

## **Dr. Craig Keener, Matthew, Session 14**

### **Matthew 16-19**

### **Resources from NotebookLM**

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Study Guide, 4) Briefing Document, and 5) FAQs

#### **1. Abstract of Keener, Matthew, Session 14, Matthew 16--19, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL**

**Dr. Craig Keener's lecture** covers Matthew 16-19, focusing on the **transfiguration of Jesus**, its allusions to Moses, and the disciples' subsequent struggles with faith and demon-casting. He then **explains Jesus' teachings** on the temple tax, kingdom relationships (including humility, forgiveness, and church discipline), and divorce. The lecture **interprets these passages** within their historical and cultural contexts, drawing on rabbinic sources and other ancient texts. Finally, it **discusses the cost of discipleship**, emphasizing care for the marginalized and the importance of following Jesus' example.

**2. 25 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Keener, Matthews, Session 14 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (New Testament → Gospels – Acts → Matthew).**



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ession 14.mp3**

### 3. Briefing Document

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the main themes and important ideas from the provided lecture excerpts by Dr. Craig Keener on Matthew 16-19:

#### Briefing Document: Dr. Craig Keener on Matthew 16-19

##### Introduction:

This document summarizes key themes and concepts from Dr. Craig Keener's lecture on Matthew chapters 16 through 19. Keener emphasizes the significance of these passages by exploring the historical, cultural, and theological context. He draws connections to Old Testament parallels and examines how these passages relate to the larger narrative of the Gospel of Matthew. The lecture focuses on the themes of Jesus's glory, faith, the nature of spiritual forces, the importance of forgiveness, and the meaning of discipleship.

##### Key Themes and Ideas:

#### 1. The Transfiguration (Matthew 17:1-13):

- **Revelation of Jesus' Glory:** The transfiguration is a pivotal event where Jesus reveals his divine glory to his disciples. This echoes Jesus' earlier promise of coming in glory with angels (Zechariah allusion).
- Quote: *"He's just told his disciples that he's going to come in glory with his holy angels... But Jesus also said he was going to give a foretaste of that to some who were alive at that time."*
- **Allusions to Moses:** The transfiguration is rich with allusions to Moses on Mount Sinai. Jesus is on a mountain, a voice from heaven speaks, and the disciples witness a divine presence.
- Quote: *"There are in this passage a number of allusions to Moses and to the time when Moses was going up to receive the Torah on Mount Sinai."*
- **Jesus as Greater than Moses:** Although Moses and Elijah are present, the emphasis is on hearing Jesus, signifying his superiority as the promised prophet like Moses (Deuteronomy 18:15).
- Quote: *"Moses was transfigured by God's glory. Here, Jesus is transfigured, but Jesus is addressing Moses and Elijah... Jesus is greater than Moses. Jesus is, in fact, the glory that Moses saw."*

- **Fore Taste of Future Glory:** The transfiguration serves as a preview of Christ's future glorious return with his holy angels. It is a divine revelation meant to strengthen the faith of the disciples.
- Quote: *"But Jesus also said he was going to give a foretaste of that to some who were alive at that time."*

#### 1. Faith and Spiritual Warfare (Matthew 17:14-21):

- **Disciples' Lack of Faith:** The disciples' inability to cast out a demon reveals their lack of faith despite previously having this power. Their failure underscores the importance of a vital, active faith.
- Quote: *"Interestingly, the disciples who weren't with Jesus on the mountain had been trying to cast out a demon and had been unsuccessful."*
- **Size of Faith vs. Object of Faith:** Keener emphasizes that the issue is not the *size* of faith but the *object* of faith, i.e., God. A small amount of faith in a powerful God can move mountains.
- Quote: *"The issue then isn't how big our faith is...The issue is how big is the God in whom is our faith."*
- **Demonic Influence:** Demons can cause physical ailments, but spiritual discernment is needed to identify when a malady has a spiritual dimension. It's not every illness that has a demonic cause.
- Quote: *"The spirit can affect the nervous system, and it can have the same kind of effects as something else affecting the nervous system. So, it's not saying that everybody who has problems with their nervous system has a demon."*

#### 1. Temple Tax and God's Provision (Matthew 17:24-27):

- **Jesus' Exemption:** As the Son of God, Jesus is exempt from the temple tax, but he chooses to pay it to avoid scandalizing others.
- **God's Sovereign Provision:** God miraculously provides the tax money through a fish with a coin in its mouth, highlighting God's sovereignty and care.
- Quote: *"God had it planned in advance."*
- **Principle of Honor:** Even when one could be exempt from societal obligations, honoring society is important whenever it doesn't compromise faith or witness.

- Quote: *"We live within society, and we want to honor society as much as possible and work within it where we can."*

#### 1. Relationships and the Kingdom (Matthew 18):

- **Humility and Dependence:** Entering the kingdom requires humility and dependence on God, like a child.
- Quote: *"Chapter 18, verses 1 through 5, deals with the humility needed to enter the kingdom, and the dependence on God needed to enter."*
- **Avoiding Scandalizing Others:** Causing new believers to stumble is a grave offense, and they should be nurtured, not harmed.
- Quote: *"Woe to those who cause them to stumble. We need to nurture them."*
- **Going After the Lost:** Christians should actively seek out those who have strayed, following the example of the shepherd seeking a lost sheep.
- Quote: *"If somebody does stumble, you go after them."*
- **Church Discipline:** When necessary, church discipline should be practiced in a way that seeks restoration and maintains the integrity of the community.
- Quote: *"sometimes church discipline is necessary...you don't want outsiders looking and saying, oh, that's how Christians live."*
- **Forgiveness:** Unconditional forgiveness is paramount, as modeled in the Lord's Prayer.
- Quote: *"he returns to this focus on forgiveness and expands that in great detail, just as you have in the Lord's prayer..."*

#### 1. Church Discipline: A Deeper Dive (Matthew 18:15-20):

- **Process of Reproof:** Jesus outlines a step-by-step process of confronting sin, beginning privately and escalating to community involvement if needed. This mirrors Jewish practices of the time.
- Quote: *"the standard Jewish practice of reproof is followed in verse 15... You go to the person privately first before bringing somebody else into it and before making it public, certainly."*

- **Importance of Witnesses:** The presence of witnesses ensures fairness and accuracy, prevents unchecked accusations, and fulfills biblical requirements (Deuteronomy 17, 19).
- Quote: *"you have to have witnesses, because if you're going to take it to another level, it can't be just your word against theirs."*
- **Authority of the Church:** The church's actions on earth (binding and loosing) reflect God's actions in heaven, emphasizing the authority and responsibility of the believing community.
- Quote: *"Whatever you bind on earth will have been bound in heaven. Whatever you loose on earth will have been loosed in heaven. ...In other words, you're simply acting on the authority of heaven when you follow these procedures."*
- **God's Presence:** When two or three are gathered for prayer and communal discernment, God is present among them (echoing a rabbinic saying about God's Shekinah).
- Quote: *"where there are two or three and they pray, well, I am in their midst."*

#### 1. The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant (Matthew 18:21-35):

- **Infinite Debt to God:** The parable highlights the immense debt humanity owes to God because of sin, a debt we cannot possibly repay on our own.
- Quote: *"the point here is our sins put us in debt to an infinite God. Our sins, therefore, are of infinite value because they're against an infinite God."*
- **God's Mercy and Forgiveness:** The king's forgiveness represents God's mercy, showing how much God forgives those who repent.
- **Importance of Extending Mercy:** The unforgiving servant demonstrates the hypocrisy of those who receive mercy but refuse to extend it to others.
- Quote: *"this man who receives mercy immediately goes out and abuses one of his fellow servants."*
- **Consequences of Unforgiveness:** Failure to forgive results in judgment and punishment, and reveals a lack of true repentance and understanding of God's grace.
- Quote: *"He's going to be imprisoned until he can repay everything. But of course, he has no means to repay."*

### 1. Divorce and Marriage (Matthew 19:1-12):

- **Restoration of God's Ideal:** Jesus advocates for marriage as a permanent union, reflecting God's original design for humanity (Genesis 2).
- Quote: *"the kingdom is often a restoration of God's original purpose for humanity. And so we look back to the creation, we see what was God's purpose."*
- **Rejection of Legalistic Interpretations:** Jesus challenges the Pharisees' interpretations of Deuteronomy 24:1, which they used to oppress women. He points to the creation narrative.
- Quote: *"Jesus circumvents their appeal to Deuteronomy 24.1 to begin with, by appealing instead to Genesis 2."*
- **Concession to Human Weakness:** Moses allowed divorce as a concession to human sin, but it was never God's ideal.
- Quote: *"Jesus said that Moses allowed this because of the hardness of your hearts. In other words, it was a concession to human weakness."*
- **Exception for Unfaithfulness:** Matthew records an exception for divorce in cases of "unfaithfulness" (porneia), emphasizing that Jesus is also defending the person unjustly treated.
- Quote: *"Matthew makes an exception for the innocent party...He says, except for the cause of unfaithfulness..."*
- **Voluntary Singleness:** Jesus highlights that some people are called to celibacy for the sake of the Kingdom, using the metaphor of being a eunuch.
- Quote: *"And there are those who make themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven... the point is that some people, for the sake of the kingdom, stay single."*

### 1. Children and the Kingdom (Matthew 19:13-15):

- **Jesus Welcomes Children:** Jesus welcomes children and blesses them, showing that the Kingdom is for those who are like children.
- Quote: *"Jesus cared about the little people, cared about the marginalized people. And if we want to be close to his heart, that's what we need to care about too."*
- **Disciples' Misunderstanding:** The disciples' attempt to push children away highlights their misunderstanding of what the Kingdom of God is truly about. They focused too much on power and politics.

- Quote: *"And they miss what the kingdom is really about."*

**Conclusion:**

Dr. Keener's lecture on Matthew 16-19 provides a rich and detailed examination of these crucial passages. He effectively blends theological insight with cultural and historical understanding, highlighting the importance of faith, forgiveness, and relationships within the context of God's Kingdom. The lecture challenges listeners to consider their own relationship with God and others. This section of Matthew is crucial for understanding the nature of Christian life, community, and the Kingdom of God.

## 4. Matthew Study Guide: Session 14, Matthew 16-19

### Matthew 16-19 Study Guide

#### Quiz

**Instructions:** Answer the following questions in 2-3 sentences each.

1. What event in Matthew 17 is closely associated with Moses, and what Old Testament passage is it connected to?
2. Why were the disciples unable to cast out a demon, and what analogy does Jesus use to illustrate the necessary amount of faith?
3. What is the significance of the temple tax in the context of Matthew 17, and how does Jesus provide the necessary funds?
4. In Matthew 18, what is the primary focus of Jesus' discourse, and what does he say about causing the "little ones" to stumble?
5. How does Jesus' teaching in Matthew 18 about confronting sin align with standard Jewish practice?
6. What is the significance of binding and loosing in the context of church discipline as described in Matthew 18?
7. How does the parable of the unmerciful servant in Matthew 18 illustrate the nature of God's forgiveness and its implications?
8. What two viewpoints are presented by the Pharisees regarding divorce in Matthew 19, and how does Jesus address their interpretations?
9. What is Jesus' view on marriage and divorce, and what is the exception he provides in Matthew 19?
10. What does Jesus teach about the value of children and their place in the kingdom in Matthew 19:13-15?

#### Answer Key

1. The transfiguration in Matthew 17 is closely associated with Moses and the giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai. This is connected to Exodus 24:16, where Moses was on the mountain for six days, and Deuteronomy 18:15, where God promises a prophet like Moses.



2. The disciples were unable to cast out a demon because of their lack of faith. Jesus says they had little faith, comparing it to the size of a mustard seed, implying that even small faith in a great God is enough.
3. The temple tax was a half-shekel tax for the upkeep of the temple. Jesus provides the necessary funds by instructing Peter to catch a fish that will have a coin in its mouth. This shows God's provision and sovereignty to avoid scandal.
4. The primary focus of Jesus' discourse in Matthew 18 is on relationships within the kingdom, particularly addressing humility, dependence on God, and care for "little ones" or new believers. Causing them to stumble is a serious offense, and believers should work to nurture them.
5. Jesus' teaching on confronting sin in Matthew 18 aligns with the standard Jewish practice of reproof by emphasizing the importance of private, one-on-one conversations before involving others. He values discretion and care when correcting believers.
6. Binding and loosing, in the context of church discipline in Matthew 18, signifies acting on the authority of heaven in the process of disciplining or releasing members within the church. It refers to actions of holding accountable or forgiving people.
7. The parable of the unmerciful servant illustrates the nature of God's boundless forgiveness. It emphasizes that when we experience God's mercy, we should extend it to others and that a failure to do so can result in judgment.
8. The Pharisees present two views on divorce: the Shammaites believed divorce was permissible for infidelity while the Hillelites believed divorce was permissible for any cause. Jesus addresses both of these interpretations by appealing to God's original design for marriage in Genesis 2.
9. Jesus teaches that marriage is a sacred union based on God's original purpose, and that divorce was never God's ideal, yet it was allowed as a concession to the hardness of hearts. He makes an exception for unfaithfulness (porneia), meaning that valid divorce requires an exception for infidelity.
10. Jesus teaches the value of children in the kingdom by welcoming them, blessing them, and stating that the kingdom belongs to them. He rebukes his disciples for trying to push the children away, highlighting that the kingdom of God is made up of people of all status, even the marginalized.

## Essay Questions

1. Analyze the significance of the transfiguration in Matthew 17, examining its connections to the Old Testament, and how it reveals Jesus' identity and authority.
2. Explore the meaning and implications of Jesus' teachings on forgiveness in Matthew 18, particularly in the context of church discipline and personal relationships.
3. Compare and contrast the different views on divorce held by the Pharisees in Matthew 19, and then discuss the implications of Jesus' teachings on marriage and divorce for the modern era.
4. Discuss the theme of humility and dependency in Matthew 18, considering how it applies to the disciples' understanding of the kingdom of God, and to modern Christian life.
5. Evaluate the importance of understanding the original cultural context when interpreting scripture through the specific examples of church discipline (Matt 18), the temple tax (Matt 17) and marriage and divorce (Matt 19).

## Glossary of Key Terms

**Transfiguration:** A miraculous event in which Jesus was transformed and revealed his divine glory to three of his disciples (Peter, James, and John) on a mountain.

**Torah:** The first five books of the Old Testament, containing the Jewish law and foundational scriptures.

**Diaspora:** The dispersion of Jews beyond their traditional homeland of Judea; Jewish communities living in the Mediterranean world.

**Temple Tax:** A half-shekel tax that all adult Jewish males were required to pay annually for the upkeep of the Temple in Jerusalem.

**Kingdom of Heaven/God:** The spiritual realm and rule of God, where God's will is carried out; this is a present reality and a future hope.

**Scandalize/Stumble:** To cause someone to sin or lose faith, especially someone who is new to or vulnerable in their faith.

**Reproof:** The act of pointing out a person's sin or error in a private or public setting.

**Church Discipline:** Corrective actions taken by a church community to address unrepentant sin among its members.

**Binding and Loosing:** A rabbinic expression for the power to make authoritative pronouncements or interpretations of the Law. In the context of Matthew, it applies to church discipline.

**Unmerciful Servant:** The main character in a parable taught by Jesus in Matthew 18. He is forgiven of a massive debt but then is unmerciful to a fellow servant who owed him a small amount.

**Shammaites:** A stricter school of Pharisaical thought that interpreted scripture more rigidly, especially on divorce and other matters of law.

**Hillelites:** A more lenient school of Pharisaical thought that interpreted scripture more loosely, especially on divorce.

**Porneia:** A Greek term that encompasses a wide range of sexual immorality, and Jesus uses it as the exception for divorce.

**Eunuch:** A man who has been castrated, either by birth or by human action, and thus is incapable of having children. Jesus uses the image of a eunuch to convey the concept of singleness, not literally.

**Shekinah:** The visible manifestation of God's presence or glory on earth.

## 5. FAQs on Keener, Matthew, Session 14, Matthew 16-19, Biblelearning.org (BeL)

### FAQ on Matthew 16-19

- **What is the significance of the Transfiguration in Matthew 17?**
- The Transfiguration is a pivotal moment where Jesus reveals his divine glory to some of his disciples. It's filled with allusions to Moses and Mount Sinai, echoing the time Moses received the Torah. The voice from heaven, "Hear him," recalls Deuteronomy 18:15, where God promised a prophet like Moses, indicating Jesus's superiority to Moses. The presence of Moses and Elijah alongside Jesus highlights that Jesus is greater, the very glory that Moses glimpsed. This event serves as a foretaste of Jesus' future glory with his angels, as he had foretold to his disciples.
- **Why were the disciples unable to cast out a demon after Jesus' Transfiguration?**
- The disciples couldn't cast out a demon because of their "unbelief," as Jesus states in Matthew 17:17. He further explains in verse 20 that their faith was too small, likening it to a mustard seed. The issue wasn't necessarily the *size* of their faith, but rather that they failed to fully recognize that the powerful God working through Jesus' ministry was also present with them as his agents. Their lack of faith demonstrated a failure to rely on the divine power available to them through Jesus.
- **What is the point of the story about the temple tax in Matthew 17?**
- The temple tax story isn't primarily about the miracle of finding a coin in a fish's mouth but rather about God's provision and avoiding unnecessary offense. Jesus, as the Son of God, should be exempt from the tax, but he chooses to pay it to avoid causing people to stumble or be offended. This act underscores the importance of living within societal norms when it doesn't compromise faith or integrity. The miracle serves as a demonstration of God's sovereign control and willingness to provide for his followers' needs.

- **What are the main themes of Jesus' teaching on relationships in Matthew 18?**
- Matthew 18 covers essential aspects of relationships within the kingdom of God: humility, avoiding causing others to stumble, pursuing those who have strayed, practicing church discipline, and forgiveness. Jesus emphasizes the need for a child-like humility and dependence on God to enter the kingdom. He warns against scandalizing new or young believers and urges believers to seek out and restore those who have gone astray. When necessary, the chapter also describes a structured approach to church discipline and a call to forgive others boundlessly, reflecting the forgiveness we receive from God.
- **What is the proper way to approach church discipline, according to Matthew 18:15-20?**
- According to this passage, church discipline should be approached with humility, and always as a last resort. You should go to the person privately first to point out their fault. If they don't listen, take one or two witnesses with you, for confirmation of the issue. If they *still* refuse to listen, bring the matter to the church or community of believers. Ultimately, the purpose is not to condemn, but to bring the erring person back to righteousness, so long as they are willing to repent.
- **How does Jesus use the parable of the unforgiving servant in Matthew 18?**
- The parable of the unforgiving servant illustrates the vastness of God's forgiveness towards us and our corresponding responsibility to forgive others. The servant, initially forgiven an enormous debt, refuses to forgive a much smaller debt owed to him. This shows the hypocrisy and ingratitude of those who have received God's grace but do not extend that same grace to others. The parable highlights that our inability to forgive hinders us from receiving God's continued mercy and love.

- **How does Jesus challenge the prevailing views on divorce in Matthew 19?**
- Jesus challenges the Pharisees' lenient interpretations of Deuteronomy 24:1 by going back to God's original design for marriage in Genesis 2, focusing on the ideal of lifelong monogamy. He argues that Moses' allowance of divorce was a concession to human weakness and a result of a "hardness of heart". While recognizing the reality of human sin, Jesus reasserts the sacred nature of marriage, an ideal intended to reflect the relationship between Christ and the church. Although he makes an exception in cases of marital unfaithfulness, he also calls for a higher standard of fidelity and commitment.
- **What is the meaning of Jesus' teaching on being a "eunuch for the kingdom of heaven"?**
- Jesus' teaching on being a "eunuch for the kingdom of heaven" is a hyperbolic metaphor that underscores the priority of serving God above even the natural and cultural pressure to marry. It does not literally require physical castration, but rather an individual's choice to forgo marriage, if they so choose, for the sake of complete devotion to God's kingdom and service to others. This may mean remaining single, or at least, making the choice to pursue ministry over the pursuit of family. It is not an obligation, but a choice for those who feel called to a particular kind of service.