

MATTHEW 8-16

NEHEMIAH HEBREWS 8-13

### THE DAILY READING BIBLE

An all-in-one, take-anywhere package to help you feed regularly from God's word.

Time to get back into regular Bible reading? *The Daily Reading Bible* has everything you need to get started, and in one compact, portable package.

This volume contains 60 readings from Matthew 8–16, Nehemiah and Hebrews 8–13. Each reading is designed to take around 15–20 minutes and contains:

- the full text of the Bible passage for that reading
- some questions to get you thinking
- some 'points to ponder'
- some ideas to get you started in prayer.

It's all here in one booklet that you can take with you anywhere—on the train, on the bus, to the park at lunchtime, or to your favourite armchair.





# THE DAILY READING BIBLE

Volume 4

MATTHEW 8-16

NEHEMIAH HEBREWS 8-13

The Daily Reading Bible (Volume 4)
© Matthias Media 2005

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ISBN 978 1 921068 06 5

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Cover design and typesetting: www.madebydesign.com.au

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## INTRODUCTION

Reading our Bibles regularly is getting harder. That, at least, seems to be the common experience of many Christians. We could waste lots of ink speculating on the reasons for this: is it the frenetic pace of life these days? Is it spiritual laziness? Is it the impact of postmodernism on our culture and the lack of certainty when it comes to interpreting the written word?

But a better option than speculating on the reasons, we thought, was to provide a new resource for Christians to help them get back into a more regular habit of reflecting daily on God's Word. So back in June 2001, we decided to start including a section called 'Bible Brief' in our monthly magazine, *The Briefing* (see www.matthiasmedia.com for more information about *The Briefing*). The 'Bible Brief' provided 20 short readings each month—acknowledging that there will be days we miss or days when we want to do something a bit different—with questions, thoughts to ponder, and suggestions to get started in prayer.

Now, some four years later, we have a good collection of 'Bible Briefs', and it's time to offer them to a wider audience in a format that will, we hope, be even more convenient and useful.

This fourth volume contains 60 readings, all designed to be done in 15–20 minutes. These short daily Bible readings are designed to help you feed regularly from God's word. They

won't cover every issue in each passage, nor even every passage from each Bible book. In other words, they are no substitute for the in-depth study of the Scriptures that you may undertake personally, in small groups or through listening to sermons.

With the kind permission of our friends at Crossway Bibles, we've been able to make this a complete package to take with you—we've included the English Standard Version Bible text with each daily study. So you can take this one book with you and have everything you need—on the train, on the bus, or to the park at lunchtime—wherever and whenever you can get 20 minutes to yourself.

#### How to use these readings

- With a penitent heart, the true prerequisite for all Bible reading. Open with prayer (perhaps using the prayer suggested at the beginning of each set of studies).
- With 15-20 minutes of peace and quiet. If you can take longer, and want to read and pray further—great! But we have designed the readings to be done in a fairly short space of time.
- With an accurate modern translation.
   We recommend and have included the new ESV translation. The writers of the studies refer to this translation. Contact us for further details about the ESV or visit www.matthiasmedia.com.au/ESV
- With a pen. Even if you only jot down brief ideas, writing focuses the mind.

- As a guide and help, not a straitjacket.
   Feel free to dig further into the passage, to notice and ponder things that the questions don't point to.
- As a launch-pad for prayer. Use the prayer ideas at the end of each reading as a starting point for your daily prayer. Many of the points that will arise from the readings will be things you can pray for yourself, and also for others (family, friends, neighbours, etc.). Why not compile a list of people you want to pray for (you can write them in the blank space below), and use the prayer ideas from each reading to pray for the next person on your list?

#### This fourth volume includes:

• studies on Matthew 8-16 (written by Rory Shiner, a staff worker with the Christian Union at the University of Western Australia)

- studies on the book of Nehemiah (written by Phil Campbell, who ministers at Mitchelton Presbyterian Church in Brisbane, and Greg Clarke, Director of the Centre for Apologetic Scholarship and Education at New College, UNSW)
- studies on Hebrews 8-13 (written by Dave Starling, pastor of Petersham Baptist Church and lecturer in New Testament at Morling College in Sydney).

### Matthias Media August 2005

**Please note:** the main section of Scripture for each study is reproduced before the questions. Other Scripture references are reproduced as footnotes at the bottom of the page, or, where the passages are too long to be included as footnotes, in the appendix.

PEOPLE TO PRAY FOR:	

# **MATTHEW 8-16**

### INTRODUCTION

Chapters 8-16 of Matthew are classic examples of those familiar (sometimes all too familiar) gospel stories. There are healings, exorcisms, teachings and miracles—all no doubt amazing at the time, and still impressive after the first few readings; however, once you've read them more than a few times they can become, well, familiar.

What happens, though, if you slow down—really slow down—and read these stories closely? You begin to discover things you may never have seen before: the way Matthew has arranged the stories; the way one story fits with another; the perplexing word; the surprising turn; the less-than-familiar parable. This is the challenge for these readings: to read these passages with some care—and who knows? You may just discover some pearls of great price.

Here's an opening prayer you might like to use before each of the next 20 studies:

#### God my Father,

Thank you for preserving your word for us. Help me today to read familiar words afresh, difficult words aright, and gracious words with thankfulness.

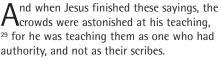
For Jesus' sake,

Amen.

NB: Tick the box when you've completed each study  $\checkmark$ 

### **READING 1**

**MATTHEW 7:28-8:4** 



- 8:1 When he came down from the mountain, great crowds followed him. <sup>2</sup> And behold, a leper came to him and knelt before him, saying, "Lord, if you will, you can make me clean." <sup>3</sup> And Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, "I will; be clean." And immediately his leprosy was cleansed. <sup>4</sup> And Jesus said to him, "See that you say nothing to anyone, but go, show yourself to the priest and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a proof to them."
- 1. Jesus has just finished teaching the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7). What struck the original hearers about Jesus' teaching (7:29)?
- 2. In these verses (7:28-8:4) what impression do you get of:
  a. the crowds?
  - b. the scribes (NIV "teachers of the law")?

3. Consider the incident in 8:1-4. According to Levitical law, when a 'clean' person touches an 'unclean' person there are serious consequences, involving isolating the unclearn person for a period of days, followed by washing and ritual sacrifice (cf. Lev 13-14, printed in the appendix on pp. 70-74.) How is Jesus' contact with the unclean different?

PONDER Jesus' relationship with Israel—its law, its leaders, its institutions—is a key theme in Matthew. Keep the question of Jesus' relationship to the institutions of Israel in the back of your mind as you read through Matthew (it may even shed some light on 8:4!). A fruitful exercise would be to write the headings 'scribes', 'crowds', 'Pharisees', etc. on a page, and keep jotting down information as you read, so as to build up a complete picture. We've included space at the end of these studies for you to do this (p. 76).

**PRAYER IDEAS** Thank God that, in Jesus, cleanness finally trumps uncleanness. Pray that Jesus will 'astonish' you this month.

### READING 2 MATTHEW 8:5-34

When he entered Capernaum, a centurion came forward to him, appealing to him, <sup>6</sup> "Lord, my servant is lying paralyzed at home, suffering terribly." 7 And he said to him, "I will come and heal him." 8 But the centurion replied, "Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof, but only say the word, and my servant will be healed. 9 For I too am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. And I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes, and to another, 'Come,' and he comes, and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it." 10 When Jesus heard this, he marveled and said to those who followed him, "Truly, I tell you, with no one in Israel have I found such faith. 11 I tell you, many will come from east and west and recline at table with Abraham. Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, 12 while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." 13 And to the centurion Jesus said, "Go; let it be done for you as you have believed." And the servant was healed at that very moment.

<sup>14</sup> And when Jesus entered Peter's house,

he saw his mother-in-law lying sick with a fever. <sup>15</sup> He touched her hand, and the fever left her, and she rose and began to serve him. <sup>16</sup> That evening they brought to him many who were oppressed by demons, and he cast out the spirits with a word and healed all who were sick. <sup>17</sup> This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah: "He took our illnesses and bore our diseases."

<sup>18</sup> Now when Jesus saw a great crowd around him, he gave orders to go over to the other side. <sup>19</sup> And a scribe came up and said to him, "Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go." <sup>20</sup> And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head." <sup>21</sup> Another of the disciples said to him, "Lord, let me first go and bury my father." <sup>22</sup> And Jesus said to him, "Follow me, and leave the dead to bury their own dead."

<sup>23</sup> And when he got into the boat, his disciples followed him. <sup>24</sup> And behold, there arose a great storm on the sea, so that the boat was being swamped by the waves; but he was asleep. <sup>25</sup> And they went and woke him, saying, "Save us, Lord; we are

perishing." <sup>26</sup> And he said to them, "Why are you afraid, O you of little faith?" Then he rose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm. 27 And the men marveled, saying, "What sort of man is this, that even winds and sea obev him?"

<sup>28</sup> And when he came to the other side, to the country of the Gadarenes, two demonpossessed men met him, coming out of the tombs, so fierce that no one could pass that way. 29 And behold, they cried out, "What have you to do with us, O Son of God? Have vou come here to torment us before the time?" 30 Now a herd of many pigs was feeding at some distance from them. 31 And the demons begged him, saying, "If you cast us out, send us away into the herd of pigs." 32 And he said to them. "Go." So they came out and went into the pigs, and behold, the whole herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea and drowned in the waters. 33 The herdsmen fled, and going into the city they told everything, especially what had happened to the demonpossessed men. 34 And behold, all the city came out to meet Jesus, and when they saw him, they begged him to leave their region.

1. There are five little incidents recorded in these verses. Go through them, labelling each one as a particular type of story (e.g. 'a healing story'). Then for each story, try and find a one-word summary of what the story is teaching (e.g. 'faith').

- a. Incident 1
- b. Incident 2
- c. Incident 3
- d. Incident 4
- e. Incident 5
- 2. We are used to people marvelling (being astonished) at Jesus (NIV "amazed"; e.a. Matt 8:27). What is it here that makes Jesus marvel (8:10)? Why is it such a marvel to him (vv. 10-13)?

**PONDER** The demons ask Jesus if he has come to torment them "before the time". Which 'time' do you think they are speaking of?

PRAYER IDEAS "What sort of man is this?" (v. 27). Thank God that he has given us this sort of man-compassionate, healing, powerful and good.

**MATTHEW 9:1-8** 

### **READING 3**

And getting into a boat he crossed over and came to his own city. <sup>2</sup> And behold, some people brought to him a paralytic, lying on a bed. And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Take heart, my son; your sins are forgiven." 3 And behold, some of the scribes said to themselves. "This man is blaspheming." 4 But Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, "Why do you think evil in

your hearts? 5 For which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise and walk'? 6 But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"—he then said to the paralytic—"Rise, pick up your bed and go home." 7 And he rose and went home. 8 When the crowds saw it, they were afraid, and they glorified God, who had given such authority to men.