



MAY READING PLAN 2024

During the month of May, we will be looking at the work of the Holy Spirit within the Gospel account of Matthew. Jesus entered the world through the Holy Spirit, performed miracles through the Holy Spirit, conquered death through the Holy Spirit, and empowered his followers with the Holy Spirit. For us to clearly see the work of Jesus, we must look at how he depended upon and partnered with the Holy Spirit in all he did. Of course, Jesus is one with the Holy Spirit and with the Father — but what does it mean for us that we have been given the Holy Spirit as well?

May 19th, 2024 is the day we remember the Day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit came upon the first disciples. This seems a fitting time for us to examine His work not only in the book of Matthew, but also in our own lives today.

WEEKLY READINGS

The 31 days of May span across 5 weeks, even though the first and last weeks are not a full seven days. We will utilize those partial weeks for 5 reading plans, but you may break this reading up differently for your own schedule.

- Week 1 (May 1-5) — Matthew 1:18-20, Matthew 3:11-4:1
- Week 2 (May 6-12) — Matthew 10:16-20
- Week 3 (May 13-19) — Matthew 12:15-32
- Week 4 (May 20-26) — Matthew 22:41-46
- Week 5 (May 27-31) — Matthew 28:16-20, Acts 1:1-5, Acts 2:1-21

APPROACH

This month's reading plan will follow a simple 3-part process:
Read. Reflect. Respond.

We will *read* the text, take some time to *reflect* on the story (this section will include some questions and thoughts to guide you), and we will utilize our BLESS rhythms to *respond*. The goal here is not to create some call-to-action to perform, but to respond to the prompting of the Holy Spirit.



MAY READING PLAN WEEK ONE

READ

Matthew 1:18-20

This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. 19 Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

20 But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit."

Matthew 3:11-4:1

"I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me comes one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. 12 His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor, gathering his wheat into the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

13 Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. 14 But John tried to deter him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" 15 Jesus replied, "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness." Then John consented.

16 As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. 17 And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."

4:1 Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

REFLECT

- The word for Jesus' 'birth', or origin, in 1:18 is the Greek word, 'genesis'
 - Matthew is intentionally giving his readers a re-creation story
 - The same Spirit who hovered over the waters of creation is present in the waters of the womb
 - Just as God breathed His own spirit into the first man, the Spirit brought Jesus into the world
- The Genesis story is recalled again at Jesus' baptism in chapter 3
 - The Father speaks, the Spirit hovers over the waters and descends upon Jesus, the Word of God is present in the human flesh of Jesus, the full image of God
- **Questions:**
 - Why did Jesus need to be baptized to fulfill *all* righteousness?
 - Why did the Spirit then lead Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted (or tested) by the devil?
 - What did John mean that Jesus would baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire?

RESPOND: BLESS Rhythms

LISTEN — God spoke to Mary and Joseph as the Spirit brought Jesus into the world. God spoke His love as the Spirit descended at Jesus' baptism. Jesus spoke God's word to combat the temptations of Satan after the Spirit led him into the wilderness. What is the Spirit saying to you right now?



MAY READING PLAN WEEK TWO

READ

Matthew 10:16-20

“I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves. 17 Be on your guard; you will be handed over to the local councils and be flogged in the synagogues. 18 On my account you will be brought before governors and kings as witnesses to them and to the Gentiles. 19 But when they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say, 20 for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.

REFLECT

- Jesus seems to have no problem sending his disciples out into danger. There will be wolves they need to be on guard against. There seems to be a certainty that they will be handed over to power, arrested, and beaten.
- And yet, Jesus sends them. He also seems to have an assurance that they should not worry, because the Spirit of their Father will speak through them.
- In context, verse 1 of this chapter tells us Jesus was sending them with authority to preach and display the Kingdom as they drove out impure spirits and healed every kind of disease. The Spirit was not just sent to give them words, but also power to face the dark spirits of this world.
- **Questions:**
 - Where has Jesus sent you? Where is he sending you in this next season? Does it seem easy and comfortable?
 - Do you really believe the Spirit of your Father goes with you and will speak through you?
 - What areas of your life do you need the power of the Holy Spirit for?
- **Prayer:**
 - Take some time to ask Jesus who his Spirit is sending you to and ask for him to empower you with his authority and love to go

RESPOND: BLESS Rhythms

SPEAK — Do you believe that God can and will actually speak through you when necessary? The context of the Spirit giving the disciples the words they needed was that they were out speaking the good news of Jesus and the Kingdom of God. How can you go out and speak the good news of Jesus this week, trusting the Spirit is empowering you with the words you need?



MAY READING PLAN WEEK THREE

READ

Matthew 12:15-32

Aware of this (the Pharisees were plotting to kill him), Jesus withdrew from that place. A large crowd followed him, and he healed all who were ill. 16 He warned them not to tell others about him. 17 This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah:

*18 “Here is my servant whom I have chosen,
the one I love, in whom I delight;
I will put my Spirit on him,
and he will proclaim justice to the nations.*

*19 He will not quarrel or cry out;
no one will hear his voice in the streets.*

*20 A bruised reed he will not break,
and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out,
till he has brought justice through to victory.*

21 In his name the nations will put their hope.” [Isaiah 42:1-4]

22 Then they brought him a demon-possessed man who was blind and mute, and Jesus healed him, so that he could both talk and see. 23 All the people were astonished and said, “Could this be the Son of David?” 24 But when the Pharisees heard this, they said, “It is only by Beelzebul, the prince of demons, that this fellow drives out demons.” 25 Jesus knew their thoughts and said to them, “Every kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and every city or household divided against itself will not stand. 26 If Satan drives out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then can his kingdom stand? 27 And if I drive out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your people drive them out? So then, they will be your judges. 28 But if it is by the Spirit of God that I drive out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. 29 “Or again, how can anyone enter a strong man’s house and carry off his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man? Then he can plunder his house. 30 “Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters. 31 And so I tell you, every kind of sin and slander can be forgiven, but blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. 32 Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.

REFLECT

- Jesus seems to heal illnesses and cast out demons by the power of the Spirit (Matthew quotes Isaiah to make this point, Jesus states it himself in verse 28).
- He then makes a point to warn people against rejecting the Holy Spirit.
- **Questions:**
 - Do you rely on the Spirit to do what Jesus calls you to, the same way he did?
 - In what ways do you need to repent from doing work in your own strength?
 - Why is it unforgivable to speak against the Holy Spirit?

RESPOND: BLESS Rhythms

SABBATH — If work is done in the power of the Holy Spirit, what are some intentional things you can do (or stop doing) to rest in His work through your life?



MAY READING PLAN WEEK FOUR

READ

Matthew 22:41-46

While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, **42** “What do you think about the Messiah? Whose son is he?”

“The son of David,” they replied.

43 He said to them, “How is it then that David, speaking by the Spirit, calls him ‘Lord’? For he says,

44 ‘The Lord said to my Lord:

“Sit at my right hand

until I put your enemies

under your feet.’”[Psalm 110:1]

45 If then David calls him ‘Lord,’ how can he be his son?” **46** No one could say a word in reply, and from that day on no one dared to ask him any more questions.

REFLECT

- The context of this passage is Jesus being questioned by Jewish religious leaders (Sadducees and Pharisees). He then silences them by turning a question back on them. Why do you think he chose this particular question?
- David was seen as the greatest king of Israel’s history. He was possibly the closest thing to a Messiah the Israelites had experienced up to this point — an anointed king chosen by God to lead His people into an era of peace in the promised land.
- Yet, David spoke of a greater anointed king to come. He knew he was not the Messiah but that God would indeed send a true Messiah to rescue His people one day.
- Jesus seems to claim that David knew this and spoke it by the Holy Spirit.
- **Questions:**
 - How is Jesus a better Anointed King (Messiah) than David or any other figure in human history?
 - What is the significance of David pointing to a future Messiah *‘by the Spirit’*?
 - In what ways has the Spirit spoken to you and revealed more of who God is?

RESPOND: BLESS Rhythms

BLESS — God blessed David by calling him into the position of king and blessed the people of Israel in many ways through David. Unfortunately, David also had his share of abusing his power and bringing harm rather than blessing to God’s people. In what ways can you partner with the blessing of God’s Spirit in order to be a blessing to the people in your life this week?



MAY READING PLAN WEEK FIVE

READ

Matthew 28:16-20

Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. 17 When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. 18 Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Also read Acts 1:1-5 and Acts 2:1-21

REFLECT

- The disciples had experienced some of Jesus' authority and power already when he sent them to heal diseases, cast out demons, and preach good news. How would this be different?
- In Acts 1, we're told Jesus said to his disciples that his baptism would be different from John's. Instead of water, Jesus would immerse them in the Holy Spirit. What does this mean?
- In Acts 2, the Holy Spirit came upon Jesus' followers and they began speaking in different languages. Yet, this wasn't just for show or confusion! They began speaking the good news of Jesus and the Kingdom of God to all the different people present.
- This happened during the Feast of Weeks
 - Also called Pentecost, meaning 50, because it happened 50 days after the previous festival; the Feast of Firstfruits
 - Jesus, the Passover Lamb, rose from the tomb on the Feast of Firstfruits, then seven Sabbath days later the Spirit of God was given to his followers
 - At this festival, where many of different languages were gathered, the first fruits of the Church were also gathered
- **Questions:**
 - What does it mean to be immersed into the Holy Spirit?
 - How was the Spirit's power coming upon the disciples for the sake of others?
 - In what ways are you being immersed in the Holy Spirit for the sake of others?

RESPOND: BLESS Rhythms

EAT — God's people would feast at this festival, celebrating how God provided for their ancestors in the wilderness. Imagine the feasting that took place once thousands of people that day heard the good news of Jesus and the Kingdom of God and were filled with the Holy Spirit! Who can you feast with this week as you celebrate the Kingdom to come and the presence of God's Spirit in the world?