

The King's Way
Matthew 14-20
Leaders Guide

The King's Way – Study 1

Matthew 14:1-36 – The One True King

1. What do people look for in a leader?

- *Boldness/Courage*
- *Decisiveness/decision-making*
- *Compassion/understanding/empathy*
- *Etc.*

Read Matthew 14.

2. From verses 1-12, how would you describe Herod?

- *This Herod = Herod Antipas – ruler of Galilee; son of Herod who was king when Jesus was born*
- *Has already jailed John the Baptist and wants to kill him*
- *Fearful of people*
- *Foolhardy when it comes to oaths*
- *A people-pleaser*

3. Given what has happened to John the Baptist, what might be expected to happen to Jesus as another of God's spokesmen?

- *Verse 12 sounds an ominous note – if this is how John the Baptist has been treated ...*

4. What do we discover about Jesus from verses 13-21? (See also Exodus 16:13-18; 2 Kings 4:42-44; and Isaiah 25:6)

- *Jesus withdraws to be on his own for a time (v. 13)*
- *With Jesus there is a miraculous and abundant provision – an expression of his “compassion” (v. 14)*
- *Exodus 16 – God miraculously feeds his recently rescued people in the wilderness/desert on their way to Mt Sinai*
- *2 Kings 4 – Through his prophet, Elisha, God provides more than enough food for one hundred men*
- *Isaiah 25 – Isaiah prophesies that the LORD will provide a rich banquet for all*

5. In what ways is Jesus being compared and contrasted with ...

i) Herod?

Herod's words bring death; Jesus' words sustain life
Herod is in it for himself; Jesus is compassionate towards others
Herod is a pretend king/ruler; Jesus is the one true King

ii) The disciples?

The disciples see only the remoteness of the location and the lateness of the time
The disciples feel that the crowds should be sent away to fend for themselves
The disciples view the situation from a human perspective, seeing only limitations
Jesus wants the people to come to him
Jesus looks to God to provide
Jesus provides abundantly

6. What do we discover about Jesus from verses 22-33? (See also Job 9:1-8 and Psalm 89:8-9)

- *Jesus takes time out to be alone and pray (v. 23)*
- *Jesus is able to walk on water*
 - *Job 9 – God is the One who “treads on the waves of the sea” (v. 8)*
 - *Psalm 89 – The LORD rules over the surging sea and stills the waves (v. 9)*
- *Jesus calls on Peter to act in faith*
- *Jesus is able to calm the wind and the waves*
- *Jesus is worthy of worship as “the Son of God”*

7. What is your impression of Peter and the other disciples from these verses? In what ways can you relate to him/them?
- *Being “terrified” (v. 26) would seem to be a pretty reasonable response to seeing someone walking on the water!*
 - *Peter comes across as brash and full of bravado – perhaps claiming more than he is actually able to do (v. 28 and v. 30)*
 - *His vision shifts from Jesus to his circumstances – with life-threatening results*
 - *We, too, struggle with possessing little faith and big doubt at times (v. 31)*
 - *The disciples’ declaration that Jesus is “the Son of God” is spot on*
8. What do we discover about Jesus from verses 34-36?
- *Jesus’ reputation has preceded him – recognition leads to the word spreading to all around*
 - *Jesus is able to heal many sick people – even as they just touch his garment*
9. What particularly stands out to you about Jesus from this chapter of Matthew’s Gospel?
- *Allow group members to share as they have been prompted by the passage*
10. In what ways has this chapter of Matthew’s Gospel confirmed, clarified, or challenged your understanding of what it means to trust and follow Jesus?
- *Allow group members to share as they have been prompted by the passage*

The King's Way – Study 2

Matthew 15:1-16:12 – The King for All

1. Think about two broad groups of people – the religious and the non-religious. Which group do you think faces the more significant obstacles in coming to faith in Jesus? Which group might find it easier to come to faith in Christ? Why?
 - *Religious people have greater knowledge to work with, which theoretically should make it easier for us to explain the Christian faith to them and for them to accept the message – it can be very difficult to help non-religious people understand what we are talking about*
 - *However, sometimes non-religious people can be more open to hearing the Christian message because they don't have as many preconceived ideas and are less likely to think that they are already accepted by God*

Read Matthew 15:1-20.

2. What problem do these religious leaders have with Jesus and his disciples?
 - *The fact that Jesus' disciples do not wash their hands before they eat is evidence to these Pharisees and teachers of the law that Jesus' disciples are breaking the tradition of the elders (v. 2)*
 - *The behaviour of Jesus' disciples reflects upon him as their leader – hence these religious leaders address their question to him*
3. How would you sum up Jesus' initial response to their objection (verses 3-9)?
 - *Jesus considers these leaders and teachers to be hypocrites because they claim to honour God but in reality their traditions have trumped God's word/command*

4. In what ways might we also be in danger of what Jesus is condemning here?

- *Our human traditions can become more precious to us than God's commands*
- *Our service of God may come at the expense of other responsibilities (e.g. family) that God calls on us to carry out*
- *At times there may be a discrepancy between our lips and our hearts*

5. How does Jesus go on to use this occasion as an opportunity to teach the crowd?

- *The words that Jesus quotes from Isaiah (vv. 8-9) provide an opportunity for him to teach that it is not what goes into our mouth that makes a person unclean but rather what comes out of the mouth (which, in turn, comes out of the heart) that makes a person unclean*

Read Matthew 16:1-12.

6. What approach to Jesus does this group of religious leaders take?

- *Matthew tells us that, in asking Jesus for a sign, these Pharisees and Sadducees were ultimately testing Jesus*

7. What is Jesus' warning to ...

i) The Pharisees and Sadducees?

Jesus condemns them as being part of a "wicked and adulterous generation" (v. 4). They are able to interpret the weather but not the more significant "signs of the times" (v. 3). The only sign they will be given is the sign of Jonah – cf Matthew 12:38-42. Matthew's closing statement is telling – "Jesus then left them and went away" (v. 4)

ii) His disciples?

Persisting through the disciples' lack of understanding, Jesus warns them that they are to be on their guard against the yeast/teaching of these religious leaders

8. Why might we also need to heed Jesus' warnings?

- *Sometimes we too are able to 'read' the signs of the weather better than we are the signs of the times*
- *We also need to be on our guard against false teaching*

9. In between these two encounters with the religious leaders, Jesus provides for a surprising group of people. For each, reflect on what we discover about: (a) Jesus; and (b) trusting and following Jesus?

i) The Canaanite woman (15:21-28)

Jesus at first rebuffs the woman (who is part of a group of people that had been enemies of Jesus' people for centuries) – he is doing this deliberately and with a particular purpose in mind

Jesus heals the woman's daughter

The woman recognises Jesus as the "Son of David" (v. 22)

In her desperation she turns to Jesus for mercy

She persists in her trust in Jesus despite being rebuffed three times by him!

She is commended by Jesus as possessing "great faith" (v. 28)

ii) The non-Jewish crowd healed (15:29-31)

Jesus heals many – lame, blind, crippled, mute etc – he had done so in the previous chapter for the Jews (14:34-36)

whilst here he does the same for Gentiles

The people bring these needy ones to Jesus

The people are amazed at what Jesus has done and praise the God of Israel in response (v. 31)

iii) The non-Jewish crowd fed (15:32-39; cf Mark 7:31)

Jesus has compassion on the people

Jesus miraculously provides for the people by feeding 4000 men – again, he had previously done similar for the Jews (cf 14:13-21) but here he does it for non-Jews (the reference to Mark's Gospel is provided in order to locate this event and make this point more explicit)

The crowd have been with Jesus for three days (v. 32)

The crowd have their material needs met by Jesus

10. What particularly stands out to you about Jesus from today's section of Matthew's Gospel?

- *Allow group members to share as they have been prompted by the passage*

11. In what ways has today's section of Matthew's Gospel confirmed, clarified, or challenged your understanding of what it means to trust and follow Jesus?

- *Allow group members to share as they have been prompted by the passage*

The King's Way – Study 3

Matthew 16:13-28 – The King Revealed

1. What are some of the different responses that people might give to the question, 'Who is Jesus'?

- *A good man*
- *A great moral teacher*
- *A prophet*
- *A fictional character*
- *The Messiah*
- *My Lord and Saviour*

Read Matthew 16:13-28.

2. In what ways does Peter's answer to Jesus' question differ from what others are saying about Jesus?

- *Peter declares that Jesus is "the Christ, the Son of the living God" (v. 16)*
- *The disciples had indicated that others had come up with a variety of responses to who Jesus was – e.g. John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah, one of the prophets (v. 14) – all of which are ultimately insufficient*

3. What does Jesus indicate is the ultimate source of Peter's response? (See also Matthew 11:27)

- *Although correct in his designation, Peter cannot ultimately claim any credit for this*
- *Jesus indicates that this revelation was given by his Father in heaven*
- *This is similar to what Jesus had said earlier in the Gospel – knowledge of God is held within the relationship of the Father and the Son ... and thankfully also "those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him" (11:27)*

4. What does this suggest about the way in which anyone can accurately recognise who Jesus is?

- *God has to reveal himself for any person – religious or non-religious – to correctly identify and acknowledge who Jesus is*
- *This is God's sovereign work – hence the need for prayer and dependence on him*

5. What does Jesus go on to promise in relation to the church?

- *Down through church history there have been disputes over exactly what Jesus meant in verse 18 – personally I think it makes best sense to see that it is Peter’s declaration of Jesus as the Christ that represents the rock (a pun on Peter’s name – “rock” in Greek) on which the church is built*
- *Alternatively, it could indicate the role that Peter, and the apostles, would play in terms of the early church*
- *There is certainly no grounds for understanding this as installing a direct line from Peter to the Pope, and investing him with infallibility, as the Roman Catholic church has claimed*
- *Jesus promises that the church is his church – “my church”*
- *He promises that he will build it*
- *He promises that nothing will overcome it/prove stronger than it – not even Hades*

6. How does this differ from the way that we, or others, might view the church today?

- *Many don’t recognise how precious and valuable the church is – it is Jesus’ church!*
- *Many seek to build it in their own strength and in their own way – but, whilst we do have roles to play, Jesus is the one who ultimately builds it*
- *Many think the church is irrelevant or dying – yet Jesus promises that nothing will overcome it*

7. In verse 20, Jesus strangely warns his disciples not to reveal his identity. In what ways do Jesus’ words in verse 21, and Peter’s response in verse 22, help us to understand why this might be necessary?

- *Jesus clearly needs to invest the concept of “Christ/Messiah” with meaning by way of explanation – he will suffer and die*
- *Peter clearly cannot comprehend such an idea – it doesn’t fit with his understanding of the Christ. To what depths he has plunged after the heights of his declaration!*

8. How does Jesus' upcoming experience serve as a pattern for those who would follow him (verses 24-28)?
- *Those who follow him must likewise deny themselves and take up their cross – they too live out a life of self-sacrifice*
 - *The path of the disciple/follower is the same as that of the Master/Leader*
9. What might we struggle with in this? What might motivate us to nevertheless still take this path?
- *We don't want to lose our life – we want to hold on to it and continue living our own way and for our own purposes*
 - *Yet paradoxically it is by losing one's life that we actually find it*
 - *There is reward from the Son of Man himself for those who take this path*
10. What particularly stands out to you about Jesus from today's section of Matthew's Gospel?
- *Allow group members to share as they have been prompted by the passage*
11. In what ways has today's section of Matthew's Gospel confirmed, clarified, or challenged your understanding of what it means to trust and follow Jesus?
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The King's Way – Study 4

Matthew 17:1-27 – The Servant King

1. Think about some of the most spectacular sights you have ever witnessed. Share one or two of these with your group, along with why they were so spectacular.

- *This question is intended to be a lead in to the first section of this Chapter – Jesus' transfiguration*
- *Allow group members to share their experiences with one another*
- *As well as providing an initial entrance into the chapter, this question also serves to help the group to connect with one another, and for relationships to deepen, as they learn more about each other*

Read Matthew 17:1-13.

2. In what ways is this episode a foretaste of what Jesus promised in 16:28?

- *In 16:28 Jesus spoke of a future occasion in which he, as the Son of Man, would come into his kingdom – a truly glorious occasion*
- *In some ways the transfiguration is a window into this future occasion as the veil is (partially/completely?) removed and Jesus is seen as he truly is – his face like the sun and his clothes dazzling white*

3. What is good about Peter's reaction? What is insufficient about his reaction?

- *It is indeed "good" for Peter et al to be there!*
- *Peter is recognising the significance of Jesus – he does, at the very least, belong among the great ones (Moses, as representative of OT Law and Elijah as representative of OT Prophets)*
- *However, and stunningly given how significant Moses and Elijah were, Jesus is not among equals in their presence – he is pre-eminent, as the passage goes on to highlight*

4. In what ways does the voice from the cloud provide clarity on the question of Jesus' identity?
- *The voice from the cloud, from God the Father, recognises Jesus as his Son*
 - *The Father expresses his love for the Son, as well as the fact that he is well pleased with him*
 - *The Father insists that Jesus, the Son, is the one the disciples are to listen to*
 - *These are the words of Psalm 2 – David's song about God's Anointed One*
 - *There are also echoes of Isaiah 42:1 here where the prophet speaks of the LORD's servant (later identified as a suffering servant, most famously in Isaiah 53)*
5. Given what we have discovered about Jesus' identity, what strikes you about:

- i) Jesus' treatment of the disciples (vv. 6-8)?

Jesus, this mighty one, of whom the disciples are right to be terrified, deals with them so tenderly and gently – he "touched them" and tells them to not be afraid.

- ii) Jesus' words regarding what will happen to him (vv. 11-13)?

As we saw in the last section of Matthew's Gospel, Jesus again links the concept of Christ/Messiah/Anointed One/Israel's promised King with suffering.

Just as was the case for John the Baptist, Jesus will also suffer.

That the mighty and powerful King/God's Son would also be the suffering Son of Man/Servant was hitherto unheard of.

Read Matthew 17:14-23.

6. What does this episode teach us about the faithlessness of Israel (as represented by the disciples)?

- *Despite the desperation of the father, and the palpably devastating situation of his son, the disciples are completely unable to assist*
- *Jesus clearly considers the broader generation of people to be “unbelieving and perverse” and comes across as exasperated with them*
- *Jesus rebukes the disciples for their lack of faith – it would appear they were unable to muster up even a mustard seed’s amount of faith*

7. In what ways can we sometimes be like them?

- *Our faith is also weak at times*
- *We are unable to bring about changes that we might desire in our own lives and in the lives of others*
- *We sometimes doubt and question God’s ability to accomplish his purposes*

8. How does Matthew present Jesus as a contrast to the faithlessness of others?

- *Matthew’s narrative is telling – “from that moment”, and simply with a word of rebuke from Jesus, the demon comes out of the boy*

Read Matthew 17:24-27.

9. What do we discover about Jesus from this interaction regarding the temple tax?

- *This is a somewhat confusing and yet fascinating episode in the Gospel*
- *Jesus, as the Son of the One who rules the temple, is of all people qualified to be granted an exemption from the temple tax*
- *Yet he chooses not to insist upon his rights/authority and rather willingly pays the tax in order to not be a stumbling block/cause offence*
- *Jesus’ assurance that Peter would be able to find a sufficient amount for both his tax and Jesus’ from the mouth of a fish is truly breathtaking*

10. What particularly stands out to you about Jesus from today's section of Matthew's Gospel?

- *Allow group members to share as they have been prompted by the passage*

11. In what ways has today's section of Matthew's Gospel confirmed, clarified, or challenged your understanding of what it means to trust and follow Jesus?

- *Allow group members to share as they have been prompted by the passage*

The King's Way – Study 5

Matthew 18:1-35 – The King's new people

1. What do you find a blessing as you relate with other Christians? What do you find difficult?

- *Christian fellowship is often a mixture*
- *At its best, we are loved deeply and cared for well – there is understanding, compassion and forgiveness*
- *There are difficulties however – we get on each other's nerves, there are misunderstandings, we hurt one another and need to forgive*

Read Matthew 18:1-6.

2. How does Jesus define greatness?

- *The question the disciples ask (v. 1) explicitly frames the discussion around the topic of greatness*
- *Jesus answers by both employing an object lesson (a child) and verbal teaching – one must become like a little child in order to enter the kingdom; greatness is seen as equivalent to humility*

3. In what ways is this different to how the world views greatness?

- *The world sees greatness as authority, power, insisting on one's rights etc.*

4. How might our views more closely resemble the world's view as opposed to Jesus' view?

- *Allow your group to reflect and share as they feel led*
- *We all find it difficult to humble ourselves like a child*

Read Matthew 18:10-14.

5. How are we to treat other believers?

- *Note that in saying “these little ones” (v. 10), Jesus explicitly links back to what he had said earlier – “these little ones who believe in me” (v. 6) – hence “other believers” being on view here*
- *We are to be concerned for one another – so concerned in fact that the Christian who has wandered away is to be brought back at great cost*
- *In this way we reflect the heart of our Father (v. 14)*

Read Matthew 18:7-9 and 15-20.

6. What are we to do with:

i) Our own sin (vv. 7-9)?

We are to hate sin and recognise its seriousness by dealing drastically with it.

In this we are alerted to the wonder of “life” and the devastation of “hell”.

ii) The sin of others (vv. 15-20)?

Jesus presents a graded approach.

Step 1 – approach the Christian brother/sister and show the person his/her fault. Presumably some interactions stop here because the other person listens to what is shared.

Step 2 – take one or two others with you. Again, the matter may be concluded at this point.

Step 3 – it is only at this point, having followed both of the previous steps, that the matter is to be communicated with the church. It is also only at this point that, if the other person still refuses to listen, they are to be treated as “a pagan or tax collector” would be treated.

Read Matthew 18:21-35.

7. In what ways is this parable related to what has come before?

- *Jesus has just been speaking about the scenario where a brother/sister sins against us (v. 15)*
- *This would seem to have given rise to Peter's question about how many times a brother/sister should be forgiven*

8. What does this parable teach us about:

i) God's forgiveness of us?

This is our state before God – we are the man/servant who has been forgiven an incalculable amount by the king/master.

ii) Our forgiveness of others?

Given what we have recognised about God's forgiveness of us, how can we withhold forgiveness from others? The servant who had been forgiven so much by his master could not find it in his heart to go and do likewise and cancel the lesser debt owed against him.

The rebuke of the master is striking – "Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?" (v. 33).

9. What particularly stands out to you about Jesus from today's section of Matthew's Gospel?

- *Allow group members to share as they have been prompted by the passage*

10. In what ways has today's section of Matthew's Gospel confirmed, clarified, or challenged your understanding of what it means to trust and follow Jesus?

- *Allow group members to share as they have been prompted by the passage*

The King's Way – Study 6

Matthew 19:1-12 – Marriage in the Kingdom

1. What are some of the different ways in which marriage is portrayed in our culture?

- *There are some who maintain a high view of marriage*
- *De facto relationships have, generally speaking, become the norm*
- *There is, sadly, a high rate of broken marriages in our society*
- *One might look at such shows as “Wife Swap”, “Married at first sight”, “7 year switch”, or “The Bachelor/Bachelorette” etc. to ascertain our culture’s (disturbing) current stance on marriage*

Read Matthew 19:1-12.

2. What are we told about the intention behind the Pharisees’ question in verse 3?

- *Matthew clearly tells us that these Pharisees have come to Jesus “to test him” (v. 3)*
- *We may also discern in the way their question is framed that they are seeking to be both legally precise (“Is it lawful”) and broad in their interpretation of the grounds on which divorce is permitted (“any and every reason”)*

3. How does Jesus respond (vv. 4-6)?

- *Jesus responds by reframing the discussion away from the negative (divorce) and on to its positive counterpart (marriage)*
- *He emphasises various aspects contained within the created order – for example:*
 - *There is a Creator*
 - *The Creator made humans “male and female”*
 - *In marriage a man leaves his parents and is united to his wife*
 - *In this way, two people are brought together as one unit*
 - *It is ultimately God who joins the two together as one – given this, we are not to separate what God has joined together*
- *Jesus’ initial “Haven’t you read ...” indicates that it is his expectation that these Pharisees would have read and been familiar with this teaching from Genesis*

4. In what ways does Jesus' teaching here also speak into our society's view of marriage?

- *The removal of the view that there is a Creator who is over and above us has had all kinds of ramifications – not least in the area of marriage and relationships*
- *The designation “male and female” is now questioned and even abandoned*
- *There is now an ease with which the marriage union can be abandoned – e.g. ‘no fault divorce’, ‘irreconcilable differences’*
- *Marriage is to be viewed as a positive – a creation ‘good’ – this is not often the way it is viewed in our society/culture*

5. What is the response of the Pharisees to Jesus' teaching?

- *The Pharisees come back at Jesus with the example of Moses – he commanded that a man could give his wife a certificate of divorce and send her away*
- *Given the intentions behind their first question, it would not be unreasonable to presume that the Pharisees are again testing Jesus – is he willing to speak against Moses, the pre-eminent OT teacher? If Moses commanded this then doesn't that over-ride the creation mandate?*

6. How does Jesus respond this time (verses 8-9)?

- *Jesus again reframes their question and the discussion*
- *This can be observed even in the subtle yet significant shift from “command” to “permitted”*
- *Additionally, this was only an allowance because of the hardness of human hearts – not something to be exploited or taken advantage of*
- *Jesus reiterates his commitment to what was set in place at creation*
- *He indicates that divorce might be necessary – for example, due to marital unfaithfulness – but it is never good (marital unfaithfulness – e.g. adultery – has in a sense already annulled the marriage by breaking the original one-flesh union and creating another)*

7. Given the way that Jesus approaches this topic, what can we learn in terms of dealing with other difficult ethical issues?

- *There is a commitment to the view of God as Creator and the primacy of the pattern set out at creation – we are to affirm God’s original intention*
- *There is also an awareness of, and appreciation for, the effect that sin has – things are not as they were at creation any longer*
- *This, however, does not mean that the ‘creation good’ should simply be abandoned – it should continue to be sought as much as possible, but given that we now live in a fallen world this will not be carried out with ‘Pollyanna-like’ optimism*

8. The disciples conclude, “it is better not to marry” (v. 10). From Jesus’ response, are they correct? Why/why not?

- *Observe the beginning and closing comments that Jesus makes – he acknowledges that “not everyone can accept this word” (v. 11) but those “who can accept this should accept it” (v. 12). Even with all its demands, marriage remains the divine intention for those to whom it has been given*
- *There are, however, some who are not given the gift of marriage and who will remain unmarried. This may be for various reasons – e.g. because they: (i) “were born that way”, or (ii) “were made that way by men”, or (iii) “have renounced marriage because of the kingdom of heaven” – the latter situation being highly significant given that in the Jewish society of Jesus’ day it was highly unusual to be unmarried*
- *We might say that the disciples were both right and wrong – for some it is better that they don’t marry whereas for others this is not the case*

9. What particularly stands out to you about Jesus from today’s section of Matthew’s Gospel?

- *Allow group members to share as they have been prompted by the passage*

10. In what ways has today’s section of Matthew’s Gospel confirmed, clarified, or challenged your understanding of what it means to trust and follow Jesus?

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The King's Way – Study 7

Matthew 19:13-20:16 – The upside-down Kingdom

1. Discuss together the ways in which Christianity is different to the prevailing views of those around us. See if you can come up with at least half a dozen.
 - *This question paves the way for the upside-down nature of Jesus' kingdom that we see in this passage*
 - *Some examples include: weakness is strength; the power of gentleness; foolishness is wisdom; the least is the greatest; we save our life by losing it; there is victory in (Jesus') death etc.*

Read Matthew 19:13-15.

2. Why do you think the disciples rebuked those who brought the little children to Jesus?
 - *Viewed in a positive light, we could excuse the disciples' behaviour as representing an attempt to protect Jesus from too much attention (as though he needed them to exercise self-protection on his behalf!)*
 - *More likely, they were insensitive to the needs of these people and their children*
 - *They have clearly not understood Jesus' revolutionary ways*
3. What do we learn about Jesus from this short but moving encounter?
 - *The picture we are given here of Jesus is both moving and beautiful*
 - *His words are a rebuke to the disciples and their behaviour*
 - *Jesus welcomes the little children and invites them to come to him – He does not want anything or anyone to hinder them*
 - *He sees in them an example of what the Kingdom is all about – humility*
 - *He is willing to place his hands on them before moving on*

Read Matthew 19:16-30.

4. In what ways does this man represent an ideal candidate for Jesus' team?

- *He is eager to receive eternal life (v. 16)*
- *Every commandment that Jesus lists this man has kept (v. 20) – he is clearly a very moral person*
- *We are told that he had “great wealth” (v. 22) – in the Old Testament, material wealth was seen as a sign of blessing (presumably this was also the disciples' understanding)*

5. What is his problem?

- *His “great wealth”, rather than representing a blessing to him, has in the end actually become a stumbling block to him – it is what prevents him from following Jesus and thus receiving “treasure in heaven” (v. 21)*

6. Is there any hope for anyone to be saved and enter the Kingdom? Why/why not?

- *The disciples express their astonishment in verse 25 – “Who then can be saved?”*
- *How can a camel go through the eye of a needle? And that, Jesus insists, is easier than a rich person entering the kingdom!*
- *Humanly speaking it is impossible for anyone to be saved and enter the kingdom – there is no hope*
- *Hope is found in the truth that God can do what man cannot – “... with God all things are possible” (v. 26)*

7. Place yourself in the shoes (sandals?) of the disciples as they witnessed these two encounters with Jesus (vv. 13-15 and vv. 16-30). In what ways might we also be in danger of misunderstanding the ways of the Kingdom?

- *We are more like the disciples than we would like to admit*
- *We struggle with humility and the idea that ones as insignificant as little children would be welcomed in the kingdom*
- *We view things through human/worldly lenses and think that the rich and famous would make great candidates for Jesus and his purposes in the world*

Read Matthew 20:1-16.

8. Reflect together on the various ways in which this parable connects with Jesus' two previous encounters.
 - *Note the connection between 19:30 and 20:16 – “the last will be first, and the first will be last”*
 - *We see in the parable the paradoxical values of the kingdom – this has been exemplified in the encounters with the little children and with the rich young man*
 - *The landowner/master is not unfair at any point (no one is underpaid, they are all given what he said he would give them, and what they agreed to)*
 - *He is, however, overwhelmingly/unreasonably generous*
 - *In each part of this section – the episode with the little children, the encounter with the rich young man, and this parable – we see how upside-down the Kingdom is and how different it is from our normal human scale of values*
 - *Just as well God is so unlike us!*

9. What particularly stands out to you about Jesus from today's section of Matthew's Gospel?
 - *Allow group members to share as they have been prompted by the passage*

10. In what ways has today's section of Matthew's Gospel confirmed, clarified, or challenged your understanding of what it means to trust and follow Jesus?
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The King's Way – Study 8

Matthew 20:17-34 – Greatness in the Kingdom

1. What are some common ways in which people use their authority (e.g. government leaders; bosses in workplaces; parents in homes)?
 - *There are, of course, some who use their authority for the common good or for the benefit of others*
 - *However, history is replete with government leaders who have allowed (desired?) their position to get the better of them – ‘power corrupts but absolute power corrupts absolutely’ – think of the various dictators that countries have suffered under*
 - *Bosses can easily misuse their position and intimidate and abuse those under them – ‘I worked hard to get to this position – I deserve this – others can serve me and my purposes now’*
 - *Parents can also sadly abuse the authority and power they have over their children*

Read Matthew 20:17-34.

2. What will going to Jerusalem involve for Jesus?
 - *In Jerusalem, Jesus (the Son of Man) will experience betrayal, condemnation, mocking, flogging and crucifixion*
 - *He also promises that he will be raised back to life on the third day*
3. Compare Jesus' words here with his two previous predictions (16:21; 17:22-23). What is similar and what is different? What does this suggest?
 - *This, the third prediction, is a lot fuller in its content and detail when compared with the previous two predictions*
 - *In 16:21 Jesus spoke of suffering many things, being killed, and being raised on the third day*
 - *In 17:22-23 Jesus spoke of being betrayed, killed, and raised to life on the third day*
 - *The reality of what is about to happen is made clearer to the disciples the closer Jesus gets to the location of these events (Jerusalem)*

4. Given what Jesus has just said, what is so jarring about the request that the mother of Zebedee's sons makes?
 - *The request made by the mother of Zebedee's sons (James and John) is extraordinary given what Jesus has just predicted about what will happen to him*
 - *Jesus had not long earlier promised and assured his disciples that they would "sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (19:28) – evidently this was not enough for these disciples or their mother!*
 - *Any glory that will be experienced comes firstly through suffering*
5. Why do you think the other disciples were indignant (v. 24)?
 - *Viewing the other disciples in a more positive light, they may be indignant with such a bald desire for precedence*
 - *Less positively, they may have been indignant by the fact that these disciples had got in first with such a request!*
6. What does Jesus say greatness looks like in the Kingdom?
 - *Worldly leadership expresses itself in terms of lording it over others and exercising authority over others (v. 25)*
 - *According to Jesus, the one who wants to become great will become a servant, and the one who is first is the slave*
 - *Again conventional wisdom and practice gets turned on its head by Jesus*
7. How is Jesus the supreme example of this?
 - *As the Son of Man (Daniel 7:14), Jesus had every right to be served*
 - *However, he chose not to use his authority, power and greatness in this way – rather, he chose to serve, even all the way to giving his life as a ransom for many*
8. In what ways do the two blind men make a model response to Jesus?
 - *They recognise Jesus as the "Son of David" – the long promised King who has now arrived*
 - *They acknowledge that their greatest need is for him to have mercy on them*
 - *They persist in these commitments despite the response of the crowd*

9. In what ways might their experience also be symbolic of what needs to happen to everyone if they are to follow Jesus?

- *Throughout these chapters in Matthew we have seen the spiritual blindness of many – e.g. the religious leaders, the crowds and the disciples*
- *In order to truly comprehend who Jesus is, and what it means to be part of his Kingdom, spiritual sight needs to be granted*
- *The word used for “eyes” (v. 34) is an unusual poetic word – this, coupled with the phrase “followed him” at the end of the section, suggests that there may also be a symbolic aspect to this encounter*

10. What particularly stands out to you about Jesus from today’s section of Matthew’s Gospel?

- *Allow group members to share as they have been prompted by the passage*

11. In what ways has today’s section of Matthew’s Gospel confirmed, clarified, or challenged your understanding of what it means to trust and follow Jesus?

- *Allow group members to share as they have been prompted by the passage*

