

engage

We dare you not to be amazed by this issue of **engage**. We'll look at **Revelation** — the wildest book in the Bible; **Matthew** talks us through some of Jesus' most challenging teaching; we'll also ask big questions about sin, sanctification and body art.

*** DAILY READINGS** Each day's page throws you into the Bible, to get you handling, questioning and exploring God's message to you — encouraging you to act on it and talk to God more in prayer.



THIS ISSUE: Read a biography of Jesus in **Matthew**; have your mind blown by **Revelation**; watch a royal soap opera in **2 Samuel**; and catch rarely heard words in **Obadiah**.

*** TAKE IT FURTHER** If you're hungry for more at the end of an **engage** page, turn to the **Take it further** section to dig deeper.

*** REAL LIVES** True stories, revealing God at work in people's lives. This time — **we go to France to meet Kevin Mosi Da Costa**.

*** TRICKY** tackles those mind-bendingly tricky questions that confuse us all, as well as questions our friends bombard us with. This time we ask: **Why do I keep sinning?**

*** ESSENTIAL** Articles on the basics we really need to know about God, the Bible and Christianity. This issue, we look at what the Bible says about **sanctification**.

*** STUFF** Articles on stuff relevant to the lives of young Christians. This issue: **tattoos and piercings**.

*** TOOLBOX** is full of tools to help you understand the Bible. This issue we concentrate on **the Bible's big story**.

All of us who work on **engage** are passionate to see the Bible at work in people's lives. Do you want God's word to have an impact on your life? Then open your Bible, and start on the first **engage** study right now...

HOW TO USE **engage**

- 1 Set a time you can read the Bible every day
- 2 Find a place where you can be quiet and think
- 3 Grab your Bible, pen and a notebook
- 4 Ask God to help you understand what you read
- 5 Read the day's verses with **engage**, taking time to think about it
- 6 Pray about what you've read

BIBLE STUFF

We use the NIV Bible version, so you might find it's the best one to use with **engage**. If the notes say "**Read Matthew 1 v 1–17**", look up Matthew in the contents page at the front of your Bible. It'll tell you which page Matthew starts on. Find chapter 1 of Matthew, and then verse 1 of chapter 1 (the verse numbers are the tiny ones). Then start reading. Simple.

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Matthew

The big picture

Ever read a biography? Maybe a sporting one or celebrity memoirs? You get to see how the big-name star in question started out. Perhaps with some embarrassing baby photos and the awkward teenage years with a bad haircut and goofy teeth, before they hit the big time and become impossibly glamorous.

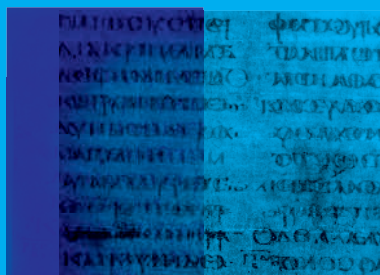
Well, the book of Matthew is one of the four Gospels — biographies of Jesus — and seems to have been written for a largely Jewish audience. No amusing childhood pranks or Oscar wins here though. The opening verses of chapter one give us a big clue about what's important to Matthew as he writes. In verse one he points out that Jesus is descended from Abraham and David. In short, Jesus is heir to the promises of the Old Testament and heir to a throne.

Matthew wants to show how Jesus Christ came as the completion of Old Testament teaching and prophecy (words from God about the future).

Matthew has 53 direct Old T quotes and loads more passing references. He's showing us how Jesus fits into the big picture of God's word.

Matthew uses the Old Testament to prove that Jesus is the long-awaited Messiah — the King God promised He would send to rescue His people — and the Saviour of the world. He'd come for all people, not just Jews. The news of this big rescue was now for everyone.

Matthew wants his readers (and that includes us) to realise just how significant Jesus' arrival on this planet was. The promised one, the perfect Son of God, the King of the universe is here. Will you bow the knee to Him now or be forced to when He returns in glory? Will you take this biography to heart?





1

Family album

Does your heart sink when you see a long list of names in the Bible? Well this one is full of hidden treasures and surprises — it's also a neat summary of God's dealings with His people from the Old Testament 'til Jesus' birth.

 Read Matthew 1 v 1–17

ENGAGE YOUR BRAIN

 *What words or phrases are used in v1 to describe who Jesus is?*

The Messiah or Christ was the king promised in the Old Testament who would lead God's people. In fact, prophets such as Isaiah claimed this king would be God Himself! So why are David and Abraham mentioned? Take a look at the promises God made to both of them. This descendant, Jesus, was about to make God's promises come true!

 *What did God promise to Abraham in Genesis 12 v 1–3?*

 *And to David in 2 Samuel 7 v 12–16?*

A few names are worth mentioning — Abraham was a big hero, but his grandson Jacob was a bit of a mixed bag. Perez had a tough start in life. Rahab and Ruth weren't even

Israelites; they were hated outsiders. King Ahaz was evil, but Hezekiah had his heart in the right place.

 *What does this tell us about who God uses in His plans?*

 *What does this tell us about God?*

Matthew picks up on some major landmarks in Jewish history as he gives us a snapshot overview not only of Jesus' human origins but of God's dealings with His people over hundreds of years.

PRAY ABOUT IT

Thank God that He uses ordinary people to bring His plan of rescue to the world. Thank Him that He keeps His promises. Thank Him that He chose you despite your sin. Ask Him to help you learn more about Jesus — the Christ — as you read through Matthew.

 TAKE IT FURTHER

Get the picture on page 109.



2

What's in a name?

We've seen Jesus' family tree; now Matthew gives us a close-up as we zoom in to focus on His birth.

Read Matthew 1 v 18–25

ENGAGE YOUR BRAIN

▮ *What was unusual about Jesus' conception? (v18, 25)*

▮ *Why is this so important?*

Jesus had a human mother and so was fully human but was also fully God — note the references to Him being conceived from the Holy Spirit. This makes Him uniquely qualified for His mission — more about which we'll discover later.

▮ *What would Joseph have assumed had happened?*

▮ *Why is Joseph described as righteous? What could he have done instead? (v19)*

▮ *How does God reassure him? (v20)*

▮ *What's the baby to be called?*

▮ *What other name will Jesus be known by, according to Isaiah's prophesy? (v23)?*

▮ *What two crucial things do these names tell us about the reason Jesus was born into our world?*

A miraculous conception. God in human flesh entering our world — Immanuel, God is with us. And God with a mission — to save sinners.

PRAY ABOUT IT

God becoming human — is one of the most incredible things to ever happen. The other is that He came to die for sinners like you and me. Take some time to really let that sink in and thank God for His incredible rescue plan.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Jesus is God with us.

→ TAKE IT FURTHER

Find a little more on page 109.

**3****We two kings?**

Another well known part of the Christmas story today — or is it? No mention of camels and we aren't told how many Magi or wise men there were. But this is a story about kings: two to be precise.

👁 Read Matthew 2 v 1–12**ENGAGE YOUR BRAIN**

- 1x** *Who are the two kings mentioned? (v1–2)*
- 1x** *What do we learn about Jesus?*
 - v2:
 - v6:
 - v11:
- 1x** *And Herod?*
 - v7–8:
 - v12:
- 1x** *Why do you think Herod was frightened by the thought of a new king?*
- 1x** *How did the wise men respond to the news of this king? (v10–11)*

Jesus still has this effect today. At one level Herod was right to see a threat to his kingship. Jesus is THE King and we can't call the shots if He takes His rightful place as ruler of our lives. But the Magi had a better reaction — they recognised Jesus' kingship and took great time and trouble to come and bow before Him, offering Him costly presents.

GET ON WITH IT

Have you recognised Jesus' right to rule over your life? The Magi travelled a long way at great personal cost to see Jesus. Is that attitude part of your Christian life? Do you spend time with Jesus even when you'd rather stay in bed than read your Bible? Do you make the effort to go to church or youth group even if other plans seem more tempting?

PRAY ABOUT IT

The Magi weren't even Jews and yet they came to recognise Jesus as their King. Thank God that Jesus came for the whole world and pray for the parts of it where people still don't know the true King.

THE BOTTOM LINE

There can only be one King in your life. Make sure it's Jesus.

→ TAKE IT FURTHER

What did Micah say? Page 109.



4

Murder in mind

Herod was a puppet king, put in place by the Romans. Paranoid and dangerous, he had anyone he saw as competition murdered; even his own wife and sons. Now he's set his sights on Jesus. What's going to happen?

Read Matthew 2 v 13–23

ENGAGE YOUR BRAIN

- What are Herod's intentions? (v13)*
- What does he do? (v16)*
- How is Jesus protected? (v13–15)*

Even this horrific slaughter was foretold by the prophets (v18), as is Jesus' escape (v15) and even His childhood hometown (v23). There are no coincidences or mistakes here. God had a plan from the beginning of time.

- What title was Jesus given back in v2?*
- When is he called that again? (Hint: chapter 27 v 37)*

Jesus faced hostility, hatred and murderous violence almost from birth. His Father kept Him safe from Herod but only for a while — it was not yet time for Jesus to die. He didn't save Him at Golgotha but turned His face

away. Why? Remember why Jesus came? To save sinners.

PRAY ABOUT IT

Amazingly God turned people's sinful, hate-filled rejection of the King into the very means by which they could be rescued. Thank Him now.

SHARE IT

Your non-Christian friends and family probably don't come across like Herod. But rejecting Jesus is as serious and as ugly as what Herod did. Rejecting our King is treason and deserves the death penalty. Herod died (v19) and so will we. Only by accepting Jesus' death in our place can we live at peace under His rule in His kingdom forever. Can you share that great news with someone today?

THE BOTTOM LINE

Rejecting the King is treason.

TAKE IT FURTHER

Justice and mercy on page 109.



5

Make way for the King

Time has moved on. Jesus has grown up now and just as a King has a herald announcing his arrival, here we see John the Baptist doing exactly that.

 Read Matthew 3 v 1–12**ENGAGE YOUR BRAIN**

1x *What is John's message? (v2)*

Repenting means turning away from our sins and turning back to God. The kingdom of heaven is near because the King is near!

1x *Who does Isaiah say John is? (v3)*

1x *So who is coming? (v3)*

Some theologians have called John the Baptist the last Old Testament prophet. He is pointing to the coming King, the Messiah. As Isaiah's prophecy makes clear, John's call means that the Lord, God Himself, is on His way. Cue Jesus!

1x *What warning does John have for those who show no evidence of repentance? (v7–10)*

1x *What does John tell us about the coming King? (v11–12)*

Jesus came to bring judgment (v12). We know that when He returns He will judge the earth, but that process began when He came the first time. People's reactions to Jesus — as we will see over the course of Matthew's Gospel — would either save them or condemn them.

GET ON WITH IT

The Pharisees and Sadducees thought they were OK because they were descended from Abraham, but they faced Jesus' judgment. Do you think you're OK because you go to church, or your parents are Christians or you're a nice person? Repent! Turn to the King — He alone can save you.

THE BOTTOM LINE

The King is coming! Get ready!

→ TAKE IT FURTHER

More background stuff on page 110.



6

Making a big splash

The King arrives. Jesus is now 30. The next big event confirms who He is. It's surprisingly soggy.

Read Matthew 3 v 13–17

ENGAGE YOUR BRAIN

Why has Jesus come to the Jordan? (v13)

Why does John not want to baptise Jesus? (v14)

Why does Jesus say John should baptise Him? (v15)

You can understand John's hesitation — here's the person he's just been talking about, someone massively above him, the King Himself, and He's asking to be baptised? John's baptism is for repentant sinners, not the perfect Messiah!

But what sort of a Messiah is Jesus? What sort of King is He? He's not up there with John telling sinners to repent, although He does preach that message later. No, He's down there in the water with the sinners; showing He's one of them even though He has no need of cleansing.

What is God the Father's verdict on Jesus? (v16–17)

Bearing in mind Jesus' actions here and His Father's words, why is the cross such an extraordinary, amazing happening?

PRAY ABOUT IT

"God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."
(2 Corinthians 5 v 21)

Think about what this meant for Jesus, and what it means for you, and then talk to God about it.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Jesus came for sinners.

TAKE IT FURTHER

More exciting explanation on p110.



7

Temptation situation

The heavens opened and God spoke, confirming who Jesus was. Here, on earth, was His Son, the unique God-man. Now... would Jesus live up to that and complete His task? Or not trust God and disobey Him, like the rest of us?



Read Matthew 4 v 1–11

Answer the following questions:

	Israel	Jesus
How long were they tested?	Numbers 32 v 13	Matthew 4 v 2
How do they respond to lack of food?	Exodus 16 v 1–3	v3–4
Do they put God to the test?	Exodus 17 v 1–2	v5–7
Do they worship God alone?	Exodus 32 v 1–6	v8–10

God's people failed to live His way again and again. They couldn't overcome their sin, but with Jesus' arrival we see a new Israel: a Jew who is totally obedient to God, someone who fulfils all the promises of the Old Testament. This is the start of something exciting.

PRAY ABOUT IT

Thank God that Jesus is the one perfect human being. Say sorry for the times you fail to trust God, grumble and put other things before serving Him. Thank Him that Jesus was not only totally obedient but that His obedience led Him to die so that you could be forgiven.



TAKE IT FURTHER

Jesus v the devil: further coverage on page 110.



8

Light and life

The preparation is over. Now this unique God-man can begin His public ministry. Again we see Jesus living up to prophecies made many hundreds of years before. God's plans are made reality.

**Read Matthew 4 v 12****ENGAGE YOUR BRAIN**

1x *What has happened to John?*

Read Matthew 14 v 1–12 for the distressing outcome.

**Read Matthew 4 v 13–17**

1x *Are you prepared to face the consequences of living God's way, no matter how serious?*

1x *What does Isaiah say about Jesus? (v16)*

1x *What does Jesus say people need to do to enter his kingdom? (v17)*

Repenting doesn't just mean feeling sorry for the things we've done wrong — most people feel like that at some point. No, it's an active decision to turn away from one way of living and to turn back to God. Remember how John the Baptist preached the same message? But this time, the King is calling us to repent! It's His

kingdom of light and life which is near. Get out of the darkness!

PRAY ABOUT IT

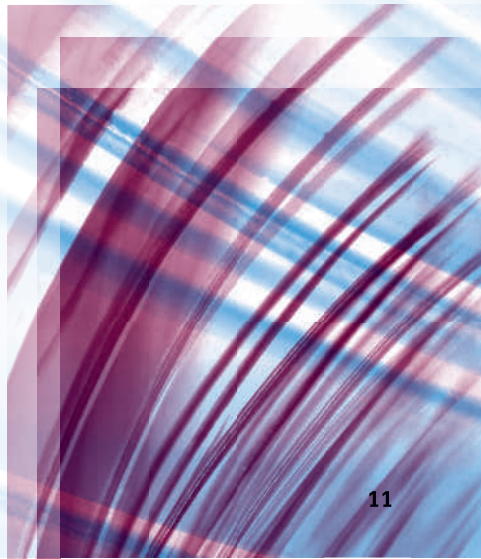
Have you done that? Pray for people you know who are living in darkness, that they would see Jesus' light and turn to Him.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Jesus is light and life.

→ TAKE IT FURTHER

Step into the light of page 110.





9

Something fishy

The kingdom is near and things are starting to gather momentum. Here we see Jesus calling the first disciples.

Read Matthew 4 v 18–22**ENGAGE YOUR BRAIN**

- Who does Jesus see? (v18)*
- What does He say to them? (v19)*
- What do they do? (v20)*
- How about verses 21–22?*
- What is so surprising about their responses?*

Jesus is the King. When a King tells you to do something, you do it. Peter, Andrew, James and John don't fully realise who Jesus is yet, but they recognise something of His authority.

- Are you following the King?*
- What do you think Jesus means by “fish for people” / “fishers of men”?*

Being a fisherman wasn't a glamorous job. Antisocial hours, hard work,

often with little success, and smelling fishy. Nice. We might not have to deal with the personal hygiene part but fishing for people will often be similar — hard work, often with limited “success”, but remember v16. We have a wonderful and life-saving message to share.

Read verses 23–25

...and remind yourself what a powerful and compassionate King Jesus is.

PRAY ABOUT IT

Ask for God's help to fish for people.

GET ON WITH IT

As you head out into whatever you face this week — school, college, work, home — leave a mental “gone fishing” sign on your bedroom door.

TAKE IT FURTHER

Go fishing on page 110.