

LIFE GROUP

Participant Guide

20 GOD 26

FIRST

MATTHEW 6:33

NAME _____

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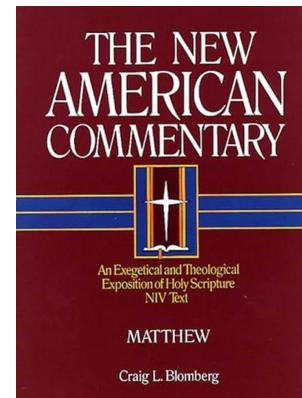
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COMMENTARY FOR THIS MATTHEW STUDY



LETTER FROM KEITH

Hey WCC Family,

Are you ready to step into a new year? I know I am.

As we look back, 2025 was filled with both challenges and blessings. And while none of us welcome hardship, every difficult season becomes an opportunity for our faith to grow. The real challenge is how we respond—whether we continue to trust God, seek Him in prayer, and lean into His comfort, peace, and presence when life feels uncertain. As followers of Jesus, we desire to pursue Him in everything we do and say, with all that we are.

As we begin 2026, we want to encourage and challenge one another with a simple but powerful focus: God First. That's our theme for the year.

Our first sermon series will take us through one of Jesus' most profound teachings—the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7). In these chapters, Jesus invites us into a way of life that places God's Kingdom at the center of everything. One truth we'll discover along the way is that putting God first isn't about perfection—it's about priority. While we won't always follow perfectly, we are called to continually seek, practice, and prioritize the Kingdom of God in our daily lives.

Jesus reminds us in Matthew 6:33: "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."

As we begin this journey together, take some time to read through Matthew 5–7. Pray and ask the Holy Spirit to guide you—to help you put God first, to seek His Kingdom and righteousness above all else. No matter what 2026 holds, we can move forward with confidence, knowing God is with us as we seek Him.

Blessings,
Keith Comp
Senior Minister

START TALKING

1. Give some examples of groups that are more selective and closed off and give some examples of groups that are more open to anyone being included. (Examples: Harvard vs. Public School, A Club Baseball Team vs. A Park League Baseball Team)
2. When it comes to a country or a kingdom, what qualifications have to be met for you to be a citizen?

START THINKING

1. Jesus begins the Sermon on the Mount by expressing who is invited into the Kingdom he came to establish. Read Matthew 5:3 to identify who is invited into Christ's Kingdom.
2. The phrase "Poor in Spirit" relates to someone who acknowledges their helplessness and complete need for Jesus's redeeming work. Why is that important to being a part of His Kingdom?
3. Read Matthew 5:4-12. What are the blessings we receive when we belong to Christ's Kingdom?
 - a. Commentary from Commentaries: The word "blessed" refers to those who are and/or will be happy, fortunate, or as those who are "to be congratulated" because of God's response to their behavior or situation. -Craig Blomberg

START SHARING

1. Which of these beatitudes sticks out to you the most? Why do you think God is bringing that specific blessing to your attention?
2. Look through the list of beatitudes again. How do these blessings speak to our purpose in life as Christians?
 - a. When Jesus describes attributes like hungering and thirsting for righteousness, peacemaking, and showing mercy, it provides us with direction on what God wants to see in our lives.
3. Our theme this year is God First. Thinking back to what we discussed today, how do the Beatitudes tie into this idea of living a God First life?

START PRAYING

1. Pray for High Hill Christian Camp. Throughout the year, we send people of all ages to High Hill, whose goal is to create a God First life within the campers who attend. Pray that those who attend camp this year would recognize that they are poor in spirit and need Christ in their lives.

START DOING

1. Memorize Matthew 5:3-12 this week. Meditating on the Beatitudes and committing them to memory is a way that we can partner with the Holy Spirit in creating a God First life.

START TALKING

1. **What is one seasoning or sauce you can't live without?**
2. **Pretend an alien visits your home and asks you why you use seasoning and sauces. What would you say?**

START THINKING

1. **Read Matthew 5:13. Considering the conversation you had earlier about seasoning, why do you think Jesus relates Christians to salt?**
2. **Read Matthew 5:14-15. What is the second example Jesus uses for Christians? How is it similar to salt and how is it different?**
3. **Read Matthew 5:16. Considering the illustration of salt and light, why are good deeds essential for a believer?**
4. **Look at the three figures listed below. Describe what their faith looks like on a day-to-day basis.**
 - a. Person One: A Christian Without Good Deeds Seen By The World
 - b. Person Two: A Person Unknown To The World Full Of Good Deeds
 - c. Person Three: A Christian Who Is Missing Good Deeds and Is Unknown to the World

START SHARING

1. Out of the three figures listed above, which one do you most resemble? Why?
2. What is hindering you from being salt and light? What can you do to change it?

START PRAYING

1. Pray for Righteous Rides. All around the world, missionaries are shining as light in countries living in darkness. Righteous Rides is a local ministry that helps international missionaries access affordable, stress-free stateside transportation during home assignment. Righteous Rides seeks to be salt for a group of believers who often come home weary. Please be praying for Righteous Rides.

START DOING

1. This week, find time to hang out with someone who isn't Christian, or with someone whose faith journey you don't know. For example, grabbing breakfast with a coworker, inviting someone you met at the gym to coffee, inviting a family over from your child's sports team to dinner, etc. Make it your goal to learn their story.

START TALKING

1. Has your relationship with the Bible changed throughout your lifetime? How have your views and interaction with Scripture changed over the years, positively and negatively?
2. Today, we are going to talk about hermeneutics. Hermeneutics is the principles and methods of interpreting the Bible. What are some wrong ways you have seen people interact with Scripture?

START THINKING

1. Listed below are three different hermeneutical principles we should apply to read the Bible well. This list of three isn't exhaustive, but it's a good starting point. Read Matthew 5:17-20 and identify each hermeneutical principle in these four verses.
 - a. Let Jesus be the ultimate interpreter of Scripture. Jesus sets the interpretive agenda for the entire Bible.
 - b. Obedience to Scripture is a part of interpreting Scripture. Interpretation aims at transformation.
 - c. We can't pick and choose which Scripture we'll follow and obey. "To refuse his right to rule any of our ethics or behavior is to deny his lordship." Craig Keener
2. What would it look like for a Christian to reject these three hermeneutical principles listed above? Describe the danger that can bring.

START SHARING

1. The religious teachers in Jesus' day were skilled in interpreting the Bible but fell short in obedience to the Bible. Do you think that still happens today? What does it look like?
2. What verses are you tempted to set aside? What's tempting about this notion?
3. Think about your relationship with the Bible in 2026. What's one area you would like to grow in throughout the year?

START PRAYING

1. Pray for Josh & Susan Sanchez with Outreach International. They oversee a church plant in Colima City, Mexico. Their goal is to teach the Bible and plant more churches in an area that is in desperate need of the Gospel. Please be praying for the Sanchez family.

START DOING

1. Commit to spending time in God's Word every day this week. You can pick a devotional plan through the YouVersion Bible App, find a seven-day devotional online, or read ahead through the Sermon on the Mount.

START TALKING

1. Pastor Tim Keller was quoted saying, “When an entire culture loses the ability to forgive and instead defaults to outrage, anger becomes the air we breathe.” Would you apply that type of culture to America today? Why or why not?
2. Contempt is defined as, “The feeling that a person or a thing is beneath consideration, worthless, or deserving scorn.” Share an example of when you experienced contempt or saw a moment when someone treated someone else with contempt.

START THINKING

1. The religious leaders in Jesus’ day took pride in their obedience of the command to not murder. Jesus addresses their pride by getting at the heart of this Old Testament command: contempt. Read Matthew 5:21-22. How do the examples Jesus shared all tie into contempt?
2. Read Matthew 5:23-24. What do these two verses teach us about the heart of God when we struggle with contempt toward someone else?
 - a. True worship is when we profess God with our lips AND our lives. God desires that we worship Him, not just on Sundays, but every day, surrendering to Him. Just like in the example Jesus shared, we may be tempted to worship God on Sundays while ignoring the issues that need to be addressed in our lives.
3. Read Matthew 5:25-26. What do these verses teach us about forgiveness?
 - a. God’s heart is that when in conflict, we seek to forgive. When we allow anger to harbor and grow in our hearts, that is when contempt starts to take over.

START SHARING

1. Jesus gave extreme and subtle examples when discussing contempt. In what ways do you struggle with contempt?
2. Every single one of us has stories of being hurt by someone else. In this journey of forgiveness, what have you done that's been helpful? What have you done that's been harmful?
3. Is there someone you need to reconcile with today? If appropriate, share that with the group so that they can keep you accountable in settling the matter quickly.

START PRAYING

1. Pray for Jireh India Missions. The country of India operates under a caste system where orphans are often treated with contempt due to belonging to a lower caste. This ministry in India shares the Gospel by providing homes and education for orphans at the House of Peace. They also teach widows to sew so they can provide for their children. Please be praying for Jireh India Mission!

START DOING

1. After your life group time, spend some time in prayer. If you are currently harboring anger in your heart, repent before God over that person or that group toward whom you are showing contempt. Thank the Lord for not showing contempt toward you in your sin!

START TALKING

1. When you were a kid, what was a rule you didn't understand at the time but later realized was for your protection?
2. What's something you "cut out" of your life for your own good? Did it make a difference?

START THINKING

1. Read Matthew 5:27-28. How can the application of this verse protect the person looking and the person potentially being looked at?
2. Earlier, we talked about cutting things out of our life for our own good. Read Matthew 5:29-30. What do you think Jesus is saying AND not saying within these verses?
 - a. Using graphic language, Jesus is declaring we should take our sin seriously doing whatever it takes to cast it off of us. (Colossians 3:5)
3. Matthew 5:31-32 ties into those similar themes of protection using the illustration of divorce to tie into the larger principle of faithfulness, purity, and protection. A famous Jewish rabbi named Hillel taught that a man could divorce his wife for almost any displeasing thing, including trivial matters such as burning a meal. This created what scholars call an "any-cause divorce." With that culture in mind, read verses 31-32. How is Jesus protecting women within these verses?
4. Read Matthew 19:1-6. What is God's heart toward marriage and how does divorce undermine that?

START SHARING

If you have been divorced, know that you are not defined by that season or the pain it caused. You are defined by the love and redemption of Christ. Included in your notes is a QR code to scan to an article that can help you on that journey of healing.



1. Going back to our conversation about lust, what's the difference between 'avoiding doing wrong' & 'actively pursuing purity'? What does it look like?
2. Throughout our discussion today, what's been something God has been laying on your heart?
3. Regarding lust and divorce, how can we be a community that pushes grace and redemption over shame and isolation?

START PRAYING

1. Pray for Show Me Christian Youth Home. When talking about the effects of divorce, not having a mother and father in the home can impact the child's development. Show Me Christian Youth Home goes beyond the limits of traditional foster care, children living at Show-Me Christian Youth Home receive therapeutic benefits from specialized programs in a Christ-centered, family environment. Working together, they help each child - physically, academically, emotionally, and spiritually - overcome the struggles of their past and prepare for a successful future. Please be praying for this ministry!

START DOING

1. If you are actively caught in the stronghold of lust or pornography, reach out to your life group leaders for prayer, accountability, and support.

START TALKING

1. Pastor Martin-Lloyd Jones was quoted as saying, “The glory of the gospel is that when the church is absolutely different from the world, she invariably attracts it.” If you had to put this quote into your own words, what would you say?
2. Can you think of a Christian in your life who excels at living differently from the world around them? What makes them different and what’s inspiring about their life?

START THINKING

1. In Matthew 5:33-37, Jesus talks about oaths and how Christians need to live differently with our promises. To understand this section, we have to understand the culture of oaths during the time of Christ. Read the excerpt below by Biblical scholar, Craig Keener.
 - a. Some people apparently thought it harmless to deceive if they swore oaths by something like their right hand. The further removed the oath was from the actual name of God, the less danger they faced for violating it. Jewish teachers had to arbitrate which oaths were actually binding as allusions to God’s name. Jesus teaches that all oaths invoke God’s witness equally. Just as heaven, earth, and Jerusalem belong to God (Mt 5:34–35), so do the hairs on our heads (5:36); although we can dye our hair, we have no genuine control over its aging (compare 6:27). All oaths implicitly call God to witness, because everything that exists was made by him.
2. With that context in mind, read Matthew 5:33-37. What do you think Jesus is saying here? How does it relate to integrity and keeping your word?
3. Read Matthew 5:38-42. What do these five verses teach us about Roman culture and how Christ wants his followers to live differently?
4. Do we live in an “eye for an eye” culture today? Give some examples.

5. **Read Matthew 5:43-48. What was the culture around love in the first century (verse 46). What two commands does Christ give us in regard to our enemies (verse 44)?**

START SHARING

1. **How have you experienced the pains of not keeping your word? How have you experienced the blessings of keeping it?**
2. **Articulate reasons why someone may justify “eye for an eye” behavior. If Jesus was sitting with your group, how would he respond to some of those reasons?**
3. **What does loving your enemy look like for you? What would it look like to live differently than the world in that relationship?**

START PRAYING

1. **Pray for Daniel and Kelsey. Daniel & Kelsey serve in a closed country in North Africa where Christianity is viewed as a dangerous religion. Daniel and Kelsey are leading others to Christ while teaching in the community and living out the love of Jesus. Pray for their ministry!**

START DOING

1. **This week, keep a list of promises you make on a notepad or in your notes app on your phone. Make it your goal to try and follow-through on every promise you make.**



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BIBLE BOWL INFORMATIONAL MEETING

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