation, and temptation, are the three best instructors of the gospel minister. - Spurgeon

But let us do what we will, we shall be tempted. God had one Son without sin, but he never had a son without temptation.- Spurgeon

Out flashed the sword of the Spirit: our Lord will fight with no other weapon. He could have spoken new revelations, but chose to say, 'It is written.....Satan borrowed our Lord's weapon, and said, "It is written"; but he did not use the sword lawfully. It was not in the nature of the false fiend to quote correctly. He left out the necessary words, 'in all thy ways': thus he made the promise say what in truth it never suggested.....It is noteworthy that all the passages quoted by our Lord are from the Book of Deuteronomy, which book has been so grievously assailed by the destructive critics. Thus did our Lord put special honor upon that part of the Old Testament which he foresaw would be most attacked. The past few years have proved that the devil does not like Deuteronomy: he would fain avenge himself for the wounds it caused him on this most memorable occasion. - Spurgeon

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#### **Matthew 4:1-11**

On the day before my mother died in 1976, my brother and I were called to her bedside. Though too weak for extended conversation, she quoted two verses—Isaiah 41:10 and John 10:29—not simply to con-sole us, but to reinforce her own faith. She held fast to what God had said; and what God said held her fast.

The Word of God has tremendous holding power. When tempted in the wilderness, our Lord overcame the enemy's suggestions by quoting Scripture. He did this to strengthen Himself, not to intimidate Satan. Though sinless, Jesus was truly human, and the temptation was real. Sometimes we allow His deity to overshadow this event and assume that the Savior casually brushed Satan aside with a few Scripture verses. But the Bible leaves no doubt that He was "tempted as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. 4:15). Therefore, the Word held Him steady. Jesus did not quote verses to Satan because they contained some magical power. Rather, He called them to mind to guide and reinforce Himself so that He would remain true to God's will. Because He kept His life under the control of the Word, Satan could not deter Him from doing His Father's will.

Whenever we are tested—whether it's a severe temptation, an overwhelming fear, or the specter of death itself—we can rest with confidence on God's sure and abiding Word. Down through the centuries countless saints have been held by its power, and it is as strong as ever. —D. J. De Haan

The strongest weapon in Satan's arsenal is no match for the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God.

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#### **Matthew 4:6 A Superstitious Use of Scripture**

"He shall give His angels charge concerning Thee: and in their hands they shall bear Thee up, lest at any time Thou dash Thy foot against a stone."—Matt. 4:6

An instructive instance of the effects which may follow a superstitious use of Scripture is recorded in the life of Mr. Lackington. That

celebrated bookseller informs us that, when young, he was at one time locked up to prevent his attending a Methodist meeting in Taunton; and that in a fit of superstition he opened the Bible for directions what to do, and hit upon the above text. "This," says Mr. Lackington, "was quite enough for me; so without a moment's hesitation, I ran up two pairs of stairs to my own room, and out of the window I leaped, to the great terror of my poor mistress." He was, of course, very severely bruised; so severely, indeed, as to be confined to his bed during fourteen days.

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### **Matthew 4:19 Following Christ**

"Follow Me."—Matt. 4:19

It is reported in the Bohemian story, that St. Wenceslaus, their king, one winter night going to his devotions in a remote church, barefooted, in the snow and sharpness of unequal and pointed ice, his servant, Redivivus, who revered his master's piety, and endeavoured to imitate his affections, began to faint through the violence of the snow and cold, till the king commanded him to follow him, and set his feet in the same footsteps which his feet should mark for him. The servant did so, and either fancied a cure or found one; for he followed his prince, helped forward with shame and zeal to his imitation, and by the forming footsteps in the snow. In the same way does the blessed Jesus; for since our way is troublesome, obscure, full of objection and danger, apt to be mistaken, and to affright our industry, He commands us to mark His footsteps, to tread where His feet have stood; and not only invites us forward by the argument of His example, but He hath trodden down much of the difficulty, and made the way easier and fit for our feet.

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### **Matthew 4:19**

They were busy in a lawful occupation when he called them to be ministers: our Lord does not call idlers but fishers. - Spurgeon

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### **Matthew 4:19 "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men."**

There are three words which have been running in my mind for the last few days and have seemed to work themselves into me. I hope I may long keep them. One word is Work, another is Wait, and the other is Pray. Work, work, work! Wait, wait, wait! Pray, pray, pray! I think that these three words will enable a man to be, under God, a true and successful fisher of men.

When Christ calls us by his grace we ought to think of what he can make us. It is "Follow me, and I will make you." It is not "Follow me, because of what you are already." It is not "Follow me, because you may make something of yourselves," but "Follow me, because of what I will make you."

It did not seem a likely thing that lowly fishermen would develop into apostles, that men so handy with the net would be quite as much at home in preaching sermons and in instructing converts. One would have said, "How can these things be? You cannot make founders of churches out of peasants of Galilee." But that is exactly what Christ did!

We cannot be fishers of men if we remain in the same element with them. Fish will not be fishers. The sinner will not convert the sinner. The ungodly man will not convert the ungodly man. And what is more to the point, the worldly Christian will not convert the world.

**Spurgeon**

## **MATTHEW 5**

Matthew 5:

- The Law was given on a mountain to a man of God. The Law was expounded on a mountain by the Son of God.

Matthew 5:5.

- A missionary in Jamaica asked a little black boy, "Who are the meek?" He answered, "Those who give soft answers to rough questions."



Matthew 5:8.

- You must pass through the narrow gate of purity before you can see the King.

Matthew 5:11.

- Who would shake those trees upon which there is no fruit?

Matthew 5:13, 14.

- Salt to preserve, and light to guide. Both silent in action but great in effect.

Matthew 5:14.

- Poor world! What a faint light it receives from most Christians!
- The lighthouse, if its light is not burning, is a peril instead of a safeguard.
- Men do not stumble when the lamp shines brightly.

Matthew 5:16.

- It is not you that is to shine, but your light. The moon shines by reflected light. A diamond is dull in the dark.
- The brighter the light, the less people remark about the lamp.
- The light abides pure, though the air be corrupted in which it shines.

Matthew 5:20. Soul-justifying Saviour. Self-justifying scribes.

Matthew 5:28. There may be guests in the house, although they look not out of the windows. So there may be lust in the heart of a man when his outward life seems pure.

Matthew 5:38. To rise above simple justice is a great question, not of education, but of sanctification.

Matthew 5:44.

- To do evil for good is human corruption.
- To do good for good is civil retribution.
- To do good for evil is Christian perfection.

Plutarch said, "A man should not allow himself to hate even his enemies, because if you indulge this passion on some occasions, it will rise of itself on others. If you hate your enemies, you will contract such a vicious habit of mind, as by degrees will break out upon those who are your friends, or those who are indifferent to you."

Never contract a friendship with a man that is not better than thyself—this was Confucius's advice regarding friendship.

Matthew 5:46.

- As an echo returns the voice it receives, so many will return a kindness when kindness is shown.

Matthew 5:48.

- We have got a good many Christians who are good in spots, but mighty poor in other spots.
- The serene beauty of a holy life is the most powerful influence in the world, next to the might of God.

[Above are from D L Moody's Bible notes](#)

Mt 5:3–12.

Those of us who have traveled in mountain countries know how one range of hills rises behind another, one ever seeming the highest, till yet a higher appears behind it; each has its own beauty, each its own peculiarity.

But in mountain countries there is one range, one line of lofty summits, which always conveys a new sense of beauty, of awe, of sublimity, which nothing else can give—the range of eternal snow. High above all the rest, we see the white peaks standing out in the blue sky, catching the first rays of the rising sun, and the last rays of the sun as it departs. So is it with this range of high Christian character which our Lord has set before us in the Sermon on the Mount. High above all earthly lower happiness, the blessedness of those eight beatitudes towers into the heaven itself. They are white with the snows of eternity; they give a space, a meaning, a dignity to all the rest of the earth over which they brood.

STANLEY.

Mt 5:13. Ye are the salt of the earth.

The salt in Judea was a native salt mingled with various earthy substances. When exposed to the atmosphere and rain, the saline particles in due time wasted away and what was left was an insipid earthy mass, looking like salt, but entirely destitute of a conserving element, and absolutely good for nothing. It was not only good for nothing, but absolutely destructive of all fertility wherever it might be thrown; therefore it was cast into the streets to be trodden under foot of men. The carcass of sheep or bullock might be buried deep in this worthless mass, and the process of corruption not be delayed a moment.

What an illustration is this of the absolute worthlessness of the form of godliness when the power is utterly lacking! "If the salt have lost his savor, wherewith shall it be salted?" How can its salting, conserving property be recovered? What can you do with it? So your savorless religion is not only worthless in its influence on others, but of no good to yourself. It will save neither them nor you from corruption. How sad for one to have lost the power that belongs to the Christian calling, and instead of being the instrument of saving others, becoming a means of their perdition! Well does the Saviour say, in another place, "Have salt in yourselves."

D. D. DEMAREST.

Mt 5:14. Ye are the light of the world.

Every Christian is placed in a centre, of which the globe is the circumference; and each must fill that circumference, as every star forms a centre, and shines through the whole sphere; and yet all meet and mingle, forming one vast field of light.

SPENCER.

Mt 5:16. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

They say the world has an eagle eye for anything inconsistent; and it has an eagle eye, sharp to discover the vagaries and inconsistencies in the defaulty and the unworthy. It has an eagle eye; but the eagle winks before the sun, and the burning iris of its eye shrinks abashed before the unsullied purity of noon. Let your light so shine before men, that others, awed and charmed by the consistency of your godly life, may come to inquire, and to say they have been with Jesus.

PUNSHON.

Mt 5:17. Think not I am come to destroy the law: I am ... come ... to fulfill.

The ten stones of the arch on which our domestic happiness, the purity of society, the security of life and property, and the prosperity of nations stand, the Son of God came from heaven, our substitute, to obey; with His blood, not to abrogate, but to enforce; on His cross to exalt, not in His tomb to bury; and, cementing the arch with His precious blood, to lend to laws that had the highest authority of Sinai, the no less solemn and more affecting sanctions of Calvary.

GUTHRIE.

Above from Moody's [One Thousand and One Thoughts from My Library](#)

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## Matthew 5:1-12

According to Bill Farmer's newspaper column, J. Upton Dickson was a fun-loving fellow who said he was writing a book entitled Cower Power. He also founded a group for submissive people and called it DOORMATS (Dependent Organization Of Really Meek And Timid Souls—if there are no objections). Their motto was: "The meek shall inherit the earth—if that's okay with everybody." Their symbol was the yellow traffic light.

Mr. Dickson sounds like he'd be a lot of fun. What disturbs me about all of this, though, is that many people assume that such humorous ideas represent the true quality of meekness set forth in Matthew 5:5. Many, even in the church, think that to be meek is

to be weak. But the opposite is true. What the Bible is talking about is a powerful virtue. The slogan "strong enough to be gentle" comes close to defining it. True meekness is best seen in Christ. He was submissive, never resisting or disputing the will of God. His absolute trust in the Father enabled Him to show compassion, courage, and self-sacrifice even in the most hostile situations.

When we are meek, we will bear insults without lashing out in resentment or retaliation. We'll thank God in every circumstance, while using every circumstance, good or bad, as an occasion to submit to Him. Meekness would be weakness if it meant yielding to sin. But because it stems from goodness and godliness, it is a great strength.—M. R. De Haan II

Meekness is strength harnessed for service.

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#### Matthew 5:2ff -

It is not superfluous to say that 'he opened his mouth, and taught them,' for he had taught them often when his mouth was closed....Jesus Christ spoke like a man in earnest; he enunciated clearly, and spake loudly. He lifted up his voice like a trumpet, and published salvation far and wide, like a man who had something to say which he desired his audience to hear and feel.....You have not failed to notice that the last word of the Old Testament is '**curse**,' (Malachi 4:6) and it is suggestive that the opening sermon of our Lord's ministry commences with the word 'Blessed.'.....Note, also, with delight, that the blessing is in every case in the present tense, a happiness to be now enjoyed and delighted in. It is not 'Blessed shall be,' but 'Blessed are.' - Spurgeon

**Poor in spirit** - A ladder, if it is to be of any use, must have its first step near the ground, or feeble climbers will never be able to mount. It would have been a grievous discouragement to struggling faith if the first blessing had been given to the pure in heart; to that excellence the young beginner makes no claim, while to poverty of spirit he can reach without going beyond his line....Everyone can start here; it isn't first blessed are the pure or the holy or the spiritual or the wonderful. Everyone can be poor in spirit. "Not what I have, but what I have not, is the first point of contact, between my soul and God.....The poor in spirit are lifted from the dunghill, and set, not among hired servants in the field, but among princes in the kingdom ... 'Poor in spirit,' the words sound as if they described the owners of nothing, and yet they describe the inheritors of all things. Happy poverty! Millionaires sink into insignificance, the treasure of the Indies evaporate in smoke, while to the poor in spirit remains a boundless, endless, faultless kingdom, which renders them blessed in the esteem of him who is God over all, blessed for ever." - Spurgeon

**The meek** (Mt 5:5KJV) - It looks as if they would be pushed out of the world but they shall not be, 'for they shall inherit the earth.' The wolves devour the sheep, yet there are more sheep in the world than there are wolves, and the sheep, continue to multiply, and to feed in green pastures.....I had only to look upon it, all as the sun shone upon it, and then to look up to heaven, and say, 'My Father, this is all thine; and, therefore, it is all mine; for I am an heir of God, and a joint-heir with Jesus Christ.' So, in this sense, the meek-spirited man inherits the whole earth. - Spurgeon

**Righteousness** (Mt 5:6) - 'Alas!' says he, 'it is not enough for me to know that my sin is forgiven. I have a fountain of sin within my heart, and bitter waters continually flow from it. Oh, that my nature could be changed, so that I, the lover of sin, could be made a lover of that which is good; that I, now full of evil, could become full of holiness!....He **hungers and thirsts after righteousness**. He does not hunger and thirst that his own political party may get into power, but he does hunger and thirst that righteousness may be done in the land. He does not hunger and thirst that his own opinions may come to the front, and that his own sect or denomination may increase in numbers and influence, but he does desire that righteousness may come to the fore. - Spurgeon

**Hungering and thirsting for the world** - One day, at an hotel dinner table, I was talking with a brother-minister about certain spiritual things when a gentleman, who sat opposite to us, and who had a serviette tucked under his chin, and a face that indicated his fondness for wine, made, this remark, 'I have been in this world for sixty years, and I have never yet been conscious of anything spiritual.' We did not say what we thought, but we thought it was very likely that what he said was perfectly true; and there are a great many more people in the world who might say the same as he did. But that, only proved that he was not conscious of anything spiritual; not that others were not conscious of it. - Spurgeon

**Pure in heart** (Mt 5:8) - Christ was dealing with men's spirits, with their inner and spiritual nature. He did this more or less in all the Beatitudes, and this one strikes the very center of the target as he says, not 'Blessed are the pure in language, or the pure in action,' much less 'Blessed are the pure in ceremonies, or in raiment,

or in food;' but 'Blessed are the pure in heart.' - Spurgeon

**Peaceable** (Mt 5:9) - The verse which precedes it speaks of the blessedness of 'the pure in heart, for they shall see God.' It is well that we should understand this. We are to be 'first pure, then peaceable.' Our peaceableness is never to be a compact with sin, or an alliance with that which is evil. We must set our faces like flints against everything which is contrary to God and his holiness. That being in our souls a settled matter, we can go on to peaceableness towards men.....And he sometimes putteth himself between the two, when they are very angry, and taketh the blows from both sides, for he knows that so Jesus did, who took the blows from his Father and from us also, that so by suffering in our stead, peace might be made between God and man. - Spurgeon

**Light of the world** (Mt 5:14-16) - This title had been given by the Jews to certain of their eminent Rabbis. With great pomposity they spoke of Rabbi Judah, or Rabbi Jochanan, as the lamps of the universe, the lights of the world. It must have sounded strangely in the ears of the Scribes and Pharisees to hear that same title, in all soberness, applied to a few bronzed-faced and horny-handed peasants and fishermen, who had become disciples of Jesus.....Poor world, poor world, it is dark, and gropes in midnight, and it cannot get light except it receives it through us!... To be the light of the world surrounds life with the most stupendous responsibilities, and so invests it with the most solemn dignity. Hear this, ye humble men and women, ye who have made no figure in society, ye are the light of the world. If ye burn dimly, dim is the world's light, and dense its darkness.....Christ never contemplated the production of secret Christians,—Christians whose virtues would never be displayed,—pilgrims who would travel to heaven by night, and never be seen by their fellow-pilgrims or anyone else.....What a lamp-stand was found for Christianity in the martyrdoms of the Coliseum, in the public burnings by pagans and papists, and in all the other modes by which believers in Christ were forced into fame.....The text says that the candle gives light to all that are in the house. Some professors give light only to a part of the house. I have known women very good to all but their husbands, and these they nag from night to night, so that they give no light to them. I have known husbands so often out at meetings that they neglect home, and thus their wives miss the light.....The venerable Bede, when he was interpreting this text, said that Christ Jesus brought the light of Deity into the poor lantern of our humanity, and then set it upon the candlestick of his church that the whole house of the world might be lit up thereby. So indeed it is. - Spurgeon

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## Matthew 5:1-12

If we make holiness our goal, we'll attain happiness; if we make happiness our goal, we'll search a lifetime and never find it. Jesus implies this in the Sermon on the Mount. He said that the way to blessedness is through poverty of spirit, purity of heart, and a longing for righteousness. But He also stated that this path may bring persecution (vv. 10-12).

Some people think they can achieve happiness by getting rid of restrictions. Eliminating rules and regulations, they reason, would remove the frustration of having to decide between right and wrong, thereby avoiding separation in human relationships. One man who follows this philosophy said, "It is more important to me to enjoy my life and to be happy than it is to be right. Being right and suffering is no fun. This has been forcefully and clearly revealed to me in my relationship with my seven-year-old. Time and time again I see that [saying he's wrong] . . . only creates suffering and separation between us.

When we apply this line of reasoning to absolute standards of morality, we are in deep trouble. It denies the reality of sin in our hearts as the source of all our woes and forgets that all lasting joy is rooted in separation—separation from evil and unto God. —D. J. De Haan

Nothing but sin can take away the Christian's joy.

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## Matthew 5:3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

Learn this lesson—not to trust Christ because you repent, but trust Christ to make you repent; not to come to Christ because you have a broken heart, but to come to him that he may give you a broken heart; not to come to him because you are fit to come, but to come to him because you are unfit to come. Your fitness is your unfitness. Your qualification is your lack of qualification.

Spurgeon

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## Matthew 5:3

An artist searching for a man to model as the prodigal son saw a beggar in the street and asked him to come to his studio and pose

for him, promising to pay him. At the appointed time the man appeared, neatly shaven and all dressed up. "Who are you?" asked the artist. "I am the beggar," answered the man. "I thought I'd get cleaned up before I got painted." "I can't use you as you are now," said the artist, and dismissed him.

All who come to Jesus for salvation must come just as they are. Simple trust in Christ—with no claim of their own merits—that's what God is looking for. This attitude is also a key to growth in grace and a life of useful service. After we are saved, we may begin to think that we must clean ourselves up in order to prove ourselves worthy. Although we must "work out" our own salvation, pride and conceit blind us to the truth that it is God who works in us "both to will and to do for His good pleasure" (Phil. 2:12-13).

Paul put it like this: "He who glories, let him glory in the LORD" (1 Cor. 1:31). Our part is to yield to His working in us.

Continued spiritual progress requires that we honestly recognize our continual spiritual poverty. Although we are saved once and for all, we must maintain that basic sense of need that prompted our initial response to Jesus in order for God's Spirit to remain in control. God can use only those who rely on Him and maintain a prodigal posture throughout all of life. —D. J. De Haan

To be rich in God is better than to be rich in goods.

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#### **Matthew 5:4**

It isn't good to brood about our sins nor to lament constantly over our shortcomings. But neither should we take them too lightly. To disobey the moral law of a holy God is a serious thing. Although as Christians we bask in the warm glow of divine forgiveness, we must never minimize the awful reality of sin.

A young pastor visited Dundee, Scotland, shortly after Robert Murray McCheyne died at age thirty. Many people had come to Christ because of McCheyne's ministry, and the visitor wanted to know the secret of his great influence. The old sexton of McCheyne's church led the preacher into the rectory and showed him some of McCheyne's books lying on a table. Then he motioned to the chair the evangelist had used, and said, "Sit down and put your elbows on the table." The visitor obeyed. "Now put your head in your hands." He complied. "Now let the tears flow; that's what McCheyne did." Next he led him into the church and said, "Put your elbows on the pulpit." The visitor did. "Now put your face in your hands." He obeyed. "Now let the tears flow; that's what McCheyne used to do."

Robert Murray McCheyne cried freely over his sins and over those of his people. By contrast, our emotions are often hardened toward sin. We need to be more sensitive to the convicting voice of God's Spirit and more determined to live a separated life. We may rejoice in God's forgiveness, but we should never be afraid to mourn for our sins.—D. C. Egner

Calvary proves that sin troubles God—does it trouble you?

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#### **Matthew 5:5**

**Cower Power** - According to Bill Farmer's newspaper column, J. Upton Dickson was a fun-loving fellow who said he was writing a book entitled Cower Power. He also founded a group of submissive people. It was called DOORMATS. That stands for "Dependent Organization Of Really Meek And Timid Souls—if there are no objections." Their motto was: "The meek shall inherit the earth—if that's okay with everybody." Their symbol was the yellow traffic light.

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#### **Matthew 5:6 "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness."**

Never does the Lord work in any man a firm resolution to find the Savior and yet allow him to perish.

He is blessed because in the presence of this hunger many meaner hungers die out. One master passion, like Aaron's rod, swallows up all the rest. He hungers and thirsts after righteousness, and therefore he is done with the craving of lust, the greed of avarice, the passion of hate, and pining of ambition.

**Spurgeon**

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#### **Matthew 5:6**

**Best Way to Acquire Knowledge** - A devoted follower of Socrates asked him the best way to acquire knowledge. Socrates responded by leading him to a river and plunging him beneath the surface. The man struggled to free himself, but Socrates kept his head submerged. Finally, after much effort, the man was able to break loose and emerge from the water. Socrates then asked, "When you thought you were drowning, what one thing did you want most of all?" Still gasping for breath, the man exclaimed, "I wanted air!" The philosopher wisely commented, "When you want knowledge as much as you wanted air, then you will get it!" The

same is true with our desire for righteousness.

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### **Matthew 5:7**

In the Sermon on the Mount, the Lord Jesus teaches us to combine idealism with realism. He shows us how to keep from getting so wrapped up in life as it is that we don't see life as it should be. On the other hand, He teaches us to avoid making the equally destructive mistake of becoming so attached to our ideals that we make impossible demands on those around us.

Columnist Sidney J. Harris wrote about the negative effects of impractical idealism. He described an author who had so much to give in his books, but so little to offer in real life. When Harris first read this writer's works, he thought they were "like a breath of fresh air in a fetid chamber. . . . He was big on Humanity, with a capital H, on family ties and folkways and children and animals and flowers...." But, as Harris laments, it was not an idealism borne out in the author's own life. At home the man was a tyrant to his wife and a terror to his children. He had an unrealistic ideal of what others should be, and he could not tolerate their imperfections.

Christ instructs us to maintain a balance. His own example shows us how to respond in truth and love to those who are imperfect. He teaches us to be right but never to exclude mercy. If we follow Christ's example, we will hold to the highest ideals, but we'll always be in touch with the real world because our hearts are filled with love.—M. R. De Haan II

A righteous heart makes room for mercy.

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### **Matthew 5:13-16 Salt Of The Earth**

You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, . . . it is then good for nothing. —Matthew 5:13

What did Jesus mean when He told His followers that they were "the salt of the earth"? (Matthew 5:13). In the ancient world, salt had many uses. For one, it preserved food. Without salt, meat and fish would quickly spoil. In a similar way, Christians who uphold God's moral standards can slow the decay of society.

Salt was also used as fertilizer. Until the mid-1900s, English farmers added salt to their fields to increase the yield. Salt helped crops to grow. Christians too can encourage the growth of what is good wherever they live.

Salt also brings out the flavor of food. By their witness, salty believers help the people around them to taste life fully as God intended.

Yet Jesus warned that salt can lose its flavor. Pure salt as we know it, made up of sodium chloride, can't lose its taste. In ancient Israel, however, farmers would dig salt from the shores of the Dead Sea. Although it was called salt and looked like salt, it was mixed with other substances. Farmers would make a pile of the salty material to use on their crops, but when the rains came, the pure salt would sometimes drain away. What was left looked like salt, but it had lost its saltiness.

What about you? Are you a salty Christian?

Keep our witness bright and clear,  
So the world may see and hear  
God's salvation far and near—  
That others too may know Him. —Hess

A salty Christian makes others thirsty for Jesus, the Water of Life.

By Haddon Robinson

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**Matthew 5:13** - Pure salt cannot lose its savor ("saltiness"), but the salt commonly used in the ancient world was rock salt, containing various impurities (especially gypsum). As the true salt was leached away, or otherwise removed, the so-called "salt" could indeed lose its savor and become tasteless. When those who profess to be Christians cease to be different from the world, we cease to be useful as retardants of decay. Jesus emphasized that our ability to preserve the world in order that it may see Christ in us depends on our being different. It is dangerously easy for Christians to lose their salty, preserving influence in the world. Remember that many people who never read the Bible are constantly reading us! If our conduct is untrue to our calling, our words will avail very little. Gospel preaching without holy, supernatural living is futile.

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**Warren Wiersbe** in his preface to "[Be Holy](#)", an exposition of Leviticus writes "Whatever else the professing Christian church may be known for today—great crowds, expensive buildings, big budgets, political clout—it's not distinguished for its holiness. Bible-believing evangelical Christians make up a sizable minority in the United States, but our presence isn't making much of an impact

on society. The salt seems to have lost its saltiness, and the light is so well hidden that the marketplace is quite dark. ([Wiersbe, W. W. Be Holy. Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books](#))

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**S. Lewis Johnson** quipped that "'Often the only version of the Bible the world reads is that of the believer's life, and, if that is true, in the light of the weakness of the church's testimony today surely the world could use a revised version!'"

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**George Barna** alludes to another potential source of **tasteless salt** noting that four out of ten people who call themselves evangelical Christians don't believe there is such a thing as absolute truth. **Barna** concludes "That's the heart of the problem we're struggling with. Think about the implications for evangelism, personal spiritual growth, and having a church that really is the salt and the light. It's pretty frightening."

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**Matthew 5:13 - Here is a sad example of tasteless salt...** Gandhi says in his autobiography that in his student days he was truly interested in the Bible. Deeply touched by reading the Gospels, he seriously considered becoming a convert, since Christianity seemed to offer the real solution to the caste system that was dividing the people of India. One Sunday he went to a nearby church. He decided to see the minister and ask for instruction in the way of salvation and enlightenment on other doctrines. But when he entered the sanctuary, the ushers refused to give him a seat and suggested that he go worship with his own people. Gandhi left and never came back. He reasoned that "If Christians have caste differences also, I might as well remain a Hindu." The partiality showed by those Christians had a devastating effect on India and the world. As we have studied, they failed to manifest the sweet aroma and saltiness of the fifth beatitude, demonstrating mercy (Mt 5:7-note) Mahatma Gandhi was also quoted as answering a missionary's question "**What is the greatest hindrance to Christianity in India?**" with the trite reply "**Christians**"!

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**Vance Havner** has some **salty words** on how to be **salty Christians** (keeping in mind that the primary function of salt in Jesus' day was preservation and which undoubtedly was His main meaning, although it does not preclude some of these other nuances of significance - the danger with metaphors is that we take them further than God intended, so keep that in mind as you read this and any commentary on the meaning of "salty Christians")...

It might have seemed ridiculous to a casual bystander for Jesus to say to a handful of ordinary men, "You are the salt of the earth and I am sending you out to **permeate** and **infiltrate** and **season** the whole world." Yet that little band, that **pinch of salt**, started something that has survived the centuries and changed the history of mankind.

Our Lord used the simplest figures of speech. Nothing is plainer, more universal and old-fashioned than salt. It is such a common commodity that we take it for granted, but if suddenly no salt could be had, what a difference that would make! What would life be without salt! A little boy said, "Salt is what tastes bad when you don't have it." Christians are the salt of the earth and we ought to make a difference.

**1. Salt has a seasoning influence.** There ought to be a flavor, a tang, a relish, and a zest about us Christians. Someone has said that our main trouble today is not that our doctrine is false, but that our experience is flat.

**2. Salt preserves.** Civilization has been saved from destruction by the restraining influence of the Holy Spirit in Christians. Salt prevents decay and restrains corruption. One godly person in a group will restrain evil conversation.

**3. Salt purifies and cleanses.** The best gargle for a sore throat is plain salt water. The church of Jesus Christ has had a purifying influence wherever it has gone. You may think that your community is in a bad state, but take out the church and you would not want to live there.

**4. Salt heals.** Lives are changed, souls saved, homes rescued from disaster, broken hearts mended, sorrows eased, burdens lifted, sick bodies and minds made well because of the antiseptic and therapeutic power of the Holy Spirit working through God's people, the salt of the earth.

**5. Salt creates thirst.** God's people should develop in the hearts of men a desire to know God. We ought so to live that others would want the peace and joy they see in us. Does anybody want to be a Christian like you? The best argument for Christianity is a Christian.

**6. Salt irritates.** When the salt of God's truth is rubbed into this diseased old world, sick souls may smart. When the light is turned on, some will wince. The devil hates the Gospel and fights back... We are not the sugar of the earth-nor the vinegar-but we are salt and we will not be welcomed by a generation full of wounds, bruises and putrefying sores.

We need to get into the salt business and we must start with a few. This is God's program today. It sounds old-fashioned, but salt is old-fashioned, sin is old-fashioned and so is the Gospel. We have been tickling palates with **fancy flavors, spicy relishes, and clever recipes** borrowed from the world. Too many **pulpit gourmets** and **theological epicures** with menus from Hollywood are trying to please the jaded appetites of a fed up humanity. We need old-fashioned salt, and if we do not start producing more of it in our churches, we shall be good for nothing but to be cast out and trodden under foot of men.

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**Vance Havner** reminds us that...

We are the salt of the earth, not the sugar, and our ministry is truly to cleanse and not just to change the taste.

Too many Christians live their Christian lives inside their heads; it never gets out through hands and feet and lips.

Salt must be brought into close contact with whatever it is meant to affect if it is to do any good. Christians are the salt of the earth. We must be willing to be rubbed into the decaying carcass of an unregenerate society. Most of us are content to sit on Sunday in our little salt-shakers, far removed from a needy and lost humanity. A box of garden seeds looks very attractive with its pretty colored packages but those seeds must be emptied from the pretty packages into the dirty earth to die and come up again if we are to have anything to eat. Christians look pretty enough in church on Sunday morning but "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone. ." (John 12:24).

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**Phil Newton** illustrates becoming tasteless relating that he knew of "two men, one a theologian and another a pastor that was arrested in two different parts of the country for perverted, immoral behavior. That is the extreme, I grant you, yet it is not something that we can take lightly or think we are immune to in our own lives. Our propensity for sin is great; so we must constantly be anchored in the cross of Christ and His gospel. They have lost their saltiness in the world. But many more do that without ever being arrested for a crime. Complaining Christians are tasteless Christians. Those that are lazy, undisciplined, arrogant, prideful, critical, mean-spirited have lost their pungent influence upon the world about them. How about your pungency? Are you salty where God has put you? Or have you so given in to the world that you are in danger of becoming tasteless to a world that desperately needs your saltiness in Christ? ([Problem of Tasteless Christianity](#))

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**Matthew 5:13 - J Vernon McGee** has a pithy ("peppery") note on Christians as salt writing that "God's people in any age and under any condition are both salt and light in the world. The Scots translate "savour" by the more expressive word tang. I like their word much better. "If the salt has lost its tang." The problem today is that most church members have not only lost their tang as salt, but as pepper they have lost their pep also. We have very few salt and pepper Christians in our day. Now salt doesn't keep fermentation and that type of thing from taking place, but it will arrest it. You and I ought to be the salt in the earth and have an influence for good in the world. ([McGee, J V: Thru the Bible Commentary Nashville: Thomas Nelson](#))

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**Matthew 5:13 - Salty Salt.** The story has often been told about Dr. Will H. Houghton, who pastored the Calvary Baptist Church in New York City and later served as president of Chicago's Moody Bible Institute till his death in 1946. When Dr. Houghton became pastor of the Baptist Tabernacle in Atlanta, a man in that city hired a private detective to follow Dr. Houghton and report on his conduct. After a few weeks, the detective was able to report to the man that Dr. Houghton's life matched his preaching. As a result, that man became a Christian.

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**Matthew 5:13 "If the salt have lost his savor ... it is ... good for nothing."**

The teacher said, "Boys, here's a watch. What is it for?"

The children answered, "To tell the time."

"Well," said he, "suppose my watch does not tell the time. What is it good for?"

"Good for nothing, sir."

Then he took a pencil. "What is this pencil for?"

"It is to write with, sir."

Suppose the pencil won't make a mark. What is it good for?"

"Good for nothing, sir."

Then the teacher asked, "What is the chief end of man?" and they replied, "To glorify God."

"But suppose a man does not glorify God. What is he good for?"

"Good for nothing, sir."



### **Matthew 5:13-20 Needed: A Big Thaw**

You are the salt of the earth . . . . You are the light of the world. —Matthew 5:13-14

Several years ago, a fire destroyed a building that contained tons of ice. Author Carl Franke said that although the building had contained thousands of gallons of potential extinguisher, the water was not in usable form. The building was full of frozen assets!

Unfortunately, many individuals and churches have a similar problem. In spite of being blessed with tons of resources for witness and service, God's chosen people are often God's "frozen people."

Jesus said that we are salt and light, but He warned against losing our saltiness and hiding our light (Mt. 5:13-20). Here are two safeguards to prevent this from happening:

1. Salt as a seasoning is useless unless it's in contact with food and mixed into it. Jesus calls us to "flavor" society in His name through close involvement with people.
2. Light is meant to be visible. Secret believers need to come out of hiding and be known as disciples. Their profession of faith must become self-evident through their good works. D. L. Moody said, "Lighthouses don't fire cannons to call attention to their shining. They just shine."

We are to season society and light up our world for Christ. It's time to thaw out the frozen assets in our lives.

Lord, help us be a shining light  
So others then may see  
Your mercy and Your love displayed  
In what we strive to be. —Sper

Our purpose on earth is not to get used to the dark, but to shine as lights.

By Joanie Yoder

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### **Matthew 5:13-16 A Big Man Playing Small**

Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus. —Colossians 3:17

A journalism professor disguised himself as a homeless person and spent a few nights on the streets of a large city. He reported that the shelters provided him with sandwiches and soft drinks, but that nobody—not even at a church-run shelter—offered a word of spiritual counsel.

Columnist William Raspberry says that when the church fails to offer spiritual help, it is "playing away from its strength." It's like a 7-foot basketball player who attempts long jumpshots, or when he's near the basket keeps bringing the ball down to chest level before shooting. Coaches refer to a tall player who wastes his height advantage as "a big man playing small."

We are like that basketball player when we focus solely on meeting physical needs but fail to give out the life-transforming salvation message that God has entrusted to us. It's commendable to be kind and generous in providing for others. But if we fail to point them to the answer for their deepest need, if we do not introduce them to Jesus Christ, we are "playing away from our strength." We are doing what any unbeliever could do, and not doing what only we can do. We are like salt that has lost its saltiness (Matthew 5:13), like a light hidden under a basket (vv.14-16), like "a big man playing small." —HVL

Thinking It Over  
How can acts of compassion open doors to witness?  
Do others think of you not only as a nice person,  
but also as a follower of Jesus Christ?

Good deeds are no substitute for the Good News.

By Herbert VanderLugt

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### **Matthew 5:13-16 Your Life's Handwriting**

You are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read by all men. —2 Corinthians 3:2

Some people believe that our hand-writing reveals our character. Experts in the field of graphology watch for things like the slant of letters, the way they are formed, where the “t” is crossed, and how the “i” is dotted. Based on these distinctions, conclusions are drawn about one’s personality. We are told that the style of our writing shows whether we are outgoing or withdrawn, individualistic or of a conforming nature.

While some may question the reliability of this practice, it reminds me of what the apostle Paul said in 2 Corinthians 3:2. He told us that Christians are epistles “known and read by all men.” The way we compose the letters of our conduct indicates the kind of persons we really are.

If we are trying to please the Lord Jesus Christ, the handwriting of our lives will reveal a love for others and a responsiveness to their needs. We will also express an individuality and a willingness to stand alone for righteousness’ sake if duty demands it. Each day we will try to adjust our behavior to the will of our heavenly Father.

Allow the Savior to live through you by relying on His power. Then let the handwriting of your life tell others you belong to Him.

You are writing a gospel, a chapter each day,  
By the deeds that you do, by the words that you say;  
People read what you write, whether faithless or true—  
Say, what is the gospel according to you? —Anon.

The Christian’s life is the world’s Bible.

By Richard DeHaan

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### **Matthew 5:13-16 In The Driver’s Seat**

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. —Matthew 5:16

I love the story of the stressed-out woman who was tailgating a man as they drove on a busy boulevard. When he slowed to a stop at a yellow light, the woman hit the horn, cussing and screaming in frustration and gesturing angrily. As she was still in mid-rant, she heard a tap on her window and looked up into the face of a police officer who ordered her to exit the car with her hands up. He took her to the police station and placed her in a holding cell.

An hour later, the officer returned and said, “I’m sorry, Ma’am. This has been a big mistake. When I pulled up behind you, I noticed your ‘What Would Jesus Do?’ license plate holder and your ‘Follow Me to Sunday School’ bumper sticker. I assumed the car was stolen!”

Satan doesn’t care so much if you’re a Christian as long as you don’t act like one. If he can get you to live by his signals, he can damage and disarm you every time and dishonor the name of Christ in the process.

Instead, Jesus calls believers to be “salt” and to “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven” (Matt. 5:16).

With Jesus in the driver’s seat of our lives, we can show off the love and glory of God.

Called to be salt and light in this world,  
Called to preserve and to shine,  
Called to reflect the glory of God—  
Oh, what a calling is mine! —Fitzhugh

Don’t let Satan manage the details of your life.

By Joe Stowell

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**Matthew 5:16 SEEING THE GOSPEL** - A man once asked a new acquaintance in a remote area of the world, "Have you ever heard the Gospel?" "No," the other replied, "I have never heard it, but I have seen it." "What do you mean by that?" the Christian responded. "Simply this," he said, "there is a man in our village whose life has been greatly influenced by a missionary who passed this way. Never have I seen such a change in a person! Before he met the man of God, alcohol ruled his life. He was lazy, neglected his family, and showed no interest in anyone else. Since then, however, his manner of living is completely different. He is no longer a slave to liquor. He works hard and is a good husband and father. I would be proud to have him as my neighbor. Yes, I have seen the

Gospel and like it so well I would now like to hear it!" Be-cause the Gospel had been lived eloquently, it could be told effectively.

To be faithful in our witness for Christ, it is essential that the message of His saving grace and transforming power be shown as well as told. If our deeds contradict our words, we might better remain silent. May the example of our lives be so consistent with the testimony of our lips that no one could ever say to us, "Your actions speak so loud that I can't hear what. you say."

The walk of the believer should be a living sermon. The world is watching us with a critical eye. Let us be careful, then, making sure that others are "seeing the Gospel" at its very best!

Jesus bids us shine with a clear, pure light, Like a little candle burning in the night, In this world of darkness we must shine, You in your small corner, and I in mine.

Jesus bids us shine, first of all for Him;  
Well He sees and knows it if our light is dim;  
He looks down from Heaven, sees us shine,  
You in your small corner; and I in mine! —Warner

The only sermon that never wearies us is that of an eloquent life!

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**Matthew 5:14-16 Story Related by Phil Newton** - R. L. Dabney told a story of a very worldly-minded attorney in the 19th century that cared nothing for Christianity. After years of ungodly living and scorning of Christians, as he grew old he went to live with his sister who happened to be a Christian. Her son was a pastor, and he had opportunity to engage the old man in conversation about Christ and even recommend some books to him. Some time later, ill in health, the old attorney asked to confess his faith in Christ publicly. The nephew was eager to get the full story and wondered if his conversation had been the instrument of turning the callused man's heart to Christ. But as the story unfolded he discovered that it was not the pastor's words or even the books that he recommended that the man read, but it was the godly life of the pastor's sister, still living at home and around the old man. He saw her godliness and radiance as a Christian in every situation, and it caused him to seek the Lord to know that same relationship to Jesus Christ. Dabney adds, "The light of a holy example is the gospel's main argument" [Discussions of Robert Lewis Dabney, vol. I, 114]. Is your life a good argument for the gospel? ([The Power of Christians as Light](#))

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**Note carefully** that neither Jesus nor Paul tell us to be **searchlights** or **spotlights** but like lights in lighthouses in the dark spiritual night of this world and that by so doing we might prevent tragic shipwreck and eternal loss of some who have eyes to see the light of Christ! How is the light in your lighthouse shining? Remember that we are not here to get used to the dark but to shine as lights.

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### **Matthew 5:13-16 Shine Where You Are**

You shine as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life. —Philippians 2:15-16

The name of Peter Carter is probably unknown to most people today. He was a 19th-century American Presbyterian pastor. He wasn't as famous a pulpiteer as Charles Haddon Spurgeon. He didn't write great works of theology like his contemporary Charles Hodge. He never achieved the international recognition of Henry Ward Beecher of the Brooklyn Tabernacle. But he lived his faith in such a way that he encouraged hundreds of people to trust and serve Jesus Christ. Carter radiated the Savior's love to children as well as to adults.

For example, a visitor asked some of the children in Carter's Sunday school if they knew the Good Shepherd. "Oh, yes," they answered. "He's Pastor Peter Carter." Missionary-statesman Robert E. Speer said, "If all the reasoned arguments in support of Christianity were destroyed, Peter Carter and the two or three men like him I have known would remain for me as its impregnable basis and defense."

Even if we think of ourselves as rather ordinary believers, all of us can by God's grace be shining lights that "glorify [our] Father in heaven" and point people to the Savior (Matthew 5:16; Philippians 2:14-16). We too can be flesh-and-blood evidence that the gospel is true.

I want my life to shine for Jesus  
So that everywhere I go  
The watching world will see He loves them  
And His saving grace will know. —Hess

God put us on earth to shine as lights, not to get used to the dark.

**One question you might be asking is this** - I understand Christians are light in the Lord and that we are not to hide our light from the world, but is there any way we can assure that we stay bright, clear beacons of light? Kent Hughes tells the following story that illustrates how this is possible writing that...

A man returning from a journey brought his wife a matchbox that would glow in the dark. After he gave it to her, she turned out the light, but it could not be seen. Both thought they had been cheated. Then the wife noticed some French words on the box and asked a friend to translate them. The inscription said:

"If you want me to shine in the night, keep me in the light."

So it is with us! We must expose ourselves to Jesus, delight in his Word, and spend time in prayer soaking up His rays. (Hughes, R. K. [Sermon on the Mount: The Message of the Kingdom. Crossway Books](#))

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**Matthew 5:14-16 - Lights in the World** - It's easy to see that we live "in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation" (Phil 2:15). We are continually reminded that we live in a fallen world by our own sinful tendencies, by newspaper headlines that report horrifying crimes, and by a society that is growing accustomed to gross immorality.

Against this backdrop of darkness, followers of Jesus are told to be "lights in the world" (Phil. 2:15). Yet our conduct often reflects a dim and distorted image of Him. That's why Paul warned us against "complaining and disputing" (Php 2:14) and urged us to put our salvation to work with reverence for God (Php 2:12-13).

We may wonder why the apostle didn't mention something more scandalous than complaining. But relatively few of us are guilty of "headline" sins, while all of us have been guilty of the smugness, pride, and self-centeredness that erupts in murmuring and quarreling. And these "lesser" sins can be just as destructive.

Paul knew that we need to be spiritually alert to evil and nip it in the bud. By heeding these exhortations we will "become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault" (v.15). Then we will be sure to shine as lights in this dark world.

Darkness seems so overpowering  
In our world today;  
Help us, Lord, to keep on shining  
Till the break of day.  
—Hess

**It's the life behind our words  
that makes our testimony ring true**

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**AMAZING LIGHT** - ... now are ye light in the Lord; walk as children of light. Ephesians 5:8

Light can do startling things! One single burst from a laser beam can drill a hole through a diamond. Such a ray of concentrated and amplified power can melt steel plate in a fraction of a second. A laser beam aimed at the retro-reflector placed on the moon by the astronauts has given the scientists greater ac-curacy in measuring the distance between the earth and the lunar surface. Medical science too is broadening its field in the use of light. A tiny laser aimed at cells diseased by cancer will in a split second destroy a great number of them. What amazing energy! I remember seeing (or was it hearing?) music transmitted on a ray of light in one of the "Sermons from Science" conducted by Keith Hargett of the Moody Institute of Science. That was an interesting demonstration — an uninterrupted flow of sharply focused electrons carrying a beautiful melody!

And divine Light—who can tell its great effect? Every child of God is not only the possessor but the reflector of it. Jesus said, "Ye are the light of the world."

Light must be concentrated and directed, however, to be most effective. Lives controlled by God's Spirit will shine with a glowing witness, bringing spiritual health and blessing to others. Indeed, heavenly harmonies will be transmitted when the Lord Jesus shines in and through us. As the hymnwriter reminds us:

Out in the highways and byways of life, many are weary and sad  
Carry the sunshine where darkness is rife, making the sorrowing glad.

Jesus said, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may ... glorify your Father, who is in heaven" (Matt. 5:16).

Is your life a shining witness  
With a testimony true?  
Could the world be won to Jesus  
Just by what they see in you?  
— Adams

**The light that shines farthest shines brightest at home.**

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**LIVING WINSOMELY** Matthew 5:16 -The early followers of Jesus were charged with breaking up homes, dishonoring their parents, lacking patriotism, practicing cannibalism, and engaging in gross immorality. It was true that Christians rejected the religious rituals of their pagan parents, that some family units were broken when young people chose to be driven from home rather than renounce their faith. Believers also refused to offer a pinch of incense to the Roman emperor and did not purchase images. But it was not accurate to say that they ate human flesh and drank blood at their communion service, or that they were immoral.

What were these Christians to do? Should they issue vehement denials? No! Peter, in our Scripture reading for today, exhorted them instead to look upon themselves as strangers unable to accept the standards of this world. They were to make their conduct among the unsaved so attractive and winsome that their lives would answer every charge made by their enemies. Do you know what happened? The behavior of the early believers was so pure and good that thousands of pagans were saved. Even those who hated the Gospel couldn't help but admire the way Christians lived. And when a period of intense persecution came almost two centuries later, Christians were accused of ignorance, superstition, and a lack of patriotism, but they were no longer denounced as immoral, cruel, or dishonest. If we who know Christ today would be lovely and winsome in our behavior, we too could make a greater impact upon the world about us. Let's try, and watch the Lord work!

Would you shine for Jesus 'mid the careless throng?  
Imitate His graces as you pass along?  
Make no weak surrender to the coarse and vile;  
Keep yourselves from evil and your tongue from guile.  
—Anon.

**In regard to Christian living—one example is worth a thousand arguments!**

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**SINNERS MADE INTO SAINTS** - Roddy Roderique had served seventeen years of a life-sentence and was appealing for an early release before the high court in Montreal. His pastor, Charles Seidenspinner, was testifying on his behalf.

"Why should this man be released?" asked the Crown Attorney.

"Because God has come into his life, and changed him, and will hold him steady" replied the pastor.

"What do you mean 'God has come into his life?'" asked the judge. He listened thoughtfully as the pastor shared in detail how Christ transforms a life. The judge then asked a loaded question: "Suppose this man is released. Would you want him for a neighbor?"

"Your Honor," said the pastor, "that would be wonderful! Some of my neighbors need to hear the same message that changed his life." Roddy was released, and today he's living for the Lord and is active in his church. —D. J. De Haan

**The world judges your faithfulness not so much by what you PROFESS,  
as by what you PRACTICE!**

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**Putting Love Into Practice** - Mt 5:11-16 - In his book Christians in the Marketplace, Bill Hybels says that people outside the faith often say, "Show me" before they say, "Tell me."

I knew a young man in Germany named Wolfgang who modeled Hybels' principle at a building site where he worked. As an enthusiastic believer, Wolfgang always read his Bible during lunch. Though his fellow workers jeered, he didn't stop his daily reading. He simply prayed for a way to demonstrate Christ's love to them.

When the workers went home at night, they always left their muddy boots behind. Wolfgang began staying late after work to clean their boots. The men were puzzled at first but then realized that Wolfgang was the only one among them who would perform this

humble service. Not only did they come to respect him, but sometimes they even asked him to read the Bible to them. Only eternity will reveal the full effect of Wolfgang's shining life. But this we know: When his co-workers saw his good works, they started listening to his God.

Jesus said, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may ... glorify your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:16). If you long to lead the people around you to Jesus, radiate His love by doing practical deeds for God's glory alone.— Joanie Yoder

My life was dark until the Light shone in,  
That Light was Christ, who saved me from my sin;  
His light that I've received I long to share  
In loving deeds for people everywhere. —Hess

### **A Christian's life is a window through which others can see Jesus.**

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**Dr Paul Chappell** reminds us of two important principles in regard to a believer letting God's light shining through, first reminding us that...

God should show through our life, but sadly sometimes our life's bulbs can be dirty, dimming His light. Think about these two factors that can dim God's light:

**Unconfessed Sin.** Just as dirt accumulates on a light bulb, so the dirtiness of sin can accumulate in your life. If you are not careful to keep your heart clean through daily confession and repentance, unconfessed sin can keep your life from shining God's light.

Have you ever known a Christian who you wondered about their heart's condition? They showed no signs of spiritual fruit and lived in open sin. While we cannot know a person's heart, we can see his light. Allowing sin to go unconfessed can dim God's light and hinder the effectiveness of a life's testimony.

**Fear of Men.** How often have Christians hidden their lights because of a fear of the opinions of others? We all want to be accepted and appreciated by our peers, yet our world tells us that talking about Christ and faith is taboo. We are told that religion is for Sunday, and Monday through Saturday is a different life. But God desires that you would allow His light to shine through you every day of the week. As the children's song goes,

"Hide it under a bushel?

No! I'm going to let it shine."

([Listen to the Kingston Trio's "This little light of mine"](#))

How clean is your life's bulb today?

Has unconfessed sin dimmed the light of Christ?

Or are you purposefully hiding your light for fear of what others think?

Christian, would you fear man's opinion so much that you would allow someone to die not ever knowing Christ?

Take time today to inspect your life. Ask God to reveal any dimming sin or actions that are keeping your life from brightly showing God's light. Also ask God to give you strength to shine for Him even when others would hide their lights out of fear. ([Daily in the Word the daily devotion and radio ministry of Dr. Paul Chappell](#))

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**Letting the light of God shine through** - One Sunday on their way home from church, a little girl turned to her mother and said, "Mommy, the preacher's sermon this morning confused me." The mother said, "Oh? Why is that?" The little girl replied, "Well, he said that God is bigger than we are. Is that true?" The mother replied, "Yes, that's true honey." "And he also said that God lives in us? Is that true, Mommy?" Again the mother replied, "Yes." "Well," said the little girl, "if God is bigger than us and He lives in us, wouldn't He show **through**?" (Amen! or Oh my!)

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**Preview of Coming Attractions** - IN THE movies, there are **previews of coming attractions**. This is where the hot clips of the upcoming movies are shown. The cuts of the movies are always of the most exciting scenes: the fight scenes, the love scenes, or the chase scenes. The moviemakers show you the best clips because they want you to tune in to the whole show. Now, the movie itself may actually be terrible, but you'll never know it by the clips! One day there is a big show coming to town. God is the Producer, the Holy Spirit is the Director, and Jesus is the Superstar. It will be a worldwide production. In the meantime, God has left you and me here as **previews of the coming attractions**. As disciples of Christ, we're supposed to be the hot clips of the upcoming show, so that when people see our clips, they conclude the show must be hot. From watching our previews, people should raise the

question, "Where can I buy a ticket to the show?" It is then that we can tell them, "You don't have to buy a ticket; the price has already been paid." (Tony Evans' Book of Illustrations: Stories, Quotes, and Anecdotes)

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### BE A RAY OF SUNSHINE

Be a ray of sunshine everywhere you go,  
Shining for the Savior with a steady glow;  
Bringing smiles to sad ones, wiping tears away,  
Make yourself a blessing every passing day.

#### *Refrain*

*Be a ray of sunshine everywhere you go,  
Shining for the Savior with a steady glow;  
Be a ray of sunshine filled with Heaven's light,  
Sending forth a message beautiful and bright.*

Be a ray of sunshine everywhere you go;  
Comfort bring to others, stoop to raise the low;  
Kind words cost but little, smiles bring pleasures, too;  
They may lift a burden; let them not be few.

#### **Refrain**

Be a ray of sunshine everywhere you go;  
Cheerfulness is needed, this you can bestow;  
Help to chase the shadows from this world away,  
Bringing joy and gladness like a shining ray.

#### **Refrain**

Be a ray of sunshine everywhere you go;  
Stars will shine the brighter in your crown, I know;  
Sunshine brought to others will reflect on you,  
Heav'n will be the sweeter—keep the end in view.

#### **Refrain**

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**Christ Shining in His Face** - The story is told of the time when the great missionary to Burma, Adoniram Judson was home on furlough, and happened to pass through the city of Stonington, Connecticut. A young boy playing about the wharves at the time of Judson's arrival was struck by the man's appearance. Never before had he seen such a light on any human face. He ran up the street to a minister to ask if he knew who the stranger was. The minister hurried back with him, but became so absorbed in conversation with Judson that he forgot all about the impatient youngster standing near him. Many years afterward that boy—who could never get away from the influence of that wonderful face—became the famous preacher **Henry Clay Trumbull**. In a book of memoirs Trumbull penned a chapter entitled: "**What a Boy Saw in the Face of Adoniram Judson**" That lighted countenance had changed his life. Even as flowers thrive when they bend to the light, so shining, radiant faces come to those who constantly turn toward Christ!

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**IVP Commentary** - Until my conversion in 1975 I professed to be an atheist in part because I looked at the roughly 85 percent of my fellow U.S. citizens who claimed to be Christians and could not see that their faith genuinely affected their lives. I reasoned that if even Christians did not believe in Jesus' teachings, why should I? My excuse for unbelief—and the excuse of many other secularists I knew—continued until God's Spirit confronted me with the reality that the truth of Christ does not rise or fall on the claims of his professed followers, but on Jesus himself. The faith of nominal Christians may appeal to non-Christians who can use it to justify their own unbelief, but such "Christians" will have no part in God's kingdom. Instead they will be thrown out and trampled (Mt 5:13). (Craig Keener)

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**Illustration of the Power of a Spirit Filled "Light"** - Have you ever looked out of a plane flying on a cloudless night? You can see pinpoints of light miles and miles away. This explains why it was necessary to have blackouts during the war to prevent enemy pilots from seeing the smallest evidence of light and thus find their targets. As good soldiers of Christ Jesus we are engaged in mortal combat for the souls of men and in contrast to real wartime actions, believers are never to have a "blackout!"

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**Kent Hughes** explains how believers are lights noting that "Dr. Barnhouse, the master of illustration, used to explain it this way. He said that when Christ was in the world, he was like the shining sun that is here in the day and gone at night. When the sun sets, the moon comes up. The moon, the church, shines, but not with its own light. It shines with reflected light. When Jesus was in the world he said, "I am the light of the world." But as he contemplated leaving this world, he said, "You are the light of the world." At times the church has been at full moon, dazzling the world with an almost daytime light. These have been times of great enlightenment, times such as those of Paul and Luther and Wesley. And at other times the church has been only a thumbnail moon, with very little light shining upon the earth. Whether the church is a full moon or a new thumbnail moon, waxing or waning, it reflects the light of the sun. (Hughes, R. K. [Sermon on the Mount: The Message of the Kingdom. Crossway Books](#))

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## His Lamps

God's lamps we are,  
To shine where He shall say:  
And lamps are not for sunny rooms,  
Nor for the light of day;  
But for the dark places of the earth,  
Where shame and wrong and crime have birth,  
Or for the murky twilight grey,  
Where wandering sheep have gone astray,  
Or where the Lamp of Faith grows dim,  
And souls are groping after Him.  
And as sometimes a flame we find,  
Clear-shining through the night,  
So dark we do not see the lamp  
But only see the Light,  
So may we shine, God's love the flame,  
That men may glorify His Name  
--Annie Johnson Flint

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**Alistair Begg** quipped "If you can't shine, at least twinkle!"

**Oswald J. Smith** used to say "The light that shines the farthest will shine the brightest at home."

**Thomas Brooks** said "A Christian's life should be nothing but a visible representation of Christ."

**Augustine** declared "What I live by, I impart."

**Martyn Lloyd-Jones** warned that "If we find in ourselves a tendency to put the light under a bushel, we must begin to examine ourselves and make sure that it really is 'light.'" (Ouch!)

**Spurgeon** once said "The sermons most needed today are sermons in shoes."

**H W Cragg** - The Christian is the visual aid which God brings on to the stage when he begins to speak at an unconverted person.

**G. Campbell Morgan** said that the church did the most for the world when the church was the least like the world.

**D. L. Moody** said "A Christian is the world's Bible — and some of them need revising... It is a great deal better to live a holy life than to talk about it. We are told to let our light shine, and if it does we won't need to tell anybody it does. The light will be its own witness. Lighthouses don't ring bells and fire cannons to call attention to their shining--they just shine.

The real mark of a saint is that he makes it easier for others to believe in God.

**Barnhouse** once said (alluding to our good works before a lost world) "Men may not read the gospel in seal-skin, or the gospel in morocco, or the gospel in cloth covers; but they can't get away from the gospel in shoe leather... Every believer is a witness whether he wants to be or not.

The early church father **Tertullian** wrote of the light shone by early Christians "But it is mainly the deeds of a love so noble that lead many to put a brand upon us. 'See,' they say, 'how they (believers) love one another,' for they themselves (non-believers) are animated by mutual hatred; 'see how they are ready even to die for one another,' for they themselves will rather put to death"



My heart is full of Christ, and longs its glorious matter to declare!  
Of him I make my loftier songs, I cannot from his praise forbear;  
My ready tongue makes haste to sing  
The glories of my heavenly King.  
---Charles Wesley

**Ray Pritchard** ([The Salt and Light Brigade](#)) quotes the following poem...

I'd rather see a sermon  
than hear one any day.

I'd rather one would walk with me  
than merely tell the way.

The eye's a better pupil  
and more willing than the ear.

Fine counsel is confusing  
but example's always clear.

The best of all the preachers  
are the men who live their creeds.

For to see good put in action  
is what everybody needs.

I soon can learn to do it,  
if you'll let me see it done.

I can watch your hands in action,  
your tongue too fast may run.

The lectures you deliver  
may be very wise and true.

But I'd rather get my lessons  
by observing what you do.

For I might misunderstand you  
And the high advice you give.

But there's no misunderstanding  
how you act and how you live.

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#### **Matthew 5:28 "Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery."**

The commandment, "Thou shalt not commit adultery," means more than the mere act. It refers to fornication and uncleanness of any shape, in act, word, and thought. So with every commandment. The bare letter is nothing compared with the whole stupendous meaning and severe strictness of the rule. The commands are like stars. When seen with the naked eye, they appear to be brilliant points. If we could draw near to them, we would see them to be infinite worlds.

Spurgeon

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#### **Matthew 5:43-48**

**Hostage of Guerrilla Soldiers** - In August 1983, Russell Stendal was taken hostage into the jungle of Columbia, South American, by a band of guerrilla soldiers. For nearly 5 months he learned what it really means to love one's enemies. He wrote a letter home, saying, "I am in danger only of losing my life; they are in danger of losing their souls." Through kindness, Russell befriended his guards. One day the commander told him, "We can't kill you face to face; we like you. So we will have to kill you in your sleep." God enabled Russell to forgive, but for the next 10 days and nights he couldn't sleep. A submachine gun was repeatedly thrust in his face under his mosquito net, but the guards couldn't bring themselves to pull the trigger. On January 3, 1984, Russell was released.

When he said goodbye, tears fill the eyes of some of his captors.

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#### Matthew 5:44

**Ruby Bridges** - In Christianity Today, psychiatrist Robert Coles told an amazing story of a girl who had learned to pray for those who were hostile to her. Coles was in New Orleans in 1960 when a federal judge ruled that the city schools must be integrated. A 6-year-old girl, Ruby Bridges, was the only black child to attend the William T. Frantz School. Every day for weeks as she entered and left the building, a mob would be standing outside to scream at her and threaten her. They shook their fists, shouted obscenities, and threatened to kill her. One day her teacher saw her lips moving as she walked through the crowd, flanked by burly federal marshals. When the teacher told Coles about it, he asked Ruby if she was talking to the people. "I wasn't talking to them," she replied. "I was just saying a prayer for them"

Coles asked her, "Why do you do that?"

"Because they need praying for," came her reply.

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**What Passes for Love** - In our relationships with others, often what passes for love is little more than a neat business transaction. People are kind to us, so we repay them with equal consideration. When they treat us unjustly, our negative response is really what they asked for. Everything is so balanced, so fair, so logical with this eye-for-an-eye and tooth-for-a-tooth kind of justice. But Christian love never settles for only what's reasonable. It insists on giving mercy as well as justice. It breaks the chain of logical reactions.

General Robert E. Lee was asked what he thought of a fellow officer in the Confederate Army who had made some derogatory remarks about him. Lee rated him as being very satisfactory. The person who asked the question seemed perplexed. "General," he said, "I guess you don't know what he's been saying about you." "I know," answered Lee. "But I was asked my opinion of him, not his opinion of me!"

## MATTHEW 6

Matthew 6:1.

"Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven."

- He who desires honor is not worthy of honor.
- The harp sounds sweetly, yet it hears not its own melody.
- Good ends do not make bad actions lawful, yet bad ends make good actions sinful.
- If some bestow a little money on the repairs of a church, it must be recorded in glazed windows.
- Where self is the end of our actions, Satan (not God) is the rewarder of them.
- He that traffics in God's service in order to procure men's praises, suffers shipwreck in the haven and loses his wages.

Matthew 6:2. Hypocrisy.

- The gospel professed may lift a man to heaven: but only the gospel possessed will bring him into heaven.
- We need not sound a trumpet for anything we bestow: for when the last trumpet shall sound, every work will be revealed.
- Saints should be like spire-steeple, smallest where they are highest.
- Religion is the best armor a man can have, but the worst cloak.
- Hypocrites are like looking-glasses which present the faces that are not in them.
- The hypocrite would not put on the appearance of virtue and religion if it was not the most proper means to gain love.

Matthew 6:14.

- Christ said, "Forgive to be forgiven."
- Paul said, "Forgive because forgiven." Eph. 4:32.

Matthew 6:16.

- It is both meat and drink to a formalist to fast if others do but see him. Some professors are like hens that no sooner drop their eggs than they begin to chatter.

Matthew 6:26.

- Object lessons: fowls, lilies, grass, foxes, raven, etc.

The river of God's truth flows down before us pure and clear as crystal; but we take our theological stick and stir it up, until you cannot see the bottom. Oh, for the simplicity of Christ in all our instructions—the simplicity He practised when standing among the people, He took a lily, and said, "There is a lesson of the manner I will clothe you;" and, pointing to a raven, said, "There is a lesson of the way I will feed you; consider the lilies—behold the fowls of the air."

Providence—that does the housework of the universe; busy, kindly, thoughtful, the hospitable word, that makes things ready for us, cares for all our life, busies itself about us, and that says to us, "The very hairs of your head are all numbered!"

[Above are from D L Moody's Bible notes](#)

Mt 6:6. When thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and, when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret.

Secret devotions resemble the rivers which run under the earth; they steal from the eyes of the world to seek the eyes of God; and it often happens that those of whom we speak least on earth, are best known in heaven.  
CAUSSIN.

The closets of God's people are where the roots of the church grow. And if the roots be not nourished, there can be no tree with branches and fruit. In many senses the root of the plant is the most important part of it. Men do not see it. It is hidden away down under the ground. Yet in the dark it works away, and in its secret laboratory it prepares the life which goes up into the plant or tree, and manifests itself in trunk and branches, in leaves and fruits. The beautiful leaf-fabrics are woven down in the looms of that dark earth-factory. The colors that tint the flowers are prepared in that lowly workshop. The little blocks that are piled in silence, one by one, as the fabric of the tree goes up, are hewn out in the secret quarries of the roots. He that would bless a tree must first bless its roots. So it is in the spiritual life. It is not the closet which men see. It is not a man's secret, personal religious life which the world understands and praises. Yet it is in the closet that the roots of his life grow. And if the roots be not nourished, then the tree will soon die.

J. R. MILLER.

Mt 6:9. Our Father.

There is one thing more pitiable, almost worse than even cold, black, miserable atheism. To kneel down and say, "Our Father," and then to get up and live an orphaned life. To stand and say, "I believe in God the Father Almighty," and then to go fretting and fearing, saying with a thousand tongues, "I believe in the love of God!—but it is only in heaven. I believe in the power of God!—but it stoppeth short at the stars. I believe in the Prudence of God!—but it is limited to the saints in Scripture. I believe that 'the Lord reigneth'—only with reference to some far-off time with which we have nothing to do." That is more insulting to our heavenly Father, more harmful to the world, more cheating to ourselves, than to have no God at all.

MARK GUY PEARSE.

Mt 6:10. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.

There is a cathedral in Europe with an organ at each end. Organ answers organ, and the music waves backward and forward with indescribable effect. The time will come when heaven and earth will be but different parts of one great accord. It will be joy here and joy there! Jesus here and Jesus there! Trumpet to trumpet! Organ to organ! Hallelujah to hallelujah.

TALMAGE.

Mt 6:21. Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

A friend of mine who had been in Eastern lands told me he saw a shepherd who wanted his flock to cross a river. He went into the water himself and called them; but no, they would not follow him into the water. What did he do? Why, he girded up his loins, and lifted a little lamb under each arm and plunged right into the stream, and crossed it without even looking back. When he lifted the lambs the old sheep looked up into his face and

began to bleat for them; but when he plunged into the water the dams plunged after him, and then the whole flock followed. When they got to the other side he put down the lambs, and they were quickly joined by their mothers, and there was a happy meeting. Our great Divine Shepherd does this. Your child which He has taken from the earth is but removed to the green pastures of Canaan, and the Shepherd means to draw your hearts after it, to teach you to "set your affections on things above."

MOODY.

Mt 6:24. No man can serve two masters.

When you see a dog following two men, you know not to which of them he belongs while they walk together; but let them come to a parting road, and one go one way, and the other another way, then you will know which is the dog's master. So at times will you and the world go hand in hand. While a man may have the world, and a religious profession too, we cannot tell which is the man's master, God or the world: but stay till the man comes to a parting road; God calls him this way, and the world calls him that way. Well, if God be his master, he follows religion, and lets the world go; but if the world be his master, then he follows the world and the lusts thereof, and lets God, and conscience, and religion go.

R. ERSKINE.

Mt 6:33. Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.

When some peculiar pressure is upon you, be like Queen Esther, whose first request was the king's company. In each trial "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness," and all other things shall be added: your seeking first the removal of the trial shows that you need the continuance of it.

Mt 6:34. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

Sometimes I compare the troubles we have to undergo in the course of a year to a great bundle of fagots, far too large for us to lift. But God does not require us to carry the whole at once: He mercifully unties the bundle, and gives us, first one stick, which we are to carry to-day; and then another, which we are to carry to-morrow; and so on. This we might easily manage if we would only take the burden appointed for each day; but we choose to increase our trouble by carrying yesterday's stick over again to-day, and adding to-morrow's burden to our load before we are required to bear it.

JOHN NEWTON.

You remember how Leonidas, the Spartan, kept back the Persian hosts. He stood in the narrow pass of Thermopylæ, and as the foe came up, one by one, each man was able to push back his enemy, and they might have kept Greece thus for many a day. But suppose Leonidas and his handful of men had gone out into the wide open plain, and attacked the Persians—why, they must have died at once, though they should have fought like lions. Christian, stand you in the narrow pass of to-day, and as your troubles come, one by one, by faith you shall find out that your strength is sufficient for you; but if you go out into the vast plain of time, and think to meet all the troubles that shall ever come at once, it must be too much for you. Will you please not to borrow misery, for you will have enough of your own.

SPURGEON.

Above from Moody's [One Thousand and One Thoughts from My Library](#)

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#### **Matthew 6:4**

Have you ever gone out of your way to do something for someone and had it go unnoticed? Almost killed you, didn't it? Perhaps I'd better not speak for you, but I've had the problem. At times I've wondered if doing good to others is worth the effort, especially when I don't receive a thank you in return. And yet, serving without looking for reward is what walking with God is all about. As Christians, we should not display a "cash and carry" attitude that expects immediate appreciation for the good we do. God wants us to remember that someday He Himself will richly reward us.

A newspaper article reminded me of the kind of "delayed returns" we should be living for. A car dealer went out of his way to give a foreign student an honest deal on a new automobile. Fifteen years later, the young man became the sole purchasing agent for the Iranian Contractors Association. He showed his gratitude to the car dealer by placing a multimillion-dollar order with that dealer for 750 heavy dump trucks and 350 pickups. "It's unbelievable!" exclaimed the businessman. The good he had done was rewarded years later beyond his wildest imagination.

Just as that salesman's reward came later, so too God will commend us in Heaven. If we do good to others for the immediate thanks

we receive, we already have our reward. But if we do it for God, the future return will be as sure and generous as He is. —M. R. De Haan II

There is no reward from God to those who seek it from men.—Spurgeon

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#### **Matthew 6:6**

In a letter to friends, hymnwriter Wendell P. Loveless told about a visitor to the United States who wanted to make a telephone call. He entered a phone booth, but found it to be different from those in his own country. It was beginning to get dark, so he had difficulty finding the number in the directory. He noticed a light on the ceiling, but he didn't know how to turn it on. As he tried again to find the number in the fading twilight, a passerby noted his plight and said, "If you want to turn the light on, you have to shut the door." To the visitor's amazement and satisfaction, when he closed the door, the booth was filled with light. He soon located the number and completed the call.

When we draw aside in a quiet place to pray, we must block out our busy world and open our hearts to the Father. He then will illuminate our darkened world of disappointments and trials. We will enter into communion with God, sense His presence, and be assured of His provision for us. Our Lord often went to be alone with the heavenly Father. Sometimes it was after a busy day of preaching and healing, as in Luke 5. At other times, it was before making a major decision (Luke 6:12).

We too can have the confidence that "if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us" (1 John 5:14). But we must remember that to "turn on the light," we must first "shut the door" by getting alone with God. —R. W. De Haan

One of the great secrets of prayer is prayer in secret.

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#### **Matthew 6:6 "When thou prayest, enter into thy closet."**

Public prayer is no evidence of piety. It is practiced by an abundance of hypocrites. But private prayer is a thing for which the hypocrite has no heart.

Spurgeon

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#### **Matthew 6:6**

**The Phone Booth** - In a letter to his friends, hymn writer Wendell P. Loveless related this story:

One evening a speaker who was visiting the United States wanted to make a telephone call. He entered a phone booth, but found it to be different from those in his own country. It was beginning to get dark, so he had difficulty finding the number in the directory. He noticed that there was a light in the ceiling, but he didn't know how to turn it on. As he tried again to find the number in the fading twilight, a passerby noted his plight and said, "Sir, if you want to turn the light on, you have to shut the door." To the visitor's amazement and satisfaction, when he closed the door, the booth was filled with light. He soon located the number and completed the call.

In a similar way, when we draw aside in a quiet place to pray, we must block out our busy world and open our hearts to the Father. Our darkened world of disappointments and trials will then be illuminated. We will enter into communion with God, we will sense His presence, and we will be assured of His provision for us. Our Lord often went to be alone with the Heavenly Father. Sometimes it was after a busy day of preaching and healing, as in today's Scripture reading. At other times, it was before making a major decision (Luke 6:12).

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#### **Matthew 6:8**

A group of scientists are directing their thoughts and needs into the heavens, but not to the God of the Bible. They have calculated that as many as fifty million civilizations may exist somewhere in space, and they believe that some of them may have found methods to improve our lives and control the time of death. In November, 1974, these scientists, using special technology, beamed a message to a cluster of stars on the outer edge of our galaxy. But even if that signal were picked up, they estimate that it would take forty-eight thousand years for an answer to come back.

To Christians, these efforts seem ridiculous and destined to failure. Yet those scientists are serious about their efforts, while we, who do have contact with "another world," sometimes act as if our prayers are not heard. Every child of God has the opportunity to get in touch, not with other creatures, but with the Creator Himself! We have immediate access through prayer to the One who stretched out all the galaxies in the heavens. He hears us the instant we pray and answers according to His will. Through the wonderful privilege of prayer, every Christian can come to One who is all-powerful, who listens in heaven, and who can and does change the

affairs of people.

In light of our relationship to Him, we can send our messages to heaven with renewed confidence, because we know personally our God-listener. —M. R. De Haan II

When we bend our knees to pray, God bends His ear to listen.

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#### **Matthew 6:9-13**

**Living Moment to Moment** - As Pastor Philip Doddridge was walking along the street one day, he was feeling depressed and desolate, for something had happened to burden his heart. Passing a small cottage, he heard through the open door the voice of a child reading the words found in Deuteronomy 33:25, “as your days, so shall your strength be.” The Holy Spirit used that truth to bolster his sinking morale. He was encouraged not to look too far ahead, but just to go on living for the Lord from moment to moment in the consciousness that God would care for him.

Apparently D. L. Moody also learned that secret, for he said,

“A man can no more take a supply of grace for the future than he can eat enough today to last him for the next 6 months, nor can he inhale sufficient air into his lungs with one breath to sustain life for a week to come. We are permitted to draw upon God’s store of grace from day to day as we need it!”

God never gives His strength in advance, so let’s stop crossing bridges before we come to them. The Heavenly Father will graciously supply our every need—one day at a time!

Don’t try to bear tomorrow’s burdens with today’s grace.

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#### **Matthew 6:9-13**

**UNDERSTANDING PRAYER** - What a privilege it would be to talk privately with the president of the United States! Yet believers can choose at any time to enjoy an infinitely greater privilege -- fellowship with the King of kings.

Prayer is not simply a matter of rushing into God’s presence with our requests. Supplication is a valid element of prayer, to be sure, but fellowship and communion are far more important elements. Prayer includes adoration, praise, thanksgiving, and intercession for others, as well as asking for the supply of our own needs and legitimate desires. Prayer is not only talking to God; it is also listening to Him as He reminds us from His Word what He wants us to do.

In Alexander Solzhenitsyn’s ‘A Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich,’ Ivan endures all the horrors of a Soviet prison camp. One day he is praying with his eyes closed when a fellow prisoner notices him and says with ridicule, “Prayers won’t help you get out of here any faster.” Opening his eyes, Ivan answers, “I do not pray to get out of prison but to do the will of God.”

Prayer is not manipulating God to get what we want but discovering what He wants us to do, and then asking the Holy Spirit to enable us to do His will. - V C Grounds

Praise His blessed name forever!  
There is naught that can compare  
To the glories of a contact  
With the Mighty God through prayer.--Anon.

Prayer is not a way to get what we want but the way to become what God wants.

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#### **Matthew 6:11**

**Weight of Prayer** - Shortly after World War II, a woman entered a grocery store and asked for enough food for a Christmas dinner for her children. When the owner inquired how much she could afford, she answered, “My husband was killed in the war. Truthfully, I have nothing to offer but a little prayer.” The man, an unbeliever, was unmoved by the woman’s need, and said sarcastically, “Write your prayer on a piece of paper and you can have its weight in groceries.”

To his surprise, she plucked a folded note out of her pocket and handed it to him. “I already did that during the night while I was watching over my sick child,” was her immediate reply.

Without even reading it, he put it on one side of his old-fashioned scales. “We’ll see how much food this is worth,” he muttered. To his dismay, nothing happened when he put a loaf of bread on the other side. But he was even more upset when he added other

items and still nothing happened. Finally he blurted out, "Well, that's all it will hold anyway. Here's a bag. You'll have to put these things in yourself. I'm busy!"

With a tearful "Thank you," the lady went happily on her way.

The grocer later discovered that the scale was out of order.

As the years passed, he often wondered if that was just a coincidence. Why did the woman have the prayer already written before he asked for it? Why did she come at exactly the time the mechanism was broken? Whenever he looks at the slip of paper that bears her petition, he is amazed, for it reads, "Please, dear Lord, give us this day !"

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#### **Matthew 6:13 "Lead us not into temptation."**

Very stupid people have tried to alter the petition into "Leave us not into temptation." The Savior never said that.

Spurgeon

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#### **Matthew 6:13**

**The Anaconda** - Lorrie Anderson, missionary to the head-shrinking Candoshi Shapra Indians of Peru, was looking for a quiet place for her daily time of Bible reading and prayer, so she went down by the edge of the river. After reading the Bible, she took up her prayer list. Eyes closed, she did not see the deadly anaconda weaving through the water until it struck, burying its fangs into her flesh. It withdrew to strike, hitting her arm again and again as it held her, screaming, in its coils. It reared up for the death blows. Then suddenly the giant snake, never known to release its prey, relaxed its grip and slithered off through the water. While Lorrie was being treated, a witch doctor from a nearby village burst into the hut and stared at her. She couldn't believe Lorrie had survived. She said her son-in-law, also a witch doctor, had chanted to the spirit of the anaconda that morning and sent it to kill the young missionary. "I'm certain," Lorrie said, "that except for the protection of God, it would have worked."

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#### **Matthew 6:19 "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth."**

Hold not earth's treasures with too firm a grasp. Our bereavements would not be half so sharp if we always viewed our friends as being lent to us. A man does not cry when he has to return a tool which he has borrowed.

Spurgeon

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#### **Matthew 6:19-22**

**Just a Passin' Through** - As Christians, we need to think of ourselves as travelers who are just passing through this sinful world. We are not permanent residents, but pilgrims on a journey to a better land. Therefore, we need to "travel light," not burdening ourselves with an undue attachment to the material things of life. The more we care for the luxuries and possessions of earth, the more difficult will be our journey to heaven.

The story is told about some Christians who were traveling in the Middle East. They heard about a wise, devout, beloved, old believer, so they went out of their way to visit him. When they finally found him, they discovered that he was living in a simple hut. All he had inside was a rough cot, a chair, a table, and a battered stove for heating and cooking. The visitors were shocked to see how few possessions the man had, and one of them blurted out, "Well, where is your furniture?" The aged saint replied by gently asking, "Where is yours?" The visitor, sputtering a little, responded, "Why, at home, of course. I don't carry it with me, I'm traveling." "So am I," the godly Christian replied. "So am I."

This man was practicing a basic principle of the Bible: Christians must center their affections on Christ, not on the temporal things of this earth. Material riches lose their value when compared to the riches of glory. To keep this world's goods from becoming more important to us than obeying Christ, we need to ask ourselves, "Where is our furniture?" -D. C. Egner

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#### **Matthew 6:19ff**

**A New House** - The Lord Jesus is now in heaven, the "Father's house." He has gone there to "prepare a place" for all who have put their trust in Him. There is a sense, however, in which believers may have a part in preparing that place. That thought was brought to my attention as I read these observations by an unknown writer:

"I once had friends who were traveling abroad. Intending to build a new house upon their return, in all their journeying the dream of that new home was constantly in their minds. When they therefore could secure a beautiful picture, statue, or vase, they purchased in and sent it on ahead to await their arrival. The same thing was done with rare and curious treasures, which afterward, when placed in their new home, could be linked with happy memories and in this way contribute to their future enjoyment." The writer then made this application: "I love to think that we, in these pilgrimage days on earth, are doing the same for our heavenly home. The kindly deed that made a rare picture in somebody's life, the little sacrifice that blossomed into joy, the helpful friendship—all these we shall find again. Whatever of beauty, tenderness, faith, or love we can put into other's lives will be among our treasures in heaven."

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### **Matthew 6:19-21 Going to Our Treasure**

A woman met a friend of her father's who had not seen him for many years. The woman's father was a devout Christian, so she found great joy in telling his old acquaintance about her dad's trust in the Lord, and the way he faced suffering, trials, and even the prospect of death.

The friend, however, had lived a different kind of life. Having given himself over completely to earning money and hoarding every cent he could, he had become very wealthy. But he didn't have the same glad anticipation of the future as his friend did. He explained it to the daughter in this way: "Your father can be more optimistic about heaven than I for a very simple reason. He is going to his treasure. I'll be leaving mine!"

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### **Matthew 6:21**

Junior wanted a dump truck, and he let everyone in the store know it. When his mother said no, the little boy threw a temper tantrum. He howled louder and louder until the embarrassed mother bought the toy. As I watched, I thought of what my mother told me when I was young. "Don't hang your heart on things!" she said. At times I rebelled against that idea, but today I'm deeply grateful for her advice. And I think it should be displayed as a motto in every home.

The apostle Paul warned that the earth and all "the works that are in it will be burned up" (2 Peter 3:10). With this truth in mind, he went on to say, "Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness? (2 Peter 3:11). Because material things are transient, we ought to set our affection on "things above" (Col. 3:2).

In a day when we're bombarded as never before by appeals to buy and have, it's difficult, even for believers, to stand firm against an excessive desire for things. Beautiful full-color spreads in magazines, scintillating radio commercials, and persuasive television ads combine to make us feel that we can't get along without certain products.

We need to guard ourselves against the tendency to want more and more material possessions. They can become heart hang-ups that draw us away from the Lord. Material values pass away; spiritual values last forever.—R. W. De Haan

Hold lightly to the things of earth but tightly to the things of heaven.

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### **Matthew 6:21**

**A Terrible Deathbed** - I once read of a man who bought a luxurious house and filled it with expensive and spectacular furnishings. After taking a friend on a tour through its many spacious rooms, the owner of the mansion asked proudly, "Well, what do you think of it?" He expected to hear lavish praise, so he was stunned when his guest responded, "It is gorgeous; but to be perfectly frank, things like this make a deathbed terrible."

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### **Matthew 6:21**

**Don't Hang Your Heart on Things** - One day I saw a little boy throw a temper tantrum in a store. He wanted a dump truck, but his mother said no. So Junior howled louder and louder until the mother, embarrassed, bought the toy. As I watched, I thought of what my mother told me when I was young. She said, "Don't hang your heart on things!" I'll admit that at times I rebelled against that idea, but today I'm deeply grateful for her advice. And I think it should be displayed as a motto in every home: DON'T HANG YOUR HEART ON THINGS.

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### **Matthew 6:22**

**George Muller** - If we could look behind the unexpected events in our lives, we would be amazed to see God wonderfully providing for our needs. The insignificant turns in the road, the seemingly unimportant events, the often unexplained happenings—all are part of God's loving care.



His gracious providence is also evident in the tangible provisions of life. In Bristol, England, George Muller operated an orphanage for two thousand children. One evening he became aware that there would be no breakfast for them the next morning. Muller called his workers together and explained the situation. Two or three prayed. "Now that is sufficient," he said. "Let us rise and praise God for prayer answered!"

The next morning they could not push open the great front door. So they went out the back door and around the building to see what was keeping it shut. Stacked up against the front door were boxes filled with food. One of the workers later remarked, "We know Who sent the baskets, but we do not know who brought them!"

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#### **Matthew 6:24 "No man can serve two masters."**

This is often misunderstood. Some read it, "No man can serve two masters." Yes he can; he can serve three or four. The way to read it is this: "No man can serve two masters." He can serve two, but they cannot both be his master.

When the Romans erected the statue of Christ and put it up in their pantheon, saying that he should be one among their gods, their homage was worthless. And when they turned their heads, first to Jupiter, then to Venus, and then to Jesus Christ, they did no honor to our Lord; they did but dishonor him. Their service was not acceptable. And so if you imagine in your heart that you can sometimes serve God and sometimes serve self and be your own master, you have made a mistake.

Spurgeon

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#### **Matthew 6:24**

**Earthly Treasures** - When a person loves earthly things so much that he can't get along without them, he opens himself to much suffering, both physical and mental. Some people, for example, have taken foolish risks to keep their riches intact. They have died rushing into burning houses or were killed because they stubbornly resisted armed robbers. Apparently they felt that without their material possessions life would not be worthwhile.

Others, when forced to part with their wealth, have been thrown into agonizing despair, even to the point of suicide. In 1975, six armed gunmen broke into the deposit boxes in a London bank and stole valuables worth more than \$7 million. One lady, whose jewelry was appraised at \$500,000, wailed, "Everything I had was in there. My whole life was in that box." What a sad commentary on her values!

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#### **Matthew 6:26 "Behold the fowls of the air."**

You know what Luther said the little bird said to him. He sat on the spray of the tree and sang,  
Mortal, cease from toil and sorrow;  
God provideth for tomorrow.

And it chirped and picked up its little grain, and sang again. Yet it had no granary. It had not a handful of wheat stored up anywhere, but it kept on with its chirping—

Mortal, cease from toil and sorrow;  
God provideth for tomorrow.

A little London girl who had gone into the country once said, "Look, mamma, at that poor little bird. It has no cage!"

That would not have struck me as being any loss to the bird. And if you and I were without our cage, the box of seed, and the glass of water, it would not be much of a loss if we were cast adrift into the glorious liberty of a life of humble dependence on God. It is that cage of carnal trust and that box of seed we are always laboring to fill that make the worry of this mortal life. But he who has grace to spread his wings and soar away and get into the open field of divine trustfulness may sing all the day, and ever have this for his tune:

Mortal, cease from toil and sorrow;  
God provideth for tomorrow.

Spurgeon

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#### **Matthew 6:32**

**CONTENTMENT** - If we could look behind the unexpected events in our lives, we would be amazed to see God wonderfully

providing for our needs. The insignificant turns in the road, the seemingly unimportant events, the often unexplained happenings—all are part of God's loving care.

His gracious providence is also evident in our tangible provisions. In Bristol, England, George Muller operated an orphanage for two thousand children. One evening, knowing they had no food for break-fast the next morning, Muller called his workers together and explained the situation. After two or three prayed, Muller said, "That is sufficient. Let us rise and praise God for prayer answered." The next morning they could not push open the great front door. To see what was holding it closed, they went out the back door and around the building. Stacked up against the front door were boxes filled with food. One of the workers later remarked, "We know Who sent the baskets, but we do not know who brought them!"

God uses many messengers and means to deliver His gifts, whether they are material or spiritual provisions. We may not always recognize that His hand is working behind the scenes, but it is. Sometimes we get down to the last of our resources, but we can rest assured that the Father knows exactly what we need. And this brings contentment to our hearts. Knowing the Source, we can leave to Him the method of His supply. —P.R.V.

God often sends His help by way of human hands.

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### Matthew 6:32

**God's Gracious Providence** - If we could look behind the unexpected events in our lives, we would be amazed to see God wonderfully providing for our needs. The insignificant turns in the road, the seemingly unimportant events, the often unexplained happenings—all are part of God's loving care.

His gracious providence is also evident in the tangible provisions of life. In Bristol, England, George Mueller operated an orphanage for two thousand children. One evening he became aware that there would be no breakfast for them the next morning. Mueller called his workers together and explained the situation. Two or three prayed. "Now that is sufficient," he said. "Let us rise and praise God for prayer answered!" The next morning they could not push open the great front door. So they went out the back door and around the building to see what was keeping it shut. Stacked up against the front door were boxes filled with food. One of the workers later remarked, "We know Who sent the baskets, but we do not know who brought them!" -P.R.V.

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### Matthew 6:32

**Bread to Hold** - In his book God's Psychiatry, Charles L. Allen tells this story:

"As World War II was drawing to a close, the Allied armies gathered up many hungry orphans. They were placed in camps where they were well-fed. Despite excellent care, they slept poorly. They seemed nervous and afraid. Finally, a psychologist came up with the solution. Each child was given a piece of bread to hold after he was put to bed. This particular piece of bread was just to be held—not eaten. The piece of bread produced wonderful results. The children went to bed knowing instinctively they would have food to eat the next day. That guarantee gave the children a restful and contented sleep."

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### Matthew 6:33

**First Things First** - In the late 19th century John Wanamaker opened a department store in Philadelphia. Within a few years that enterprise had become one of the most successful businesses in the country. But operating his store wasn't Wanamaker's only responsibility. He was also named Postmaster General of the United States, and he served as superintendent for what was then the largest Sunday school in the world at Bethany Presbyterian Church. When someone asked him how he could hold all those positions at once, he explained. "Early in life I read, 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.' The Sunday school is my business, all the rest are the things."

One evidence of Wanamaker's desire to keep the Lord's work first in his life was a specially constructed soundproof room in his store. Every day he spent 30 minutes there praying and meditating upon God's Word. He had his priorities straight!

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### Matthew 6:33 "Seek ye first the kingdom of God."

When I had resolved to enter college, walking across Midsummer Common, just outside of Cambridge, revolving in my mind the joys of scholarship and the hope of being something in the world, that text came to my heart, "Seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not" (Jer. 45:5); "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." All was given up, everything was renounced, the finest prospects seemed to melt into thin air, merely on the strength of that text, believing that

God would most certainly fulfill to me his promise if I could keep his precept.

Spurgeon

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### Matthew 6:33

**Planned Neglect** - Have you ever noticed how the saints in the Bible were eager to let God have His way in their lives? They bestirred themselves as soon as dawn touched the sky in order to worship Him and seek His leading. For example, Abraham got up very early to stand before the Lord (Gen. 19:27). Jacob in like manner arose from his stony pillows to worship God after having seen a vision of angels in the night (Gen. 28:18). Moses went early to meet the Lord at Sinai (Ex. 34:4). Joshua did the same when he pre-pared to capture Jericho (Josh. 6:12), and Gideon followed their example when he made his way at dawn to examine the fleece that he had cast upon the ground to discern Jehovah's will (Judg. 6:38). Hannah and Elkanah arose early to worship God (1 Sam. 1:19), as did Samuel when he went to meet Saul (1 Sam. 15: 12). Job left his warm bed to offer sacrifices for his children (Job 1:5), and the faithful women who had followed the Savior arose at daybreak that they might go to the sepulcher on the first Easter morn (Mark 16:2). Say, have you ever gotten up early to study God's Word, to pray, and to seek His will? Does He have priority in all you do?

A noted young concert artist was asked the secret of her success with the violin. "Planned neglect!" she replied, and then explained. "Years ago I discovered that there were many things which demanded my time. After washing breakfast dishes, I made my bed, straightened my room, dusted the furniture, and did a host of other things. I then turned my attention to violin practice. That system, however, failed to accomplish the desired results. So I realized I had to reverse things. I deliberately set aside every-thing else until my practice period was ended. That program of planned neglect accounts for my success!"

Christian, put priority on daily Bible study and prayer, even if you must neglect some secondary things. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God!"

He who puts God first will find God with him at the last!

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### Matthew 6:34

**Life Can be Monotonous** - The road that lies before us seems to stretch mile after mile across a flat, barren desert with no oasis in sight. How then are we to handle wearisome responsibilities when there's no foreseeable relief from our burdens?

Oliver de Vinck, severely disabled from birth, lay helplessly on his bed for all of his 32 years, unable to care for himself. Day after day and year after year his parents put every spoonful of food into his mouth, changed his diapers, and still maintained a happy home.

One day Oliver's brother Christopher asked his father how they managed. He explained that they didn't worry about the long succession of tomorrows that might lie before them. They lived a day at a time, asking, "Can I feed Oliver today?" And the answer always was, "Yes, today I can do it."

Jesus taught us how we can handle life's routine: "Do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble" (6:34). In faith—and with prayer—we can break life and its often wearisome tasks into bite-size pieces, entrusting the unpredictable future to the grace of Him who promises that "as your days, so shall your strength be" (Dt. 33:25).

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### Matthew 6:34

**Worry: Fear's Extravagance** - Worry is fear's extravagance. It extracts interest on trouble before it comes due. It constantly drains the energy God gives us to face daily problems and to fulfill our many responsibilities. It is therefore a sinful waste.

A woman who had lived long enough to have learned some important truths about life remarked, "I've had a lot of trouble—most of which never happened!" She had worried about many things that had never occurred, and had come to see the total futility of her anxieties.

An unknown poet has written:

"I heard a voice at evening softly say,  
'Bear not your yesterdays into tomorrow,  
Nor load this week with last week's load of sorrow.  
Lift all your burdens as they come, nor try  
To weigh the present with the by-and-by."

One step and then another, take your way;  
Live day by day!"

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#### Matthew 6:34

**No Record of Failure** - In the book *Streams in the Desert*, Mrs. Lettie B. Cowman tells of a minister who was heavily burdened under a load of anxiety and care. After carrying this weight for quite some time, he one day imagined that he could place his burden on the ground and stand back a pace or two. Then he could look at it and analyze it. When he did, he discovered that it was made up almost entirely of borrowed things. A good portion of it belonged to tomorrow. An even larger amount of it belonged to the week to come. And a sizable percentage was a carryover from his yesterdays.

Mrs. Cowman indicated that this pastor was guilty of "a very stupid but a very ancient blunder." He had made the mistake of burdening himself in the "now" with things that belonged to "yesterday and tomorrow." "Never yield to gloomy anticipations," she concluded. "Who told you that the night would never end in day? Who told you that the winter of your discontent should proceed from frost to frost, from snow and hail and ice to deeper snow? Do you not know that day follows night, . that spring and summer succeed winter? Place your hope and confidence in God. He has no record of failure."

## MATTHEW 7

Matthew 7: In this chapter we have:—

- Two gates—strait, and wide;
- Two ways—broad, and narrow;
- Two classes—many, and few;
- Two destinations—life, and destruction
- Two trees—good, and corrupt;
- Two fruits—good, and evil;
- Two things done to trees—hewn down, and cast out;
- Two houses;
- Two foundations—rock, and sand;
- Two builders—wise, and foolish;
- Two storms;
- Two results—the one house stood, the other fell.

Matthew 7:2.

- He that blows into a heap of dust is in danger of putting out his own eyes.

Matthew 7:7.

- Many pray like boys who knock at doors and then run away.

Matthew 7:13.

- If a man goes into the evil way, the great enemy of souls goes after him and blots out his footprints.

Matthew 7:16.

- "Shake the tree," said Luther, "and you will see if there is any fruit."
- When the wheels of a clock move within, the hands on the dial move without.

Matthew 7:19.

- If ye be not fruit-bearing plants, ye will become burning brands.

Matthew 7:24.

- Build on the Rock, and fear no shock. "Upon a rock." R. V.: "upon the rock."
- A bed of limestone underlies all Palestine, and Christ speaks of the man who digged down to it.

[Above are from D L Moody's Bible notes](#)

Mt 7:20. By their fruits ye shall know them.

Some people can talk Christianity by the yard, but they cannot walk it by the inch.

Blaise Paschell.

Some church-members have their roots on one side of the church wall and their boughs all hang over and drop the fruit on the world's side. It is not only a question of where your roots are, but where the boughs hang and the apples fall. We want more in these days of clear, distinct, emphatic, Christly religion, so that we do not need to look into the church-roll to find out whether a man is a Christian or not.

CUYLER.

There is a counterfeit olive-tree in Palestine. It is called the wild olive, or the oleaster. It is in all points like the genuine tree, except that it yields no fruit. Alas! how many wild olives are there in the church! When I see a man taking up large space in Christ's spiritual orchard, and absorbing a vast deal of sunlight and soil, and yielding no real fruit, I say, "Ah! there is an oleaster!"

BOWES.

Above from Moody's [One Thousand and One Thoughts from My Library](#)

### Matthew 7:1-3

**Jumping to Conclusions** - For some reason, it is easier to jump to negative conclusions about people than it is to assume the best about them. When we do this, we ascribe to them bad intentions and evil purposes that may not be true. We also reveal something about ourselves, for the faults we see in others are actually a reflection of our own.

In his little book Illustrations of Bible Truth, H. A. Ironside pointed out the folly of judging others. He related an incident in the life of a man called Bishop Potter. "He was sailing for Europe on one of the great transatlantic ocean liners. When he went on board, he found that another passenger was to share the cabin with him. After going to see the accommodations, he came up to the purser's desk and inquired if he could leave his gold watch and other valuables in the ship's safe. He explained that ordinarily he never availed himself of that privilege, but he had been to his cabin and had met the man who was to occupy the other berth. Judging from his appearance, he was afraid that he might not be a very trustworthy person.

The purser accepted the responsibility for the valuables and remarked, 'It's all right, bishop, I'll be very glad to take care of them for you. The other man has been up here and left his for the same reason!'

**Hacking Cough** - A California woman became extremely irritated by the hacking cough of her pet macaw. When the distressing symptom persisted, she took the bird to a veterinarian who checked his feathered patient and found it to be in perfect health. Furthermore, the doctor discovered that instead of having some exotic disease, the bird had merely learned to imitate the raspy "barking" of its cigarette-smoking owner. When the woman was informed of this, she was greatly surprised. The insight she gained into her problem helped her kick the habit.

### Matthew 7:1-6

**CRITICISM** - For some reason, it is easier to jump to negative conclusions about people than it is to assume the best about them. When we do this, we ascribe to them bad intentions and evil purposes that may not be true. We also reveal something about ourselves, for the faults we see in others are usually a reflection of our own.

Bishop Potter "was sailing for Europe on one of the great trans-atlantic ocean liners. When he went on board, he found that another passenger was to share the cabin with him. After going to see the accommodations, he came up to the purser's desk and inquired if he could leave his gold watch and other valuables in the ship's safe. He explained that ordinarily he never availed himself of that privilege, but he had been to his cabin and had met the man who was to occupy the other berth. Judging from his appearance, he was afraid that he might not be a very trustworthy person. The purser accepted the responsibility for the valuables and remarked, 'It's all right, Bishop, I'll be very glad to take care of them for you. The other man has been up here and left his for the same reason — (H. A. Ironside, Illustrations of Bible Truth).

We need to make sure we have all the facts before we speak and guard ourselves against making snap judgments about people. The standards we use to judge others will be used to judge us. —D. C. Egner

It is much easier to be critical than to be correct.—Disraeli

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### **Matthew 7:3**

**Can You Hear Me?** - A man was having difficulty communicating with his wife and concluded that she was becoming hard of hearing. So he decided to conduct a test without her knowing about it.

One evening he sat in a chair on the far side of the room. Her back was to him and she could not see him. Very quietly he whispered, "Can you hear me?" There was no response.

Moving a little closer, he asked again, "Can you hear me now?" Still no reply.

Quietly he edged closer and whispered the same words, but still no answer.

Finally he moved right in behind her chair and said, "Can you hear me now?" To his surprise and chagrin she responded with irritation in her voice, "For the fourth time, yes!" What a warning to us about judging!

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### **Matthew 7:7 "Ask ... seek ... knock."**

Faith asks, hope seeks, and love knocks.

There was a nailhead for the knocker to drop on, and people used to smite it so heavily that some remarked that such blows on the head were killing. Hence arose the mirthful proverb, "as dead as a doornail." It betokens a hearty kind of knocking, which I would have you imitate in prayer. Knock at heaven's gate as earnestly as people knocked at doors in the olden time.

Spurgeon

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### **Matthew 7:7-8**

"For more than 40 years, Ace Pawn Shop had been a fixture on West Main Street in my hometown. Now it was closing. Fred and Lydia Fischer had run the shop as a 'mom and pop' operation, and when Fred died, Lydia found that she couldn't go on alone. Rather than sell the business, she decided to close shop and move south. As a final gesture of appreciation to the customers who had made life so good for them, Lydia sent a card to everyone who had an item in pawn and offered it back free of charge. The sign in the window told the story: 'Pawn Shop Closing: Claim What Is Yours' (David Grubbs, Claim What Is Yours).

God has invited all believers in Christ to claim what is ours, and the Sermon on the Mount lists a number of these wonderful gifts: the kingdom of heaven (salvation), comfort in mourning, the prospect of inheriting the earth, spiritual fulfillment, mercy, fellowship with God, adoption into God's family, and an eternal home in heaven.

When we begin to feel spiritually poor, it's time to ask, seek, and knock. Before another day passes, we can, by faith, "claim what is ours." —D. C. Egner

He possesses all who know the Creator of all.

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### **Matthew 7:13 "Broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction."**

The road is so wide that there may be many independent tracks in it, and the drunkard may find his way along it without ever ruffling the complacency of the hypocrite. The mere moralist may pick a clean path all the way, while the immoral wretch may wade up to his knees in mire throughout the whole road. Behold how sinners disagree and yet agree in this, that they are opposed to God! It is a broad road.

Spurgeon

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### **Matthew 7:20**

**Student Exercise** - Throughout history, ungodly people have attained power and influence through their strong personalities or their spectacular deeds. But natural qualities and remarkable feats do not provide the kind of spiritual leadership that God desires and approves. A classic example is the Russian "clergyman" Rasputin.

Rasputin gained a foothold in the home of Czar Nicholas II because he seemed to possess a supernatural power to help the czar's hemophiliac son. Rasputin's "prayers" appeared to do far more for the boy than the efforts of all his doctors. Thus, the "holy man"

achieved great influence in the government by telling the czar and his wife that their son would live only as long as they listened to his advice. As time went on, Rasputin became openly cruel and immoral, maintaining his position through intimidation and fear.

Charlatans can be clever and winsome. They may even perform counterfeit miracles. But observed closely, their lives give no evidence of the fruit of the Spirit. Their works are as worthless as apples tied on an apple tree to make it look productive.

Fitness for spiritual leadership comes from the inside, not the outside, and includes the qualities of love, joy, peace, longsuffering, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Gal. 5:22-23). —H. V. Lugt

A good leader is one who knows the way, goes the way, and shows the way.

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#### **Matthew 7:23 “I never knew you.”**

Not passionately or angrily, but in stern, sad, solemn tones he said, “I never knew you.”

“But we used thy name, good Lord.”

“I know you did, but I never knew you, and you never truly knew me.”

I can almost imagine someone turning around in that day and saying to some Christians who used to sit in that same pew, “You knew me.”

“Yes,” they will reply, “we knew you, but that is of no avail, for the Master did not know you.”

I can picture some of you crying out to your minister, “Pastor, did not you know us? Surely you recollect what we used to do.”

What can he reply? “Ah, yes, sorrowfully do I own that I know you, but I cannot help you. It is only Christ’s knowing you that can be of any avail to you.”

Spurgeon

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#### **Matthew 7:26 “Every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not. ...”**

If any soul will be lost emphatically, it is he who has been for years a hearer only, a hearer where thousands have believed unto eternal life. Over the cell of such a man write, “He knew his duty, but he did it not,” and that cell will be built in the very center of Gehenna. It is the innermost prison of hell. Willful rejection of Christ ensures woeful rejection from Christ.

Spurgeon

## **MATTHEW 8**

Matthew 8:

Four typical miracles:—

1. Leprosy, typifying guilt.
2. Palsy, typifying impotence.
3. Fever, typifying passion.
4. Demoniacy, typifying slavery of sin.

Matthew 8:10.

1. Christ marveled at unbelief. Mark 6:6.
2. How is it ye have no faith? Mark 4:40.
3. Oh, thou of little faith. Matt. 14:31.
4. Great is thy faith. Matt. 15:28.
5. So great faith. Matt. 8:10.

Matthew 8:17. The key to Christ’s atoning death: “Himself took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses.”

Matthew 8:24. “He was asleep”—Christ’s humanity.

Matthew 8:26. "He rebuked the winds"—His divinity.

Matthew 8:25.

- Lord—We.
- Save—Perish.

When a man really wants the Saviour, he does not need any one to teach him how to pray.

[Above are from D L Moody's Bible notes](#)

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### Matthew 8:26

No Christian is immune from the storms of life. The transforming power of God's grace does not come with a guarantee that we will be free from difficulty and trial. Yet we are assured of God's abiding presence and mighty power to calm our fears and hold us secure in times of trouble.

One night an unexpected storm swept over a passenger ship sailing from England to New York, tossing the ship violently and awakening everyone on board, including the captain's eight-year-old daughter. "What's the matter?" the frightened child cried. After her mother explained about the storm, she asked, "Is Father on deck?" Assured that he was, the little girl snuggled back into her bed and in a few moments was sound asleep. Although the winds still blew and the waves still rolled, she had peace because her father was at the helm.

Although the squalls of life strike us, we are assured of our Father's presence. He controls our lives and upholds us with His right hand. We may not dodge the storm, and the winds may still blow, but the Master of wind and wave is on board. And if we trust Him, He will either calm the waves or quiet our hearts. — P.R.V.

We need not nervously pace the deck if the Captain of our salvation is at the helm.

## MATTHEW 9

Matthew 9:9.

- It was a great victory to win a promising business man.

Matthew 9:36.

- What are the "multitudes" that Jesus sees to-day, from his throne in glory? Eight hundred millions heathen, two hundred millions Mohammedans, etc.

[Above are from D L Moody's Bible notes](#)

Mt 9:13. I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

Among the several wonders of the loadstone, this is not the least, that it will not draw gold nor pearl, but, despising these, it draws the iron to it, one of the most inferior metals: thus Christ leaves the angels, those noble spirits, the gold and the pearl, and He comes to poor sinful man, and draws him into His embraces.  
T. WATSON.

Mt 9:29. According to your faith be it unto you.

Faith never goes home with an empty basket.  
ELIJAH P. BROWN.

So it ever is. Christ's mercy, like water in a vase, takes the shape of the vessel that holds it. On the one hand, His grace is infinite and "is given to every one of us according to the measure of the gift of Christ," with no limitation but His own unlimited fullness; on the other hand, the amount we practically receive from that



inexhaustible store is determined by the measure and the purity and the intensity of our faith. On His part there is no limit but infinity; on our side the limit is our capacity, and our capacity is settled by our desire. His word to us ever is, "Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it" "Be it unto thee even as thou wilt."  
MACLAREN.

Above from Moody's [One Thousand and One Thoughts from My Library](#)

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### Matthew 9:36

We who live in countries where the gospel is freely preached find it difficult to imagine the tremendous spiritual need in areas where people have never heard the gospel. When we think of the millions who do not know Christ, we need to be filled with compassion and moved to action, as our Savior was in Matthew 9.

While on furlough from missionary service in Africa, Robert Moffat (1795-1883) spoke in England about his work. A young medical student in the audience had hoped to serve on the mission field in China, but that land was closed. He listened as Moffat described a frequent sight in Africa. "There is a vast plain to the north, where I have sometimes seen, in the morning sun, the smoke of a thousand villages where no missionary has ever been."

"The smoke of a thousand villages." Those words painted a vivid picture and gripped the heart of the young student. This was the challenge he was looking for in his desire to reach the unreached. Filled with a new vision, the young man went to Moffat and asked, "Would I do for Africa?" That student was David Livingstone.

Christ said, "Lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest" (John 4:35). He still needs workers today. With Moffat and Livingstone, we can envision "the smoke of a thousand villages." Then we must ask God to show us what we can do to share the gospel with those who have never heard. —R. W. De Haan

We can reach out to a world in need with the Word it needs!

## MATTHEW 10

Matthew 10:8.

- The motive—free grace.
- The measure—free giving.
- The Christian's commission—"Raise the dead."
- How? "Go, preach." V. 7.
- Who are the dead? All. 1 Cor. 15:22.
- Why are they "dead"? Because they are "alienated from God." Eph. 4:18.
- To what to be raised? To "sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." Eph. 2:6.

Matthew 10:9.

- Faith is better than funds for the life that now is, and for the life that is to come.

Matthew 10:38.

- A saint is often under a cross; never under a curse.

[Above are from D L Moody's Bible notes](#)

Mt 10:19. It shall be given you in that same hour.

How often hast thou found thyself, at the entrance into a duty, becalmed, as a ship, which, at first setting sail, hath hardly wind to swell its sails while under the shore and shadow of the trees, but meets a fresh gale of wind when got into the open sea! Yea, didst thou never launch out to duty as the apostles to sea, when the wind in thy face, as if the Spirit of God, instead of helping thee on, meant to drive thee back, and yet hast

found Christ walking to thee before the duty was done, and a prosperous voyage made of it at last? Abraham saw not the ram which God had Prded for his sacrifice till he was in the mount. In the mount of prayer God is seen, even when the Christian does often go up the hill toward duty with a heavy heart because he can as yet have no sight of Him. Turn not, therefore, back, but go on with courage: He may be nearer than thou thinkest "In that same hour," saith Christ, "it shall be given unto you."  
GURNALL.

Mt 10:38. He that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.

The cross is easier to him who takes it up than to him who drags it along.  
J. E. VAUX.

Mt 10:42. Whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water ... he shall in nowise lose his reward.

Life affords but few opportunities of doing great services for others; but there is scarcely an hour of the day that does not afford us an opportunity of performing some little, it may be unnoticed kindness.  
BOWES.

Above from Moody's [One Thousand and One Thoughts from My Library](#)

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### Matthew 10:28

All sorts of fears obsess believers. Although some may be legitimate, most are vague, nameless feelings of apprehension. They rob us of confidence and joy, and keep us from spiritual health and effectiveness. The Bible has the solution to this problem. When we learn the fear of God, we will not be controlled by earthly terrors.

A young boy living in Holland when it was occupied by the Nazis during World War II, wrote the following in his journal: "Last week three German officers stopped my dad in the hallway. They held him at gunpoint and forced him to open the steel door leading to the basement. One of them ordered Dad to show the crawl space under the hallways. He said if he didn't tell where the hidden weapons are, he will be shot. Dad usually is not a great hero. He's even afraid of the dentist. But this time he is not afraid at all. One of them cocked his Luger and held it against my Dad's temple. Dad recited the Bible verse that was on his mind, 'And fear not them who kill the body, . . . but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both body and soul in hell.' The Germans looked at each other, shrugged their shoulders, and then left. The steel heels of their boots made a clanging noise on the iron stairway."

This boy's father feared God more than he did the enemy. Having that kind of attitude will help us put all our fears in perspective. —  
D. C. Egner

We need not fear the darkness of this world, for we have Christ the light.

### Matthew 10:29

**HIS EYE IS ON THE SPARROW!** - These words of Jesus are a rebuke to faltering faith, and an exhortation to put our trust in God. A sparrow in Jesus' day was worth about one-eighth of a cent, and yet He who controls the universe is interested in each one of these insignificant little birds. If His eye notes the sparrow's fall, will He not also enter into every pang that rends the heart of His children?

C. F. Bundy has an interesting commentary on this passage. He writes: "This precious verse is usually misquoted. Note that it does not say 'to the ground' but 'on the ground.' Picture in your mind an active little sparrow, and the significance of the difference will become clear. The sparrow does not have to fall from a height, or die, but merely stumble as it hops along 'on the ground,' and God knows and cares! How much more is He concerned when one of His children stumbles and falls or is tried in the way of life! Not only so, but He is ever ready to help, strengthen, and restore such a fallen one. Don't wait for an emergency or a great tragedy before you call upon the Lord; rather, present to Him the problems, perplexities, and the little needs of everyday living!"

An anonymous poet exclaims:

"When the birds begin to worry, and the lilies toil and spin,  
and God's creatures all are anxious, then I also may begin;  
for my Father sets their table, decks them out in garments fine,  
and if He supplies their living, will He not provide for mine?  
Just as noisy, common sparrows can be found most anywhere —

unto some a worthless creature, if it perish who would care?  
Yet our Heavenly Father numbers every creature great and small,  
caring even for the sparrows, marking when each one doth fall.  
If His children's hairs are numbered, why should we be filled with fear?  
He has promised all that's needful, and in trouble to be near!"  
If God sees the sparrow's fall,  
Paints the lily, short and tall,  
Gives the skies their azure hue,  
Will He not then care for you? — Anon.

With God's strength behind you, His love within you, and His arms underneath you, you are more than sufficient for the job ahead of you! —Wm. A. Ward

## MATTHEW 11

Matthew 11:29.

- The eastern yoke is made for two necks. If Christ is with us, we are blessed. There is no room for a third neck. 2 Cor. 6:14.
- The only description of Christ's heart—"lowly."
- The burden of law remains eternally the same, but the inspiration of grace enables men to bear it.

1. Something to do—"Come unto me."
2. Something to take—His yoke.
3. Something to leave—Your burden.
4. Something to find—Rest.

"Learn of me." If the life of Christ be not your pattern, the death of Christ will never be your pardon. What He was by nature, we should be by grace.

Matthew 11:30.

- He that deems the yoke of Christ heavy, will not find his crown easy.
- When Christ takes the burden of guilt off a sinner's shoulders, He places the yoke of obedience upon his neck.

[Above are from D L Moody's Bible notes](#)

Mt 11:28. Come unto me ... and I will give you rest.

The needle in the compass never stands still till it comes right against the north pole. The wise men of the East never stood still till they were right against the star which appeared unto them; and the star itself never stood still till it came right against that other Star, which shone more brightly in the manger than the sun did in the firmament. So the heart of man can find no rest till it comes to Christ.

This is a tired world! Multitudes tired of body or tired of mind or tired of soul! Every one has a burden to carry, if not on one shoulder, then on the other. In the far East, water is so scarce that if a man owns a well, he is rich; and battles have been fought for the possession of a well of water. But every man owns a well, a deep well,—a well of tears. Chemists have tried to analyze a tear, and they say it is made of so much of this and so much of that, but they miss important ingredients. A tear is agony in solution. But by divine power, it may be crystallized into spiritual wealth, and all burdens may be lifted. God is the rest of the soul that comes to Him. He rests us by removing the weight of our sin and by solacing our griefs with the thought that He knows what

is best for His children. A wheat sheaf cried out to the farmer, "Why do you smite me with that flail? What have I done that you should so cruelly pound me?" But when the straw had been raked off the wheat and put in the mow, and the wheat had been winnowed by the mill and had been piled in rich and beautiful gold on either side the barn door, then the straw looked down from the mow and saw why the farmer had flailed the wheat sheaf.

TALMAGE.

Mt 11:29. Ye shall find rest unto your souls.

Rest unto our souls!—'tis all we want, the end of all our wishes and pursuits. Give us a prospect of this, we take the wings of the morning, and fly to the uttermost parts of the earth to have it in possession, till, after many miserable experiments, we have been seeking everywhere for it but where there is a prospect of finding it: that is within ourselves,—in a meek and lowly disposition of heart.

STERNE.

Above from Moody's [One Thousand and One Thoughts from My Library](#)

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## MATTHEW 12

Matthew 12:31

- Those who think they have committed the unpardonable sin seldom worry themselves about other sins.

Matthew 12:45.

- If godly sorrow takes possession of the house, it will quickly shut sin out.

[Above are from D L Moody's Bible notes](#)

Mt 12:34. Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.

There is so much correspondence betwixt the heart and tongue, that they will move at once. Every man, therefore, speaks of his own pleasure and care. If the heart were full of God, the tongue could not refrain to talk of Him: the rareness of Christian communication argues the common poverty of grace. If Christ be not in our hearts, we are godless; if He be there without our joy, we are senseless; if we rejoice in Him, and speak not of Him, we are shamefully unthankful. I will think of Thee always, O Lord; so it shall be my joy to speak of Thee often; and if I find not opportunity, I will make it.

BISHOP HALL.

Mt 12:33. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things; and an evil man, out of the evil treasure, bringeth forth evil things.

When the wheels of a clock move within, the hands on the dial will move without. When the heart of a man is sound in conversion, then the life will be fair in profession.

Above from Moody's [One Thousand and One Thoughts from My Library](#)

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## MATTHEW 13

Matthew 13:23.

- Understanding the Word with the heart (v. 15) is the result of the Spirit's dealing, and indicates regeneration. 1 Cor. 2:10, 16.

Matthew 13:45.

The "pearl of great price" is the church. Jesus Christ is the merchantman and gave all to purchase the pearl. Could not pay a higher price. Not "pearls," but the "pearl." Brought from great depths, into changed surroundings, at risk of diver's life; noted for purity; no need of polishing; perfect when found.

The church is the pearl. Believers are "jewels."

[Above are from D L Moody's Bible notes](#)

Mt 13:22. The cares of this world ... choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful.

We cannot grow good wheat if we also grow the thorns of the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches and the pleasures of this life.

Mt 13:30. Let both grow together until the harvest.

It is God's way to let "both grow together." Here are lessons of patience and of charity. If God can wait, His servants can. If the Master of the harvest can bear with the tares, His children need not be anxious about them. The wheat and the tares in their early growth are alike; the best farmer cannot distinguish them. God sees the difference; man cannot, but "the day will declare it." There is no tareless wheat-field, there is no pure Church on earth. The tares will not always be hidden, but when God's sickle is thrust in they will be given to the fire. The wheat will all be gathered in due time,—not one of God's children will be lost. When we see the tares, let us be patient; we would have cast Judas out long before Jesus did. He may try the faith, the charity, and the patience of His people now, by leaving Judas in the Church, as He did then.

Be charitable. What you think to be tares may be God's wheat. What if they walk not with us? They may be for us. Bear with human frailty and sin; you also are frail and sinful. It is safe to leave the results with God.

H. H. JESSUP.

Above from Moody's [One Thousand and One Thoughts from My Library](#)

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## Matthew 13:36-43

**PUNISHMENT FOR DISOBEYING GOSPEL** - During the Franco-German War of 1870-71, a homeowner found two unexploded shells near his house. He cleaned them up and put them on display near his fireplace. A few weeks later he showed them to a visitor. His friend, an expert in munitions, had a horrible thought. "What if they're still loaded?" After examining the shells, he exclaimed, "Get them away from the fire immediately! They're as deadly as the day they were made!" Without realizing it, the homeowner had been living in peril.

Likewise, many people unknowingly live in constant jeopardy of something far worse—a Christ-less eternity in hell. Failing to recognize the consequences of unbelief, they risk sealing their doom at any moment. We cannot exaggerate the danger of rejecting Christ and living in unbelief, for what we do with Him and His offer of salvation determines where we will spend eternity.

The words of our text are among the most chilling found in the Bible. They emphasize the truth of Hebrews 10:31 : that it is "a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." Our Lord describes hell as a terrible place of outer darkness (Matt. 22:13 ) and eternal hopelessness (Matt. 18:8-9) . —H. G. Bosch

When it comes to salvation, he who hesitates may be lost!

## MATTHEW 14

Matthew 14:4.

- John the Baptist was an uncompromising preacher.

Matthew 14:9.

- The head of John the Baptist was a high price for a few moments entertainment.

Matthew 14:31.

- "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" Peter had enough faith to keep him from drowning, but not from doubting.

[Above are from D L Moody's Bible notes](#)

Mt 14:23. He went up into a mountain apart to pray.

We may well take the lesson which Christ's prayers teach us, for we all need it—that no life is so high, so holy, so full of habitual communion with God that it can afford to do without the hour of prayer, the secret place, the uttered word.... The life that was all one long prayer needed the mountain top, and the nightly converse with God. He who could say, "The Father hath not left me alone, for I do always the things that please Him," felt that He must also have the special communion of spoken prayer. What Christ needed we cannot afford to neglect.  
MACLAREN.

Above from Moody's [One Thousand and One Thoughts from My Library](#)

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### **Matthew 14:31**

**I WILL NOT DOUBT** - What a picture we have in this passage of the manner in which we often react when we are "tossed with the waves" of adversity and buffeted by the "contrary winds of human experience." When everything appears to be going against us, and the very foundations seem crumbling, how prone we are to forget that our Savior has promised, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Heb. 13:5).

Oh, what peace we forfeit when we refuse to take God at His Word. How much better, keeping our eyes on Him and trusting His promises, to say with the poet:

I will not doubt though all my ships at sea  
Come drifting home with broken masts and sails;  
I will believe the Hand which never fails,  
From seeming evil, worketh good for me.  
And though I weep because these sails are tattered,  
Still will I cry, while my best hopes lie shattered,  
"I trust in Thee!"  
I will not doubt though sorrows fall like rain,  
And troubles swarm like bees about a hive,  
I will believe the heights for which I strive  
Are only reached by anguish and by pain;  
And though I groan and writhe beneath my crosses,  
I yet shall see, through my severest losses,  
The greater gain.  
I will not doubt, well anchored in the faith,  
Like some staunch ship my soul braves every gale,  
So strong its courage that it will not fail  
To breast the mighty unknown sea of death.  
Oh may I cry, though body parts with spirit,

"I do not doubt," so listening worlds may hear it  
With my last breath. —Ella Wheeler Wilcox  
May this be our trusting prayer today.  
Above the tempest's roar, faith hears His voice;  
And with its hand in His, it can rejoice.  
It fears no cloud, or wind that it can bring;  
Faith looks across the storm, and still can sing! —Anon.

I do not want merely to possess faith; I want a faith that possesses me!—C. Kingsley

## MATTHEW 15

Matthew 15:

The woman's faith overcame His—

1. Silence. Matthew 15:23.
2. Sovereignty. Matthew 15:24.
3. Severity. Matthew 15:26.

Matthew 15:25.

- Christ heard the woman when she dropped the title, "Son of David" (v. 22). She was a Gentile.
- A prayer of three links, connecting earth with heaven: "LORD—HELP—ME."

Matthew 15:27. Don't be satisfied with crumbs. Go for the whole loaf.

[Above are from D L Moody's Bible notes](#)

Mt 15:25. Lord, help me.

There is a chain of but three links in this prayer of the poor woman of Canaan, but it reaches a long way. Some of the most beautiful prayers ever uttered are very short prayers. This is a very short prayer—any child can say it. There are three links in the chain, mark you. One link is on the throne of God; it is "Lord." The other link is down here; it is "me." And then there is a great link between that and this; it is "help." "Lord, help me." And the greater your need, the more that middle link in the chain will express.  
MARCUS RAINSFORD.

Mt 15:27. Truth, Lord: yet.

"Truth, Lord: yet!" is the sum and substance of faith. If we have learned to combine these words, we have learned to believe. Truth, Lord: "sin has abounded unto death"; yet "hath Thy grace much more abounded unto life." Truth, Lord: "cursed is every one that abideth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them"; yet, "He who knew no sin was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." Truth, Lord, is the sea of our sin and guilt, and the righteous anger of God; yet, is the rock of Christ's redemption and love. Truth, Lord, is a view of self; yet, is a view of Jesus.  
SAPHIR.

Mt 15:28. Be it unto thee even as thou wilt.

Oh, the victories of prayer! They are the mountain tops of the Bible. They take us back to the plains of Mamre, to the fords of Peniel, to the prison of Joseph, to the triumphs of Moses, to the transcendent victories of Joshua, to the deliverances of David, to the miracles of Elijah and Elisha, to the whole story of the Master's life, to the secret of Pentecost, to the keynote of Paul's unparalleled ministry, to the lives of saints and the deaths of martyrs, to all that is most sacred and sweet in the history of the Church and the experience of the

children of God. And when, for us, the last conflict shall have passed, and the footstool of prayer shall have given place to the harp of praise, the spots of time that shall be gilded with the most celestial and eternal radiance, shall be those, often linked with deepest sorrow and darkest night, over which we have the inscription, "Jehovah-Shammah: The Lord was there!"

SIMPSON.

Mt 15:34 How many loaves have ye?

Christ puts that question day by day to each one of us. There be many that say, "I have no work for Christ, and no mission. Mine is no lofty station, mine is no large sphere, mine is no eloquent tongue, or popular manner, or telling influence. It is too late for me—or perhaPs for the heart is versatile in its deceitfulness, it is too soon for me—to undertake anything for Christ; the King of Glory wants chief men, choice gifts, for His ministries: let me live out my little day and go back to the ground from which I was taken." Gravely, sorrowfully, yet earnestly and gently too, does Christ address Himself to you to-day, saying, "Think yet once more—how many loaves have ye?" Nothing? Not a soul? Not a body? Not time? Not one friend, not one neighbor, not one servant, to whom a kind word may be spoken, or a kind deed done, in the name, for the love of Jesus? Bring that—do that, say that—as what thou hast; very small, very trivial, very worthless, if thou wilt: yet remember the saying, "She hath done what she could."

VAUGHAN.

Above from Moody's [One Thousand and One Thoughts from My Library](#)

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## MATTHEW 16

Matthew 16:13–17.

The answers of opinion and of revelation. Why did Jesus come into the world? 1 John 3:5, 8; John 1:29; 1 Tim. 1:15; Luke 19:10, etc.

Matthew 16:13. It makes a great difference to men what they think of Jesus.

Matthew 16:15. It makes less difference to a man what others think of Jesus than what he thinks.

Matthew 16:16. A great confession.

Matthew 16:22. A great collapse.

Matthew 16:22, 23.

- The devil hates to consider the death of Jesus, knowing that it is so important.

Matthew 16:26.

- The devil gained the whole world and lost his soul. Who would change places with him?

Pleasure, Profit, and Preferment are the wicked man's trinity: and his carnal self is these in unity.

[Above are from D L Moody's Bible notes](#)

Mt 16:6. Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees.

Every variety of character has its own danger, perhaPsits own form of Pharisaism. It is easy for us to see the Pharisaism of others. We can stone the Pharisee in an indignant zeal, and what then? When the storm is over, and we have hurled the lightnings, there stands the Master, with eyes that search us through, and He bends over us, and saith unto His disciples, first of all, "Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees." We, too, may have our own form of Pharisaism eating the life out of us; spoiling all the beauty and blessedness of our religion. To those that are nearest and dearest to Him this word is spoken by the Lord Himself.

MARK GUY PEARSE.



Mt 16:24. If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

Christ's cross is the sweetest burden that ever I bore; it is such a burden as wings are to a bird, or sails to a ship, to carry me forward to my harbor.

RUTHERFORD.

Above from Moody's [One Thousand and One Thoughts from My Library](#)

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#### **Matthew 16:26**

**Obsessed With Winning** - The magazine article summarized the life of a former winning NCAA basketball coach and network sports announcer. Throughout his colorful coaching career he had been obsessed with the game and with winning. But years later, stricken with cancer, he came to realize the triviality of the goods and values to which he had been passionately devoted. "You get sick and you say to yourself, 'Sports means nothing,' and that feels terrible."

Because he had spent little time with his wife and children, he confessed, "I figured I'd have 20 years in the big time, who knows, maybe win three national titles, then pack it in at 53 or 54. I was going to make it all up to them, all the time I'd been away. It sounds so silly now. But it went on and on, that insatiable desire to conquer the world."

#### **Matthew 16:26**

**THE MATHEMATICIAN'S CONVERSION** - The most precious possession a man has is his soul! However, sin and Satan have so blinded the eyes of the unsaved that they abuse, degrade, and bargain away this "jewel of God" for a pittance. Unless grace enlightens them, they will carelessly barter away their eternal future for a few fleeting moments of earthly pleasure or transient success; yet Jesus in His Word makes it abundantly clear that there is no greater tragedy than a lost soul!

A young man, distinguished for his mathematical attainments, was fond of challenging his fellow students to a trial of skill in solving difficult problems. One day a classmate came into his study and handed him a folded paper, saying, "Here is a problem I wish you would solve." Then he immediately left the room. The paper was eagerly spread out and read, but instead of a question in mathematics, there appeared the solemn words of Jesus: "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Mark 8:36, 37). With a gesture of impatience, the mathematician tore the paper to bits and turned again to his books. In vain he tried to shake off the conviction the heart-searching words had produced. The Holy Spirit continued to press home the truth of his guilt and eternal danger so that he could find no peace until he had made sure of his soul's destiny by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ. The story goes that subsequently he became a preacher of the Gospel, and that his first sermon was from the very words that brought him to Christ: "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

Have you given your most precious possession to Jesus? Re-member, that soul of yours is only safe in His keeping!

When thou, in the dust art forgotten,

When pleasure can charm thee no more,

'Twill profit thee nothing, but fearful the cost,

To gain the whole world, if thy soul should be lost! — F. Crosby

Life with Christ is an endless hope; without Him it is a hope-less end!

#### **Matthew 16:21-28**

**GET BEHIND ME** - When Peter objected to Jesus' statement about going to Jerusalem to die, he unwittingly spoke for the devil. A song portrays Satan as gleeful when he saw Christ on the cross, but I believe the devil was dismayed when he realized that Jesus was paying the price for man-kind's sins and that His sacrifice would break forever the power of death.

From the time John the Baptist declared Christ to be "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29), Satan tried to keep our Lord from going to the cross. In the wilderness temptation he suggested that Jesus take the kingdoms of the world without the ordeal of Calvary. He incited the Jewish leaders to hate Christ, hoping they might kill Him by stoning. When these attempts failed, he switched tactics. He induced Peter to speak against God's plan, and he "entered" Judas (John 13:27). He prompted Peter's denials of Jesus, the cowardice of the apostles, the brutality of the soldiers, and the heartlessness of the mob. Through all of this he hoped to convince Jesus that mankind wasn't worth dying for.

Satan lost that battle, but he continues to fight. He does all he can to hinder the spread of the gospel. He even uses religions that

pro-mote salvation by works and ritual. Despite his efforts, thousands are being saved through faith in Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection. They can joyfully sing, "Hallelujah for the Cross," because the cross and the empty tomb spelled Satan's ultimate defeat. —H. V. Lugt

Calvary stands for Satan's fall.

## MATTHEW 17

Matthew 17:2. The law was given with thunderings, lightnings, and darkness. Christ was manifested in glory and peace.

Matthew 17:5.

"This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him." God here quotes three Old Testament texts:—

- a. This is my beloved Son. Ps. 2:7.
- b. In whom I am well pleased. Isa. 42:1.
- c. Hear ye him. Deut. 18:15.

This was the last time God spoke to men.

He who refuses to hear the voice of Jesus Christ shall never see his face.

[Above are from D L Moody's Bible notes](#)

Mt 17:1, 2. Jesus taketh Peter, James and John ... up into an high mountain apart, and was transfigured before them.

Come close to Him. He may take you to-day up into the mountain top, for where He took Peter with his blundering, and James and John, those sons of thunder, who again and again so utterly misunderstood their Master and His mission—there is no reason why He should not take you. You can hardly be farther back than they were. So don't shut yourself out of it and say, "Ah, these wonderful visions and revelations of the Lord are for choice spirits, for an election within the election!" They may be for you. The Lord will come to those that are humble and of a contrite heart and who tremble at His Word.

McNEILL.

Mt 17:2. His face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light

If a thing reflects no light, it is black; if it reflects part of the rays, it is blue or indigo or red; but, if it reflects them all, it is white. If we are like Christ, we shall seek, not to absorb, but to reflect, the light which falls upon us from heaven upon others: and thus we shall become pure and spotless; for this is the meaning of the "white robes," which the saints wear in glory.

BEECHER.

Above from Moody's [One Thousand and One Thoughts from My Library](#)

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### [What Does It Mean to Have Mustard Seed Faith?](#)

Faith is so vital to the Christian life that Scripture tells us without it, it is impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6). And yet faith is such a powerful gift from God (Ephesians 2:8–9) that with just a tiny measure of it, the size of a mustard seed, Christ told His disciples they could move mountains. So, what does it mean to have "mustard seed faith"?

We see the reference to "mustard seed faith" twice in Scripture. First, in Matthew 17:14–20, we see Christ's disciples unable to exorcise a demon from a young boy, even though Jesus had previously given them the authority to do this very thing (Matthew 10:1). When they inquired of Jesus why they were not able to drive the demon out, the Master replied, "Because you have so little faith. I tell you the truth, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'move from here to there' and it will move; Nothing will be impossible for you" (Matthew 17:14–20). Next, in Luke 17:6, Jesus tells His disciples: "If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it will obey you." By using the uncommonly small mustard seed as an example, Jesus is speaking figuratively about the incalculable power of God when unleashed in the lives of those with true faith.

We know that this statement about moving mountains and uprooting trees by faith is not to be taken literally. The key to

understanding the passages is the nature of faith, which is a gift from God. The power of faith reflects the omnipotent nature of the God who bestows faith on His own. The mustard seed is one of the tiniest seeds found in the Middle East, so the conclusion is that the amount of faith needed to do great things is very small indeed. Just as in the parable of the mustard seed (Matthew 13:31–32), Jesus uses rhetorical hyperbole to make the point that little is much when it comes from God. The mustard seed in the parable grows to be a huge tree, representing the tiny beginnings of Christianity when just a few disciples began to preach and teach the gospel. Eventually, the kingdom grew to huge proportions, encompassing the entire world and spreading over centuries.

So, too, does the tiniest bit of faith, when it is true faith from God, grow to immense proportions in the lives of believers and spreading out to influence all they come into contact with. One has only to read histories

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**C H Spurgeon** - Brethren, why do you think that the Lord allows his servants to be beaten at all? Well, of course, the chief reason in this case was—and of that we will speak presently,—because God gives the victory to faith, and if we will not believe, neither shall we be established. If we fall, as those disciples probably had fallen, into an unspiritual frame of mind and a low state of grace, our commission will not be worth much, our former qualifications will be of little value, and all successes we have had in earlier days will not take away the effect of present failures. We shall be like Samson, who went out and shook himself as he had done aforetime; but the Spirit of God had departed from him; and the Philistines soon overcame him,—those very Philistines whom, if his Lord had still been with him, he would have smitten hip and thigh with great slaughter. If we are to do the Lord's work, and to do it successfully, we must have faith in him, we must look beyond ourselves, we must look beyond our commission, we must look beyond our personal qualifications, we must look beyond our former successes, we must look for a present anointing by the Holy Spirit, and by faith we must hang upon the living God from day to day.

- Excerpt from his sermon [The Secret of Failure](#) (Recommended)

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### **Nothing Is Impossible with God**

When shadows loom and doubts arise,  
When hope seems dim beneath the skies,  
Remember this, both near and broad:  
Nothing is impossible with God.

The mountains high, the oceans deep,  
The promises He swore to keep,  
Are held by Him, the staff, the rod,  
For nothing is impossible with God.

A barren womb, a parted sea,  
A shepherd boy with victory.  
A stone rolled back, a Savior awed—  
Yes, nothing is impossible with God.

When chains of fear your soul confine,  
When paths are dark, no clear design,  
Look up! The way the saints have trod—  
Proclaims: Nothing is impossible with God.

He speaks, and worlds are brought to be,  
He calms the storms, commands the sea.  
His hand creates, His voice unflawed,  
Declares, "Nothing is impossible with God."

So trust Him in the fiercest fight,  
He turns the wrong to make it right.  
With faith, step forward, ground unshod—  
For nothing is impossible with God.

Let this truth echo in your soul,  
When life feels broken, hard, not whole.  
Through every trial, every prod,  
Believe: Nothing is impossible with God.

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**FEED YOUR FAITH AND STARVE YOUR DOUBT!** - Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief. Mark 9:24.

This father of a demonized boy had both faith and unbelief, but he took sides with his faith against his unbelief. Whatever we feed grows stronger. What we starve dies eventually. Your faith may be small, even as a grain of mustard seed, but feed it on the Word and exercise it unto godliness and it will gain strength by the day. Pay no attention to your doubts, no matter how feelings may clamor, and they will grow weaker. It is as simple as that. I did not say as easy as that, for Christian maturity is not reached easily, but it is as plain as that if we but follow it. (Vance Havner)

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#### **J J Knapp - Faith that Moves Mountains** Mt. 17:20

What a contrast: a mustard seed and a mountain! Elsewhere Jesus called the mustard seed the smallest of all herb seeds, and a mountain belongs to the imposing and great things of the earth. The smallest is here contrasted with the greatest. Yet, the grain of seed, that is taken along by the wind, is more than the anchored majestic mountain, if it is only a grain of a mustard seed of faith. Spiritual power is contained in faith and the slightest amount of spiritual power shall finally triumph over all material powers, even if they are as immovable as a deep-rooted mountain.

Mountains of objections arise before us in connection with God's providential government. As long as everything in our lives goes according to our wish, we usually can accept the thought that the Almighty One holds the reigns of government. However, how do matters stand when God makes us to walk in riddles? Then the questions pile up as high as a mountain. Why do the godly go so often in black while the godless have no bonds until death? Why is there in our lives so much bitter sorrow? Why are we chastised so severely? Why does God allow so much unrighteousness, while He has the power to stop it? Why is there so much misery and sickness in the world?

Mountains of objections also arise before us in connection with the redemption by Christ, even if we have found a place of rest in the redeeming blood of the cross. What a number of questions of little faith! If it became apparent that we sinned against duty and light,.... and then not to doubt grace? If we have fallen into sins that we had renounced in solemn earnest, ... and then still to flee to Christ as a penitent?

Behold, here applies the admonishing word of Christ: "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you!" The true faith in God's providence, even if it is as small as a grain of seed, has such a trust in God that it calls the most crooked paths straight and the darkest nights day. True faith in the redeeming grace of Christ casts all the listed objections to the side; yes, even if our own conscience would raise mountains and close off access to the throne of grace, saying that there was no hope for us to be accepted again after so many stumblings,—we would not allow us to be withheld by these hurdles; we would remove all those mountains into the heart of the sea; we would make them move by the living trust in Him who does not reject the penitent, even if he had sinned seven, yes, even seventy times seven times.

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#### **Henry Blackaby - Genuine Faith** - Borrow [The experience : a devotional and journal : day by day with God page 78](#)

"I tell you the truth, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you." Matthew 17:20

Faith is measured by quality, not quantity. It's not how much faith we have that counts, but where we put our faith. Sometimes we put our faith in faith, instead of in God. We think if we just believe hard enough we'll get whatever we want. That's trusting in ourselves rather than in God. Faith by itself is as worthless as a solar-powered flashlight or an inflatable dartboard. The power to move mountains is in God, not in our faith.

When the disciples asked why they'd been unable to cast a demon out of a boy, Jesus pointed to their faith. The disciples had false confidence in their own faith. Jesus explained that they had grown to believe in themselves and their ability to do things for God, instead of believing in God's ability to work through them. They were treating their faith like a magic wand that they pulled out whenever they needed another miracle. They had placed their faith in faith rather than in God.

Be careful you don't fall under that same misconception. Don't even try to work up enough faith, thinking that at some point God will say, "You've reached the minimum faith requirement; now you can move a mountain." Instead, put your faith where it belongs: not in yourself, but in God. Then stand aside and watch him move the mountain!

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#### **Matthew 17:20**

A Woman of Little Faith - A woman who was known for her deep trust and calmness of soul was asked by a person who wanted to learn her secret, "Are you the woman with the great faith?" "No," she replied, "I am the woman with the little faith in the great God!"

Most Christians admit that frequently their faith is weak. Often they try to generate its power from within their own hearts. This is a mistake. Faith can grow only as it reaches out to the Lord and His Word. A friend and I were discussing this subject one day. "Henry," he said, "I've just been reading Matthew 17, where Jesus compares our faith to a grain of mustard seed. As I studied this, I discovered an interesting fact. A mustard seed has a small amount of nourishment within itself to support the germ of life. Therefore, it must be planted near the surface in rich, fertile ground if it is to flourish. As soon as a tiny shoot emerges, it must immediately obtain food and strength from another source. The moist, loamy soil around it and the sunlight from above must work their miracle if the plant is to survive." The same is true with out faith. Because it is so weak, it must reach beyond itself for sustenance and growth. It "should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God" (1 Cor. 2:5). - H.G.Bosch (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

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#### **F B Meyer - Our Daily Walk - THE POWER OF SMALL THINGS**

"Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed nothing shall be impossible unto you."-- Mt 17:20.

THE GRAIN of mustard seed is the smallest of seeds, but Jesus says that it is a fitting emblem of the Kingdom of God, and the unostentatious beginnings of the Christian era. The number and social position of the disciples was insignificant in the extreme. And the first germ of truth sown in the heart of man, woman, or child, is sometimes equally insignificant. It may be just a sentence, a text, a passing remark which results in a mighty harvest (Mark 4:30-32).

What is it that enables this tiny seed to make such a prodigious increase? It lies in its receptive power, as it receives into its nature the mighty forces which slumber in the soil, the effect of sunbeams, moisture, and air. So long as a little aperture is kept open, there is no limit to the fertility and usefulness of the plant. You may be but a child, and your life seem weak and ineffective, but if you will open your heart to God by faith, He will pour in His mighty fullness, and the tiny seed become a great tree of strength and usefulness, grace and beauty.

Let us not despise the day of small things. Faith may be as a grain of mustard seed, but as it is used it will grow. Your effort to do good may seem so insignificant that it would be hardly missed, if it were discontinued, and yet out of it may emanate some mighty work which will bring help and comfort to thousands. How many orphanages, schools, and philanthropic efforts have owed their origin to the most infinitesimal beginnings. One destitute child cared and ministered to for Christ's sake has led to another, until finally thousands of little ones have received a good start in life. What could be more insignificant than the beginnings of the Gospel message in many a heathen country. Do not be discouraged. Like Gideon, you may be only a cake of barley bread, but by faith you may overturn the tents of Midian. Like the little lad, you may only be able to place five tiny loaves and two small fish in the hands of Jesus, but He will bless them and make them sufficient to feed the multitude. A stone may bring Goliath to the dust; an arrow may pierce through the armour of the mailed warrior. Have faith in God; Reckon on God's faithfulness to you!

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#### **Vance Havner - Sand Or Seed**

Faith as a grain of mustard seed. Matthew 17:20.

If you would develop a living faith, not like a grain of sand but like a grain of seed, do not read too many books on faith. One dear brother will tell you that you must agonize and strive to enter, while another would have you "take it by faith." Both are right: you must mean business and be in dead earnest, but beyond that you must, like Hudson Taylor, quit working at your faith and rest in the Faithful One. (**ED**: NOT "LET GO, LET GOD" BUT "LET'S GO, LET GOD!" AND YOU "REST IN THE FAITHFUL ONE" BY IMMERSING YOURSELF IN HIS FAITHFUL WORD!)

Books on faith are colored by the author's temperament, theology, experience, style of expression. You can become more concerned about the quantity and quality of your faith than about its object. You never will get your experience to suit you. You will never pray just as you want to, or feel or preach or live just as you want to. Perfection is found only in Him.

Real faith stops studying itself and is occupied with Him. Quit digging in the ashes of your poor heart for satisfaction. Consider Him—not your faith—"lest ye be weary and faint in your minds."

The Word does not stress the quality of it (except to say that a little will work wonders, Mt. 17:20) but the object of faith, and since Christ was the object here (Mt 9:18-26), the blessing followed—as it always does.

**ED COMMENT - THE BEST BOOK TO READ ON FAITH IS THE BOOK! THE BIBLE! Ro 10:17**

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#### **SHIFTING THE WINDS**

Topics: Dependence on God; Divine Power; Help from God; Miracles

References: Joshua 10:1–14; Matthew 17:20

The prevailing winds in the Persian Gulf area blow from northeast to southwest. So if you attack from the southwest, your enemy can release biological weapons into the air, and the chemicals will blow right into your face. That was a tremendous concern for the military during operation Desert Storm and the subject of many prayers in the Gulf and back home in the United States.

On February 21, 1991, American forces attacked from the southwest at 4:00 a.m. Only three hours before, the prevailing winds had shifted from southwest to northeast, exactly 180 degrees from the direction the prevailing winds normally blow. The winds blew in that direction for four days, the duration of the war. Within thirty minutes of the surrender, the winds shifted back. That is the unbelievable power of prayer.

—General Charles Krulak, in a message given at the Leadership Prayer Breakfast, Wheaton, Illinois, October 2000

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#### **Warren Wiersbe - Faith is the Glue See: Jeremiah 17:5-8; Matthew 17:20.**

The people who jest about faith don't realize how big a part it plays in everyday affairs. It takes faith to get married because marriage vows are basically promises. It takes faith to send children off to school. It takes faith to get a prescription filled. It takes faith to eat in a restaurant, deposit money in a bank, sign a contract, drive on the highway, or get on an airplane or an elevator. Faith isn't some kind of religious experience for the elite; it's the glue that helps hold people's lives together.

But remember, faith is only as good as its object. If we trust people, we get what people can do; if we trust money, we get what money can do; if we trust ourselves, we get what we can do; if we trust God, we get what God can do.

—Warren Wiersbe, author and speaker. BORROW [Men of Integrity PAGE 78](#)

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#### **Vance Havner - According to Your Faith**

Because of unbelief:

Israel was set aside nationally (Rom. 11:20).

The generation that came out of Egypt failed to reach the Promised Land (Heb. 3:19).

Christ could do no mighty works in Nazareth (Matt. 13:58).

Christians and churches are powerless before a demonized world (Matt. 17:20).

O Ye of Little Faith

Faith and care (Matt. 6:30).

Faith and fear (Matt. 8:26).

Faith and doubt (Matt. 14:31).

Faith and spiritual stupidity (Matt. 16:8).

"...Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief" (Mark 9:24).

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#### **Streams in the Desert - "Nothing shall be impossible unto you." (Matt. 17:20.)**

IT is possible, for those who really are willing to reckon on the power of the Lord for keeping and victory, to lead a life in which His promises are taken as they stand and are found to be true.

It is possible to cast all our care upon Him daily and to enjoy deep peace in doing it.

It is possible to have the thoughts and imaginations of our hearts purified, in the deepest meaning of the word.

It is possible to see the will of God in everything, and to receive it, not with sighing, but with singing.

It is possible by taking complete refuge in Divine power to become strong through and through; and, where previously our greatest weakness lay, to find that things which formerly upset all our resolves to be patient, or pure, or humble, furnish today an opportunity—through Him who loved us, and works in us an agreement with His will and a blessed sense of His presence and His power—to make sin powerless over us.

These things are DIVINE POSSIBILITIES, and because they are His work, the true experience of them will always cause us to bow lower at His feet and to learn to thirst and long for more.

We cannot possibly be satisfied with anything less—each day, each hour, each moment, in Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit—than to WALK WITH GOD.—H. C. G. Moule.



We may have as much of God as we will. Christ puts the key of the treasure-chamber into our hand, and bids us take all that we want. If a man is admitted into the bullion vault of a bank, and told to help himself, and comes out with one cent, whose fault is it that he is poor? Whose fault is it that Christian people generally have such scanty portions of the free riches of God?—McLaren.

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#### **Adrian Rogers - John 11:40**

Jesus said to His disciples that the least amount of faith is greater than the greatest amount of difficulty. He said to them, **If you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will tell this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you**" (Matt. 17:20). If you want your faith to be strong, do not put your faith in the size, amount, or strength of your own faith. Put your faith in God. That's the way to grow a strong, living, vibrant, and enduring faith. As you find out more and more who God is, your faith will know no bounds.

See his sermon on Mt 17:20 - [Mustard Seeds and Mountains—Learning to Think Small \(scroll down to page 1343\)](#) -- I'm speaking today to some people who have some difficulties; I mean, some mountains: mountains of heartache, mountains of debt, mountains of despair, mountains of satanic opposition. And you say, "Oh, God, what am I going to do with this mountain that is facing me?" Well, today, we're going to have a lesson in how to remove mountains.

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**Ron Dunn** - Borrow his book [Don't just sit there - have faith!](#) to read the entire sections quoted below.

#### **EXCERPT - An Amazing Promise: "All Things Are Possible"**

To the questioning father of the demon-possessed boy, Jesus said, "All things are possible to him who believes" (Mark 9:23). Whatever obstacle stands between us and the will of God can be uprooted by the command of faith. Just think of it. There is nothing, absolutely nothing, that can keep us from doing the will of God—if we believe.

Behind the will of God is thrown the power of God. When God commands us to be or do something, he places at our disposal all the resources of heaven. And faith is the key that releases those resources into our situation. If I know God's will in a given circumstance, I can be assured that he stands ready to supply whatever is needed to accomplish that will. (ED COMMENT - NOTE THE REPETITION OF GOD'S WILL - 6 TIMES IN THIS SHORT EXCERPT)

#### **ANOTHER EXCERPT - A Surprising Requirement: "To Him Who Believes"**

This kind of power, power to move mountains, is released only by faith. The father of the demon-possessed boy cried out to Jesus, "If You can do anything..." to which Jesus replied, "If You can? All things are possible to him who believes" (Mark 9:22-23). The question is not, "Can God do it?" but, "Can I believe?" It is never a question of his ability but of our faith.

Let's take a closer look at the incident involving the boy and his father. Jesus, you remember, was on the Mount of Transfiguration with three of his disciples. The other nine waited in the valley below. While they waited, a father appeared with his son and asked them to deliver the boy from his tormented condition. It was not a far-fetched or surprising request, for since Jesus had bestowed upon them the power to cast out demons they had seen many such spirits flee at the mention of that name. But now something was wrong. In spite of all their efforts, they were powerless to free the boy.

When Jesus returned, the father reported the disciples' failure; and Jesus, taking charge of the situation, commanded the demon to leave the boy. Afterwards the puzzled disciples came to Jesus privately (I don't blame them for coming privately—they must have been terribly embarrassed by their public failure) and asked why they had been unable to deliver the boy. Why were they suddenly unable to do what Jesus plainly promised them they could do (Matt. 10:1)?

It was a good question, for them and for us. Does it ever bother you—this terrible discrepancy between what God says we are and what we really are? God has promised us power; yet we are weak. He has promised to supply all our needs; yet we are forced to beg at the world's back door for money to keep our religious machines running. He promised that sin would not have dominion over us; and yet we are being delivered again into bondage. He promised that we would reign in life through Christ; yet we live like slaves, imprisoned by the world, the flesh, and the Devil. Isn't it time we got alone with Jesus and asked why?

What is the answer? What reason did Jesus give? I was more than mildly shocked by the explanation put forth by a well-known theologian. Commenting on this incident in one of his books, he claimed that the gift to cast out demons bestowed upon the disciples by Jesus was a temporary one. The only thing wrong with that explanation is it is wrong. That was not the reason given by Jesus. He didn't say, "You know, men, I knew there was something I forgot to tell you. That was a temporary gift and it expired yesterday at noon."

Nor did he explain their failure by saying, "Well, fellows, demons are tougher than they used to be. Why, I remember the time when just a snap of the fingers would send them running for cover. But times have changed."

Forgive me if I sound irreverent. I don't intend to be; but some of the reasons we offer for our tragic impotence are just as irreverent—and just as wrong.

What did Jesus say? **"Because of the littleness of your faith; for truly I say to you, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you"** (Matt.

17:20). In Mark's account Jesus answered, "This kind cannot come out by anything but prayer" (Mark 9:29). There is no real contradiction in the two answers, for prayer and faith are two sides of the same coin. Faith encourages us to pray, and prayer is the true expression of our faith (Mark 11:23- 24.)

Jesus' answer is unmistakably clear—the secret of the disciples' failure was their lack of faith. No other reason is given, for no other reason exists. This calls to mind Matthew's comment concerning Jesus' ministry in his hometown of Nazareth: "And He did not do many miracles there because of their unbelief (Matt. 13:58).

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**J Oswald Sanders - Unanswered Prayer** Matthew 17:20 (See [J. Oswald Sanders: Three Spiritual Classics in One Volume](#))

Our Lord's brother gives one reason for unanswered prayer: "When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives" (James 4:3). God does not attempt to answer every self-centered petition, but He does promise to answer every prayer that is according to His good and perfect will.

It may be that our prayer was not the prayer of faith but only the prayer of hope. Jesus said, "According to your faith will it be done to you" (Matthew 9:29), not according to your hope. Are many of your prayers only prayers of hope?

Or we may have been substituting faith in prayer for faith in God. We are not told anywhere to have faith in prayer but to "have faith in God," the One who answers the prayer. This is more than a matter of semantics. Sometimes we sigh, "Our prayers are so weak and ineffective!" or "My faith is so small!" Jesus anticipated this reaction when He said, "I tell you the truth, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you" (Matthew 17:20).

The naked eye sees little difference between a grain of sand and a mustard seed, but there is a world of difference between the two. In the mustard seed is the germ of life. It is not the size of our faith that is important, but whether it is a living faith in a living God.

Mature disciples will not become discouraged because of a delay in the answer to their prayer. They know that a delayed answer is not necessarily a denied answer.

God's timing is infallible. He takes every factor and contingency into account. We often want to pluck unripe fruit, but He will not be pressured into premature action.

If He in His wisdom delays the answer to our prayer, that delay will in the long run prove to be for our good. (See Hebrews 12:10.) It will be either because He has some better thing for us or because there is something He desires to achieve in our lives that can come about in no other way. (SD

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**Rob Morgan** - Two or three years ago, when I was deeply troubled over a problem that seemed to have no solution, I looked up verses in the Bible on this subject and jotted them down for myself. I'd like to quote them for you now, for they bolster and confirm the words Gabriel speaks in Luke 1:37 (See his full sermon *Nothing is Impossible*)

- Is anything too hard for the LORD?—Genesis 18:14
- The LORD is able.—2 Chronicles 25:9
- Ah, Lord God! Behold, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and outstretched arm. There is nothing too hard for You.—Jeremiah 32:17
- Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh. Is there anything too hard for Me?—Jeremiah 32:27
- And He said, "Abba, Father, all things are possible for You."—Mark 14:36
- I know that You can do everything.—Job 42:2
- God is able.—Matthew 3:9
- The things which are impossible with men are possible with God—Luke 18:27
- Jesus looked at them and said, "With men it is impossible, but not with God, for with God all things are possible."—Mark 10:27
- Jesus said to him, "If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes."—Mark 9:23
- Assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, "Move from here to there," and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you.—Matthew 17:20
- For with God nothing will be impossible.—Luke 1:37

It has been so encouraging to my faith and to my soul to review these verses during times of anxious worry. Missionary Amy Carmichael once said, "When you are facing the impossible, you can count on the God of the impossible." One of my favorite writers, J. Oswald Sanders, said, "(God) encourages us to ask as freely for the impossible as for the possible, since to Him all difficulties are the same size—less than Himself." And evangelist Michael Guido once said, "You cannot bring a burden too heavy for God to lift or a problem too hard for Him to solve or a request too big for Him to answer. God does things no one else can do."

In the book about Ruth Bell Graham entitled *Footsteps of a Pilgrim*, Gigi Tchividjian tells about a time her mother, Ruth, was visiting her in France. The Tchividjians at that time lived in the French countryside, and one day Gigi invited some friends over for supper to



meet Ruth. These friends were Jewish by birth, but not religious at all. As they prepared to entertain, the telephone rang. It was an old-fashioned phone, and difficult to use. Gigi answered, "Hello... hello... hello..." Finally an overseas operator broke through the static. It was a call for Ruth. It was her husband, Billy, who was in Tokyo. He had bad news. There was a serious problem with one of the children, a nineteen-year-old prodigal. Ruth would have to return home as soon as possible to deal with it.

As Gigi listened to her mother's side of the conversation, she saw the concern sweep over Ruth's face. But she also heard Ruth say to Billy over the phone, "Well honey, don't worry, the Lord will work it all out. He is still in control."

All day Ruth was making—or trying to make—phone calls as she planned an emergency trip home, and by and by Gigi asked, "Mother, wouldn't you like me to cancel the dinner guests tonight?"

"No, dear, please don't do that. I'm okay."

Around 6:30 the doorbell rang and the guests arrived. The subject of the day's difficulties never came up, and the guests lingered until nearly midnight, enjoying Ruth's animated conversation. Several weeks later, the friends remarked to Gigi about what a wonderful evening they had spent. But the thing that struck them most and made a lasting impression on them was the sense of peace they felt coming from Ruth all evening.[4]

I read that story while I was struggling with a particular concern of my own, and I was ashamed that my faith wasn't strong enough to generate the same peace.

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### Henry Blackaby - Faith (Borrow [Experiencing God](#))

When God speaks, your response requires faith. All through Scripture when God revealed Himself, His purposes, and His ways, the response to Him required faith. God is interested in your walking with Him by faith. Read the following Scriptures to see what God has to say about faith.

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. (Heb. 11:1) For we walk by faith, not by sight. (2 Cor. 5:7) [Jesus said,] "He who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father." (John 14:12)

"For assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you." (Matt. 17:20) [Paul said,] "My speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God." (1 Cor. 2:4-5)

If you will not believe, surely you shall not be established. (Isa. 7:9)

Faith is confidence that what God has promised or said will come to pass. Sight is an opposite of faith. If you can see clearly how something can be accomplished, more than likely faith is not required. Remember the illustration about our church budget? If we had chosen to operate on what we knew we could do, faith would not have been necessary.

Your faith does not rest in a concept or an idea. Faith must be in a Person — God Himself. If you or someone else decides something would be nice to have happen and then leads people to "believe" or "have faith," you are in a dangerous position. Faith is only valid in God and what He says He is purposing to do. If the thing you expect to happen is from you and not God, then you must depend on what you can do. Before you call yourself, your family, or your church to exercise faith, be sure you have heard a word from God.

With only mustard-seed (very small) sized faith in God, nothing is impossible. Jesus said His followers would do even greater things than He had done. Our faith, however, must be based on God's power and not human wisdom. Without a firm faith, you will stumble and fall.

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### QUESTION - [Can faith really move mountains?](#)

**ANSWER** - In order to correctly interpret a passage such as Matthew 17:20, we first look at the overall context of the passage. Jesus, along with Peter, James and John, had just come down from the "[mount of transfiguration](#)," and they encounter a man with a demon-possessed child. The man tells Jesus that he brought his son to Jesus' disciples, but they couldn't cast the demon out (recall that Jesus earlier, in Matthew 10:1, gave His disciples the authority to cast out evil spirits). Jesus then chastises them for their lack of faith and then casts the demon out of the boy. When His disciples inquire as to why the demon didn't obey their command, Jesus replies with the statement in Matthew 17:20. Their faith, He says, is small and weak. If it were the size of even the smallest of the seeds, the mustard bush, they would be able to "move mountains."

The first thing that needs to be considered is the Bible's use of literary techniques. The Bible is first and foremost God's revealed Word; we want to be clear on this point (2 Timothy 3:16). While the Bible is God's revealed Word, it is revealed to us by way of language. God condescended—He lowered Himself—to speak to us in ways in which we would understand. Consider a father trying to communicate with his young child. The father has to condescend in order to be understood by the limited intellect and understanding of the child. This is analogous (though not identical) to the way in which God speaks to us.

The Bible employs many forms, or genres, of literature. There is historical narrative, poetry, prophecy, apocalyptic writing, and epistolary literature (to name a few). Among these various literary genres, several literary techniques are used—metaphor, simile, imagery, parable, allusion, irony, personification, paradox, and hyperbole. As readers of the Bible, we must recognize when these techniques are being used so we can properly interpret the meaning. For example, in John 10:7, Jesus says, "[I am the door of the sheep](#)." How are we to interpret this verse? If we are too literal, we might start looking for a doorknob hidden somewhere on His body. However, if we understand this to be a metaphor, then we can begin to understand His meaning (Jesus is the way of access to eternal life, much like a door is the way of access into a room).

Another thing to consider in biblical interpretation is the context of the passage. More often than not, when we take a single verse out of its native context, we end up misinterpreting the verse. In the context of Matthew 17, Jesus rebukes the disciples for their weak faith and says that even if they had mustard seed-sized faith, they could command the mountain to move. Contextually, the mountain must refer to the demon that was afflicting the man's son. Jesus tells His disciples that, if their faith was stronger, they could have commanded the demon to leave the boy, and it would be so. This was clearly the case in Matthew 10 when Jesus sent them out to cure diseases, cast out demons, and spread the gospel. Therefore, it is clear from the context that Jesus does not intend to assert that mustard seed-sized faith can literally move mountains. Rather, the expression Jesus uses was a common colloquialism of that day; to a Jew of Jesus' day, a mountain is a metaphor signifying a seemingly impossible task.

Faith that can move mountains is not meant to imply a faith that can literally move literal mountains. The point Jesus was making is that even a little bit of faith—faith the size of a tiny mustard seed—can overcome mountainous obstacles in our lives.

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#### QUESTION - [What does it mean to have mustard seed faith?](#)

**ANSWER** - Faith is so vital to the Christian life that Scripture tells us that, without it, it is impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6). Yet faith is such a powerful gift from God (Ephesians 2:8–9) Christ told His disciples that, with just a tiny measure of it, the size of a mustard seed, they could move mountains. So, what does it mean to have "mustard seed faith"?

We see the reference to "mustard seed faith" twice in Scripture. First, in Matthew 17:14–20, we see Christ's disciples unable to exorcise a demon from a young boy, even though Jesus had previously given them the authority to do this very thing (Matthew 10:1). When they inquired of Jesus why they were not able to drive the demon out, the Master replied, "Be

of the great men of the faith, such as Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*, to know that superhuman feats were performed by those whose faith was, at one time, only the size of a mustard seed.

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#### QUESTION - [Why do so many people struggle with a lack of faith?](#)

**ANSWER** - The apostle Paul exhorts Christians to "walk by faith and not by sight" (2 Corinthians 5:7). What we see here is a contrast between truth and perception—what we know and believe to be true and what we perceive to be true. This is where the Christian struggle with a lack of faith finds its basis. The main reason why so many Christians struggle with a lack of faith is that we follow our perceptions of what is true rather than what we know to be true by faith.

Perhaps before going any further it may be helpful to come up with a working definition of *faith*. Faith, contrary to popular opinion, is not "belief without proof." This is the definition that many skeptics give for *faith*. This definition reduces faith to mere [fideism](#)—i.e., "I believe despite what the evidence tells me." Skeptics are right to reject this concept of faith, and Christians should reject it, too. Faith is not belief without proof or belief despite the evidence; rather, faith is a complete trust or confidence in someone or something. That trust or confidence we have in someone is built up over time as he proves himself faithful time and time again.

Christianity is a faith-based religion. It is based on faith in God and in His Son, Jesus Christ. God has provided us with His Word, the Holy Bible, as a testimony of His faithfulness to His people all throughout history. In its bare essentials, Christianity is faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ claimed to be the promised Messiah and the Son of God. His life was one of perfect righteousness according to the revealed Law of God, His death was an atoning sacrifice for the sins of His people, and He was raised to life three days after His death. When we place our faith and trust in Christ alone for our salvation, God takes our sin and places it on the cross of Christ and awards us, by grace, with the perfect righteousness of Christ. That, in a nutshell, is the Christian message. As Christians, we are called to believe this message and live in light of it.

Despite this, Christians still struggle with believing the biblical account because it doesn't match up with our perception of reality. We may believe that Jesus was a real person, we may believe that He died by crucifixion at the hand of the Romans, we may even believe that He led a perfect life according to God's Law, but we don't "see" how faith in Christ makes us righteous before God. We can't "see" Jesus atoning for our sins. We can't "see" or "perceive" any of the great truths of Christianity, and, therefore, we struggle with lack of faith. As a result of this lack of perception, our lives often do not reflect the fact that we really believe what we claim to believe.

There are many reasons for this phenomenon among Christians. The main reason we struggle with faith is that we don't truly know the God in whom we profess to have faith. In our daily lives, we don't trust complete strangers. The more intimately we know someone and the more time we have had to see him "in action," the more likely we are to believe what he says. But, if God is essentially a stranger to us, we are less likely to believe what He has said in His Word. The only cure for this is to spend more time in God's Word getting to know Him.

The world, the flesh, and the devil often distract us. By "the world" is meant the accepted "wisdom" of the unbelieving world and the culture in which we find ourselves. For those of us living in Europe and North America, that dominant worldview is naturalism, materialism, skepticism, and atheism. "The flesh," refers to our sinful nature that still clings to Christians and with which we struggle on a daily basis. "The devil" refers to Satan and his horde of evil spirits who excite and entice us through the world and our senses. These things all afflict us and cause us to struggle with faith.

That is why Christians need to be constantly reminded of what Christ has done for us and what our response should be. The apostle Paul says, "Faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ" ([Romans 10:17](#)). Our faith is built up as we have the gospel continually preached to us. Our churches need to be built on the solid preaching of the Word and the regular observance of the ordinances. Instead, too many churches spend their time, energy, and resources on the creation of "programs" that neither feed the sheep nor draw a clear distinction between godliness and ungodliness.

Consider the example of the Israelites in the Old Testament. God had performed great miracles in rescuing His chosen people from slavery in Egypt—the Ten Plagues, the pillar of smoke and fire, and the crossing of the Red Sea. God brings His people to the foot of Mount Sinai, gives them the Law and makes a covenant with them. No sooner does He do this than the people begin to grumble and lose faith. With Moses gone up on the mountain, the people convince Aaron, Moses' brother, to construct an idol (against God's clear prohibition) for them to worship ([Exodus 32:1–6](#)). They were no longer walking by faith, but by sight. Despite all the clear miracles God did in their redemption, they lost faith and began to go on their perception.

That is why God instructed the new generation of Israelites before going into the Promised Land to continually remind themselves of what God had done for them: "And these words that I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise" ([Deuteronomy 6:6–7](#)). God knows that the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak ([Mark 14:38](#)), and so He commands His people to be in constant remembrance of these things.

In conclusion, we need to heed the example of the disciple Thomas. When Thomas heard the stories of the resurrection, he wouldn't believe them until he saw Jesus with his own two eyes. Jesus accommodated Thomas' lack of faith by making an appearance to him and allowing him to see and touch Him. Thomas responds in worship, and Jesus says to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." Many skeptics today echo Thomas' sentiment: "Unless I see Jesus face to face, I will not believe!" We must not behave as the unbelievers do. We need to continually keep in mind Paul's exhortation to walk by faith rather than sight. We learn in the book of Hebrews that without faith it is impossible to please God ([Hebrews 11:6](#)) because faith is believing the Word of God and acting upon it, not responding to our perceptions [GotQuestions.org](#)

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#### Related Resources:

- [What does the Bible say about faith? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [How can I overcome the fact that I am struggling with faith?](#)
- [Can faith change God's plan? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [How can I keep the faith? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [Faith vs. fear - what does the Bible say? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [How can I overcome the fact that I am struggling with faith? | GotQuestions.org](#)

Matthew 18:3.

- "As little children." Not foolish, not playful; but gentle, obedient, truthful, pure, trusting.

Matthew 18:5.

- The pastor who leads the lambs will be able to lead the sheep. Every time you lay your hand on a child's head, you lay it on his mother's heart.

Matthew 18:7.

- He that sins is weak; but he that leads others into sin is devilish.

[Above are from D L Moody's Bible notes](#)

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#### **Matthew 18:8**

**DEALING WITH SIN** - On several occasions when visiting men in jail, I have seen them shake their heads mournfully and say, "I never thought it would come to this." When they began to break minor laws, they fully intended to change their ways before getting into serious trouble. But instead, one thing led to another, and they became more and more involved in a life of crime. Now they languish in jail, facing a long imprisonment.

These men failed to realize that sin always progresses. When we flout God's laws in one facet of life, a kind of mathematical law of addition and multiplication goes into effect. Soon sin affects other areas of our lives. It's foolish to think we can keep just one pet sin. That single sin will grow and spread unless we deal radically with it. That's why Jesus spoke of cutting off the offending hand and plucking out the offending eye (Matt. 18:8-9). By using such a strong figure of speech, He was saying, do whatever is necessary to stop.

We cannot afford to toy with sin. Three times in Romans 1, Paul said of unbelievers that "God gave them up" to their evil ways. In other words, He allows wickedness to run its downhill course until judgment falls and there's no escape. We can avoid the inevitable arithmetic of sin by trusting Jesus as Savior. His power in our lives can overcome any sin. —H. V. Lugt

No one becomes wicked all at once.

#### **Matthew 18:9**

**The Eyegate** - The eyegate opens onto a broad avenue that leads directly to the soul. Through it flow images that can kindle lust, stir up envy, and incite sinful pleasures.

In The Confessions of St. Augustine, the author told of his friend Alypius who, though not a Christian, hated the bloody entertainment of the Roman circus. One day some students forced Alypius into the amphitheater to watch the gladiators. "Though you hale my body to that place," he said, "can you force me also to turn my mind or my eyes to these shows?" So there he sat, eyes closed, mind fixed on nobler things. Just then a frenzied cry arose as a gladiator fell victim to a sword. Alypius opened his eyes for a brief moment. "So soon as he saw the blood," Augustine recorded, "he therewith drank down savageness; nor turned away, but fixed his eye, drinking in frenzy, unawares, and was delighted with that guilty fight, and intoxicated with the bloody pastime."

Our Lord, in a bold figure of speech, said, "if your eye caused you to sin, pluck it out." He didn't mean this to be taken literally. Rather He was saying, in effect, "Take the most drastic action necessary to keep your inner life pure."

Billy Graham once said, "You may not be able to help the first look, but you can refuse the second." When an impure image comes to mind, whether from a book, a magazine, the TV, or real life, never "let the eyes have it." Instead, fix the eyes of your soul on Jesus, who intercedes in heaven for us. He will keep you pure.

#### **Matthew 18:10**

**PRECIOUS IN HIS SIGHT** - Some Christians need to be humbled because they have too exalted an opinion of themselves; others stand in constant need of encouragement because they have a tendency to dwell too much upon their own inadequacies. One of the problems a minister faces is that of preaching messages which will convict the proud without utterly discouraging those who have a difficult time believing they could possibly be precious in the sight of God.

Our Savior, using a little child as an object lesson, very effectively humbled the self-seeking disciples; yet, at the same time, He showed lowly believers that they were important in God's sight. He told the Twelve they needed to become like that little one, ever realizing their personal inadequacy and their complete dependency upon Him. If they failed to do so, they would not be fit to take their places in His kingdom. Our Lord then pointed out that every Christian, however obscure and unimportant in the eyes of man, is still precious to God. To fellowship with these lowly ones is to honor the Savior (Matt 18:5), but should unbelievers seek to harm them, Jesus warns that such persecutors will be severely judged (Matt 18:6, 7). Moreover, to despise any of those who come to Christ in a childlike spirit is to take a position which is completely contrary to God's attitude toward them. He has, in fact, appointed holy angels as their representatives in the court of Heaven. As the shepherd is concerned about one straying sheep, so the Lord Jesus places great value upon even the lowliest believer.

Christian, you are important to God! He will judge all who seek to harm you and has provided you with angelic guardians. You need not fear that He will ever let you perish!

The humble, God will keep and bless;  
They are the objects of His grace.  
To such, His promises are sure;  
Their angels e'er shall see His face! — Bosch

To have the comforts of grace and God's full blessing, humble yourself; for the holy place is ever the lowly place!

## MATTHEW 19

Matthew 19:21

- "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me."

It was the force of these words that moved Francis of Assisi to give up the world and become the power he was in the Church.

Matthew 19:22.

- "Wealth is no harm: but the inability to give it up is deadly.

Matthew 19:23.

- Christian men often become rich, but rich men seldom become Christians.

Matthew 19:28.

- Now the world judges the godly. Hereafter the godly shall judge the world.

[Above are from D L Moody's Bible notes](#)

Mt 19:26. With God all things are possible.

Our God does not need noble characters, as the ground-work of His masterpieces. He can raise up stones as children. He can turn thorns into fir-trees, briars into myrtle-trees. He can take fishermen from their nets, and publicans from their toll-booths, making them into evangelists, apostles, and martyrs. We are not much by nature—wild, bad blood may be flowing in our veins; but God will be the more magnified, if from such stones He can raise up children unto Abraham. The miracle of His grace and power will bring more conspicuous glory to His holy name, in proportion to the unpromising character of the materials on which He works.

F. B. MEYER.

Above from Moody's [One Thousand and One Thoughts from My Library](#)

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**Matthew 19:14**

Two and a Half Converts - When D. L. Moody returned one night from a service where he had preached, a friend asked him, "How many converts did you have tonight?"

He replied, "Two and a half."

The person responded, "I suppose you mean two grownups and a child?"

"No," said Moody, "Two children and a grownup."

"How do you make that out to be two and a half?"

"Well, you see," replied the evangelist, "the two children have a whole life before them, but a grownup person has only a half a life before him."

## Matthew 19:22

**Material Possessions** - When a person loves earthly things so much that he can't get along without them, he opens himself to much suffering, both physical and mental. Some people, for example, have taken foolish risks to keep their riches intact. They have died rushing into burning houses or were killed because they stubbornly resisted armed robbers. Apparently they felt that without their material possessions life would not be worthwhile.

Others, when forced to part with their wealth, have been thrown into agonizing despair, even to the point of suicide. In 1975, six armed gunmen broke into the deposit boxes in a London bank and stole valuables worth more than \$7 million. One lady, whose jewelry was appraised at \$500,000, wailed, "Everything I had was in there. My whole life was in that box." What a sad commentary on her values!

## MATTHEW 20

Matthew 20:27.

- A humble saint looks most like a citizen of heaven.

[Above are from D L Moody's Bible notes](#)

Mt 20:18. Behold, we go up to Jerusalem.

Never had there been such a going up to Jerusalem as that which Jesus here proposes to His disciples. Jesus goes up voluntarily. The act was not enforced by any external compulsion. Jerusalem might at this time have been avoided. It was deliberately sought. Jesus was hereby fulfilling the Father's will, executing the mission on which He had been sent. It was after this journey that He said, "I have finished the work Thou gavest Me to do." His going up was a part of that work. Hence it was right for Him to go up, although He knew that betrayal, arrest, condemnation and crucifixion awaited Him. It was a going up to a triumph to be reached through defeat, a coronation to be attained through ignominy and humiliation.

O believer, in your walk through the world to-day, be strengthened, be comforted, be inspired, by the spectacle of the Captain of your salvation thus going up to Jerusalem! And remember in all those apparently downward passages of life, where sorrow and it may be death, lie before you, that all such descents, made or endured in the spirit of Jesus, are really up-goings, stepsl leading you to the mount of God and the resurrection glory.

JOSEPH STRATTON.

Above from Moody's [One Thousand and One Thoughts from My Library](#)

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## Matthew 20:26

When Pastor Howard Sugden preaches on the upper room, where Jesus washed the disciples' feet, he speaks of "God with a towel in His hand." That towel symbolizes One who "did not come to be served, but to serve" (Matt. 20:28). Yet how quickly we reverse the pattern and expect others to serve our needs. We may even go so far as to complain when other believers disappoint us and don't do as we expect. That's why we need to keep Jesus' example before us.

Vernon Grounds, then president of Denver Conservative Baptist Theological Seminary, challenged the graduating class of 1973 with the truth of John 13. Dr. Grounds gave the graduates a tangible symbol that he said would help them in their future ministries. As the classmates filed quietly to the front, they expected a special Scripture verse, a little book, or an inscribed medallion. To their surprise, he gave them a small square of white terry cloth. One graduate, who has served as an overseas missionary, says,

"We were commissioned to go into the world as servants. That small piece of towel, frayed and grubby from years in my wallet, is a constant reminder of that moving moment and of our basic call to serve."

The example Christ gave in the upper room challenges us to ask ourselves if we have a servant's attitude. Perhaps it's time for us to realize that the "towel in our hand" is a servant's towel. —D. C. Egnor

The believer's talents are not to be laid up for self—they are to be laid out in service.

#### **Matthew 20:27**

Sometimes I get the feeling that we are experiencing a leadership crisis among Christians. Although plenty of people are eager to assume the top positions, far too few are willing to accept the biblical pattern of authority. They assume that headship means dominance, so they ignore the basic teaching of passages like Matthew 20. The pattern established by Christ for leadership in the church can be summed up in one word: servanthood. Jesus Himself exemplified this when he washed the disciples' feet as "an example" (John 13:2-16).

In *The Mark of a Man*, Elisabeth Elliot told of a relative who was the dean of a Christian college in the Midwest. One night some boys in a dorm smeared the walls with shaving cream, peanut butter, and jelly. When the dean heard about it, he wondered what action to take. He could force the young men to clean it up or he could order the janitor to do it. Instead, he started to clean up the mess himself. Soon doors began to open, and before long the guilty ones were helping him wash the walls. Because he was willing to take the role of a servant, he solved the problem and taught the boys a valuable lesson at the same time.

Whenever we're in a position of leadership and seem to be failing, we should examine our attitude toward service in light of Matthew 20 and John 13. Perhaps we need more practice in the principle of leading by serving. —D. C. Egnor D. J. De Haan

Lead players are always improving their serve

#### **Matthew 20:28**

**WITNESSING FROM A WHEELCHAIR** - A woman named Nancy put this ad in her local newspaper: "If you are lonely or have a problem, call me. I am in a wheelchair and seldom get out. We can share our problems with each other. Just call. I'd love to talk." The response to that ad has been tremendous -- 30 calls or more every week.

What motivated this woman to reach out from her wheelchair to help others in need? Nancy explained that before her paralysis she had been perfectly healthy but in deep despair. She tried to commit suicide by jumping from her apartment window, but instead she became paralyzed from the waist down. In the hospital, utterly frustrated, she sensed Jesus saying to her, "Nancy, you've had a healthy body but a crippled soul. From now on you will have a crippled body but a healthy soul." As a result of that experience, she surrendered her life to Christ. When she was finally allowed to go home, she prayed for a way to share God's grace with others, and the idea of the newspaper ad occurred to her.

Every believer can do something to help needy people. Limited as we may be by sickness, old age, or disability, we can still pray, call, or write. No matter what our condition, we can be an effective witness for Jesus Christ. - V C Grounds

Lord, let me be a shining light  
So others then may view  
Your mercy and Your love displayed  
In all I say and do.--Sper

Only after you talk to God about needy people are you ready to talk to needy people about God.

## **MATTHEW 21**

Matthew 21:37.



- Men would never have known that they would put God to death, unless Christ had been born.

[Above are from D L Moody's Bible notes](#)

Mt 21:22. All things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.

Prayer is the bow, the promise is the arrow: faith is the hand which draws the bow, and sends the arrow with the heart's message to heaven. The bow without the arrow is of no use; and the arrow without the bow is of little worth; and both, without the strength of the hand, to no purpose. Neither the promise without prayer, nor prayer without the promise, nor both without faith, avail the Christian anything. What was said of the Israelites, "They could not enter in, because of unbelief," the same may be said of many of our prayers: they cannot enter heaven, because they are not put up in faith.

PSALTER.

Above from Moody's [One Thousand and One Thoughts from My Library](#)

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### **Matthew 21:1-11**

Sometimes I wonder how many of those who enthusiastically cried, "Hosanna!" on Palm Sunday were shouting, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" a few days later. People must have been disappointed, even resentful, that Christ didn't overthrow the Romans and set up an earthly kingdom. He had had a golden opportunity to rally support as He rode into Jerusalem. In contrast to His earlier actions, He didn't try to dampen this jubilant demonstration. Yet neither did he capitalize on the fervor of the crowd and issue a call to arms. Those who longed only for release from foreign domination were disillusioned. The Messiah had not fulfilled their expectations.

Jesus' contemporaries failed to recognize that before He could assert His outward sovereignty, He had to rule the inner citadel of their hearts. The Jews' greatest need was not freedom from Caesar's legions but release from the chains of their own sin. Jesus would rule in power and glory one day, but first He had to pay sin's penalty on the cross. The key to His kingdom was not revolution but repentance.

Through the centuries the issue has not changed. If we follow Christ only because we think He'll shield us from life's hardships, heal all our sicknesses, and guarantee prosperity, we're headed for disillusionment. But if we renounce sin, take up our cross, and live for Him because He is our God, our Creator, and our Redeemer, we will never be disappointed in Him. —D. J. De Haan

Putting Christ first brings satisfaction that lasts.

### **Matthew 21:9**

**HOSANNA** - It's Sunday morning, time for the electronic church in America. Thousands lounge in their living rooms watching television. Almost every channel carries a religious program. Some preachers proclaim a clear-cut gospel message. Others, however, pace before an enraptured audience, telling them that Jesus will heal all their diseases and make them rich. "He wants you well! Poverty is of the devil!" shouts the preacher. And the swelling of applause picks up where he leaves off. People love the "gospel" of prosperity and deliverance from sickness.

Now turn back the calendar to a Sunday morning around 33 A.D. The city is Jerusalem. There's no TV, but there is a preacher who stirs the hopes of an excited crowd. For three years He's been going about Judea and Galilee, healing the sick, feeding the hungry, and even raising the dead. Now He rides into Jerusalem on a colt, gladly receiving the acclaim of the crowd. But those who shout "Hosanna!" are accepting Him for what they think He will give them, not for who He is and what He came to do. They want an earthly Messiah who will provide for their material welfare, not a suffering Messiah whose death on the cross will expose their sin, provide forgiveness, and call for a life commitment.

Jesus didn't promise release from all the suffering in the world. But He did offer forgiveness, peace, eternal life, and a cross. Anything less than taking up that cross in serving Him is shallow allegiance.—D. J. De Haan

The word easy appears only once in the New Testament, and then in connection with yoke.

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## **MATTHEW 22**

[Above are from D L Moody's Bible notes](#)

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## MATTHEW 23

Matthew 23:27.

- Whitewashed, not washed white in the blood.
- Some very good-looking people are deformed on the inside.

[Above are from D L Moody's Bible notes](#)

Mt 23:27. Ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones and of all uncleanness.

In the olden times even the best rooms were usually of bare brick or stone, damp and mouldy, but over these in great houses when the family was resident, were hung up arras or hangings of rich materials, between which and the walls persons might conceal themselves, so that literally walls had ears. It is to be feared that many a brave show of godliness is but art arras to conceal rank hypocrisy; and this accounts for some men's religion being but occasional, since it is folded up or exposed to view as need may demand. Is there no room for conscience to pry between thy feigned profession and thy real godliness and bear witness against thee? Remember, if conscience do it not, certainly "the Watcher and the Holy One" will make a thorough search within thee.

SPURGEON.

Above from Moody's [One Thousand and One Thoughts from My Library](#)

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### Matthew 23:11

**GREATNESS** - Music lovers, brace yourselves. Some of the greatest orchestral conductors of the past were sometimes podium tyrants. In an article in The Indianapolis Star, Robert Baxter wrote, "Their heyday came in the 1930s and '40s when Artur Rodzinski carried a loaded revolver to rehearsals, when Arturo Toscanini broke batons, . . . when Fritz Reiner pierced musicians with his laser-like eyes, and George Szell slashed them with his razor-sharp tongue." One player recalls, "Playing under them was like being in an open field during an electrical storm." Once an offended musician stormed out of rehearsal, shouting to Toscanini, "Nuts to you!" Toscanini bellowed back, "It's too late to apologize!" With such disharmony in relationships, it's a wonder these geniuses could get such beautiful music from their players.

Strong leaders don't need to instill fear and be autocratic to command respect. Jesus, the only perfect leader this world has ever known, showed us a better way. His podium was not the Mount of Transfiguration, where He revealed His deity. It was a Roman cross, where He served our deepest needs by paying the penalty for our sins. Now He draws beautiful music from sin-ruined lives—first by surrounding us with His love and forgiveness, then by serving through us as we joyously yield to His direction.

Those in positions of leadership can look to Jesus to learn the secret of leading by serving. —D. J. De Haan

Leaders do not begin to serve until they put serving into their leadership.

### Matthew 23:12

**Booker T. Washington** - A truly humble man is hard to find, yet God delights to honor such selfless people.

Booker T. Washington, the renowned black educator, was an outstanding example of this truth. Shortly after he took over the presidency of Tuskegee Institute in Alabama, he was walking in an exclusive section of town when he was stopped by a wealthy white woman. Not knowing the famous Mr. Washington by sight, she asked if he would like to earn a few dollars by chopping wood for her. Because he had no pressing business at the moment, Professor Washington smiled, rolled up his sleeves, and proceeded to do the humble chore she had requested. When he was finished, he carried the logs into the house and stacked them by the fireplace. A little girl recognized him and later revealed his identity to the lady.

The next morning the embarrassed woman went to see Mr. Washington in his office at the Institute and apologized profusely.

"It's perfectly all right, Madam," he replied. "Occasionally I enjoy a little manual labor. Besides, it's always a delight to do something for a friend."

She shook his hand warmly and assured him that his meek and gracious attitude had endeared him and his work to her heart. Not long afterward she showed her admiration by persuading some wealthy acquaintances to join her in donating thousands of dollars to the Tuskegee Institute.

### **Matthew 23:28**

Our society encourages hypocrisy. Even before our children enter school they begin to master the art of artificiality. It isn't long until they become as sophisticated as their adult counterparts at the slick little deceptions of modern life.

This practice is bad enough in social circles, but it is even worse when it occurs in the church. When Sunday morning comes, we adjust our behavior to fit what others expect of a good Christian. We sit piously in our "Sunday best," hiding from everyone that we are selfish, stingy, unforgiving people.

In his book *Improving Your Serve*, Charles Swindoll tells of speaking at a singles retreat in a Rocky Mountain resort. He had purposely brought along a full-faced rubber mask that his children had given him as a funny present. One evening he wore it as he began to speak on authenticity. As expected, the crowd went wild with laughter. Each new sentence increased the effect. After removing the mask, he observed, "It's a funny thing, when we wear literal masks, nobody is fooled. But how easy it is to wear invisible ones and fake people out by the hundreds. . . . Servants who are 'pure in heart' have peeled off their masks. And God places special blessing on their lives."

We all struggle with the problem of hypocrisy. But when our hearts are pure, we will have no reason to cover our faces. —D. C. Egner

A hypocrite is a person who isn't himself on Sunday.

## **MATTHEW 24**

Matthew 24:2.

- John does not mention the destruction of Jerusalem, as he wrote after it had taken place.

Matthew 24:18.

- In the ruins of Pompeii there was found the petrified body of a woman in the act of snatching her jewels.

Matthew 24:22.

- "The elect" are the "whosoever will's": the "non-elect" are the "whosoever wont's."

Matthew 24:42.

- The Lord's exhortations to holiness are never based on the fear of death, but on the hope of his return, and its unexpectedness.
- We know the duty ("watch"), but not the day.

Matthew 24:47.

- The promotion God gives is not like earthly promotion, wherein the eminence of one excludes that of another—but rather like the diffusion of love in which the more each has, the more there is for all.

Matthew 24:49.

- Unkindness to the Lord's people, and fellowship with the ungodly, are two great marks of hypocrites.

[Above are from D L Moody's Bible notes](#)

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### Matthew 24:42-47

God's Word commends faithfulness. The parables in Matthew 24 and 25 about being ready for Christ's sudden appearing point out that those who faithfully do their tasks receive the Lord's approval. Day by day, in good fortune or in bad, whether feeling good or a little down in the dumps, we are to continue steadfastly doing the job God has given us.

After the tragic bombing of a marine base in Beirut in October 1983, the steadfastness of one young soldier moved and heartened the American people back home. He had been critically wounded in the explosion of the revamped hotel where he and his fellow marines had been staying. Many of his buddies had been killed. He was covered with bandages and a jungle of tubes was attached to his body. Unable to speak, he indicated he wanted to write something when visited by General Paul X. Kelly, Commandant of the Marine Corps. Painfully he wrote the words *semper* /j a shortened form of the U.S. Marine Corps motto, *Semper Fidelis*, which means "Always faithful."

Those of us in the Lord's army can learn from this young man's example. We too may have come under heavy attack. Our "wounds" may be many. Some of our beloved fellow soldiers may fall in battle. Even so, we are to be faithful to the end. An attitude of determined loyalty should fill our hearts and drive us onward no matter what the circumstances. Yes, *Semper Fidelis*, "always faithful," is also the Christian's motto. —D. C. Egner

The proof of our faith is our faithfulness.

## MATTHEW 25

Matthew 25:15.

- Many thousands of watchsprings can be made out of a pound of iron. See that you improve faithfully the talent God has given you.

Matthew 25:21.

- Not "well done good and successful" servant, but "faithful" servant.
- God has three kinds of servants in the world—
- (1) slaves, who serve him from a principle of fear;
- (2) hirelings, who serve him for the sake of wages;
- (3) sons, who serve him under the influence of love.

Matthew 25:34.

- The Church was chosen before the foundation of the world. Eph. 1:4; Titus 1:2. The Jews (here) "from the foundation of the world."

Matthew 25:35.

- Many love at their tongue's end; but the godly love at their fingers' end.

[Above are from D L Moody's Bible notes](#)

Mt 25:10. The door was shut.

The door of mercy has hinges, and it may be shut, and then locked with the adamant key of justice.  
RALEIGH.

Mt 25:19 After a long time the lord ... cometh and reckoneth with them.

An Eastern allegory runs thus: A merchant, going abroad for a time, gave respectively to two of his friends two

sacks of wheat each, to take care of against his return. Years passed: he came back, and applied for them again. The first took him into his storehouse, and showed them him; but they were mildewed and worthless. The other led him out into the open country, and pointed out field after field of waving corn, the produce of the two sacks given him. Said the merchant, "You have been a faithful friend.

Give me two sacks of that wheat: the rest shall be thine."

Mt 25:21. Thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things.

Your "few things" may be very few, and very small things, but He expects you to be faithful over them.

FRANCES RIDLEY HAVERGAL

Mt 25:23. Well done, good and faithful servant.

The Hebrews have a saying, that God takes more delight in adverbs than in nouns; 'tis not so much the matter that's done, but the matter how 'tis done, that God minds. Not how much, but how well! 'Tis the well-doing that meets with a well-done. Let us, therefore, serve God not nominally or verbally, but adverbially.

VENNING.

The master's approval is the servant's best wages.

MACLAREN.

Mt 25:24–26. He ... said ... I ... hid thy talent in the earth.... His Lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant.

Between the great things we cannot do and the small things we will not do, the danger is that we shall do nothing.

MONOD.

Mt 25:32 Before him shall be gathered all nations, and he shall separate them one from another.

It is a remarkable fact, that while the baser metals are diffused through the body of the rocks, gold and silver usually lie in veins; collected together in distinct metallic masses. They are in the rocks but not of them.... And as by some power in nature God has separated them from the base and common earths, even so by the power of His grace will He separate His chosen from a reprobate and rejected world.

GUTHRIE.

Mt 25:34, 40. Come, ye blessed of my Father.... Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren ye have done it unto me.

Services rendered for Christ never stop.

TALMAGE.

Mt 25:40. Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.

It is to motives God looks, not results. Fidelity not success regulates the final reward.

MACDUFF.

Above from Moody's [One Thousand and One Thoughts from My Library](#)

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## Matthew 25:13

**BE READY!** - As a teenager, Jim Tait wanted to make maple syrup, so he purchased some catch buckets and a boiling pan. Then he tapped the trees and collected the sap. His father told him what to watch for after he began boiling the sap. But instead of keeping his eye on the steaming liquid, Jim left it for a few moments to consult with his father. While he was gone, the sap became milky and began to bubble. Moments later Jim returned, but it was too late. The sap had turned to syrup, and the syrup had crystallized and burned.

In the parable of the 10 virgins, Jesus was instructing His followers to be ready at all times to meet the bridegroom, whose coming represented Christ's any-moment return to this earth. They were to live so that the Lord would find them as ready as if they had known the exact moment of His appearing.

The fact of Christ's imminent return to this earth benefits us as Christians in many ways. It helps us to be ready and watching for the Lord, to be obedient, to be faithful, and to bear spiritual fruit. It is also a purifying truth that gives us hope (1 John 3:3).

Are you watching for Jesus' return? If you knew it would be today, would you be ready? -D C Egner

Blessed are those whom the Lord finds watching,  
In His glory they shall share;  
If He shall come at the dawn or midnight,  
Will He find us watching there?--Crosby

Since Jesus may come at any time, we must be ready all the time.

#### **Matthew 25:21**

**WELL DONE** - Speaking in Edinburgh, missionary John Williams held his audience spellbound with thrilling accounts of God's work among the tribes-people of the New Hebrides Islands. A soft-spoken missionary followed Williams with a brief report of his work. In a low and trembling voice he said, "My friends, I have no remarkable success to relate like Mr. Williams. I've labored for Christ in a far-off land for many years and have seen only small results. But I have this comfort: when the Master comes to reckon with His servants, He will not say, 'Well done, thou good and successful servant,' but 'well done, thou good and faithful servant.' I have tried to be faithful!"

From Jesus' story in Matthew 25 we learn that unequal gifts exercised with equal diligence will receive equal reward. In the parable, talents represent God-given abilities to carry out God-assigned responsibilities. What's important is not how much we accomplish, but our motives and the quality of our labors. Alexander MacLaren wrote, "Christ rewards not action, but the graces that are made visible in the action; and these can be seen in the tiniest as in the largest deeds. A light that streams through a pinprick is the same that pours through the widest windows."

We need not feel inadequate if we have been diligent in serving Christ. Although it's rewarding to see large results, in God's eyes faithfulness that produces even small results is a job well done.—D. J. De Haan

Work done well for Christ will receive a "well done" from Christ.

## **MATTHEW 26**

Matthew 26:20.

- The Lord's Supper is a memorial of a departed Friend, a prophecy of a returning Friend, and a parable of a present Friend.

Matthew 26:56.

- Christ's circle gradually narrowed down. First, the multitudes left him; then, many so-called disciples; lastly, the twelve.

[Above are from D L Moody's Bible notes](#)

Mt 26:39. Not as I will, but as thou wilt.

A man's will should be an echo, not a voice; the echo of God, not the voice of self.  
MACLAREN.

Mt 26:42. Thy will be done.

"Thy will be done" is the keynote to which every prayer must be tuned.  
A. J. GORDON.

Above from Moody's [One Thousand and One Thoughts from My Library](#)

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#### **Matthew 26:38**

Suffering comes to all of us, and no one can suffer for us. Even so, loved ones and friends can support us in many ways in those difficult times by their prayers and understanding. But when we are too proud to admit our need to others, we are in great danger.

The Sequoia trees of California tower as high as 300 feet above the ground, yet these giants have unusually shallow root systems, which reach out in all directions to capture the greatest amount of surface moisture. Seldom do redwoods stand alone, because high winds would quickly uproot them. They grow in clusters, their intertwining roots providing support for one another against the storms.

Support is what Jesus wanted from Peter, James, and John in Gethsemane as He faced Calvary. On the cross as the world's sin-bearer He would experience the Father's wrath and abandonment. That was the awful cup He prayed would be taken from Him. In that dark hour, He looked to His disciples for prayerful alertness and compassion. But they disappointed Him. The sight of His sleeping disciples must have made the isolation of Gethsemane even more painful.

If Jesus looked to human support in His crisis hour, how much more do Christians need one another when they suffer. We must be willing to ask someone to pray for us and with us. And we must be alert for opportunities to lend our support to others who are suffering. —D.J.De Haan.

Those who suffer need more than sympathy, they need companionship.

## MATTHEW 27

Matthew 27:27: Christ's innocence attested by:—

1. Judas. Matthew 27:4.
2. Pilate's wife. Matthew 27:19.
3. Pilate. Matthew 27:24.
4. Herod. Luke 23:15.
5. Thief. Luke 23:41.
6. Centurion. Luke 23:47.

Matthew 27:33.

- On Golgotha there were skulls of all sizes.

Matthew 27:35.

- The soldiers took from Jesus his garments, but He laid aside the robe of flesh of his own will.

Matthew 27:36. Twelve views of the cross. Luke 23:48.

- The soldiers saw in Christ a criminal, with cruelty.
- The women saw in Christ a benefactor, with sorrow.
- His mother saw in Christ a son, with anguish.
- The disciples saw in Christ blighted hopes, with perplexity.
- The first thief saw in Christ a malefactor, with hardness.
- The second thief saw in Christ a King, with penitence.
- The centurion saw in Christ divinity, with conviction.
- The priests saw in Christ an impostor, with mockery.
- Angels saw in Christ love, with wonder.
- Devils saw in Christ the seed of woman, with dismay.
- Jehovah saw in Christ obedience, with affection.
- The passers-by saw in Christ nothing, with indifference.

The cross cannot be explained. To nail our poor theories on that tree but shows how our love has cooled and stiffened and expired.

Matthew 27:57.

- None of the Gospels forget to mention Joseph of Arimathæa.

Matthew 27:63.

- Christ's enemies remembered what his disciples forgot: "We remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days, I will rise again."

[Above are from D L Moody's Bible notes](#)

### Matthew 27:35

In 1968, Admiral Elmo Zumwalt, Jr., took command of the American naval forces in Vietnam. In an effort to reduce U.S. casualties, he ordered the waterways sprayed with the chemical defoliant Agent Orange. This would push back the jungle and make it harder for North Vietnamese to ambush Navy river patrol boats at pointblank range. One of those boats was commanded by 21-year-old Lt. Elmo Zumwalt III. The tragedy and irony of the story is that today he suffers from a usually fatal form of lymph cancer that both father and son believe was caused by his exposure to Agent Orange. Theirs is the heartbreaking story of a father who made a decision that unintentionally resulted in great suffering for his own son. Yet they both agree that it was the right one.

In conquering sin and death to provide salvation for us, God the Father intentionally made a decision that resulted in immeasurable agony for His only begotten Son. After deciding to save the human race through His Son, He watched Him suffer the mockery of the crowd, the lashes of the whip, the pain of the nails through His hands and feet, the inexpressible weight and humiliation of our sins, and the indescribable agony of isolation and abandonment.

Our lack of gratitude adds to God's pain. Certainly His amazing sacrifice deserves our unending thanksgiving. —M.R.De Haan.II

The truest measure of God's love is that He loves without measure

### Matthew 27:57-60

**THE MOST PRIVILEGED UNDERTAKER** - Those who were crucified by the Romans were usually left ex-posed to the elements until eaten by birds of prey — a guard being set around the bodies to prevent friends from burying them. Knowing this, Joseph of Arimathaea, "a good man and a just" who as a member of the Jewish council had not consented to the crucifixion of Jesus, went to Pilate and begged for the body of Jesus. The fact that he was a rich and prominent man, and had a newly hewn tomb in a garden near the place of crucifixion, probably influenced the Roman governor to give his consent. In this way Isaiah 53 was fulfilled. For the Messiah must make His "grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death." Having been accorded the privilege of caring for Jesus' body, Joseph of Arimathaea became the most privileged undertaker of all ages! Tenderly he took the Savior's bruised body and shrouded it in a large, clean cloth. However, in the "embalming process" that followed, he had an assistant — none other than Nicodemus who had earlier come to Jesus by night to learn how he might be "born again." This formerly secret follower of the Lord came supplied with about a hundred pounds of myrrh and aloes (John 19:39, 40). Together these men wound Jesus' body in additional "linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury." Then they placed Him in Joseph's new tomb.

The privilege of caring for the dead body of Jesus was given only to those two; yet we today may do service for the Savior by telling others that He physically arose from the tomb, ascended to the Father in Glory, and now offers eternal life to all who believe.

Three days He lay within that dark domain, Then with new life, forth from the tomb He came; Christ has the keys, oh, death, where is thy sting? Our Lord cloth live! oh, let your praises ring! — L.S.

Christ by His death and resurrection has built a bridge across the gulf of death! —A. Young

## MATTHEW 28

Matthew 28:19, 20.

- "Go ye ... I am with you." In other words, "Come with me to this work."
- God only had one Son, and he sent him on a foreign mission.

[Above are from D L Moody's Bible notes](#)

Mt 28:16, 18, 19. The eleven disciples went ... into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them.... Jesus came and spake unto them saying ... Go ye and teach all nations.

The considerable actions in the world have usually very small beginnings. Of a few letters, how many thousand words are made! of ten figures, how many thousand Numbersers! A point is the beginning of all geometry. A little stone flung into a pond makes a little circle, then a greater, till it enlarges itself to both the sides. So from small beginnings God doth cause an efflux through the whole world.

CHARNOCK.

Mt 28:20. Lo, I am with you alway.

A mother one morning gave her two little ones books and toys to amuse them, while she went to attend to some work in an upper room. A half hour passed quietly; and then a timid voice at the foot of the stairs called out, "Mamma, are you there?"—"Yes, darling."—"All right, then;" and the child went back to its play. By and by the question was repeated, "Mamma, are you there?"—"Yes."—"All right, then;" and the little ones, reassured of their mother's presence, again returned to their toys. Thus we, God's little ones, in doubt and loneliness, look up and ask, "My Father, art Thou there?" and when there comes, in answer, the assurance of His presence, our hearts are quieted.

The best test of apostolic succession is apostolic success.

Above from Moody's [One Thousand and One Thoughts from My Library](#)

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#### **Matthew 28:19-20**

**Hudson Taylor** - When Hudson Taylor was director of the China Inland Mission, he often interviewed candidates for the mission field. On one occasion, he met with a group of applicants to determine their motivations for service. "And why do you wish to go as a foreign missionary?" he asked one. "I want to go because Christ has commanded us to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature," was the reply. Another said, "I want to go because millions are perishing without Christ."

Others gave different answers. Then Hudson Taylor said, "All of these motives, however good, will fail you in times of testings, trials, tribulations, and possible death. There is but one motive that will sustain you in trial and testing; namely, the love of Christ."

A missionary in Africa was once asked if he really liked what he was doing. His response was shocking. "Do I like this work?" he said. "No. My wife and I do not like dirt. We have reasonable refined sensibilities. We do not like crawling into vile huts through goat refuse. But is a man to do nothing for Christ he does not like? God pity him, if not. Liking or disliking has nothing to do with it. We have orders to 'Go,' and we go. Love constrains us."

#### **Matthew 28:19**

**GET ON WITH IT!** - A college choir was all set to present its package of music in a large church. The program of sacred song was to be carried live by a local radio station. When everything appeared to be ready, the announcer made his final introduction and waited for the choir director to begin.

One of the tenors was not ready, however, so the leader refused to raise his baton. All the time, nothing but silence was being broadcast.

Growing very nervous, the announcer, forgetting that his microphone was still on and that he could be heard in the church and on the radio, said in exasperation, "Get on with it, you old goat!"

Later in the week, the radio station got a letter from one of its listeners -- a man who had tuned in to listen to the music from the comfort of his easy chair. When he heard "Get on with it, you old goat!" he took the message personally. He had been doing nothing to further God's work, and this startling message was enough to convince him and get him going again.

Sometimes we need a wakeup call. We need to be reminded that before Jesus left this earth, He gave us all the instructions we need. He told us we should go and make disciples. We need to get on with it! -J D Brannon

Revive us, Lord! Is zeal abating  
While harvest fields are vast and white?  
Revive us, Lord -- the world is waiting!  
Equip Thy church to spread the light.--Head

It's what you're doing today that counts, not what you're going to do tomorrow.