



Walk | Read | Pray | Join | Commit

Matthew's Gospel Connect Group Resources: **Jesus – A Life**  
Matthew Chapters 8-10

*The aim of this session is to explore the question: The Kingdom of God was at the centre of Jesus' ministry, but what is it? **And how can we be part of it?***

**COLLECT** – an ice breaker for your group

**In the film the *Bucket List* two strangers meet at the end of their lives and decide to go on an adventure doing the things they'd always wish they'd done before they 'kick the bucket'. Take a few minutes to think about what you would have on your Bucket List, then share three of them with each other.**

This activity encourages us to think about the future and our hopes. When many people think of the Kingdom of God they think of it as a future and distant hope for when we've died, but Jesus shows us the Kingdom of God is also a present reality; we can experience now what will be experienced then, it is both now *and* not yet.

**CHALLENGE** – today's main questions

In Matthew 9:35 we read that '*Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness.*' This was how Jesus spent his three years of ministry, proclaiming the Kingdom of God in word and deed. ***Thinking about Jesus' activity in these few chapters, what does it tell us about the Kingdom of God?***

Healing and restoration are hallmarks of the Kingdom of God. In Matthew 9:20-22 we read about Jesus healing the woman who had had been bleeding for 12 years. We find the context of how this bleeding would have affected her social and religious life in Leviticus 15:19-23. ***What difference would Jesus healing this woman have made to her life? In what different ways does Jesus seek to restore our lives?***

The Kingdom of God is about the authority of God in action. As Jesus heals diseases of all kinds and casts out demons, we see Jesus' authority over sin, sickness & Satan. In Matthew 10:1-8 Jesus gives the twelve disciples the authority to go out and do the same, proclaiming that the kingdom of heaven has come near. ***How do you feel about being sent by Jesus to play your part in the kingdom of God? What might this look like in your life?***

**CONNECT** – a chance to grow as community

Jesus invites us to cooperate with him in bringing the Kingdom of God to earth, it's an invitation to a larger, fuller & richer life than we'd ever live on our own.

*Leave 15/20 minutes to pray for one another and to pray for God's Kingdom to come and His will to be done in specific situations in our lives & in those around us. Pray for courage to be a part of seeing God's kingdom come and a renewed hope for the future.*



Walk | Read | Pray | Join | Commit

**CONTEXT AND CONTENT OF CHAPTERS 8-10** – relevant and helpful background information

*[You may choose to read this as a whole group, or just use it as preparation to inform and facilitate group discussion.]*

Within Matthew the Kingdom of God/Kingdom of Heaven is mentioned 52 times. The Kingdom of God is God's Reign, where his will is done, his authority and power is at work. It is an alternative to the present reality in which evil flourishes and humanity is distorted. Through the Kingdom of God, God is reordering, redefining and restoring humanity and creation.

We find Jesus demonstrating his authority as the Son of God to bring about the Kingdom of heaven here on earth through casting out demons and healing people. God's will is realised when the sick are healed, people are freed, and relationships restored. In these healings we see the now of the kingdom, God's reign breaking into history, his authority being outworked in creation, heaven invading earth.

The majority of people that Jesus healed and restored, whether of a skin disease, blindness, an issue of blood, or being possessed by a demon, were considered 'unclean'. They were the marginalised and were typically poor because of their condition. They were to be avoided, and they were not able to engage in the normal activities of a community. The term 'unclean' refers to ritual purity, rather than physical cleanliness and being 'unclean' could disqualify and exclude you from both worshipping and the worshipping community. The Pharisees and many other religious people would have been highly concerned about being made unclean by the very people Jesus spent time with and brought the kingdom to.

Jesus restores the people society had boxed in, stereotyped, rejected and given up on. The transformation is so radical, that we see people responding with amazement and awe (9:8, 9:33) and in other parts of the gospels, with fear. Conflict between Jesus and the public authorities was inevitable because of the social, religious and political consequences of Jesus's ministry; the Kingdom of God disturbed the status quo.

The Kingdom of God is a demonstration of God's authority over the powers of this world, and we see the extent of this authority at the cross. However, it isn't until the resurrection that we see the full scale of what God's Kingdom is about. In the resurrection we see that Jesus' victory over the enemy goes deeper than overcoming sickness and demons, it goes to the point of defeating death and atoning for sin. But we live between the accomplishment of the reign of God in Christ, and its full realisation, prayerfully anticipating the Kingdom of God to be declared across our world.