

SAMPLER

NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION

NIV
UPSIDE-DOWN
KINGDOM
BIBLE

DR. PRESTON SPRINKLE
General Editor

THINK DEEPLY // LOVE WIDELY

WELCOME TO THE *NIV UPSIDE-DOWN KINGDOM BIBLE*

The American social activist Jim Wallis once said, “Faith is always personal, but never private.”

Christianity, in other words, is not about some private Jesus that we keep tucked away in our hearts, nor is it simply about one’s personal holiness and salvation, though it does include these individual dimensions. Rather, **the biblically rooted Christian faith should determine how we think about all areas of life: economics, immigration, the death penalty, abortion, war, violence, power, justice, sexuality, and what it means to follow the Creator’s design for human flourishing.**

Declaring “Jesus is Lord” is a profound theological statement. It’s also a politically subversive statement. Not only is Jesus Lord of our lives; he’s Lord over creation, and our viewpoint of this or that political, cultural, or ethical issue should flow from our allegiance to king Jesus.

The uniqueness of *The Upside-Down Kingdom Bible*, then, is in helping the reader to see how relevant the Bible is for understanding the public nature of our faith. **We’ve titled it *The Upside-Down Kingdom Bible* to capture the specific counter-culture vision of God’s reign on earth.** “Many who are first will be last” (Mk 10:31), “those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted” (Mt 23:12), and “whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant” (Mt 20:26). The values of Christ’s kingdom were so startling to public ears that when Paul announced Jesus as Lord to the people in Thessalonica, it threw the whole city into turmoil, and its citizens complained: “They are all defying Caesar’s decrees, saying that there is another

king, one called Jesus” (Ac 17:7). The Thessalonians had it right. When believers announced that Jesus is Lord, it meant that Caesar is not, and this message affected people “all over the world” (Ac 17:6).

The Upside-Down Kingdom Bible seeks to unleash this counter-cultural, politically subversive, upside-down nature of the Christian faith. In order to reflect the *Upside-Down* nature of the kingdom, **we’ve enlisted a team of Christian scholars and writers that reflect the nature of this kingdom.** Since God’s kingdom is filled with both men and women, the study notes are authored by both women and men. God’s kingdom is also multi-ethnic; so are our authors. Our authors also span several generations, from young millennials to older boomers. And no single denomination (let alone political party) holds the keys to the kingdom; likewise, our authors come from dozens of different denominations and different partisan persuasions. We all hold passionately to the centrality of the gospel, the Lordship of Christ over all things, the authority of Scripture, and the theological tenets of the Nicene Creed. And we believe that there’s great value in ethnic, denominational, age, sex, and healthy theological diversity. And that through thinking deeply on these important areas of life, from diverse writers who come together for the sake of unity, we are simultaneously equipped to love widely and well.

Our hope and goal is that the study notes in this Bible will provide you with a fresh, challenging, and, at times, uncomfortable experience as you engage God’s scandalous Word. May this Bible fan the flames of your faith—which is personal but never simply private.

Preston Sprinkle, PhD
General Editor

MATTHEW

According to tradition, Matthew, the tax collector who became an apostle, wrote his gospel to address a decisive question confronting the first Christians: namely, whether or not God could save the Gentiles, who were ethnically non-Jews (Ac 11:18). Some first-century believers thought Jesus came for *his* people, the lost sheep of *Israel*—not for “Samaritans” or Gentile “dogs” (Mt 10:5–6; 15:21–27). But Matthew shows how the kingdom of heaven turns that notion upside down. In fact, Jesus found more faith in a Roman officer than he did in all of Israel (8:10), and in God’s kingdom, Gentiles will come from all around to feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (8:11). For Matthew, this is not a novel idea but a foregone conclusion from reading the whole of Scripture, which attests to Gentiles appearing in the Messiah’s genealogy from the Old Testament (e.g., Rahab, Ruth) and which leads foreigner astrologers (the Magi) to worship Jesus, the king of the Jews (1:1–6; 2:1–12). It is no wonder then, that, in what some consider the most Jewish of the Gospels, Jesus begins his ministry in the land of the Gentiles, providing light to a people enshrouded in darkness (4:12–17). Nor is it surprising that Jesus ends his ministry with the Great Commission to make disciples of *all* the nations (28:18–20)—the entire earth, not just Israel, is God’s field (13:38). Therefore, Matthew’s Gospel pushes back against any ethnocentric assumption that the kingdom of heaven has been cordoned off so that only people “like us” enter into it because, paradoxically, “those other people” may get there before we do (21:31).

Modern churches still struggle to carry out Jesus’ dismantling of ethnocentrism. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in his famous “I have a dream” speech said that the American church would be the biggest hindrance to that dream. And it doesn’t appear that King was too far off the mark. Today, many churches may preach unity while practicing Sunday-morning segregation. Ethnocentrism still hinders the church from embodying Jesus’ kingdom vision of tearing down the ethnic barriers that divide us, which is highlighted so beautifully in Matthew’s Gospel.

MATTHEW

The Genealogy of Jesus the Messiah

1 This is the genealogy^a of Jesus the Messiah^b the son of David, the son of Abraham:

- ² Abraham was the father of Isaac,
Isaac the father of Jacob,
Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers,
- ³ Judah the father of Perez and Zerah, whose mother was Tamar,
Perez the father of Hezron,
Hezron the father of Ram,
- ⁴ Ram the father of Amminadab,
Amminadab the father of Nahshon,
Nahshon the father of Salmon,
- ⁵ Salmon the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab,
Boaz the father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth,
Obed the father of Jesse,
- ⁶ and Jesse the father of King David.

David was the father of Solomon, whose mother had been Uriah's wife,

- ⁷ Solomon the father of Rehoboam,
Rehoboam the father of Abijah,
Abijah the father of Asa,
- ⁸ Asa the father of Jehoshaphat,
Jehoshaphat the father of Jehoram,
Jehoram the father of Uzziah,
- ⁹ Uzziah the father of Jotham,
Jotham the father of Ahaz,
Ahaz the father of Hezekiah,
- ¹⁰ Hezekiah the father of Manasseh,
Manasseh the father of Amon,
Amon the father of Josiah,
- ¹¹ and Josiah the father of Jeconiah^c and his brothers at the time of the exile to Babylon.

¹² After the exile to Babylon:

- Jeconiah was the father of Shealtiel,
Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel,
- ¹³ Zerubbabel the father of Abihud,
Abihud the father of Eliakim,
Eliakim the father of Azor,
- ¹⁴ Azor the father of Zadok,
Zadok the father of Akim,
Akim the father of Elihud,
- ¹⁵ Elihud the father of Eleazar,
Eleazar the father of Matthan,
Matthan the father of Jacob,
- ¹⁶ and Jacob the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary, and Mary was the mother of Jesus who is called the Messiah.

¹⁷ Thus there were fourteen generations in all from Abraham to David, fourteen from David to the exile to Babylon, and fourteen from the exile to the Messiah.

^a 1 Or is an account of the origin ^b 1 Or Jesus Christ. Messiah (Hebrew) and Christ (Greek) both mean Anointed One; also in verse 18. ^c 11 That is, Jehoiachin; also in verse 12

WOMEN

Matthew's genealogy offers a portrait of Jesus by describing his family as tightly tied to Israel's history through Abraham and David. Ancestry was typically traced through the father's lineage; therefore, the mention of five women highlights their importance in filling out the character of Jesus. First listed is Tamar, mother of Perez and Zerah, whose father was Judah (Mt 1:3; cf. Ge 38). After the death of Tamar's husband, through the custom of levirate marriage his brother should have married her. However, he did not, and Tamar took action to right this wrong. In the end Judah pronounced her, his daughter-in-law, more righteous than he because she proactively followed the customs of Israel when he did not.

Rahab is listed second as the mother of Boaz (Mt 1:5), who is the husband of Ruth, the third woman named. The Canaanite Rahab lived in Jericho and was a prostitute (Jos 2:1-21; 6:16-25). She hid and protected the Israelite spies, prophetically declaring that God would give Israel the land (Jos 2:9). Ruth, a Moabite, married a son of Naomi (an Israelite), but he died within a few years, and she chose to follow her mother-in-law as she returned to Bethlehem, Naomi's hometown (Ru 1). There she married Boaz, a member of Naomi's larger family network.

The fourth woman mentioned in the genealogy is Bathsheba, a faithful wife to Uriah (Mt 1:6). Second Samuel describes how King David saw her bathing in her courtyard (an action that during that time period was not improper or seductive); King David acted on his lust, and Bathsheba became pregnant (2Sa 11-12). The story lays all the blame for the adultery and the subsequent murder of Uriah at David's feet, and his repentance of these actions is seen in Psalm 51.

Several women in this genealogy were non-Israelites (Gentiles) who followed the God of Israel: Tamar and Rahab were Canaanites, Ruth was a Moabite and Bathsheba was married to a Hittite. These women prefigure Matthew's focus on the Gentile mission of Jesus and remind readers of God's constant outreach to Gentiles.

DIVORCE

MATTHEW 1:18-25

Joseph considers quietly divorcing Mary in Matthew 1:19 when she becomes pregnant during their time of engagement. The context is the larger narrative detailing Joseph and Mary's relationship in Matthew 1:18–25. Joseph's behavior provides an example of how a righteous, Torah-observing man should treat his spouse if he suspects adultery. According to Old Testament and earlier ancient Near Eastern law, a wife guilty of adultery could be executed. This law also applied to those who were betrothed (a legally bound marriage that had not yet been consummated), since the betrothal period was the transition from the authority of a woman's father to a relationship with her husband to be.

There is not a recorded example of the death penalty being enacted for adultery. Divorce was the usual response instead. This principle also applies to someone betrothed. Mary's pregnancy provides the background for the actions of Joseph. Instead of a public punishment as mandated by Deuteronomy 22:13–21, Joseph determines to privately divorce Mary. As a result of being engaged and moving toward marriage, Mary would have to be divorced formally, but this would be publicly shameful for the bride, groom and their families. Joseph's actions and his righteousness and faithfulness to the law clearly describe his intentions to adhere to the law by divorcing an adulterous wife, while also choosing to do so privately to lessen her shame. However, we should view Joseph's actions through the lens of Old Testament law and not reflective of one living under the New Covenant (see note on Divorce on Matthew 5:32).

Joseph Accepts Jesus as His Son

¹⁸This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about^a: 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. ¹⁹Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet^b did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

²⁰But 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. ²¹She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus,^c because he will save his people from their sins."

²²All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: ²³"The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel"^d (which means "God with us").

²⁴When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. ²⁵But he did not consummate their marriage until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.

The Magi Visit the Messiah

2 After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi^e from the east came to Jerusalem ²and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him."

³When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. ⁴When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born. ⁵"In Bethlehem in Judea," they replied, "for this is what the prophet has written:

⁶"But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel."^f

⁷Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. ⁸He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him."

⁹After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. ¹⁰When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. ¹¹On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. ¹²And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

The Escape to Egypt

¹³When they had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. "Get up," he said, "take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him."

¹⁴So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt, ¹⁵where he stayed until the death of Herod. And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: "Out of Egypt I called my son."^g

¹⁶When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who

^a 18 Or *The origin of Jesus the Messiah was like this* ^b 19 Or *was a righteous man and*

^c 21 *Jesus is the Greek form of Joshua, which means the LORD saves.* ^d 23 Isaiah 7:14

^e 1 Traditionally *wise men* ^f 6 Micah 5:2,4 ^g 15 Hosea 11:1

were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi. ¹⁷Then what was said through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled:

¹⁸“A voice is heard in Ramah,
weeping and great mourning,
Rachel weeping for her children
and refusing to be comforted,
because they are no more.”^a

The Return to Nazareth

¹⁹After Herod died, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt ²⁰and said, “Get up, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who were trying to take the child’s life are dead.”

²¹So he got up, took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel. ²²But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning in Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. Having been warned in a dream, he withdrew to the district of Galilee, ²³and he went and lived in a town called Nazareth. So was fulfilled what was said through the prophets, that he would be called a Nazarene.

John the Baptist Prepares the Way

3 In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea ²and saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.” ³This is he who was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah:

“A voice of one calling in the
wilderness,
‘Prepare the way for the Lord,
make straight paths for him.’”^b

⁴John’s clothes were made of camel’s hair, and he had a leather belt around his waist. His food was locusts and wild honey. ⁵People went out to him from Jerusalem and all Judea and the whole region of the Jordan. ⁶Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River.

⁷But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to where he was baptizing, he said to them: “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? ⁸Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. ⁹And do not think you can say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. ¹⁰The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.

¹¹“I baptize you with^c 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^c the Holy Spirit and fire. ¹²His 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.”

The Baptism of Jesus

¹³Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. ¹⁴But John tried to deter him, saying, “I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?”

¹⁵Jesus replied, “Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness.” Then John consented.

¹⁶As 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. ¹⁷And a voice from heaven said, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.”

MIGRATION

MATTHEW 2:13-15

In this passage, the Lord commands the sudden migration of Joseph, Mary and Jesus. The child’s safety is at stake, and the whole family must flee. Herod regarded Jesus, a newborn *king* (Mt 2:2), as a threat to national security, so Herod sought to destroy him. Thankfully, Joseph obeyed the divine order and fled to Egypt during the night.

This narrative recalls the diasporic experience of the children of Israel. During the days of Joseph, the Hebrew people had to flee to Egypt. They fled from their God-given land because of an environmental and food-security crisis (Ge 41:57; 43:1; 47:3-4). Like Mary and Joseph, these migrants also feared for their lives. After the crisis passed, they too returned to the land of their ancestors. The evangelist Matthew is reminding us how the Messiah identifies himself with the experience of forced displacement. Jesus and his family were impacted by the same struggles that often accompany displacement: detachment, vulnerability, discrimination and nostalgia. At the same time, despite the violence that migrant people often encounter, their journeys can also be places of faith, resistance, resilience, divine protection and miraculous flourishing.

Nowadays, both the sacred family and the people of Israel would likely be identified as asylum seekers and refugees. The Son of God and the people of God feared for their lives and fled. For the people of Israel, this experience is so central to their calling as God’s people that, according to Matthew’s account, it was something to be fulfilled in the life of the Messiah.

^a 18 Jer. 31:15 ^b 3 Isaiah 40:3 ^c 11 Or in

POLITICS

MATTHEW 4:1-11

Matthew describes how Jesus went out into the wilderness for 40 days and 40 nights after his baptism and was tempted by Satan (Mt 4:1–11). The story proves that Jesus is the true Son of God because—unlike Adam in the garden and Israel in the wilderness—Jesus is faithful when tempted.

Satan tempts Jesus in three different ways. First, Satan urges Jesus to use his supernatural power for instant gratification rather than relying on God’s provision for his daily needs (vv. 3–4). He then dares Jesus to manipulate God into manufacturing a miracle to prove his identity to the crowds (vv. 5–7). Finally, Satan tempts Jesus with an offer of all the kingdoms of the world in exchange for the worship that is rightfully God’s (vv. 8–10). In each case, Jesus is tempted to wield his messianic power in worldly ways. Jesus resists each temptation, choosing, rather, to embody the otherworldly power of the upside-down kingdom he came to inaugurate.

Christians can experience the same temptation as Jesus when they are faced with the opportunity to find a shortcut to political power by endorsing violence and corruption, employing coercion, ignoring injustice, trading in lies or weaponizing prejudice. For Christians, political office and public service are a means to a common good, not a platform for establishing the cultural hegemony of one demographic under a religious banner. Our primary calling is to faithfulness through service, not establishing a civil religion through political power. God is already the king of the nations, and he does not need our political machinations to enhance his sovereignty.

Jesus Is Tested in the Wilderness

4 Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted^a by the devil. ²After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. ³The tempter came to him and said, “If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.”

⁴Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.’^b”

⁵Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. ⁶“If you are the Son of God,” he said, “throw yourself down. For it is written:

“‘He will command his angels concerning you,
and they will lift you up in their hands,
so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.’^c”

⁷Jesus answered him, “It is also written: ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’^d”

⁸Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. ⁹“All this I will give you,” he said, “if you will bow down and worship me.”

¹⁰Jesus said to him, “Away from me, Satan! For it is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.’^e”

¹¹Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him.

Jesus Begins to Preach

¹²When Jesus heard that John had been put in prison, he withdrew to Galilee. ¹³Leaving Nazareth, he went and lived in Capernaum, which was by the lake in the area of Zebulun and Naphtali — ¹⁴to fulfill what was said through the prophet Isaiah:

¹⁵“Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali,
the Way of the Sea, beyond the Jordan,
Galilee of the Gentiles —

¹⁶the people living in darkness
have seen a great light;
on those living in the land of the shadow of
death
a light has dawned.”^f

¹⁷From that time on Jesus began to preach, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.”

Jesus Calls His First Disciples

¹⁸As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. ¹⁹“Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will send you out to fish for people.” ²⁰At once they left their nets and followed him.

²¹Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee, preparing their nets. Jesus called them, ²²and immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.

Jesus Heals the Sick

²³Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people. ²⁴News about him spread all over Syria, and people brought to him all who were ill with various diseases, those suffering severe pain, the

^a1 The Greek for *tempted* can also mean *tested*. ^b4 Deut. 8:3 ^c6 Psalm 91:11,12

^d7 Deut. 6:16 ^e10 Deut. 6:13 ^f16 Isaiah 9:1,2

SATAN, DEMONS, ANGELS AND GIANTS

Jesus fasted for 40 days in the desert west of the Dead Sea where wild animals roamed (Mk 1:13). First-century pagans as well as Jewish people believed that demons inhabited dry, desolate places. Satan approached Jesus toward the end of his 40-day fast. He recognized Jesus as the Son of God and hoped to derail Jesus' mission. Satan proposed that Jesus could betray God and take an easier path, one where Satan reigned and Jesus served him—a terrifying thought.

The words *Satan* and the *devil* (*diabolos*) refer to the same being. The word *devil*, used in this passage, means “slanderer” and “accuser,” coming from the root word, meaning “to divide.” Other names for the devil include great dragon, ancient serpent, accuser (Rev 12:9,10), enemy (Mt 13:39), Beelzebul (Mk 3:22) and evil one (1Jn 5:19). Jesus came to destroy the devil's work (1Jn 3:8). Jesus refuted and resisted the devil's temptations by quoting Scripture and aligning his will with the will of God.

The devil approached Jesus at the end of his time of fasting. The devil tempted Jesus to use his divine power to turn stones into bread and satisfy his hunger. The miracle was not inherently evil. Jesus would later miraculously feed a multitude with bread (Mt 14:15–21). But disobeying God is sin, and sinless Jesus resisted testing God's faithfulness, quoting Deuteronomy 8:3. Jesus feasted on God and his word.

Then the devil took Jesus to a high point in Jerusalem and told him to jump to see if God would catch him. Satan misquoted Psalm 91, which properly assured believers that angels protected God's people in their daily lives—not when they deliberately jump off buildings. Jesus would not test and anger God. He quoted Deuteronomy 6:16, which references the Israelites' sin at Massah.

Finally, the devil took Jesus to a high mountain and offered him the kingdoms of the world if Jesus worshiped him. He tempted Jesus to rule the world without suffering on the cross. But Jesus worshiped and served God only. Jesus issued his first command, “Away from me, Satan!” (Mt 4:10). During the temptations, Jesus quoted from the book of Deuteronomy (Dt 8:3; 6:16; 6:13) to strengthen and attest to his resolve to align his will with God's. Jesus fought the devil by steadfastly sustaining his relationship with God by using the words given in Scripture, and that is how we too can stand against the devil.

RACE AND ETHNICITY

MATTHEW 4:12-17

The Old Testament prophet Isaiah speaks of the great messianic hope, in which the Jewish Messiah brings hope for the Jews and also for the Gentiles who walked in darkness: “There will be no more gloom for those who were in distress. In the past he humbled the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the future he will honor Galilee of the nations, by the Way of the Sea, beyond the Jordan—The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned” (Isa 9:1–2).

This passage in Matthew 4 has tremendous implications for racial tensions across the globe today. Jesus withdrew to Galilee, an area that had more ethnic diversity than other parts of Israel. Jesus lived in rural Nazareth and would have grown up near many people from various ethnicities. Also, the pervasive Greek culture, called Hellenism, and the Roman economic and governmental administration would have had an influence on Jesus’ life in Galilee, making the region a community where Jews and Gentiles interacted. As a boy and young man working with his father in construction or carpentry, Jesus may have traveled to cities such as Sepphoris or even Caesarea Philippi and Tiberias to work on buildings projects. Jesus certainly would have had contact with various Gentile ethnicities. Considering God’s covenant with Abraham, the ethnically diverse nature of Galilee provided Jesus with a glimpse of what God’s multiethnic family would look like—a picture that would become a significant part of his mission to build a kingdom of every tribe and language and people and nation (Rev. 5:9–10). The ethnically diverse community of Galilee was a perfect starting point for this beautiful task.

demon-possessed, those having seizures, and the paralyzed; and he healed them. ²⁵Large crowds from Galilee, the Decapolis,^a Jerusalem, Judea and the region across the Jordan followed him.

Introduction to the Sermon on the Mount

5 Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, ²and he began to teach them.

The Beatitudes

He said:

³“Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

⁴Blessed are those who mourn,
for they will be comforted.

⁵Blessed are the meek,
for they will inherit the earth.

⁶Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
for they will be filled.

⁷Blessed are the merciful,
for they will be shown mercy.

⁸Blessed are the pure in heart,
for they will see God.

⁹Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they will be called children of God.

¹⁰Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

¹¹“Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. ¹²Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Salt and Light

¹³“You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot.

¹⁴“You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. ¹⁶In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

The Fulfillment of the Law

¹⁷“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. ¹⁸For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. ¹⁹Therefore anyone who sets aside one of the least of these commands and teaches others accordingly will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. ²⁰For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.

Murder

²¹“You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘You shall not murder,^b and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.’ ²²But I tell

POLITICS

The first of Jesus' five big sermons in the Gospel of Matthew is known as the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5–7). The sermon contains Jesus' beatitudes (5:3–12), his exhortations to be salt and light (vv. 13–16), an affirmation of the Torah (vv. 17–20), several ethical antitheses (vv. 21–48) and a call for almsgiving, prayer and fasting (6:1–18). Jesus declares that discipleship requires resisting the seduction of wealth, not worrying about material things and seeking “first his kingdom and his righteousness” (6:33). He speaks about the perils of hypocrisy, the necessity of holiness and the love of his heavenly Father. Jesus also pronounces the Golden Rule about treating others the way one wants to be treated (7:12). The sermon rounds off with a series of contrasts between wide and narrow gates, wolves and sheep, fruitless and fruitful trees, mere profession versus actual devotion and foolish versus wise builders (7:13–27).

Just as politicians often launch a campaign with a manifesto of promises and positions, Jesus inaugurates his kingdom with his own manifesto. Jesus promises a reordering of power and blessings for mourners. Jesus gives his position on the Torah, temple offerings, murder, adultery and more. This manifesto is for citizens of heaven, disciples of the kingdom—that is, anyone who would follow him. Jesus is saying that if we want to belong to the kingdom of heaven, then this is how we are supposed to live. This is how to be righteous, how to be the salt of the earth, how to be a city on a hill, how to be a renewed Israel. His words are not guidelines, nor quaint sayings for a cultural Christianity. Jesus issues rigorous commands that normalize what is abnormal: loving our enemies, rejoicing in persecution, disavowing love of money, turning the other cheek, choosing to walk the extra mile. What is more, Jesus boldly declares that the difference between the followers and the fans—between the sheep and the goats—is that his followers obey and the others turn away.

MIGRATION

MATTHEW 5:10-12

As part of the Beatitudes, Jesus affirms that God's blessing rests upon the persecuted. They are blessed in such a way that the kingdom of God belongs to them. Those who suffer persecution for the sake of *dikaiousune* ("righteousness") are blessed. But Jesus takes this claim deeper as he turns to his intimate group of disciples and directly tells them that they are blessed when they take on his cause and receive insults and persecution because of it. By adding this statement, Jesus declares that suffering for righteousness is not just any cause; it is intrinsically connected to the way of Christ.

It is right for families to have food and security. It is right for children to have enough resources to flourish. It is right for parents to have the opportunity to nurture and take care of their children in safe environments. It is right for humans to migrate, looking for better conditions that are unavailable to them in their homelands. If we believe that, then supporting and advocating for the migrant community is also the right thing to do. Jesus invites his disciples to consider the way of justice and righteousness as an essential part of their commitment to follow him. This path is not without risks, but to all who are reviled and persecuted for righteousness' sake, Jesus promises the blessing of God's kingdom.

SEXUALITY AND GENDER

MATTHEW 5:27-28

Jesus intensifies the Old Testament's prohibition against adultery (Ex 20:14) and says that a man who "looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Mt 5:28). In other words, it's not simply the act of adultery that is wrong, but

(continued on page 1238)

you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister^{a,b} will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to a brother or sister, 'Raca,'^c is answerable to the court. And anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell.

²³Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, ²⁴leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift.

²⁵Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still together on the way, or your adversary may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison. ²⁶Truly I tell you, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny.

Adultery

²⁷"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.'^d ²⁸But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. ²⁹If your right eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. ³⁰And if your right hand causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.

Divorce

³¹"It has been said, 'Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce.'^e ³²But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, makes her the victim of adultery, and anyone who marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

Oaths

³³"Again, you have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not break your oath, but fulfill to the Lord the vows you have made.'^f ³⁴But I tell you, do not swear an oath at all: either by heaven, for it is God's throne; ³⁵or by the earth, for it is his footstool; or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King. ³⁶And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make even one hair white or black. ³⁷All you need to say is simply 'Yes' or 'No'; anything beyond this comes from the evil one.^g

Eye for Eye

³⁸"You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.'^h ³⁹But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also. ⁴⁰And if anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, hand over your coat as well. ⁴¹If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two miles. ⁴²Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.

Love for Enemies

⁴³"You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor'^h and hate your enemy.'ⁱ ⁴⁴But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. ⁴⁶If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? ⁴⁷And if you greet only your own people,

^a 22 The Greek word for *brother or sister* (*adelphos*) refers here to a fellow disciple, whether man or woman; also in verse 23. ^b 22 Some manuscripts *brother or sister without cause* ^c 22 An Aramaic term of contempt ^d 27 Exodus 20:14

^e 31 Deut. 24:1 ^f 37 Or *from evil* ^g 38 Exodus 21:24; Lev. 24:20; Deut. 19:21

^h 43 Lev. 19:18

DIVORCE

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus addresses six antitheses or opposites regarding the new (and expansive) type of righteousness he expects from his followers (Mt 5:21–48). In this context, Jesus addresses the grounds for divorce (vv. 31–32). Jesus states that divorce causes the wife to commit adultery if she remarries, and divorce causes the one who marries the divorced woman to commit adultery. Jesus states that the only rationale for a permissible divorce is sexual immorality.

In Matthew 5:31, Jesus alludes to Deuteronomy 24:1–6, where guidelines for divorce in the Old Testament were outlined. The Jewish debate over Deuteronomy 24:1 centered on what constituted the grounds for divorce from the man's perspective (women were not allowed to divorce their husbands). The first-century rabbinical school of Shammai conservatively interpreted the Hebrew phrase in Deuteronomy 24:1 *erwat debar* (“something indecent” or “something that brings shame”) to refer to sexual immorality or immodesty. However, immodesty in this context could refer to a woman appearing in public with her hair unfastened. On the other hand, the school of Hillel had broader interpretations of *erwat debar*, where a man could divorce his wife for any reason, even burning his dinner. Jesus reflects a view closer to the Shammai interpretation but restricts the reason for divorce to only sexual immorality and adds that divorce and remarriage with or without a certificate are adultery in God's eyes.

Jesus emphasizes that for both men and women, divorce and remarriage are permitted only in cases of sexual immorality. Sexual immorality (*porneia*) is a broad term that includes any sexual relationship outside of marriage (see Leviticus 18:6–23 for a list of examples).

Jesus' view of divorce and remarriage was among the stricter Jewish views in his day; he stated that a man could divorce his wife only for sexual unfaithfulness, which was not a popular perspective. An upside-down kingdom has an upside-down sexual ethic, where both men and women are called to radical faithfulness to God and to each other.

(Sexuality and Gender continued)

the posture of the heart that got him there. But—what exactly does it mean to look “at a woman lustfully”?

First, Jesus’ words are directed at men but certainly apply to women as well. It wouldn’t make sense for Jesus to condemn heart-adultery among men but not among women. Second, the Greek phrase behind the word “lustfully” can also be translated as “with the purpose to lust.” There’s an intention behind the act, a desire to have sex with the woman. This is more than simply noticing a beautiful woman or man, taking note of their body, their hair, their smile. To feel a spike of excitement over the head-spinning beauty of another person isn’t necessarily lust, but it could lead to lust. However, if you’re not overcome with the desire to have sex with this person—and possibly taking steps to make those thoughts a reality—then you’re probably not committing the destructive sin Jesus is confronting.

We all should be vigilant to live holy lives and guard ourselves from sexual temptation. We should also resist the impulse to heap shame upon ourselves for recognizing beauty.

what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? ⁴⁸Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Giving to the Needy

6 “Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven.

²“So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. ³But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

Prayer

⁵“And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. ⁶But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. ⁷And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. ⁸Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

⁹“This, then, is how you should pray:

“Our Father in heaven,
 hallowed be your name,
¹⁰your kingdom come,
 your will be done,
 on earth as it is in heaven.
¹¹Give us today our daily bread.
¹²And forgive us our debts,
 as we also have forgiven our debtors.
¹³And lead us not into temptation,^a
 but deliver us from the evil one.^b

¹⁴For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. ¹⁵But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

Fasting

¹⁶“When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. ¹⁷But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, ¹⁸so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

Treasures in Heaven

¹⁹“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

²²“The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are healthy,^c your whole body will be full of light. ²³But if your eyes are unhealthy,^d your whole body

^a ¹³ The Greek for *temptation* can also mean *testing*. ^b ¹³ Or *from evil*; some late manuscripts *one, / for yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.*

^c ²² The Greek for *healthy* here implies *generous*. ^d ²³ The Greek for *unhealthy* here implies *stingy*.

WEALTH AND POVERTY

The Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5–7) and its counterpart in Luke (Lk 6:17–49) function as the essence of Jesus’ teaching on faith—a teaching that many disciples find difficult to live out. While the Law might already seem too difficult to follow, Jesus’ understanding of righteousness as spelled out in the Sermon is even more demanding: “unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven” (Mt 5:20).

In Matthew 6, Jesus confronts the hypocrisy that can exist behind pious deeds like giving to the poor (6:1–4), praying (vv. 5–15) and fasting (vv. 16–18). The theme for the section is stated at the outset: avoid actions that invite people’s good opinion rather than God’s pleasure (v. 1). There is a direct exchange between the two: as the pursuit of people’s good opinion increases, God’s pleasure decreases. Giving to the poor is part and parcel of righteousness; piety that excels in prayer and fasting but doesn’t give to the poor is not true righteousness. Yet Jesus presses even further. Giving to the poor must be in secret, so that the reward we seek might be only from God and not people.

As we discern the motivations behind our piety, we must also choose between material and spiritual treasures. Again, we cannot live with divided allegiance, but must choose one or the other (v. 24). We are called to honor God first in our giving, praying and fasting, and we are also called to choose God as our treasure rather than wealth and material possessions. Indeed, Jesus is explicit about the dangers of materialism and wealth. He says that the desire for wealth will infect the whole person (vv. 22–23), and it is impossible to serve both God and money. To choose God over money necessarily means trusting God to provide for our lives. Our preoccupation with appearances and daily sustenance must be set aside in favor of our primary concern for God’s kingdom (v. 33). Righteousness is not simply about giving to the poor on occasion; it is a complete reorientation of our priorities.

TECHNOLOGY AND MEDIA

MATTHEW 6:22-24

What does Jesus mean when he says that “the eye is the lamp of the body”? Though modern human physiology has taught us that light is not emitted from the eye, in the ancient world one common belief was in fact that the eye emitted light produced by the body. As such, healthy eyes were a metaphor for generosity and sincerity. Conversely, unhealthy eyes were a metaphor for selfishness and stinginess. The peculiarity (at least to the modern reader) of Matthew 6:22-23 makes sense when read as a set up for v. 24—that we “cannot serve both God and money.”

Not much has changed in the two millennia since these words were first spoken. In the digital age, social media litters our visual landscape with carefully filtered images of the lives we want but don’t actually have. We find ourselves running on the treadmill of comparison, juxtaposing our mundane moments with the edited, often contrived, snapshots of others’ highlights. Rather than exuding generosity and sincerity, we grow dissatisfied and disdainful. Our eyes become channels of darkness rather than light. But just as we “cannot serve both God and money,” we also cannot serve both God and all that we believe money might afford us—namely, the Instagram life we long for and think we need. Christians become people of light by fixing our gaze away from pop culture’s thin portrayals of the good life and onto Christ himself, who is our abundant life (cf. Jn 10:10; Col 3:4; Php 3:8).

will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness!

²⁴“No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.

Do Not Worry

²⁵“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? ²⁶Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? ²⁷Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life^a?

²⁸“And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. ²⁹Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. ³⁰If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? ³¹So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ ³²For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. ³³But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. ³⁴Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

Judging Others

7 “Do not judge, or you too will be judged. ²For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.

³“Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? ⁴How can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? ⁵You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.

⁶“Do not give dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs. If you do, they may trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces.

Ask, Seek, Knock

⁷“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. ⁸For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.

⁹“Which of you, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone? ¹⁰Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? ¹¹If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him! ¹²So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.

The Narrow and Wide Gates

¹³“Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. ¹⁴But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.

True and False Prophets

¹⁵“Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. ¹⁶By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? ¹⁷Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸A good tree

cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. ¹⁹Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.

True and False Disciples

²¹“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. ²²Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?’ ²³Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’

The Wise and Foolish Builders

²⁴“Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. ²⁵The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. ²⁶But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. ²⁷The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.”

²⁸When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, ²⁹because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law.

Jesus Heals a Man With Leprosy

8 When Jesus came down from the mountainside, large crowds followed him. ²A man with leprosy^a came and knelt before him and said, “Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean.”

³Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. “I am willing,” he said. “Be clean!” Immediately he was cleansed of his leprosy. ⁴Then Jesus said to him, “See that you don’t tell anyone. But go, show yourself to the priest and offer the gift Moses commanded, as a testimony to them.”

The Faith of the Centurion

⁵When Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to him, asking for help. ⁶“Lord,” he said, “my servant lies at home paralyzed, suffering terribly.” ⁷Jesus said to him, “Shall I come and heal him?”

⁸The centurion replied, “Lord, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. But just say the word, and my servant will be healed. ⁹For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, ‘Go,’ and he goes; and that one, ‘Come,’ and he comes. I say to my servant, ‘Do this,’ and he does it.”

¹⁰When Jesus heard this, he was amazed and said to those following him, “Truly I tell you, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith. ¹¹I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. ¹²But the subjects of the kingdom will be thrown outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

¹³Then Jesus said to the centurion, “Go! Let it be done just as you believed it would.” And his servant was healed at that moment.

Jesus Heals Many

¹⁴When Jesus came into Peter’s house, he saw Peter’s mother-in-law lying in bed with a fever. ¹⁵He touched her hand and the fever left her, and she got up and began to wait on him.

RACE AND ETHNICITY

MATTHEW 8:5-13

The city of Capernaum became Jesus’ ministry headquarters after the people of Nazareth, Jesus’ hometown, wanted to throw him off a cliff for preaching that the Jewish Messiah came to save Jews and Gentiles (Lk 4:16–30). While in his new ministry headquarters, a Roman centurion—a Gentile man with great authority, who was part of Rome’s occupation and oppression of Israel—asked Jesus to heal his servant. The Jewish people despised Roman centurions, lepers and Jewish tax collectors. They were considered unclean. And many Jews considered Gentiles ethnically beneath Jews. Racism and prejudice are not new sins. Jesus died not just to forgive our sins, but to give us brothers and sisters with different colored skins. The blood of Christ unites and reconciles (Eph 2:14–16).

It would have been scandalous for a rabbi to enter the home of a Gentile military leader. Jews were accustomed to the injustice of Romans crucifying Jewish men; the crosses lined the streets of ancient Israel. Yet, Jesus came to reconcile all people who trust him. Jesus marvels at this Gentile’s faith (Mt 8:10). It is ironic that in his hometown synagogue he was rejected because he advocated Gentile inclusion into the family of God, which is exactly what God promised Abraham he would do, yet he is accepted and respected by a Gentile. In this text, we see that God’s banquet is a table of grace spread for all people, regardless of ethnic or social status.

^a 2 The Greek word traditionally translated *leprosy* was used for various diseases affecting the skin.

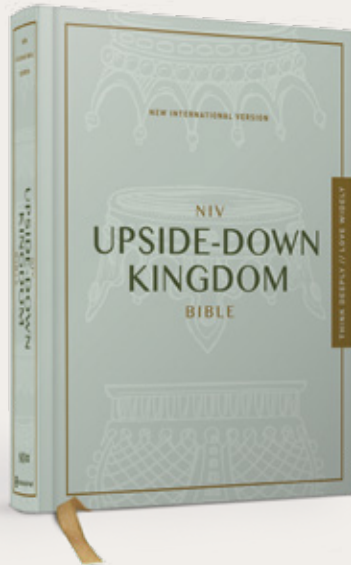
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- Art and Worship
- Baptism
- Creation Care
- Death and Afterlife
- Divorce
- Family and Kinship
- Festivals, Food, and Drink
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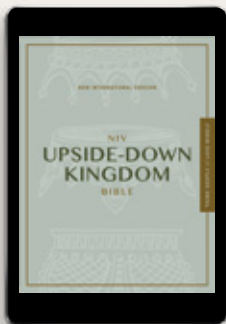
Alphabetical List of Contributors

- Rev. Sharon Beekmann
- John Bevere
- Lisa Bevere
- Dr. Michael F. Bird
- Francis Chan
- Rev. Eugene Cho
- Dr. Lynn H. Cohick
- Dr. Gregory Coles
- Christopher M. Date
- Dr. Joseph R. Dodson
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
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
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