

Encountering Jesus Today: A Devotional Study in the Gospel of Matthew

There are two approaches:

1. You can do the study below as a group or with another person, doing two chapters of Matthew at a time. The following study guide will be done for each week with the two chapters.

For example: for the first week do Matthew 1 and 2 and follow the guide below. The next week do Matthew 3 and 4, also using the guide below. The goal and focus is on Jesus, "Who is Jesus?" And, "What is He like?"

2. If you would like to make it a more inductive and thorough bible study, then use the attached inductive bible study sheet. You can use this for each section to observe, interpret and apply.

The Matthew Study Guide:

Read some of Matthew each day, even if it is for 5-10 minutes.

Day 1 - Read through the assigned chapters assigned for the week (possibly two chapters a week).

Day 2 - Pause and prayerfully ask God to still your heart then re-read the passage. This time read through slowly, reflectively, and expectantly.

Day 3 - Now read with a pencil in hand, answering the questions on the page.

Day 4 - Stand back and look at the big picture. What strikes you? What stands out? Do you notice repetition of who is Jesus and what He is like?

Day 5 - Read any parts again that strikes you. How are you encountering Jesus? What would you share with another?

Questions to consider as you read:

How is Jesus introduced (specifically in the first 4 chapters)?

Who is Jesus? (This is our main question.)

- What do you learn about Jesus?
- What does the text and others say about Him?
- What does He say about Himself?

What are things that stand out to you?

How does Jesus interact with others? How do others respond to Him?

What is my response to what I have observed?

How can I share something from these chapters with someone else?

- ...in introducing spiritual things?
- ...for sharing Christ with someone else?
- ...with a disciple?
- ...with a friend?

Matthew

Observation: What does it say?

Start by looking for the basics:

Who – Who is performing or receiving the action?

What – What is occurring?

When – When is it occurring? Is there a sequence of events?

Where – Where is the action occurring? Does the location change within the paragraph?

Why – What is the goal or purpose for the action? Who benefits?

How – What is the means or manner for accomplishing the action?

Key Words (especially theologically important terms)

Important Connectives - Indicate relationships within and between paragraphs; such as... after, then, as, until, before, when, now, while, because, for, since, so, therefore, thus, in order that, but...

Grammatical Construction - How does each word function in the sentence?

Verbs - What are the actions? Note the tense of the verb (when is the action performed) Is there a list of commands?

Noun - name of a person, place, thing or quality

Adjective & Adverb - modifies or describes something

Figures of speech - Non-literal language (e.g. “I am the bread of life”)

Also look at these:

Comparison: points out the similarities between two or more related ideas, or simply joining like ideas. “...he will be **like** a tree firmly planted ...”(Ps.1:2-3)

Contrast: points out dissimilarities between thoughts or ideas. This indicator is often easily identified by the use of the word “but.” “Now the deeds of the flesh are evident... **But** the fruit of the Spirit is....” (Galatians 5:19-23)

Questions: structure is built around questions posed and answered by the author (or a hypothetical opponent created by the author). “What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace might increase?” (Rom. 6:1)

Repetition: reiteration of the same word or phrase (when a similar but not exact word, phrase or idea is repeated it is known as continuity).

Progression of Ideas: the movement of ideas from general to particular (Matt. 6:1-18) or particular to gen. (Jas 2).

Cause to Effect: the passage first states the cause and then directly correlates the effects. Romans 1:18-31 demonstrates the cause (rejection of God) and the effect (God gave them over). See also Romans 6:23.

Effect to Cause: opposite of cause to effect, the author states the effect and then substantiates it by stating the cause. In Romans 8:18-27 Paul describes the effect of longing, and in 8:28-30 he describes the cause, which is our certain future glorification.

Summarization: the author gathers the main ideas he has been trying to communicate and restates them in a summary. For examples see Hebrews 8:1-2 and Joshua 12.

Interpretation: What does it mean?

Observation is answering, ‘What does it say?’ In interpretation you are asking, ‘What does this mean?’ Or better, in a book like Colossians, ‘What does Paul mean here?’ As you observe, ask lots of questions like:

What does this word mean?

Why does he use this analogy?

What does Paul mean when he says we “were dead”?

Answering these questions is interpretation. Remember creativity in interpretation is not a virtue. Start your search for answers within the immediate context. Also, consider what others say now (your small group, pastor...) as well as in the past (commentaries).

Your goal is to discern the author’s intended meaning.

Application: How does this touch my life?

Once you have discovered the universal principle(s) from the text, then you move to application. How does this truth connect to my life? By putting your application in words you begin to hold yourself accountable for becoming a doer of the Word. Some basic guidelines for application are: 1) focus on the main themes expressed by the author; 2) keep it short; 3) make it practical. An example of an application from Matthew 28:18-20 is “Wherever I am, I should proclaim the gospel to all men in hope of making some disciples.” Consider the following questions for application:

- Is there an example for me to follow or avoid? (Genesis 34; Joshua 1:9)
- Is there a sin or error for me to avoid? (1 Cor. 5:1)
- Is there a promise for me to claim? (Heb. 13:5)
- Is there a prayer for me to repeat? (Eph. 3:14-21)
- Is there a command for me to obey? (2 Timothy 2:22)
- Is there a condition for me to meet? (John 15:5)
- Is there a verse for me to memorize? (Psalm 119:11)
- Is there conviction from the Spirit to which I must respond? (1 Thess. 5:19)

Relate the application to your various relationships. Ask yourself, ‘How should this application affect my attitudes, thoughts or actions?’:

- In relationship to God
- In relationship to myself
- In relationship to my family
- In relationship to my Christian friends
- In relationship to my non-Christians friends and the world relationship to my adversary

Create a plan of action

So, what will I do today, or this week, or this month to implement this application? Who will I ask to hold me accountable? How and when will I evaluate my progress? A plan of action for our application from Matthew 28 might look something like this:

By the power of the Holy Spirit I commit myself to asking my neighbor to lunch this week. I commit to daily pray for his salvation and for the opportunity to present a verbal witness to him during lunch. I will ask my Bible study leader to hold me accountable to initiate this plan by asking me next week if I have followed through.