

# GPS

God's Plan of Salvation

## Bible Reading Plan August 2020

This month the GPS Reading Map takes us deep into the life of Christ as we explore the four books that tell the Greatest Story Ever Told. It is appropriate here to add a few notes. First, one of the purposes of these reading maps was to briefly summarize the parts of the Old Testament story that we had to skip over so that the reader would be able to keep up with the main events of the history in the Old Testament, even if he wasn't reading all of it. That isn't possible or as necessary, now that we have arrived at the Gospels. Instead we will try to focus on our second purpose for the GPS maps: to keep the reader connected to the big purposes of God as revealed in the major promises in Scripture. We will continue to be on the lookout for passages that reference the Genesis 12 and 2 Samuel 7 promises, because those verses shape all of Scripture. We want to keep making those connections to the Old Testament so that we all see more clearly how the Bible is one book, with one theme, one plot line, one idea: the salvation of people from sin. We need to keep the main thing the main thing! So even as our notes here emphasize the continued unfolding of the Bible story we never want to forget where we came from: everything we are reading about is born from the disaster of Genesis 3, and the promises of God to fix that mess as recorded in the Old Testament in passages like Genesis 12, 2 Samuel 7 and Jeremiah 31. *~qa* Finally, a word about harmonies of the Gospel. We will attempt to read the life of Christ in chronological order. However, arranging the Gospel's material into consecutive order is often very difficult, and even occasionally controversial. Don't be surprised if you read another harmony with a different arrangement of material. The GPS Maps are simply one approach as we do the best we can to maximize our time in the Gospels while telling the story of Jesus' life in an orderly fashion.

### Week 1 - John 1 Luke 1 2 Matthew 3 4



While not attempting a full blown harmony of the Gospels, we will try to read about Jesus' life and teachings in chronological order as best we can. We begin with John's very different beginning to his gospel in **John 1**. This first chapter records God's testimony to who Jesus is, and then John the Baptist's testimony, followed by the testimony of the first disciples. **Luke 1** gives us the story of John the Baptist's miraculous birth, and then Jesus' birth is foretold. This is a long chapter with a major emphasis on big happenings because God is at work. After 400 years things are stirring! Note the explicit ties to Abraham and David's promises (verses 32-33, 54-55, 69, 72-73). **Luke 2** records the birth of Jesus. Early on we see that the outcasts of society (shepherds) are interested in this One who has come for "all people" (verses 10, 31-32). **Matthew 3** picks up John the Baptist preparing the way for Jesus. **Matthew 4** then tells us how Jesus began His ministry.



**John 1:39** mentions the "tenth hour" which would be 4 PM reckoning with Jewish time. However, John often favors Roman time so this could be 10 AM. **John 1:40** names one disciple, Peter, but leaves the other without a name. That may be the author of this Gospel, John.



For so long we have read our Bible watching for the Messiah. Now He is here, and we are actually watching Him at work. Take a moment to think about how different Jesus is than we might have expected. What about His birth is surprising? What about His way of doing is different? What are the distinctives of His teaching that appear early in His ministry and set the tone for all He says and does?



This week we want to play “I met Jesus.” As you read, note the people who met Jesus and talk about what it was like for that person to be in Jesus’ presence. What would that be like? Is it always comfortable to meet Jesus? Ask your children “If you could talk with Jesus, what would you talk about or ask Him?”

## Week 2 - Matthew 5 6 7 John 2 3



**Matthew 5-7** records the greatest sermon ever preached, The Sermon on the Mount. It is very much the constitution of the Kingdom, describing the kind of character Jesus desires His subjects to possess. **Chapter 5** begins with a different way of living and then emphasizes the difference in rabbinical interpretations and distortions of Moses’ Law and what God really wants. **Chapter 6** takes on the subject of public piety (verses 1-8). Problems with prayer give Jesus a chance to build us a model prayer (verses 9-13). What we focus on and where our focus is forms the subject of the rest of the chapter. Don’t let worry ruin your focus is Jesus’ big point here. **Chapter 7** works on our relationships, with others, with God, and even with those who reject the Gospel. From here we turn to **John 2**, where Jesus does His first miracle (verses 1-12) and then cleanses the Temple (verses 13-25). **John 3** records the conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus (verses 1-15). It is hard to tell exactly where the conversation ends and John takes up writing again but the tone changes after verse 15.



**Matthew 5:39** has been oft misunderstood. Does Jesus mean we are literally never to resist evil? Certainly not. The Bible is full of examples of evil being forcefully resisted (see Exodus 7; Acts 25:10-11; 1 Tim 1:20). Just as Jesus has used large language and figures of speech earlier in the sermon (“pluck out your eye,” verse 29) so He is using an exaggerated statement here to make the point: disciples try to get along with everyone and always leave vengeance to God.



Watch out in **Matthew 5:3ff** with the term “blessed.” Some have decided that means “happy.” The Scriptures show very little interest in happiness as most Americans think of it. Blessed here refers to the kind of joy and contentment disciples have deep in their heart because they are approved of God. When you have that, you can be blessed even when you are weeping (verse 4). You can be blessed even when you are not happy! Spend a moment and think about this and pray about it. Work back through the beatitudes looking for their tie to the approval of God. So mourning (verse 4) is mourning for sin. Being a peacemaker (verse 10) is making peace between men and God.



The Gospels feature a lot of Jesus’ teaching which can be difficult for children. Try reading in small bites and then ask your children to sum up in their own words what Jesus says and means. You may be surprised at the depth of insight children can have!

## Week 3 - John 4 Luke 6 7 Matthew 13 15



**John 4** features another conversation with Jesus. This time He is talking with a woman in Samaria who has a checkered past. Notice Jesus says He is the Messiah, the fulfillment of the Old Testament (verses 26-27). **Luke 6** begins to up the hostility level between Jesus and the Pharisees, as nothing Jesus does is exempt from harsh criticism (verses 1-11). The chapter also includes The Sermon on the Plain (verses 20-49). This is not The Sermon on the Mount and we shouldn’t try to “harmonize” the two (as if that was needed). Jesus probably preached this basic sermon everywhere - it was His basic sermon on the nature of Kingdom citizens! **Luke 7** shows strong faith in a non-Israelite (verse 9), and some questions from John the Baptist (verses 18-35). These questions give Jesus the opportunity to affirm that He is the Messiah Isaiah spoke of (verses 22-23). Jesus is anointed by a sinful woman (verses 36-50), but this is not Mary who anoints Jesus’ feet in Bethany shortly before His death (see John 12). **Matthew 13** is the great chapter of parables. **Matthew 15** gives us more of Jesus’ great teachings and recognizes the faith of a Gentile woman (verses 22-28). Notice she calls Jesus “son of David” (verse 21), a connection to 2 Samuel 7.



The story of Jesus' disciples plucking wheat on the Sabbath and Jesus' justification of it (**Luke 6:1-5**) has been often misunderstood. All Jesus does is note the lack of criticism of David for doing what was surely wrong, while His disciples are attacked for doing something that wasn't a violation of God's Law. We can be sure that if the disciples were sinning, Jesus would have taken care of it! This is just a case of Pharisaical hypocrisy. Was Jesus rude to the Sidonian woman in **Matthew 15:26**? We don't know the tone of voice or whether Jesus said what He did in a playful way with a twinkle in His eye. Jesus certainly is willing to test one's faith but that doesn't infer He was being deliberately mean to this woman.



In **Matthew 13** Jesus tells those great "earthly stories with a heavenly meaning." Go back and re-read why Jesus said He told parables (verses 14-17). Do you get it? Parables sifted the crowds, pushing away the uninterested and attracting those who want the Lord. People who didn't care about Jesus walked away baffled by His strange stories. People who wanted more thought about the stories and even asked about them (verse 10). Ask yourself, "What would I have done?" What is your attitude toward the harder parts of Scripture? Is that an excuse to pack up and go, or will you pursue Jesus even more through the Word?



Talk with your kids about speaking to those no one wants to talk to, like Jesus did in **John 4**. What is the disciple's attitude to be towards the outcast? Pick up Jesus' discussion of how the outcast are often the very ones that can accept God in **Luke 7:20-26**. Talk about why it is that the rich, the social climbers, the "haves" often reject Jesus.

#### Week 4 - Mark 6 Matthew 16 Luke 9 10 15



**Mark 6** is a long chapter. Jesus is rejected at His home base (verses 1-6), sends out the Twelve (verses 7-13), and John the Baptist is murdered (verses 14-29). Then Jesus feeds the five thousand (verses 30-44), the only miracle recorded in all four gospels. **Matthew 16** sees more ill will between the Pharisees and Jesus. In the midst of that, we get Peter's great confession (verse 16). Note that this confession leads immediately to Jesus telling of His impending death and resurrection (verse 21). **Luke 9** also records the feeding of the five thousand, but also has the story of the Transfiguration (verses 28-36). The chapter ends with four failures by the disciples (verses 37-56), and more of Jesus' discipleship sayings (verses 57-62). **Luke 10** has one of Jesus' most famous parables, the Good Samaritan (verses 25-37). Notice that it is preceded with stories of the religious elite rejecting Jesus (verses 13-16). **Luke 15** has the three great parables on being lost. Jesus may tell all three stories to get to the story of the elder brother (verses 25-32), a fourth parable here that is often neglected. Note the heavy emphasis on celebration and joy in these stories.



Does Jesus suffer a "power failure" in **Mark 6:5**? No. The problem isn't with Jesus but faithless people who won't come to Him. He healed those who did!



Re-read Jesus and Peter's conversation in **Matthew 16**. Peter does well to acknowledge Jesus is the Messiah but watch how Jesus immediately talks about His death. Jesus never lets other's expectations and agendas determine what kind of Messiah He is. He always pushes the need for salvation from sin and His role as the Suffering Servant. If you had been standing there what would you have thought of this exchange between Peter and Jesus? Do you try to remake Jesus into a Messiah who does to please you?



Focus on two events from our reading this week. First, the feeding of the five thousand is an awesome miracle that our children need to think about and imagine. What would it be like to be there? What would you have thought about Jesus afterward? What does this miracle say about Jesus? What should we learn from it? Second, talk about the lost and found parables of **Luke 15**. What does it mean to be lost? How does God feel about us when we get lost? How should we treat others who are lost and then found? **Luke 15** makes the Gospel message very real and very practical. Don't miss this chance to let Jesus teach your kids how to think about lost and found.

## Week 5 - □ John 9 □ 11 □ Mark 10 □ 11 □ Luke 20



No chapter traces out the steps to belief and the determination of unbelief like **John 9**. Keep track of the blind man's rising faith (verses 11, 17, 33, 38). **John 11** crystallizes the opposition to Jesus because He does an absolutely incredible miracle, the raising of Lazarus from the dead, within a few miles of Jerusalem (note verse 45). Mark 10 introduces more teaching with various people "interrupting" Jesus along the way. We read about children (verses 13-16), the Rich Young Ruler (verses 17-31), James and John (verses 35-45), and blind Bartimaeus (verse 46-52). Note the Davidic title Bartimaeus uses twice for Jesus (verses 47-48). **Mark 11** opens the last week of Jesus' life, with the Triumphal Entry (Sunday) and trips into Jerusalem on Monday and Tuesday, during which Jesus cleanses the temple again (verses 15-19) and curses a fig tree (verses 12-14, 20-25). **Luke 20** picks up the questioning of Jesus' authority that was covered briefly in **Mark 11**, and goes on to record more of the teaching and debates as Jesus challenged the religious authorities of His day. Jesus again identifies Himself with David and the Messianic prophecies of Scripture in verses 41-44.



Many are puzzled about why Jesus cursed the fig tree in **Mark 11** since "it was not the season of figs" (verse 13). The key here is that the tree has leaves on it (verse 13). Figs often appear simultaneously as the leaves appear on the tree. So the leaves told Jesus there should be figs on the tree. This tree was unique. It promised figs, even in a time when most trees would not have them. But it didn't fulfill its promise. It was like Israel: they looked like God's people but refused to fulfill the promise of holiness.



Read **John 9** again and note the factors that keep the religious leaders from accepting Jesus. Among them are loving their own traditions (verse 16), peer pressure (verse 22), closed mindedness (verse 24), and personal attacks and pride (verse 34). Do we see these attitudes operating today?



**John 11** is a spectacular miracle and affirmation of Jesus' deity. Talk through this chapter. Talk about what people expected and how Jesus did far more than anybody could have dreamed. Discuss the emotions there. Why does Jesus cry (verse 35)? What does Jesus' raising of Lazarus absolutely prove about Him?