

connect 360

**BIBLE STUDY GUIDE
LARGE PRINT EDITION**

Miracles

The Transforming Power of Jesus

**A STUDY OF
Matthew**

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Vivian Conrad
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 **BaptistWayPress**
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*Miracles: The Transforming Power of Jesus (A Study of Matthew)—
Connect 360 Bible Study Guide—Large Print Edition*

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How to Make the Best Use of This Issue

Whether you're the teacher or a student—

1. Start early in the week before your class meets.
2. Overview the study. Review the table of contents and read the study introduction. Try to see how each lesson relates to the overall study.
3. Use your Bible to read and consider prayerfully the Scripture passages for the lesson. (You'll see that each writer has chosen a favorite translation for the lessons in this issue. You're free to use the Bible translation you prefer and compare it with the translation chosen for that unit, of course.)
4. After reading all the Scripture passages in your Bible, then read the writer's comments. The comments are intended to be an aid to your study of the Bible.
5. Read the small articles—"sidebars"—in each lesson. They are intended to provide additional, enrichment information and inspiration and to encourage thought and application.
6. Try to answer for yourself the questions included in each lesson. They're intended to encourage further

thought and application, and they can also be used in the class session itself.

If you're the teacher—

Do all the things just mentioned, of course. As you begin the study with your class, be sure to find a way to help your class know the date on which each lesson will be studied. Here are some suggestions to guide your lesson preparation:

- A. In the first session of the study, briefly overview the study by identifying for your class the date on which each lesson will be studied. Lead your class to write the date in the table of contents on pages 9–10 and on the first page of each lesson.
 - Make and post a chart that indicates the date on which each lesson will be studied.
 - If all your class has e-mail, send them an e-mail with the dates the lessons will be studied.
 - Provide a bookmark with the lesson dates. You may want to include information about your church and then use the bookmark as an outreach tool, too. A model for a bookmark can be downloaded from www.baptistwaypress.org under the “Teacher Helps” menu.
 - Develop a sticker with the lesson dates, and place it on the table of contents or on the back cover.
- B. Get a copy of the *Teaching Guide*, a companion piece to this *Study Guide*. The *Teaching Guide* contains additional Bible comments plus two teaching plans. The teaching

plans in the *Teaching Guide* are intended to provide practical, easy-to-use teaching suggestions that will work in your class.

- C. After you've studied the Bible passage, the lesson comments, and other material, use the teaching suggestions in the *Teaching Guide* to help you develop your plan for leading your class in studying each lesson.
- D. Teaching resource items for use as handouts are available free at www.baptistwaypress.org under the "Teacher Helps" tab.
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Miracles (The Gospel of Matthew) The Transforming Power of Jesus

<i>How to Make the Best Use of This Issue</i>	3
<i>Writers for This Study Guide</i>	7
<i>Introducing Miracles: The Transforming Power of Jesus</i>	11

DATE OF STUDY

LESSON 1 _____	Overcoming Temptation MATTHEW 4:1–11	17
LESSON 2 _____	A Leper and the Touch of Jesus MATTHEW 8:1–4	31
LESSON 3 _____	Christ the Healer MATTHEW 8:14–17	45
LESSON 4 _____	The Perfect Storm MATTHEW 8:23–27	59
LESSON 5 _____	Power Over Death MATTHEW 9:18–19; 23–26	71
LESSON 6 _____	A Desperate Touch of Faith MATTHEW 9:20–22	83
LESSON 7 _____	A Sabbath Miracle MATTHEW 12:9–13	95

MIRACLES: THE TRANSFORMING POWER OF JESUS

LESSON 8	The Miraculous Feeding MATTHEW 14:14–21	107
LESSON 9	Get Out of the Boat! MATTHEW 14:22–33	119
LESSON 10	From Desperation to Faith MATTHEW 15:21–28	131
LESSON 11	Mission Impossible? MATTHEW 17:14–21	143
LESSON 12	The Great Dilemma MATTHEW 17:24–27	153
LESSON 13	The Master’s Touch MATTHEW 20:29–34	163
CHRISTMAS LESSON	The Miracle of the Virgin Birth MATTHEW 1:18–25	173
	<i>Our Next New Study</i>	181
	<i>How to Order More Bible Study Materials</i>	183

Introducing

MIRACLES: The Transforming Power of Jesus

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

What can we learn from the miracles recorded in the Gospel of Matthew? The word “miracle” has been used extensively in our culture. Many songs, movies, TV shows, books, and products have incorporated the word “miracle” or “miracles” within their name. And so, the use of the word “miracle” almost seems commonplace today. But as we study the miracles of Jesus, we need to understand what a miracle really is. The classic definition is this: “A miracle is an interruption of the laws of nature which can only be explained by divine intervention.” The miracles of Jesus are unquestionable displays of God’s power.

Matthew was a witness to the transforming power of Jesus. We benefit greatly from his detailed accounts of the great miracles of Jesus.

Background on the Book of Matthew

The Gospel of Matthew was written by the former tax collector (Matthew), one of the original twelve apostles. The numerous Old Testament references found in the Gospel likely indicate it was written for a primarily Jewish audience. There is great care taken to show Jesus as the long-awaited Messiah who was described by the prophets in the Old Testament. Many scholars believe the Book of Matthew was written sometime between 60–70 A.D.

Matthew has much to say about Jesus Christ the King, the law, religious defilement, the Sabbath, Jerusalem, the temple, David, the Messiah, and Moses. And of course, Matthew, by recording the miracles of Jesus, confirmed Jesus' deity and claims to be the Savior of the world. His miracles included:

- Cleansing a leper
- Healing two paralytics
- Cooling a fever
- Calming a storm
- Casting out demons
- Raising a girl from the dead
- Giving sight to two blind men
- Restoring speech to a man made dumb by demons
- Healing every other kind of disease and sickness

To say the least, in this book we find a simply amazing display of power. Since the beginning of our BaptistWay Press

study series, we have focused on the Book of Matthew five previous times. We believe studying scriptures directly about Jesus on a regular basis is important, so we provide a study of a Gospel each year. Each study begins with a new emphasis and fresh outlines in which lessons are created.

Miracles in Our Day

Do you need a miracle today? A miracle doesn't have to be Jesus calming the storm or healing a leper. A miracle is when Jesus shows up and touches a person who is in need. When God forgives a sinner and accepts that person into His family, it requires a miracle. Salvation is the greatest miracle of all.

Our prayer is that this study of the Gospel of Matthew will reawaken us all to **the transforming power of Jesus**. Over and over in this Gospel, Jesus turns into victory what our adversary intends for defeat.

Matthew 19:26 says, "And looking at them Jesus said to them, "With people this is impossible, but with God all things are possible." NASB

MIRACLES

Lesson 1	Overcoming Temptation	Matthew 4:1–11
Lesson 2	A Leper and the Touch of Jesus	Matthew 8:1–4
Lesson 3	Christ the Healer	Matthew 8:14–17
Lesson 4	The Perfect Storm	Matthew 8:23–27
Lesson 5	Power Over Death	Matthew 9:18–19; 23–26
Lesson 6	A Desperate Touch of Faith	Matthew 9:20–22

MIRACLES: THE TRANSFORMING POWER OF JESUS

Lesson 7	A Sabbath Miracle	Matthew 12:9–13
Lesson 8	The Miraculous Feeding	Matthew 14:14–21
Lesson 9	Get Out of the Boat!	Matthew 14:22–33
Lesson 10	From Desperation to Faith	Matthew 15:21–28
Lesson 11	Mission Impossible?	Matthew 17:14–21
Lesson 12	The Great Dilemma	Matthew 17:24–27
Lesson 13	The Master’s Touch	Matthew 20:29–34
Christmas Lesson	The Miracle of the Virgin Birth	Matthew 1:18–25

Additional Resources for Studying the *Book of Matthew*¹

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NOTES

1. Listing a book does not imply full agreement by the writer or BAPTISTWAY PRESS® with all its comments.

lesson

Overcoming Temptation

MAIN IDEA

Satan's resolve is to thwart God's plans for us and those we influence.

QUESTION TO EXPLORE

How can I resist sin?

STUDY AIM

To understand that God allows testing in my life to strengthen me.

QUICK READ

Temptation is an unrelenting part of human life. Satan cloaks temptation in deception, trying to steal, kill, and destroy. But God gives us combative tools and strengthens us through the process.

Introduction

Perhaps it's because I have an eight-year-old son, but the word *impossible* is more than an adjective around our house; it's a dare. For example, did you know it's impossible to:

- Touch your nose or the bottom of your chin with your tongue?
- Fit your whole fist in your mouth?
- Write the digit six on a piece of paper while moving your foot clockwise in a circle?
- Eat a spoonful of cinnamon?
- Lick the tip of your elbow?
- Sneeze with your eyes open?

If you haven't tried any of these by now, ask an eight-year-old boy. Maybe that's how Ethan Hunt (main character in Mission Impossible movies) started? "Your mission, should you choose to accept it, is to sneeze with your eyes open." Thankfully, Hunt went on to more interesting impossible missions.

Jesus knew we would have a fascination for the impossible: we gawk in awe when the amazing occurs before us, and relish accolades when we accomplish things unexpected. However, some things still elude our abilities, but Jesus assured us no task is beyond his ability; certainly not the salvation of human souls. He said, "With people this [i.e., salvation for a rich person] is impossible, but with God all things are possible" (Matthew 19:26). As we begin our study

of miracles in the Book of Matthew, you may wonder why we're starting with Jesus' temptations. He didn't perform a miracle in the wilderness, or did he?

Because it requires supernatural work, defeating temptation is no less a miracle than giving sight to the blind, raising the dead, saving someone by faith through grace, or calming a stormy sea. Satan provokes and tantalizes us, using specific enticements to steal, kill, and destroy (John 10:10), attempting to sabotage what God desires for us and those we influence. What can our Savior's approach to temptations teach us about combatting our enemy?

Matthew 4:1–11

¹Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. ² And after He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He then became hungry. ³ And the tempter came and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread." ⁴ But He answered and said, "It is written, 'MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE, BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD.'"

⁵ Then the devil took Him into the holy city and had Him stand on the pinnacle of the temple, ⁶ and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down; for it is written,

'HE WILL COMMAND HIS ANGELS CONCERNING YOU';

and

'ON their HANDS THEY WILL BEAR YOU UP, SO THAT YOU WILL NOT STRIKE YOUR FOOT AGAINST A STONE.'"

⁷ Jesus said to him, "On the other hand, it is written, 'YOU SHALL NOT PUT THE LORD YOUR GOD TO THE TEST.'"

⁸ Again, the devil took Him to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory; ⁹ and he said to Him, "All these things I will give You, if You fall down and worship me." ¹⁰ Then Jesus said to him, "Go, Satan! For it is written, 'YOU SHALL WORSHIP THE LORD YOUR GOD, AND SERVE HIM ONLY.'" ¹¹ Then the devil left Him; and behold, angels came and began to minister to Him.

A Dare to Dine (4:1–4)

Following the heavens' glorious unfolding at his baptism (Matt. 3:13–17), the Spirit immediately led Jesus into Judea's desert wilderness—west of the Jordan River and the Dead Sea—for the express purpose of testing by Satan (4:1). What a strange follow-up to a thrilling experience. To be led to the wilderness by the Spirit who had affirmed him using a dove's form seems almost cruel. As God's Son, couldn't he have had a moment to bask in that glorious affirmation and allow others to recognize and celebrate him?

Instead, Jesus fasted for forty days, isolated in the wilderness—preparing for his upcoming ministry. It's no wonder he was hungry (4:2). Imagine his exhaustion; his resources were depleted. Matthew focused on three significant temptations Satan issued after those days. In fact, the Books of Mark and Luke state Satan tempted Jesus throughout the forty days. Our enemy thrives on striking when we're alone and

physically weak. He sought to destroy God's plan for humanity's salvation by leading Jesus to disobey, thus forfeiting his perfect holiness, the very thing we needed to gain righteousness (2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Peter 2:24; Jeremiah 23:6).

Satan began two of his temptations by saying, "If you are the Son of God" (4:3). In Greek, the word *if* is less uncertain than it appears in English; it's better translated *surely*. Satan wanted Jesus to feel the need to affirm his identity, suggesting *Surely you are the Son of God*, (with a tinge of sarcasm, I suspect), *indeed, you have the right to satisfy your own needs and desires, regardless of God's expectations*.

Thus, Satan appealed to the most basic physical need: hunger. Knowing Jesus' power as God, he suggested Jesus turn stones into bread by simply speaking it. However, fasting was God's will (desire for that situation) for Jesus, and yes, even hunger. For Jesus to command bread from stones would have been a good thing for his well-being but would have led him outside God's will for his incarnational experience.

Jesus had to choose: succumb to his physical desires or please the Father; exploit his power to avoid discomfort or submit to God's plan of suffering. Jesus did not feel a simple "I-had-to-work-through-lunch-today" hunger. He desperately needed and deserved food. Though fully God, Jesus was also fully human. He knew hunger's pangs better than most of us by that point in his forty-day experience.

Human desire is a strong force. To resist such a basic need required miraculous will-power and self-control provided by

the Spirit (Galatians 5:22–23). Jesus later proclaimed, “My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and accomplish His work” (John 4:34), so he chose obedience, even suffering, trusting God would supply his needs at the right time and in the right way (cf. Philippians 4:19). To combat his enemy, Jesus quoted Deuteronomy 8:3: “Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God” (4:4). His reply is our example. We, too, are instructed in Ephesians 6:17 to use “the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.” Scripture is our offensive weapon against Satan’s attacks, and it is the supernatural intervention we need when enticed to sin.

A Dare to Dive (4:5–7)

Satan came again to Jesus, leading him (probably in a vision) to stand at the temple’s high point in Jerusalem, daring him to throw himself down (4:5–6). Ironically, the devil quoted from Psalm 91, tempting Jesus to jump off the pinnacle, thereby displaying his command and authority, for angels would naturally protect and preserve their Lord (Ps. 91:11–12; cf. Matt. 26:53). Satan tried to play on Jesus’ ego, challenging him to put himself in mortal danger, not for Jesus’ destruction, but rather, for him to prove God’s love by jumping to God’s protection since he protects the faithful.

Jesus replied, “You shall not put the LORD your God to the test” (4:7; Deuteronomy 6:16), knowing Satan’s suggestion

Lesson 1: Overcoming Temptation

was foolish. Jesus didn't need God to prove his love; he'd received a confirmation at his baptism (Matt. 3:17). Satan wanted him to create an artificial crisis. Risking his life (and the subsequent jump to safety) would be an act of self-interest, "inappropriately testing his Father's love, trying to manipulate him"¹ into a rescue.

Today, we test God's promises of safety with our choices. *Just one more cookie*, we rationalize, daring God to keep our bodies healthy. *Just one more glance at that attractive person*, we think, daring God to keep our minds pure and relationships sound. *Just one more_____*. You fill in the blank with your greatest struggle. Temptation is not a sin; giving in is (cf. James 1:13–15). Essentially, Satan tempts us to doubt God's best is fulfilling and to step outside God's guardrails of wisdom and protection to satisfy our desires, as though trying to prove we can manage our lives better than our Creator.

A Dare to Show Devotion (4:8–11)

Failing at two attempts, Satan, ever-vigilant, tried again to destroy Jesus' character and redeeming work. This time he tempted Jesus' commitment to God's sovereignty by taking Jesus to a high place from which he could view "all the kingdoms of the world and their glory," meaning the world and all it offers (4:8). Notice Satan didn't point out the problems which come with the world.

Obviously, there is no such mountain from which to see the entire known world, so this was also a vision. Ancient peoples placed altars to God and idols of false gods on “high places” (e.g. 1 Kings 3:2; Deut. 12:2), thus Satan’s choice of locale. Would Jesus practice idolatry and prostrate himself before Satan in this exalted place (4:9)? Or would he hold to the commandment to “have no other gods” (Exodus 20:3)? Would Jesus be tempted by the lure of immediate power and prominence? God promised the Messiah “the nations as Your inheritance, and the very ends of the earth as Your possession” (Psalm 2:8). But that promise first requires the cross’ shame and agony. Satan’s suggestion is a short-cut, luring Christ to forfeit God’s will, and by so doing submitting to Satan’s will, thereby committing idolatry. While Satan does have influence in the world, he certainly overstates his authority to offer it to Jesus (see Luke 4:5–6; cf. Matt. 28:18). God is still sovereign.

Jesus replied with a direct and authoritative command: “Go, Satan;” more strongly interpreted as “Get away from me.” He added with force Deuteronomy 6:13, “You shall worship the Lord your God, and serve (i.e. fulfill religious duty to) Him only” (4:10). With this command, “the devil left him” (cf. James 4:7), and angels came to minister² to Jesus (4:11). The angels’ arrival didn’t merely provide sustenance for the starving Son of God, but also affirmed him. Angels act as God’s messengers and emissaries, serving and worshiping him. Jesus didn’t call them in response to Satan’s dare, so these angels probably lined up in heaven for the chance to

celebrate his victory and take him some food. It may have been quite a party in that wilderness!

Implications and Actions

Will You Dare to Trust?

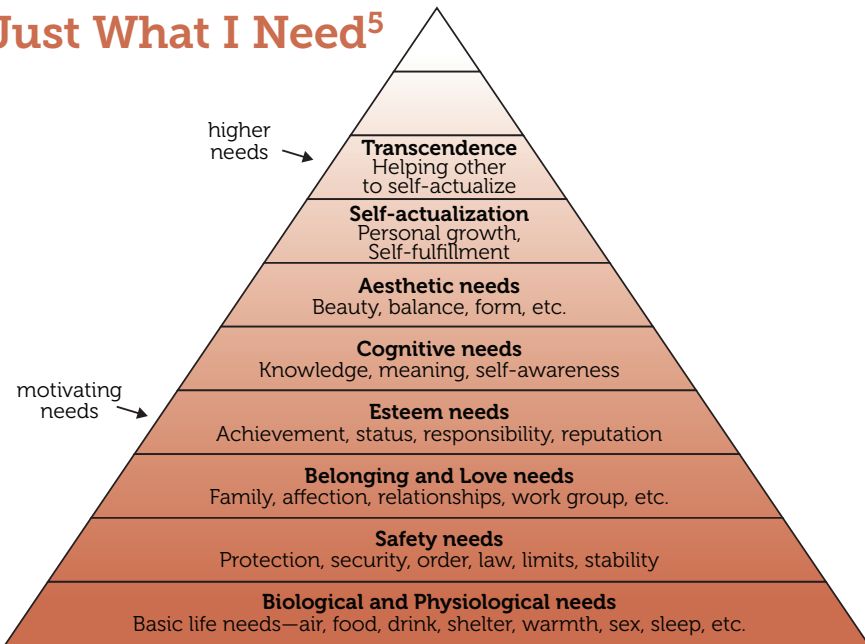
Deuteronomy 6:5 challenges us to love (i.e. live loyally toward) God with all our heart, soul, and might. Jesus loved God with his heart by choosing God's will over his desires; with his soul, by refusing to succumb to ego; and with his might, by rejecting a shortcut to power. Furthermore, none of these temptations were executed publicly to prove his Messiahship to the masses. There was no earthly crowd to celebrate his faithfulness. The temptations tested his trust in God's provision; he refused to exercise his Messianic powers in order to satisfy his own desires.³

Denying ourselves when tempted can be difficult (cf. Matt. 16:24) and lonely, yet sometimes God allows that path in order to strengthen us for even greater challenges to come. While at first glance it may seem unkind, it's no less necessary than athletes gradually building stamina in preparation for competition. If runners cannot endure a 5K, how can they expect to complete a marathon? If Jesus had given in to any of these temptations, could he have withstood the cross' rigors? Perhaps God was building his endurance through this experience. Perhaps he's doing the same for you and me.

Though he intended to destroy God's work in and through Jesus (and in believers today), Satan cannot act

independently of God’s divine sovereignty (cf. Job 1:7–12). Our temptations may not be exactly the same, but because Jesus was human, he was indeed tempted in every way we are (Hebrews 4:15) and became our example for victory. We can trust 1 Corinthians 10:13: “No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.” Will you rely on the Holy Spirit, wield God’s Word, and stand firm?

Just What I Need⁵



In the mid-twentieth century, psychologist Abraham Maslow constructed the Hierarchy of Needs, detailing, in priority, the requirements for human beings’ psychological health and

growth in learning. (It has been expanded through subsequent research.) At its base are biological and physiological survival needs (food, drink, air, and shelter). The next level is safety needs (protection, security, stability). Third, are belonging and love needs (affection, relationship). Fourth, are esteem needs (achievement, status). The hierarchy continues with cognitive needs, aesthetic needs, self-actualization, and transcendence.

Reviewing Satan's temptations, we see he approached Jesus with the four most basic levels. He tempted him with food (biological and physiological needs), with protection from the Father (safety and love needs), and with power and status (esteem needs). None of these things was innately evil. All people need food, to know they are loved and will be protected, and are honored, appreciated, and have influence. But "temptations are one of the enemy's ways of trying to get a person to go contrary to God's specific will . . . The very nature of a temptation is that it can be subtly construed . . . by perverting a good thing to a bad use."⁶

Jesus' Temptation Battle Plan

Jesus gave us the example. Now, we can take practical steps to battle temptation.

- Connect with God. Jesus spent concentrated time with God, so he knew God well, and could determine if Satan's suggestions were in keeping with God's character or desires. Prayer and Bible study are critical to knowing God's heart.

- Be alert. Satan's twisted use of Scripture didn't deceive Jesus. Jesus recognized the roaring, devouring lion (1 Peter 5:8) who disguises himself as an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:14).
- Know the cost. Jesus considered what he'd be forfeiting: "the joy set before him" (Hebrews 12:2), and God's pleasure. What will you lose as a result of sin?
- Remember God's promises. Jesus knew God loved him and would not abandon him. Believers have the Holy Spirit within (Romans 8:5–10), are never forsaken, and are aided by God (Heb. 2:18; 13:5; 4:16).
- Respond appropriately. Jesus knew God's Word. We can't answer temptation with Scripture if we don't know it. Read, study, and memorize verses specific to tempting areas in your life.

Questions

1. Consider and discuss the following: "The word *tempted* is the verb *peirazo*, which can mean either *tempt* or *test*. A temptation is an enticement to get a person to go contrary to God's will, as Satan attempted with Jesus. A test tries to get a person to prove himself or herself faithful to God's will, with the right intention that the person passes the test. Scripture is clear: God never tempts anyone to do evil (James 1:13), but God does use circumstances to test a person's character or resolve with the intended purpose of promoting good ends (e.g., Heb. 11:17).⁴

Lesson 1: Overcoming Temptation

2. Review Deuteronomy 8:3. Do you find it significant that Jesus used a verse about the Word of God while speaking the Word of God to Satan? Why or why not?

3. Compare and contrast Jesus' answer to Satan in 4:4 to John 4:34 and 6:35. Discuss the implications of all three.

4. Explore the idea that Satan was challenging Jesus' trust in God's safety by risking his life in a jump from the temple's pinnacle. In what ways do you and others you know test God's protection by trying to step outside guardrails intended to safeguard, shield, and shelter?

5. Share an example of a good thing perverted into a bad thing in terms of temptation to sin. For example, a healthy physique is a good thing unless it becomes a driving force or idol. Then temptations (e.g., poor eating habits, dangerous drugs, or neglect of relationships and responsibilities) result in sinful behaviors to achieve that physique.

NOTES

1. Michael J. Wilkins, "Matthew," *NIV Application Commentary; Accordance/OakTree Software, Inc. electronic ed.* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 160.
2. "Minister" is Gr. *diakoneo*, the root of "deacon;" cf. Acts 6 where deacons served food to widows.
3. Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 1–13, Volume 33A, Word Biblical Commentary*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000, 66. Electronic text hypertexted and prepared by OakTree Software, Inc. Version 1.7.
4. Wilkins, 155.
5. <http://www.fengshuidana.com/2012/03/06/can-this-pyramid-help-you-live-up-to-your-potential-in-life/>. Accessed 3/18/2019.
6. Wilkins, 158, 166.