

MATTHEW



STUDY GUIDE

In the opening to the sermon on Sunday, we considered the character Walter White from the TV series, *Breaking Bad*. Walter is a classic example of a character we want to like, who seems like they will be good, but continually makes decisions that seem terrible. If you watch the show, you will find yourself thinking, “Why is he doing that???”

Have you ever looked at your own choices and actions and wondered, “Why am I doing this?”

Share a few “Why am I doing this?” Stories from your own life. Then consider:

- What different desires were battling inside you when you made that decision?
- How aware were you in the moment of your options before you acted?
- What did you learn from this experience about the complexity of variables that lead us to our choices and actions?

Text: Matthew chapter 20

This chapter is broken up into four sections.

1. The parable of the vineyard owner in which we learn again about the lavish grace of God and how God gives equally to the first and the last.
2. Jesus’ third prediction of his death and resurrection.
3. The response of James and John to this passion prediction where they ask him for honor and glory in his kingdom and Jesus rebukes them.
4. The response of the two blind men who beg Jesus for mercy.

The contrast between the attitudes and actions of James and John could not be more different from the attitudes and actions of the two blind men. Even more surprising is that *James and John have been with Jesus since the beginning*, and they still seem to be missing the point.

What struck you most about these two contrasting interactions with Jesus?

YOUR MOVE

Jesus’ prediction of his own suffering and death demands a response from all who hear it.

First, a foundational decision about whether we will acknowledge Jesus as our Lord.

Second, further consideration about how we will then follow him in our lives. As we considered this second challenge, we acknowledged again just how varied and complex the factors are that lead to our day-to-day decisions to faithfully follow Jesus. We therefore suggested three practices to not only follow Jesus in our words, but with our lives.

Self-Reflection – we must first know the emotions, beliefs, assumptions, and attitudes that drive us.

Focused Attention – growth in the way of Christ requires intentionality, you never drift to a desired destination. But we live in a noisy, distracted world.

Selfless Action – God will form us by his Spirit into people who naturally give of ourselves to others, but while on that journey, we must also choose to intentionally act selflessly along the way.

Which of these would be most valuable for you to practice in your life and what would it look like to engage more purposefully in self-reflection, focused attention, or selfless action in the week ahead?