

MATTHEW



STUDY GUIDE

Introduction:

You've probably heard of the famous experiment where children were set in a room with a marshmallow and told, "If you can wait five minutes and not eat this, then we will give you a second marshmallow." The kids who waited, who practiced patience and delayed gratification, were demonstrated to have higher levels of success later in life. Delayed gratification is a powerful tool for living a healthy life. However, *delay* can just as easily become a trap. Instead of delayed gratification, we sometimes also *delay responsibility*. We put off a decision, drag our feet on a task, procrastinate, hesitate, or avoid the issue all around.

When is a time you have delayed something important for far too long?

Share a few stories with your group or journal a few memories here. (Remember, for group discussion, it might often be appropriate to share funnier or more lighthearted examples. Though, the closer the group is, the more ready you often are to go deep with heavier stories even right at the beginning of a discussion.)

Text: Matthew 12:22-50

We had a BIG chunk of text for today's passage. In the sermon we broke it into six sections:

- Introducing the question, "The Kingdom of God has come near, what are you going to do about it?"
- The Strong Man in the house illustration. Tie him up!
- The Tree and Fruit illustration. Store up the Kingdom!
- Jonah and the power of Resurrection. Trust the power of the Kingdom!
- The Impure Spirit Brings Friends. Don't just give lip service!
- Jesus' mother and brothers. The Kingdom is closer than family!

It was suggested that each of these is like another circle, another pass around the central idea that the Kingdom has come near with another call to action, "What are you going to do about that?"

Which of these illustrations was most impactful for you and why?

What is it like to think about these as six circles around the same single idea? Was that helpful for making sense of the text or applying it to your life?

Your Move:

We are focusing during September on journaling as a spiritual practice. Specifically, creating space to write down what you hear God saying to you, then revisiting that regularly to consider whether you are going where God leads and growing as God calls.

How have you sensed God leading you these past couple weeks?

How are you most cooperating with and most resistant to his direction?

How can your group pray for you in the week ahead?