



THE GOSPEL OF  
**Matthew**

## Leading a Virtual Study?

While in-person Bible studies are always the best option, they may not be possible. As you follow campus guidelines for in-person gatherings, you may need to take your study virtual. If so, we have you covered!

### VIRTUAL DISCOVERY KIT

Open your Virtual Discovery Kit online using the link below. Find helpful resources to use in conjunction with this guide including visuals to screen share during the study, and more.

[bit.ly/virtual-kit](https://bit.ly/virtual-kit)

## About Matthew

You see it everywhere. From graduations to mascots. From the stories we tell to the values we learn. Our college campuses are steeped in history and tradition; it's the connection between the old and new.

While every passing generation carries on traditions and stories, they also add their own twists. Same ceremonies. New themes. Same history. New perspectives. With every new generation, the past influences our future, yet the way we approach each year is never quite the same.

This is true for the story of Jesus too. From the things he did to the places he went, tradition influenced the stories he told and the values he taught. Much of what you see in the book of Matthew can be traced back to the ancient traditions and teachings found in the Old Testament.

While Jesus carried on these traditions, he also added his own twist. Same stories. New endings. Same values. Deeper meanings. The same old honored traditions but with a new way of doing things. This new way of life, found in the New Testament, began with Jesus, and with him, the way we approach life, people, and ultimately God would never quite be the same again.

Nowhere is this connection between the Old Testament and New Testament more clear than in the Gospel of Matthew. As you refer back to these old traditions and teachings, we hope that you and your friends would experience a new and deeper connection with God.

# How to Use This Guide

As you know, Bible study is a vital part of leading a small group, but it's not the *only* part. Building friendships and following up outside of the study is crucial to leading a transformative group. This Leader's Guide is designed to help you lead both inside and outside of your group.

## STUDY BREAKDOWN



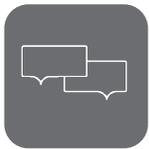
### THE PASSAGE

Each study begins with the portion of Scripture that you'll be exploring that week.



### BEFORE THE STUDY

This section is designed to enrich your own personal understanding of each passage as you prepare to lead your friends.



### DURING THE STUDY

This section provides you with everything needed to lead an engaging study. Pay attention to section headers and pacing icons.



### AFTER THE STUDY

This section is designed to help you capture what God is doing in the lives of your friends and identify ways to help them grow closer to Jesus outside of the study.

## ADDITIONAL TOOLS



### PACING ICONS

Keep track of how much time the section should take



### LEARN & LEAD

Lead well by learning more with InterVarsity's online training and resources



### GO DEEPER

Go deeper into the passage with Bible Project's explainer videos

# How to Lead Study

Leading an engaging study is the best way for your friends to encounter and follow Jesus! Below are the three parts to every study. For more training, visit [howto.bible](http://howto.bible).

## SHAPE OF DISCOVERY STUDY



### ENTERING THE PASSAGE

*What does it say?*

The goal while entering the passage is to observe what it says. Use the prompts in this section to help your group understand the background, identify the facts (e.g. who, what, when, where, etc.), and engage their senses and emotions. The key is to be curious and ask questions about everything!



### DISCUSSING THE PASSAGE

*What does it mean?*

The goal while discussing the passage is to interpret what it means. Use the prompts in this section to gather and discuss observations and questions. While observations focus on the what, interpretation questions focus on the why. The key is to discover why the author wrote this passage, what they were trying to communicate, and how the original audience would have understood it.



### APPLYING THE PASSAGE

*What does it mean to me, us, and our world?*

The goal while applying the passage is to discover what it means for us and how we are meant to live our lives differently in light of it. Use the prompts in this section to summarize, clarify, and respond to the meaning of the passage. The key is to seek transformation, not just more information about the Bible!

# Discussion Guidelines

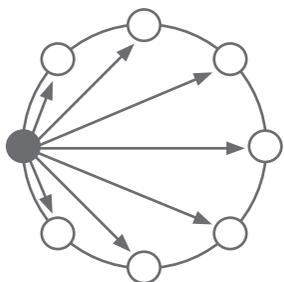
Review the Discussion Guidelines below as you begin the first few studies. Revisit them any time someone new attends. This will help everyone know what to expect.

## PARTICIPATION IS CRUCIAL

In a Traditional Study, the *Leader* uses *their* questions to drive the discussion. However, in a Discovery Study, it's the *Group's* questions that drive the discussion. Discovery Studies are more engaging and interactive, but they only work if everyone participates.

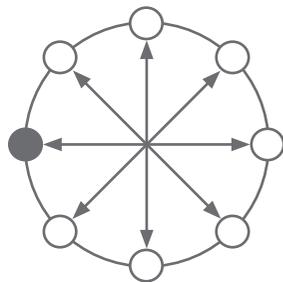
### TRADITIONAL STUDY

*Leader Driven*



### DISCOVERY STUDY

*Group Driven*



## ASSUME YOU KNOW NOTHING

Whether the passage being studied is very familiar or completely foreign, it's best for everyone to assume they are reading it for the first time.

Sometimes knowing something can keep you from seeing something new. Focus on the passage and keep outside knowledge to a minimum.

## BE REAL

Small Groups aren't just Bible Studies. They're communities, and the best communities are real and authentic. No one is perfect and everyone has questions so be real with one another.

## HAVE SOME RESPECT

Everyone does not have to agree, but everyone must respect each other. The best discussions have multiple viewpoints.

# Discussion Tips

Use the tips below to facilitate a great discussion. For more tips, visit InterVarsity's [howto.bible](#).

## ENTERING THE PASSAGE

*Context First. Then Handouts.*

Always give context (i.e. Prior to Passage) first before giving handouts. Context is critical but people tend to stop listening when given handouts.

*Embrace Silence*

Silence can be awkward but it's crucial for studying the passage. Silent study will make for better sharing later. Give people between 3-5 minutes of silent study.

## DISCUSSING THE PASSAGE

*Facilitate First. Then Share.*

When discussing questions, don't share your thoughts right away. Focus on facilitating the discussion first. Then share.

*Avoid Long Tangents*

People lose focus with long tangents. Refocus your group by either repeating the original question or asking the next one.

*Involve Everyone*

Try to get everyone to share at least once during each study. Keep asking, "What do others think?"

*Text the Answer*

Use the passage rather than opinions to answer questions—"Where do you see that in the passage?"

*Keep It Moving*

Don't wait for the discussion to die before asking the next question. Move on as the discussion begins to slow.

*Use Quick Recaps*

Quickly summarize the story before moving on to next section of text. It helps build tension and momentum.

## APPLYING THE PASSAGE

*Use Group Lingo*

Use the group's language rather than the guide's as much as possible. It will feel more personal and natural.

*Choose One Application*

Discuss only *one* Application Option. Choose the one that best fits your group's discussion.

# Weekly Preparation

Preparation is crucial to leading a great study! Set aside one hour each week to prepare. If other leaders are using the same study, prepare together! For more on preparing, visit [howto.bible/how-prepare](https://howto.bible/how-prepare).



## STUDY PASSAGE 45 MIN

Before you consider what God has for your friends, consider what he has for you. Study the passage and apply it to your own life first. The best leaders lead from personal experience.



## REVIEW LEADER GUIDE 10 MIN

Review the study in the Leader Guide and familiarize yourself with the questions and content. The more familiar you are with the guide the less you'll have to reference it during the study, which frees you up to focus on the discussion.



## PRAY 5 MIN

Pray that the LORD would meet you and your friends through each study, and watch for how he shows up!



## INVITE

Invite by sharing *why* not *what*. Rather than just sharing the place, time, and content of your study (i.e. the what), share why people might enjoy coming to your study (i.e. the why).

Consider your why. Is it to ask questions about faith? Grow in faith? Grow closer as friends? Learn how God can use us to make a difference? Clarify your "why," and then share it!

First time invitations are best done in-person. However, a text reminder the day of each study is also helpful.

# Study Plan

Study	Date	Time	Location
One			
Two			
Three			
Four			
Five			
Six			
Seven			
Eight			

## DATE & TIME

There is rarely a perfect time for everyone. Just pick a time that works for most people and be consistent.

## LOCATION

Choose a place that is quiet, relaxed, and familiar to your group.

## HOSPITALITY

Make people feel at home with snacks, drinks, and a comfortable setting. Invite your friends to bring snacks as well.

# Table of Contents

<b>STUDY ONE</b> <i>Matthew 8:23-27</i> .....	11
<b>STUDY TWO</b> <i>Matthew 14:13-21</i> .....	23
<b>STUDY THREE</b> <i>Matthew 14:22-33</i> .....	35
<b>STUDY FOUR</b> <i>Matthew 7:21-23</i> .....	47
<b>MIDPOINT REVIEW</b> <i>Reflection Guide</i> .....	58
<b>STUDY FIVE</b> <i>Matthew 13:1-23 (Excerpts)</i> .....	61
<b>STUDY SIX</b> <i>Call to Faith</i> <i>Matthew 13:44-46</i> .....	73
<b>STUDY SEVEN</b> <i>Matthew 6:24-34</i> .....	85
<b>STUDY EIGHT</b> <i>Matthew 5:43-48</i> .....	97
<b>SEMESTER REVIEW</b> <i>Reflection Guide</i> .....	108





## Matthew 8:23-27

<sup>23</sup> Then he got into the boat and his disciples followed him. <sup>24</sup>

Suddenly a furious storm came up on the lake, so that the waves swept over the boat. But Jesus was sleeping. <sup>25</sup> The disciples went

and woke him, saying, "Lord, save us! We're going to drown!" <sup>26</sup> He

replied, "You of little faith, why are you so afraid?" Then he got up

and rebuked the winds and the waves, and it was completely calm. <sup>27</sup>

The men were amazed and asked, "What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey him!"



## Before the Study

### PREPARING

In order to better understand the meaning of a passage, it's critical to know how the *original audience* would have heard it. The context below has been provided for you to better understand the world in which these listeners lived. It will also be helpful in answering cultural questions that arise during the study.

#### *Disciples (v.23)*

At least four of the twelve disciples were experienced fishermen who had exposure to treacherous waters. They would have been accustomed and prepared to deal with all kinds of weather. The boat they were using was a fisherman's boat, which was fairly small.

#### *The Lake (v.24)*

Due to the steep cliffs and mountains surrounding the lake, also known as the Sea of Galilee, winds often rushed down the slopes unexpectedly creating violent storms.

#### *Furious Storm (v.24)*

The word translated as "storm" could refer to hurricane-like gusts of wind or even an earthquake. Regardless of the actual event, the storm indicates that the air and water surrounding the boat was so rough it was literally shaking.



### OVERVIEW OF MATTHEW

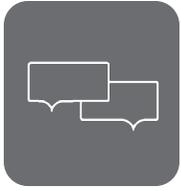
How do these passages fit into the larger story of the Bible? Watch the video below to get a quick overview of the first half of Matthew:  
[bibleproject.com/  
explore/video/  
matthew-1-13/](https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/matthew-1-13/)

#### *Sleeping (v.24)*

While Jesus is exhausted from a long day of teaching and healing people, there is also a deeper meaning connected with sleeping. Sleeping is one of the most vulnerable states of life. When you're asleep, you're unconscious, unaware, and unable to protect yourself against harm. In light of this, *deep sleep* was often associated with *deep trust* that God would watch over you and protect you in your weakest moment (Psalm 3:5, 4:8; Proverbs 3:24). In this story, there could not be a greater contrast between this lethal storm and sleeping Jesus.

#### *Calming the Storm (v.26)*

The ability or authority to control the weather was widely believed as something only God himself had the power to do. In fact, there were ancient Jewish psalms, or poems, that spoke of God being able to calm a storm with a whisper (Psalm 107:23-32).



# During the Study

## ENTERING THE PASSAGE 5-10 MIN

### DISCUSSION GUIDELINES

Review the Discussion Guidelines (Page 3) before beginning.

### PRIOR TO THIS PASSAGE

When Jesus first entered the public scene, no one knew who he was. He wasn't known as a religious figure. He was just another guy. However, all that began to change when he started performing inexplicable miracles like healing people of incurable diseases. As you can imagine, Jesus quickly gained a large following, which also included a smaller group of men, known as the disciples, who had left their jobs as fishermen to follow Jesus. Just prior to this particular story, after Jesus had just finished a long day of teaching and healing people, he began making plans to travel to another village by boat. However, when one of the disciples asked to take care of some family business before leaving, Jesus challenges the disciples to prioritize following him over everything including their families. Our story picks up immediately following this challenge.

### READ ALOUD

Have three people read the passage aloud for the group. You can use the sections on the following page to assign verses to read.

### CREATIVE ENTRY

Imagine we're the disciples struggling to stay afloat in the midst of this massive storm. As you frantically bail water from the crashing waves, what is the first thought that runs through your mind when you look over to find Jesus taking a nap?

### STUDY SILENTLY

Invite everyone to reread the passage silently. Note who, where, when, and what. Imagine yourself in the story. Note repeated words, comparisons and contrasts. Develop questions for further discussion.

## DISCUSSING THE PASSAGE 40 MIN

### SHARE OBSERVATIONS. GATHER QUESTIONS.

First, invite everyone to share their observations. Then, gather questions asking for verse references and write them in their respective sections below. Do not discuss until everyone has shared. Finally, use the checkboxes to select no more than six questions to discuss.

### DISCUSS QUESTIONS

#### *Sleeping Peacefully (v.23-24)*

- Why is Jesus sleeping in the midst of this furious storm? (v.24)
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

#### *Drowning in Fear (v.25-26)*

- Why does Jesus ask if they are afraid in the middle of this life-or-death situation? Why doesn't he calm the storm first? (v.26)
- Why does Jesus call out the disciples' lack of faith? What does their faith have to do with this situation? (v.26)
  - Imagine a little kid waking up to a bad thunderstorm outside and running to their parents' bedroom. What's the difference between the child and the parents in their reaction to the storm?
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

#### *Afraid to Amazed (v.27)*

- Why are the disciples so amazed by Jesus' actions here? (v.27)
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

## APPLYING THE PASSAGE



10-15  
MIN

### SUMMARY

As the disciples look over in the midst of the chaotic storm, Jesus is sleeping peacefully. Desperate for a miracle, they wake Jesus and beg for help. Yet, rather than doing something, Jesus takes the time to ask them why they're afraid. The disciples are probably thinking, "Isn't it obvious, Jesus! We're about to die! What does our faith have to do with this storm?!" The answer is everything! The disciples had the faith to follow Jesus into the boat and trust him with their jobs and their families, but in the midst of the storm, their faith began to drown in fear. Even in the midst of this lethal storm in his most vulnerable state, Jesus trusted God with his life. The question is would the disciples continue to trust God with theirs? As Jesus calms the storm by merely speaking to it, the disciples begin to wonder in amazement if God might be a little closer than they thought.

### BIG IDEA

Sometimes God uses the storms of life to reveal he's worth trusting.

### APPLICATION OPTIONS

Discuss *one* Application Option from the next page. Then finish by sharing The Bigger Story and Creative Response.

### THE BIGGER STORY

It's a fact of life. We will all face struggles, and we will all face death. Yet, if the disciples had reason to trust Jesus in the midst of the storm, we have even more. We don't just have Jesus saving us from a storm but from death itself. Even on the cross, in his weakest, most vulnerable state Jesus fully entrusted his life to God. In this moment, Jesus didn't just face death. He actually died. Yet, when it seemed like all hope was lost and death was certain, Jesus demonstrated his ultimate power and authority by coming back to life. If Jesus has the power to overcome death, how much more does he have the power to overcome the smaller storms we face in this life? If he was willing to give up his life to save us, how much more should we trust him with ours? It's in seeing and remembering Jesus that we can trust and remain calm in the face of anything.

### CREATIVE RESPONSE

Depending on the comfort of your group, you can simply pray or creatively respond through journaling, music, or another form of prayer.

## APPLICATION OPTIONS

### *Jesus, Wake Up!*

Sometimes it can feel like God is sleeping silently in our greatest times of need. Yet, this story shows us that silence does not mean absence. Even when it seems like God is unconscious and unaware of our struggle, he is still powerfully present. **Are there "storms," or difficult circumstances in your own life where it feels like Jesus is sleeping silently? How might knowing that Jesus is present with you and has experienced what you're going through bring you comfort?**

### *Out of Control*

Unexpected and difficult situations can often reveal just how little control we have over our lives, which can cause us a great deal of fear and anxiety. Yet, this story shows us that even when life seems completely out of control, God isn't. **How do you typically react when you experience unexpected and difficult situations? How might knowing that Jesus is in complete control of the situation put your mind to rest? What might keep you from surrendering control and trusting him?**

### *Storms are Good for Something*

In our culture, we highly value safety, comfort and happiness. Therefore, we see little value in going through difficult situations. Like the disciples, our immediate impulse is to simply ask God to fix it. Yet, rather than immediately calming the storm, Jesus takes the opportunity to teach and develop his followers. He shows us there are valuable life lessons to be learned in and through the storms of life. **What are common storms or difficult situations that we might all face in life? Which of these, if any, have you experienced? What might God want to teach you in the midst of it? About yourself, others, or God?**

