

**TRINITY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
IHOP BIBLE STUDY**

Topic: Matthew 1: 1 to 2:23 “The birth of a teacher.”

Welcome to another study of the Gospels. The gospel of Matthew's message is powerful and relevant to our current human situation. Matthew shares with us the topic of **sanctification**. OK, this is a scary “Head Trip” word. During this study we will experience this word instead of just studying it. In this way, sanctification is transformed into the joy of living in our “secret gardens.” I'll explain what a secret garden is as we go along.

The Summary Chart of the Gospel of Matthew

Take a moment to capture the Chart of Matthew's gospel. It is on the Salina Trinity UMC website at www.triumc.org. Search for the “Ministries” drop-down box. Click on the On-Line Bible Study to find Chart of Matthew. This is a pdf file and will give you a readable copy.

When you have the chart in your hands, review it with these notes. My reflections on the gospel give us the overall title of **“The Training Manual For Teaching The Transparent Life.”**

This overall title is divided into seven sub-titles: “Preparing The Teacher;” “Tools for Teaching The Holy/Happy Life Methods;” “The Moral Imperatives;” “Teaching for Transparency – Part I;” “Teaching With Authority;” “Teaching for Transparency – Part II;” “The Teacher's Reward.”

Under these sub-titles are twenty study sections. You can identify and associate them with each of the seven sub-titles. My teaching plan is to review The Gospel of Matthew in about twenty sessions. While this is the goal, it may be subject to change as the lessons progress.

With this metaphor established, let us begin.

- I. Read the assigned reading at one time.
- II. 1: 1 – 17 Take time now to research this genealogy. You can use your own library resources, or there is a wealth of material on the web. Share some of your research findings here.

Using the “teaching” metaphor Matthew provides, we can ask the question “what is the lesson?” The Teacher (Jesus) is in the lineage of the great teachers of Abraham and David. Both of these ancient men are first-rank scholars and deeply in touch with the human/natural and the spiritual worlds.

The contrast between the genealogy of Matthew and that of Luke 3: 23 –38 is interesting. Luke begins his with Jesus and Joseph and go backward to Adam and God. On the other hand, Matthew begins his genealogy with Abraham—the father of the Jewish nation—and goes forward to Jesus.

The second notable difference between these two genealogies is that Matthew lifts up five women: Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, Bathsheba and Mary the mother of Jesus. A character study of these five women reveals them to be of doubtful morals, and Ruth is an outsider. This in itself is a lesson to be learned. Because of women's place in Jewish society this is a remarkable

notation. Women were to play a central role in the life of the Teacher. This makes Jesus a revolutionary of his time.

III. 1: 18 – 25 In light of our operating metaphor (the birth of the teacher) speculate on the angel's directions to Mary and Joseph. In particular, what are the "sins" from which the birth of The Teacher will save us? [vs. 21b] (Some research in my book "Old Code Words" may be helpful to recall how the word sin is used in "Gut Trip Analysis.")

"Sin" is associated with the word "separation." When it is understood that At-One-Ment is the purpose for which God created us, then separation is the antithesis of At-One-Ment. Anything that drives a wedge between us and our neighbor and God defeats the Great Lesson Jesus came to teach us: The Great Commandment is to love God as we love our neighbor and ourselves.

This places "sin" in an indicative ethic. It describes "The Way Life Is (TWLI)." It removes "sin" from a moral ethic. The indicative ethic supports the belief that we are sinners from birth. The proof of this is that our gender, race, and culture defines our relationship to each other as separate entities.

This is the "lesson" Jesus comes to teach us about the life of sanctification. Sanctification, understood in "Gut Trip Analysis," is the "happy life," or the life lived in deep satisfaction. This experience characterizes the Kingdom of God, and is my definition of "The Secret Garden."

Then, in verse 23b, speculate on the significance of the name "Immanuel." In light of "Gut Trip Analysis" what difference does this make in our human experience? Share some of your ruminations.

The Reward for the Deed is found in the Deed Itself--

Immanuel is translated as "God with us." To avoid "Head Trip Analysis" of the term God, it is necessary to ask how we experience God? If God is "love" then when was the last time we experienced being loved? Now, we have a common basis to discuss the nature of God.

One of my experiences of God is that of The Guarantor. When we do loving things, actions that help us experience At-One-Ment, then God guarantees that we experience feeling good about ourselves. When we do hateful things, actions in which we experience the antithesis of At-One-Ment, then God guarantees that we experience feeling bad about ourselves.

In this way God is the Guarantor. Because God unreservedly loves us, God directly does not punish us, we punish ourselves. This supports my believe that "The reward for the deed is found in the deed itself." We do happy things, and we feel good. We do mean things and we feel bad and make others feel bad. God Guarantees it!

IV. 2: 1 – 12 In light of our Teaching metaphor, it is interesting to speculate on the Magi who are "Wise Men." This is not to make too much of this part of the story, but to what is the comparison of the gifts of gold, incense and myrrh? In practical terms, what is YOUR EXPERIENCE in using these three items. What lessons do we learn from this experience. Stay away from moralisms. I'm pushing us to think about the "indicative;" that is The Way Life Is."

There is a danger here of pushing our "teaching" metaphor too far. However, my experience of the three gifts of the Three Learned Men is as follows:

Gold is experienced as being refined and is used to make things sturdy and last a long time. Sanctification, or the Holy/Happy Life, is a golden backbone of Christian faith. Perhaps (?) this is the lesson taught by the first Wise Man.

Frankincense is a fragrance used in incense. Somewhere in the Psalms, the psalmist writes of how we humans are incense wafted up to the nostrils of God. The question is, what kind of smell are we to God who is The Perfect At-One-Ment? Perhaps (?) this is the lesson taught by the second Wise Man.

Myrrh is an ointment used in the preparation of a body for burial. When Baptism is considered our death to this world and our epiphany into the life of the spirit, then this ointment is the reminder we live in two worlds, the human/natural world and the world of the spirit. Perhaps (?) tis is the lesson taught by the third Wise Man.

I told you not to make too much of this scripture passage, didn't I?

- V. Referencing The Escape/return section in 2: 15b
Note the reference to Hosea 11:1. Those of you who are Old Testament or Hebrew Testament scholars/students, perhaps you can enlighten us on the use of this Prophet. Why did Matthew use this reference in light of his intended metaphor of The Teacher? Or, in this same light, why the use of Jeremiah?

Hosea, Micah and Jeremiah are all quoted. Matthew used a common method of proof-texting his message out of material readily familiar to his readers. Where more research is needed is why Matthew choses these quotations rather than others. A New Testament professor use to push my experience of the Gospels by raising the question, "What happened to Matthew the night before he wrote this down. Something that happened during which Matthew said, 'Ah, yes. Now I remember what happened to Jesus. . .'"

OK, gang. Let's go to work. Don't be bashful in saving this to your "reply" box, and work from there. Send it back to me. This dialogue is helpful when I resend this material back to everyone **with comments.**