



# Riverwood-Punchbowl Anglican Church

St Andrew's  
RIVERWOOD

St DENYON'S  
Punchbowl

St Matthew's  
Beverly Hills North

Postal Address: 31 Hilltop St Riverwood 2210  
Telephone: 02 9153 7624

# Learning to Live in the Kingdom

Studies from Matthew 13-25

## Introduction

When people are learning to drive, they have to display "L" plates on their car, and must have a licensed driver riding with them. Most folks are very eager to get beyond the "L" plate phase. One reason for this is that they want to be able to drive on their own, but another reason is that they feel a dislike for being marked out as "Learners".

In some ways living the Christian life is a bit like driving, but in other ways, it's different. There are some basics ... elementary truths of the Christian message, which all Christians ought to grasp, as they grow in faith. For Anglicans, these elementary truths form the preparation a person does for confirmation. However, a Christian never stops learning. Being a Christian means having a vital relationship with God, through Jesus his Son. And all vital relationships grow and develop ... we learn more and more about each other.

Matthew's gospel is a "Learner's Gospel". Just before Jesus returned to heaven, Matthew records, he gave this command to his disciples:

*"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. So as you go, make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age."* Matthew 28:18-20

The task of discipling people from all nations is the parting command the Lord gave. Baptizing and teaching folk to be followers of Jesus are two elements of that discipling process. And Matthew, up to this point in his gospel, has been seeking to do just that ... providing a record of the things Jesus taught his disciples. (For the word "disciples", you can substitute "learners" ... that's what it means)

Whereas other gospels may tend to intersperse the things that Jesus *said* with the things that Jesus *did*, Matthew assembles Jesus' sayings in five distinct blocks:

1 chapters 5-7

1 chapter 10

1 chapter 13

1 chapter 18

1 chapters 24-25

It's fairly likely that one way Matthew's gospel was used in the early church's life was similar to the function of confirmation manual in our church today ... to instruct new believers in the way of the Lord. But it goes beyond that, because Christ's ways are so different to the ways of the world at large that *all* believers, new *and* old, need to be constantly taught, challenged and reminded of them. The Kingdom of God is very much at odds with the kingdoms of human rulers. We see this again and again in Matthew.

What's more, God's kingdom (his reign in the hearts and lives of his people) is not a new development ... it's something that the Lord has been establishing down through the centuries of Old Testament history. The Old Testament is just as much a Christian book as the New. So if Christians are to grow as God's people they must be men and women of the Old Testament as well as the New. Matthew's gospel, more than any other, forges the link between Old and New Testaments. All that the Old Testament looked forward to found its fulfillment in Jesus.

But disciples don't only learn by listening to things people say. Jesus "commandments" to his disciples were fleshed out by his actions ... *what* he did, and *how* he did what he did. So the "story" sections that are set between the blocks of teaching are important, too. One of the popular Christian slogans of recent times is "WWJD" ... "What would Jesus do?" When trying to decide on a course of action to take, folk are encouraged to ask themselves this question. But it's a question that cannot be answered unless we are thoroughly familiar with what Jesus *did* do. Otherwise, we actually end up acting on the basis of our own prejudices, preferences and guesses.

In reducing Matthew to chunks of a manageable size, it's been necessary on a couple of occasions to break in unnatural places. Although each study has been given a heading, we'll do better justice to the message of "Matthew" if we recognise that, in fact, there's a "flow" from one portion of the gospel to the next.

*Each day's bible portion has an extra passage listed. This is an **optional** reading, which, in one way or another is related to the day's portion from Matthew's gospel.*

## Week 1

### THEME: This Kingdom ... What It's Like

#### **Day 1 Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23** (*Galatians 5:22*)\*\*

What do the four soils represent? What remains unchanged in the sowing of every type of soil?

#### **Day 2 Matthew 13:10-17** (*2 Corinthians 6:1-13*)\*\*

What heart-condition prevents people being open to God's word? How do you think that their hearts came to be this way?

#### **Day 3 Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43** (*2 Thessalonians 1:6-10*)\*\*

People sometimes point to the fact that injustice and evil in the world go unpunished as evidence that there is no God. What is Jesus' answer to this?

#### **Day 4 Matthew 13:31-35, 44-52** (*Matthew 4:12-17*)\*\*

What is unusual about the man's response in the parables of the treasure and the pearl?

#### **Day 5 Matthew 13:53-14:21** (*John 1:9-12*)\*\*

Why do the people of Nazareth reject Jesus? How does their attitude contrast with that of the crowd Jesus feeds?

*Pray, in particular, for your street, that the "word of the kingdom" may be faithfully cast there.*

## **Study Passage: Read Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23**

1. Do you have a "green thumb" or a "brown" one? Do you have a gardening success story you can tell? What about a spectacular failure?

2. With regard to the first three soils, what prevented the seed from germinating in each case? What was wrong with the seed? Does the parable explain the reason for the good soil's varying yields?

3. For whom was the parable really told (see also 13:11-13, 16-17)? Why did they need to hear these things about the Kingdom of Heaven?

4. What encouragements and challenges do you find in this parable? What aspects of it do you find discouraging?

5. Do people's hearts remain hard/rocky/thorny/good ... or do they vary over time? How can you tell what type of soil they are going to be?

*\*\* See note on page 3 regarding these readings*

## Week 2

### **THEME: That Kingdom ... What It's Like**

#### **Day 1 Matthew 14:22-36** (*John 20:24-28*)\*\*

Why did Peter sink? Why were the sick healed?

#### **Day 2 Matthew 15:1-9** (*Colossians 2:13-19*)\*\*

What is wrong with the human traditions Jesus refers to?

#### **Day 3 Matthew 15:10-20** (*James 1:13-15*)\*\*

The Pharisees' focus is on outward appearances. What does Jesus say to this?

#### **Day 4 Matthew 15:21-28** (*Hebrews 11:1*)\*\*

How does this story contrast with that of 13:53-58?

#### **Day 5 Matthew 15:29-39** (*Luke 4:18-21*)\*\*

What do the crowds do when they see Jesus' acts of healing? What is Jesus' motivation for his miraculous feeding of the crowd?

*Pray for discernment regarding practices inherited from earlier times, and graciousness in dealing with one another over these matters.*

## **Study Passage: Matthew 15:1-20**

1. Do you have any family "traditions" (eg, to do with Christmas, sport or other pastimes, naming of children, and so on)? Name one or two. Do you consider these particular traditions to be useful, or a nuisance?

2. List the traditions that Jesus discusses here. What are some further traditions that Jesus breaks, in other gospel accounts?

3. Was Jesus against tradition? Explain your answer.

4. What value does tradition have (if any)? How may we assess whether a tradition is acceptable or not? What should be done about traditions which we regard as doubtful?

5. Are there any Anglican church traditions which you consider to be unhelpful (just one or two will do!)? What are your reasons?

*\*\* See note on page 3 regarding these readings*

## **Week 3**

### **THEME: Commitment to this Kingdom**

#### **Day 1 Matthew 16:1-12** (*Exodus 17:1-7*)

What "leaven"(RSV)/"yeast"(NIV) do the Pharisees and Sadducees demonstrate in this passage?

#### **Day 2 Matthew 16:13-20** (*Revelation 20:14, 21:1-4*)

What shall not prevail (be victorious) over the church of Jesus Christ? What do you think that this means?

#### **Day 3 Matthew 16:21-28** (*Judges 15:14-18*)

What warning is there for us in the events of verses 21-23?

#### **Day 4 Matthew 17:1-8** (*Isaiah 6:1-7*)

What encouragement is there for us in Jesus' words to the disciples (verse 7)?

#### **Day 5 Matthew 17:19-23** (*Malachi 4:4-6*)

What is puzzling the disciples about Elijah (see 17:3, 8)? Who really is the Elijah predicted by the Old Testament prophecy?

*Pray for deeper commitment to Christ, both for yourself and one specific friend who comes to mind.*

## **Study Passage: Matthew 16:21-28**

1. Are you a part of any club or interest-group outside the church? What is it? How long have you been in it?

Is your attendance o Regular o Patchy o Only occasional?

2. Compare Peter's interaction with Jesus in 16:21-23 with the immediately preceding one in 16:13-20. What lessons are there for us in this?

3. Rewrite 16:24 in your own words. In place of "anyone" (NIV)/"any man" (RSV) and "he" (NIV)/ "him" (RSV), write your own name.

4. Sometimes, in literature and movies, a person strikes a bargain with the devil. In reality, no words or contract is necessary for a person to "lose their soul/life". What sorts of things do tempt people to forfeit their soul?

5. What sort of help do you most need from your friends if they are going to assist your discipleship (1) a kick in the rear end when necessary (2) being left alone without pressure to sort things through (3) prayer (4) support and encouragement (5) being held accountable for my progress (6) something else?

## Week 4

### **THEME: Mutual Responsibility in this Kingdom**

#### **Day 1 Matthew 17:24-27** (*1 Corinthians 9:19-23*)

Why does Jesus pay the tax?

#### **Day 2 Matthew 18:1-4** (*Romans 10:5-10*)

What aspect of childlikeness does Jesus commend here? How does it differ from childishness (Matthew 11:16)?

#### **Day 3 Matthew 18:5-14** (*Ephesians 6:1-4*)

List three things that the passage tells you about temptation.

#### **Day 4 Matthew 18:15-21** (*Leviticus 19:17-18*)

What good benefits can you see in following the pattern that Jesus sets out here?

#### **Day 5 Matthew 18:21-35** (*Ephesians 4:25-26, 31-32*)

What does this parable teach us about our relationship to each other, when compared to our relationship to God? What motivates the master to forgive the debt owed by his servant?

*Pray for the ability to forgive. In particular, pray concerning any long- held grudges.*

## **Study Passage: Matthew 18:21-35**

1. Were you ever mistreated at school? What happened?
2. What comments by Jesus lead up to the question Peter asks in verse 21?
3. Considering the story up to verse 30, compare the two servants ... What did they owe? What did they ask for? What did they receive? How does this apply to us?
4. "But I don't feel forgiving towards some people. And sometimes, even though I've tried to forgive them, I suddenly find that I'm angry with them all over again." Comment on this.
5. "Won't people just walk all over me if I let them keep on getting away with things?" Comment on this.

## Week 5

### **THEME: Getting Into this Kingdom**

#### **Day 1 Matthew 19:1-12** (*Malachi 2:13-16*)

How long does God intend a marriage to last? Why did he permit Moses to include divorce in Israel's legal code?

#### **Day 2 Matthew 19:13-15** (*Matthew 21:14-17*)

What purpose did the parents have in bringing their children to Jesus?

#### **Day 3 Matthew 19:16-22** (*James 4:17*)

Would this young man be considered upright by today's standards? Why is living a good moral life ... even in a perverse society ... not enough?

#### **Day 4 Matthew 19:23-30** (*Jonah 2:1-9*)

What can God achieve that humans cannot?

#### **Day 5 Matthew 20:1-16** (*2 Corinthians 9:6-12*)

Is the householder (1) fair (2) unfair (3) generous (4) stingy?

When God deals with people, who (in your opinion) are "the last", and who are "the first"?

*Pray that the saving message of the gospel may be clearly presented.*

## **Study Passage: Matthew 19:13-26**

1. Have you ever lost something of importance to you? What did you do about it?

2. Why does the disciples' treatment of the parents show that they are particularly out of touch with the values of the kingdom (see 18:1-6, 10)? What is it that Jesus is commending in 19:14?

3. How would you have answered the young man's question (19:16)? Why? What (do you think) is Jesus' intention in answering as he does?

4. What is "astonishing" (19:25) about Jesus' comments to the disciples (19:23-24)?

5. Should the Anglican Church sell its property and give the proceeds to the poor? Why/ Why not?

## Week 6

### **THEME: Privilege in this Kingdom**

#### **Day 1 Matthew 20:17-28** (*Romans 12:2*)

From whom have the disciples taken their values? How does this relate to us?

#### **Day 2 Matthew 20:29-21:11** (*2 Samuel 17:1-17*)

What do the blind men call Jesus? What is the significance of this, given the events which immediately follow?

#### **Day 3 Matthew 21:12-22** (*1 Samuel 17:19-26*)

What groups of people does Jesus interact with after entering the temple? What are the various responses to his actions?

#### **Day 4 Matthew 21:23-32** (*John 12:37-43*)

What answer (do you think) would the priests and elders like to give to Jesus' question? What does this indicate about their frame of mind?

#### **Day 5 Matthew 21:33-46** (*Revelation 2:1-5*)

How much work had the householder put into the vineyard? How much had the tenants done?

*Pray for one another, that each one might be fruitful for God.*

## Study Passage: Matthew 21:33-46

1. Have you ever allowed another person to borrow something from you, only to have it returned in a damaged condition? (No names, please!) How did you feel? What did you decide as a result of this?

2. This parable results from earlier incidents involving Jesus.

What were they?

3. What words would you use in describing the landowners in this parable? What words would you use in describing the tenant-farmers? Why?

4. We are told who the parable is about in 21:45. Does this then mean that we can ignore it? Why/ Why not?

5. What are the "fruit" (21:43) of the kingdom? What is one way you could be more fruitful? Who are the fruit for?

## **Week 7**

### **THEME: Warnings from this Kingdom**

#### **Day 1 Matthew 22:1-14** (*Romans 10:14-21*)

What does this parable tell of God's mercy? What does it tell of his justice?

#### **Day 2 Matthew 22:15-33** (*Galatians 2:11-13*)

What criticisms does Jesus level at his opponents? In what ways can we be guilty of the same things?

#### **Day 3 Matthew 22:34-45** (*Philippians 3:7-16*)

What is our duty towards God and to our neighbour? Is it humanly possible for us to do this?

#### **Day 4 Matthew 23:1-22** (*Numbers 15:37-41*)

What are some of the Pharisees' motivations?

#### **Day 5 Matthew 23:23-39** (*1 Samuel 16:17*)

What things do these "woes" have in common with each other?

*Pray that God will keep us sensitive to hypocrisy in our own life.*

## **Study Passage: Matthew 23:1-15**

1. Who is your favourite actor/actress? Why?
2. What does the word "hypocrite" mean to you? What are some of the examples of hypocrisy that Jesus refers to?
3. Jesus repeats the words "Woe to you" seven times. What do you think that "Woe to you" actually means? Is Jesus being a bit too tough on the Scribes and Pharisees? Why/ Why not?
4. How can Jesus' words here be reconciled with the things he says in Matthew 5:14-16?
5. Nowadays we are not worried too much by phylacteries (23:5), or by putting herbs in the offertory plate. But what are some temptations to hypocrisy that do affect us? What can we do about them?

## **Week 8**

### **THEME: Being Ready for this Kingdom**

#### **Day 1 Matthew 24:1-8** (*1 John 4:1-3*)

What question asked by the disciples prompts this "sermon" from Jesus?

#### **Day 2 Matthew 24:9-14** (*James 5:7-11*)

List the things that Jesus predicts will happen to the people of God.  
According to Jesus, what will this call for?

#### **Day 3 Matthew 24:15-28** (*2 Thessalonians 2:7-10*)

What general guideline does Jesus give us to assess claims of his return (verses 26-27)?

#### **Day 4 Matthew 24:29-35** (*1 Thessalonians 4:16-18*)

Why does Jesus emphasise the certainty of these things happening (verse 35)?

#### **Day 5 Matthew 24:36-44** (*1 Thessalonians 5:1-4*)

What will people's lives be like prior to the return of Christ?

*Use Jesus' commands in this chapter in your praying today.*

## **Study Passage: Matthew 24:1-2, 32-44**

1. What is the most impressive building or structure that you have ever visited? Why (do you think) did Jesus answer the disciples' question as he did, instead of agreeing with their comment?
2. What does Jesus expect that his followers will be able to do (24:32-35)?
3. What discouraging things are going to happen to God's people before Christ returns? In the face of these discouragements, what wrong ways out of the difficulties will people be tempted to take (24:4-5, 24-27, 35)?
4. How does the picture Jesus paints in 24:37-41 seem to differ from the one he's set out earlier in this chapter? Have a go at explaining why this is so.
5. In this chapter, Jesus gives information in reply to the disciples' question (24:3), but he also gives a number of commands. Find and list these. In your opinion, which are the most relevant today? Why?

## **Week 9**

### **THEME: Judgement in this Kingdom**

#### **Day 1 Matthew 24:45-51** (*2 Peter 3:8-10*)

Why does the servant become irresponsible in his task?

#### **Day 2 Matthew 25:1-13** (*Proverbs 10:28*)

Are the brides guilty of thinking that the groom was never going to arrive?  
What assumption did they make?

#### **Day 3 Matthew 25:14-17** (*Romans 12:6-8*)

Why did the master give differing amounts to each servant?

#### **Day 4 Matthew 25:18-30** (*Luke 21:1-4*)

Does the master treat the "5-talent servant" differently to the "3-talent servant"? Why/Why not?

#### **Day 5 Matthew 25:31-46** (*Psalms 121*)

What do the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger etc (verses 35-36, 42-43) have in common with one another?

*Pray for faithful stewardship of the talents God has given us.*

## Study Passage: Matthew 25:14-30

1. Have you ever returned from an outing or holiday to find that some things have gone missing? What happened? Who was responsible for it ... you or someone else?

2. In this passage who is the master? What do the talents represent? Who are the servants? What is the journey?

3. If you were the "one-talent servant", would you have been a) jealous of the others who got more b) resigned to a life of obscurity c) relieved to have less responsibility d) challenged to invest it wisely e) something else ? Which (if any) do you think you should have been?

4. In each of this week's parables, someone ends up "out in the darkness" (24:51, 25:12,30,41). What is the significance of this? Is it fair that they end up this way? Why/Why not?

5. "You must not stop me from exercising my talents" is the demand occasionally made by people who want a part in some particular church activity. Is this right? Why/Why not?





## HOW TO USE THESE NOTES

1. Read the daily Bible readings on the left hand side of the double page, and think about the question for the day. Make a note of your answer and any difficulties you have.
2. The questions on the right hand side of the double page are designed for group discussion. Think about these questions before you go to your discussion group.
3. The study passages follow the morning and evening sermon series. You might find it helpful to take notes of the sermons.
4. Please don't be frustrated if you can't understand or answer the questions: the important thing is that you read God's word.
5. Use this guide for family or personal Bible Reading, and if you would like to join a discussion group, please see one of the ministers.