

An aerial photograph of a winding asphalt road that curves through a dense, green forest. Several cars are visible on the road, including a red car at the top, a white car, a blue car, and a white van. The text 'SET FREE' is written in large, white, brush-stroke style letters across the middle of the road, and 'WE FOLLOW' is written in smaller, white, block letters below it.

SET FREE

WE FOLLOW

TERM 1 2021
BIBLE STUDY BOOK

BIBLE STUDY PROGRAM – TERM 1 2021

Matthew 8-12

Set Free, We Follow

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Set Free, We Follow.

Matthew 8-12

Welcome back to the Gospel of Matthew. We first started making our way through this book in 2019 when we covered chapters 1-4. Last year, 2020, we did the Sermon on the Mount, working through chapters 5-7. This year we will cover chapters 8-12.

Structure

- Chapters 8-10
 - 8:1-22: Three miraculous actions and the call to follow.
 - 8:23-9:17: Three miraculous actions and the call to follow.
 - 9:18-10:42: Three miraculous actions and the sending out of the 12 apostles.

In this section we see Jesus bring life and restoration to Israel. He has preached that the poor in spirit will be blessed and now he puts his money where his mouth is. However, interspersed in the healings and miracles is the call to 'follow'. Entering into the life and restoration that Jesus offers requires that we do more than just observe him from afar. We must actively follow him. Furthermore, we must be prepared to be sent out on a dangerous mission to share new life with the lost.

- Chapters 11-12 - Responses to the ministry and mission.
 - 11:1-30: Jesus is not accepted as the Messiah.
 - 12:1-45: Jesus is opposed by the Pharisees.

In this section we see various responses to the ministry and mission of Jesus and his 12 apostles. We see doubt, indifference and outright opposition. Jesus' claims about his identity and authority are huge and they are backed up by the power of his miracles. However, many of the lost sheep of Israel refuse to accept him. This rejection will be the subject of the parables in chapter 13.

Over all, there are many opportunities for groups through this series. We will be reminded of the renewal and new life that Jesus brings but will also be challenged by his call to follow no matter the cost. As Jesus sends out his 12 apostles to the lost sheep of Israel we will be reminded that we are sent to all nations. As we see the various responses to Jesus and his message we will be able to consider our own.

If you'd like to spend some time getting to know more about the gospel of Matthew as a whole I suggest the following websites:

- <https://bibleproject.com/learn/matthew>
- <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/course/matthew/#overview>

Study 1 - Made Clean: Follow Me

Matthew 8:1-22

Talk

- 1) When you describe your faith, do you ever say 'I'm a follower of Jesus'? Why or why not? How is describing yourself in this way different from saying 'I'm a Christian' or 'I believe in Jesus'?

Big Picture

- 2) Have a think back over our Matthew studies from the last 2 years. Can you recall any distinctions about how Matthew structures his account of the life of Jesus? How may that help us as we start this next section.

Read and Investigate: Matthew 8:1-22

- 3) Jesus comes down from the mountain like a life-giving river, healing and setting free all who come to him. What stands out to you in Matthew's account of the 3 healings? Are there any common threads or themes that hold them together?

- 4) Following the healings, we are taught something about their meaning and the nature of Jesus' ministry. What do we learn from this quotation from Isaiah 53:4 about Jesus' identity? What do we learn about the healings that took place?

- 5) Jesus heals, we learn something of his identity and then learn something of what it means to follow him. In the context of the passage, what has prompted these sudden offers to 'follow'?

- 6) Last week we saw Jesus' radical inclusion of those who come to him in faith. Lepers and gentiles are loved and restored to the community of believers. How do you feel about Jesus' change of tone here? Why do we feel uneasy about his response, especially to the disciple who wishes to bury his father?

- 7) "Let the dead bury their own dead". How do Jesus' miracles connect to these stark words?

Discuss and Apply

- 8) We may be uneasy about this call to follow, yet Jesus says what he says. What 'but firsts' get in the way of our wholehearted discipleship? Has following Jesus ever cost you anything? Have you ever had an opportunity, act of service or call to a ministry that you declined because of the cost to you?

- 9) Here we see both the radical inclusion of those in need of grace and a very high bar for those wishing to call themselves disciples. We often struggle to hold both things together in our personal lives and churches. We tend either towards radical inclusion without the expectation of costly obedience, or we set a high bar for the life of a disciple and leave those who don't meet it alienated and shut out. Which do you think you tend towards? Which do you think our church tends towards?

Prayers Week 1

Pray for Brett and Mardi, Evie, Harriet, Olivia, and Willow Middleton. Please pray for Brett as he seeks to encourage, serve and build up the wider staff team. Pray for wisdom that he and the team develop ministry plans that will help St Luke's stay faithful and growing into the future.

Pray for our Church Wardens: Colin Adams, Colin Contessa and Joel Garlato. Pray for our Parish Councillors: Laurie Davidson, Amanda Garlato, Elise Adams, Celia Hacker, Eliza Lucas, David Parkes, James Russell, Simon Veltmeyer (also our treasurer) and Kath Telfer. Pray for our Parish Nominators: Timothy Clipsham, Michael Easton, Megan Smith, Amanda Garlato, Louise Parkes. Pray for our Synod Reps: Michael Easton and Amanda Garlato.

Pray that the local school programs not running during the Covid season will be able to continue this year.

- School Lunch program
- Kids Hope Mentors
- Scripture teaching
- School Chaplains
- Breakfast Club at Miranda Public
- Breakfast Club Port Hacking High School.



Pray for Matt and Lauren, Ezra, Joanna and Samuel Thomas and their mission work with OMF International to an unreached people group in South East Asia.

Study 2 - Forgiven: Follow Me

Matthew 8:23-9:17

Talk

- 1) Have you ever followed someone into a dangerous situation? Has following Jesus ever led you into a dangerous situation? Have you ever felt Jesus leading you somewhere but you resisted due to the danger or difficulty?

Read and Investigate: Matthew 8:23-9:17

- 2) What structural similarities do you notice between this week's passage and last week's passage? How is it different from last week?
- 3) What stands out to you in Matthew's account of the 3 miracles this week? Are there any common threads or themes that hold them together?
- 4) Following the miracles we are again challenged to consider the call to follow Jesus. Why would the calling of a tax collector and the meal that follows have offended the Pharisees so greatly?
- 5) What do we learn about the mission of Jesus from his response to the Pharisees? How does it radically differ from the mission of the Pharisees?
- 6) Why does Jesus allude to Hosea 6:6? How is the situation in Hosea similar to what Jesus here encounters?

- 7) Fasting was a discipline observed by some during times of national calamity, mourning and repentance. Presumably it was observed at this time due to the Roman occupation and the longing for God to restore the fortunes of Israel. Why don't Jesus and the disciples fast?

Discuss and Apply

- 8) Jesus uses the metaphor of 'the doctor and the sick' to explain his ministry of forgiveness. If Jesus is the doctor, and the sinner is the sick, what is the location of the surgery? How might this help us in our own outreach and mission?
- 9) Jesus calls Matthew: 'follow me'. Where is the first place Matthew is led? What does this tell us about following Jesus?
- 10) Even though the disciples have 'little faith', Jesus hears and acts with power to save them. At what moment might this be of comfort to us?

Prayers Week 2

Pray for Jennie and Don Everist. Pray for Jennie as she ministers and cares for the people who attend the Thursday Communion Service. Pray for her as she continues to pray and care for those who are unable to attend, due to Covid.

Nicole Murray working with our Young Adults. Luke Murray working on Sundays as our Student Minister. Pray that their time in preparation is productive and good for all they serve.

Pray for our Prime Minister and government. Pray for our state and federal members, our Premier and government. We pray also for our local Council including our Mayor.

Pray for those who serve to protect our country. Pray for health and safety for the service men and women and their Chaplains both here and overseas. Pray for their families waiting at home.

Pray that the word of God which we hear on Sundays might shape how we live Monday to Friday.

Thank God that we have the opportunity to represent Christ in how we speak and act in the workplace.



Pray for Shane and Ruth, Kye, Joel, and Finn Sparks and their mission work making disciples in Gijon, Spain.

Study 3 - Healed: Follow Me

Matthew 9:18-38

Talk

- 1) How many people do you think you spoke to yesterday or today? Did you have any opportunities to share your faith? Did you take those opportunities or ignore them?
- 2) Life is finite. There is only so much time, money, people-power and energy available. How much of our church's finite resources should be expended on reaching out to the lost in the Shire? How much should be expended on care of people who are already Christians?

Read and Investigate: Matthew 9:18-38

- 3) Again we see a cycle of healing before a cycle of teaching. What are the themes that Matthew emphasises in this cycle? Are they similar or different to the previous cycles?
- 4) The growing crowd and the growing fame lead the Pharisees to spin their own story about Jesus. What is it? How might this help us trust the reality of Jesus' miraculous powers?
- 5) What title do the blind-men give Jesus? This is the first time Jesus is referred to with the title he is first given in Matthew (1:1). What is the irony here?

Prayers Week 3

Pray for Tim and Shona, Annika, Hamish, Edward and Hugo Goldsmith. Pray for Tim as our Community Pastor. Pray for Tim as he also heads up our Local Mission profile for St Luke's and focuses on outreach and evangelism.

Pray for Sharyn as Office Administrator, to be able to facilitate and implement new procedures well.

Pray for Eddie as he assists with the bookkeeping on a Wednesday.

Pray for Lisa in Office Admin, working hard on keeping all our records in the Elvanto database. With so many regulations, this is a large job in a parish.



Pray for Sarah and husband Tim and her work in India with BCTI and SIM.

Study 4 - Sent to the lost

Matthew 10:1-15

Talk

- 1) "Between 2001 and 2011 the number of Christians born in Britain fell by 5.3 million — about 10,000 a week. If that rate of decline continues, the mission of St Augustine to the English, together with that of the Irish saints to the Scots, will come to an end in 2067...Anglicanism will disappear from Britain in 2033. One day the last native-born Christian will die and that will be that". Damian Thompson, 2015.

How do you feel about this projection? Do you think Australia is in a similar situation? Do you think our church behaves, plans and prioritizes as if this is true?

- 2) *"The church is not a community that has a mission; the church is a mission. Disciples of Jesus are not saved people who happen to have a task to fulfill; being saved means being caught up in the mission of Jesus".* - P.J. Leithhart. Do you agree?

Big Picture

- 3) Let's think again about the way Matthew structures his account of Jesus' life. Jesus is depicted as re-living the history of Israel. The Sermon on the Mount matches up with Sinai. Matthew 8-9, themed around the call to 'follow', matches up with the time Israel spent in the wilderness. What might we expect to come next?

Read and Investigate: Matthew 10:1-15

- 4) 10:2-4 is the first reference in the gospel to the 12. Why is this a fitting moment to set this group aside from the wider group of disciples (10:6)? What is being reflected in their change of title (10:2)?
- 5) Jesus sets up the ministry of the 12 with the metaphor of the harvest. They are the workers sent out into the harvest. In what ways is 'harvest' the appropriate image for what Jesus calls them to do?

6) What teaching from the Sermon on the Mount are the apostles being called to put into practice here? What might this tell us about the relationship between what we preach and the lives we live?

7) What will be the mark that someone has truly received the message the apostles bring (10:6-10)?

Discuss and Apply

8) How might the metaphor of 'harvest' help us engage in mission?

9) How do the aims and practices of our mission work differ from that of the apostles? How is the pattern of their mission the same as the pattern of our mission?

10) Are there moments in our outreach when we need to '*shake the dust off our feet and leave that home or town*'? How might we know when that moment has arrived?

Prayers Week 4

Praise God for our Bible Study leaders and for their faithful work in teaching and ministering to us throughout the term.

Pray for our witness to our local community – especially as more units are developed and more people move into the area. Pray for opportunities to connect with our community.

Pray for peace and wise leadership in our world. Pray that there would be opportunities for Christians to share the love, peace and saving grace that Jesus offers to all.



Pray for Kylie Zietsch and her work at Johannesburg Bible College, South Africa.

Study 5 - Sent to the dangerous

Matthew 10:16-11:1

Talk

- 1) What do you think is the most common command in the bible?

- 2) “Inoculation introduces a mild form of a disease into a body, thereby stimulating the growth of antibodies and rendering the person immune to getting a full-blown version of the sickness. In the same way, post-Christian society contains unique resistance and “antibodies” against full-blown Christianity.” - Timothy Keller

In the above quote Tim Keller argues that our society's mild exposure to Christianity, perhaps through childhood activities, media or history, doesn't just make it non-christian but particularly resistant to Christianity. Do you think this is true?

Read and investigate: Matthew 10:16-11:1

- 3) “Wise as snakes and pure as doves”. This mission the 12 are sent out to undertake will need wisdom/shrewdness and purity/innocence. Why? Do you think the same is true for us?

- 4) Jesus gives the disciples a great deal of power and yet it does not keep them from persecution. Have a read of verses 17-20 and 24 again. What are some of the reasons God allows persecution of the apostles?

- 5) In 10:21-23 we read of increasing turmoil before an event of some sort, described as the coming of “the son of man”. It seems the mission of the apostles to the lost sheep of Israel will finish at that point. What is the ‘coming of the son of man’ and why does it affect the mission of the apostles?

6) As you read through Jesus preparing the apostles for mission, what warnings particularly stand out to you. Do you feel they could equally be said to us?

7) What words of comfort stand out to you? Do you think they equally apply to us?

Discuss and Apply

- 8) The most common command in the bible is “do not fear/be afraid”. It is given many times here in Matthew 10. There are many reasons for the apostles to be afraid of sharing the gospel and many reasons we might also be afraid to do so. What are they? What words of comfort from Jesus particularly apply to these fears?
- 9) 10:37-39 are some of the most stark and challenging words of Jesus. The mission of the apostles is likened to taking up their cross and following Jesus. Holding instead to the things of this world will make them unworthy of Jesus. What earthly things hold us back from our mission to take the good news to the nations (including the Shire)?

Prayers Week 5

Thank God for his loving provision in drawing us to him and making us his children and heirs. Pray for members of our families and those close to us who do not know Jesus as Lord and Saviour. Pray for both wisdom and boldness in how to share the good news we have with those who are nearest and dearest to us.

Pray for Sam and Jess, Percy, Lois, Finn and Cleo Morton. Pray for Sam as our Services Pastor, preparing the elements, which make up our Sunday services. Pray for Sam as he also heads up Youth Ministry and high school Scripture.

Pray for Sandy Rigby as she supports Sam in ministering to the youth of St Lukes. We continually bring before God, high school scripture, that he will continue to make paths for us to teach over this disrupted year.



Pray for Andrew and Adele, Isaac, Lucy, and Finn Southerton and their church plant in Wellington, City on a Hill, New Zealand.

Study 6 - Sent to the hard hearted

Matthew 11:2-30

Talk

- 1) What is one of your biggest moments of failure?
- 2) Is there someone you have been sharing Jesus with for a long period of time and you are just not getting anywhere?

Read and investigate: Matthew 11:2-30

- 3) The precursor to chapter 11 is the disciples being sent on mission to the lost sheep of Israel. The section ends with Jesus himself joining them in this mission (11:1). Considering the tone of 11:2-30, how is the mission to the lost sheep of Israel progressing?
- 4) Why may John now doubt the identity of Jesus? Consider the contrasting ministries of John and Jesus and also John's circumstances.
- 5) What does Jesus want John to know about Jesus?
- 6) What does Jesus want the crowd to know about John the Baptist?
- 7) What does Jesus want the crowd to know about the time they are in?

8) What does Jesus want the crowd to know about themselves?

9) What is Jesus' response to the failure of that generation to have faith in him (11:20-30)?

Discuss and apply

10) In this passage we see that the ministry of Jesus and his apostles has no lead to spiritual revival. This generation do not call him Lord but a drunkard. Neither John's 'fire and brimstone' nor Jesus' restoring miracles are enough for them. Do you ever feel discouraged in your efforts to share Jesus? Do you ever feel like no matter the angle you take with people it'll just never be enough for them? How might Jesus prayer and call in 11:25-30 encourage us?

Prayers Week 6

Pray for Cam, Katrina, Peyton and Thea Harte. Pray for Cam as he heads up Children's Ministry, including KOS (Kids on Sunday), Primary Scripture, Children's Thursday arvo programs.

Pray for Jess Moran as she overseas our Crèche and Playtime programs. We pray for energy and enthusiasm as she looks after this age group as well as providing support and encouragement for the parents.

Pray for our ongoing and various Children's, Youth, and Young Adults Ministries; that God would be using the leaders and volunteers to sow seeds and help people grow into mature and loving relationships with Jesus. Pray that this would be a great witness to the wider community.



Pray for Geoff and Liz, Johanna, Will, Tom and Zoe Robson and their work with Christian Union in Canterbury University, Christchurch, New Zealand.



Pray for Rob and Jo, Lili, and Jemma Copland. Pray for Rob's work as the Anglican Chaplain at the University of Wollongong and for his work as Campus Director of the University Bible Group.

Study 7 - Rest

Matthew 12:1-21

Talk

- 1) How do you rest? Do you consider any particular day your 'day of rest'?
- 2) What does everyone know about the Sabbath? Why was it so important in the life of Israel? How does it relate to God's character, creation and Israel's freedom from slavery?

Read and Investigate: Matthew 11:28-12:21

- 3) What is the first accusation against Jesus? How might Jesus' actions be interpreted as 'unlawful'?
- 4) How does Jesus respond (cf 1 Samuel 21:1-7)?
- 5) Is it a simple legal argument, where Jesus claims that his actions are lawful, or is there more going on?
- 6) Jesus again quotes from Hosea 6:6. How is the second moment of conflict, the healing of the man with the shrivelled hand on the sabbath, connected to this verse?

- 7) Consider 11:28-30 and 12:15-21. How do these verses provide the context for Jesus' words and actions in 12:1-14?

- 8) "But the Pharisees went out and plotted how they might kill Jesus". What has Jesus done to inspire such a response?

- 9) How is talk of Jesus death fitting in a section where Jesus promises to bring rest?

Discuss and Apply

- 10) God makes laws to give his people rest. Jesus called us to 'take his yoke upon us and learn from him' that we will have rest. This seems counterintuitive to us. Laws, learning and obedience are not how our culture thinks it will find rest. Our culture tends to think freedom and self-focus will give us the rest we yearn for. Has it worked for our culture?

- 11) How are your 'rest' and 'peace' levels? Have you found rest in Jesus? In the passage, to do so means taking the 'yoke' upon ourselves. It's easy and light, but a yoke nonetheless. How might obedience and working for Jesus provide a rest that our world is not able to provide?

Prayers Week 7

Please pray that our new system for welcoming people would be useful and encouraging to keep loving new people. Pray that we would continue to connect with hospitality and warmth even with the current restrictions in place.

We pray for Evan Caddy our Ministry Trainee, with us over the next 2 years, working alongside Brett and Sam.



Pray for David and Kathryn, Reuben and Felix Luis. Pray for David as Campus Director of Geelong Christian Union at the Deakin University Campus in Victoria.

Study 8 - The stronger man

Matthew 12:22-37

Talk

- 1) C.S. Lewis warns against obsessing over the devil as if the powers of evil are an equal and opposite match to those of God. He also writes books meant to warn Christians about not taking the devil's plans seriously enough. Would you say you have a balanced attitude towards the devil?
- 2) There isn't much talk about satan or evil spirits in the old testament. Can you think of any? Where in the bible do we find most of the demonic activity concentrated?

Read and Investigate: Matthew 12:22-37

- 3) What is the background for this episode? How does it connect to last week's?
- 4) The presenting issue is a demon-possessed man brought to Jesus for healing. Why, upon Jesus healing the man, do they wonder if Jesus is the 'Son of David'? Up until now Jesus has been living out the Moses/wilderness era. What OT era might we now be shifting to?
- 5) The Pharisees, eager to accuse Jesus of anything, go on the attack. What exactly prompts the Pharisees to attack? What does this tell you about their true concerns? What is the logic of Jesus' response in 12:24-28.
- 6) How does Jesus characterise his ministry in 12:29? What do we learn about our world in this verse?

7) By what power does Jesus claim to be casting out demons? Does this help us understand 12:30-32?

8) How do the final warnings in 12:33-37 continue Jesus' argument?

Discuss and Apply

9) When you were 'plundered from the strong man', what were you set free from? What ways of life or patterns of thought were you able to break free of in the power of Jesus?

10) "A tree is recognised by its fruit"? What fruit might we expect to see in the lives of those set free by Jesus? Spend some time sharing with each other the fruit you see growing in each other's lives.

11) In what areas of life do you fear 'the strong man' gaining a foot-hold again?

Prayers Week 8

Pray that St Luke's as a community would be a welcoming family to the new person who walks through our doors, as well as the person who's been walking through our doors for many years. Pray that God would help us to love the people as he first loved us. Give St Luke's a spirit of hospitality, care and inclusivity.



Pray for Peter, Katharine, Noah and Atticus Yock. Pray as they work amongst the students at the campus of Griffith University.

Study 9 - The sign

Matthew 12:38-45

Talk

- 1) Was believing in Jesus a matter of 'evidence' for you? Is it for anyone you know? What 'evidence' are people after before they believe in Jesus?

Read and Apply: Matthew 12:38-50

- 2) What is the background for this episode? How does it connect to last week's?
- 3) When the Pharisees make demands of Jesus and ask for a sign, who does it remind you of (Matthew 4:1-11)? How does this make sense of his harsh words to the Pharisees about them being a 'brood of vipers' and 'wicked'?
- 4) When the Pharisees ask for a sign, what do you think they are asking for? Considering the many miracles they have seen, what more do they want?
- 5) What is the sign that will be given (12:39-42)? What two aspects of the Jonah story will be the signs that Jesus acts in the power of the Holy Spirit?
- 6) How does Jesus' parable of the evil/unclean spirit fit in the context? How does it continue his condemnation of the generation rejecting him?

Discuss and Apply

- 7) Jesus calls the generation rejecting him 'adulterous'. What does this teach us about their rejection of Jesus? What might it teach us about those we know who reject Jesus?

- 8) As 'adulterers', it would be wrong to see the Pharisees as people with genuine doubts about Jesus. There is a difference between the genuine doubts we all face at various points in our Christian lives and the desire the Pharisees have to discredit and discount Jesus? What are some of the genuine doubts you have experienced? Have you experienced other times when doubts have been the 'cover story', giving validation to sin or back-sliding?

- 9) Have you ever seen 12:43-45 play out in people's lives? They experience some of the good of Jesus, but don't place him as king of their hearts and end up in a whole-hearted rebellion against him?

Prayers Week 9

Pray for English as a Second Language classes each Friday during school term. Give thanks for Marina and her team as they continue to assess when it is safe to teach and encourage this vulnerable group of people.

Thank God for the many and varied resources available to us as a parish. As we seek to witness to the goodness of God daily, pray that we might make the most of opportunities to invite people we know to church. Pray that God would be preparing the hearts of people we could invite to a service at St Luke's.



Pray for Marty & Katrina, Simeon, Jed and Luke Feltham, preparing to serve in Kenya with CMS.