



CHRISTIANITY WITHOUT THE RELIGION

BIBLE SURVEY

THE UN-DEVOTIONAL

MATTHEW

Week 3

DAY 15

Listen up!

Matthew 13:1-52

OPENING
up to the Word

Is there a story-teller or riddle-maker in your family?

DIGGING
into the Word

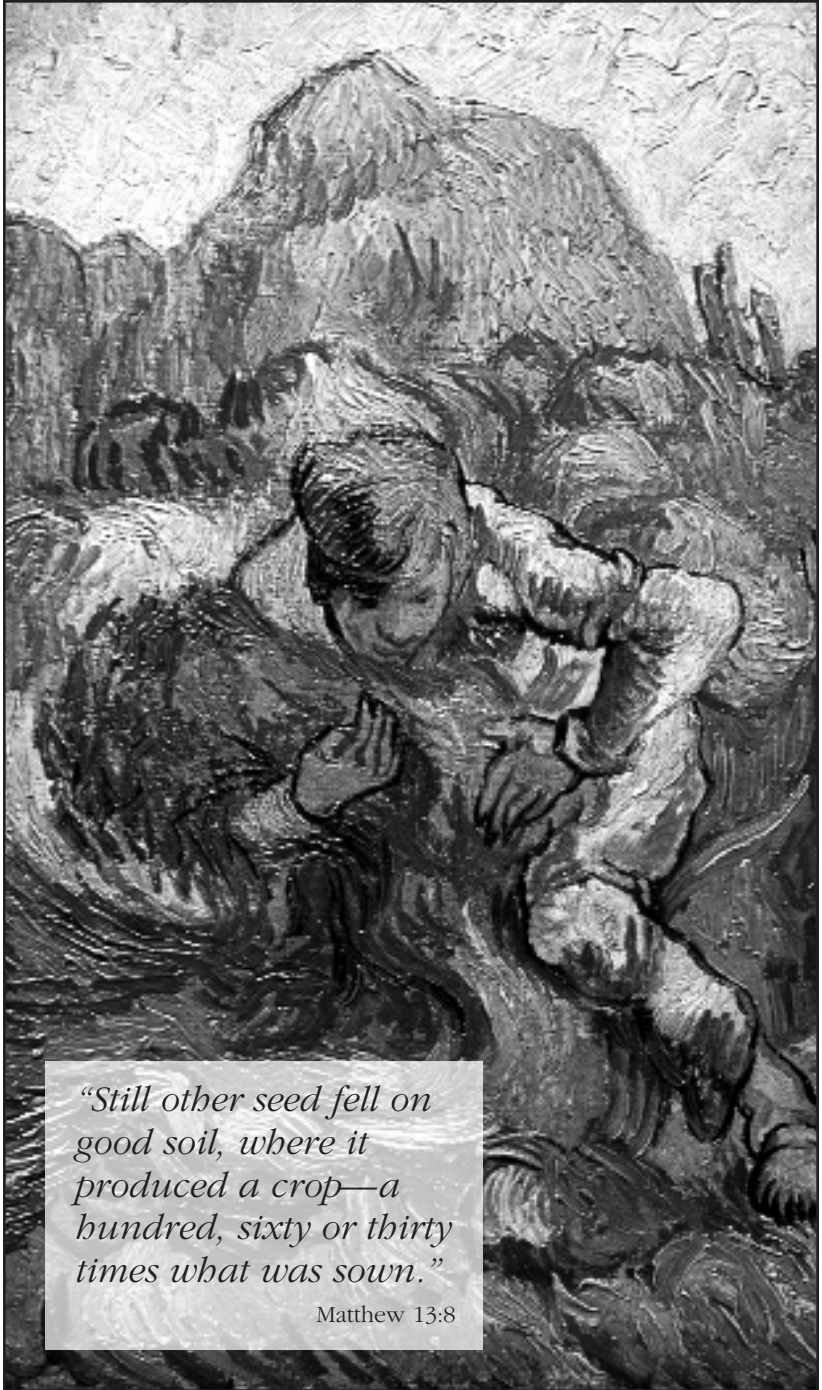
1. Why teach with parables if they can't be generally understood (vs. 10-17)?
 2. Identify the seed, the sower, the snatcher and the soil. On what does the phenomenal growth depend?
 3. Why isn't weed-pulling a good idea? How and when will the *weed/wheat* problem be resolved (vs. 30, 40-43)?
 4. In the parables of the mustard seed, yeast, pearl and net, what's the point about the kingdom? (a) start small, (b) branch out, (c) take time, (d) penetrate the whole, (e) pray hard, (f) laugh last, (g) sell all, (h) spend big, (i) hear and obey, (j) amazement.
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LIVING
out the Word

1. Which parable in Matthew 13 best describes your experience or understanding of God's kingdom?
 2. In response to Jesus' parables, are you puzzled, deaf, growing, amazed, taking offense, going all out or what?
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WINDOW
on the Word

Parable (v. 3). A simple comparison between natural phenomena and spiritual truth to illustrate a point.



*“Still other seed fell on
good soil, where it
produced a crop—a
hundred, sixty or thirty
times what was sown.”*

Matthew 13:8

The Sheafbinder by Vincent Van Gogh

“When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. ‘It’s a ghost,’ they said, and cried out in fear.”

Matthew 14:26



Artwork by Mike Wimmer

Matthew 13:53–14:36

Have you ever had a “prophet without honor” experience—being accepted and listened to by those who don’t know you well, but rejected by friends and family?

1. What do the folk from Jesus’ hometown think of him? Why is a local prophet without honor?
2. Was Herod more afraid of John or of Jesus (14:2)?
3. Why would even the Son of God need time alone (14:13, 23)?
4. To feed the 5,000, what three avenues were explored (14:15-19)? With what results?
5. Why did Jesus wait so long before rejoining the disciples?
6. What changed Peter’s mind from faith to fear to worship (vs. 27-33)?

1. Alternately, imagine yourself at Nazareth for Jesus’ homecoming; as Herod Antipas on his birthday; as one of the 5,000 at dinner time; as the disciples in the boat; as Peter outside the boat; as the people at Gennesaret. In each case, how would peer pressure or circumstances affect your opinion of Jesus?

2. Which of the above are you more like?
3. Are you limiting God to merely blessing your daily food or getting you somewhere safely? How might you ask Jesus to help or heal you in a more significant way? Help or heal friends and family?

His brothers (13:55). *Not brothers in the spiritual sense (12:50), but sons of Joseph and Mary after Jesus was born.*

Herod the tetrarch (14:1). *Herod Antipas, one of four sons of Herod the Great ruling over Palestine for Rome, was technically a “tetrarch” (ruler of one-fourth), but popularly called a “king” (14:9). **Fourth watch** (v. 25). By Roman reckoning, this was 3:00-6:00am.*

OPENING
up to the Word

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Rules and Fools

Matthew 15:1-39

OPENING
up to the Word

How often do you wash your hands? Clean plates or bowls? Brush your teeth? Any unusual hygiene traditions in your daily routine?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. Previous charges against Jesus included blasphemy and Sabbath-breaking; now how did he fail to measure up to the standards of the religious professionals (vs. 1-2)?

2. Jesus answers their question with a question, a Scripture quote and a parable-like observation—to make what points (vs. 3-12, 15-20)?

3. Must all tradition be set aside to please God?

4. How did Jesus react to those who took offense?

5. Why was this Canaanite woman shunned, even by Jesus (vs. 21-26)?

6. How did she deal with being last in line to eat? How did Jesus then deal with her?

7. Why and how did Jesus heal them and feed them?

LIVING
out the Word

1. Do you believe attendance at a physically-located church is necessary? If you attend, is it more like a habit, or an adventure with God? How do you keep your worship from falling into a rut?

2. Do you use *spiritual mouthwash* every morning (vs. 18-20)? How so?

3. What can you learn by waiting in line for God's blessings?

4. Among the hungry, needy, hurting people you know, in what ways could you show Christ's love?

WINDOW
on the Word

Tradition of the elders (v. 2). *Meticulous religious rituals, rules and regulations made by Jewish rabbis after their return to Jerusalem from the Babylonian Exile. These traditions were passed down orally and not recorded (into the Mishnah) until A.D. 200. Children's* (v. 26) *that is, lost sheep of Israel* (v. 24) *or Jews.*

*“I have compassion for these
people; they have already been
with me three days
and have nothing to eat...”
His disciples answered,
“Where could we get enough
bread in this remote
place to feed such a crowd?”*

Matthew 15:32-33



Photo by Hal Finch

This Is a Test

Matthew 16:1-28

OPENING
up to the Word

What Q & A games or quiz shows do you like? (a) Deal or No Deal, (b) Trivial Pursuit, (c) Wheel of Fortune, (d) Jeopardy, (e) other.

DIGGING
into the Word

1. What big test is put to Jesus and why?
2. What is it about this *yeast* (performance-based religion) that the disciples must avoid, yet don't understand (vs. 5-12)?
3. What big test does Jesus put to the disciples and why (vs. 13-15)?
4. What are the implications of Peter's answer (vs. 16-21)? When would these keys be used?
5. If Peter knows about Jesus' true identity as the Christ, why the secrecy (v. 20) and rebuke (v. 23)?
6. How do you understand the prediction in 16:28? (a) misstatement about the Second Coming, (b) foreshadowing of Pentecost, when the kingdom spread rapidly, (c) a reference to the Transfiguration (17:1-3; 2 Pet 1:16).

LIVING
out the Word

When you have a hard time understanding the Bible (like yeast or these predictions), what are you supposed to do? (Hint: How would you answer Jesus' rhetorical questions in 16:26?)

WINDOW
on the Word

Gates of Hades (v. 18). *Hades* is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew **Sheol**, which is the realm of departed spirits and came to mean "powers of death."

My, How You've Changed!

DAY 19

Matthew 17:1-27

Has God dramatically transformed and changed anyone you know enough to profoundly impact you and serve as an ongoing positive example?

OPENING
up to the Word

1. What changes have come over Jesus? How does Peter react?
2. Who appears with Jesus? Why these two (see 5:17; 11:13; Mal 4:5-6)?
3. What effect does the voice from above have (vs. 5-6; compare 3:17)?
4. How is the boy with the demon healed?
5. Why were the disciples unable to help (vs. 16-21)? Were they relying on their own power?
6. How do the disciples react to the second prediction of Jesus' death (vs. 22-23; compare 16:21-23)?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. What does it take for God's Word to affect you? (a) special events, (b) audio-visual effects, (c) dramatic healing, (d) great preaching, (e) simple faith.
2. For what *mountain* in your life would you like such faith?

LIVING
out the Word

ON FORGIVENESS...

“Forgiveness is not an occasional act, it is a permanent attitude.”

—Martin Luther King, Jr.



“Forgiveness is not that stripe which says, ‘I will forgive but not forget.’ It is not to bury the hatchet with the handle sticking out of the ground, so you can grasp it the minute you want it.”

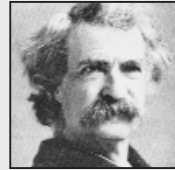
— Dwight L. Moody

“He that demands mercy, and shows none, ruins the bridge over which he himself is to pass.”

—Thomas Adams

“Forgiveness is the fragrance that the flower leaves on the heel of the one who crushed it.”

— Mark Twain



“Life lived without forgiveness becomes a prison.”

—William Arthur Ward

“Only one petition of the Lord’s Prayer has any condition attached to it. It is the petition for forgiveness.”

—Sir William Temple

“We all agree that forgiveness is a beautiful idea until we have to practice it.”

—C. S. Lewis

Forgive Him? Forget It!

DAY 20

Matthew 18:1-35

What's the most indebtedness you have ever assumed or accepted?

1. Why did Jesus use a child to illustrate the kingdom of heaven?
2. What warnings does Jesus give those who cause people to sin (vs. 6-9)? What about those who bring even one lost person to faith?
3. What four steps are appropriate for restoring the sinner (vs. 15-20)? How do the verbs "bind," "loose" and "agree" modify discipline? Why this orderly, merciful, approach?
4. What plot twists and role reversals do you see in the Parable of the Unmerciful Servant (vs. 21-35)? At what points would Jesus' listeners be smiling? Grimacing?
5. What's the price of unforgiveness?

1. What child-like qualities do you need to cultivate in yourself or protect in others?
2. Would you leave behind the 99 of anything to fetch the one lost?
3. Whom do you find it easiest to forgive? Hardest to forgive? Why? Is it their attitude, the amount of their debt, the depth of your pain?
4. Who are you more like in this parable? Who is God like?
5. Suppose God were your banker or mortgage holder and cancelled all your present debts (sins). How would you respond?

Cut... gouge... (vs. 8-9). *On self-mutilation as hyperbole, see note on 5:29-30 under day 6. **Ten thousand talents** (v. 24) probably represented the entire annual income from taxes collected by kings of that era. The drachma equaled one day's wage and the talent equaled 6,000 drachma, or about 60 million days' wages—a laughable amount, as no king would ever let anyone fall this far behind and for which no repayment plan (v. 25) would ever suffice. Enslaving family members, a Gentile practice that Jews found abhorrent, would fetch only 2,000 days' wages.*

OPENING
up to the Word

DIGGING
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LIVING
out the Word

WINDOW
on the Word

DAY 21

When Giving Up Is Good

Matthew 19:1-30

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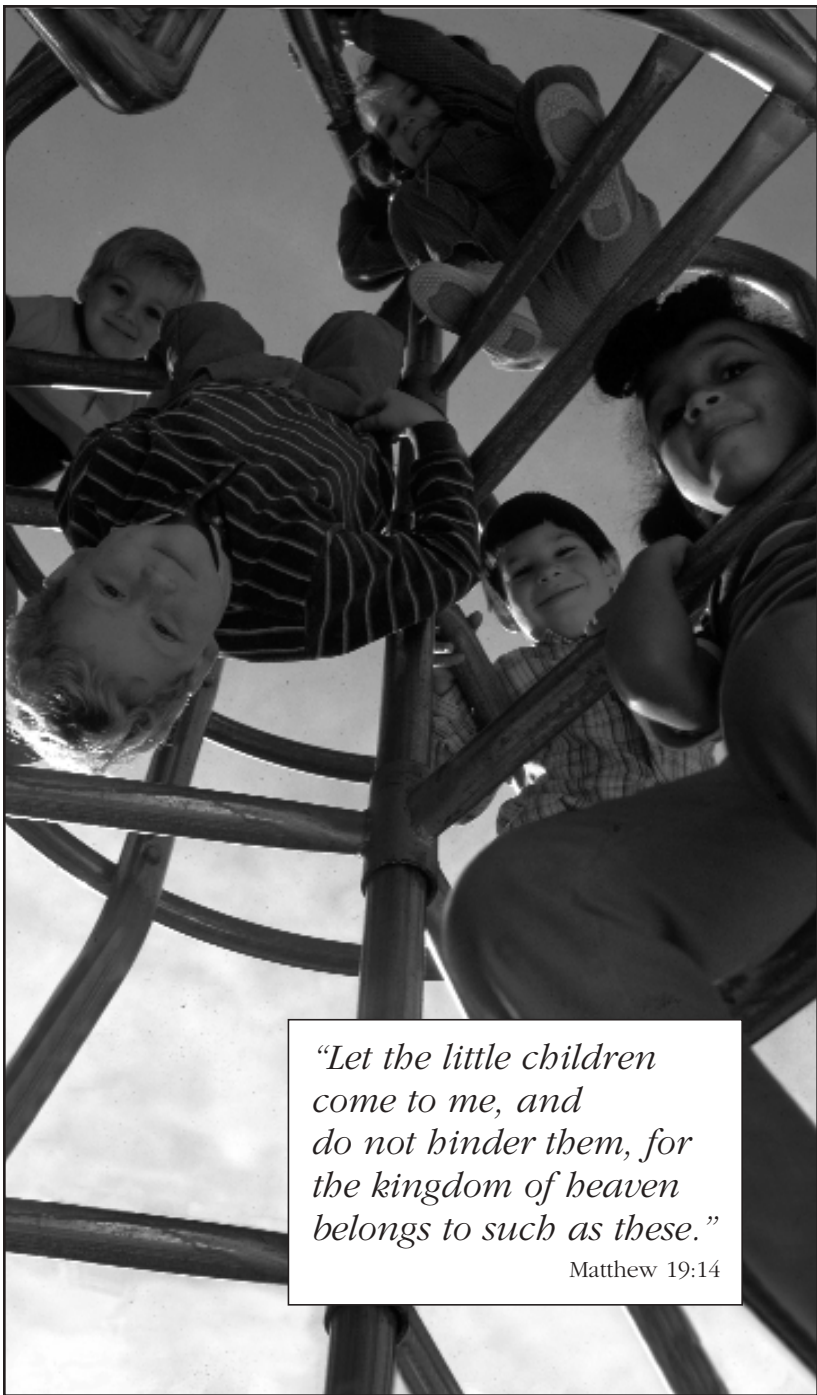
WINDOW
on the Word

How has your family been touched by divorce?

1. On what grounds was divorce allowed by these Pharisees? By Moses (see Dt 24:1-4)? By Jesus?
 2. Why does Jesus make time for the children (vs. 13-15)?
 3. On what grounds was the rich man allowed to receive eternal life (vs. 16-21, 29-30)? How do the rich man and disciples react and why (vs. 22-27)?
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1. What advice (if asked) would you give to a Christian involved in divorce?
 2. On what biblical grounds might divorce be appropriate (see vs. 2-11)?
 3. Which of the assets or relationships (vs. 21, 29) are hardest for you to give up to follow Jesus? In what sense is Jesus calling you to give up a parent, spouse or child? Will you do that?
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*The religious interpretation of the strict school of rabbi Shammai argued that **divorce** could be allowed only on grounds of unfaithfulness, whereas the religious perspective of the more liberal school of Hillel argued that even “burnt toast” or “someone more attractive” could be grounds for divorce. Both religious schools gave the escape clause of divorce only to men, never to women.*



*“Let the little children
come to me, and
do not hinder them, for
the kingdom of heaven
belongs to such as these.”*

Matthew 19:14