

**New Testament Recovery Version
Study Guide**

For Vital Groups

Series I – Gospel of Matthew to Gospel of John

USING NEW TESTAMENT RECOVERY VERSION IN THE GROUP MEETING

The Small Group Gathering Being All-Inclusive in Nature

According to its function, the small group gathering includes nearly all of the church life. In the small groups, there can be teaching, which is related to the aspect of the truth, there can be shepherding, which is the aspect of life, and there can also be care and support, which is the aspect of practical living. In addition, in the small groups there can also be gospel preaching. If a church can thoroughly take care of all these aspects—the teaching of the truth, the shepherding in life, and the care and support in practical living— then this church can be said to be considerably established.

The Bible Being Needed In Order To Have Both Teaching and Shepherding

Teaching cannot be detached from the truth in the Bible, and shepherding and teaching are like two cords of one rope twisted together, actually being one. In Ephesians 4:11, we see that shepherds and teachers are the same group of people. If we desire to shepherd others, we need to know how to teach; if we would like our teaching to be effective, we must be shepherds. Therefore, shepherding and teaching are the two cords of one rope; if they are twisted together, there is strength. For this reason, the fellowship meeting in the small groups must use the Bible; otherwise, teaching is not done, and neither is shepherding. When teaching and shepherding are carried out in a good way, there will definitely be care and support. So the key here is how to use the Bible in the fellowship meeting of the small groups.

The Best Material Being the New Testament Recovery Version and the Life-studies

In the fellowship meeting of the small groups, we can use the New Testament Recovery Version and the Life-studies as material. Life-studies are written by taking life as the line, life as the focus, and life as the content. We all know that the Bible is a book of life, that the history of the Bible is to support the line of life, and that the characters in the Bible are to give us examples to testify life. We can say that everything in the Bible centers on

life. (*The Proper Aggressiveness of the Lord's Serving Ones*, pp. 46-48, in *Chinese*)

Teaching in Mutuality

For the perfecting of the saints, there is the need of teaching in the group meetings, and in the group meetings all are teachers. There should not be a particular teacher. Even one who was saved two weeks ago can be a little teacher. ... This kind of teaching is rich and all-inclusive. Its many aspects are much better than a meeting where only one is speaking. If everyone speaks, all the saints will be happy, and all will learn. This is the way for all to be perfected. If there is someone there who is really high in spiritual knowledge and in the experience of life, he may give a conclusion of perhaps ten minutes. (*The Exercise and Practice of the God-Ordained Way*, pp. 232-233)

Being Filled in Spirit in the Meetings

I pray that in the meetings you will all be filled in spirit. Especially with those who have received grace, you must bear the responsibility to pray and be filled with a praying spirit. As soon as the meeting begins, your spirit will come forth. I often use playing in a basketball game as an illustration. When you are in the ball court, you cannot be so delicate and elegant when the ball comes. Rather, as soon as you start playing you should forget about your self-consciousness, your face, and everything else, and concentrate only on the ball and getting it into the hoop; your goal is to gain more points. It is the same in the small group meeting. As soon as we arrive at the meeting, we forget about everything else; we only remember the spirit. The spirit is our ball. We should also remember to release the light in the truth and to supply the riches of life. Our goal is that after every meeting all those in attendance, including ourselves, will feel enlightened and supplied.

Diligently Practicing and Preparing for the Material

I lay before you a simple and practical way. I hope that before every small group gathering you will simply and diligently read the verses and the footnotes in the [New Testament] Recovery Version, and you will also read the related portion in the Life-study messages. If you practice according to what I said, marking the places that are useful and putting aside what will not

be used, after six months or a year, you will become more experienced and proficient. You should realize that we are not giving an inspirational message, speaking by inspiration; rather, we are learning to apply the material we already have.

The Whole Church Pursuing And Entering Into The Material In this way

If every small group in the whole church would pursue and enter into the material in this way, it will be easier to lead the church as a whole, and the entire church will be in step as it marches forward. (*The Proper Aggressiveness of the Lord's Serving Ones, pp 55, 58-59, in Chinese*)

Gospel of Matthew

Week 1 Matt. 1:1-5:48

I. Key Verses:

- Matt. 1:1 The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.
- Matt. 1:21 And she will bear a son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for it is He who will save His people from their sins.
- Matt. 3:2 And saying, Repent, for the kingdom of the heavens has drawn near.
- Matt. 4:4 But He answered and said, It is written, "Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out through the mouth of God."
- Matt. 5:3 Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of the heavens.
- Matt. 5:4 Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.
- Matt. 5:5 Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.
- Matt. 5:6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.
- Matt. 5:7 Blessed are the merciful, for they shall be shown mercy.
- Matt. 5:8 Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.
- Matt. 5:48 You therefore shall be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.

II. Central Lane:

Please read the corresponding outline.(NT RcV p. 1)

III. The Light of the Truth:

CHRIST IS THE CENTER OF THE ENTIRE BIBLE

—Matt. 1:1, 17, 21; Matt. 1:1 not 1, 17 note 4, 21 note 1, Mark 1:1 note 1.

Further Reading: Life-Study of Matthew, Msg. 1.

IV. Life Supply:

The Bible is a book of life. This life is nothing less than the living Person of Christ. In the Old Testament Christ is portrayed as the coming One. In the New Testament, the One whose coming was predicted has come. Thus, the New Testament is the fulfillment of the Old. St. Augustine once said that the New Testament is contained in the Old and the Old Testament is expressed in the New.

We need to say a word concerning the New Testament. The New Testament is simply a living picture of a Person. This Person is too wonderful. He is both God and man. He is the mingling of God with man, for in Him the divine nature and the human nature are mingled together. He is the King, and He is a bondsman. He is wonderful!

No human being has ever spoken words like He spoke, words so profound, yet so clear. For example, Jesus said, "I am the bread of life" (John 6:35), and, "I am the light of the world" (8:12). Plato and Confucius were two great philosophers, and people appreciated the things they said, but neither of them could say, "I am the light of the world." No one else could say, "I am the life," or, "I am the way," or, "I am the reality" (14:6). These are simple words and short sentences—"I am," "I am what I am," and "I am that I am"—but they are great and profound. Can any of us say that we are the light of the world or that we are the life? If we did, we would surely be sent to a mental hospital. But Jesus could say these things. How great He is!

Jesus is all-inclusive. With Him there are many aspects. No one can exhaust in language who and what He is. Who else in history has four unique biographies written of him? Although the New Testament is a short book, it begins with four biographies of one Person, four books telling us of the life of Christ.

Each of us has four sides: the front and the back, the right and the left. If you look at me from the front, you can see seven holes on my face. But if I turn my back to you, all the holes disappear. On my right side you can see a little hole, and on my left side, another little hole. If you would make an accurate copy of my image, you need to take a picture of every side. This is exactly what has been done in the New Testament. (*Life-Study of Matthew, pp. 1-3*)

Week 2 Matt. 6:1-11:1

I. Key Verses:

- Matt. 6:9 You then pray in this way: Our Father who is in the heavens, Your name be sanctified;
- Matt. 6:10 Your kingdom come; Your will be done, as in heaven, so also on earth.
- Matt. 6:25 Because of this, I say to you, Do not be anxious for your life, what you should eat or what you should drink; nor for your body, what you should put on. Is not the life more than food, and the body than clothing?
- Matt. 7:14 Because narrow is the gate and constricted is the way that leads to life, and few are those who find it.
- Matt. 8:17 So that what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, saying, "He Himself took away our infirmities and bore our diseases."
- Matt. 9:17 Neither do they put new wine into old wineskins; otherwise, the wineskins burst, and the wine pours out, and the wineskins are ruined; but they put new wine into fresh wineskins, and both are preserved.
- Matt. 9:38 Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest that He would thrust out workers into His harvest.
- Matt. 10:32 Every one therefore who will confess in Me before men, I also will confess in him before My Father who is in the heavens;

II. Central Lane:

Please read the corresponding outline.(NT RcV pp. 1-2)

III. The Light of the Truth:

THE NEW WINE AND THE NEW WINESKIN

—Matt. 9:17; Matt. 9:16 note 1, note 2, 17 note 1, note 2, note 3.

Further Reading: Life-Study of Matthew, Msg. 28.

IV. Life Supply:

In [Matthew chapter 9] verse 17 the Lord...said, "They put new wine into fresh wineskins, and both are preserved."... The fresh wineskins signify the church life in the local churches as the container of the new wine, which is Christ Himself as the exciting life. The kingdom people are built into the church (16:18), and the church is expressed through the local churches in which they live (18:15-20). They are regenerated persons constituting the Body of Christ to be the church (Rom. 12:5; Eph. 1:22-23). This Body of Christ as His fullness is also called "the Christ" (1 Cor. 12:12, Gk.), the corporate Christ. The individual Christ is the new wine, the exciting life inwardly, and the corporate Christ is the fresh wineskin, the container to hold the new wine outwardly. With the kingdom people, it is not a matter of fasting or of any other religious practice, but a matter of the church life with Christ as their content. Christ came not to establish an earthly religion of rituals, but a heavenly kingdom of life, not with any dead religious practices, but with Himself, the living Person, as the Physician, the Bridegroom, the unshrunk cloth, and the new wine to His followers as their full enjoyment that they might be the fresh wineskin to contain Him and become the constituents of His kingdom.

We see then that the new wineskin is the church life. The church is actually the enlargement of Christ. The individual Christ is our wine within us. When this individual Christ is enlarged into a corporate Christ, that is the church. This corporate Christ is the wineskin, the container, to contain the individual Christ as our wine. Never consider the church a religion; the church is a corporate entity full of Christ, because the church is Christ enlarged.

Christ is not only our new garment and new wine, but, being increased, He is also our new wineskin to contain the wine. He is our outward qualification, He is our inward satisfaction, and He is in a corporate way the church, the Body (1 Cor. 12:12), capable of holding the wine. Christ is everything. He is the Bridegroom, the new garment, the new wine, and also the corporate vessel to contain what we enjoy of Him. The meaning here is very profound.*(Life-Study of Matthew, pp. 343-344)*

Week 3 Matt. 11:2-14:36

I. Key Verses:

- Matt. 11:28 Come to Me all who toil and are burdened, and I will give you rest.
- Matt. 12:20 A bruised reed He will not break, and smoking flax He will not quench until He brings forth justice unto victory.
- Matt. 12:50 For whoever does the will of My Father who is in the heavens, he is My brother and sister and mother.
- Matt. 13:23 But the one sown on the good earth, this is he who hears the word and understands, who by all means bears fruit and produces, one a hundredfold, and one sixtyfold, and one thirtyfold.
- Matt. 13:33 Another parable He spoke to them: The kingdom of the heavens is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal until the whole was leavened.
- Matt. 14:19 And after commanding the crowds to recline on the grass, He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed and broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples to the crowds.
- Matt. 14:20 And they all ate and were satisfied. And they took up what was left over of the broken pieces, twelve handbaskets full.

II. Central Lane:

Please read the corresponding outline.(NT RcV pp. 2)

III. The Light of the Truth:

THE KINGDOM OF THE HEAVENS

—Matt. 13:3, 24 31, 33, 44-45, 47; Refer to the chart on NT RcV. pp. 30-31; Matt. 13:3 note 1, 24 note 1, 32 note 1, 44 note 1.

Further Reading: Life-Study of Matthew, Msg. 37.

IV. Life Supply:

In Matthew 13 we see a picture of the outward appearance of the kingdom of the heavens. (Please refer to the chart on NT RcV. pages 30 and 31.) The kingdom of God covers everything from eternity past to eternity future. Between the two eternities there is time divided into various ages or dispensations. The first is the dispensation before law. After Adam was created, he was placed in the garden where there was no sin or darkness. From him is the period of the Patriarchs, the fathers, extending to Moses. This period of the Patriarchs is known as the dispensation before law. Then comes the dispensation of law. Following this are two crucial dispensations, the first of which is the dispensation of grace, the church age, and the other, the dispensation of the kingdom, the millennium. As we have pointed out already, the kingdom of the heavens covers only these two dispensations. In the dispensation of grace there are a number of complications, for the kingdom of the heavens has three aspects: the aspect of reality, the aspect of appearance, and the aspect of manifestation. As long as the church is normal, it is the reality of the kingdom. In a normal situation the church equals the reality of the kingdom. The third aspect of the kingdom, the manifestation, is in the heavenly part, the upper part, of the millennium.

When the Lord Jesus comes back, where will you be? If we have endured unto the end, that is, have kept ourselves in the spirit until the end, we shall be saved and shall be in the manifestation of the kingdom of the heavens, the heavenly part of the millennium. Those who are there will rule with Christ. According to 13:43, they will “shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.” ... That shining will be the ruling, the reigning as kings.

We want to be real and normal believers, real sons of the kingdom who live according to the constitution of the kingdom of the heavens. We would grow Christ by living a life according to the constitution. Whatever we grow will be the multiplication which is the constituent of the kingdom of the heavens. Therefore, today we are not only in the reality—we are the reality. Then when the Lord Jesus, the King, comes again, we shall be in the manifestation of the kingdom of the heavens, shining over the world to reign as Christ’s co-kings and enjoying the heavenly part of the millennium. (*Life-Study of Matthew, pp. 457-460*)

Week 4 Matt. 15:1-20:16

I. Key Verses:

- Matt. 15:26 But He answered and said, It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs.
- Matt. 15:27 And she said, Yes, Lord, for even the little dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table.
- Matt. 16:16 And Simon Peter answered and said, You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.
- Matt. 16:18 And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.
- Matt. 17:5 While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and behold, a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is My Son, the Beloved, in whom I have found My delight. Hear Him!
- Matt. 18:19 Again, truly I say to you that if two of you are in harmony on earth concerning any matter for which they ask, it will be done for them from My Father who is in the heavens.
- Matt. 19:29 And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields for My name's sake shall receive a hundred times as much and shall inherit eternal life.

II. Central Lane:

Please read the corresponding outline.(NT RcV pp. 2-3)

III. The Light of the Truth:

THE VISION OF CHRIST AND THE CHURCH

—Matt. 16:13, 16, 18; Matt. 16:13 note 1, 16 note 1, 18 note 1, note 3, note 5.

Further Reading: Life-Study of Matthew, Msg. 47.

IV. Life Supply:

[Matthew chapter 16] Verse 13 says that the Lord Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi with His disciples and there asked them, “Who do men say that the Son of Man is?” ... Caesarea Philippi is in the northern part of the Holy Land, close to the border, at the foot of Mount Hermon, on which the Lord was transfigured (17:1-2). It was far from the holy city with the holy temple, where the atmosphere of the old Jewish religion filled every man’s thought, leaving no room for Christ, the new King. The Lord brought His disciples purposely to such a place with a clear atmosphere that their thought might be released from the effects of the religious surroundings in the holy city and holy temple, and that He might reveal to them something new concerning Himself and the church, which is the pulse of His heavenly kingdom. It was here that the vision concerning Him as the Christ and the Son of the living God came to Peter (vv. 16-17). It was also here that the church was revealed and mentioned for the first time as the means of bringing in the kingdom of the heavens (vv. 18-19).

After the Lord asked His disciples to say who they thought He was, Simon Peter answered and said, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (v. 16). The Christ, as the anointed One of God, refers to the Lord’s commission; whereas the Son of the living God, as the second of the Triune God, refers to His person. His commission is to accomplish God’s eternal purpose through His crucifixion, resurrection, ascension, and second advent, whereas His person embodies the Father and issues in the Spirit for a full expression of the Triune God.

In verse 18 the Lord said, “And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.” The Father’s revelation concerning Christ is just the first half of the great mystery, which is Christ and the church (Eph. 5:32). Hence, the Lord needed also to reveal to Peter the second half, which is concerning the church.

The church that is built upon the revelation concerning Christ is the genuine church... The church must be built upon “this rock,” that is, upon the revelation of Christ.... The revelation concerning Christ is the rock upon which the Lord Jesus is building His church. (*Life-Study of Matthew*, pp. 562, 565-568)

Week 5 Matt. 20:17-24:51

I. Key Verses:

- Matt. 20:28 Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many.
- Matt. 21:22 And all that you ask in prayer, if you believe, you will receive.
- Matt. 22:4 Again, he sent other slaves, saying, Tell those who have been called, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatted cattle have been slain, and all things are ready. Come to the wedding feast.
- Matt. 22:37 And He said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind."
- Matt. 23:37 Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I desired to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not!
- Matt. 24:14 And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole inhabited earth for a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come.
- Matt. 24:32 But learn the parable from the fig tree: As soon as its branch has become tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that the summer is near.

II. Central Lane:

Please read the corresponding outline.(NT Rcv pp. 3-4)

III. The Light of the Truth:

THE COMING OF CHRIST

—Matt. 24:3, 27-28, 43-44; Matt. 24:3 note 3, 27 note 1, 28 note 1, 43 note 2, 44 note 1.

Further Reading: Life-Study of Matthew, Msg. 63.

IV. Life Supply:

[In Matt. 24:40-41,] to be taken means to be raptured before the great tribulation. This rapture is a sign of the Lord's coming and a sign to the Jews. It is very interesting to see that the two men are working in the field and that the two women are grinding at the mill. Both working in the field and grinding are for eating. There is a difference between our eating and the eating of the worldly people. The worldly people study and work, and we also study and work. The worldly people, however, have been drugged. But we have not been drugged. Rather, we are simply fulfilling our duty to make a living. We are not for eating, drinking, and marriage; on the contrary, we maintain our existence in order to take the way of the cross to fulfill God's purpose. Our concern is not for our education, employment, or business.

When some of the young people hear this, they may say, "How glad we are to hear this word! Let's not care any more for study or for work. Let us spend all our time praying and having fellowship with one another." Such an attitude is wrong. Remember, according to verse 40 the brothers were farming, and according to verse 41 the sisters were grinding. Grinding grain is very hard work. This indicates that we Christians should not take easy jobs. We need to work hard in order to make a living. The eating and drinking in verse 38 is worldly, but the farming and grinding in verses 40 and 41 are holy... We need more holy sisters to grind at the mill to produce fine flour. We are not drugged, but we do need to be properly nourished.

The principle is the same with the brothers in their jobs... Notice, the rapture does not take place when the two brothers and the two sisters are praying, but when they are working... they were doing their ordinary work.

The Lord Jesus certainly spoke this word with a definite purpose. He wanted to show us that as we wait for His coming and expect to be raptured, we must be very faithful in our daily duties. We need to do the best farming and the best grinding. We need a properly balanced human life, not the life of monks who devote themselves to spiritual things and expect others to take care of them. It is the brothers working in the field and the sisters grinding in the mill who will be raptured. (*Life-Study of Matthew*, pp. 738-740)

Week 6 Matt. 25:1-28:20

I. Key Verses:

- Matt. 25:29 For to every one who has, more shall be given, and he shall abound; but from him who does not have, even that which he has shall be taken away from him.
- Matt. 26:26 And as they were eating, Jesus took bread and blessed it, and He broke it and gave it to the disciples and said, Take, eat; this is My body.
- Matt. 26:27 And He took a cup and gave thanks, and He gave it to them, saying, Drink of it, all of you,
- Matt. 26:28 For this is My blood of the covenant, which is being poured out for many for forgiveness of sins.
- Matt. 27:46 And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is, My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?
- Matt. 28:19 Go therefore and disciple all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,
- Matt. 28:20 Teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you all the days until the consummation of the age.

II. Central Lane:

Please read the corresponding outline.(NT RcV pp. 4)

III. The Light of the Truth:

THE PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM

—Matt. 28:18-20; Matt. 28:18 note 1, 19 note 3, note 4, note 6; 20 note 2.

Further Reading: Life-Study of Matthew, Msg. 72.

IV. Life Supply:

[Matthew chapter 28] Verse 18 says, “And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.” ... In Matthew it is not a matter of breath, but a matter of authority. John’s concern was for life, and life requires breath. But Matthew’s concern was for the kingdom, and the kingdom requires authority. The Gospel of John reveals that we need life to care for the little lambs and to feed the Lord’s flock. But in Matthew 28 there is no word about feeding the lambs. In Matthew the Lord commands the disciples to disciple all the nations (v. 19) to make all the nations part of the kingdom. This requires authority. Therefore, in John resurrection is a matter of life, power, breath, and shepherding. However, in Matthew it is a matter of righteousness, authority, and discipling the nations.

Verse 19 says, “Go therefore and disciple all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” Because all authority had been given to Him, the heavenly King sent His disciples to go and disciple all the nations. They go with His authority. To disciple the nations is to cause the heathen to become the kingdom people for the establishment of His kingdom, which is the church, even today on this earth.

Notice that the Lord did not charge the disciples to preach the gospel, but to disciple the nations. The difference between preaching the gospel and discipling the nations is that to preach the gospel is simply to bring sinners to salvation, but to disciple the nations is to cause the Gentiles to become the kingdom people. We have been sent by the Lord not only to bring people to salvation, but also to disciple the nations. This is a matter of the kingdom.

In verse 20 the Lord told His disciples, “Behold, I am with you all the days until the consummation of the age.” The heavenly King is Emmanuel, God with us (1:23). Here He promised to be with us in His resurrection with all authority all the days until the consummation of the age, that is, until the end of this age.

In the Lord’s resurrection with His righteousness the kingdom is present, and we have the authority, commission, and position, to disciple the nations. In this way the kingdom is spreading. (*Life-Study of Matthew, pp. 826-828, 831*)