



CHRISTIANITY WITHOUT THE RELIGION

BIBLE SURVEY

THE UN-DEVOTIONAL

MATTHEW

Week 1

Before You Begin Your Journey...

Welcome to the *Christianity Without the Religion Bible Survey*! You are in for a treat! The *CWR Bible Survey* is designed with you in mind.


If you are a new student of the Bible, feeling a little intimidated and overwhelmed by the task of reading and studying the Bible, this study series is for you!

We believe *CWR Bible Survey* will not only be fascinating, but it will provide insights into the principles in this incredible collection of 66 books that we call the Bible. And even if you have read and studied the Bible for 50 years, we think that you will learn and profit from *CWR Bible Survey*. There is something here for everyone!

One of the unique qualities of the *CWR Bible Survey* is our format. The *CWR Bible Survey* does not start with Genesis and simply move through the Bible book by book. That's a predictable pattern and a well-worn trail. Many students of the Bible get lost and frustrated after two or three lessons when they use such an approach. Instead, we have carefully planned your journey so that you get a feel for the variety that the Bible offers as soon as possible. We believe *CWR Bible Survey* will give you a balanced and interesting spiritual diet.

We begin our survey with Matthew, the first book of the New Testament. Then we continue by "going back" to Genesis, the first book of the Old Testament.

Get ready to start on this journey through the Bible—to discover for yourself the good news that God has for each of us!



Greg Albrecht

President, Plain Truth Ministries

How to Use the CWR Bible Survey...

1—Read and study at your own pace. This is a devotional. It is designed to help you consider and ponder the great truths of God's written revelation. It is designed to help you worship and come to know God. If you get behind, you can always catch up.

2—We suggest you set aside a special time for the *CWR Bible Survey* every day. We recommend allowing 30-45 minutes, but even if you can only spare 15 minutes, try to make it part of your regular schedule.

3—You will need a good Bible. This might be an excellent time for you to consider purchasing a new Bible. Plain Truth Ministries recommends the *New King James Study Bible* published by Thomas Nelson and the *New International Version Study Bible* published by Zondervan.

4—Always read the assigned passage of the daily lesson in your Bible first. Each daily lesson builds upon the portion of the Bible being covered that day. You may want to begin by praying about what God has in store for you as you read, and then look at the questions and background information.

5—Consider the format of each daily lesson. Almost every daily lesson will include:

- **Opening Up to the Word** —a section designed to help you open your mind to the teaching God has inspired.

- **Digging Into the Word**—this section will encourage you to get your nose into the Bible and think deeply about what it says.

- **Living Out the Word**—here you will be challenged to consider the practical implications for your life. How does this passage help you live?

- **Window On the Word**—will offer key insights to help you more clearly understand the daily Bible passage.

6—After you finish the daily lesson, take some quiet time. You may simply think, look out the window, take a walk, or even get down on your knees. But use this time to let this daily lesson sink in. Ask God to show you what he wants you to understand from your reading and study.

7—Consider the *CWR Bible Survey* for small groups in which you may be involved. Tell your friends about it. If you are involved in a small group that meets for prayer and Bible study, introduce your group to it. Many are seeking an easy-to-read guide to help them understand the Bible and to help them know God. the *CWR Bible Survey* can do that!

8—Remember that while we may refer to the Bible as the word of God—the Eternal Word of God is noneother than Jesus, who inspired the Scriptures to be written by human insturments. Words on paper may tell us about him—but it is not the words that we worship—it is Jesus Christ, the Eternal Word.

•Abbreviations Used in *CWR Bible Survey*—

Genesis	Ge	Nahum	Na
Exodus	Ex	Habakkuk	Hab
Leviticus	Lev	Zephaniah	Zep
Numbers	Nu	Haggai	Hag
Deuteronomy	Dt	Zechariah	Zec
Joshua	Jos	Malachi	Mal
Judges	Jdg	Matthew	Mt
Ruth	Ru	Mark	Mk
1 Samuel	1Sa	Luke	Lk
2 Samuel	2Sa	John	Jn
1 Kings	1Ki	Acts	Ac
2 Kings	2Ki	Romans	Ro
1 Chronicles	1Ch	1 Corinthians	1Co
2 Chronicles	2Ch	2 Corinthians	2Co
Ezra	Ezr	Galatians	Gal
Nehemiah	Ne	Ephesians	Eph
Esther	Est	Philippians	Php
Job	Job	Colossians	Col
Psalms	Ps	1 Thessalonians	1Th
Proverbs	Pr	2 Thessalonians	2Th
Ecclesiastes	Ecc	1 Timothy	1Ti
Song of Songs	SS	2 Timothy	2Ti
Isaiah	Isa	Titus	Tit
Jeremiah	Jer	Philemon	Phm
Lamentations	La	Hebrews	Heb
Ezekiel	Eze	James	Jas
Daniel	Da	1 Peter	1Pe
Hosea	Hos	2 Peter	2Pe
Joel	Joel	1 John	1Jn
Amos	Am	2 John	2Jn
Obadiah	Ob	3 John	3Jn
Jonah	Jnh	Jude	Jude
Micah	Mic	Revelation	Rev

MATTHEW

The Jewish
Gospel
for
All Nations

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Introduction to Matthew

Authorship: This Gospel does not name its author (none of them do), but early church tradition has always attributed this one to Matthew the tax collector (9:9-13), also called Levi (Lk 5:27-32), one of the twelve apostles.

Date: Matthew was written either in the late 50s A.D. (when the church was still largely Jewish), in the 60s A.D. (when Pharisees had their largest power base) or in the 70s A.D. (right after Jerusalem was destroyed by Rome).

Setting and purpose: Most likely written in Syria-Palestine, where rabbis were known to exert their strongest influence. The Jewish Christians, whom Matthew addresses, were apparently in conflict with the religious establishment of their day. Matthew was written to show that Jesus was indeed the fulfillment of the Old Testament (OT) predictions of the Messiah, despite what the Pharisees had to say.

Distinctive features: Intended for Jewish readers, Matthew's Gospel is distinct from the other Gospels in at least two key respects.

Matthew has multiple references to the OT. Some 53 quotations and 76 other allusions or general references have been identified, all important to Matthew's Jewish readers. The intent of these OT quotes and allusions was to show the Jewishness of Jesus, and to confirm Jesus as the promised Messiah ("the anointed one") in every respect—from birth to death.

Matthew has more extensive blocks of teaching material (ethics, parables, woes, hard sayings, last things), interspersed with mighty works, than any other Gospel. The words of Jesus comprise 644 verses in this 1,068-verse Gospel. Jesus is presented as a "second Moses" and the Gospel as the "Christian Torah." The Gospel seems intentionally structured into five teaching units (ch. 5-7, 10, 13, 18, 23-25), each bracketed by a similar refrain such as, "When Jesus had finished saying these things." This made Matthew akin to the Pentateuch (first five books of

the OT) and useful to the first Christians as a teaching manual, or catechism, to make other disciples of Jesus (see 28:20).

Reading outline: Here is a reading plan intended to help you study the book of Matthew in 30 days. Use the questions which accompany each daily reading to help you open up to, dig deeper into and live out God's Word in your life. These questions may be used on your own or with a group.

I. PREPARATION FOR THE COMING KING, 1-4:25

- A. Birth and Early Years of Jesus, 1:1-2:22
- B. Baptism and Temptation of Jesus, 3:1-4:25

II. INAUGURATING THE KINGDOM IN WORD AND DEED, 5:1-12:50

- A. Lifestyle of the Kingdom, 5:1-7:29
- B. Miracles Worked by the King, 8:1-9:34
- C. Authority of the King Received and Rejected, 9:35-12:50

III. CONTROVERSY SURROUNDING THE KING AND THE KINGDOM, 13:1-20:34

- A. Parables of the Kingdom as a Present Reality, 13:1-58
- B. Reassurance of the Disciples, 14:1-15:39
- C. Controversial Signs of the King, 16:1-17:27
- D. Sin, Mercy and Greatness in the Kingdom, 18:1-20:34

IV. CLIMACTIC CONFRONTATION WITH THE KING, 21:1-28:20

- A. Reception and Rejection of the King, 21:1-23:29
- B. Concerns about the coming of the King, 24:1-25:46
- C. Anguish, Arrest and Trial of the King, 26:1-27:44
- D. Death and Resurrection of the King, 27:45-28:20

*“The virgin will be with
child and will give birth to
a son, and they will call
him Immanuel...”*

—Matthew 1:23



Artwork by Dan Andreassen

Tracing Your Roots

DAY 1

Matthew 1:1-25

What memorable details have you been told about your birth? Who were you named after and why?

1. Some of Jesus' ancestors have embarrassing, even scandalous, stories to tell. Which ancestors were liars or cheats? Who were adulterers? Any murderers?
2. Find the five women mentioned. Any prostitutes? Who was a non-Jew? A second wife?
3. What does this chapter say about the human ancestry of the future King of the Jews? About the wait that Jews had to endure for their Messiah?
4. What details was Joseph told about the birth of Jesus?
5. What did Joseph think and do in response to this good news? What did he not do and why?

1. Who are the important people in your spiritual (or perhaps religious) upbringing? Have you come to understand the difference between religion and genuine Christianity?

2. What dream or insight about your life has God given you that would require a big step of faith if you were to act on it?

Pledged to be married (v. 18). *Joseph and Mary were engaged at this time, yet Matthew speaks of them as already husband (v. 19) and wife (v. 24). This indicates that betrothal was a much more binding agreement in their day than in ours; only a "divorce" (v. 19) could negate an engagement.*

OPENING
up to the Word

DIGGING
into the Word

LIVING
out the Word

WINDOW
on the Word

DAY 2

Oh, Boy! Now We're in Trouble!

Matthew 2:1-23

OPENING
up to the Word

What do you remember about your family looking for a new home or job or school or church? Was the search long and hard?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. What special effects were used to announce this special baby's birth? To whom was the announcement made? Any important political or religious leaders?
2. Who attended Jesus' birth? Who else wanted to worship him? Were any priests, clerics or religious officials present at or after his birth?
3. After his birth, what problems did Jesus and his family have to face? With whose help? At what risk?
4. Many families did not escape the murderous King Herod. How do you account for this loss of innocent life?

LIVING
out the Word

1. How hard is it for God to get through to you? Do you always obey or seize the moment when God calls, as did Joseph? Or do you hesitate?
2. In what ways has coming to know Jesus been like a pilgrimage for you? Where on that journey are you? Are you more like the Magi or like King Herod in your response to Jesus? How so?

WINDOW
on the Word

***Magi from the east** (v. 1). They were probably kings or wise men from Persia or Arabia, but definitely Gentiles or non-Jews, which sets up a contrast with another non-Jewish worshiper from a rival kingdom, King Herod (v. 1). **Herod the Great** (37-4 B.C.) who rebuilt the Temple in Jerusalem, was the first of four generations of Herods mentioned in the Bible. All were appointed by Rome, most ruled by brute force. This particular Herod murdered his wife, two in-laws and three sons, among others. So, the murder of the innocents (v.16) was the rule, not the exception, in that day. Thirty some years later, at the hands of another Herod (Lk 23:7-12), the innocent Jesus would die in place of those condemned to death.*

Paving the Way

DAY 3

Matthew 3:1-17

What outdoor experience adventure comes to mind when you think of good food? Adversity? Uninvited guests?

1. How is John the Baptist described here? What was attractive about him? What was a turn-off?
2. What message did John deliver to the Pharisees and Sadducees (leaders of two distinct Jewish parties)? Why such harsh words of judgment?
3. What was the meaning of baptism for John's followers? For these Jewish leaders? For Jesus?
4. What special effects highlighted Jesus' baptism?

1. What parts of John's leadership style would you like to imitate or learn from? What parts of his leadership style would you modify or tone down? Consider Jesus' statement about John in chapter 11.
2. Assuming you have been baptized, when and how and why was that done?
3. Who has been a John the Baptist-type in your life, preparing you for Jesus?
4. When have you sensed that God was well pleased with your life? If Jesus is living his life in you, wouldn't God *always* be pleased with you?

*In ancient times, the **coming of a king** to a new land required that a special ambassador be sent ahead to pave the way, even if that meant making new roads. For example, the visit of Queen Elizabeth II to the Bahamas meant that someone had to resurface the roads on which she would be traveling. In Jesus' case that someone was John the Baptist, but the preparations for Jesus' royal arrival were quite different.*

OPENING

up to the Word

DIGGING

into the Word

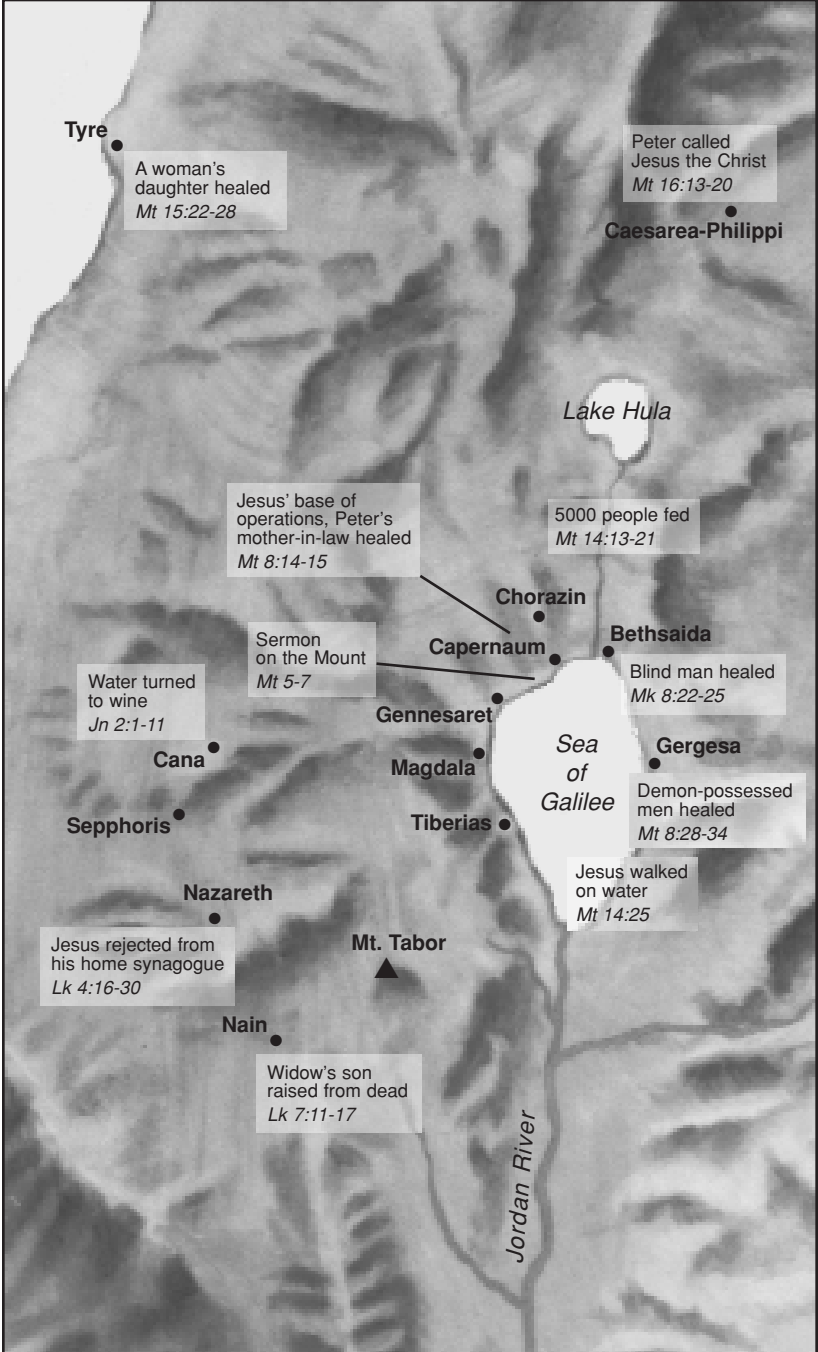
LIVING

out the Word

WINDOW

on the Word

JESUS' MINISTRY IN GALILEE



An Offer You Can't Refuse!

DAY 4

Matthew 4:1-25

Suppose some telemarketer or headhunter made you an offer you couldn't refuse. What is that enviable commodity or exalted position you've always wanted? What would it take to hook you?

1. Scan this chapter for all place names or geographic references. What was the scope of Jesus' ministry?

2. Why turn stones into bread (vs. 1-11)? What deeper issue is at stake here? How does Jesus resist this first temptation?

3. Since God's angels were watching over Jesus (vs. 6, 11), why not prove himself definitively, for all to know at once?

4. What's so tempting about the third offer? How does that relate to the core message Jesus was preaching (vs. 17, 23)?

5. What's the key to using Bible texts correctly, if even the devil can quote Scripture (v. 6)?

6. How is the Spirit involved in temptation?

7. How did Jesus attract followers? What did they leave behind? What became of those who joined?

1. Which of these temptations (to power, to seek signs, to compromise) are you most vulnerable to? How so?

2. What principles for resisting temptation can you learn from Jesus?

3. What temptations does the devil place before us today?

4. Have you responded to Jesus' call? What "nets" did you drop to follow him?

For background, read Deuteronomy 8:1-5, to appreciate how God tested the Israelites in the desert, to see if their heart was true to the Lord.

OPENING

up to the Word

DIGGING

into the Word

LIVING

out the Word

WINDOW

on the Word

DAY 5

Happy Days Are Here Again

Matthew 5:1-20

OPENING
up to the Word

What happy days from your past or future put a smile on your face?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. *Blessed* means happy or fortunate. What blessings does Jesus offer for members of God's forever family? How are they made worthy?
 2. Which blessings seem to offer too little for so much work? Which are for right now? Which seem far off? Does that matter to you?
 3. What is the point of stating these blessings? (a) to make people feel guilty, (b) to extend grace, (c) to cause people to behave better, (d) to give hope for the future, (e) to highlight the need for Jesus, (f) to convey a new righteousness that exceeds the old law.
 4. What is the point of the *salt* and the *light*?
 5. What is Jesus' relation to the Law? (See three options under #3 below.)
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LIVING
out the Word

1. Given these beatitudes, what hardships in your past do you now see as blessings in disguise?
 2. What two "blesseds" could God build in your life this week as salt and light at work? In your community? With your friends? At the family table?
 3. Since Jesus obeyed and fulfilled the Law, (a) I should too, (b) I don't have to, (c) I have a new "righteousness" (right relationship with God) apart from keeping the law.
-

WINDOW
on the Word

The contrast between Jesus' ethical teachings and Jewish legalistic traditions is so great that some have dismissed the Sermon on the Mount as inapplicable to human beings in this lifetime. But Jesus' point is that humans are incapable of producing these virtues—rather, God produces them in us and blesses us. Paul makes the same point in Galatians 5 with the "fruit of the spirit."

THE BEATITUDES

*God blesses those people who depend
only on him.*

They belong to the kingdom of heaven!

God blesses those people who grieve.

They will find comfort!

God blesses those people who are humble.

The earth will belong to them!

*God blesses those people who want to obey him
more than to eat and drink.*

They will be given what they want!

God blesses those people who are merciful.

They will be treated with mercy!

God blesses those people whose hearts are pure.

They will see him!

God blesses those people who make peace.

They will be called his children!

*God blesses those people who are treated badly
for doing right.*

They belong to the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 5:3-10,
Contemporary English Version

DAY 6

Good Cop or Bad Cop?

Matthew 5:21-48

OPENING
up to the Word

Were you raised with more rules, few rules or no rules, compared with how you might raise children today?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. Is it possible to legislate against anger? Against swearing or name-calling? Against lust? Are such laws enforceable or prosecutable? How so?
2. Why is Jesus giving these ethical teachings?
3. Can a grudge affect your relationship with God? How about a legal battle between neighbors, friends or family members?
4. What's the difference between: (a) being friendly, (b) flirting, (c) sexual harassment, (d) committing adultery in the heart?
5. What did Jesus mean by the "gouge-out" and "cut-off" teaching (vs. 29-30)?
6. What questions or practices in Jesus' day prompted his rebuttal in verse 32? In verse 34? In verse 39? In verse 44?

LIVING
out the Word

1. On which of Jesus' ethical teachings in Matthew 5 would you give yourself a passing or failing grade? What is Jesus saying about "making the grade"?
2. What family rules and consequences, if any, do you have regarding breaking your word?
3. Who might have a harder time living out what Jesus says here: people in a troubled marriage or teenagers surrounded by a sexually explicit culture? The victim of injustice or the prosecuting attorney? The haves or the have-nots? Agnostics or religious zealots?
4. When someone last wronged you, how did you react? What enemies (difficult people in your life) is God calling you to love?

WINDOW
on the Word

Note the hyperbole (exaggeration to make a point) in 5:29-30, where a literal reading misses or obscures the point. (Can a blind man still lust?) Hyperbole occurs frequently in the Scriptures (See Mt 17:20; 18:8-9, 24).

*Today, a church overlooks
the Sea of Galilee from the
Mt. of Beatitudes, where it
is commonly thought
Jesus delivered the
Sermon on the Mount.*



Photo by Barry Stahl

*“Our Father in heaven,
May your name be
honored.*

*May your Kingdom
come soon.*

*May your will be done
here on earth,
just as it is in heaven.*

*Give us our food
for today,
and forgive us our sins,
just as we have
forgiven those who
have sinned against us.*

*And don't let us yield
to temptation,
but deliver us from
the evil one.”*

Matthew 6:9-13,
New Living Translation

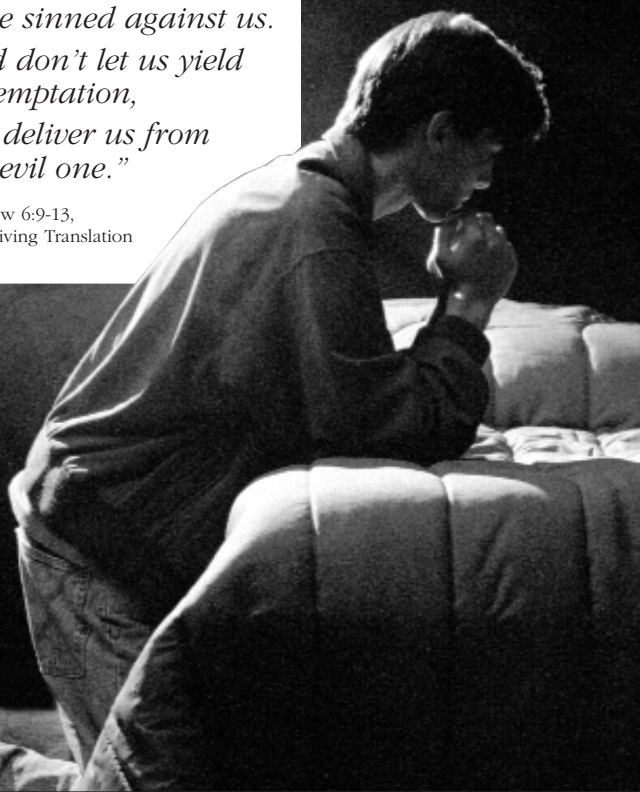


Photo by Barry Stahl

Going Undercover

DAY 7

Matthew 6:1-18

How would other family members or coworkers rate you at keeping a secret? What if a super sleuth did an exposé on your anonymous acts of kindness or private prayers? What would public exposure do to you?

1. Why should giving, praying and fasting be kept secret?
2. How and when does God reward such “acts of righteousness”? (a) here and now, (b) now and then, (c) never, (d) always with more than we gave, (e) only in the hereafter. Why or why not?
3. What things work against prayer? How should we pray?
4. What’s the difference between repeatedly asking God for the same thing (v. 11, also Lk 18:1-8) and “babbling” with many words? Is God ever swayed by prayer language, argumentation or persistence? Isn’t asking just once enough for God to hear and respond? Or will God give without our having to ask even once (v. 8)?
5. How does Jesus’ model prayer (vs. 9-13) differ from Jewish practice of the day (v. 5)? From pagan prayer (v. 7)? Could the Lord’s Prayer also become a religious ritual?

1. Is it okay to publish a list of what others give as part of a public fund-raising campaign?
2. Why would you want to pray or give or fast more than you do? (a) heavenly rewards, (b) earthly rewards, (c) others are doing it, (d) God commands it, (e) out of a desire energized by God’s grace that others would come to know God more intimately.
3. Judging from your current habits, which reward system are you banking on?

Read background notes in a study Bible about the religious behaviors and rituals of the First-Century Pharisees.

OPENING

up to the Word

DIGGING

into the Word

LIVING

out the Word

WINDOW

on the Word