



Study of Matthew

The Way of the Kingdom of Heaven

Table 2

Season 4 Episode 1

Sometimes I have these moments where it dawns on me, *I've lost the plot line*. I somehow have *detached* from the *heart of God*. I'm still doing all the “right” things—following Jesus, saying the words, keeping the habits—but something inside feels off. *Do you ever find yourself there too?*

I picture Matthew sitting in a tax collector's booth on the edge of Capernaum, maybe feeling that same way. Was he just going through the motions, wondering, *“How did I end up here? Is this really my life?”*

We can only speculate about what happened in this Jewish man's life which may have led to him working for Rome. I can't imagine he would have chosen to betray his people by going to work for their oppressors had there not been a catalyst or a series of events in his life that led him to *detach* from his people and heritage...*to detach from God*.

I'm so curious! *How did Matthew lose the plot line?*

With that one choice, he crossed a line—from insider to outsider, from belonging to being branded a betrayer.

Even if Matthew had wanted to turn back, every door was closed. That is, until one day Jesus stopped in front of his booth—and with just two words, changed everything.

“Follow me,” He told him, and Matthew got up and followed Him. (Matthew 9:9)

I personally connect to Matthew's outsider status. My early religious church experience was far removed from mainstream Christianity. I don't hesitate to call the church I grew up in a cult. We were definitely outsiders. Your story is probably very different from mine. But, we all have a “before” testimony. ***Before I was a follower of Jesus...***

I find when I reflect on my “before” testimony, I'm able to recapture the *plot*. Remembering where I've come from helps me to reconnect with the heart of God.

Another way I attach to the heart of God is through reading and rereading God's story. I recently got teary eyed over Joshus dispersing the promised land among the tribes of Israel. I thought about how the promise was first given to Abraham—how he believed, but never actually possessed the land himself. And here I was, generations later in the story, watching his descendants finally inherit what he had only seen by faith.

Imagine the discouragement the Jews felt under the Roman occupation. This was just the latest in a long line of foreign powers ruling over them. Yes, they were living in the land God had promised—but make no mistake, they weren't flourishing. The promise was still there, but the joy of it had faded under the weight of oppression.

I can't help but think this is how Matthew lost the plot. Maybe he decided, "*If I can't be free, I might as well be rich.*" So he took the job as a tax collector. He sold out.

Jesus helped Matthew recover the *plot line* with two words, "*Follow me.*"

Everyone else saw a sellout, a traitor, a man who had traded his soul for wealth. But Jesus saw something different. He saw a man who had lost his way — someone who had chosen an empty life, yet still had a heart that could be redeemed.

What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Mark 8:36

When Matthew walked out of the tax collector's booth, he began to walk in *the way of the Kingdom of heaven*. He found the *good way* the prophet Jeremiah (6:16) wrote about.

Have you found *the good way*?

Are you walking in the way of the Kingdom of Heaven?

If we've lost the plot line, there's hope. As we study Matthew together, Jesus will help us recover it — to rediscover His heart and His story woven into our own.

And as He does, He'll also teach us how to help others recover the plot line in *their* lives — inviting them back into the story of the Kingdom.

Keep following the Table Flipper, and leave the table flipping to Jesus.

