

# Matthew 4

## Bible Study

By Gary Eugene Howell



### Verses 1-2

Ask for a volunteer to read aloud Matthew 4:1-2.

**Observation:** Jesus was led by the Spirit.

**Discussion:** How can we, in our daily lives, be led by the Spirit?

Allow your Bible study

group the time to contemplate their responses, however, if they have difficulty with this question, here are a few prompts that may help them.

Spend time in God's word daily, pray continually, strive toward obedience, consider fasting, fellowship with other believers, seek Godly counsel.

### Verses 3-4

Ask for a volunteer to read aloud Matthew 4:3-4.

**Observation:** Jesus's defense against Satan was to quote scripture.

**Discussion:** What does this tell us about the importance of knowing scripture well? What dangers exist for us if we are never able to recall scripture?

### Verses 5-7

Ask for a volunteer to read aloud Matthew 4:5-7. Next, ask for a volunteer to turn to Psalm 91:11-12 and read it out loud.

**Observation:** Notice that Satan left out the part of verse 11 that says "to guard you in all your ways". Satan was attempting to make the scripture sound like something it was never meant to say. In other words, Satan was using false doctrine to try to deceive Jesus. Next, notice that Jesus responded by saying "It is also written" and then quoted Deuteronomy 6:16.

**Discussion:** How does knowing the full counsel of God's Word protect us from being deceived? Why does reading only the "verse of the day" make us more vulnerable to deception? Have you ever noticed that the "verse of the day" is always something that sounds positive and encouraging? When publishers select the verse of the day, they avoid verses that sound

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convicting, challenging, or that warn of sin and judgment. By relying only on the “Verse of the day” as the foundation of your scripture reading, you can inadvertently develop a lopsided view of God’s character and this imbalance can make it easier for false doctrine to take root.

**Challenge:** Here is a fun little challenge you can do with your study group. Ask them who thinks they’re a fast reader? If someone raises their hand, tell them you’re going to put them to the test! The shortest chapter in the New Testament is Revelation 15—it’s only 8 verses long. Tell the volunteer you’re going to time them reading it out loud and we’re going to see how fast they can get through the whole thing.

The person flips to Revelation 15. You say “On your mark, get set, go! They read it as fast as they can. The moment they get to the last word, stop the timer. Tell everyone what his or her time was. Congratulate them and tell them they did a great job.

Here’s the point of the exercise: if we have time to read the ‘verse of the day,’ it really doesn’t take that much more time to read a whole section, or a whole page or even a whole chapter. We might think that reading the Bible takes forever, but the reality is that with only a commitment of 5 to 15 minutes a day, you can get through entire books of the Bible in relatively short periods of time.

“When I timed myself, I read Revelation 15 in 1 minute and 20 seconds.”

### **Verses 8-9**

Ask for a volunteer to read aloud Matthew 4:8-9.

**Observation:** Satan is lying! Satan can not give all the kingdoms of the world to Jesus, because Jesus already owns all the kingdoms of the world.

I have no need for a bull from your stall or goats from your pens, for every beast of the forest is Mine—the cattle on a thousand hills. I know every bird in the mountains, and the creatures of the field are Mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell you, for the world is Mine, and the fullness thereof. (Psalm 50:9-12)

Through Him all things were made, and without Him nothing was made that has been made. (John 1:3)

When Satan lies, he speaks his native language, because he is a liar and the father of lies. (John 8:44b)

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Satan is the deceiver. Everything that comes out of his mouth is a lie. So when you have a choice between what God says, and what the world says, understand that one of those two is a lie. And God is not a liar.

**Discussion:** What lies does the world tell us? Give some examples of how Satan has deceived the whole world. How can we overcome those lies in our personal life?

### **Verses 10-11**

Ask for a volunteer to read aloud Matthew 4:10-11.

**Observation:** The devil saw that he was getting nowhere with Jesus, so the devil left. That's the way you and I need to be. The devil can not hang around us because we are so well grounded in the Word of God.

**Discussion:** Invite group members to share their personal Bible reading plan or study routine. Encourage them to talk about the Bible they are currently using. For example, this author has a Tyndale NLT, large print, thinline, reference Bible covered in genuine leather—which he is very fond of. Others may have a simple \$5 paperback Bible or prefer a digital Bible app. Each person should feel free to share why their choice works for them. Ask how long they've had their current Bible and whether they take notes, highlight verses, or use bookmarks. Some people may treasure a clean, preserved Bible, while others may find great joy in underlining and jotting down insights. Both approaches can be meaningful and valuable.

**Caution:** Encourage a spirit of respect and grace during this discussion. Everyone's Bible journey is unique, and the goal is to encourage one another to engage more deeply with Scripture—not to debate translations or criticize others' preferences. Kindly steer the conversation away from divisive topics such as “King James Only” debates or harsh judgments about paraphrased translations. If you're concerned about someone's Bible translation choice, pray privately that the Holy Spirit will guide them into truth. Remember: it's better to uplift than to correct someone in public over personal convictions. Let's focus on celebrating the fact that we're all spending time in God's Word.

### **Verses 12-16**

Ask for a volunteer to read aloud Matthew 4:12-16.

**Observation:** Jesus left his home town of Nazareth, and moved to Capernaum. Yet he neither owned a house nor rented an apartment.

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Foxes have dens and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay His head. (Matthew 8:20)

**Discussion:** This author—and likely you, the Bible study leader—enjoys laying his head on a pillow at night. There’s nothing wrong with owning a home, a bed, or the comforts God provides. But take a moment to consider Jesus’ example and talk about material possessions.

What does Jesus’ example teach us about His commitment to His mission? How can material possessions distract us from the great commission? For example, this author once owned a large aquarium. It was beautiful and enjoyable, but it also required hours of maintenance each week and cost hundreds of dollars to set up and maintain. When he eventually sold the aquarium, he felt as if a burden had been lifted—freeing up time, energy, and focus for more meaningful pursuits.

### Verse 17

Ask for a volunteer to read aloud Matthew 4:17.

**Discussion:** Jesus began His public ministry with a call to repentance. Why is repentance so important? What role does it play in our salvation?

We know that salvation is by grace through faith, not by good works or self-effort. We don’t get into heaven by “cleaning up our act.” But at the same time, scripture teaches that genuine faith will always result in a changed heart.

Why is repentance an essential part of responding to the gospel, even though it doesn’t “earn” our salvation?

What are some ways we can help others understand repentance without turning it into a “works-based gospel”?

What does it reveal about a person’s faith if they refuse to repent? Can someone claim the name of Christ while refusing to repent of a known sin? Why or why not?

### Verses 18-22

Ask for a volunteer to read aloud Matthew 4:18-22.

**Observation:** Jesus said, “Come, follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.”

**Note to Bible study leader:** Language changes over time. Back then the word Men referred to the human race. Today, however, many people who hear the word “men” may conclude it’s

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referring only to males. This might be a good time to briefly point out that Jesus' call to become "fishers of men" is a call to reach all people with the gospel—both women and men. God's call to share the good news is not limited by gender. Everyone who follows Jesus is called to help bring others into the Kingdom.

**Discussion:** What does it mean to "follow" Jesus in our daily lives? Why do you think Jesus started with an invitation rather than a command? What might someone have to leave behind in order to follow Jesus fully (see verses 20–22)? Jesus says, "I will make you..." What does this tell us about who shapes us for ministry? How does this verse challenge the idea that we must be "qualified" before God can use us? What fears or hesitations do people often have about sharing their faith with others? How can Jesus' promise to "make you" a fisher of men give you confidence?

### Verses 23-25

Ask for a volunteer to read aloud Matthew 4:23-25.

**Observation:** Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching, preaching and healing.

**Discussion:** Why is it important for Christians today to care about both people's physical needs and their spiritual condition? For example, a charity might dig water wells in Africa. But without the message of salvation, those who receive the water may still die without Christ.

On the other hand, if we tell someone about Jesus but ignore their obvious physical needs, such as not offering a glass of water to someone who's thirsty, have we truly reflected the love of Christ?

How can we learn from Jesus' example to minister to the whole person, both their physical needs as well as their spiritual ones?

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# Free Bible Study Resources for Bible Study Leaders

By Gary Eugene Howell

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**Dear Bible study leader:** Here are a few tips on how to conduct a good Bible study that will foster spiritual growth in those attending.

**First:** Prepare for your Bible study by spending quality time in prayer in the days or week ahead of the study. Seek not to rely upon your own strengths and abilities, but instead rely upon the Lord.

**Second:** Begin your group bible study by taking prayer requests. If you have less than 25 people in your group, be bold by asking every individual, by name, what they would like prayer for. Then ask the group members to pray for one another. (You can ask, “who would like to pray for John?” or you can ask that everyone pray for the person on their left), however you choose to organize it is fine. Make sure you take notes on what people are asking prayer for. Then, before you begin the group prayer, ask if anyone needs a reminder of who and what they are praying for. If your group spends the whole hour praying and you never get to discuss the bible study, that’s perfectly fine.

**Third:** Don’t turn your Bible study into a sermon—your attendees can hear a sermon on Sunday. Instead, aim to be the one who speaks the least during the session. When you ask the group a question, be comfortable with several seconds of silence while people gather their thoughts. If no one responds after a long pause, try rephrasing the question and ask it again in a different way. Then give everyone time to reflect and respond.

**Fourth:** Many Bible study sessions end up being shallow. This often happens when the leader asks simple questions that require only one- or two-word answers. Your goal, however, is to guide your attendees deeper into God’s Word. Lead the group in examining the context and meaning of the passage being studied. Then move on to application—but remember, the Bible is not a self-help book for behavior modification. It is the story of Jesus—what He has done for us, what He is doing in us, and how He saves us.

**Fifth:** Hopefully, two or three attendees will help carry the discussion—those who are eager to talk about the Word of God. However, be prepared in advance for the possibility that one person may try to dominate the conversation. If someone begins to speak at length—five or ten minutes—without allowing others to contribute, you’ll need to find a kind and respectful way to gently redirect the discussion and keep it balanced.

**Sixth:** It’s perfectly okay if you don’t get to all the questions presented in this bible study. If you ask the first question and your group spends the remainder of the hour discussing it, your job is done. You had a successful bible study. Don’t be concerned that you didn’t get to the rest of the questions.