

The Gospel of Matthew: This Is John

Discussion Guide for February 7 and 8, 2026

Summary

This week's message examines Matthew 14:1–14 and the death of John the Baptist. John's bold obedience in speaking truth led to imprisonment and execution, revealing the real cost of faithfulness in a broken world. Through Herod's fear-driven leadership, rash promises, and moral compromise, we see how power resists truth. Yet the passage ultimately points us to Jesus—the rejected King—who responds to loss and suffering with compassion. John's death foreshadows Jesus' own rejection, reminding us that while faithfulness may be costly, the Kingdom of God advances through sacrificial obedience and the mercy of Christ.

Intro Prayer

Lord, give us hearts that love truth more than comfort and obedience more than approval. Strengthen us to stand firm in a world that often resists Your ways. Help us trust You even when faithfulness is costly, and teach us to respond to pain and loss the way Jesus does—with compassion and surrender. Amen.

Ice Breaker

Have you ever experienced tension or consequences for standing up for what you believed was right? What made that situation challenging?

Key Verses

1. Matthew 14:1-12
2. Matthew 14:13-14

Discussion Questions

1. John the Baptist spoke truth despite knowing it could cost him his freedom—or his life. What does this reveal about the kind of faith God calls us to live out?
2. Herod feared public opinion more than he feared God. In what ways can the desire for approval influence our decisions and silence our convictions today?
3. The sermon highlights that calling out sin is often meant to lead to repentance and restoration. Why is relationship so important when addressing sin in others?
4. How can we discern the difference between speaking biblical truth and simply voicing personal opinions or preferences?
5. Jesus withdrew to grieve John's death, yet He returned to serve the crowds with compassion. What does this teach us about grief, humanity, and sacrificial love?
6. John's death foreshadows Jesus' rejection. How does knowing that Jesus willingly endured rejection and suffering shape the way we face hardship for our faith?

Life Application

This week, reflect on where God may be calling you to stand for truth—whether in a relationship, workplace, or personal decision. Ask the Holy Spirit for wisdom, courage, and humility as you respond. Additionally, identify one way you can model Christ's compassion by caring for someone else even while navigating your own challenges.

Key Takeaways

1. Faithfulness to God may come at a cost, but obedience honors the King and advances His Kingdom.
2. Silence in the face of evil allows darkness to persist; God calls His people to speak and live truth with wisdom and love.
3. Jesus understands grief and suffering and meets us with compassion, inviting us to trust Him fully.

Ending Prayer

Father, thank You for the example of John the Baptist and the compassion of Jesus. Give us courage to stand for what is right, wisdom to speak truth in love, and faith to trust You when obedience is costly. Help us follow the King faithfully, no matter what the outcome. In Jesus' name, Amen.