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Discussion Questions for *the Gospel of Matthew* by Curtis Mitch and Edward Sri
Two things to notice that the questions below do not touch on, but are worth looking at: 1) the parallels to each Scripture passage in the OT, the NT, the Catechism, and the Lectionary. 2) The “Reflection and Application” sections that Mitch and Sri add at the ends of some of the sections take the place of discussion questions, except that they are spiritual. They are very good either for personal prayer or for sharing with our groups.

Chapter 4 – The Messiah Tested and Revealed (4:1-25)

1. Again we are in the desert. Is there some significance to this setting? Is it different from John’s baptizing in the wilderness?
2. The three temptations have traditionally been explained as being symbols of temptations of the flesh (hunger), the world, and the Devil. How do Mitch and Sri take the temptations farther in their meaning?
3. Why does the Tempter want Jesus to jump off the Temple as opposed to some other high place?

Note the Devil’s upping the ante as he takes Jesus’ lead each time and begins to quote Scripture.

4. The Devil’s mask falls off and reveals him (76). Why does the Devil hope that the third temptation will hit the essence of Jesus’ “Messianic objectives”? What is the tradeoff?
5. Comment on the box on p. 77. How do Jesus’ temptations parallel the escape of Israel from Egypt?
6. Talk about Jesus’ choice of Galilee and Capernaum to begin his ministry. Consider Isaiah’s prophecy, the history of the northern tribes Zebulun and Naphtali, the ministry to the Gentiles.

Chapter 5--Sermon on the Mount Part 1: The Message of the Kingdom (5:1-48)

These first five questions can be skipped if we are short on time.

1. Box on p. 80: Discuss the concept of the Kingdom of Heaven in Matthew.
2. How is Jesus’ gathering of His disciples different from the usual custom at the time?
3. Is it a miracle that the first disciples, the fishermen, followed Jesus immediately? Talk about this (82).
4. Box on p. 83: present to the group in an appreciative way the angle that John Cardinal Newman lists calls from God in the (whole) Bible.
5. Discuss the structure of the Sermon on the Mount, the geographical setting, Jesus’ climbing a mountain, the significance of his sitting to teach, the parallel with Moses.

The Beatitudes themselves—we might take this discussion first.

6. Why might modern readers not understand the full meaning of the Greek *makarios*? How was the literary form *the beatitude* used in ancient times? (87)
7. How do the Beatitudes mirror Christ’s own life? (88)
8. Did any of the qualities of the “poor in spirit” surprise you? (89)
9. Have you even mourned in the sense that Sri and Mitch give? (89-90)

10. Discuss the other technical terms in the Beatitudes whose meanings would be recognized as richer for a first-century hearer or reader, whereas we would probably miss the nuances.

Note the technical terms in the Beatitudes that continue on pp. 90ff: righteousness, peace and peacemakers, children of God. Did any of their meanings strike you that are different from today's?

11. If it's not there, I will give the etymology of the word *Amen*.
12. Discuss Jesus' attitude toward the current Law of Moses and the prophets? (pp. 94-95) Why must his followers keep the law to the smallest letter but at the same time surpass [the righteousness] of the scribes and Pharisees?
13. What does Jesus' teaching call for regarding each of the laws of Moses that he cites, throughout 5:21-48? Each time he begins another teaching of the Law (of Moses), he uses the words "You have been told . . . but I say unto you?" (95-109)
14. How was the injunction "Be perfect, as your Heavenly Father is perfect" (with a parallel in Lev. 19:2) interpreted in the 1st century? However, what is Jesus calling Christians to do?

Chapter 6--Sermon on the Mount Part 2: Treasures in Heaven (6:1-34) **Matthew 6:19-30 is about prayer and trust in God for material goods.**

1. Prayer is one of the "three pillars of Jewish piety" (103). What are the other two?
2. What conditions does Our Lord place on fasting and almsgiving? (104-5, 107)
3. Look at the box on p. 105 for the significance of calling God "Father."

The rest of the Our Father is discussed on pp. 106-107.

Note that Matthew does not include the request of the disciples: "Lord, teach us to pray." He is already teaching us the essentials of prayer: the Our Father.

4. What type of prayer does Jesus condemn, who did it, and why?
5. Discuss Jesus' teachings on hoarding, on God and mammon, and on trusting God to give us food and clothing (109-112). What well-known beautiful comparisons from nature does he give to illustrate trust?
6. Discuss the concept of the good and bad eye in Matthew 6: 22-23 (109-110). Note the statement that someone with good eyes can view the riches of the world in a different way than the evil eye, thus rounding out the discussion of wealth and trust.

Chapter 7--Sermon on the Mount Part 3: The House Built on Rock (7:1-29)

1. What are the consequences of judging one's brother (114)? There are several. What comic metaphor does Jesus give to show someone judging someone else? (114-115).
2. What does the warning about dogs and pigs in 7:6 seem to mean? Add your own interpretations. Sri and Mitch give their best guess at the bottom of p. 115.
3. What else does Jesus say about the prayer of petition on pp. 116-117?
4. What famous directive ends the Sermon on the Mount and sums up the Law and the prophets?
5. Talk about the authors' explanation of the "narrow gate" (118-119).
6. What are "false prophets"? Talk about the two metaphors (the first very famous) of false prophets (120). [I personally think that the second is the best test for false prophets.]

3 Study Questions on Curtis Mitch and Edward Sri, *The Gospel of Matthew, Ch. 4-7*

7. To whom does Christ say, "I never knew you," and whom, surprisingly, does Jesus *not* mean? Why are these people themselves surprised? What did they do wrong?
8. What final metaphor does Jesus give contrasting someone who listens to His words and acts on them [I would say also "lives by them"], as opposed to someone who likewise listens to Jesus' words but does not act on them?

Note: Other Scripture passages bring up this same point about hearing and doing (see cross references listed in the small print under the Scripture passage). The verses from the Proverbs would have been familiar to His listeners. The passage from James, "The one who looks in the mirror and promptly forgets what he looks like" makes the same point.

Luke records Jesus making the same point in two other passages (my italics added in both): 1) Luke 8:21: "And he answered and said unto them, My mother and my brethren are these which hear the word of God, *and do it.*" 2) Luke also includes the answer that Jesus gives to the compliment to His mother: "A certain woman of the company lifted up her voice, and said unto him, 'Blessed is the womb that bore thee, and the breasts at which you sucked!' But he said, 'Rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, *and keep it* (Luke 11:27-28).