



First Person Week Five

Opening Prayer: God, thank you for coming to bring healing and equality among all of us. Be with us today as we seek your wisdom, expressed in scripture and in one another's stories.

Talk It Over: Continuing in Matthew this week we take a look at the ways Matthew leans into the wisdom of Jesus. As one of the disciples, Matthew had a front row seat to watching Jesus and his stories unfold. People who knew Matthew when he was still Levi, the tax collector, would have been surprised that Jesus chose him to share his message. In the same way that the stories of Jesus still have power and wisdom for us today Jesus is still choosing people that we might not view as worthy to deliver his message.

- Do you feel unqualified to be used by God? We all struggle with this sometimes. What are some of the stories that replay in your mind building a case for why God can't use you?
- Would people who knew you before Jesus was in your life be surprised by the life you now live?
- Can you think of a time that God used someone that you would not have expected to help support you?

Read Matthew 13:3-9 The Voice

God is working to bring incredible good in our lives through his spirit. This new life of God in us requires a partnership; we play a part and have some responsibility for that new life in us. When we partner together with God we bear fruit in our lives. The first step in that partnership is to either reject or accept Jesus. If we choose to accept this partnership we begin to experience a season of weeding and watering, becoming who God wants us to be. At the same time God calls us into meditation (listening to or resting in the presence of God) and multiplication.

- If you have not accepted the invitation to partner with Jesus what is holding you back?
- If you have a story of weeding (having things uprooted in your life) that you would like to share, do that.
- What spiritual practices or habits help you water your spiritual life?
- Is meditation something you are comfortable doing? How does a time of silence in your prayer time feel to you?
- When you have experienced time resting in God's presence do you feel the desire to share with others what you have taken away from that prayer time? Do you? If not, what holds you back from doing so?

Read Matthew 13: 18-23 The Voice

We have all experienced "a-ha moments" where things seem to connect and we somehow have insight to a truth we have been blind to in the past. The Holy Spirit is great at giving us those moments of realization. Consider that moment as an invitation

for growth instead of a one-time message. Those are the moments we experience an invitation and a glimpse into the condition of our soul and what it/we might need to grow.

- How is your soul doing? What might it need? *Just a hint... this response might be as simple as a nap.*
- Growing is a journey. It will not always be up and to the right. Reflect and recall some things you struggled with a year ago. Do you still struggle with those same things?
- What can you add to your daily life this week to help the condition of your soul?

Mediation: Settle into your chair. Notice your feet on the floor and your body in your seat. Take a few breaths and ask God to allow you to feel his presence. Bring a peaceful picture to your mind where you and God connect. Feel his love and acceptance of you. Rest here for a few minutes and ask God to continue this connection with you this week as you care for your soul.

Closing Prayer: God, thank you for the gift of our soul. Help us to care for our soul this week as we seek you and your presence. Thank you for your gift of love.

Challenge: We would like to invite you to follow along with us as a church as we read through the books of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. You can do that through the eDevotional. <http://eastlakechurch.com/next-steps/edevotional/> If you have already started this reading, share some thoughts or insight about your experience this week.