



Morning Watch

FOR YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS

May 2021

READING THROUGH THE BIBLE
IN 3 YEARS & 3 MONTHS



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Chapter: Matthew 3

Theme: John the Baptist and Jesus

Study Verse: Matthew 3:16, 17

Statement: The quiet years, first in Egypt then in Nazareth, have passed, and Jesus’ cousin John, son of Elisabeth and Zechariah, has begun to preach that the Messiah is on His way. Jesus knows it is time to begin His ministry. If you were John, how would you react if Jesus came to be baptized by you?

Response: _____

Prayer: *Father God, Your voice proclaimed Your love for Your Son. I can understand that. What I can’t understand is that You proclaim the same love for me! Help me to live every day of my life within the safety and freedom of that love.*

Chapter: Matthew 4

Theme: The Beginning

Study Verse: Matthew 4:23

Statement: There is a lot in this chapter: the temptations, which represent all the classes of temptation we face; the beginning of Jesus’ ministry; and the calling of the first disciples. Read the last three verses again and try to imagine what it was like. What would you do if someone began walking through your town healing people and proclaiming the love of God?

Response: _____

Prayer: *Dear Jesus, You walk through my life as well. You heal my fears and infirmities, even though You don’t always heal today as You did then. I want to follow You, too. I believe in the complete healing You promise—when You come, if not now.*

Chapter: Matthew 5

Theme: Sermon on the Mount, Part 1

Study Verse: Matthew 5:2-10

Statement: Try to memorize the whole beatitudes passage, but also pick out the one that most speaks to you. Different ones will call to you at different times in your life. Which one is yours for today? Pray that God will make it a reality in your life.

Response: _____

Prayer: *Blessed Teacher, bless me, too! Help me not to see these or any of Jesus' teachings as "oughts" and "shoulds" and burdens, but as encouragement to live with Your Spirit within.*

Chapter: Matthew 6

Theme: Sermon on the Mount, Part 2

Study Verse: Matthew 6:33

Statement: This chapter contains a cure for legalism: try to keep your good deeds secret between you and God; a cure for greed: serve God and money will lose its power over you; and a cure for anxiety: seek God and His kingdom and let Him worry about the details. Which means the most to you today?

Response: _____

Prayer: *My heavenly Father, I know that You care for the smallest of Your creatures, and sometimes I feel that is me. Keep my eyes on You and on Your love.*

Chapter: Matthew 7

Theme: Sermon on the Mount, Part 3

Study Verse: Matthew 7:7

Statement: Again, there are several themes in this chapter, but there is one golden thread that unites them: relationship. A person who is close to God 1) won't judge others, 2) asks trustingly for what is needed and treats others with love, 3) follows God rather than the crowd, 4) knows God personally and produces good fruit, and 5) builds life only on the foundation of Christ and His love.

Response: _____

Prayer: *Leader of my life, I will follow You wherever You go, no matter how narrow the path. I will share Your love with others and trust You fully.*

Chapter: Matthew 8

Theme: Stories of Faith

Study Verse: Matthew 8:13

Statement: This chapter shows several pictures of faith and also of lack of faith. Take note of the difference it makes. What made the leper willing to seek Jesus' help when all others had always cursed and avoided him? Why was the centurion more trusting than the average Jew? Why did the disciples grow terrified during the storm, and why did the Gadarenes beg Jesus to go away? Where do you see yourself in these stories?

Response: _____

Prayer: *Master of all storms, calm the ones in my heart, please! I want to be one of the faithful ones. I thank You for Your constant care.*

Chapter: Matthew 9

Theme: Building the Kingdom

Study Verse: Matthew 9:36-38

Statement: Jesus has thousands of followers, and probably dozens of close followers. He is still calling the inner circle of 12. He is also getting very public about His teaching—He could have simply healed the paralytic, but He chose to make it a teaching moment on forgiveness and the extent of His power. He is making His position as Messiah clear, even to His enemies, and at the end of the chapter, He calls His close friends (that includes you and me) to join Him in His work.

Response: _____

Prayer: *Teacher, I long to live by Your side, bringing light and healing to all I meet. Show me my job, the things You specifically want me to do.*

Chapter: Matthew 10

Theme: Sending the Twelve

Study Verse: Matthew 10:40

Statement: Jesus has now made His final choice of the inner circle of 12 men He will train to take His place when His earthly work is over. He is going to send them, two-by-two, on a practice mission without Him, so they can begin to learn their future work. How do you think they felt about this? Which parts of His instructions in this chapter would mean the most to you, if you were going out on a mission journey?

Response: _____

Prayer: *Master Evangelist, I can tell the story of what You have done and are doing in my own life. I can share the stories I read in the Bible. Send me, and show me with whom You want me to share.*

Chapter: Matthew 11

Theme: Encouragement for the Discouraged

Study Verse: Matthew 11:25

Statement: John, languishing in prison, is hearing about Jesus, but probably only bits and pieces. It’s hard to maintain your faith in such hard times. He sends some friends to seek comfort and reassurance from Jesus—and he gets it. Jesus also begins to speak hard truths to the apathetic cities. This chapter ends with one of the most beloved passages in the Bible. Have you yoked yourself to Jesus?

Response: _____

Prayer: *Lowly One, You are the King of Kings, yet you said You were humble-hearted. I know that if I wear a yoke with You, it will be You bearing all the weight. Help me cling faithfully by Your side.*

Chapter: Matthew 12
Theme: What is Sabbath For?
Study Verse: Matthew 12:8

Statement: The people of Jesus’ time had, with the best intentions of protecting God’s holy day, hedged the Sabbath about with so many rules it was a burden instead of a delight, as Isaiah 58 said it was to be. Jews and Sabbath-keeping Christians of modern ages have often done the same. What did Jesus do to dispel these attitudes? What can you do to make next Sabbath a delight?

Response: _____

Prayer: *Lord of the Sabbath, thank You so much for a whole day every week to spend with You! Thank You for the ways You’ve made it a delight, and forgive me for the ways I’ve made it a burden.*

Chapter: Matthew 13
Theme: Kingdom Parables
Study Verse: Matthew 13:23

Statement: In this chapter, (a whole collection of kingdom parables), Jesus explains why He uses stories to reach people. Those to whom “it has not been given” to understand the things of God often will not listen to a direct sermon or other teaching about God. They’ve already made up their mind and have no intention of changing it. But everyone will listen to a story. Jesus is hoping to open some hearts through the power of story. What story of God can you tell someone who is not willing to listen to direct Christian messages?

Response: _____

Prayer: *Great Storyteller, Your whole Bible is one giant story of Your dealings with faulty humanity. Help me to learn to help tell the story in ways that will catch people’s attention, even if they think they don’t want to hear about You.*

Chapter: Matthew 14

Theme: Man of Sorrows

Study Verse: Matthew 14:13, 14

Statement: Jesus had done what he could to encourage His cousin John while he was in prison, but it is clear from verse 13 that Jesus was still very sorrowful to learn of John’s cruel death. Notice what happened—He withdrew, hoping for some time by Himself with His heavenly Father...but the people followed Him. It must have been difficult for Him, but His compassion for them was such that He ministered to them anyway. How does that make you feel?

Response: _____

Prayer: *Beloved Friend, when You were here, You must have gotten so tired! I hope that You regained strength and joy from the people’s response to Your teaching. I hope I bring You joy, too.*

Chapter: Matthew 15
Theme: What is Defilement?
Study Verse: Matthew 15:28

Statement: The Pharisees had their traditions, and remaining “pure” was extremely important to them. Among other things, they thought contact with women—especially non-Jewish women!—would make them impure. Which does Jesus say is most important—God’s law of love, or human tradition? How does He cement the lesson in His disciples’ minds through His dealings with the presumably pagan Syro-Phoenician woman?

Response: _____

Prayer: *Dear God, help me remember that in Your eyes, **people** are not impure; unloving thoughts and actions—to anyone—are.*

Chapter: Matthew 16
Theme: The Turning Point
Study Verse: Matthew 16:

Statement: In each gospel, we will find a turning point when Jesus turns from merely teaching and healing and begins to prepare for the great sacrifice that is coming. This is the turning point in Matthew. Jesus begins warning more directly about the false teachings of the Pharisees, and also begins speaking directly about His own death. If you were one of His followers, how would you have felt?

Response: _____

Prayer: *Lamb of God, even before the cross, You were giving Yourself for us every day that You were on earth. We are so grateful!*

Chapter: Matthew 17
Theme: A Glimpse of Heaven
Study Verse: Matthew 17:20

Statement: Note the first sentence; it goes with the last sentence of the previous chapter. The three closest disciples actually got to glimpse a little bit of heaven when Moses and Elijah came, possibly to encourage Jesus before His coming ordeal. Notice also that the trip from the mountaintop to the trial is a quick one. They are immediately confronted with a healing the disciples couldn't do on their own. Why?

Response: _____

Prayer: *Lord, sometimes I have mountaintop experiences with You...and then the very next minute, it seems like Satan is after me. I know he doesn't like it when I'm close to You. I choose to be close to You anyway!*

Chapter: Matthew 18

Theme: Arguments and Forgiveness

Study Verse: Matthew 18:19, 20

Statement: Despite Jesus’ teachings, and despite the Transfiguration, the disciples continue to argue over who is “better.” It is in this context that Jesus gives His Conflict Resolution Principles. What are the three steps to reconciliation? An important point: when a brother or sister remains in rebellion, some people think that to let them be “as a Gentile and tax collector,” means to shun them. We just have to remember how Jesus treated Gentiles and tax collectors! Clearly, He did not mean any such thing.

Response: _____

Prayer: *Master, I am a sinner. I can’t possibly thank You enough that You came to rescue me from my sins, and I want to pass on that forgiveness and reconciliation with all who will accept it.*

Chapter: Matthew 19
Theme: Whom Does Jesus Love?
Study Verse: Matthew 19:14

Statement: There are four sections in this chapter. First, Jesus clarifies God’s standing on divorce. Does He love the Pharisees and divorced people? Then He blesses the children. Does he love them? Next, He tries to reach the rich young ruler. We can hope that young man changed his mind later and will be in the kingdom, but we do not know. Does Jesus love Him? How about His disciples, who are all about “Hey, what reward do *we* get?” Does He love them? Does He love you?

Response: _____

Prayer: *Jesus, Lover of my soul, I don’t know why You love me so much, I’m just glad You do. I love You, too! Help me love all the annoying people in my life.*

Chapter: Matthew 20
Theme: Setting Things Straight
Study Verse: Matthew 20:28

Statement: In many places still today, people wait on street corners or in marketplaces, hoping to be hired for day labor. Are there places like that where you live? How important is it to these people that they get at least a little work? Obviously, they are not people who already have a lot of money. This chapter shows Jesus setting things spiritually straight, but He also sets the example for us of giving work and wages to all those in need. Is there anything you can do for a person in need this week?

Response: _____

Prayer: *Master of the Vineyard, thank You for the work You give me, and thank You for giving us far more than we deserve, so far as Your favor and salvation!*

Chapter: Matthew 21

Theme: The Beginning of the End

Study Verse: Matthew 21:9

Statement: This is the beginning of the last week of Jesus’ earthly life. He is no longer leaving any doubt in people’s minds about who He is or what His mission is. He rides in like a king, cleanses the temple again, meets the chief teachers on their own ground, and tells parables designed to get their attention and try to get *some* of them to actually listen. (Some do, too, as we’ll learn in Acts. But they don’t speak up yet.) Notice the last two verses. The priests and Pharisees know very well that He is speaking of them. What is their response?

Response: _____

Prayer: *Lord, I wish I could have been there to shout “Hosanna!” I hope I wouldn’t have been among those who turned on You a few days later. Forgive me for the times I’ve failed You.*

Chapter: Matthew 22

Theme: The Battle Intensifies

Study Verse: Matthew 22:37-40

Statement: In the midst of the leaders' attempts to trick Jesus or somehow catch Him out so they can arrest Him, and in the midst of some of Jesus' most powerful parables, this chapter contains in one nugget all the foundation of the life of faith. Love God. Love everybody else. Period. You could make a poster, as beautiful as you can, of verses 37-40, and share it or post it online.

Response: _____

Prayer: *King of the universe, I love You. I love Your children. The whole goal of my life is to learn to live that love better and better.*

Chapter: Matthew 23

Theme: Jesus' Broken Heart

Study Verse: Matthew 23:37

Statement: Jesus drops all attempt to be gentle and speaks sternly to those who claim to be leaders of God's people yet attack the Son of God. His woes must have seemed like lashes. But if you wonder if He still loved them, no matter what, just watch him in the last three verses of the chapters. How He must have wept over His children who, like their Old Testament ancestors, just *would not*.

Response: _____

Prayer: *Lord, I want to be a baby chick under Your wings. I promise not to rebel, and to listen to You if You ever have to be stern with me.*

Chapter: Matthew 24

Theme: Signs of the Coming

Study Verse: Matthew 24:30, 31

Statement: As Seventh-day Adventists, this is one of our favorite chapters. It's a little confusing, because it contains prophecies of the fall of Jerusalem, all mixed in with prophecies of the end of time. Make two lists and try to pick the two apart. Are there some things that apply to both? Note on vs. 40 and 41, which can be confusing: "taken" means killed by the brightness of His coming (Luke 17:27) and "left" refers to those "who are alive and remain (1 Thess. 4:17).

Response: _____

Prayer: *O Lord Jesus, come! Come soon! We long for Your arrival!*

Chapter: Matthew 25

Theme: Parables of the End

Study Verse: Matthew 25:40

Statement: These three parables have one thing in common—they are all about the end of time. The bridesmaids story tells us to have “oil in our lamps,” which means to keep our hearts filled with the Holy Spirit. The talents story tells us to use every gift and strength we have to build up the kingdom. And the sheep and goats tells us that we’ll be known to belong to God (or not) by how loving we are to those who can’t pay us back. Do you think there’s a reason they are in this order?

Response: _____

Prayer: *Great Shepherd, sometimes I’m a little goat-headed. I want to do things my own way and get into trouble. But I want to be a meek lamb, who follows You wherever You go.*

Chapter: Matthew 26

Theme: Almost the End...

Study Verse: Matthew 26:13

Statement: The climax of Jesus’ life is coming closer and closer. In this eventful chapter we have Jesus saying yet again that He will be killed, we have Judas’ betrayal, the Last Supper, the terrible ordeal in Gethsemane, and the final arrest. In the midst of all this, we have a treasure of a little story about a woman who gave all she had to Jesus because she loved Him so much. Reread verses 6-13. How does this story make you feel? How do you think it made *her* feel, when Jesus said her story would be told forever—(even in 2018!)?

Response: _____

Prayer: *Beloved Teacher, may my life be a beautiful perfume for You. It isn’t much, but it’s all I have, and I love You.*

Chapter: Matthew 27

Theme: The End

Study Verse: Matthew 27:54

Statement: Read this chapter very slowly and prayerfully. Try to make it all real in your mind, as if you were there for all of it. Walk with Jesus through His farce of a trial, listen to Him calling for His Father, watch the centurion’s face soften from its habitual hardness when he realizes who this “criminal” is. Be there with Joseph, and with those who take down the poor, beaten body, wrap it, and put it in the borrowed tomb. Try to feel what they felt—that this was the end of all their dreams.

Response: _____

Prayer: *Father God, I will never understand how You—the whole Godhead, Father, Son, and Spirit—did what You did. I am in tears of awe that You did it for me.*

Chapter: Matthew 28

Theme: The Beginning!

Study Verse: Matthew 28:19-20

Statement: What a long, dreadful Sabbath that must have been! Those who loved Jesus hadn't even been able to properly prepare His body. It was the high Sabbath of Passover, but it must have seemed like all darkness to His friends, especially His mother. Then comes Sunday morning! The gospels present us with a confusion of stories, as there always is when lots of people see exciting events. What would it be like to be Mary Magdalene, the first evangelist—the first to get to announce—*He is risen!!*

Response: _____

Prayer: *Lord of Lords and King of Kings—You did it! You lived and died and rose again, so we can have a way to God! We can only bow in humble and speechless adoration.*

Chapter: Mark 1

Theme: Diving into Ministry

Study Verse: Mark 1:15

Statement: Take a deep breath—here we go again! Mark is the earliest gospel we have, and it takes no time on birth and childhood stories, but dives right into John’s and Jesus’ ministries. Mark adds some details Matthew didn’t mention much, about Jesus, in the early days, telling those He healed not to talk about it. Why do you think He did that? Could you keep it to yourself if Jesus healed you of leprosy?

Response: _____

Prayer: *Great Physician, You can’t help healing. We hurt, and You come. But we can’t help talking about You, either! Give me words to share what You do for me.*

Chapter: Mark 2

Theme: Early Lessons

Study Verse: Mark 2:27

Statement: You will recognize these stories from Matthew. The gospel writers had many of the same memories, and they also borrowed from each other. But each had a little different point of view (which is why God wanted all of them). Compare verse 27 with Matt. 12:8. What added detail does Mark share, and why is it important to you?

Response: _____

Prayer: *Master of Sabbath, thank You for a guaranteed day off for life! Help me find ways to make that day a delight for myself, my family, and my friends.*

Chapter: Mark 3
Theme: Which Spirit?
Study Verse: Mark 3:28-30

Statement: This chapter teaches about the unforgivable sin—calling the Holy Spirit an unclean spirit. Why do you think that’s unforgivable? Is it any worse to blaspheme against one Member of the Godhead than another? What makes forgiveness possible? Doesn’t it come from God’s love, and doesn’t that love come from the Holy Spirit within? We will learn later, in John 16, that it’s the Spirit who teaches about righteousness, sin, and judgment. So if you refuse the Spirit entrance...then how can you find forgiveness?

Response: _____

Prayer: *Dear God, I accept You, and Your Holy Spirit. I accept that it is not mine to judge another’s sin, only my own. And I will never refuse Your Spirit. Live in me and direct me, I pray.*

Chapter: Mark 4

Theme: Sowers and Seeds

Study Verse: Mark 4:28

Statement: Again, we have the parable of the sower and soil, but here is an interesting enlargement. Reread 26-29. Have you ever grown a plant? Do you know how it does what it does? It’s an everyday miracle, isn’t it? So, Jesus says, it is with God’s kingdom—it sneaks into our heart when we accept it, and it puts down roots and starts growing and turning green, and we produce fruit we *know* we could never have produced by ourselves! We don’t really know how—we just know the Spirit is at work.

Response: _____

Prayer: *Come, Holy Spirit. Live in my life, sow Your seeds of truth and light, water them with love and justice, and produce the fruit You want in me.*

Chapter: Mark 5

Theme: Healings

Study Verse: Mark 5:19, 20

Statement: Most scholars agree that there must have been two demon-possessed men, but one made a bigger impression. This is a much more detailed story than most demon exorcisms. Perhaps the two most meaningful moments are when Jesus understands the man’s silent cry for help even when all he can say out loud is “Get away,” and the job Jesus gives him right away. Later traditions say that after Jesus went back to heaven, when disciples began to spread the gospel in this area, there were many believers already, because of this man’s stories. Won’t it be interesting to meet him in heaven?

Response: _____

Prayer: *Healer of my heart, You give me my own stories to tell. I don’t have to travel far with You (though I will if You ask me to) but I can tell my stories.*