

# Love Letters

Reading Through the Gospels



Reading Guide  
Week #2

Matthew 7-12



NEW HORIZON  
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

## Love Letters

### Reading Guide for Week #2—Matthew 7-12

**A Week in Review.** Last week moved quickly: Jesus' genealogy and birth; Jesus' baptism and the beginning of His ministry; Jesus was tempted, began preaching, called disciples, and demonstrated miracles. Finally, Jesus began The Sermon on the Mount – His largest, single discourse of teaching in all the Gospels. We are engaged with the Savior as we continue learning at His side...

**This Week's Reading.** Matthew has been developing Jesus' identity, teachings, and credibility. We are beginning to understand Who Jesus is, what He stands for, and what He can do. Now we witness Jesus interacting with many different people—family, friends, crowds, and opponents. Notice peoples' reactions as Jesus lives and demonstrates what He's been preaching. Their responses are varied: some hear and receive gladly, while others remain pessimistic. Some receive until the cost becomes too great. Some reject Jesus wholesale based on prejudices and other beliefs. Others believe, follow, and obey. Matthew forces us to consider where we stand in relation to this intriguing and mysterious Galilean.

#### ○ MONDAY—MATTHEW 7

**Consider.** Today we close out the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus has done more than offer moral teachings. He has called people to a different mode of being; a new perspective; new goals. He has both described for us and called us to a pursuit of the Kingdom of Heaven.

#### **Read.**

- Jesus describes a lot of "heart activity" in today's reading. What is Jesus helping us see regarding how God views our lives?
- Jesus seems to be offering stern warnings in today's reading. Why do you suppose His hearers responded favorably (v.28) to hard teachings?

**Reflect.** What areas of your life might be "built on sand" rather than on obedience to God?

#### ○ TUESDAY—MATTHEW 8

**Consider.** Jesus seems intent on defying religious protocol. He has already turned the Ten Commandments upside down. Now, Jesus, the fulfillment of Jewish messianic prophecy, welcomes outcasts, sinners and Gentiles (non-Jews.) Jesus is doing more than teaching. His counter-cultural behavior causes us to think deeply about God's truths.

#### **Read.**

- In healing the leper, Jesus does more than cure the man's disease. In what other ways has Jesus made this man "clean" (v.3)?
- In v. 5, Jesus enters Capernaum, known today as the "City of Jesus". It is here in this tiny region that Jesus will conduct the bulk of His ministry activity. Why would God choose such a backwoods location as the center of His Son's ministry?

**Reflect.** Those who receive from Jesus not only believe He was able, but sense a particular *authority* (v.8-9, 23) in Jesus. How is your daily living affected believing that Jesus has authority in all circumstances, big and small?

#### ○ WEDNESDAY—MATTHEW 9

**Consider.** We learn something new about Jesus in today's reading: Jesus is "knowing". Here we find Jesus knowing people's thoughts (v.4), their potential (v.9), and their faith (v.22). Matthew continues to demonstrate Jesus' God-like attributes as we read.

#### **Read.**

- What seems to be at the heart of the illness in 9:1-8? In addition to the power to heal, what other authority does Jesus' have?
- What attribute seems to capture Jesus' attention as people come to Him with requests for healing? (8:10, 9:2, 9:22, 9:29) How might we demonstrate this quality as we make requests of God?

**Reflect.** vs. 30-31 suggest that doing the "good" and "sensible" thing is not always the "right" thing. In the end, it's our obedience to Jesus that determines which. As people given to common sense and rational decision making, how can we be more intentional about listening to the Holy Spirit's direction in our daily lives?

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## ○ THURSDAY—MATTHEW 10

**Consider.** Matthew concludes chapter 9 by setting up all that will follow in chapter 10. There is much need at hand, and much labor before them for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven. Jesus didn't call His disciples simply to teach them, but to prepare them to join Him in God's ministry to the world. It is a gracious call, with the potential for eternal consequences. But it will also bring opposition and mistreatment. In the end, the reward for the disciples is the privilege of serving Jesus.

**Read.**

- Although the disciples are called into the ministry of the Gospel, this work is not theirs alone. Jesus reminds them of their constant Companion and Source (v.20). What are signs of the Holy Spirit empowering you in your contact with others?
- Obedience to Jesus may draw fire, accusation, and persecution. In the midst of these challenges, Jesus reminds the disciples where to affix their eyes (v.28). When have you been able to withstand struggle by keeping your eyes on Jesus?

**Reflect.** Throughout this chapter, the subject of "worthiness" appears several times (vv. 10, 11, 37, 38, etc.). As Christ-followers, we are rarely worthy to bear His name. However, He is *always* worthy of our obedience. In what ways do you honor Jesus with your obedience?

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## ○ FRIDAY—MATTHEW 11

**Consider.** Today, Jesus announced that a new era has begun. The "Law and the Prophets" (the Old Testament teachings) are a foreshadowing (v.13). We are now entering a new day—the Kingdom of God has come to earth in Jesus Christ! The result will mean judgment upon unbelievers, and may bring persecution for believers. Yet a remarkable peace and rest will mark Jesus' followers in the midst of it all.

**Read.**

- In v.3, John the Baptist seems to have second thoughts about Jesus' identity. Jesus' response corrects and comforts John.

Afterwards, Jesus praises John to the crowds. When have you experienced Jesus both correcting and encouraging you simultaneously?

- In vv.25-27 we learn that it is God who reveals His truths to us. From this passage, what is the posture of those to whom God makes His truths know?

**Reflect.** The Kingdom of Heaven seems to involve severity (v.12)—severe consequences for those who reject (judgment), and for those who believe (persecution). What are examples of how this severity might be overlooked or downplayed in much of our Christian preaching, teaching, and living today?

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## ○ SATURDAY—MATTHEW 12

**Consider.** In today's reading, Jesus receives radical accusation from His opponents. Instead of listening, observing, and discerning truth, His opponents are demanding signs and looking for every opportunity to find fault. They even go so far as to criticize the source of Jesus' authority, the Holy Spirit (v.32), which is an affront to God Himself. It's disconcerting that God's people so badly misunderstand God's Son.

**Read.**

- In v.6, Jesus tells His opponents that His disciples are guiltless because He is accompanying them. What good news do you hear in this statement as you seek to follow Christ daily?
- In v.38, the Pharisees ask Jesus for a sign, even after all they've seen already! Yet a sign of infinitely greater magnitude is coming—the Resurrection (v.40). Yet, many won't recognize or accept it because it's not what they're expecting. When do you suppose we miss God's activity because it's not what we're looking for?

**Reflect.** Jesus boldly redefines His family as this chapter closes (vv.46-50). It's not bloodline, or religious adherence, or privilege, that determines who is part of Jesus' family. It's one's obedience to our Heavenly Father. In what ways does this statement challenge your relationship with God?

## Notes:



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