

New Testament Challenge

March 1 – May 2, 2009

United Baptist Church – Old Town, ME

Small Group Study Questions – Week #1 – Starting March 1

Ice Breaker Question:

What do you know about your genealogy? What would you like to know?
(Matthew 1 Genealogy)

Quick Facts about the Book of Matthew:

- Written by one of Jesus' disciples – Matthew (he was a tax collector)
- Originally believed to be the first Gospel written. Now many scholars believe Mark is the oldest. Was written in the first century AD; a very fresh history of the life and death of Jesus.
- Matthew wrote to a Jewish audience (whereas Luke wrote to a very Greek audience). Note the many references to Old Testament prophecy (very important to Jews). You will also notice that the genealogy in Matthew 1 only goes back to Abraham (the Father of the Israelite people). Luke's genealogy goes all the way back to Adam to emphasize Jesus' universal impact.
- The famous Sermon on the Mount is found in Matthew 5-7.

Quick Facts about the Book of Acts:

- Full title is the Acts of the Apostles (those who saw the resurrected Jesus)
- Best history of the early church – The early church quickly grew from a handful of believers in Jerusalem to more 5,000 people. Christianity spread all across Asia Minor and into Europe in less than one generation. Unprecedented spread of a faith by a persecuted people through peaceful means.
- First half of the book focuses on Peter. The second half focuses on Paul and his journeys.
- Was written by Luke who was a doctor and went with Paul on several of his mission trips.
- Acts is really Part 2 of the Gospel of Luke (continues the story) that we will read later.

** Please note: The first week all study questions are arranged by day. The remaining weeks will be arranged by topics.

Discussion Questions for Sunday, March 1

1. From Joseph's responsiveness of going to Egypt what do you learn about faith and obedience? How long would it take you to say "yes" if God asked you to relocate? What is your story of relocating to this area? Or did you grow up in this area? (Matthew 2 – Jesus and family relocating)
2. What have been your best experiences in group prayer? How is praying with others for a common mission different from private prayer about your individual concerns? (Acts 1 – Disciples praying)

3. Have you ever traveled where you did not speak the language? What happened? (Acts 2 – Pentecost)
4. As the cripple, what would you write as a diary entry for a typical day? When Peter grabs your hand? After the healing? (Acts 3 – Healing of the crippled man)

Discussion Questions for Monday, March 2

1. Who has been a John the Baptist in your life? How did he or she prepare you to meet Jesus? Is there someone in your life who is currently pointing you to Jesus? (Matt. 3)
2. What is the most persecution you have experienced due to your faith? How did you take it? (Acts 4)
3. Which responsibility at home or work would you gladly give up? Never give up?
(Acts 6 – Apostles choose 12 people to carry out ministry of the church...what does this say about who should do the ministry of the church – the pastors or the members?)

Discussion Questions for Tuesday – March 3

1. This past week, did you feel more blessed or stressed? What can you do to be more focused on God's blessings in your life? (Matthew 5 – Sermon on the Mount)
2. What causes you the most worry? What is God saying to you through this passage about handling your particular worry or disappointment? (Matthew 6 – Sermon on the Mount)
3. How did the Lord first get your attention? Was it in some dramatic event or something more subtle? (Acts 9 – Saul's conversion on the road to Damascus)

Discussion Questions for Wednesday – March 4

1. Describe a time when you saw a despised or neglected person receive a surprising amount of love and respect. (Matthew 8)
2. As a child, what foods did you refuse to eat? What foods do you still dislike today? (Acts 10 – Peter and Cornelius)

Discussion Questions for Thursday – March 5

1. What is the longest distance you have hiked or hitchhiked across country?
2. What was one of the biggest misunderstandings about Christianity you had to overcome before you could believe? (Acts 14)
3. What were some of the expected, extra-biblical rules you were supposed to follow in the church where you grew up? When you became a Christian? (Acts 15)

Discussion Questions for Friday – March 6

1. In what specific way can you be an encourager to someone in church leadership? In your family? Among your friends? (Matthew 11)
2. What is one habit or behavior you do which totally annoys others around you? (Matt 12)
3. Where do you have an “open door” for ministry now: In your home? School? Work? Community? How will you take advantage of it? (Acts 15)

Discussion Questions for Saturday – March 7

1. Can you see and hear Jesus at work in today's world? If so, how? (Matthew 13)
2. If you fed five thousand people at a picnic, what would you serve? (Matthew 14)
3. What place did your parents have to drag you to, because you were scared to go there: Circus? Dentist? Elsewhere?