Walk | Read | Pray | Join | Commit

Matthew's Gospel Connect Group Resources: **Jesus – A Life**
Matthew Chapters 19-22

The aim of this session is to explore the question: What 'stuff' in our lives hold us back from following Jesus?

COLLECT
Ask your group to break up into pairs for this activity. **In your pairs discus "What three things would you take with you on a long journey if they were the only things you could take and why?"**

CHALLENGE
In Matthew 19, there is a real focus on giving up all that you hold dear in your life to follow Jesus. ***What does it mean to give up all your 'possessions' (this can be both physical and metaphorical) to follow Jesus? What does this look like practically?***

In Matthew chapter 20, servanthood and being servant hearted is a key subject. Read Matthew 20:25-28. ***How would you define a servant heart? What new habits do you need to take up or old habits do you need to drop to fulfil this definition?***

Read Matthew 20:29-34. We see here that Jesus heals a man who has been blind from birth. Sometimes we carry a burden for so long that we doubt God can move in power to heal the situation. ***Is there anything in your life that you fear God can not heal? Is there anything in your life that you have seen God bring healing in? How did that experience make you feel? How can we remain encouraged in times when our prayers don't seem to be answered?***

In Matthew 22:15-22, the Pharisees try to trap Jesus with sensitive questions about obeying worldly authority at the possible cost of being obedient to God. ***Jesus says that we are to give back to God what is God's. What gifts, resources and traits has God given you? What ways can you turn your gifts back to God?***

CONNECT
It can sometimes feel lonely in our Christian walk and we can allow life's problems to get on top of us. Corrie ten Boom, the Dutch watchmaker who worked with her family to helped save many Jews escape the Nazi Holocaust, said, "Let God's promises shine on your problems."

How can we create a space in our week to be a light that shines God's love on others? How can we encourage each other in the next week when we face problems and challenges? What do we already do to keep our eyes focused on God that we can share with others?

Leave 10 to 15 minutes to discuss the above questions in small groups of three or four. Write down a plan for your week, to set aside time to reflect and act on what you discuss. Pray for one another and ask that God's light would shine in our lives.

CONTEXT AND CONTENT OF CHAPTERS 19-22 – relevant and helpful background information [*You may choose to read this group, or just use it as preparation to inform and facilitate group discussion.]*

Matthew's gospel sees Jesus' movement and teaching split into two distinct areas: the first half (chapters 1-13) has Jesus in and around the Galilean countryside and the second half (14-28) in and close to the capital, Jerusalem. In chapters 19-22 we find ourselves in the region of Judea on the other side of the Jordan, closing in on Jerusalem.

Chapter 19 is made up of three different stories: The first begins with Jesus leaving Galilee and going into Judea. When Jesus gets there the Pharisees try to trap him and ask him questions about the law to make him say something wrong. They ask Jesus about divorce, when it's lawful. Jesus answers the question with knowledge that comes full circle starting back in the beginning when God created man and woman.

From there Matthew goes into blessing and praying for the children. The disciples thought the Jesus had more important things to do than bless the children people had brought.

Next, Matthew goes into the story of the rich young man. A man comes to Jesus wanting to know how to obtain eternal life. Jesus answers with some commandments then tells him to sell everything and follow him. With this the man leaves Jesus truly sad for he has great wealth. Jesus then turns to his disciples and tells them that it is hard for a rich man to get into heaven. He goes on to tell them that with God all things are possible and that anyone who leaves anything and everything to follow him will receive a hundred times as much and will obtain eternal life.

In chapters 20-22 we see Jesus entering Jerusalem, drawing closer to the climax of his mission. Looking back a couple of chapters we see that Jesus had not only taken part in the transfiguration but had also been doing lots of teaching. It's obvious that Jesus knew his time was coming to an end. This is made starkly clear when Jesus predicts that his death will come as he enters Jerusalem.

It is in this context that Jesus enters the city that is at the heart of the people of God. The first picture we see is of the triumphant entry where he is adored by the crowd and hailed as the messiah. This seems to be a high moment in the final few days of Jesus' life, with Matthew drawing attention to the stir he creates. There must have been some nationalistic pride, and even more a sense of hope that maybe this prophet from the line of David was finally here to overthrow the Romans and restore the nation to a point it had been longing for many decades – promises left unfulfilled since the return from Exile.

If you've been keeping notes on this series so far, now would be a good point to look over all you have observed of Jesus as he enters the final stages of his mission. What has God said to you personally through his word, about gis Son, by his Spirit, his Kingdom?