

God With Us: A Pastoral Theology of Matthew's Gospel

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Introduction to the Course

This course is intended:

To provide an occasion for peers to grow in their understanding and skills through interaction with the lectures, the reading assignments and discussions with others. While there is no on-site teacher, these resources should free you and the group to proceed at your own pace and control your own learning

To encourage the development of supportive relationships among Christian leaders who face similar challenges. The “Get Started” time in each session is intended to help make this when it is possible for the group to meet face to face.

Since this is a study of the Gospel of Matthew, it should be read along with the textbook each session. You may choose to read it from beginning to end, or study the various passages referred to in each of the chapters. And, of course, bring your Bible along to the group sessions.

The textbook is God With Us, by Mark Allan Powell, published by Fortress Press.

Session 1, Introduction

A. Get Started

1. Make sure that all in the group know each other. Let each one tell their reaction to the Gospel of Matthew, as over against the other gospels.
2. Devotions: Matthew 1:18-25

B. Watch the Lecture (Session 1, Part 1, 4 min.)

C. Discuss

How are people in America likely to answer the question "Where is God in the world today"? The people in your congregation? How would you answer that question?

D. Watch the Lecture (Session 1, Part 2, 15 min.)

E. Discuss

Look up these passages in Matthew:

10:40 25:31-46 18:5-6 28:20 18:20

Where is Jesus to be found in our world?

F. Watch the Lecture (Session 1, Part 3, 10 min.)

G. Discuss

1. What are some prevalent attitudes in America toward the statement "God is to be found in church"? How about "primarily in church" or "only in church"?
2. What does Matthew mean by his assertion that Jesus may be found where people are gathered "in my name", or among people "who believe in me"? What does this mean or imply for "church people"?

H. Watch the Lecture (Session 1, Part 4, 11 min.)

I. Discuss

1. Recall your discussion on "Where is God in the world today." What does Matthew say? Are our people as clear as Matthew is? Why or why not? What is our task as leaders in the church?
2. Powell says that often the teachings of the church first appear in worship, and only later become official doctrine. True? What are the implications of this?

J. Assignment for next session

Read chapter 1 in the textbook.

Look up and reflect on the scripture passages which are referred to. Make note of ideas you wish to discuss in your group.

Session 2, Mission

A. Get Started

Devotions: Matthew 16:13-19

B. Watch the Lecture (Session 2, Part 1, 2 min.)

C. Discuss

How does the mission of the Church differ from that of Jesus?

D. Watch the Lecture (Session 2, Part 2, 6 min.)

E. Discuss

How is the Church storming the gates of hell? How is it salt and light? What are some of the demons that the Church is overcoming?

F. Watch the Lecture (Session 2, Part 3, 9 min.)

G. Discuss

A major responsibility of the church is to "discern and articulate the will of God". How do we do that? How well do we do it? How could we do it better?

H. Watch the Lecture(Session 2, Part 4, 7 min.)

I. Discuss

1. "The Church's mission is not primarily to convert people, or to get people to join the church. The mission is to proclaim the reign of God, to teach and to enact God's will in a sinful world. Evangelism means calling people to join this mission."

Discuss the above statement. Do the leaders of your congregation understand evangelism that way? Should they? What appeal does this view have?

2. Scan chapter 1 on the textbook. Raise some issues that you would like to see highlighted or would like more clarity.

J. Assignment for next session

Read chapter 2 in the textbook.

Session 3, Worship

A. Get Started

Devotions: read pages 31-32 in the textbook and reflect on the passages referred to.

B. Watch the Lecture (Session 3, Part 1, 3 min.)

C. Discuss

What is the significance of the magi giving their gifts to Jesus?

D. Watch the Lecture (Session 3, Part 2, 6 min.)

E. Discuss

How important to you is "attitude" in worship? Any problems with it?

F. Watch the Lecture (Session 3, Part 3, 7 min.)

G. Discuss

According to Matthew, the person coming to God in prayers of supplication, first comes with worship and praise, and then states a simple request. This stands in contrast with other practices, biblical and modern (p. 33). Discuss the values of the approach described by Matthew. What relevance does this have for our worship life?

H. Watch the Lecture(Session 3, Part 4, 10 min.)

I. Discuss

1. Do people judge the church and its worship by "what I get out of it"? How valid is this?
2. Most of the time sermons should be doxological: they should elicit praise to God? Do you agree? How can we do that better?

J. Watch the Lecture(Session 3, Part 5, 15 min.)

K. Discuss

1. How and where is the attitude of "adoration" evident in worship in your church? Why is it important? Is adoration evident in the prayers?
2. What thoughts did the discussion of the "Magi" evoke in you?
3. Scan the chapter on worship in the textbook. Raise the issues you would like to discuss.

L. Assignment for next session

Read chapter 3 in the textbook.

Session 4, Teaching

A. Get Started

Devotions: Matthew 18:15-18

B. Watch the Lecture (Session 4, Part 1, 14 min.)

C. Discuss

Look up these passages in Matthew, and determine whether Jesus is loosing or binding in each instance.

5:33-37	12:9-12	8:4	9:10-13
22:17-21	9:14-15	19:9	

Now, hear what Dr. Powell has to say.

D. Watch the Lecture (Session 4, Part 2, 14 min.)

E. Discuss

According to Matthew 18:15-18, how should the issue of homosexuality be handled in the church?

F. Watch the Lecture (Session 4, Part 3, 11 min.)

G. Discuss

1. How does the issue of "loosing and binding" relate to the church today?
2. Review pages 84-88 in the textbook and discuss the three tests for whether the church is interpreting the commands of Jesus faithfully.
3. What else in the chapter would you like to discuss?

Session 5, Stewardship

A. Get Started

Devotions: Matthew 22:34-40

B. Watch the Lecture (Session 5, Part 1, 6 min.)

C. Discuss

1. The textbook speaks of three key parables in Matthew that teach a theology of stewardship (p. 89). Look them up and remind yourself what they are about.
2. Discuss the theological basis for stewardship (p. 91). Examine and discuss the scripture references.
3. Review pages 93-94 on the teaching of rewards and punishments. What do you do with these and similar passages in your preaching and teaching?

D. Watch the Lecture (Session 5, Part 2, 4 min.)

E. Discuss

1. Briefly scan pages 95-98. Discuss the tensions between the priorities of serving God, others and ourselves? Are they really tensions? How do you deal with these in your own life and in teaching and counseling others?
2. Look up these passages.

5:23-24

15:3-9

10:34-37

23:8-10

Discuss how they relate to stewardship.

F. Watch the Lecture (Session 5, Part 3, 20 min.)

G. Discuss

Recall Powell's video presentation? Were there "aha moments"? What did you find useful for teaching to your congregation? (p. 104-112)

H. Assignment for next session

Read chapter 5 in the textbook.

Session 6, Social Justice

A. Get Started

Devotions: Matthew 5:3-11

B. Watch the Lecture (Session 6, Part 1, 5 min.)

Powell refers to a new article by Ulrich Luz in "Treasures Old and New" edited by David Bauer and Mark Powell, published by Scholars Press.

C. Discuss

Examine Matthew 25:31-46 and explore the meaning (p 113-114 and 146-148).

D. Watch the Lecture (Session 6, Part 2, 6 min.)

Paraphrase of Matthew 5:3-6:

Blessed are those who have no reason for hope--
heaven rules them!

Blessed are those with no cause for joy--
they will find contentment!

Blessed art the oppressed--
they will get their share of this world!

Blessed are those who have been starved for justice--
they will get it!

E. Discuss

Review pages 119-140 in the textbook. What new insights regarding the Beatitudes did you get from this study? What does it reveal about Matthew's teaching on social justice? This discussion will be continued in the next part.

F. Watch the Lecture (Session 6, Part 3, 10 min.)

G. Discuss

1. Does God take sides? What does it mean for the church?
2. What has been your reaction to this whole study of the Beatitudes?

H. Watch the Lecture (Session 6, Part 4, 4 min.)

Note diagrams at the end of this guide--"Christ and Culture"

I. Discuss

What is the relationship between church and society as envisioned in Matthew's gospel? How would you diagram it?

J. Watch the Lecture (Session 6, Part 5, 15 min.)

K. Discuss

What are the major new insights you received from this study?

Christ and Culture