

MATTHEW

Author: Matthew **Date of writing:** AD 55–65

INTRODUCTION

Matthew teaches us principles of inspired biography

The book of Matthew is the first of four books called Gospels. A gospel, as a genre of literature, is a biography with a purpose. The four biblical Gospels are biographies of Jesus of Nazareth. Their purpose is to show that Jesus is the Messiah and to encourage people to

put their faith in him. The term *gospel* also refers to the primary content of the Gospels—the “good news” that anyone, Jew or Gentile, who trusts in Jesus can receive the gift of eternal life.

Matthew teaches us principles of prophetic confirmation

Matthew was a Jew writing for a Jewish audience. He assumed that his readers were familiar with the Jewish Scriptures—what we call the Old Testament—and quoted it extensively. About sixty times, he showed that Jesus fulfilled the prophecies. For example:

<u>Prophet</u>	<u>Fulfilled Prophecy</u>
Micah	Jesus was born in Bethlehem.
Isaiah	Jesus was born of a virgin.
Zechariah	Jesus entered Jerusalem riding on a donkey's foal.

The evidence is overwhelmingly conclusive: Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah, the Son of God.

Matthew teaches us principles of wholehearted commitment

Matthew was a tax collector before Jesus called him to be one of his twelve apostles. As a tax collector, he not only collaborated with the Roman oppressors but also extorted extra money from his Jewish brothers.

He would have been a hated outcast. But with a simple invitation, “Follow me,” Jesus set him on a path of repentance and righteousness. Matthew left everything behind to become Jesus's disciple.

Matthew teaches us Principles to Live By

Jesus initially announced himself as the Messiah of the Jews, but after the majority of the Jews rejected him, he began to teach his disciples that Gentiles would be included in the kingdom of heaven. He also began teaching in parables, which were understandable to those who were open to his teaching but incomprehensible to those who had rejected him. After

Jesus's death and resurrection, Matthew and the other inspired Gospel writers were guided by the Holy Spirit to make Jesus's ministry, message, and mission clear: Jesus came to fulfill the Scriptures, to bring sight to the blind and rest to the weary, to serve and give his life, to call sinners to enter the kingdom of God—to save the lost.

MATTHEW – Principles to Live By

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MATTHEW

THE GENEALOGY OF JESUS CHRIST

1 An account of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham:

FROM ABRAHAM TO DAVID

- ² Abraham fathered ^A Isaac, Isaac fathered Jacob, Jacob fathered Judah and his brothers,
- ³ Judah fathered Perez and Zerah by Tamar, Perez fathered Hezron, Hezron fathered Aram,
- ⁴ Aram fathered Amminadab, Amminadab fathered Nahshon, Nahshon fathered Salmon,
- ⁵ Salmon fathered Boaz by Rahab, Boaz fathered Obed by Ruth, Obed fathered Jesse,
- ⁶ and Jesse fathered King David.

FROM DAVID TO THE BABYLONIAN EXILE

- David fathered Solomon ^B by Uriah's wife,
- ⁷ Solomon fathered Rehoboam, Rehoboam fathered Abijah, Abijah fathered Asa. ^C
 - ⁸ Asa ^C fathered Jehoshaphat, Jehoshaphat fathered Joram, ^D Joram fathered Uzziah,
 - ⁹ Uzziah fathered Jotham,

- Jotham fathered Ahaz, Ahaz fathered Hezekiah,
- ¹⁰ Hezekiah fathered Manasseh, Manasseh fathered Amon, ^E Amon fathered Josiah,
 - ¹¹ and Josiah fathered Jeconiah and his brothers at the time of the exile to Babylon.

FROM THE EXILE TO THE CHRIST

- ¹² After the exile to Babylon Jeconiah fathered Shealtiel, Shealtiel fathered Zerubbabel,
- ¹³ Zerubbabel fathered Abiud, Abiud fathered Eliakim, Eliakim fathered Azor,
- ¹⁴ Azor fathered Zadok, Zadok fathered Achim, Achim fathered Eliud,
- ¹⁵ Eliud fathered Eleazar, Eleazar fathered Matthan, Matthan fathered Jacob,
- ¹⁶ and Jacob fathered Joseph the husband of Mary, who gave birth to Jesus who is called the Christ.

¹⁷ So all the generations from Abraham to David were fourteen generations; and from David until the exile to Babylon, fourteen generations; and from the exile to Babylon until the Christ, fourteen generations.

MATTHEW PRINCIPLE 1 - THE GIFT OF SALVATION

No matter what our sinful condition, we should accept total forgiveness by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ who lived, died, and rose again to redeem us from all sin.

The genealogy of the Lord Jesus Christ speaks volumes regarding God's provision for salvation. First, God chose Abraham and Sarah out of idolatry to provide a way of salvation for all sinful humanity (v. 1). (See [Genesis Principle 15 - God's Mercy](#), p. 17.)

Second, we encounter at least four women in Christ's genealogy. It appears Matthew honored these women by including them in this list but also demonstrated that God's grace extends to all people regardless of their human failures and circumstances. For example, Rahab was a Canaanite prostitute (Mt 1:5a; see Jos 2:1-22), and Ruth was a Moabite whose genealogy began with an incestuous relationship (Mt 1:5b; see Gn 19:30-38).

Third, some of the most notorious and evil kings of Judah are listed in Jesus's genealogy. For example, Manasseh "shed so much innocent blood that he filled Jerusalem with it from one end to another" (2Kg 21:16; see Mt 1:10).

Matthew's genealogy demonstrates that, through the virgin birth of Jesus Christ, God became a man who empathized with sinful humanity. Though sinless himself, he died for the sins of the world (Jn 3:16). (See [Joshua Principle 4 - Salvation for All](#), p. 256.)

Reflection and Response

What does the genealogy of Jesus Christ communicate regarding God's incomparable and immeasurable grace toward all human beings?



^A1:2 In vv. 2-16 either a son, as here, or a later descendant, as in v. 8 ^B1:6 Other mss add *King* ^C1:7,8 Other mss read *Asaph* ^D1:8 = Jehoram ^E1:10 Other mss read *Amos*

THE NATIVITY OF THE CHRIST

¹⁸ The birth of Jesus Christ came about this way: After his mother Mary had been engaged^A to Joseph, it was discovered before they came together that she was pregnant from the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ So her husband Joseph, being a righteous man, and not wanting to disgrace her publicly, decided to divorce her secretly.

²⁰ But after he had considered these things, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, don’t be afraid to take Mary as your wife, because what has been conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹ She will give birth to a son, and

you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.”

²² Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

²³ **See, the virgin will become pregnant and give birth to a son, and they will name him Immanuel,^B**

which is translated “God is with us.”

■ **Isaiah Principle 8 - The Incarnation, p. 865.**

²⁴ When Joseph woke up, he did as the Lord’s angel had commanded him. He married her ²⁵ but did not have sexual relations with her until she gave birth to a son. ^C And he named him Jesus.

MATTHEW PRINCIPLE 2 - DEMONSTRATING GRACE

As believers, we are to extend mercy and grace toward those who are living out of the will of God.

From a human perspective, Matthew focused his thoughts on Joseph. In identifying him as “a righteous man,” we can assume that he was “declared righteous” because of his faith in God’s promises (v. 19; see Rm 5:1). If so, Joseph had followed in the footsteps of Abraham, his ancestor (Mt 1:1,17), who had “believed God, and it was credited to him for righteousness” (Gl 3:6). (See **Genesis Principle 22 - Justified by Faith, p. 21; Romans Principle 7 - God’s Free Gift, p. 1443.**)



Joseph was also a righteous man in the way he lived. Like Abraham, his works

demonstrated the reality of his faith (Jms 2:20-26). When he thought Mary had betrayed him through an immoral relationship, he responded with love and grace (Mt 1:19). Once God revealed the truth, Joseph immediately obeyed and took Mary to be his wife (v. 24).

In this instance, Mary was not living out of the will of God. However, Joseph responded with grace and mercy even when he believed that she was guilty of sexual immorality.

Reflection and Response

How can we apply this Principle to Live By today without violating Scripture? (See **Galatians Principle 11 - The Process of Restoration, p. 1516.**)

WISE MEN VISIT THE KING

2 After Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of King Herod, wise men from the east arrived in Jerusalem, ² saying, “Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star at its rising and have come to worship him.”^D

³ When King Herod heard this, he was deeply disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. ⁴ So he assembled all the chief priests and scribes of the people and asked them where the Christ would be born.

⁵ “In Bethlehem of Judea,” they told him, “because this is what was written by the prophet:

⁶ **And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah: Because out of you will come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.”^E**

■ **Micah Principle 5 - Our Great Shepherd, p. 1151.**

⁷ Then Herod secretly summoned the wise men and asked them the exact time the star appeared. ⁸ He sent them to Bethlehem and said, “Go and search carefully for the child. When you find him, report back to me so that I too can go and worship him.”^F

⁹ After hearing the king, they went on their way. And there it was — the star they had seen at its rising. It led them until it came and stopped above the place where the child was. ¹⁰ When they saw the star, they were overwhelmed with joy. ¹¹ Entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and falling to their knees, they worshiped him. ⁶ Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. ¹² And being warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their own country by another route.

MATTHEW PRINCIPLE 3 - WORSHIPFUL GENEROSITY

We are always to use our material gifts to worship and praise God and his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

The wise men demonstrated without question who Jesus was and is—God in human flesh (1:23; Jn 1:1,14). They worshiped him, and to demonstrate ▶

^A1:18 Or betrothed ^B1:23 Is 7:14 ^C1:25 Other mss read to her firstborn son ^D2:2 Or to pay him homage ^E2:6 Mc 5:2 ^F2:8 Or and pay him homage ^G2:11 Or they paid him homage

▶ their respect and honor, they presented him with expensive gifts (Mt 2:11). (See [John Principle 2 - The Deity of Christ](#), p. 1347.)

These brilliant men did not bow down to Mary, even though she was a wonderful godly mother. The wise men's gifts of "gold, frankincense, and myrrh" were for Jesus Christ. As they fell to their knees, "they worshiped him" and "presented him with gifts" (v. 11).

Mary was indeed a marvelous human instrument, miraculously touched by the Holy Spirit. However, from

birth, Jesus became the "one mediator between God and humanity" (1Tm 2:5-6). (See [Hebrews Principle 9 - The God-Man](#), p. 1604.)

Reflection and Response

When we give our material gifts to God, how can we keep our attitudes and actions from becoming a mere ritual? (See [2 Corinthians Principle 16 - Guidelines for Generosity](#), p. 1501.)



THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT

¹³ After they were gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, "Get up! Take the child and his mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I tell you. For Herod is about to search for the child to kill him." ¹⁴ So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night, and escaped to Egypt. ¹⁵ He stayed there until Herod's death, so that what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet might be fulfilled: **Out of Egypt I called my Son.**^A

THE MASSACRE OF THE INNOCENTS

¹⁶ Then Herod, when he realized that he had been outwitted by the wise men, flew into a rage. He gave orders to massacre all the boys in and around Bethlehem who were two years old and under, in keeping with the time he had learned from the wise men. ¹⁷ Then what was spoken through Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled:

¹⁸ **A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping,^B and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children; and she refused to be consoled, because they are no more.**^C

■ [Jeremiah Principle 33 - The Impact of Sin](#), p. 971.

THE RETURN TO NAZARETH

¹⁹ After Herod died, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, ²⁰ saying, "Get up, take the child and his mother, and go to the land of Israel, because those who intended to kill the child are dead." ²¹ So he got up, took the child and his mother, and entered the land of Israel. ²² But when he heard that Archelaus was ruling over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And being warned in a dream, he withdrew to the region of Galilee. ²³ Then he went and settled in a town called Nazareth to fulfill

what was spoken through the prophets, that he would be called a Nazarene.

THE HERALD OF THE CHRIST

3 In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea² and saying, "Repent, because the kingdom of heaven has come near!"³ For he is the one spoken of through the prophet Isaiah, who said:

A voice of one crying out in the wilderness: Prepare the way for the Lord; make his paths straight!^D

■ [Isaiah Principle 26 - Spiritual Preparation](#), p. 895.

⁴ Now John had a camel-hair garment with a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. ⁵ Then people from Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the vicinity of the Jordan were going out to him, ⁶ and they were baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins.

⁷ When he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, "Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath?"

⁸ Therefore produce fruit consistent with^E repentance. ⁹ And don't presume to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I tell you that God is able to raise up children for Abraham from these stones. ¹⁰ The ax is already at the root of the trees. Therefore, every tree that doesn't produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.

¹¹ "I baptize you with^F water for repentance, but the one who is coming after me is more powerful than I. I am not worthy to remove^G his sandals. He himself will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. ¹² His winnowing shovel is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the barn. But the chaff he will burn with fire that never goes out."

MATTHEW PRINCIPLE 4 - THE MESSAGE OF REPENTANCE

To have forgiveness of sins and to live in fellowship with God, we must experience true repentance.

Repentance is a comprehensive concept. It begins with regret and sorrow for sins, but to be spiritually

authentic it must involve a change in both attitudes and actions. In this instance, John's message to repent was directed specifically to the religious leaders in Israel. However, he was also speaking to all who were ▶

^A2:15 Hs 11:1 ^B2:18 Other mss read *Ramah, lamentation, and weeping*, ^C3:11 Or to carry

^D2:18 Jr 31:15 ^E3:3 Is 40:3 ^F3:8 Lit fruit worthy of ^F3:11 Or in

▶ listening. Some were probably true believers—having experienced heart circumcision (Rm 2:29)—but not living godly lives. Some were believers in name only. John wanted them to know that just being children of Abraham physically did not mean they were God’s children. Some of their hearts were still like stone, even though they were engaging in certain rituals. (See [Romans Principle 5 - A Heart Experience](#), p. 1441.)

Writing to both Jews and Gentiles, believers and unbelievers, Paul addressed repentance. He was thankful that they had responded to his exhortation in a previous letter:

For even if I grieved you with my letter, I don't regret it. And if I regretted it—

since I saw that the letter grieved you, yet only for a while—I now rejoice, not because you were grieved, but because your grief led to repentance. For you were grieved as God willed, so that you didn't experience any loss from us. For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, but worldly grief produces death. (2Co 7:8-10)

Reflection and Response

John the Baptist proclaimed a message of repentance when Jesus came the first time. How should the certainty of his second coming affect our message today? (See [2 Peter Principle 5 - Looking for Christ's Return](#), p. 1643.)

THE BAPTISM OF JESUS

¹³ Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan, to be baptized by him. ¹⁴ But John tried to stop him, saying, “I need to be baptized by you, and yet you come to me?”

¹⁵ Jesus answered him, “Allow it for now, because this is the way for us to fulfill all righteousness.” Then John allowed him to be baptized.

¹⁶ When Jesus was baptized, he went up immediately from the water. The heavens suddenly opened for him,^A and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming down on him. ¹⁷ And a voice from heaven said: “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased.”

■ [Luke Principle 8 - Believer's Baptism](#), p. 1301.

⁴ He answered, “It is written: **Man must not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.**”^B

⁵ Then the devil took him to the holy city, had him stand on the pinnacle of the temple,⁶ and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down. For it is written:

He will give his angels orders concerning you, and they will support you with their hands so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.”^C

■ [Psalms Principle 87 - God's Protection](#), p. 731.

⁷ Jesus told him, “It is also written: **Do not test the Lord your God.**”^D

⁸ Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor.⁹ And he said to him, “I will give you all these things if you will fall down and worship me.”^E

¹⁰ Then Jesus told him, “Go away,^F Satan! For it is written: **Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.**”^G

¹¹ Then the devil left him, and angels came and began to serve him.

THE TEMPTATION OF JESUS

4 Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.² After he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was hungry.³ Then the tempter approached him and said, “If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.”

MATTHEW PRINCIPLE 5 - THE POWER OF SCRIPTURE

When we're tempted to violate God's will, we are to follow Jesus's example and use Scripture to thwart Satan's efforts.

Our personal encounters with temptation will never equal Jesus's direct confrontation with Satan. He was the incarnate Son of God and uniquely lived in both the divine and the human realms. However, we will face a variety of temptations as followers of Jesus Christ, and when we do, like Jesus, we can draw on Scripture in order to “stand against the schemes

of the devil” (Eph 6:11). Paul exhorted the Ephesians to “take up the full armor of God,” and he concluded his metaphor with “the sword of the Spirit—which is the word of God” (Eph 6:13-17). (See [Ephesians Principle 15 - Walking in God's Strength](#), p. 1529.)

Reflection and Response

How does Satan's approach to Eve in the garden of Eden compare to his approach to Jesus in the wilderness? (See [Genesis Principle 4 - Satan's Tactics](#), p. 7.)



MINISTRY IN GALILEE

¹² When he heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew into Galilee. ¹³ He left Nazareth and went to live in Capernaum by the sea, in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali. ¹⁴ This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah:

¹⁵ **Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali, along the road by the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles.**

¹⁶ **The people who live in darkness have seen a great light, and for those living in the land of the shadow of death, a light has dawned.**^{A,B}

■ Isaiah Principle 10 - Serving Christ Faithfully, p. 867.

¹⁷ From then on Jesus began to preach, “Repent, because the kingdom of heaven has come near.”

THE FIRST DISCIPLES

¹⁸ As he was walking along the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon (who is called Peter), and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the sea—for they were fishermen. ¹⁹ “Follow me,” he told them, “and I will make you fish for^C people.” ²⁰ Immediately they left their nets and followed him.

²¹ Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee, and his brother John. They were in a boat with Zebedee their father, preparing their nets, and he called them. ²² Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.

MATTHEW PRINCIPLE 6 - DEDICATED DISCIPLESHIP

To follow the Lord Jesus Christ, we must faithfully apply his teachings.

Shortly after his public baptism, which demonstrated his deity as a member of the eternal community—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (3:16-17)—Jesus began to mobilize his apostolic team. It would take over three years to prepare them to carry out the Great Commission (28:19-20). Jesus began this process even before he called Peter, Andrew, James, and John. When Andrew was a disciple of John the Baptist, he introduced his brother, Peter, to Jesus (Jn 1:29-42). (See John Principle 3 - Seeking the Truth, p. 1348.)

For all of us, following Jesus begins with coming to know him as personal Lord and Savior—as “the way, the truth, and the life” (Jn 14:6). In actuality, we’re not sure when the apostles were truly “born again” (Jn

3:3). Thomas may not have had this experience until after Christ’s crucifixion and resurrection when he saw the wounds in his hands and side (Jn 20:27-28). We do know, however, that the apostles did not truly understand what it meant to follow Jesus until the Holy Spirit descended on the day of Pentecost, after which they were indeed dedicated disciples of Jesus Christ.

Reflection and Response

Even though the apostles had a distinctive calling to follow Jesus, how can we apply the principles of true discipleship in our personal, family, and church lives today? (See Deuteronomy Principle 11 - Teachable Moments, p. 219; 2 Timothy Principle 3 - Mentoring Others, p. 1579.)

**TEACHING, PREACHING, AND HEALING**

²³ Now Jesus began to go all over Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every^D disease and sickness^E among the people. ²⁴ Then the news about him spread throughout Syria. So they brought to him all those who were afflicted, those suffering from various diseases and intense pains, the demon-possessed, the epileptics, and the paralytics. And he healed them. ²⁵ Large

crowds followed him from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and beyond the Jordan.

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

5 When he saw the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and after he sat down, his disciples came to him.

MATTHEW PRINCIPLE 7 - PRODUCING MATURE DISCIPLES

To develop mature Christ followers, all spiritual leaders should give special attention to those who have a sincere desire to learn deep spiritual truths.

Following his baptism, Jesus established his credibility as the Messiah by teaching from synagogue to synagogue and miraculously healing people. Predictably,

“large crowds followed him” from place to place (4:25). However, Jesus was not satisfied to simply minister to the multitudes. He often turned his attention to those who took his teachings more seriously.

Apparently this happened when he ascended a steep hill overlooking the Sea of Galilee, knowing that only those who took his messiahship seriously would make ▶

▶ the effort to follow him to the top. Those who had selfish motives and were intrigued only by his miraculous powers would hesitate to negotiate the rugged incline.

It was then that Jesus shared with his disciples what are often called the Beatitudes—qualities of life reflecting hearts that Paul described as being circumcised “by the Spirit, not the letter” (Rm 2:28-29). These great truths can only be lived out in a con-



sistent, God-honoring way by those who are justified by faith like Abraham (Rm 4:13).

Reflection and Response

In what creative ways can spiritual leaders today balance reaching the multitudes with devoting quality time to those who are truly seeking to understand deeper spiritual truths?

²Then^A he began to teach them, saying:

THE BEATITUDES

- ³ “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs.
- ⁴ Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.
- ⁵ Blessed are the humble, for they will inherit the earth.
- ⁶ Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.
- ⁷ Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

- ⁸ Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.
- ⁹ Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.
- ¹⁰ Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs.

¹¹“You are blessed when they insult you and persecute you and falsely say every kind of evil against you because of me. ¹²Be glad and rejoice, because your reward is great in heaven. For that is how they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

MATTHEW PRINCIPLE 8 - REFLECTING GOD’S FULLNESS

To discover enduring spiritual fulfillment, we must be saved by grace through faith and then demonstrate those qualities of life that reflect God’s perfection.

It is humanly impossible to practice Jesus’s teachings perfectly. We need supernatural help. This is why the Savior came into the world—to enable us to experience God’s perfection **positionally** (as God sees us in Christ) and then to reflect his perfection **progressively** (becoming more and more like Christ). This helps us understand more fully the Beatitudes and how they apply to our lives today.

First, to experience salvation by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, we must

- acknowledge our spiritual poverty—be “poor in spirit” (v. 3); and
- regret our sins—be among “those who mourn” (v. 4).

When we receive God’s gift of salvation, we are justified by faith, and God



sees us as perfect through the atoning work of his Son (Rm 5:1). We are born again by the Holy Spirit who comes to dwell in us (Jn 3:6-8). This positional righteousness will enable us to progressively manifest more of God’s fullness and the “fruit of the Spirit” (Gl 5:22-23). With Christ’s help, we can

- reflect humility—be “humble” (Mt 5:5);
- pursue godliness—seek “righteousness” (v. 6);
- demonstrate concern for others—be “merciful” (v. 7);
- have a passion for holiness—be “pure” (v. 8);
- strive for unity—be “peacemakers” (v. 9); and
- accept rejection—be “persecuted because of righteousness” (vv. 10-11).

Reflection and Response

How does Paul’s prayer for the Ephesians correlate with the Beatitudes? (See Ephesians Principle 7 - Experiencing God’s Power, p. 1524.)

BELIEVERS ARE SALT AND LIGHT

¹³“You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt should lose its taste, how can it be made salty?^B It’s no longer good for anything but to be thrown out and trampled under people’s feet.

¹⁴“You are the light of the world. A city situated on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵No one lights a lamp and puts it under a basket, but rather on a lampstand, and

it gives light for all who are in the house. ¹⁶In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.

CHRIST FULFILLS THE LAW

¹⁷“Don’t think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. ¹⁸For

^A5:2 Lit *Then opening his mouth* ^B5:13 Or *how can the earth be salted?*

truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter^A or one stroke of a letter will pass away from the law until all things are accomplished.¹⁹ Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these

commands and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven. But whoever does and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

MATTHEW PRINCIPLE 9 - FULFILLING THE LAW

As Christ followers, we are to reflect the law's requirements by loving one another.

When Jesus stated that his followers were “the salt of the earth” and “the light of the world,” he used the plural pronoun “you” (vv. 13-14). Believers are to be a corporate example of Christ's love. Though each one of us is to be a personal witness, to communicate who Jesus is and why he came into the world, we need to participate in a local community of faith.

John helped us understand how these exhortations apply to the church—particularly in fulfilling the demands of the Mosaic law. After washing the disciples' feet, Jesus taught them a profound lesson:

I give you a new command: Love one another. Just as I have loved you, you are also to love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another. (Jn 13:34-35) (See Exodus Principle 26 - A New Command, p. 101.)

As Jesus and his men left the upper room and headed for the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus completed this powerful message with a prayer request to the heavenly Father for the apostles and all future Christians:

I pray not only for these, but also for those who believe in me through their word. May they all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us, so that the world may believe you sent me. (Jn 17:20-21) (See John Principle 28 - Modeling Love, p. 1371; John Principle 33 - The Results of Love, p. 1376.)

Reflection and Response

How do Paul's words in Romans verify our responsibility to fulfill the law of love? (See Romans Principle 26 - Loving One Another, p. 1456.)



²⁰ For I tell you, unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never get into the kingdom of heaven.

MURDER BEGINS IN THE HEART

²¹ “You have heard that it was said to our ancestors, **Do not murder**,^B and whoever murders will be subject to judgment. ²² But I tell you, everyone who is angry with his brother or sister^C will be subject to judgment. Whoever insults^D his brother or sister, will be subject to the court.^E Whoever says, ‘You fool!’ will be subject to hell-fire.^F ²³ So if you are offering your gift on the altar, and there you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, ²⁴ leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled with your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift. ²⁵ Reach a settlement quickly with your adversary while you're

on the way with him to the court, or your adversary will hand you over to the judge, and the judge to^G the officer, and you will be thrown into prison. ²⁶ Truly I tell you, you will never get out of there until you have paid the last penny.^H

ADULTERY BEGINS IN THE HEART

²⁷ “You have heard that it was said, **Do not commit adultery**.^I ²⁸ But I tell you, everyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. ²⁹ If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of the parts of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. ³⁰ And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of the parts of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.

MATTHEW PRINCIPLE 10 - INTERNALIZING GOD'S WORD

To overcome temptations that lead to serious sins, we must internalize God's truth in our hearts on a consistent basis.

When Jesus challenged his disciples to surpass the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees (v. 20), it would have shocked them. Those religious leaders ap-

peared extremely righteous due to the fact that they were very concerned with perfecting their outward actions. But because their relationship with God was not personal and heartfelt—not based on internalized truth—they gave in to the temptation to twist the laws of Moses and conform to their evil desires. ▶

^A 5:18 Or *not one iota*; *iota* is the smallest letter of the Gk alphabet. ^B 5:21 Ex 20:13; Dt 5:17 ^C 5:22 Other mss add *without a cause*
^D 5:22 Lit *Whoever says 'Raca'*; an Aramaic term of abuse that puts someone down, insulting one's intelligence ^E 5:22 Lit *Sanhedrin*
^F 5:22 Lit *the gehenna of fire* ^G 5:25 Other mss read *judge will hand you over to* ^H 5:26 Lit *quadans*, the smallest and least valuable Roman coin, worth 1/64 of a daily wage ^I 5:27 Ex 20:14; Dt 5:18

▶ They substituted “human tradition” for the “command of God” (Mk 7:8). (See [Mark Principle 13 - Truth and Traditions](#), p. 1274.)

Jesus taught his listeners that in God’s sight it’s possible to commit both adultery and murder without actually engaging in physical acts. In these cases, lust and hate involve an actual and deliberate intent to carry out these horrible sins. Because the temptation to sin begins in the heart, it is crucial to establish the truth of God’s Word in our



hearts in order to resist temptation (Ps 119:11; Eph 6:17).

King David’s moral lapse dramatically illustrates this principle. From God’s point of view, David had already committed both adultery and murder before he engaged in a sexual act with Bathsheba and before he ordered her husband’s death (Mt 5:27-28). (See [2 Samuel Principle 7 - From Temptation to Sin](#), p. 380.)

Reflection and Response

What can we learn from David’s terrible moral failure?

DIVORCE PRACTICES CENSURED

³¹“It was also said, **Whoever divorces his wife must give her a written notice of divorce.** ^A ³²But I tell you, everyone who divorces his wife, except in a case of sexual immorality, causes her to commit adultery. And whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

TELL THE TRUTH

³³“Again, you have heard that it was said to our ancestors, **You must not break your oath, but you must**

keep your oaths to the Lord. ^B ³⁴But I tell you, don’t take an oath at all: either by heaven, because it is God’s throne; ³⁵ or by the earth, because it is his footstool; or by Jerusalem, because it is the city of the great King. ³⁶Do not swear by your head, because you cannot make a single hair white or black. ³⁷But let your ‘yes’ mean ‘yes,’ and your ‘no’ mean ‘no.’ Anything more than this is from the evil one.

MATTHEW PRINCIPLE 11 - PRACTICING INTEGRITY

We are to build all relationships on trust and honesty.

Most of the people listening to Jesus’s sermon that day on the hillside overlooking the Sea of Galilee had only one source for spiritual truth—their religious leaders. Unfortunately, they had been taught that it’s perfectly right and just in God’s sight for men to divorce their wives for almost any reason and to make commitments they never planned to keep.



Jesus clarified this issue. Divorce is indeed a serious sin, though justified for a spouse whose partner is unfaithful

sexually. And, when we make commitments, we are to be totally honest, with no hidden agendas and no wavering for selfish reasons. When we say yes or no, we should mean what we say. This, of course, includes our marriage vows. (See [Numbers Principle 38 - Faith Promises](#), p. 200.)

Reflection and Response

How do Paul’s exhortations in his letter to the Ephesians correlate with this principle of trust and honesty? (See [Ephesians Principle 12 - Walking in the Light](#), p. 1527.)

GO THE SECOND MILE

³⁸“You have heard that it was said, **An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.** ^C ³⁹But I tell you, don’t resist ^D an evildoer. On the contrary, if anyone slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. ⁴⁰As for the one who wants to sue you and take away your shirt, let him have your coat as well. ⁴¹And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two. ⁴²Give to the one who asks you, and don’t turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.

LOVE YOUR ENEMIES

⁴³“You have heard that it was said, **Love your neighbor** ^E and hate your enemy. ⁴⁴But I tell you, love your enemies ^F and pray for those who ^G persecute you,

⁴⁵so that you may be ^H children of your Father in heaven. For he causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. ⁴⁶For if you love those who love you, what reward will you have? Don’t even the tax collectors do the same? ⁴⁷And if you greet only your brothers and sisters, what are you doing out of the ordinary? ^I Don’t even the Gentiles ^J do the same? ⁴⁸Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

^A5:31 Dt 24:1 ^B5:33 Lv 19:12; Nm 30:2; Dt 23:21 ^C5:38 Ex 21:24; Lv 24:20; Dt 19:21 ^D5:39 Or don’t set yourself against, or don’t retaliate against
^E5:43 Lv 19:18 ^F5:44 Other mss add *bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you,* ^G5:44 Other mss add *mistreat you and*
^H5:45 Or *may become, or may show yourselves to be* ^I5:47 Or *doing that is superior; lit doing more* ^J5:47 Other mss read *tax collectors*