

Follow Me
Matthew—Part Two
Matthew 14–28

by

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Leader's Guide

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To the leader

Writing a Bible study to be used by various different groups is a humbling undertaking. Some Christians have studied the material before and are ready for more in-depth questions. Others are relatively new to the faith and need a study to guide them through the basics. Some classes are used to discussion and find no difficulty interacting. Other classes—particularly large ones—find it more difficult. The best written study guide, therefore, is only a tool, never to be followed slavishly.

The most important element of your study is the Scripture. This study guide is prepared to help you focus on Scripture, not on the guide itself. Read each section of Matthew; try to understand how chapter connects with chapter, how verse connects with verse; and pay special attention to how the Holy Spirit uses words and phrases. This is the heart of Bible study. Remember, the main reason you are here is so that the Holy Spirit can work on hearts through his Word, leading your class members to Christ and preparing them for works of service.

The second most important element of your study is you, the teacher. God has gifted you to teach his Word and has called you to teach this course. You are in the best position to judge your class' level of understanding and to teach accordingly. For the most part, this study does not deal with details of content or the finer points of interpretation. The teacher will want to have a grasp of the material beyond this study guide. In class we suggest reading a section of Matthew. If there are details that need to be explained, do that next. Then use the study questions to help the class focus on some of the main points of doctrine or application.

The third most important element is the members of the class. Their interest in Scripture, advance preparation, questions, and willingness to discuss the study questions will make the class more enjoyable. Let them know how important their questions and comments are, and encourage them to do some home study. Ask them to prepare for each week by reading the Bible alone and thinking about its meaning on their own. Suggest they read a commentary such as *Matthew* in The People's Bible series, but only after they have attended class.

Fourth in importance are the study notes. They are designed to help the class focus on the important truths of each section. Feel free to adapt them as needed. We suggest you cover a chapter a week. This will mean being very selective in how many fine points you cover.

The goal of this course is to study the whole gospel of Matthew. Matthew reveals to us how Jesus taught his disciples to make disciples of others. In today's religious world there is much discussion about what makes a Christian a disciple. Some distinguish between mere believers and real disciples. Believers, they say, focus on faith in Christ and doctrine, while disciples really seek to let God guide their lives. Scripture makes no such distinction. Matthew tells us to watch Jesus, learn who he is, and see his compassion and power and how he ushers in the kingdom of God. Watch him die for our sins and rise again. As we do this, we will be willing and able to follow him and grow in our ability to live for him.

One of the finest commentaries on Matthew is *Follow Me: Discipleship According to Saint Matthew*, (Concordia Publishing House, 1961) by Martin Franzmann. Franzmann approaches this gospel as Matthew's account of how Jesus prepared his followers to be his disciples. This study follows his approach and is indebted to him for his many insights. We recommend you read this commentary, if possible, as you teach the course.

May the Lord bless your study of his Word.

Robert Koester

Using the computer CD included in this Bible study kit

Thank you for purchasing an NPH Bible study kit. The computer CD included with this Bible study offers resources to help you prepare to teach God's Word to his people.

Each CD contains two text files, GUIDES.TXT and RESOURCE.TXT, and two directories, GUIDES and RESOURCE.

Read the short text files first. The GUIDES.TXT file tells you what is in the GUIDES directory. It lists the various formats for the student's guide copy masters. The RESOURCE.TXT file tells you what is in the RESOURCE directory. It contains a list of articles and resource material you may find helpful in preparing to teach the course.

How do I open the text files?

There are no programs on this CD. In other words, there is nothing you need to install on your computer and run. These are simple files, such as a letter or sermon you might save on your hard drive. To use these files, simply open them as you would any other file.

Most word processors have a window in which you can navigate to various places to locate files. You will need to tell your word processor that you want to find a file on the drive in which you inserted the Bible study CD. This will usually be drive c: or d:. If you are using a Windows™ word processor, click on drive c: or d: in the Open File window. When you have selected the appropriate drive, it will list the files and directories that are on the Bible study CD.

What if no files or directories appear? Some word processors are set to show only files created by or for that program. You need to indicate that you want to see *all the files* on the CD. A pull-down menu in the Open File window gives you the options for the types of files you want the program to list. Choose "all files" or the equivalent. All the files and directories on your CD should appear. At this point you should be able to open the two text files. By navigating to the GUIDES and RESOURCE directories, you will be able to view the file names and open their contents as well.

How do I use the files in the GUIDES directory?

The GUIDES directory contains the student's guide copy masters and leader's guide.

The files in the GUIDES directory are provided in both RTF and PDF formats. We have made every effort to provide you with the capability of adapting this Bible study to your needs. However, some degree of reformatting may be necessary to use the RTF files on your computer.

The files included on this CD can be used by both IBM and Macintosh systems.

If you have any questions about using the CD, please call NPH at (414) 615-5773.

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SAMPLE

Lesson One—Matthew 14 and 15

Follow Me—And Be Separate from the World

Approach

This is a rather long lesson. The leader will want to work through the sections rather quickly, focusing on the main lessons each account teaches about the kingdom of God. Focus on how the Lord is calling his first disciples—and us—out of the kingdom of the world and into his own kingdom.

Introduction

In our study we have been emphasizing the kingdom of God. Jesus is teaching his disciples about their work in the kingdom. He is teaching them important truths about the kingdom, which include the following:

The kingdom of God is one of authority. Before it the kingdoms of the world cannot stand, and at the Last Day this truth will become clear to all.

The kingdom of God is a kingdom of grace and pardon for sin. God's compassion overflows into every area of our lives.

The kingdom of God is radically different from the kingdoms of this world—secular and religious. Those who enter Christ's kingdom must leave the other kingdoms behind.

Watch for these themes in chapters 14 and 15.

14:1-13 The death of John the Baptist

How does this account illustrate the great gulf between God's kingdom and the kingdoms of the world?

Think of the humility of John the Baptist and his desire to testify to the truth, no matter what it might cost him. Contrast that with Herod's lechery and his foolish oath, two things he wanted to hold on to, no matter what it might cost him.

The kingdoms of this world are based on political power.

Christ's kingdom is one of crossbearing and suffering here on this earth.

Verse 13 Note Jesus' response to the news that John had been killed. What lesson is there in this for us? (Hint: Contrast Jesus' reaction to John's death with the way a ruler of this world would have reacted to the murder of one of his champions at the hands of a rival kingdom.)

We see many examples today of rulers who get revenge on people who assassinate one of their friends. Jesus certainly had power to react that way; in fact, he could have stepped in at any moment and delivered John from prison. But revenge was not what Jesus came to bring. (Jesus would bring vengeance on the church's enemies at a future time.) He came to suffer and do battle with Satan by means of the cross.

The church today operates as Jesus did. It does not seek vengeance or overcome its enemies by political power. It rejoices that its martyrs, many of whom have borne witness before kings, are in heaven.

14:14-21 Jesus feeds the five thousand

Look at each of the following phrases and note the lesson Jesus' disciples learn about work in the kingdom.

- “he had compassion on them”
Jesus teaches them to have compassion on people in need, even in their physical needs.
- “They do not need to go away”
It would seem logical that the crowd should leave Jesus and find the nearest food store. But the best place to be in times of need is with Jesus.
- “Bring [the five loaves of bread and two fish] to me”
Jesus doesn't need many resources to help others. With Jesus, the smallest of resources will yield the greatest bounty.

- “he gave them to the disciples”

This is the first time Jesus has asked his disciples to help him perform a miracle. Jesus is letting his disciples personally experience his power.

14:22-36 Jesus strengthens the disciples' faith

Jesus invited Peter to walk on the water and come out to where he was. Jesus' invitation strengthened Peter's faith and Peter did what Jesus told him to do. But what happened next?

Peter took his eyes off of Jesus and looked at the waves.

What lesson did Peter and the other disciples learn from this?

Jesus rebuked Peter by calling him a man of little faith. When the waves grew larger in Peter's mind, Jesus grew smaller. That might be a good definition of a small faith—when Jesus looks small to you.

The disciples learned that when trouble came into their lives, they should focus on Christ.

How do you think Peter and the others put this into practice later on in their ministries?

Instead of focusing on their troubles and letting them become large in their minds, they turned to the Word that told them about Christ, prayed to him, and sang songs of praise even in the most trying circumstances.

15:1-20 Jesus teaches what cleanness and uncleanness really mean—in contrast to the teaching of the Pharisees

Verses 1-8 How did Jesus point out the Pharisees' hypocrisy?

The Pharisees had rebuked the disciples for breaking one of their traditions. Jesus doesn't bother to point out this fact. Rather, he points out how the Pharisees were breaking the Fourth Commandment on a daily basis.

The leader will want to read in a reliable Bible dictionary or commentary about the law of Corban and help the class

understand why it was a transgression of the Fourth Commandment.

Verses 10,16-20 How did the Pharisees define uncleanness?

They were concerned about ceremonial washings—keeping the outside of the body clean.

How did Jesus define uncleanness?

Jesus was concerned about the heart. The wickedness that comes out of a person, from the heart, is what makes the person unclean.

Verses 12-14 The disciples were somewhat concerned about the Pharisees' reaction to Jesus' words. What does Jesus tell the disciples to do? What lesson is there for us in this?

Remember that the disciples had grown up under these religious leaders. They now were followers of Christ, but it was hard for them to release their grip on the past. They were still concerned about the displeasure of the Pharisees.

Jesus tells his disciples to let the Pharisees be. This teaches us that we dare not compromise our teaching even if it means making someone displeased. We dare not cater to human beings when it becomes clear that they care nothing for the gospel.

Sometimes the best thing to do is to ignore the false teacher and just bear witness to the truth.

15:21-28 A further example of Jesus' understanding of cleanness

Verse 22 What was so unusual about this woman?

She was a Gentile who was bold enough to press her case with a Jew.

Verse 26 How did this woman display her great faith?

She continued to “argue” with Jesus, even after Jesus had seemingly rejected her.

Note the contrast between this woman and Peter. Jesus had told Peter to come to him on the water, but Peter's lack of faith