

4. Long before psychologists noticed that what people say is an indication of what's really going on inside their thoughts and imaginations, particularly when they're not concentrating very hard, Jesus made the same point. The motivations which point toward actions give themselves away in thoughts and words which come bubbling up from the depths of the personality, showing that, whatever outward purity codes the person may keep, the innermost self of that person needs to be changed if they are to be what God intends and wants. Why is it easier to keep oneself pure externally than to keep oneself pure internally?

5. Matthew is underlining his belief that the long-awaited time is now at last coming to pass. The healings are not just signs of special power. They are signs of the fact that Jesus is fulfilling the old prophecies. Here, finally, is what Israel had been waiting for all along. No wonder the crowd "gave praise to the God of Israel" (v. 31) What work of mercy or issues that cannot wait may God be asking you, your small group, or our church to take on?

6. a. In what ways does God's provision for us in the past (Matthew 14:13-22) help us when we face an overwhelming situation now (ch.15 vv. 32-33)?

b. How helpful is it for us to hear the stories of the way God has worked in the lives of other Christians? Why or why not?