

A woman in a white robe is kneeling on a dirt floor, pouring water from a large, decorated clay jug into a shallow brown basin. A man in a blue shirt and jeans is sitting on the floor, leaning forward with his head bowed and hand to his face, as if in prayer or contemplation. The scene is lit with warm, dramatic lighting, highlighting the textures of the robes and the floor.

A SERVING LEADER'S DEVOTIONAL

LEAD, LOVE, AND SERVE LIKE JESUS

VOLUME I: GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

BY LUKE KUEPFER

A Serving Leader's Devotional

Lead, Love, and Serve like Jesus

Volume 1: Gospel of Matthew

by Luke Kuepfer

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A NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR

A Serving Leader's Devotional presents a new perspective on the Gospel of Matthew by looking at it through the lens of serving leadership. Each entry typically focuses on a short passage of text and draws out some practical applications relevant to the challenges facing contemporary leaders. Designed with the busy leader in mind, each devotional can be read, listened to, or watched in approximately one minute.

Jesus ultimately sought to fulfill the objectives of his Father—his *Audience of One*. A Serving Leader's Devotional will help you clarify your leadership objectives and align with Jesus' model. All good leaders are first followers. Before effectively leading, loving, and serving others, great leaders choose to follow Jesus—their *Audience of One*.

Who is it for?

This devotional is for anyone who seeks to lead, love, and serve others after the model of Jesus Christ. Because leadership is influence, everyone is a leader in the broadest sense of the term. Leaders at all stages and of all stripes and styles will be challenged to change when confronted by the story of Jesus through the framework of serving leadership.

How do I use it?

The purpose of this devotional is three-fold. First, I desire to challenge your thinking and impact your worldview at a heart level. Hence, a focus on the transformative text of the Gospel. Second, I pray that you will be prompted to change and align your leadership with that of Jesus Christ. The questions in each devotional are designed to help you evaluate your leadership and make adjustments. Journal your responses for greater impact and accountability. Third, I hope you will pass on what you've learned. The simplicity of each entry and the optional links to both the audio and video versions hopefully will facilitate this third purpose with ease.

What is the purpose of the QR codes?

The QR codes in the top two corners are links to both the audio and video version of each entry. Scan the code with a device like your smartphone (QR Code apps are numerous and free) and either listen to or watch each episode with friends, family members, or your team.

How long will it take me to get through it?

Featuring 175 expositions from the Gospel of Matthew, this devotional can be worked through in half a year. However, for greater benefit, I recommend using it over the span of a whole year by taking two days for each entry. Spend the first day reading the scripture, commentary, and questions. On the second day, journal your answers to the questions to help you both process and readjust your leadership.

I'm excited that you've obtained this devotional. Working through Matthew's text has been for me a journey of digging, reflecting, and creating. I've had to seriously contemplate the implications of Jesus' model on my influence with family, friends, colleagues, and everyone I meet. I am grateful for your interest, and desire that you join me in becoming a better serving leader. Your feedback and reflections would be most welcome.



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My deepest gratitude to Jesus Christ for enabling me to study, process, and write. His grace has made this book possible.

Very special thanks to my wife, Amy, for believing in me and giving me valuable feedback throughout the writing process.

A big thank you to Jennie Lovell for editing the manuscript and helping me comprehend the way English works.

A huge shoutout to John Stahl-Wert, co-author of *The Serving Leader*, for helping me complete this project and actually get it printed.



MATTHEW 1:21



“She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.”

In Matthew 1:21, an angel instructed Joseph to name Mary’s son, 'Jesus', “because he will save his people from their sins.” One must ask several questions: Did the Jews know that their greatest need was salvation from their self-centered interests? Did they realize what had gotten them into their present mess or why they were enslaved under the cruel rule of Rome? They were certainly looking for a Messiah, a deliverer, but not from their own sin. No, they were looking for a political savior who would restore them to their former glory under King David, one who would wipe out the Romans and give them back their land, their freedom, and their greatness. They wanted a Messiah on their terms. But Jesus would go to the root of their problems via a cross. As a serving leader, he would serve their best interests whether they knew it or not, because that’s what serving leaders do. They don’t lead to what people want but rather serve to bring about what they desperately need.

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MATTHEW 1:23



“The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel (which means ‘God with us’).”

In Matthew 1:23, we read that in fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy, Jesus would be called Immanuel, meaning, “God with us”. Matthew’s final words in his gospel remind us that he will be “with us” always to the very end of the age. Isn’t it fascinating that “with us” appears not only at the beginning of Matthew’s gospel but also at the very end? Perhaps Matthew wanted his audience to reflect throughout his gospel on this powerful leadership concept. Serving leaders are with their people. In fact, leadership is more about what we do *with* people than what we do *to* them. Serving leaders are incarnational; they are present, up close, relating on the level of those they serve. How else can you understand someone’s struggles and failures? Or how else can you truly meet people’s needs and develop them into who they were created to be? Serving leaders are not lords over their followers, calling the shots from high above them in some corporate office. Instead, they are “with” their people.

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KEY QUESTIONS: *When I am with people, am I fully present and engaged, or do I let social media or other distractions prevent me from truly listening? How can I better relate on the level of those I serve?*

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MATTHEW 2:6



“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.”

In Matthew 2:6, we see a metaphor for Jesus’ leadership from the Old Testament prophet Micah. Jesus would be a ruler who shepherds his people. In John 10, Jesus said more about “shepherd” serving leaders. They call each sheep by name. Shepherd leaders know each of their followers personally and thus are able to provide customized care for their unique needs. They provide pasture, not only supplying needs but also nurturing growth. Shepherd leaders do not keep their sheep within the safe confines of the fold but lead them outside for their own good. They want their sheep to experience fullness of life. Shepherds also go ahead of their sheep, not asking them to do anything they haven’t first experienced. Shepherds prepare the way. They lay down their lives for the sheep, taking responsibility regardless of the danger or cost. Jesus modeled “shepherd” serving leadership for us.

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MATTHEW 3:15



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

In Matthew 3:15, Jesus’ humility was evident when his cousin John baptized him. John the Baptist clearly recognized Jesus as much greater than him and thus attempted to deter Jesus from getting baptized. He had told the crowds earlier that when Jesus appeared he wouldn’t even be worthy to carry his sandals. But Jesus convinced John to baptize him. He humbled himself even though he certainly didn’t need John’s baptism of repentance. Note several things. First, Jesus didn’t deny what we might term his “superiority” or higher status in the relationship; that seems to be completely beside the point. Rather, Jesus wanted to relate with the people he had come to serve. He was willing to participate in what they would experience. Second, Jesus saw himself as a partner with John in the kingdom of God. Serving leaders do not posture above their followers; they serve them while joining them.

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MATTHEW 4:1



“Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.”

In Matthew 4:1, Jesus “was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.” Famous American president, Abraham Lincoln, discerned that to test a man’s character all you need to do is give him power. In this series of temptations, Jesus chose not to exercise his power as suggested by the evil one. Rather, he followed the leading of the Spirit who led him into this time of temptation and also guided him through it, considering his victory over the tempter. Many leaders today are led by the spirits of fear, pride, and greed and unfortunately succumb to temptation. Not so with Jesus. He chose wisely who he would follow even if that included a wilderness, danger, and severe temptation. Remember that it’s often through temptation that a leader’s character is formed. Jesus submitted himself to the power of the Spirit and withstood every temptation thrown at him. Serving leaders are always followers first. They choose wisely whom to follow, knowing that this always leads to the right results.

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KEY QUESTIONS: *Who am I following? Do I lead out of fear (by seeking to please others) or lead out of pride (“I have all the answers and I am in control”)? How will I follow the Spirit through danger and temptation?*

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MATTHEW 4:3 & 6a



“The tempter came to him and said, “If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread...If you are the Son of God,” he said, “throw yourself down.”

In Matthew 4:3 and the first part of verse 6, we are given insight into one of the devil’s most destructive attacks afflicted on leaders. Twice he challenged Jesus on his identity with the words, “If you are the Son of God.” Perhaps the greatest questions a leader can answer are those regarding his identity: Who are you? Whose are you? What really makes you tick? Are you capable? Who is behind you? What credentials or credibility do you have? These are identity questions. We all face them and we all need to answer them. Jesus didn’t allow any of these challenges to his identity to unnerve him. He knew *who* he was and *whose* he was. Jesus knew who was backing him. His cre-

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ditionals were not dependent on human affirmation; he knew he was infinitely loved by his Father and that he was the Son of God. When you know who you are and whose you are—that no failure will diminish the Father’s love for you—then you are ready to lead, love, and serve like Jesus!



MATTHEW 4:4, 7b, & 10b



“Jesus answered, ‘It is written: Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God...Do not put the Lord your God to the test...Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.’”

In Matthew 4:1–11, Jesus was confronted with three big temptations that every leader will face. First he was tempted to turn stones into bread. But Jesus would not instantly gratify his desires, using his leadership to get for himself whatever he wanted in the moment. Next he was tempted to throw himself off the temple. Imagine Jesus gliding down as a superman in front of everyone. But he wouldn’t use his leadership to make a name for himself; rather, Jesus used his God-given abilities to make his Father famous. And finally, Jesus was tempted to bow down before the devil in exchange for the kingdoms of this world. Although he had come to restore the Kingdom to his Father, he would not use his leadership to take a shortcut to success. Instead, he took the long hard road of the cross rather than sell his soul to the devil. Serving leaders reject instant gratification, leading for popularity’s sake, and shortcuts to success.

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"A transformational leadership guide, straight from the life of Jesus." -John Stahl-Wert, Co-Author, *The Serving Leader*

Jesus influenced thousands of people during his three-year stint of ministry. But more importantly, he focused on developing a handful of disciples who turned his vision into a global movement. How did Jesus do it without position or title? Why was his leadership point of view largely informed by serving and self-denial? How did Jesus infuse his passion and purpose into the hearts of his followers? In *A Serving Leader's Devotional*, Luke Kuepfer helps you discover some answers by closely examining both the teachings and example of Jesus Christ.

As founder and former field director of a non-profit organization, Luke learned leadership through experience and the pursuit of his greatest leadership role model ever—Jesus Christ. Looking at the Gospel of Matthew through the lens of serving leadership, he shares profound and practical insights that will help you discover how Jesus:

- *Ultimately served his Audience of One*
- *Focused on a few to impact the many*
- *Stayed aligned with his mission*
- *Developed and empowered new leaders*
- *Dealt with temptation, opposition, and rejection*



Luke Kuepfer serves as president of the Reverb Network and is a master trainer with Lead Like Jesus. He holds a Masters in Christian Leadership from Asbury Theological Seminary and offers leadership coaching and training in both business and non-profit environments. Luke firmly believes that having our thinking challenged is not enough—we need to change. He lives in the USA with his wife, Amy, and their three children.

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