

KINGDOM LIVING

Jesus was launching His public teaching ministry. He'd gathered some followers and healed people who were sick - like deathly ill people were restored to full health and people who couldn't walk were literally jumping with joy.

One afternoon He climbed a gentle slope above the Sea of Galilee. His reputation was growing, so a big crowd gathered: some skeptics, some ready to believe, some young, some old, but all seeking something.

As the breeze rustled nearby olive branches, He opened His mouth and began to speak out. What flowed from His heart to the ears of hopeful listeners was a message that still rings true 2000 years later. We call it the *Sermon on the Mount*.

Like a composer who lays out key melodic elements in the overture of a masterful symphony, the greatest teacher who ever lived laid the groundwork for His ministry that would shake the world. And it still echoes into the hearts and lives of people today. His words contain wisdom so simple that children smile in wide-eyed wonder, and so profound that scholars still delve the depths of their meaning.

Over the next two months, we'll explore Jesus' message together, shining a light on the multifaceted truth and hope it holds.

The apostle Matthew, one of Jesus' close friends, wrote an account the earthly life of Jesus. We call it The Gospel of *Matthew* and it's

one of the books in the Bible. In the coming weeks, we'll open up Matthew's gospel and set our hearts on seven principles for living Jesus shared on that Galilee hillside.

Jesus makes some sweeping claims about God and the good life and how we can live as people of God's Kingdom. Plan to join us at Woodmen each weekend for the teaching series, *Kingdom Living*.

This journal is designed to help you prepare and grow in your faith journey. Each week, set aside a few minutes with God to prayerfully reflect on the scriptures and questions in these pages. It's our hope and prayer that together, we'll find a clearer, fuller understanding of the real Jesus, and what it looks like to follow Him as our King today. This chapter of scripture is a great starting place to discover Jesus and what it looks like for His Kingdom to come and His will to be done, in Colorado as it is in heaven.

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THE CALL TO RECONCILIATION

Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight. Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.
Romans 12:15-18

I started off with the best intentions to love someone well, to care for what's important to them. How did it all go sideways? Sooner or later, most of us find ourselves in this place.

I was recently left looking back in frustration and discord after an opportunity that initially seemed exciting ended up in a big mess. After a few days being a part of this endeavor, the communication was messy, the goals kept moving and expectations were unmet. I felt selfish and aggravated.

I paused and prayed. When I looked below the surface, I was feeling exasperation and shame. I was disappointed in the situation, but also in my own reaction to it. I'd let my emotions get the best of me.

In Acts 3:19-20, Luke gives us wisdom for moments like these: "Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out. That times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord ... "

I reflected further on the teaching and the life of Jesus. How would He respond? With the help of the Holy Spirit, I let go of my frustration and shame. As my attitude changed and I began to be reconciled to the needs of others, frustration gave way to a renewed sense of hope.

God never walks away from us or finds our troubles too big; Through the power of Christ, He forgives and calls us to be reconciled with Him and with those around us.

Is there a relationship in your life that needs to be reconciled? Take a moment to invite the Lord to help you see the best in others and to open your heart to reconciliation today.

More about Reconciliation:
Colossians 3:12-15, Romans 12:2, 2 Corinthians 5:18-21, Ephesians 2:14-18

PREPARE FOR THIS WEEKEND'S TEACHING

READ MATTHEW 5:21-26

Take a few moments to pray and reflect on the scripture.

What is revealed about God - about His character, His conduct or His concerns?

What do I learn about people - about our identity, our tendencies, our condition or our relationships?

Is there an example or principle to follow?

How does this passage connect to the grand story of scripture and God's plan to save His people?

How can I apply the truths of this scripture in my life?