

HEART-TO-HEART

We are reminded that Christ is in our hearts and we are in His and that love connects us all in unity.



In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

Matthew 5:16

It Only Takes a Spark

The start of a new year brings optimism, resolutions, and new beginnings. What if all Christians made a resolution to “plant seeds” and “be a spark” for Jesus this year? Can you imagine what the world would look like if that happened?

We tend to shy away from spreading the Good News about Christ because it sounds daunting, but it doesn’t have to be. As God is all about relationships, He wants us to be relational too.

For those people we already have established relationships with, a seed may be planted when you

meet them for a meal and ask if you can pray with them before eating. Or it could be giving them a Christian-based bookmark if they like to read. Something small and doesn’t feel intrusive.

When we meet strangers, it may be just telling them “good morning” or “hello” on your daily walk or at the grocery store. Sometimes we just need to let our joy shine through so that others catch the spark. They may comment on the fact that your joy is contagious which then lets you share where your joy comes from.

We don’t need to “get it right”, we just need to “spark” a conversation.

IN THIS ISSUE

One Verse, Six Observations

Opportunities

Accepting Gifts

One Verse, Six Observations

by Pastor Gary Lau / gary@LearntheBibleFast.com

The new year is a great time to read the Bible with fresh eyes. If you've never read through the whole Bible, I have a two-year Bible reading plan...just email me to request it (gary@LearntheBibleFast.com).

But for some, you may just want to start the New Year with the New Testament...it's a little easier to read and not as confusing as the Old Testament.

If you start with the New Testament, this will be the first verse:

“This is the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah the son of David, the son of Abraham” (Matthew 1:1).

This one verse has so much information that it gets me excited to dive into the Bible. Here are six observations from this one verse.

1. Look at the word “genealogy.” To understand this word, we need to look at the Greek translation because most of the New Testament was written in Greek (with some Hebrew scattered throughout). The Greek translation of “genealogy” is pronounced “genesis,” meaning “source or origin.” The word “genesis” would remind us of the book of Genesis, the first book of the Bible. Matthew was not only communicating the lineage of Jesus but that Jesus was the source or origin of all things.

2. Look at the name “Jesus.” In the Greek, it means “Jehovah is salvation.” Some of the names we’re familiar with in the New Testament also have a Hebrew equivalence such as Mary (her name in Hebrew is Miriam) or John (his name in Hebrew is Yohanan). In Hebrew Jesus’ name is Yeshua, similar to the name Joshua which also means “Jehovah is salvation.”

3. Look at the term “Messiah.” This is a Hebrew word meaning “the anointed” or “the anointed one.” In Greek, it’s translated “Christ.” So when you see or hear “Jesus Christ,” Christ is not his last name, it’s His title. It means Jesus the Anointed One. It points to the expected Messiah chosen and anointed by God as predicted in the Old Testament.

4. Look at the term “the son of David.” This is referring to the Davidic Covenant. A covenant is an agreement. The Davidic Covenant (or Agreement) refers to the promise God made to David in 2Samuel 7:16 when God told David, “Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever.” This promise to David was fulfilled in Jesus.

5. Look at the term “the son of Abraham.” This is referring to the Abrahamic Covenant found in Genesis 12:3, “All peoples on earth will be blessed through you.” This promise to Abraham was fulfilled in Jesus.

Thus, Matthew 1:1 could be studied as, “This is the genesis of ‘Jehovah is salvation’ ‘the Anointed One,’ the son of David who fulfilled the Davidic Covenant, the son of Abraham who fulfilled the Abrahamic Covenant.”

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“Nobody ever outgrows Scripture; the book widens and deepens with our years.”

— Charles Spurgeon

One Verse, Six Observations cont.

6. Here's the last observation. Most scholars believe the gospel of Mark was the first gospel to be written around 60 A.D., followed by Matthew and Luke written around 65 A.D. If the gospel of Mark was written before Matthew, why is Matthew's gospel placed before Mark in our Bibles? Many believe Matthew was placed first because of its strong connection to the Old Testament.

Matthew's gospel contains many prophecies from and references to the Old Testament. Hence, the gospel of Matthew becomes a connecting book between the ending of the Old Testament and the beginning of the New Testament.

It's fascinating what you can learn from one verse and Matthew 1:1 says a lot.



Opportunities

by Jeanne Nagatani

The following devotional by Billy Graham caught my attention, and I thought that I'd share it with you:

Joshua 22:5 “Be very careful to ...serve him with all your heart and all your soul.”

God wants to use you right where you are. Every day you probably come in contact with people who will never enter a church, or talk with a pastor, or open a Bible—and God wants to use you to point them to Christ. You may be the bridge” God would use to bring them to Himself.

Be alert for opportunities to share the Good News of Christ’s love with others—even today. Never underestimate what God can do through even your smallest effort to reach out to others in the name of Jesus.

Have you ever had someone's name pop into your head? It happens to me a lot. When that happens, I usually sent a friendship card to let the person know that I thought of them. I have found that the person to whom the card was sent may have been sad or felt alone as some of them will reach out to let me know that they appreciated the card and how it made them feel when they received it. So maybe Jesus was directing me to send that person a note?

It doesn't matter whether they reach out to me or not. Whenever the thought pops into my head I believe that it's Jesus directing me to reach out to that person. He reminds me that everyone needs to know that someone cares and that Jesus loves them.



“Too often we underestimate the power of a touch, a smile, a kind word, a listening ear, an honest compliment, or the smallest act of caring, all of which have the potential to turn a life around.”

— Leo F. Buscaglia

Aunty's Salad Dressing

In keeping with the theme of “planting seeds,” how about sending the recipe below to your friends and family with a note that says, “I’m sharing this recipe as it’s pretty good, but I’d rather share with you the best recipe for your life that comes from knowing Jesus.” Might be too “corn-y,” but you get the gist. There’s opportunities for us to strengthen relationships with others while sharing our faith at the same time.



"Eating a salad is not about the lettuce. It's about the dressing, the toppings, and the company you keep."

- Unknown



Aunty's Salad Dressing

Ingredients

- Dressing:
- 1 cup Canola oil
- 1/2 cup rice vinegar
- 2/3 cup white sugar
- 1/4 round onion - chopped
- 2 garlic cloves - chopped
- 1 tsp Italian seasoning or oregano
- 2-1/2 tsp. salt
- 1/2 tsp. pepper
- 1 tsp. Dijon mustard

Directions

1. Blend well in blender.

Salad Idea

Toss dressing with salad greens, cooked pasta of your choice and shredded chicken (Costco's rotisserie chicken is easiest.) You can also add in cranberries, pumpkin seeds, almonds, and croutons.



“...for the joy of the Lord is your strength.”
Nehemiah 8:10



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