

Training

Week 5

This week in summary

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Day 1

Following Jesus**A summary of Matt 14-18**

Jesus' cousin John the Baptist is executed and Jesus knows that his death is coming soon. But before that he wants to make sure his disciples are ready to take over after he goes. In this week's section Jesus gives his students opportunities to take their training to the next level. In the past they've been learning from Jesus and following his directions, now they will start to imitate Jesus. It was the custom in those days that students imitate every aspect of their teacher's life. Peter specifically steps up to be like Jesus. He succeeds gloriously and fails just as miserably but he keeps trying. Living in a way that imitates Jesus doesn't come naturally it take practice.

Jesus helps his disciples to see beyond the surface and the physical. He helps them to get beyond food and rituals and start living life by things that are intangible like personal motives and influence.

Several times Jesus tells his students that He is going to be killed which naturally sounds like this revolution of the Kingdom of Heaven is going to fail. Certainly this is distressing to Jesus' disciples. Then he challenges his beloved students to follow him through a failure's death (*take up your cross*). Following Jesus is a difficult road indeed. Even though Peter failed over and over he kept trying. With God's help Peter lived and died following Jesus. With God's help, will you follow Jesus all the way?

Jesus wraps up this training by highlighting his expectation of his students as they learn to imitate him. Even though they are stepping into leadership positions he wants them to be humble. He is a king that acts like a servant. He turns leadership around. In his culture, kings lead by fear and oppression. Jesus did the opposite, leading by serving and compassion. And he told his students that when you serve the weak you'll receive a king's reward. He concludes with a story of forgiveness which showing the importance of being affected and changed by the gifts God gives.

Reading Today: Matthew 14

10-15 minutes

Day 2

Jesus the Healer

Look again at the list of Jesus' miracles in week 4. Notice healing seems to dominate the list. Not only did Jesus have power over all kinds of disease by he gave that ability to his disciples.

But healing was at best a secondary objective. His true calling was to repair the relationship between humanity and God. This relationship is founded on trust which is built up by the Kingdom of God. God paints a picture of his character and trustworthiness in the lives of his citizens. As they trust Him with more and more parts of their lives his faithfulness in more readily displayed.

What about this gift of healing? Would it surprise you to know that we can already heal others. Just imagine the kind of medical advancements we've made in the past 2000 years. Even more significant to public health is basic sanitation and clean drinking water. It's not as flashy as being able to snap your fingers and heal but in terms of raw numbers no medical advancement has done more for public health than clean drinking water.

Today, one in ten people on earth do not have access to clean drinking water. A small group of 6-8 people have the financial ability to heal a large village. You may not feel rich but financially you have the ability to heal more people than Jesus did. It was after all His desire that we exceed his work. But that requires that we use our gifts for God's will and not our lifestyle. Why would God give us supernatural talent if we don't use our natural talents? Debt and lack of trust are hindering our ability to heal. Jesus regularly indicated that healing relates to trusting him.

Are we likely to see supernatural healing? It may depend on trusting God with your life, not just an immediate situation. Are you following Jesus' example? Using your abilities to do God's will? Giving yourself to others and not spending your life on yourself? Maybe by following Jesus you can receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Reading Today: Matthew 15

10-15 minutes

Day 3

Freedom

If you grew up in the mid-western part of the U.S., there is a good chance that you spent some time as a child catching fireflies on warm summer evenings. Those slow-flying glowing bugs were easy to catch, and it was fun to watch them crawl and glow inside the jar or bug cage you put them in. They would often make their way to the top of the jar or the door of the bug cage, but a slight tap on the top would send the clumsy bugs to the bottom so that the lid could be opened and more could be added. At times the bugs would seem somewhat confused – seeing the outside world, yet banging into an invisible shield every time they flew towards it. The bugs were trapped, life-threateningly trapped.

There are a lot of things in life that can make us feel trapped as well. Perhaps you feel trapped by a wound from your past, an inability to forgive someone, an addiction, a perpetual need to please others, fear, anger, depression, or worry about the future. There is an endless list of things that can make us feel trapped. We are on the inside of the jar --- longing to fly free only to find ourselves hitting a wall. We may feel confused—not realizing that we are in a jar and trying to fly in different directions or worse we've given up flying altogether convinced that there is no hope. The good news is that Jesus came that we might experience freedom --- a freedom that only comes when we choose to follow Him.

First, you must understand how you got into the jar. The answer to that is **sin**. The Bible tells us that all of us have “sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). Sin traps us, making us its slave and ultimately leads to eternal death. Romans 6:23 says, “For the wages of sin is death.” All of us have sinned, all of us have been trapped, and all of us are in need of being saved from death! If all of us have sinned, and all are in the jar, who can get us out? Who can save us? It has to be someone without sin---someone not in the jar—Jesus.

The Bible says that “God so loved the world that he sent his one and only Son.” Jesus freely came to earth. He did not sin, yet he paid the penalty for our sins. He died so that we would have a way out of the jar. Not only that, he also came alive again – demonstrating his power over death for all time. Jesus took the lid off the jar and he stands at the entrance to freedom. There is only one way out, and that’s through Jesus. First, we must realize that we are in the jar. We must confess our sin, acknowledge our need for him, and choose to follow Him. When we do this, he forgives our sins, welcomes us into his family, and begins to transform our lives.

Being free does not mean that I am now in control over my circumstances or that I now carry everything out with perfection. On the contrary, I have given control of my past, present, and future circumstances to God, trusting that he is powerful, he is good, he has forgiven me, and his love for me is greater than my own understanding. The freedom comes in yielding to Him. While living on earth, I know that I will have trials. I will not always do things perfectly. I will not always please others. I will experience injustice. I will sometimes be sad. However, there is freedom in knowing that Christ will never fail. He will never leave me. He is my helper. He will always love me. He holds the future. I have the hope of heaven. I also have a purpose in praising Him, following Him, and telling others about the freedom I’ve found in Him.

Reading Today: Matthew 16

10-15 minutes

Day 4

My Encounters

Just a reminder: God loves the world. No matter how big or small your world this means He loves everyone in your world. Your day to day life the people you encounter every one of them – God loves them.

Let's take a look at the fringes of your life the people you encounter briefly if nothing more than a quick "hi" or an exchange of money with a cashier. Let's look at them because God loves them too.

List five places in your area that you like to go?

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____
- 4 _____
- 5 _____

List five places you most often spend money?

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____
- 4 _____
- 5 _____

Everyone you exchange money is loved by God but may not know it. God is trustworthy but they may not know that he can be counted on. They might be missing out on the best thing in life and it's absolutely free, someone just needs to tell them. That's why God put these places near you. Let's start by getting God's perspective. Take the action step.

Action step:

Ask God for his perspective on these encounters.

“God, how do you see these people around me? I want to know how you feel about the people who work at these 10 places. Will you show me these people through your eyes next time I go?”

Reading Today: Matthew 17

10-15 minutes

Day 5

My Skills - Service

Look over the list of **Skills** at the end of the book. This list represents strengths that people demonstrate in life. As you look over this list you should indicate by each 'Skill, how you see this personally applying to you by number: 1- Always true, 2 – usually true, 3 sometimes true, 4 – rarely true, 5 – never true.

Look over the thing you have indicated with a '1' or '2' and list the top 5, your most consistent strengths.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Reading Today: Matthew 18

10-15 minutes