



Matthew - May 6 - YA Small Group Discussion Guide

As we make our way through the gospels we will use the H.E.A.R. method to unpack scripture.

The H.E.A.R method promotes reading the Bible with a life-transforming purpose. No longer will our focus be on checking off the boxes on our daily reading schedule; our purpose will instead be to read in order to understand and respond to God's Word.

The acronym H.E.A.R. stands for Highlight, Explain, Apply, and Respond. Each of these four steps contributes to creating an atmosphere to hear God speak. Once we establish a time to read and study God's Word, we will be ready to H.E.A.R. from God.

HIGHLIGHT...Read Matthew 1 and 2 individually or out loud as a group. As you read, find a verse or verses that stood out to you. Feel free to underline it, highlight it or rewrite them or try to paraphrase this passage in your own words.

EXPLAIN...what it means in the context of the passage. Each of the Gospels gives a detailed account of Jesus' time on earth; however, each Gospel writer had a unique purpose for writing, and that purpose shaped which encounters and teachings they included. It also determined how they began and ended their Gospel. The Gospel of Matthew is written to a Jewish audience who had an understanding of the Old Testament Scriptures. This explains why Matthew began with Jesus' genealogy. The genealogy affirms that Jesus descended from Abraham, Judah, and David, fulfilling various Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah. Following the genealogy, Matthew focuses on events surrounding Jesus' birth. The angel's appearance to Joseph in a dream with the message of the miraculous conception underscores Jesus' divine nature. The wise men's search, discovery, and subsequent worship of Jesus further confirms His identity. Even the family's escape to Egypt, eventual return to Israel, and their settling in the city of Nazareth is again a prophetic fulfillment.

From reading the birth and infancy narratives in Matthew, we are reminded that God keeps His promises. We also learn that Jesus was God's unique Son and that He alone is positioned to change the world.^{1 2}

Group Discussion Questions:

1. Why do you think Matthew began his Gospel with Jesus' genealogy? How does it help establish Jesus' identity for a Jewish audience for us today?
2. How do the events surrounding Jesus' birth (such as the angel's message, the wise men's visit, and the escape to Egypt) demonstrate God's faithfulness to His promises?
3. What role does prophecy play in affirming who Jesus is, according to Matthew 1–2?
4. In what ways does the story of Jesus' birth challenge or strengthen your understanding of God's plan for humanity?
5. Who in your life might need to hear about the hope Christ offers, and what are some practical ways you can share that hope with them this week?

APPLY...Apply a truth from this passage to your life. As you close, discuss one way you can apply this to your life going forward this week.

RESPOND...Respond to God with a prayer or an action. What's your next step?

PRAY - Pray for one another and commit to sharing this truth with at least one person this week. Again, take any prayer request and commit too praying for one another.

HIGHLIGHT - EXPLAIN - APPLY - RESPOND

Footnotes and Resources

¹ Robby Gallaty, *Foundations: A 260-Day Bible Reading Plan for Busy Believers* (Nashville: Lifeway Christian Resources, 2015), 164.

² Patrick Schreiner, *The Four Gospels: Jesus, the Hope of the World* (Scripture Connections) (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2024).



Matthew - May 20 - YA Small Group Discussion Guide

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HIGHLIGHT...Read Matthew 19:16-30 individually or out loud as a group. As you read, find a verse or verses that stood out to you. Feel free to underline it, highlight it or rewrite them or try to paraphrase this passage in your own words.

EXPLAIN...Explain what it means in the context of the passage. Matthew 19:16–30 tells about Jesus' conversation with a man known only as the rich young ruler. This man approached Jesus during a time when He was teaching and inquired about the necessary requirements for eternal life with God. In response, Jesus told the man to sell all of his possessions and give the money to the poor. Although the man was faithful to obey the law, he refused to give up everything to follow Jesus, which left him outside of the kingdom of God. Jesus' instruction to this man highlighted the idols in his life—his money and possessions mattered greatly to him. They were his whole identity. However, Jesus teaches us today that nothing can have a greater priority in our lives than following Jesus, and our faith in God should be the source of our identity.

Through His conversation with the rich young ruler, Jesus revealed that He knows our hearts, and He also knows what we are tempted to place above Him in a position of higher importance.^{3 4}

Group Discussion Questions:

1. Why do you think Jesus asked the rich young ruler to give up his possessions instead of just telling him to keep following the commandments?
2. What are some modern-day “idols” that people might place above following Jesus? How can we recognize them in our own lives?
3. How does Jesus’ interaction with the rich young ruler challenge the way we view success and identity?
4. What does this passage teach us about the cost of discipleship? How should that impact the way we live out our faith?
5. Is there something in your life that God might be asking you to let go of to follow Him more fully? What would it look like to take the first step toward obedience?

APPLY...Apply a truth from this passage to your life. As you close, discuss one way you can apply this to your life going forward this week.

RESPOND...Respond to God with a prayer or an action. What’s your next step?

PRAY - Pray for one another and commit to sharing this truth with at least one person this week. Again, take any prayer request and commit to praying for one another.

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³ Robby Gallaty, Foundations: A 260-Day Bible Reading Plan for Busy Believers (Nashville: Lifeway Christian Resources, 2015), 178.

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Mark - June 3 - YA Small Group Discussion Guide

As we make our way through the gospels we will use the H.E.A.R. method to unpack scripture.

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HIGHLIGHT...Read Mark 1 individually or out loud as a group. As you read, find a verse or verses that stood out to you. Feel free to underline it, highlight it or rewrite them or try to paraphrase this passage in your own words.

EXPLAIN...Explain what it means in the context of the passage. Unlike the other three Gospels, Mark begins abruptly at the start of Jesus' earthly ministry, thirty years after His birth. Much of Mark's Gospel focuses on the actions of Jesus and how people responded to Him. The chapter begins with information about the preparations made for Jesus' ministry. John the Baptist called for repentance from sin and proclaimed the One (Jesus) to follow. Jesus presented Himself for baptism to John as a way of affirming John's ministry. Mark next introduced Jesus as proclaimer of the message of good news and God's kingdom. Jesus issues a formal invitation to four fishermen to follow Him. Jesus further demonstrated His oneness with God as He displayed authority over unclean spirits and healed many physical illnesses. Although many people sought Him because of His power, Jesus shied away from the crowds and devoted most of His time to training the twelve disciples.

A final healing, however, shows Jesus' ministry to be marked by compassion toward those in need. From the beginning of Mark's Gospel, we see that in Jesus' ministry, meeting people's spiritual and physical needs go hand in hand. This is the model He demonstrates for us.^{5 6}

Group Discussion Questions:

1. Why do you think Mark chose to begin his Gospel with Jesus' ministry rather than His birth or early life? How does this shape the way we understand Jesus?
2. What does Jesus' baptism by John tell us about His character and mission? Why do you think He chose to be baptized even though He was sinless?
3. How do Jesus' actions in Mark 1—healing, casting out demons, and calling disciples—reveal His authority and purpose?
4. Jesus often withdrew from crowds to focus on teaching and training His disciples. What does this say about His priorities, and how might it influence the way we spend our time?
5. How can we follow Jesus' example of showing compassion by meeting both the spiritual and physical needs of others in our communities today?

APPLY...Apply a truth from this passage to your life. As you close, discuss one way you can apply this to your life going forward this week.

RESPOND...Respond to God with a prayer or an action. What's your next step?

PRAY - Pray for one another and commit to sharing this truth with at least one person this week. Again, take any prayer request and commit to praying for one another.

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Mark - June 17 - YA Small Group Discussion Guide

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HIGHLIGHT...Read Mark 10 individually or out loud as a group. As you read, find a verse or verses that stood out to you. Feel free to underline it, highlight it or rewrite them or try to paraphrase this passage in your own words.

EXPLAIN...Explain what it means in the context of the passage. Many times during His earthly ministry, Jesus predicted His own death and the suffering His disciples would endure. He wanted those who followed Him to have a clear picture of what they were getting themselves into—connecting oneself with the mission of Jesus requires sacrifice. Contrary to how the disciples viewed it, Jesus defined effective discipleship by the practice of humble service to other people (Mark 10:42–45). He downplayed success as an attainment of position and power. Real effectiveness in ministry comes through serving, not through being served. This mindset was counter cultural in Jesus' day, and it remains countercultural for us today too. Serving others requires an active attentiveness to people's needs and genuine compassion for people's souls.

When we struggle to show this kind of humility and compassion to others, it is important to remember this is how God loves us. Recognizing the love, compassion, and grace of God in our own lives enables us to overflow that love to others.^{7 8 9}

Group Discussion Questions:

1. Why do you think Jesus emphasized serving others as the true mark of discipleship? How does that challenge cultural views of success and leadership today?
2. In what ways do you find it difficult to embrace sacrifice or humility in your own faith journey? What might be holding you back?
3. Jesus said that real greatness comes through serving. What are some practical ways you can serve others in your daily life?
4. How has God shown you grace and compassion in your own life? How does remembering that impact the way you treat others?
5. Who in your life right now needs to experience the love, compassion, or grace of God through your actions? What can you do this week to show that to them?

APPLY...Apply a truth from this passage to your life. As you close, discuss one way you can apply this to your life going forward this week.

RESPOND...Respond to God with a prayer or an action. What's your next step?

PRAY - Pray for one another and commit to sharing this truth with at least one person this week. Again, take any prayer request and commit to praying for one another.

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⁷ Robby Gallaty, Foundations: A 260-Day Bible Reading Plan for Busy Believers (Nashville: Lifeway Christian Resources, 2015), 181.

⁸ Patrick Schreiner, The Four Gospels: Jesus, the Hope of the World (Scripture Connections) (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2024).

⁹ Timothy Keller, Jesus the King: Understanding the Life and Death of the Son of God (New York: Riverhead Books, 2013).



Luke - July 1 - YA Small Group Discussion Guide

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HIGHLIGHT...Read Luke 1 individually or out loud as a group. As you read, find a verse or verses that stood out to you. Feel free to underline it, highlight it or rewrite them or try to paraphrase this passage in your own words.

EXPLAIN...Explain what it means in the context of the passage. For centuries God spoke through His prophets. Then after Malachi He stopped talking. For nearly five hundred years God remained silent. All of the promises God made seemed to be fading away in the hearts of His people. God didn't remain silent forever. He spoke again through John the Baptist, a prophet who had the unique responsibility of announcing that Jesus, the long-awaited Messiah, had arrived. Luke began his Gospel (his account of the events surrounding Jesus' earthly ministry) with the angelic announcements of two key births—John the Baptist's and Jesus'. The birth stories of these two people were intricately linked. The angel's descriptions of both men reveal key information about who Jesus is and why He came. Jesus is the very Son of God, and His name means "Deliverer" or "Savior." He came to save God's people from their bondage to sin and to establish the kingdom of God—His justice and righteousness—on earth.

The announcements of Jesus' birth show that, despite present conditions, God had not abandoned His people—a truth we need constant reminders of today. ^{10 11}

Group Discussion Questions:

1. Why do you think God's silence before Jesus' arrival was significant? How might that silence have impacted the people's faith and expectations?
2. What does the birth announcement of Jesus in Luke 1 reveal about who He is and why He came? How does that influence your understanding of Him?
3. The angel called Jesus the "Son of God" and "Savior." What do these titles mean to you personally, and how do they shape your relationship with Him?
4. How does God's faithfulness in keeping His promises in Luke 1 encourage you during seasons when He seems silent or distant?
5. What can you do to be more aware of God's presence and promises in your life, especially during times of uncertainty or waiting?

APPLY...Apply a truth from this passage to your life. As you close, discuss one way you can apply this to your life going forward this week.

RESPOND...Respond to God with a prayer or an action. What's your next step?

PRAY - Pray for one another and commit to sharing this truth with at least one person this week. Again, take any prayer request and commit to praying for one another.

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Luke - July 15 - YA Small Group Discussion Guide

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HIGHLIGHT...Read Luke 17:11-37 and Luke 18 individually or out loud as a group. As you read, find a verse or verses that stood out to you. Feel free to underline it, highlight it or rewrite them or try to paraphrase this passage in your own words.

EXPLAIN...Explain what it means in the context of the passage. One of the themes that surfaces time and again in the Gospels is that salvation changes us. One of the stories in Luke 10 tells about ten lepers who were healed by Jesus. Of the ten only one returned to thank Him, but that one revealed he had an understanding the change Jesus has brought about in our lives should lead to a heart of gratitude toward Him. Prayer also played a significant role in Jesus' life and teaching. At the start of Luke 18, we read a story Jesus told about a widow, which highlights the need for persistence in prayer, even when it seems like God is being slow to answer us (2 Pet. 3:9). A second parable about the Pharisee and the tax collector emphasizes the need for humility in prayer.

Both persistence and humility in prayer communicate total dependency on God and a desire to unite with Him through prayer. Prayer is one of the greatest gifts God gives His children and is a gift for which we, like the leper, should be eternally grateful.^{12 13}

Group Discussion Questions:

1. What does the story of the ten lepers teach us about gratitude in our spiritual walk?
2. Why do you think only one of the ten lepers returned to thank Jesus, and how does that reflect human nature?
3. How does Jesus use the parables in Luke 18 to emphasize both persistence and humility in prayer?
4. In what ways can pride hinder our prayer life and relationship with God?
5. What are some practical changes you can make to develop a more dependent and humble approach to prayer?

APPLY...Apply a truth from this passage to your life. As you close, discuss one way you can apply this to your life going forward this week.

RESPOND...Respond to God with a prayer or an action. What's your next step?

PRAY - Pray for one another and commit to sharing this truth with at least one person this week. Again, take any prayer request and commit to praying for one another.

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John - August 5 - YA Small Group Discussion Guide

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HIGHLIGHT...Read John 1 individually or out loud as a group. As you read, find a verse or verses that stood out to you. Feel free to underline it, highlight it or rewrite them or try to paraphrase this passage in your own words.

EXPLAIN...Explain what it means in the context of the passage. John 1 focuses on Jesus' divinity and role in creation as well as the start of His earthly ministry. The Word, Jesus, is divine, distinct from God the Father but one with Him. God created everything through the Word. Nothing came into being without His direct involvement. Life came through Jesus, who provided the light of God's love and guidance. As the creation of physical light dispelled the darkness on the first day of creation (Gen. 1:3), so Jesus' light pierced through the darkness of sin to provide eternal salvation to those who believe in Him. Although the world had been created through the Word, the world's people did not recognize or respond to Him. Despite that rejection, some accepted Jesus, believing in Him as Savior. In addition, John's Gospel also emphasizes the humanity of Jesus. By coming in human form, Jesus allowed us to see the glory of God.

John the Baptist's ministry proved true as the life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus revealed God's grace and truth. In Him we find grace, truth, and salvation. Like the first disciples who answered Jesus' call to follow Him, once Christ changes our lives, we are compelled to live for opportunities to demonstrate the power of the gospel, pointing others to Jesus.^{14 15}

Group Discussion Questions:

1. What does John 1 teach us about the connection between Jesus, God the Father, and creation?
2. How does the imagery of Jesus as "the light" help us understand His role in the world and in our lives?
3. Why do you think many people did not recognize or receive Jesus when He came into the world?
4. In what ways does Jesus' humanity make His ministry and message more personal and relatable to us today?
5. How can we, like the first disciples, live in a way that points others to Jesus through our everyday actions?

APPLY...Apply a truth from this passage to your life. As you close, discuss one way you can apply this to your life going forward this week.

RESPOND...Respond to God with a prayer or an action. What's your next step?

PRAY - Pray for one another and commit to sharing this truth with at least one person this week. Again, take any prayer request and commit to praying for one another.

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John - August 19 - YA Small Group Discussion Guide

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HIGHLIGHT...Read John 16 individually or out loud as a group. As you read, find a verse or verses that stood out to you. Feel free to underline it, highlight it or rewrite them or try to paraphrase this passage in your own words.

EXPLAIN...Explain what it means in the context of the passage. In the final instructions given to His disciples in the upper room on the night before His crucifixion (John 13–16), Jesus promised that He would ask the Father to send the Holy Spirit to His disciples (14:15-17). He revealed that the Holy Spirit would be their Counselor (14:25-26). The Holy Spirit would testify about Jesus Christ and enable believers to testify also (15:26-27). The Spirit's ministry to the world would be to convict people of sin, righteousness, and judgment in His efforts to bring people to faith and salvation in Jesus Christ (16:5-15). The Holy Spirit would guide believers into all truth. Genuine spirituality involves developing a personal knowledge of and experience with the person and ministry of the Holy Spirit in our daily lives.

Only through the Spirit's strength are we able to find the hope and confidence Jesus encourages at the close of this chapter with the reminder: "Take heart; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33, ESV).^{16 17}

Group Discussion Questions:

1. Why do you think Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit to His disciples before His crucifixion?
2. In what ways does the Holy Spirit help believers today, according to this passage?
3. What are some of the many troubles you are currently facing (John 16:33)? How can understanding that troubles are inevitable help you handle difficulties differently?
4. How might Jesus' follow-up statement, that He has overcome the world, enable you to take heart as He commands?
5. How can a deeper relationship with the Holy Spirit strengthen your confidence and hope during hard times?

APPLY...Apply a truth from this passage to your life. As you close, discuss one way you can apply this to your life going forward this week.

RESPOND...Respond to God with a prayer or an action. What's your next step?

PRAY - Pray for one another and commit to sharing this truth with at least one person this week. Again, take any prayer request and commit to praying for one another.

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