
***SERIES 2: WALKING BY FAITH IN JESUS
CHRIST***

BOOK 4: Following Jesus Christ as Lord
Matthew 8-16

Book 4: Following Jesus Christ as Lord
Introduction

As Matthew continues His Gospel of the words and works of Jesus Christ, He focuses on how disciples must *follow* Jesus Christ as their Lord. For, as we see later in this section, there are many who *disqualify themselves* from following Jesus because they have little interest in knowing Jesus in His fullness as Lord, being quite satisfied with their own *Self-Lordship* and Self-justifying religion. But, if you are *resolved to follow Jesus Christ as His disciple, then learn from these next chapters 8-16 in the Gospel of Matthew*. As a disciple, you must follow by *faith* in Jesus Christ as your Lord. Great faith *focuses on Jesus Christ* fully in His power and Lordship, while *little* faith diminishes His power to *rely on the flesh*. But, those who follow Jesus Christ by faith experience the *fullness* of His power and Kingdom! For, you are called as a disciple not merely to *abide* in His Kingdom but to *advance it* by your testimony, gathering the lost sheep back home. So, follow Jesus *sacrificially to take up your cross*, fulfilling the Lord's purpose for your life!

STEPS of a *Devoted Disciple*:

Your *Devotion* matters to the Lord. For, there is only one Lord and God, and He deserves creation's highest honor and praise. So, you were made to give yourself to the Lord God in loving devotion of heart, soul, mind, and strength (Mark 12:30). In this same devotion to the Lord, Jesus Christ calls you to follow Him as His disciple. These short devotionals guide you in the Word to cultivate a heart devotion to the Lord as His disciple.

- First, **discover** what His life-giving Word has to say to you personally, being careful to write down your insights to share with others.
- Then, **discuss** His Word with those closest to you: your family, your friends, and in your home fellowship group (your spiritual family).
- Next, **dialogue** to compare views on key passages with a partner—either another disciple, or an older mentor or younger mentee.
- Finally, **develop** key skills as you abide in the Word by applying it to your life as you read the devotional, notes, and footnotes.

START HERE: *Humble Yourself in Prayer:*

Devote yourself to the Lord to hear and do His Will for you.

☐ *Do I want to humble myself under the Lordship of God by faith?*

☐ *Or, will I live as my own Lord, relying on my own understanding?*

PRAYER OF DEVOTION

Lord God, I devote my life to you today. I offer you my soul to live humbly under your Lordship; my mind to seek your will and Spirit; my heart to love you and others; and, my strength to obey your Word and Will!
Amen.

Chapter 1: FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST: Humbled under Authority

Matthew 8:1-17

Step 1. Discover: *Preview and View God's Word for yourself then Write Insights to Share with others.*

a. Preview Matthew 8:1-17

Faith in Jesus Christ: Humbled under Authority. God sent Jesus Christ into the world as the light which we as his disciples would look to by faith. So, read Matthew 8 to discover why Jesus Christ is the perfect object of our faith, bring God's healing kingdom to us! First, see how Jesus Christ ***responds to the faith*** of those who turn to him. Notice specifically his welcoming heart, as He receives our faith gladly! (8:1-4).

Then, observe how the *centurion* who approached Jesus for his sick servant becomes for us a model of faith, for the Lord commends this man because he was ***humbled under authority by faith***. Not only does this man respond to Jesus by faith, but he understands the *source* of his power, for Jesus too is *subject* to the Father's authority by faith (8:5-13). Finally, see how all who come to Jesus for help, including Peter's mother-in-law, are ***restored by faith*** (8:14-17).

b. Prayerfully Read Matthew 8:1-17 and Write your insights to share

SEEING What is this Bible passage about? Key words, ideas	
LEARNING What does it mean? What is it teaching me?	
DOING What lesson can I apply to my life?	

Step 2. Discuss: Share Viewpoints. Read the Passage and Discuss Questions with Family, Friends, and Fellowship Group.

Q1. How does Jesus respond to the *leper who comes to him by faith*?

Q2: What does Jesus Christ see as the *remarkable* faith of the centurion, and how can we have such an outstanding faith?

Step 3: Dialogue: Compare Viewpoints as Disciples. Answer, share, & compare insights with partner, mentor, or mentee.

Q1. How does Jesus Christ respond to the *leper who draws near to him by faith*? (Mt. 8:1-4)

1. Responds to Faith: Willing Heart. Our faith must have a *person* in whom we trust. When we come to the Lord Jesus in faith, we see that He responds to us with a willing heart in warm welcome! Notice that the *leprous man* who came to Jesus by faith knew two things—that the Lord was *able* to cleanse him, but also that it depended on the Lord’s *willingness*. So, Jesus Christ displays a *willing heart* to help those who draw near to him by cleansing the leper. Also, this act of mercy was not driven by a *selfish interest*, for Jesus asked that the man “say nothing” except what was proper (4).

Q2. Why does Jesus Christ commend the centurion for his faith?
(Mt. 8:5-13)

2. Outstanding Faith: Humbled under authority. Again, the centurion who approaches Jesus comes to him with an expectant faith, because he clearly understands that Jesus is *Lord* (6). And, his *clear understanding* of Jesus as Lord gives him an outstanding faith. The centurion understands that Jesus is *Lord* because He is under the surpassing authority of His Father. So, not only is Jesus *subject to authority*, but also those who come to him by faith also *subject themselves* to the Lord's authority.

Q3. How does the Lord God work in those who have faith? (Mt. 8:14-17)

3. Restored by Faith: Freed from Oppression. Faith is the only appropriate way to respond to the Lordship of Jesus Christ, because the *disciple* who comes to Jesus by faith recognizes His Lordship in both *earthly* but also the most inaccessible matters of *spirit*. For, we can be afflicted not just by *bodily weakness*, like Peter's mother-in-law, but more dangerously, by *spiritual oppressors, demons* which can only be driven out by the Lord's power. So, in our vulnerability and weakness, we can only have *faith* in the One who is Lord over all!

Step 4: Develop: Review & Apply God's Word as a Growing Disciple to **read** Devotional, Notes, and Footnotes.

Walking by Faith: Restored and Freed by Lord. As a disciple, you are called to walk with the Lord Jesus Christ by faith. For, faith opens your eyes and life to the power of His *good* and *restorative Lordship*!

Your *faith* as a disciple will draw you near to the Lord Jesus with confidence, for you know that He is a *willing Lord*. Like the *leper* of our story, come to the Lord Jesus as one without any earthly hope, yet recognizing that the Lord has the power to *cleanse*. Like the leper, there are *areas of uncleanness in our Selves and in our lives*—areas broken and untouched by the Lord's kingdom rule. So, to ask for *cleansing* is to ask for the Lord's power to change you and your life, sanctifying you under His rule. For this reason, the centurion had a great faith to recognize that the *Lordship* of Jesus exceeded *his own person*, for Jesus is Lord as one *under the full authority of His Father God*. So, Jesus exercises His Lordship humbly, to please the Father who has given him “all authority in heaven and on earth” (Matt. 28:18). So, by faith, you also put yourself under this authority of the Lord, living in subjection, by faith, to the rule of Heaven.

Respond to Devotional: (mark passage above)	
✓ Agree	? Question ! Differ
SUPPORT: Agree What insight or Bible verse to add ?	
QUESTION: Modify What to question or change?	
DIFFER: Disagree What insight or Bible verse to differ ?	

Personal Study Notes: Understanding the Passage:

Write and share notes with your partner/ mentor/ mentee.

What is the *big idea* of this passage?

- key verse:

What is a key idea?

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Teaching Preparation Notes: Sharing the Passage:

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(write a question for people to discover this lesson)

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Notes¹: Commended Faith: Faith begins with a humble turning to Jesus Christ as Lord. So, the centurion displays such faith, for himself *subjects himself under the authority* of the Lord by faith. However, such a *subject faith* also highlights the possibility of *weak faith* which does not see Jesus as the Lord under authority. Rather, weak faith may doubt the *Lordship* of Jesus because it questions the source of his authority. It may even doubt the choices of Jesus to respond because he is simply a religious figure acting on his own authority. But, a Lord under the authority of His God and Father does not please himself, nor does He exercise His Lordship arbitrarily. Rather, He is a humbled Lord who calls His disciples to show a similar humility of faith, subject to His Lordship and the Will of His Father.

¹ **Footnotes: Oppressed by demons:** In the same way we do not see the Lordship of Jesus as separate from the Father's Rule, we do not see the ministry of Jesus apart from the Kingdom of God's state of being *free and cleansed of* this world's demonic oppression and uncleanness. So, the Lord's ministry to "heal" and to "cast out" is to bring people into His Kingdom by giving them a foretaste of the Kingdom's restoration.

Chapter 2: FOLLOWING JESUS CHRIST: Counting the Cost

Matthew 8:18-34

Step 1. Discover: *Preview and View God's Word* for yourself then **Write** *Insights to Share with others.*

a. Preview Matthew 8:18-34

Following Jesus Christ: Counting the Cost. The Lord Jesus is the Anointed Son of God and the Son of Man, so His disciples should be prepared to *believe in His Fullness to Follow Him Faithfully*. So, read Matthew 8:18-34 to discover how Jesus encouraged His first disciples to *know the reality of His Lordship* to follow Him faithfully as His disciples!

First, Jesus Christ encouraged *disciples* who see him merely as a *teacher* of religious truths and doctrines to understand *the Son of Man's Poverty*, for He had given up His rights to fulfill the Father's will to restore the *family of man* to God's blessing (8:18-20; Phil. 2:4-11). For *disciples* who rightly view Him as their *Lord*, *Jesus* exhorts them to share the **Lord's Primacy** which takes priority over the concerns of this life (8:21-22). Finally, disciples who view Jesus as *simply a man* must understand the **Son of God's Power**, especially in the spiritual reality of the Kingdom as it displaces the *unclean* presence of demons. (8:23-34).

*b. Prayerfully **Read Matthew 8:18-34** and **Write** your insights to share*

SEEING What is this Bible passage about? Key words, ideas	
LEARNING What does it mean? What is it teaching me?	
DOING What lesson can I apply to my life?	

Step 2. Discuss: Share Viewpoints. Read the Passage and Discuss Questions with Family, Friends, and Fellowship Group.

Q1. Why does Jesus reveal Himself to His disciples as the *Son of Man*?

Q2: How should you follow Jesus Christ as your *Lord*?

Step 3: Dialogue: Compare Viewpoints as Disciples. Answer, share, & compare insights with partner, mentor, or mentee.

Q1. Why does Jesus reveal Himself as the Son of Man? (Mt. 8:18-20)

1. Son of Man's Poverty: Cautioning the Casual. Some early disciples of Jesus saw him merely as a human *teacher*. Those who follow an earthly teacher can still *control* their earthly lives and cling to life's *comforts and convenience*. However, Jesus Christ cautions these disciples against such a *casual faith* which seeks to simply *learn ideas* from Jesus but keep His life and influence far from their own experiences. So, Jesus Christ reminds them that He is the Son of Man, *humanity's Heir* who gave up all His rights to bring humanity back home to God's blessings.

Q2. Why does Jesus Christ challenge His disciples to make Him their highest priority? (Mt. 8:21-22)

2. Lord's Primacy: Challenging the Disloyal. Other disciples called Jesus *Lord*, but they neglected the *Lord's Primacy* as their highest priority. For, Jesus Christ calls His disciples to follow Him first, putting His call to follow above every other concern of this life. The Lord Jesus can call for such obedience because He is the life-giver, and following Jesus as His disciples is the call to live with Him in life and to see one's old life in the world as *irrelevant* as death.

Q3. How does Jesus Christ rebuke those who *see Him* mainly as a man? (Matt. 8:23-34)

3. Son of God's Power: Rebuking Unbelief. Even though some of the disciples of Jesus called on him as *Lord* (25), they imagined His Lordship as having limits, for they viewed him as merely a “man” (27). However, the Lordship of Jesus covered both the *earthly realm* of the storm and seas (26) as well as the *spiritual realm* in which the *opposing demons* were powerless against him, being forced to obey Him because He is “the Son of God.” So, Jesus *rebukes* the unbelief of His disciples who had “little faith” and a diminished view of His Lordship! (26).

Step 4: Develop: Review & Apply God's Word as a Growing Disciple to *read* Devotional, Notes, and Footnotes.

Following Jesus as Lord: Clear-eyed Faith: Your devotion to follow Jesus Christ as His disciple *will strengthen or weaken* depending on your faith, whether you see Jesus clearly as the *strong Lord* over the heavens and the earth or with unbelief, a mere man who teaches good ideas.

Be sure that you don't merely see Jesus Christ as a teacher, who only passes on *good ideas* and *teachings* to you. If Jesus is simply *teacher*, then it is up to you to be your own *Self-Lord*, *seeking to gain nothing from Jesus but ideas and doctrines which will* support your life on earth. But, the reality is that Jesus Christ is the *Son of Man*, mankind's heir who gives up His rights in order to *rescue* God's people home to His blessings.

Rather, fix your faith on Jesus Christ as Lord, the only *life-giver* who saves you from this world's sin and death into a new spiritual "life" (8:22). Jesus has the Lord's right to ask you to follow Him *first*, for He has all authority over earth and heaven, over the stormy seas (8:26) and the *oppressing demonic spirits* (32).

Respond to Devotional: (mark passage above)	
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(write a question for people to discover this lesson)

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Key lesson to learn?

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Notes²: The Son of Man: The Christ, that is, Messiah, is humanity's Heir. So, as the appointed *Firstborn Son*, Jesus is the Head. As "the Son of Man," Jesus is Lord over all *sons of Man*. Because Jesus is the human family's *Firstborn*, God designates him to bear the family responsibility of *redemption*—to forsake all his rights in order to *atone* for His people to restore them to God and His blessing.

² **Footnotes: The Son of God:** Messiah was also anointed as *the Son of God*, again, the Firstborn Heir of the *sons of God* whom He redeems from the kingdom of darkness (Is. 9:2-6; Phil. 1:13-14). As the Son of God, Jesus is the eternal God through whom the Father created the heavens and the earth (Heb. 1:1-3). So, the Lord Jesus simply utters a word to calm the stormy seas (26) and cast out the unclean spirits (32).

Chapter 3: RESTORED BY THE SON OF MAN: New Life

Matthew 9:1-31

Step 1. Discover: *Preview and View God's Word* for yourself then **Write** *Insights to Share* with others.

a. Preview **Matthew 9:1-31**

Restored by the Son of Man: New Life. God promised Messiah to be the one to *crush the works of Satan* to restore God's people to their original life with God (Gen. 3:15). So, read Matthew 9:1-31 to see how Jesus Christ is the long-promised *Son of Man* (that is, Seed of the Woman (Gen. 3:15) and humanity's Firstborn Heir (Ps. 8:4-6) to overturn Satan's works and restore people to the Lord's blessing! First, notice the ***Son of Man's Authority to Restore***. This restoration is not merely a physical but also a spiritual restoration. (Matt. 9:1-8) Then, see how Jesus calls people to reject the *sin* and *brokenness* of this world's godless age. For, Jesus is the ***physician who calls to repentance***. In this way, Jesus welcomes sinners to come to Him that they might be healed of their *soul sickness* of sin (9:9-13). Finally, Jesus is the ***bridegroom who is the cause for celebration*** of His people, for He gives them the *new wine* of a restored, Kingdom life! (9:14-31).

*b. Prayerfully **Read Matthew 9:1-31** and **Write** your insights to share*

SEEING What is this Bible passage about? Key words, ideas	
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DOING What lesson can I apply to my life?	

Step 2. Discuss: Share Viewpoints. Read the Passage and Discuss Questions with Family, Friends, and Fellowship Group.

Q1. Why does Jesus refer to himself as “the Son of Man”? (Ps. 8:3-6).

Q2: Why does Jesus compare himself to a *bridegroom*?

Step 3: Dialogue: Compare Viewpoints as Disciples. Answer, share, & compare insights with partner, mentor, or mentee.

Q1. What does God authorize the Son of Man to do? (Matt. 9:1-8)

1. the Son of Man's Restoring Authority: From our very first fall into sin, the Lord God promised to raise up one of us, a *Seed of Woman* (Gen. 3:15) to restore what sin and death had taken away. Over the course of unfolding scripture, we see that this promised Seed of “Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob” is the Mashiach, humanity's Firstborn Heir as “the Son of Man” (Ps. 8:3-6). As the Heir of humanity and its *appointed redeemer*, Jesus as the Son of Man is authorized by God to restore what the serpent had snatched away.

Q2. Why is Jesus like a physician? (Matt. 9:9-13)

2. Physician Calls to Repentance Because Jesus is the Son of Man, he takes responsibility for the sons of man, ruined and broken by sin. Unlike the *accusatory* Pharisees, Jesus views the *sinner*s gathering around him with the *healing heart* of a physician, whose mission is to heal and restore the damage of sin. In the same way that a physician does not *shy away* from the sickness of his patients, neither does the Son of Man shrink from the sin of his people. Rather, He *calls* the sinners by His *mercy* (33) to leave their life of sin to enjoy new life in Him!

Q3. Why does Jesus compare Himself to a *bridegroom*? (Matt. 9:14-31)

3. The Bridegroom: Cause for celebration. When the disciples follow Jesus, they are not simply following a set of religious rules or a collection of teachings. Rather, the disciples of Jesus Christ are drawn to the One who is humanity's appointed "Son of Man," its Redeemer who restores the human family to the blessings of God! So, this Son of Man is not just humanity's Savior but also its Heir, who inherits an eternal Kingdom from God! So, the disciples of Jesus celebrate Him as the *new wine of their devotion* lavishly overflows the *new wineskins* of the Kingdom of God! So, Jesus as the Kingdom's Bridegroom is the cause of the disciples' celebration!

Step 4: Develop: Review & Apply God's Word as a Growing Disciple to **read** Devotional, Notes, and Footnotes.

Restoring Rule: Relating to Son of Man. Human religion imagines a Messiah fashioned in its own institutional image, a wise scholar or a catchy celebrity, an anonymous face of the institutions of power. But, Jesus Mashiach comes to you as someone who has an ancient bond of connection, older than any man-made institution. For, He is the *human Seed*—to be raised up directly from a *woman* (Gen. 3:15) to be the Son of Man (Psalm 8:4, 6), our *designated Heir* to restore us from *cursed sin* to the *grace of God*. So, when Jesus approaches the *paralytic*, He calls to him as a *parent who has finally found his lost child*, saying: “Take heart, my son!” (Mt. 9:2). And, He *restores* not just his current *paralysis* but first his ancient, shared affliction, the guilt of his sin, saying: “Your sins are forgiven” (2). For, the same faith that turned the paralytics eyes to Jesus for healing will also draw his heart to the Savior’s cross, upon which his sins would one day be carried. So, when you turn your faith to Jesus as your promised Messiah, a spark recognizes that He is the one you have waited to know all your life! For, his is the *ancient right* to restore you. The physician who calls you from *fatal sin* to a *forgiven life*! The bridegroom whose *new wine* celebrates the coming of a new kingdom!

Respond to Devotional: (mark passage above)	
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Notes³: Bridegroom: The parable is told of a King who gives a wedding feast for His Son and Heir (Matt. 22:2), which foretells the coming celebration when the Kingdom of Heaven is established on this earth with great joy and celebration! The Kingdom is like such a wedding celebration, because the *reason* for this celebration is the Son Himself, whom His Father wishes to honor. In this way, the Kingdom is not like *earth's* joyless religions, which celebrate empty rituals and man-made practices. Instead, the Kingdom and its joy are always centered on Jesus as her Mashiach!

³ **Footnotes: New Wine: Celebrating New Life.** When Jesus likens the joyous life of celebrating His presence to *new wine*, He shows how different it is from the *old life* of *fleshly religious practice*. For, the *pharisaical followers of old religion* perform such religious activities as *fasting* for the sake of their *tired* human traditions and man-made rationale. But, the disciples celebrated Jesus Mashiach himself, the promised *ancient* Messiah whose presence would bring a new age of His joyful Kingdom. And, the King himself is among us! So, the only fitting container for this new wine is a *fresh wineskin*, a newly-sacrificed life to contain this new Kingdom life poured out!

Chapter 4: FOLLOWING SHEPHERD: Gathering Lost Sheep *Matthew 9:35-10:42*

Step 1. Discover: *Preview and View God's Word* for yourself
then **Write** *Insights to Share* with others.

a. Preview *Matthew 9:35-10:42*

Following Shepherd: Seeking Lost Sheep. The mission of Jesus Christ is to gather the *lost sheep* of Israel and the world back home to God's flock. So, read Matthew 9:35-10:42 to discover how the disciples of Jesus share in His *shepherding ministry*, along with the persecution and sacrifice that accompany the task, to share in its rewards. First, consider that Jesus Mashiach has a ***Shepherd's Heart for Lost Sheep***. When the Lord looks upon the people of this world who wander through life without a *shepherd*, his heart is moved with *compassion* to both pray and to send us as shepherds to the lost sheep. (9:35-10:14). However, rescuing these lost sheep comes with a great cost, so *we disciples share with Shepherd in His persecution*, which proves our *relationship as the disciples of the Shepherd* (10:16-25). Finally, to walk with the Shepherd as his servants is a privilege given only to the faithful, we we must ***follow the Shepherd in sacrificial service*** (10:26-42).

*b. Prayerfully **Read Matthew 9:35-10:42** and **Write** your insights to share*

SEEING What is this Bible passage about? Key words, ideas	
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DOING What lesson can I apply to my life?	

Step 2. Discuss: Share Viewpoints. Read the Passage and Discuss Questions with Family, Friends, and Fellowship Group.

Q1. Why does Jesus Christ see people as *sheep without a shepherd*?

Q2: How should we view people in the world who are outside the Kingdom of God?

Step 3: Dialogue: Compare Viewpoints as Disciples. Answer, share, & compare insights with partner, mentor, or mentee.

Q1. How does Jesus Christ feel about people who are outside the Kingdom of God? (Matt. 9:35-10:14)

1. Shepherd's Heart for Lost Sheep. Jesus Christ came to earth not to be served but to serve (Mk. 10:45), proving that He is the *rightful Heir* of the family of man, the *anointed Shepherd* who is *rightful owner* of the sheep (Jn. 10:14). So, when Jesus Christ gazed upon the helpless people of this world, his heart felt compassion for them, for they were *sheep without a shepherd*, unprotected and wandering in this world. This heart of compassion drove Jesus to point out the *readiness* of people to be *brought into the Kingdom* (9:38). So, Jesus sends His servants first to the *lost sheep of Israel* (10:6), for the promises of God were given to their forefathers first.

Q2. What should disciple expect if they seek to walk with Jesus as their Shepherd? (Matt. 10:16-25)

2. Disciples Share in Shepherd's persecutions: For the disciples of Jesus, being associated with their great Lord and Messiah is enough reward. For, there is no greater name in heaven and earth than the name of Jesus Christ. And, there is no more precious mission than our Father Lord's sending of *laborers into earth's fields of lost sheep*. So, we disciples should be willing to not share in the name but the *sufferings and hardship* to which our Lord was subjected, for we are not greater than him. If *humiliated for his sake; forced to witness before all; delivered and betrayed; hated and persecuted*. Then, so be it, for our Lord Shepherd will soon *come on His Day* to confirm our *little testimony* with His *great appearing* to Israel to save! (23; Zech. 12:10).

Q3 Why is it personally costly to serve the Shepherd in His rescue mission? (Matt. 10:26-42)

3. Following Shepherd in sacrificial service. We do not lose heart in our *sacrificial service* of our Shepherd, the Lord Jesus Christ. For, *He values our service* enough to entrust His words to us in secret, that we may proclaim them in public! (27) And, He values our testimony so that when we *acknowledge Him* before men, He promises to claim us before His Father in heaven! (32). So, hold fast to the Lord alone, for He counts you as *one to represent Him to this world*. Do not dread your cross to lose *this earth's passing life*, but know that what you *sacrifice* only wins for you a glorious reward!

Step 4: Develop: Review & Apply God's Word as a Growing Disciple to **read** Devotional, Notes, and Footnotes.

Sacrificial Shepherding: Grace. Consider the Shepherd's devotion for His sheep. Though clearly the Shepherd's life is more precious than *the beasts* assigned to His care, the good Shepherd willingly *lays down his life* for His sheep! (Jn. 10:11) For, these are *His sheep*, precious ones entrusted to Him by His Father (Jn. 10:29) So, when the Lord Messiah sees the *world's crowds* of lost people, he sees them with *compassion and* a shepherd's *longing* for those who belong under His protective care! If our Lord and Messiah gives His life to rescue this world's *lost sheep*, will you join Him in His mission? Sacrifice marks the life of a shepherd, so will you as His disciple take up your cross to *endure* to bring these *lost sheep* home to the Father? The Day is coming when we servant-shepherds resume the Lord's original mission to *go to the lost sheep of Israel* (Mt. 10:6). At that time, the Church's witness will give way to the *sons of Israel* who will once again go through the towns of Israel (23) to proclaim Jesus and His coming Kingdom. As they go, the Lord Himself will *affirm their testimony* by His coming and great salvation of Israel! (Zech. 12:10).

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Notes⁴: Sheep without a Shepherd: In our natural human condition in *sinful flesh*, we are truly like *sheep* who have gone astray. Like *errant* and *self-absorbed* sheep, we all have “gone our own way” (Is. 53:6). So, the Lord God mercifully sends to us a good shepherd who *carries* our own weaknesses to bring us back to the Father’s safe home!

⁴ **Footnotes: Lost Sheep of Israel:** When Jesus Mashiach first sent His disciples to proclaim the *Kingdom of God* to the lost sheep of Israel, they rejected Him, thus hurling themselves into a two-thousand year *exile* in the nations. Now gathered back to the land of Israel, the *lost sheep of Israel will once again hear the Shepherd’s call*. For, in the last days, the Church’s witness will give way to a revived remnant of Israel, whose sons will once again proclaim Jesus as Lord throughout the towns of Israel. As they witness, the *birth pains* (Mt. 24) will lead to the *Day of the Lord* and His return to save Israel, at which point Israel will gaze upon the face of their Shepherd and repent! (Zech. 12:10).

Chapter 5: CALLED TO KINGDOM: Learning from Humble King **Matthew 11**

Step 1. Discover: *Preview and View God's Word for yourself then Write Insights to Share with others.*

a. Preview **Matthew 11**

Hearing the Kingdom's Call: Resting in Mashiach. When Jesus Messiah comes as light to this earth, He establishes the Kingdom of God by His *ruling presence*. So, read Matthew 11 to see how God prepares the way for Jesus Messiah to call people into the Kingdom of God and discover how we can respond to His call.

First, see how God ***prepares people for the Lord and His Kingdom***. John the Baptist goes before the Lord Jesus to *prepare people* for His way, yet his *earthly ministry* soon gives way to the spiritual power and *greatness* of the Kingdom for respond to the Lord's call and enter it (11:1-19). Then, discover how ***resisting the Kingdom leads to certain judgment*** (Matt. 11:20-24). Finally see that those who ***receive the Kingdom rest as little children***. For, God the Father reveals *His Kingdom* to little children, who are willing to *come to Jesus* as the Lord who carries their burdens (Matt. 11:25-30).

b. Prayerfully **Read Matthew 11** and **Write** your insights to share

SEEING What is this Bible passage about? Key words, ideas	
LEARNING What does it mean? What is it teaching me?	
DOING What lesson can I apply to my life?	

Step 2. Discuss: Share Viewpoints. Read the Passage and Discuss Questions with Family, Friends, and Fellowship Group.

Q1. How is the Kingdom of God *greater* than any earthly religion or practice?

Q2: Why must we come to God and Jesus as *little children* to enter the Kingdom of heaven?

Step 3: Dialogue: Compare Viewpoints as Disciples. Answer, share, & compare insights with partner, mentor, or mentee.

Q1. Why does John the Baptist go before Jesus Messiah? (Matt. 11:1-19)

1. Preparing for Lord and His Kingdom. Jesus teaches and preaches to proclaim His Kingdom. But, John the Baptist prepared people to hear Jesus by preaching a “baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins” (Mark 1:4) to make people aware of their need for forgiveness. And, as people prepared for new life by *forsaking their flesh* with its sinful deeds, they also were pointed to Jesus as the “greater” one to give new life by the Holy Spirit (1:8). That is, the people of the Kingdom realized that *new life* was not simply refraining from this world’s corrupting flesh. But, *new life* in Jesus required them to be *reborn into a spiritual life* and to abide in not simply earthly religion but in the heavenly *kingdom* (11), which was truly greater.

Q2. What happens when people resist the Kingdom? (Matt. 11:20-24)

2. Resisting the Kingdom: Certain Judgment. Some people and their communities reject the message of the Kingdom, refusing to repent (20) even after seeing the “mighty works” of the Kingdom (21). Sadly, these communities were even more resistant than the people of the past, who would have repented if mighty miracles were done in their midst (21). Because they are unrepentant, these people face an even severer judgment (24).

Q3. How does one enter the Kingdom of Heaven? (Matt. 11:25-30)

3. Receiving Kingdom rest as little children: Coming to Jesus. The Kingdom comes in the person of Jesus Messiah, so those who are full of Self-Worth, whether by their own wisdom, understanding, or righteousness will have no need or desire for Jesus and the promise of His redemption. Thus, the Father reveals the glory of His Kingdom only to those who humbly receive all of the riches of the *heavenly kingdom*. For, those who are *little* need a greater one to comfort them. So, Jesus invites everyone to rest in him, allowing His power to restore them in His Kingdom.

Step 4: Develop: Review & Apply God's Word as a Growing Disciple to **read** Devotional, Notes, and Footnotes.

Receiving the Kingdom: As Little Children. Life in the flesh is solitary, filled with many whose lives are filled with their own self-interest and understanding. So, Jesus Messiah brings an entirely new Kingdom unified under one Father and ruled by one Lord. So, it is the Father who *reveals* the Kingdom to *little children*, whose hearts are open to this Kingdom and the Lordship of its Father (25). Likewise, the children of the Kingdom realize their own weakness in the Kingdom, having no spiritual power of their own making or design. Rather, all they have they've *received* (25) from the Father and *learned* from their *humble and lowly* Lord (29). Oddly, these humbled ones of the Kingdom, like their *lowly and humbled Lord*, are *great* in the true reality of the Lord's Kingdom.

Respond to Devotional: (mark passage above)	
✓ Agree	? Question ! Differ
SUPPORT: Agree What insight or Bible verse to add ?	
QUESTION: Modify What to question or change?	
DIFFER: Disagree What insight or Bible verse to differ ?	

Personal Study Notes: Understanding the Passage:

Write and share notes with your partner/ mentor/ mentee.

What is the *big idea* of this passage?

- key verse:

What is a key idea?

- key verse:

What is a key idea?

Teaching Preparation Notes: Sharing the Passage:

Share lesson with partner, family, or group.

What is the *big lesson* to learn in this passage?

- verse:

Key lesson to learn?

(write a question for people to discover this lesson)

- verse:

Key lesson to learn?

(write a question for people to discover this lesson)

Notes⁵: Violent take Kingdom by force: The Kingdom of God was *established through violent suffering*, taking its place in a world *deeply opposed* to its very existence. For, this *dark world* of ungodly rebellion and *fleshly self-interest* is naturally threatened by the realm ruled and resting under the Lord God's peaceful rule. But, not only has it *suffered violence* (Mt. 11:12), but it is the *violent* who *take hold* of the Kingdom by force. For, the Kingdom is not advanced by the *lukewarm and non-committals musings of fleshly intellects*. Rather, the Kingdom's Lord comes with passion and resolve, and He gathers to himself men of action accustomed to *overcoming obstacles* with resolute faith in the Lord.

⁵ **Footnotes: Resting in the Lord:** As the *shepherd* concerned about the welfare of His sheep, the Lord Jesus draws His *followers near to Himself* to unburden them, not oppress them. For, He calls them from His *gentle and lowly heart*, for their own good. Indeed, the Kingdom is not filled with *anonymous slaves to be abusively driven* but by the Father's *children*, called as it future *heirs* to rest in their Mashiach to *grow to reflect His* servant leadership!

Chapter 6: SPIRIT-ANOINTED SERVICE: Advancing Kingdom

Matthew 12

Step 1. Discover: *Preview and View God's Word for yourself then Write Insights to Share with others.*

a. Preview **Matthew 12**

Spirit-anointed Service: Faith in Messiah. Jesus Messiah advances the Kingdom of God not by *fleshly force* or coercion but by the testimony empowered by the Spirit of God. So, read Matthew 12 to discover how Jesus as Messiah has the right to work powerfully by the Spirit to testify to both the unbelieving and the believing. First, Jesus as the Lord's *anointed* has the right to act freely as the *Son of Man*, but instead He chooses to serve humbly because His ***Spirit-anointed ministry invites faith***: (12:1-21). So, as Jesus ministers as God's *Spirit-anointed Messiah*, the people respond either with the recognition of faith or a ***Spirit-denying unbelief preventing faith***: some see Him as the *Son of David* while the critics trace his power back to *the devil* (12:22-32). Finally, see that Jesus as the ***Son of Man testifies to unbelieving but welcomes believers as family*** (12:38-50).

b. Prayerfully **Read Matthew 12** and **Write** your insights to share

SEEING What is this Bible passage about? Key words, ideas	
LEARNING What does it mean? What is it teaching me?	
DOING What lesson can I apply to my life?	

Step 2. Discuss: Share Viewpoints. Read the Passage and Discuss Questions with Family, Friends, and Fellowship Group.

Q1. How does the Spirit support the ministry of Jesus as God's Messiah?

Q2: What is the danger of *denying the Holy Spirit*, and why does Jesus gravely warn against such words?

Step 3: Dialogue: Compare Viewpoints as Disciples. Answer, share, & compare insights with partner, mentor, or mentee.

Q1. How does Jesus minister to people as God's chosen Messiah? (Matt. 12:1-21)

1. Spirit-anointed Ministry invites Faith: Humble son of Man. As the *Son of Man* and the Son of David, Jesus as Lord has the right to act freely (12:8). However, God anoints Him by the Spirit to *proclaim justice* with truthful power, yet to do so humbly and without quarreling. For, Jesus does not *overpower* His opposition by sheer force. Rather, His display of the Spirit's work and a clear proclamation of justice and truth is meant to *elicit faith in His hearers*.

Q2. Why do people respond differently to Jesus Messiah and His Spirit-empowered ministry? (Matt. 12:22-30)

2. Spirit-denying unbelief prevents faith: Son of David or Devil?

The Messiah's ministry is surprising because His *full rights* and irresistible power of the Holy Spirit do not lead to him overpowering His opponents. Rather, He uses His power to free people from Satan's bondage (12:29). So, while the full force of the Kingdom's power is used to *oppose the* spiritual work of darkness, its good effects on earth allow people to either *deny the Spirit's work* in unbelief (24) or to *draw near* to Jesus in faith (23). Often, those who deny the Spirit's power are threatened by *His freeing ministry*, thus proving their complicity with Satan to *keep people in unbelief*.

Q3. How does Jesus Messiah respond to the unbelieving and believers? (Matt. 12:38-50)

3. Son of Man testifies to unbelievers: Welcomes believers as Family. Again, Jesus Messiah does not wield His *spiritual power* to directly war against fleshly opposition and unbelief. Rather, he patiently waits for the *tree* to prove its goodness or badness by its *fruit* (33), realizing full well that the day of judgment will hold all people accountable for every “careless” word (37). So, to unbelievers, Jesus testifies of His *death and resurrection* as proof enough of the Spirit’s witness. For believers who “do the will” of the Father, He welcomes into His family (50).

Step 4: Develop: Review & Apply God's Word as a Growing Disciple to **read** Devotional, Notes, and Footnotes.

Ministry of the Spirit: Winning Faith. In all of His ministry, Jesus Messiah shows a gracious and respectful witness, even to those who oppose Him. Though adorned with the *rights and privilege* of His Lordship as the Son of Man and the Son of David, Jesus still seeks to bring His people gently into God's *rest and restoration* (8). Jesus is gentle in His witness, for He that the *people* He seeks for the Kingdom are like *bruised reeds*, bent and oppressed by this world's enslaving power of Satan (29). And, many are like *smoldering wicks* whose flame of faith can either *ignite* with recognition, realizing that this may be "*the Son of David*" (23). So, Jesus continues His witness even to *his* most entrenched critics, testifying of the *proof* of His impending *death and resurrection* (12:40). However, He also solemnly warns His critics of their *casual blasphemy* against the Spirit, which is unforgivable (31). For, those who intentionally *blind* themselves to the Spirit's work—whether His work to *reveal Christ in the Word of God* or signs to verify the witness of Christ—will set them on an unbelieving path that leads to certain judgment.

Respond to Devotional: (mark passage above)	
✓ Agree	? Question ! Differ
SUPPORT: Agree What insight or Bible verse to add ?	
QUESTION: Modify What to question or change?	
DIFFER: Disagree What insight or Bible verse to differ ?	

Personal Study Notes: Understanding the Passage:

Write and share notes with your partner/ mentor/ mentee.

What is the *big idea* of this passage?

- key verse:

What is a key idea?

- key verse:

What is a key idea?

Teaching Preparation Notes: Sharing the Passage:

Share lesson with partner, family, or group.

What is the *big lesson* to learn in this passage?

- verse:

Key lesson to learn?

(write a question for people to discover this lesson)

- verse:

Key lesson to learn?

(write a question for people to discover this lesson)

Notes⁶: Blasphemy of the Holy Spirit: The human heart is deceitful and *desperately sick* (Jer. 17:9), so its deceit can darken the “eye” (Mt. 7:) and influence how a person interprets the *signs and works* of the Spirit. Because the hearts and eyes of the Pharisees were darkened, they chose to see the “good” works Jesus did on the Sabbath (Matt. 12:12) and the *demon-oppressed freed* (12:22) as indications of *Satanic power* (24). Such blasphemy *deprives the blasphemer* of any pathway to faith, however, for the Spirit testifies of Jesus Mashiach by the Word of God and by the works of the Kingdom. So, to deny both makes saving faith and forgiveness impossible.

⁶ **Footnotes: The Son of Man/ the Son of David:** Lord of the Sabbath. The Mashiach is promised to be the Firstborn Heir of heaven and earth. As the Son of Man, Mashiach is to be *the son* from among the “generations” of sons of Man to inherit the “heavens and the earth” (Gen. 2:4). As the Son of David, He is *first* among David’s *sons* and the one to inherit an eternal kingdom and throne (2 Sam. 7:16). So, as the Heir, Messiah possesses the original right to the family of man and the redemptive house of David, bringing salvation to all people, both Jew and Gentile.

Chapter 7: GROWING KINGDOM: Serving the King

Matthew 13

Step 1. Discover: *Preview and View God's Word for yourself then Write Insights to Share with others.*

*a. Preview **Matthew 13***

Growing Kingdom: Future Harvest. Jesus Messiah reveals the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven to His disciples through parables. So, read Matthew 13 to discover the secrets of how the Kingdom of God so that you might serve the Lord in advancing His Kingdom with spiritual insight into how the Kingdom grows, culminates in a harvest, and is received by people even though it is hidden but soon to come.

First, understand the **heart conditions for Kingdom Growth** which determine how the Word of God takes root and either languishes or produces lasting spiritual fruit for the Kingdom (13:1-23). Then, consider how a final **harvest tests Kingdom readiness** (13:24-43), so both the true and the false will grow up in the kingdom until the day of judgment reveals the *suitability of one's fruit for the Kingdom* (13:24-43). Finally, consider the different responses of people to the Gospel of the Kingdom, as the **Hidden Kingdom is Treasured or Turned From** (13:44-58). For, those who treasure the Kingdom by faith receive its rewards, while those who turn from it in unbelief are themselves cast out.

*b. Prayerfully **Read Matthew 13** and **Write** your insights to share*

SEEING What is this Bible passage about? Key words, ideas	
LEARNING What does it mean? What is it teaching me?	
DOING What lesson can I apply to my life?	

Step 2. Discuss: Share Viewpoints. Read the Passage and Discuss Questions with Family, Friends, and Fellowship Group.

Q1. What are the different heart conditions that either prepare you or harden you to the Word of God?

Q2: How do the *wheat* and the *weeds* differ, and how can you tell them apart?

Step 3: Dialogue: Compare Viewpoints as Disciples. Answer, share, & compare insights with partner, mentor, or mentee.

Q1. What does the parable of the sower reveal about Kingdom growth? (Matt. 13:1-23)

1. Heart conditions for Kingdom Growth: The Kingdom of God is *hidden* and grows secretly in the spiritual reality, so the Lord's servants must never imagine they can *control* the *Kingdom* by fleshly means. Rather, we take responsibility for what we can do, which is to *sow the Word of God* freely (13:3, 19). However, the hidden, *spiritual condition of the heart* of its hearers, will shape how the Word of God grows or does not. The heart conditions for the Kingdom are: *good hearts* which are open to *hearing* and *understanding* (that is, responsible to act on) the Word of God. *Hard hearts* choose not to change nor understand the Word (19). *Selfish Hearts* still have hard parts untouched by the Word, so are temporary (21). *Worldly Hearts* are more influenced by the world's affairs than the Word so are choked (22). But, *Good Hearts* are surrendered to the Lord and His Word to bear fruit (23).

Q2. Why does God allow the wheat and the weeds to grow up together? (Matt. 13:24-43)

2. Harvest tests Kingdom Readiness: Weed or Wheat. The Kingdom of God involves both *sowing* but also a final *harvest*. That is, on earth, those who enter the Kingdom of God are expected to bear its *fruit*, as *the Word of God* changes them and as the new life of the Lord grows in them. So, those who are truly in the Kingdom grow from its “good seed” (37). However, there are those who also *grow*, but as the “weeds” (38) whose home is the world and whose source is the devil. Only the final Harvest will show the true nature of the growth, whether “wheat” of the Kingdom or the “weeds” of the world (41). The mark of someone being of the world is a harvest of “sin” and “lawbreaking” (42).

Q3. How do people respond differently to the Kingdom? (Matt. 13:44-58)

3. Hidden Kingdom Treasured or Turned From. On earth, the Kingdom's treasured value is hidden, like a *treasure buried in field* (44). However, the sons of the Kingdom will recognize its glorious treasure and prioritize their life on earth to sacrifice for the Kingdom and to *reveal its riches* to those who would hear. However, the world blinds people by their Godless unbelief to the Kingdom's value, so even Jesus, the King of His Kingdom, was not honored by those familiar with him, for they were blinded by *fleshly appearance* to His *heavenly glory*.

Step 4: Develop: Review & Apply God's Word as a Growing Disciple to **read** Devotional, Notes, and Footnotes.

Growing Kingdom: Sowing and Harvest. As a Servant of Jesus Messiah, you are called to work to advance His Kingdom on earth until the day of Harvest, when the Lord's rule will cover the earth. So, these parables of the Kingdom will help your labor. First, know the *hidden reality* of the Kingdom requires you to walk and advance it by faith, keeping from relying on your own *fleshly ability* to seek to control its growth. As a *farmer, you sow and wait*. There are certain things beyond your control, such as the state of the *heart* of your hearers. So, so freely, then gather the ones showing Kingdom growth!

Labor, knowing that the *inevitable* Day of Harvest will reveal the true state of the crop. Beware, because in this life, wheat and weeds may look alike in their growth. But you keep faithful in planting the Seed of the Word and let the Lord test fruit in the end. Finally, check your own heart to *ensure that* the Lord and His Kingdom is your highest treasure! Honor Him always as your Lord and so abide in His Kingdom power to spread its growth! For, one day its glorious treasures will be yours to enjoy!

Respond to Devotional: (mark passage above)	
✓ Agree	? Question ! Differ
SUPPORT: Agree What insight or Bible verse to add ?	
QUESTION: Modify What to question or change?	
DIFFER: Disagree What insight or Bible verse to differ ?	

Personal Study Notes: Understanding the Passage:

Write and share notes with your partner/ mentor/ mentee.

What is the *big idea* of this passage?

- key verse:

What is a key idea?

- key verse:

What is a key idea?

Teaching Preparation Notes: Sharing the Passage:

Share lesson with partner, family, or group.

What is the *big lesson* to learn in this passage?

- verse:

Key lesson to learn?

(write a question for people to discover this lesson)

- verse:

Key lesson to learn?

(write a question for people to discover this lesson)

Notes⁷: Mustard Seed and Leaven: Small/ Hidden to Large: The Kingdom comes in small and hidden ways, for it operates in the *realm of the Spirit*. So, do not overlook the small, the secret ways that you are to serve in the Kingdom which the Lord will show you. Do not shirk sharing with the stranger, or the lonely, or the poor. Do not despise what is little. For, the flesh despises the *little* to seek the great and the glorious. But, the Kingdom's way moves from small to great!

⁷ **Footnotes: Well-trained Scribes:** The Kingdom's treasure is conveyed by the Word of God. So, train yourself as a *handler of the Word* in both the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament. You will learn to *bring forth* from your storehouse "old" treasures, as the *promises in the Hebrew Scriptures of Mashiach and His coming Kingdom* are brought to light to illuminate the current reality. Then, *bring forth* "new" treasures, as the direct Words of Jesus become a reality as the Kingdom unfolds in your current experience and reality!

Chapter 8: SERVING IN THE WORLD: Faith in the Son of God **Matthew 14**

Step 1. Discover: *Preview and View God's Word for yourself then Write Insights to Share with others.*

a. Preview Matthew 14

Serving in the World: Faith not Flesh. Jesus Messiah brings His Kingdom *subtly*, as the Word of God is sown and grows in the hearts of it people, but the world seeks to limit and oppose the Kingdom's growth. So, read Matthew 14 to see how Jesus and His servants accomplish the work of the Kingdom even as fleshly people and the world seek to limit its growth!

First, see how Jesus and His followers faced ***worldly opposition from people of lawless flesh***. Herod uses his worldly power to satisfy the fleshly whims of people, so persecutes John the Baptist (14:1-12). Then, see how the disciples face shortages which seemingly prevent them from doing good, but find that their ***limited resources are enough for Kingdom Purpose***. For, the Lord shows his disciples how to offer what they have to God for his blessing (14:13-21).

Finally, Peter discovers that ***obeying Lord's Command by faith gives Kingdom Power***. For, Peter is able to walk on water to *obey* the command of the Lord (14:22-32).

b. Prayerfully Matthew 14 and Write your insights to share

SEEING What is this Bible passage about? Key words, ideas	
LEARNING What does it mean? What is it teaching me?	
DOING What lesson can I apply to my life?	

Step 2. Discuss: Share Viewpoints. Read the Passage and Discuss Questions with Family, Friends, and Fellowship Group.

Q1. How does the world and its fleshly people seek to *oppose or limit* the Kingdom work of Jesus Christ?

Q2: Why do we receive a spiritual power enabling us to obey the commands of Jesus Messiah?

Step 3: Dialogue: Compare Viewpoints as Disciples. Answer,
share, & compare insights with partner, mentor, or mentee.

Q1. How does the world oppose the work of the Kingdom?
(Matt. 14:1-12)

1. Worldly Opposition: Lawless Flesh. Herod and Herodias exemplify how fleshly people oppose the Kingdom of God and overlook Jesus as the world's rightful Messiah. When John the Baptist rebuked Herod for his *lawless* behavior, Herod did not repent but instead retaliated and put John in prison. Herodias herself begrudged John for this rebuke, and finally asked for his head on a platter. Thus, the rulers of this world neither *fear God* nor *heed His Laws*, so they persecute those who stand for righteousness.

Q2. How can the Servants of Jesus Christ advance the Kingdom when they have limited resources in the world? (Matt. 14:13-21)

2. Limited resources enough for Kingdom Purpose: Sacrificial Offerings Blessed. Servants of Jesus can also be influenced by the *flesh*, which judges according to the *world's equations and realities*. So, the disciples see no *possible* solution to the shortage of food facing the great crowd of more than *five thousand people*. But Jesus sees the higher kingdom purpose, so commands the disciples to act. Notice how the Kingdom addresses *worldly limitations*. First, the disciples are encouraged to *sacrifice to Jesus what little they have* (18). Then, Jesus asked God to *bless* this small amount. Finally, Jesus and the disciples *gave away* what they had, which was enough to feed the crowd. Only by sacrifice and giving is the Kingdom advanced!

Q3. How do the Servants of Jesus Christ experience His Kingdom power? (Matt. 14:12-32)

3. Obeying Lord's Command by Faith for Kingdom Power: The exceeding Kingdom power of the Lord Jesus is made available to His servants when they simply obey His commands! When Peter saw Jesus standing on the seas, he knew that it was impossible for him to also walk on the water. So, he knew that his only hope was to *obey the Lord's commands*, so he says: *"Lord... command me to come to you"* (28). Because Jesus is the Lord of all authority, He gives power to all those who wish to obey His commands! So, Peter walked on the water by faith in the Lord and His Word of command!

Step 4: Develop: Review & Apply God's Word as a Growing Disciple to *read* Devotional, Notes, and Footnotes.

Serving in the World: Kingdom Power and Purpose. As servants of Jesus Christ, you are called to advance His Kingdom work in a world which opposes you, threatening your life and discouraging your faith. Currently, the world's *lawless* powers respond to God's law as a personal *insult*. So, Herod threw John the Baptist in prison and Herodias asked for his head. Yet, their threats could not stop the purposes of Jesus (12). So, the Word *instructs* the servants of Jesus in two ways to minister in this dark world.

First, *sacrifice* all that you have to the Lord, that He might in turn offer your sacrifice to the Father, who blesses and multiplies your work to meet the needs of your people (20). So, the disciples *gave Jesus* all they had—five loaves and two fish (17). Jesus *takes* and gives this offering to God, that He might bless it so that the Father might use it to feed the hungry crowd. (19)

Second, *obey the Lord's command* to experience His authority and power, which will strengthen you to finish His work for you. In this way, people *obeyed the Lord's command* and walked on water.

Respond to Devotional: (mark passage above)	
✓ Agree	? Question ! Differ
SUPPORT: Agree What insight or Bible verse to add ?	
QUESTION: Modify What to question or change?	
DIFFER: Disagree What insight or Bible verse to differ ?	

Personal Study Notes: Understanding the Passage:

Write and share notes with your partner/ mentor/ mentee.

What is the *big idea* of this passage?

- key verse:

What is a key idea?

- key verse:

What is a key idea?

Teaching Preparation Notes: Sharing the Passage:

Share lesson with partner, family, or group.

What is the *big lesson* to learn in this passage?

- verse:

Key lesson to learn?

(write a question for people to discover this lesson)

- verse:

Key lesson to learn?

(write a question for people to discover this lesson)

Notes⁸: Lord... command me: The *simple choice* to obey the Lord's commands is the key that unlocks His Kingdom power and rule to strengthen those who obey him! For the Lord's Word of Command transcends this world's material limitations. To respond to the Lord's command by faith operates in the realm of the Kingdom, allowing the *over-ruling power of heaven* to intervene in earth's sphere of matter. So, when the Lord *commands* Peter to come to him, Peter's act of *faith* and focus on the Lordship of Jesus supersedes such worldly realities of *water buoyancy and gravity*. But, the world can stifle faith, so Peter's fear turned him away from Jesus.

⁸ **Footnotes: you give them something to eat...:** The world naturally *stifles faith* by remind the disciples of Jesus that they are constrained by their *powerlessness and poverty* in this world. However, Jesus knows that the Lord God's work is not limited by the world, so He simply asks His servants to *offer him what they have*, that God might multiply their works to bear fruit!

Chapter 9: HARDENED HEARTS: Defiled by Unbelief

Matthew 15-16:12

Step 1. Discover: *Preview and View God's Word* for yourself then **Write** *Insights to Share* with others.

a. Preview Matthew 15-16:12

Hardened Hearts: Defiled by Unbelief. Jesus Messiah proclaims His Kingdom Gospel through His servants, but this message will provoke the hearts of the world's people. So, read Matthew 15-16:12 to hear the instructions of the Lord to confront hard hearts that resist His Words of truth.

First, understand that the fleshly people, especially those who seek to hide behind their own *self-righteousness*, will develop ***detached and defiled hearts*** which give an appearance of faith but actually rely on empty words and lifeless *commands* of men (Mt. 15:1-20). In contrast, the heart of faith turns in *self-less surrender* to the Lord, for ***desperate hearts turn to the Lord*** (15:21-31). But those caught up in *their own self-righteousness* will not come to the Lord for mercy, for ***fleshly teaching deadens hearts and eyes to the Shepherd*** (15:32-16:12).

b. Prayerfully Read Matthew 15-16:12 and Write your insights to share

SEEING What is this Bible passage about? Key words, ideas	
LEARNING What does it mean? What is it teaching me?	
DOING What lesson can I apply to my life?	

Step 2. Discuss: Share Viewpoints. Read the Passage and Discuss Questions with Family, Friends, and Fellowship Group.

Q1. What are signs that your heart is growing cold to the Lord?

Q2: How can you avoid the *self-righteous unbelief* that will harden your heart to Jesus and His Gospel?

Step 3: Dialogue: Compare Viewpoints as Disciples. Answer, share, & compare insights with partner, mentor, or mentee.

Q1. How does *self-righteous* and man-made religion harden the hearts of *fleshly people*? (Matt. 15:1-20)

1. Detached and defiled heart: Worthless words. The Pharisees accused the disciples of Jesus of *breaking the commands of the Elders* (15:3), for the Jewish people held to a *self-righteousness* before God based on their traditions and *religious teachings*. However, did such a *self-righteousness* produce the fruit which God required? In actuality, Jesus showed that *self-righteousness* based on human teachings actually *abrogates* the commands of God (6) and leads *hearts away from God* (8). The reason why *fleshly religion* rather than *faith in Mashiah* leads to Godlessness is a) the *commandments of men* have no spiritual power (9); b) to rely on *fleshly understanding* necessarily displaces the *Word of God* as authoritative due to the desire to replace, to be “like” God (Gen. 3:5); c) *fleshly religion* have no impact on *defiled hearts* (18) but simply *justify errant hearts*.

Q2. What hearts will receive the Lord by faith? (Matt. 15:21-31)

2. Desperate hearts turn to the Lord: Self-less surrender.

Unlike the Pharisees and scribes, who were protective of their own *self-righteousness*, this Canaanite woman cares little for her *self-reputation*. So, when Jesus compares the Jews to *hungry children*, she does not hesitate to recognize she has no rights or status before him (27). Such *surrender* before the Lord Jesus recognizes as “great faith”—the forsaking of any *self-righteousness* to depend entirely on the mercy of the Lord. Thus, we see the deceptive allure of *human religion* to dilute faith in Mashiach—the *self-righteous* have no need for mercy, being justified by their own words and traditions.

Q3. What will *fleshly teaching* affect the heart and eyes that view the Shepherd? (Matt. 15:32-16:12)

3. Fleshly Teaching deadens hearts and eyes to Shepherd:

Leaven of Unbelief. When the Pharisees and Sadducees ask Jesus for a “sign from heaven” (16:1), Jesus correctly points out that their problem is not the *sign* but their unwillingness to *see and interpret* the signs correctly. Behind this *interpretive and willful blindness* is their “teaching,” which Jesus calls the “leaven” (6). That is, the teaching of the *Pharisees* is like *leaven*, because has the *appearance of growth* but is insubstantial, full of emptiness. In this way, the *voluminous* words which the Pharisees produce may appear to be productive, but they are lifeless. Worse, their *fleshly unbelief* hardens the heart and blinds their eyes to Mashiach and His salvation!

Step 4: Develop: Review & Apply God's Word as a Growing Disciple to **read** Devotional, Notes, and Footnotes.

Hearts Hardened to the Kingdom: Religious Unbelief. As a servant of Jesus Mashiach, your biggest *foe* on earth is the most *insidious*—fleshly human religion and the Self-righteousness it produces.

If *great faith* surrenders to Jesus as its merciful *Lord and Mashiach*, fleshly human religion completely *undermines* such surrender by propping up *human self-sufficiency and righteousness*, which needs neither God nor His salvation.

So, *diagnose the signs of fleshly religion* and its *self-righteous fruit*. Look no further than the heart of the worshipper. Does their heart *condition to God draw back to* remain at a distance, even while their lips honor him? Are their hearts *defiled* by passions of the flesh, growing in a Godless vacuum? And, do they find ways, through their *religious*, self-justifying language, *to break the commands of God*?

If so, discern the *roots of this unbelief*. Jesus warns against the *leaven of the Pharisees*, that is, their teaching. Because the Pharisees rely on their own *words and understanding*, their words have no *spiritual power* (Matt. 7:29). Rather than drawing men closer to God, their teachings create a distance, with a focus and faith placed in *human religion* and teachings.

Respond to Devotional: (mark passage above) ✓ Agree ? Question ! Differ	
SUPPORT: Agree What insight or Bible verse to add ?	
QUESTION: Modify What to question or change?	
DIFFER: Disagree What insight or Bible verse to differ ?	

Personal Study Notes: Understanding the Passage:

Write and share notes with your partner/ mentor/ mentee.

What is the *big idea* of this passage?

- key verse:

What is a key idea?

- key verse:

What is a key idea?

Teaching Preparation Notes: Sharing the Passage:

Share lesson with partner, family, or group.

What is the *big lesson* to learn in this passage?

- verse:

Key lesson to learn?

(write a question for people to discover this lesson)

- verse:

Key lesson to learn?

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Notes⁹: Commandments of Men: Deceptive *fleshly teaching of the Bible* bears the fruit of a) alienation from God (Matt. 15:8) and *neutralizing the commanding authority of the Word* (6). Fleshly teaching shifts the *authority* from God to human teachers. How do the *commandments of men* get such power? As we see in Satan's first *deception*, 1) ***ambiguation***: doubt is cast on the plain meaning of the Word and its command (Gen. 3:1); 2) ***addition***: the message of the Word is diluted by *human insertions* that may run parallel with the Word (3); 3) ***amending***: presuming to know the mind of God, the Word is replaced with a more convenient reading (4-5). The result of this shifting authority is *unbelief*: humans take the place of God as having the *final say* on meaning, becoming "like God" (5), having the God-like power to define reality, creating a "good" and "evil" to create a *self-righteousness* (e.g. a Jewish sense of self-righteousness by being *Torah-observant*).

⁹ **Footnotes: Honoring with Lips:** People claiming a Self-righteousness will adopt the language of Scripture to justify their own righteousness. Thus, their Words are simply a means to sound holy. Of course, such discourse involves *talking about God* in an *honorable way*. However, the honor which God regards is *sacrificial*, surrendering self-righteous comfort to obey at great costs. For, only such sacrifice reveals a heart of worship, one that values God over any other possession.

Chapter 10: FOLLOWING CHRIST CRUCIFIED:

Sharing in Suffering

Matthew 16

Step 1. Discover: *Preview and View God's Word* for yourself
then **Write** *Insights to Share* with others.

a. Preview Matthew 16

Following Christ Crucified: Denying Self. Only those who know the fullness of Jesus Christ and the sacrifice of His cross can truly follow Him. So, read Matthew 16:13-38 to see how Jesus reveals Himself and His purpose to those willing to share with Him in His cross of sacrifice.

First, *fleshly people* who are only willing to trust in Self and set their own experiences and understanding as the standard for their lives are blinded to Jesus, for disciples are those willing to ***follow Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God*** (Matt. 16:13-20). Yet, even His disciples must reject *fleshly values and purposes* to follow ***the purpose of God, not man***. (Matt. 16:21-23). Finally, disciples of Jesus Christ must choose to share their Lord's view of *life itself* as not something to *protectively hold*. Instead, they must choose to *deny* not *save* self by taking up their own cross. For, ***sharing in the Lord's Cross of Self-Sacrifice forsakes Self-Protection*** (Matt. 16:24-28)

*b. Prayerfully **Read Matthew 16** and **Write** your insights to share*

SEEING What is this Bible passage about? Key words, ideas	
LEARNING What does it mean? What is it teaching me?	
DOING What lesson can I apply to my life?	

Step 2. Discuss: Share Viewpoints. Read the Passage and Discuss Questions with Family, Friends, and Fellowship Group.

Q1. How will clinging to one's own *fleshly understanding* blind you to the real identity of Jesus?

Q2: How must the disciple of Jesus *deny* himself and take up *his cross* like Jesus did?

Step 3: Dialogue: Compare Viewpoints as Disciples. Answer, share, & compare insights with partner, mentor, or mentee.

Q1. How must disciples see Jesus in order to follow him? (Matt. 16:13-20)

1. Follow Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God: Revealed by God.
To follow Jesus Christ as the Son of God, you must first surrender your own *understanding and experience* to know Him, instead relying on the Father to reveal His *blessed Son to you (16:17).* So, Peter was able to see Jesus as the Christ/ Messiah in the fullness of His glory as the “Son of God” yet also humbled as the “Son of Man” (13, 16)—*gloriously humbled* to please the Father.

Q2. Why is it impossible to follow the purposes of man and also the purpose of God? (Matt. 16:21-23)

2. Follow the purpose of God, not man: Saving Self. To follow Jesus Christ as the One sent from God, you must first surrender your own *fleshly and worldly purposes* to Him, setting your mind entirely on the *things of God* (16:23). It is impossible to serve the *purposes of man*, because the sole purpose of the *flesh* is to preserve and exalt human life. *However*, the Son of Man came to serve the Father by *giving His life as a ransom* (10:45). So, you cannot serve the Lord to save others while also seeking to save your own life.

Q3. How can disciples share in the life of Jesus Christ as their Lord? (Matt. 16:24-38)

3. Sharing in Lord's Cross of Self-Sacrifice: Forsaking Self-Protection. To follow Jesus Christ and His ministry of the Cross, you must first surrender your own *life* and *self* to Him, denying yourself so that you can take up His cross daily—every day seeking not self but sacrificing to serve. The *cross is not an instrument of total loss but of exchange*. At the cross, we give up what is *fleshly and selfish* to gain and give a *lasting life* for ourselves and others! For, whoever “loses his life for my sake will find it!” (25). Consider the inverse. You can gain the whole world, yet still lose your “soul”—your very self. But, to give up your Self in surrender, you gain life and the Kingdom of *heaven and earth* as well (Matt. 5:3-5).

Step 4: Develop: Review & Apply God's Word as a Growing Disciple to **read** Devotional, Notes, and Footnotes.

Following Jesus Christ by Sharing His Cross: Deny Self. Over the generations of the Church, many have aspired to follow Jesus Christ as His disciples, but few have succeeded. For, as we see with Peter's own experience, the *fleshly urge* imprinted in us to *Save our Self* seeks to derail our discipleship at every turn. For, unless we *crucify* our *Self* on the cross (Gal. 2:20), we will be blind to the *person of Christ*, mistake the *purpose of Christ*, and fail to share in the *life of Christ* as we choose self-understanding, self-protection, and self-safety to abandon Christ's cross of salvation.

So, the Church has often *diminished* the Lordship of Christ, the Son of God, because it *elevated* human understanding over *revelation* (17) and its own *theology* over a pure knowledge of the *heavenly man*.

And, *seeking to protect* its institutions and way of life, the Church has often mistaken *human interests* for the *things of God*. So, resolve to set your mind on God's purposes, as *humble, inconvenient, and perplexing* though they might appear!

Finally, the *people of Christ's Church* have been weakened by their desperate clinging to their *way of life*, fearing loss as an irrecoverable mistake, counting their lives with earth's *fleshly calculus*. But the cross proves that *earthly loss of Self* means a *heavenly gain of Life*. So, do not fear sacrificing your life for your Lord Jesus Christ, whose salvation come through sacrifice!

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- verse:

Key lesson to learn?

(write a question for people to discover this lesson)

Notes¹⁰: Things of Man: To focus on the *things of man* is to seek what the *flesh life desires*. The *flesh* is our *earthly self* that seeks to live without God (Rom. 8), exalting the human Self above all else in the place of God. Naturally, the *flesh* seeks the human purposes of Man, which may seem *religious* but are entirely *Godless*—God is dethroned that man may be exalted. Ultimately, the *things of man* will become more and more distanced from God, for the *hearts of man* will be on *man* and not God.

¹⁰ **Footnotes: Deny Self/ Take up Cross:** To *take up your cross* with Jesus is to commit yourself to the path of *surrendered sacrifice*. That is, you resolve to give up what is *fleshly* and *Self-led* in this world in order to fulfill the purposes of the Father and to accomplish the Lord's life-giving mission.

Prayer Requests:

Prayer Request/ Date	Answered Prayer/ Thanks

Journaling:

What is God teaching you?	How are you growing?

Sermon Notes:

Sermon Notes/ Date	Applying it to my life

Notes: