



For Cowboys, By Cowboys.

Gospel of Matthew: SCV is proud to present the message of the Gospel in the words of the cowboy — written by real cowboys.

Read the Gospel through the dust-filled eyes of the Old West cowboy. In the words of our Western heritage, *The Temptation in the Wilderness* becomes *The Duel in the Desert*, *The Sermon on the Mount* becomes *The Message on the Mesa*, and the *Resurrection* is rediscovered as *Jesus Rides Back into Town*. Simple words, clear meaning, and a bold and exciting presentation of the greatest story ever told — with hard hittin' questions all throughout for group discussion or personal ponderin'.

Some call it "The Word as a Western" or "The Good News at High Noon." Call it what you want — but more importantly, read it, believe it, and ride tall as you apply its godly truths to your daily life.

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Discussion questions ©Stephen Skelton
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Gospel of Matthew

Simplified Cowboy Version

By Kevin Weatherby
Discussion Questions by Stephen Skelton

TO:



FROM:



What are folks saying about the Simplified Cowboy Version?



“It is truly a blessing to have the Simplified Cowboy Version. Now reading the Lord’s Good Book doesn’t leave me feelin’ like a cow looking at a new gate!!”

—Richard Thompson, Stanton, TX

“This is truly a ‘No nonsense, no dog and pony show, no snake-oil, real cowboy’s way of understanding a real God’s words’ ”.

—Pastor Frank Johnson, Cow Camp Cowboy Church, Weatherford TX

“Kevin Weatherby’s work has made a world of difference in my life and his interpretations through the Simplified Cowboy Version give it to you straight.”

—Trey Wahrmond

“When a cowboy or cowgirl picks up God’s word, they should be able to understand what God is telling them! SCV has done that with a flair that is permeated in the Western heritage language, something all can understand: man, woman or child. God Bless Kevin Weatherby and his work!”

—Pastor Kevin Mahr, Cowboy Church of Lee County, Lexington TX

“Kevin Weatherby and Save the Cowboy understand the importance of reaching men where they are. By integrating the cowboy lifestyle and language, SCV has successfully made Scripture relevant to a new generation of outlaws in need of a Trail Boss.”

—Evan Dawson, founder of Third Option Men

“The Simplified Cowboy Version is as simple as that, simple and cowboy. I’ve been reaching out to cowboys for years, at rodeo bible camps and other events. The number one thing I hear is “The Bible doesn’t make sense and it’s hard to read.” I believe the SCV will help open their eyes and lead more cowboys to the greener pastures.”

—Pastor Walter Taylor, Catalyst Cowboy Church, Endicott WA

“Call it a cowboy concordance. It’s not meant to replace the Bible, but does make it a whole lot easier to understand.”

—Cory Johnson, Waller TX

“Thank you for the SCV. It brings things to light in a language that is easier to relate to and understand.”

—Kim Casey, Elbert County CO

“What a ministry! The SCV is doing what a modern day Paul would do—figure out a person’s culture, and then go to them and tell them about Christ in a way that they can understand. Here it is COWBOY!”

—Pastor Josh Sparkman, No Fences Cowboy Church, Falkville AL



The Simplified Cowboy Version is not a Bible. It is a Bible paraphrase intended to help those that are new to the Word of God and also those that want to see the Bible come alive in a brand new way. This undertaking wasn’t done by scholars or theologians, just two cowboys who have a love for the Bible and helpin’ cowboys and cowgirls understand its vast beauty. The scripture references are there so you can go get a real Bible and see what God really has to say.

We’ll see ya down the trail, amigos!

Kevin Weatherby

Jake Hershey



Matthew 1



The Family Tree

This is a list of how Jesus came all the way from Abraham and down through King David (because it was said long ago that God's Boy would come through David):

² Abraham was Isaac's daddy.

Isaac was Jacob's daddy.

Jacob was Judah and his brothers' daddy.

³ Judah was Perez and Zerah's daddy (Tamar was their momma).

Perez was Hezron's daddy.

Hezron was Ram's daddy.

⁴ Ram was Amminadab's daddy.

Amminadab was Nahshon's daddy.

Nahshon was Salmon's daddy.

⁵ Salmon was Boaz' daddy (Rahab was his momma).

Boaz was Obed's daddy (Ruth was his momma).

Obed was Jesse's daddy.

⁶ Jesse was King David's daddy.

David was Solomon's daddy (whose momma was Bathsheba, the widow lady of Uriah).

⁷ Solomon was Rehoboam's daddy.

Rehoboam was Abijah's daddy.

Abijah was Asa's daddy.

⁸ Asa was Jehoshaphat's daddy.

Jehoshaphat was Jehoram's daddy.

Jehoram was Uzziah's daddy.

⁹ Uzziah was Jotham's daddy.

Jotham was Ahaz' daddy.

Ahaz was Hezekiah's daddy.

¹⁰ Hezekiah was Manasseh's daddy.

Manasseh was Amon's daddy.

Amon was Josiah's daddy.

¹¹ Josiah was Jehoiachin and his brothers' daddy.

¹² After the Babylonian boot out:

Jehoiachin was Shealtiel's daddy.

Shealtiel was Zerubbabel's daddy.

¹³ Zerubbabel was Abiud's daddy.

Abiud was Eliakim's daddy.

Eliakim was Azor's daddy.

¹⁴ Azor was Zadok's daddy.

Zadok was Akim's daddy.

Akim was Eliud's daddy.

¹⁵ Eliud was Eleazar's daddy.

Eleazar was Matthan's daddy.

Matthan was Jacob's daddy.

¹⁶ Jacob was Joseph's daddy, and Joseph was hitched to Mary.

Mary gave birth to Jesus, who is called the Saving Hero.

¹⁷ So there were fourteen generations from Abraham until David. Then there was another fourteen from David till the time the Jews were taken captive to Babylon, and fourteen from the captivity in Babylon until the Christ.

Joseph and the Birth of Jesus

¹⁸ Before Jesus was born, Joseph had asked for Mary's hand in marriage. Joseph had been honorable towards Mary and she was unspoiled. But before they could get hitched, Mary became pregnant through the power of the Holy Ghost. ¹⁹ In order to avoid an embarrassing shotgun wedding, Joseph was just gonna go away and leave Mary quietly.

²⁰ While Joseph sat ponderin' his options, an angel appeared to him and told him not to run out on Mary. Seems her baby wasn't by any human, but conceived by the Holy Ghost. ²¹ "She's gonna have a son," the angel said. "Be sure and call him Jesus, 'cause he's gonna end up savin' everyone from their sins."

²² This all happened because a prophet had already said, ²³ "A gal that's never been with a man will have her a child and call him Emmanuel." — which is a fancy way of sayin', "God's with us."

²⁴ Joseph went and did just what that angel told him to and tied the knot with Mary. ²⁵ But he didn't never go to her bed like a husband would usually do until after Jesus was born.

In verses 1-17, God worked through all sorts of different people to bring Jesus into the world—David was a king, Rahab was a hooker, Ram was just a regular guy. Given that God used a king, a hooker and a regular guy, do you think he could use you?

In verse 18, even though Joseph found out that Mary was in a family way before they were married, he refused to shun her in public. When you find out about someone's "dirty laundry," do you say a prayer for them or do you talk about it at the cow sale?

In verses 20-24, while gettin' hitched to a pregnant gal could have made him look like a fool, Joseph did what God wanted him to do. Have you done what God wants you to do, even when other people thought it was crazy?

Matthew 2



Strangers from Afar

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem, while Herod was King, some strangers from the east visited Jerusalem² and asked, “Where’s the little one that’s meant to be the King of the Jews? We seen a bright light from way over yonder and we have come to hit a knee before him.”

³ King Herod was plum disturbed along with all of Jerusalem at the things the strangers said. ⁴ He gathered up every person that worked around there that had a lick of sense and asked ‘em where the Christ was to be born. ⁵ They all told him it was supposed to be in Bethlehem based on what a wise fellow of God had said:

⁶ “Bethlehem ain’t no little place among Judah. From you will come a cowboy that will gather all of the herd together and take care of ‘em.”

⁷ Then Herod asked those strangers when the bright light had appeared in the sky. ⁸ He told ‘em to ride for Bethlehem and find this baby they was a lookin’ for and send him a message. Herod wanted to come and grab a knee with his hat in his hands right along with them.

⁹ The strangers rode hard and followed the light until it stopped over where Jesus was layin’. ¹⁰ When they saw the bright star, they was overcome with happiness. ¹¹ When they got to the house and saw Mary holdin’ Jesus, they grabbed a knee and worshiped him. Then they went to their saddlebags and brought out some sure enough nice gifts for the baby. ¹² They rode off at first light, but they didn’t return to old Herod. An angel had told them to take another trail and strike a long trot back to where they’d come from.

The Getaway

¹³ After the strangers had lit out, an angel came to Joseph while he was dreamin’. “Saddle up,” the angel told him, “ride hard for Egypt and hunker down there until I tell you it’s safe. Herod’s gonna start killin’ all the kids and he’s hopin’ Jesus is one of ‘em.”

In verses 1-2, the three wise men (strangers) came looking for Jesus with gifts to give him, rather than expecting Jesus to give something to them. Do you come to Jesus asking what he can do for you—or what you can do for him?

In verse 11, the wise men (strangers) gave Jesus gold, incense and spice, which were the best things they had to offer. When you give things to Christ—your attention, your time, your efforts—is it the best you have to offer?

¹⁴ So Joseph took Mary and Jesus and struck a long lope for Egypt. ¹⁵ He stayed there until Herod had kicked the bucket. This fulfilled a long ago sayin’ that said: “My Son’s gonna come out of Egypt when I call for him.”

¹⁶ When old Herod realized he’d been double crossed by the strangers, he was spittin’ nails. He gave orders to slaughter all the boys in the territory that were two years old or younger. That’s the age the strangers had reckoned Jesus to be. ¹⁷ This also brought truth to a long ago foretelling by the prophet Jeremiah:

¹⁸ “There will be wailin’ and weepin’. Rachel will cry for her kids and won’t take to any comfortin’ by anyone because they are all gone.”

Headin’ Home

¹⁹ When Herod was dead, an angel once again came to Joseph in a dream and ²⁰ told him, “Light out for home. Take Jesus and his mamma back. The danger has passed on by.”

²¹ So Joseph saddled up and they traveled back to Israel. ²² But when he found out that Archelaus had taken his father Herod’s place on the throne, he became scared. Another dream had warned him, so he detoured into Galilee territory, ²³ and made permanent camp in a place called Nazareth. Once again, this made true the old saying: “He’s gonna be called a Nazarene.”

Matthew 3



John the Baptist Blazes a Trail for Jesus

Durin’ this time, John the Baptist was preachin’ in the dry country of Judea² and tellin’ folks, “Make right your minds, for God’s Green Pasture is near.”³ John is who Isaiah was talkin’ about when he said:

“The dry country will have a voice, ‘Blaze a trail for the Lord and make it true and straight.’”

⁴ John’s duds were made out of animal hair, and his belt was made of good leather. He made meals out of locusts with wild honey for dessert. ⁵ Cowboys and cowgirls

In verse 16, King Herod was afraid Jesus would take over and run his outfit—when Jesus really came to give him eternal life, something worth much more than what Herod had. Do you know cowboys who are afraid that ridin’ for Jesus will mean giving up something they think is “valuable”?

In verses 1-2, John the Baptist told people to turn to God so God would forgive their sins—which meant John was invitin’ sinful, messed-up, dirty outlaws to meet God. Have you ever thought you had to get spit-shined before you could meet God?

came from all over to see him. ⁶ These cowboys and cowgirls told God about everything they'd done wrong and John baptized them in Jordan Creek.

⁷ When John saw the real religious folks ride over the hill followed by a bunch of no-account politicians, he hollered at them: "You den of rattlesnakes!! Who told you to ride as fast as you could from the comin' anger?" ⁸ You gotta change the way you live your life if you want what God is offerin' folks here! ⁹ Don't even try to make the excuse that Abraham was your father. God can make these rocks become Abraham's children if that's what he wants to do. It don't mean nothin'. ¹⁰ God's axe is already at the bottom of your tree. If you don't change the way you live your lives, your tree will end up in the BBQ pit.

¹¹ "I dunk folks in water as a symbol that they want to change the way they think and live. But there's a cowboy comin' who's boots I ain't fit for carrying. He's gonna dunk you with the Holy Ghost and flame. ¹² His pitchfork is in his hand and he's gonna separate the good stuff from the moldy. This useless trash will be thrown in the fire that can't go out."

¹³ Then Jesus rode in from Galilee to be dunked in the Jordan by John. ¹⁴ Old John balked at the idea and said, "It's the other way around! I need to be dunked by you."

¹⁵ But Jesus told him, "Nope. This is the way we're gonna do it so everything will be made right with God." John shook his head in disbelief but agreed to do it Jesus' way.

¹⁶ As soon as Jesus had come up out of the creek, heaven's gate was throwed wide open. The Spirit of God came out of that gate in the form of a dove and landed on Jesus. ¹⁷ Out of heaven a voice said, "This is my Son that I love. I am pleased with everything that he is."

Matthew 4



The Duel in the Desert

God led Jesus out into the dry country to be tempted by the devil. ² Jesus was famished after not eating for forty days and nights. ³ That old devil rode up and said, "If you're God's Boy, you can easily turn these rocks into bread. What are you waitin' on?"

In verse 8, John told people to not only talk the talk, but walk the walk—meaning they should not just say good things but actually do good things. Have you known people who only say the right things, but don't do the right things?

In verse 13, Jesus was baptized, even though he never sinned, as an example for the rest of us to be baptized. Have you known people who said they followed God but thought they didn't need to be dunked?

⁴ Jesus said, "Man don't live on just bread, but on every word that comes out of God's mouth."

⁵ The devil snatched Jesus up and took him to the holy city and they stood at the highest point of the church. ⁶ "If you're God's Boy," the devil said, "bail off of here. 'Cause it's written that:

"God's angels are gonna look out for you. They won't let a scratch of harm come to you."

⁷ Jesus answered and said, "It's also said: 'Don't be a fool and try to test God.'"

⁸ The devil whisked him off again and took him to a tall mountain where they could see all of the territories. ⁹ "I'll make a horse trade with you. I'll swap you everything you see below us if you'll take off your hat and call me boss."

¹⁰ Jesus told him, "Get away from me Satan! It's written that we are to 'Only bow down and call God the boss; him and him only.'"

¹¹ The devil then high-tailed it out of there and God sent some angels to take care of his Boy.

Jesus Starts Tellin' Folks the Truth

¹² Jesus heard that his buddy John the Baptist had been thrown in jail so he rode back to Galilee. ¹³ When he left Nazareth, he bunked out in Capernaum ¹⁴ to prove what was once said by Isaiah:

¹⁵ "In the land around Capernaum and along the Jordan, and in Galilee, the land of those who ain't Jews, ¹⁶ the folks livin' in the dark have seen a bright light; those livin' in the land shadowed by death, a great lantern has been lit in the darkness."

¹⁷ From the first time Jesus told folks the truth, he said, "Change the way you think and live, for God's Green Pastures are close."

Some Cowboys Decide to Ride with Jesus

¹⁸ When Jesus was walkin' down by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two cowboys, Peter and his brother Andrew. They were gatherin' some cattle and puttin' 'em in some pens. ¹⁹ "Come and ride with me," Jesus said to 'em, "and help me gather mavericks. I'll make

In verses 2-11, Satan tempted Jesus to stop Him from doin' what he'd come to do, which was to show cowboys the trail that led into the kingdom of heaven (not a kingdom on earth). Do you think Satan has tempted you to stop you from God's purpose for your life?

Also in verses 2-11, Satan tempted Jesus when he was plum give out—when Jesus was alone, hungry and tired during his time in the desert. The next time you are feeling weaker than a newborn calf, will you watch out for Satan to tempt you?

you gatherers of men.”²⁰ They left the herd right there and rode off with him.

²¹ As they rode along, Jesus saw two more cowboys—James and his brother John. They were also getting’ ready to work some cattle. Jesus hollered at them to come on²² and they immediately dropped what they were doin’ and rode off with him.

²³ Jesus traveled everywhere in Galilee. He was teachin’, preachin’, and healin’ all kinds of folks.²⁴ Word traveled near and far about what he was doin’. People came from everywhere so Jesus could help them.²⁵ Huge herds of mavericks, from Galilee to the area on the other side of Jordan Creek, began to follow him.

Matthew 5



The Message on the Mesa

When Jesus saw the great big herd of mavericks, he rode up on a mesa and hunkered down there. His cowboys grabbed a knee right below him,² and he began to tell them:

³ “God takes mighty good care of those folks that don’t have anything to depend on except him.

⁴ “God takes mighty good care of those folks who are hurtin’ and sad because he’s the only one that can offer ‘em comfort.

⁵ “God takes mighty good care of those that don’t think very highly of themselves and he’s gonna give ‘em everything one day.

⁶ “God takes mighty good care of those that would rather do what he says than eat or drink, for one day they will never be hungry or thirsty again.

⁷ “God takes mighty good care of those that don’t have an ounce of cruelty in ‘em, for one day they will be spared.

⁸ “God takes mighty good care of those whose hearts are as pure as spring water, ‘cause they will sure enough see God one day.

⁹ “God takes mighty good care of those who don’t make trouble for anyone, for he’s gonna claim them as his own sons.

Also in verses 2-11 (back on page 6), Satan tempted Jesus through his strengths, because Jesus had the power to satisfy his needs anyway he wanted to, even the wrong way—but he didn’t. Since Jesus was tempted the same ways you are tempted, don’t you think he can help you resist those tempting things too?

In verses 18-22 (back on page 6), when Jesus called the disciples to follow him, they did not make excuses, because they knew Jesus could change their lives for the better. When you feel like Jesus is calling you to ride for him, do you make excuses or do you follow him to a better life?

¹⁰ God takes mighty good care of those who are put-down because of their belief in him and the way they live, for their reward is his green, eternal pasture.

¹¹ “God’s gonna take real special care of those of you who are insulted, spit upon, and talked wrongly about because of me.¹² Just smile and go on because your reward will be more than worth it in heaven. They did the same things to the cowboys that worked for God so many years ago.

Salt and Light

¹³ “Ya’ll are the salt of the earth. If the seasoning loses its flavor, how can it be seasoned again? It ain’t good for anything anymore, so it will be thrown out in the backyard to be trampled on by boots and coyotes.

¹⁴ “Ya’ll are the light of this earth. You can’t miss a big city that sits on a hill.¹⁵ And cowboys don’t light a lantern and then throw their hat on top of it to keep it from shinin’.¹⁶ Just like that, let your lanterns shine bright before men, so that they can see all the good things you do and bow their heads in thanks to the Boss.

Jesus Gives It to ‘Em Straight

¹⁷ “Don’t think that I’ve come here to take away any of the things the Boss told you to do. I didn’t come to take anything away, but to show you the right trail.¹⁸ I ain’t lyin’ when I say that nothing will be changed in what he told you to do until everything is finished.¹⁹ Any cowboy that doesn’t do what the Boss says to do, and tries to tell others to act the same way, will not be thought of very highly in heaven, but those cowboys who do what the Boss says to do will be rewarded handsomely in heaven.²⁰ So listen up, if you can’t do better than those fake religious fellows, you won’t see hide nor hair of God’s Green Pastures.

²¹ “You heard that the Boss said long ago, ‘Don’t kill anyone and if you do, you run the risk of bein’ found guilty.’²² But I’m tellin’ you that it’s no different if you’re even mad at your brother over somethin’ stupid. You can still be found just as guilty. Just by callin’ someone a fool is reason enough to be tried.

²³ “If you’re gonna grab a knee and worship God and you realize that your brother or amigo is mad at ya,²⁴ get up and track ‘em down and get things right between ya’ll. Get things straightened out and then come back and offer your prayers.

In verses 1-11, Jesus said that what God thinks is important is different from the world dotes on—to God, helpin’ others is very important, but money and power don’t mean much. When you think about what is important to you, do you share God’s values or the world’s values?

In verses 21-22, Jesus said that both killing and being mad enough to kill are wrong—so when it comes to sin, what you do is just as bad as what you ponder. Have you tried to control not only your actions but what you think as well?

Matthew 6



Jesus Continues to Teach

“Don’t be a cowboy that only rides his horse in parades so people will notice him. If you do things just so folks will see you, there won’t be a reward for you in heaven.² If you help out a cowboy in need, don’t go around telling everyone about it so they will admire you. I’m dead serious when I say that you will already have received all the notoriety you will ever get if you act that way.³ But when you do help someone out, don’t let the glove on your left hand know what the glove on your right hand is doin’.⁴ If you help folks privately, the Boss knows and will reward you himself.

⁵ “If you only take your hat off and pray when other people are watching, their appreciation is all you’re gonna get.⁶ But when you pray, head out to the barn where even the horses can’t see you. Then the Boss, who sees and hears everything, will reward you.

⁷ “When you talk to the Boss, don’t run your mouth off like an auctioneer that don’t know when to say ‘Sold!’ Just repeatin’ the same words over and over and over again don’t get your prayers answered.⁸ Don’t be like those kinds of guys, ‘cause the Boss knows exactly what you need before you ever open your mouth!⁹ This is how you should talk to the Boss:

Our Boss, who owns the heavenly pastures in the sky, may your name be revered above all others.¹⁰ I hope your pastures come soon and I hope we all do what you want us to down here—just like things are done up there on your spread.¹¹ Bring us today everything we’ll need to get us by,¹² and look the other way when we fail you. Help us also to look the other way when our partners fail us.¹³ And don’t let us fall into gopher holes that will kill us, but keep us safe and sound from evil.

¹⁴ “If you look the other way when people do you wrong, the Boss will do the same for you.¹⁵ But if you hold grudges against your fellow cowboys, the Boss will treat you the same way.

¹⁶ “If you want to show the Boss how much you care for him by goin’ without food

²⁵ “If you deal someone from the bottom of the deck and they decide to file charges on you for your wrongdoing, you better make it up to them before you get thrown in jail.²⁶ I’m tellin’ you that you won’t get out before every last penny has been repaid.

²⁷ “Ya’ll have heard that you shouldn’t ‘jack with someone else’s jenny.’²⁸ But I’m tellin’ you that even if you look at a girl and think about it, you’ve done the same thing in your heart.²⁹ If you think your eye has a mind of its own, then poke it out with a sharp stick. It’s better to have one eye than to burn in hell.³⁰ If your right hand won’t listen to you, lop it off with an axe for the very same reason.

³¹ “It’s been said that, ‘If anyone gets a divorce from his wife, he’s gotta give her the papers that say so.’³² But I’m tellin’ you that you better stick with her unless she’s been sleepin’ around. ‘Cause if you don’t, you’re gonna make an adulteress out of her and anyone that marries her is going to be found guilty of adultery.

³³ “If you remember, the Boss told your grand-daddies, ‘Don’t go back on your word, but stand behind everything you say to the Lord.’³⁴ But I’m tellin’ you straight, Don’t swear at all: either by heaven, for it’s the Boss’ pasture;³⁵ or by the earth, for it’s the trap around the headquarters; or by Jerusalem, for it’s the Boss’ headquarters.³⁶ And don’t swear by your own abilities. You can’t make even one hair on your head become white or black.³⁷ It’s this simple. Let your ‘Yes’ mean ‘Yes’ and your ‘No’ mean ‘No’; anything other than this is the same thing the devil would say.

³⁸ “You’ve heard again and again, the old sayin’, ‘An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.’³⁹ But I’m tellin’ you right now, don’t shoot for revenge against anyone. If someone smacks you on the right cheek, let him have an easy shot at the left one too.⁴⁰ If someone wants to steal your vest, give ‘em your coat too.⁴¹ If someone makes you walk a mile behind their horse, go even further than that.⁴² Give to those that ask and don’t turn anyone away when they ask to borrow something.

⁴³ “You remember that it was said, ‘Love your buddies and hate those that hate you.’⁴⁴ But I tell you: Love those that hate you and pray for those that run their mouths about you.⁴⁵ Then God will claim you as his own son. He makes the sun shine on the good, the bad, and the ugly, and sends ‘em all the same rain to boot.⁴⁶ If you only love those that love you right back, what kind of love are you really showin’? Even politicians do that!⁴⁷ If you only say hi to your brother and your buddies, do you really think you are doin’ somethin’ special? Even dogs sniff each other’s butts when they recognize each other and growl when a strange dog comes by.⁴⁸ Be perfect just like the Boss is.

In verses 29-30, Jesus said you should get rid of anything that causes you to get all hot and bothered—which nowadays might mean certain magazines, web sites or even folks in your life. Is there something or someone that makes you act like a young bull turned out with a bunch of heifers that you should cut out of your life?

In verses 43-48, Jesus said you should love both your pards and your enemies—because when you hate someone, you make it impossible to show the love of Christ through you. Is there someone you could bring closer to Christ if you showed them love instead of hate?

In verse 1, Jesus said to do good things for God, not to impress other cowboys, because if you just want to look all high and mighty to other people, then that will be the only reward you get. When you do something good—like giving, praying or fasting—who do you do it for?

for a little while, don't go around tellin' everyone what you're doin'. Those that do are lookin' for sympathy and admiration from everyone but the Boss. That's all they'll get out of it, too. ¹⁷ But if you go without food for a while, saddle up and ride just like it's any normal day of work. ¹⁸ Then the Boss will know that the only reason you're doin' it is for him. It's this kind of stuff that he rewards.

¹⁹ "Don't buy a bunch of saddles and tradin' spurs here on earth so that people will think highly of you. The saddles will eventually rot and the spurs will rust if someone doesn't break into your barn and steal 'em first. ²⁰ Shoot for the great things of heaven, where there is no rot and thieves can't break in. ²¹ Whatever you long for the most is where your heart really is.

²² "Your eye is like the lantern of your body. When your eyes are good, your whole body (or the barn in this case) is filled with light. ²³ But when your eyes are bad, the whole barn is filled with darkness. ²⁴ If you mistake darkness for the light, you have a mighty dark barn my friend.

²⁵ "That's why I'm tellin' you not to worry about anything. Don't worry 'bout food or water, or if you will have boots to wear. Isn't this life more than about beef steaks, and isn't your body more than about boots? ²⁶ Look at the birds. They don't have a herd of cattle to butcher for beef or a garden to pick vegetables for canning, but the Boss provides for them every day. You mean a lot more to him than little birds do. ²⁷ Can a little bit of worry really do anything to add a single moment more to your life?

²⁸ "Why worry about your boots and chaps? Even prickly pear have apples and grow strong in the pasture. Cactus don't have to work for these beautiful apples, ²⁹ and even the richest man who ever lived, Solomon, didn't have clothes like a cactus does. ³⁰ And if the Boss cares so much for cactus' that are here today and rot tomorrow, he certainly cares for you. Why can't you have a little more faith than that?"

³¹ "So don't sit around frettin' all the time, sayin' things like, 'I wonder what we'll eat? Will there be anything to drink? Will I have a neckerchief to keep warm in the winter?' ³² This is the way people think that don't believe in the Boss, but he knows everything you need. ³³ Search out his way before you search for anything else, and be sure and live like he wants you to. Then he will give you everything you need.

³⁴ "Don't fret about tomorrow, for tomorrow will fret about itself. Today's filled with enough frettin' for one day.

In verse 24, Jesus said you can chose only one master, either God or money—although anything that you think about more than God can also be your master. What do you spend most of your time thinking about—God, money or something else?

In verses 25-34, Jesus said you shouldn't fret about the things you need in life, like grub, wrangler jeans, and a roof over your head, because if you ride for God, he will provide for you. Even though you work hard, do you still worry or do you trust God to provide?

Matthew 7



Judging Others

¹ "Don't make opinions about what others do, and no opinion will be made about you. ² The way you treat others is the way you will be treated. The judging eye you cast upon others will be the same judging eye that will be cast on you.

³ "Don't criticize your partner's horse for slinging its head when you can't even get on your own horse without gettin' bucked off. ⁴ How can you offer to help your friend out with his horse when you can't even put a saddle on yours? ⁵ That's just bein' a hypocrite! When you get your horse goin' good and steady, then you can offer to help your partner.

⁶ "Don't give the best of what the Boss has given you to the coyotes. Don't throw pearls into the pig pen just so they will get mashed down in the mud and never be seen again.

How to Talk to the Boss

⁷ "If you need somethin', keep tellin' the Boss about it and you will get it. If you keep lookin' for the cows in the pasture, you will find them if you don't give up. If you keep knockin' on the barn door, he will open it for you. ⁸ If you ask, you will receive. If you knock, the door will be opened. If you look, you will find.

⁹ "If you're a mom or a dad, listen up. If your children are hungry and ask for something to eat, do you hand them a fence post? ¹⁰ If they ask for some macaroni and cheese, do you give them turpentine and taters? Of course you don't! ¹¹ So if you sinners know how to take care of your kids, how much more will the Boss be able to take care of those he thinks of as his own children?

The Rule to Live By

¹² "Work another man's horse the way you want him workin' your best horse. This is what the Rules and the Wise Cowboys were tryin' to teach all those years ago.

In verses 1-5, Jesus said to take a hard look at yourself before you judge what's wrong with other people. When you are tempted to criticize someone for something, do you check the mirror first to see if you are guilty of the same thing?

The Narrow Sorting Gate

¹³ “You can only enter the Boss’ ranch by way of the narrow sortin’ gate. The trail to hell is wide open and easy to follow for those that choose it. ¹⁴ But the gate to life is narrow and the trail is rough and steep. Only a few will ever find it or be able to follow it.

The Mesquite Tree and Its Beans

¹⁵ “Look out for the fake fellows who stop by the ranch disguised as harmless sheep but are really rabid coyotes. ¹⁶ You can spot ‘em by their beans. Can you pick beans off of tumbleweeds, or taters off of cockleburrs? ¹⁷ A good tree produces beans that will feed the animals, but a bad tree produces beans that kill cattle and cowboys. ¹⁸ A good tree can’t make bad beans and a bad tree can’t make good beans. ¹⁹ So every tree that can’t make good beans is cut down and used for firewood. ²⁰ You can spot a tree by its beans, and you can spot people by their ways.

Real Cowboys

²¹ “Not everyone who claims to be a cowboy that works for me will end up on the Boss’ ranch. Only those cowboys who do what the Boss wants them to will end up there. ²² On the day of reckonin’, many cowboys will claim that they worked for me. They will say, ‘Lord! Lord! Didn’t we ride out and tell people about you and get rid of evil things in your name? Didn’t we do things that could only have come from you?’ ²³ But I’m gonna tell ‘em, ‘Maybe so! But we never rode together as partners and amigos. Get out of my sight and off my spread.’

Building a House on Solid Rock

²⁴ “Any cowboy who listens to what I tell them and does it, knows the right trail to take. Just like a cowboy that builds his bunkhouse on solid rock. ²⁵ When the creek rises and the north wind blows like a hurricane, not a thing will happen to it. ²⁶ But anyone who listens to what I’m sayin’ and then just blows it off is like the cowboy who built his bunkhouse on sand. ²⁷ When the creek rises and the norther starts blowin’, his bunkhouse won’t last a split second.”

²⁸ When Jesus was done talkin’, everyone just kind of stood there in awe and wonder. ²⁹ He said things like he knew what he was talkin’ about and had the authority to say it—unlike those fake fellas that didn’t know nothin’ except rules and regulations.

In verses 15-20, Jesus said to watch out for sorry teachers, which is anybody that has an influence on how you live, because they are actually more interested in helping themselves than you. Is there someone that has taught you to sling your head?

In verses 24-27, Jesus said that if you build your life around what he says, you will be able to weather the storm—but if you don’t, you won’t. Do you know people who have used their faith to help them through some deep canyons of life?

Matthew 8



Jesus Heals a Man with Hoof Rot

A ton of people followed Jesus as he came down from the mesa. ² All of a sudden, a man came from the brush and took off his hat and hit one knee right in front of him and said, “Boss, if you want to, you can heal me of this hoof rot.”

³ Jesus laid a hand on the guy’s shoulder and said, “I sure enough want to. Be healed!” The hoof rot that had covered his body instantly vanished. ⁴ Jesus told him, “Don’t say a word about this to anyone. Instead, head to town and let the priest have a look at you. Take something with you so you can offer it to God for healin’ you. This is how you will let people know you’ve been healed.”

The Brand Inspector’s Faith

⁵ When Jesus went back to Capernaum, a Roman brand inspector came to him and begged him, ⁶ “Lord, my young day-worker is paralyzed and in a lot of pain.”

⁷ Jesus said, “I’ll go with you and make him well.”

⁸ But the brand inspector told him, “I’d really rather you not. It’s not necessary. All you have to do is say the word and I know the young lad will be healed. ⁹ I know this because I do what my boss tells me to and my cowboys that ride for me do what I tell them to. If I give ‘em word to ride hard west, they do it. If I give ‘em word to come back, they do it.”

¹⁰ Jesus stood there amazed. He turned around and said, “That’s the kind of faith I’ve been lookin’ for and I finally found it! ¹¹ And let me tell you something else folks. Cowboys and cowgirls are goin’ to come from everywhere and sit down at the Great Campfire in the sky with all the saints. ¹² But a lot of the cowboys from Israel—those that the Campfire was made for—will be thrown out in the darkness on their heads, where there will be constant squawlin’ and grindin’ of teeth.”

¹³ Then Jesus told the brand inspector, “Go on back to your hacienda. Your young cowboy will be healed because you believed I could do it.” Come to find out, the young

In verses 1-3, Jesus healed a man with leprosy, which was an incurable sickness that could be spread by touch, causing many folks to turn their backs on lepers. If Jesus could help a leper, is there any reason you should turn your back on those that need your help?

In verses 5-13, a soldier showed more faith than the so-called “religious” people—and because of his faith, Jesus did more for that soldier than he did for the “religious” people. Which group pleases God more, cowboys who only say they ride the narrow trail or cowboys who really do?

cowboy was healed at that exact hour.

Jesus Cures Many Folks

¹⁴ When Jesus made it back to Peter's house, Peter's mother-in-law was mighty ill with a burnin' fever. ¹⁵ But when Jesus walked in and touched her on the hand, the fever left her. She felt so good she got up and cooked 'em all some buttermilk biscuits.

¹⁶ That evening while they were sittin' on the porch, a bunch of folks were brought to Jesus that were possessed by devilish spirits. Jesus simply told the spirits to take a hike and the people were cured. Jesus also healed everyone that was sick. ¹⁷ This fulfilled what Isaiah had said about him long ago:

"He hauled out our sicknesses and vanquished our diseases."

Following Jesus has its Costs

¹⁸ Jesus saw that the folks were startin' to crowd around him so he told his cowboys to cross to the other side of the lake.

¹⁹ Then one of the teachers that taught the rules said to him, "Hey, I'll go wherever you go Jesus."

²⁰ But Jesus told him, "Coyotes have dens and birds have nests, but the Boss' Son doesn't have any place to call home."

²¹ Another fellow said, "My dad died, and as soon as his funeral's over, I'll come with you."

²² Jesus shook his head and said, "If you are really willin' to follow me then do it right now. You can't help anyone that's already dead."

Jesus and the Storm

²³ Then Jesus jumped in the boat and they headed for the other side of the lake. ²⁴ All of a sudden, a boat-sinker of a storm blew in. But Jesus had his hat down over his eyes and slept through it. ²⁵ The disciples were frettin' and fearin' that this was gonna be the end of them all. They finally woke Jesus up by shakin' him and saying, "Jesus, save us!! We're all gonna drown!"

²⁶ Jesus shook his head patiently and said, "Quit actin' like a bunch of sissies! You ain't got very much faith at all, do you?" Jesus got up, stretched, and told the wind to

In verses 14-15, Jesus healed Peter's mom-in-law—and she immediately got up and looked for ways to serve him. The next time God helps you, will you show your appreciations by looking for ways to ride for him as quick as you can?

shut-up and the waves to sit down . . . and they did.

²⁷ The hands were shocked, stunned, and amazed and asked, "What kind of hombre is this? Even the wind and the waves listen at him!"

The Demons and the Pigs

²⁸ When he got over to the Gadarene country, two possessed men that came from the cemetery met him. They was so brutal and mean that no one could pass that way. ²⁹ "What does the Boss' Son want with us?" they screamed. "Have you come to kill us before you are supposed to?"

³⁰ There was a herd of pigs feeding in the next pasture. ³¹ The demons begged and cried out to Jesus, "If you get rid of us, send us into that herd of pigs over there."

³² He told them, "Alright then. Go!" So the demons left the men and went into the herd of pigs. When they possessed the pigs, the four-legged slop eaters all ran to a cliff and jumped in the water and drown. ³³ The farmers that were tendin' the pigs ran off to town and told everyone what had happened, includin' what had happened to the two demon possessed men. ³⁴ Everyone got together when they heard the news and went out to confront Jesus. When they saw him, they told him to get the heck out of Dodge.

Matthew 9



The Man Who Could Not Move

Jesus got in a boat and headed for the town where he was raised. ² Some fellows brought him a guy that was paralyzed and could not move, lying on a bedroll. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the guy on the bedroll, "Don't worry amigo, your sins are forgiven."

³ Some teachers of the law said to each other, "This fella can't do that and get away with it!"

⁴ Jesus knew what they were thinking and saying. He said to them, "Why are your minds filled with evil? ⁵ What's easier for me to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say,

In verses 1-8, Jesus not only forgave the stove-up man's sins, but he also healed his legs—which he did to prove to the crowd that he had the power he said he had. Are you waiting for Jesus to show you a miracle before you'll ride for him?

‘Get up and walk?’⁶ Just so you know, the Boss’ Son can forgive sins here on earth.” Then he told the man who couldn’t move, “Get up, take your bedroll and mosey on back home.”⁷ The man did just that.⁸ When everyone saw this, they were amazed and praised the Boss, who had given this type of authority and power to men.

Jesus Sups with Sinners

⁹ When Jesus left there, he saw a guy named Matthew sitting at the Tax Collector’s shack. “Come on,” he told him and Matthew left everything right there and went with him.

¹⁰ Jesus went to Matthew’s house and supped with him. A lot of Matthew’s friends, mostly outlaws and politicians that were crooked, came and ate with them and Jesus’ hands.¹¹ When the Religious-Know-It-Alls (Pharisees) seen this, they asked Jesus’ cowboys, “Why does your trail boss eat with outlaws and no-accounts?”

¹² Jesus heard ‘em and said, “The healthy cattle don’t need a Vet, the sick one’s do.”¹³ You need to head off and ponder what this means: ‘I want mercy, not sacrifice.’ Because I haven’t come to round up the gentle cattle, but I have come to gather the mavericks.”

Religious Leaders Question Jesus about Fasting

¹⁴ John the Baptist’s day-workers came and questioned Jesus about worshiping God by not eating. They asked, “Why is it that the Religious-Know-It-Alls (Pharisees) and us fast, but your cowhands don’t have to?”

¹⁵ Jesus told them, “The folks at a wedding don’t get all sad and mopey when the groom is at the party. There will come a time he has to light out and leave ‘em. That’s when they will fast.”

¹⁶ “You don’t put an unshrunk cotton patch on a pair of britches that are torn. As soon as you wash them, the patch will shrink and make the tear worse.¹⁷ Neither do cowboys put new wine into an old wineskin. New wine will ferment and expand, stretchin’ the leather bag. If the bag has already been stretched, it’s just gonna tear. That’s why you put new wine into new leather wineskins and old wine into old wineskins. That way, both are still usable.”

In verse 9, Jesus told Matthew to follow him and Matthew did—leaving behind a job that made him a lot of money by swindlin’ folks with their taxes. Is there anything in your life that you need to leave underneath a mesquite bush because it keeps you from following Jesus?

In verses 10-12, Jesus supped with sinners, including Matthew who was a cheating tax collector—yet Matthew would become one of the original twelve disciples of Christ. Have you thought that some people were too rank to follow Jesus—or have you felt like you were one of those cowboys?

Jesus Heals a Couple of Girls

¹⁸ When Jesus was talking, a man that was in charge of running a church came and got down on his knees in front of him. The man said, “My daughter has just died. But I believe if you come to my house, you can raise her from the dead.”¹⁹ Jesus got up immediately and told his hands to come on.

²⁰ Just then, a lady who had been bleeding for twelve years snuck up behind Jesus and touched the edge of his shirt.²¹ She told herself, “I know I will be healed if I can touch him. Even if it’s the edge of his shirt.”

²² Jesus spun around and told her, “Cheer up, daughter,” he said, “you’ve just been healed by your faith.” From that very moment, the woman was healed.

²³ When Jesus entered the house of the guy whose daughter had died, he saw people cryin’ and playin’ sad songs on instruments.²⁴ Jesus told ‘em, “This girl ain’t dead, she’s just asleep.” But they all just laughed and mocked him.²⁵ Jesus told ‘em all to get out and when they were all outside, he went into the little girl’s bedroom. Jesus went up to her and took her by the hand and she stood up.²⁶ Word spread around the countryside like wildfire about what had happened.

The Blind and Mute are Healed by Jesus

²⁷ When Jesus left, two blind guys followed him and yelled out to him, “Help us and have mercy on us Son of David!”

²⁸ He took ‘em indoors and asked them, “Do you think that I can heal you?”

”Yes, Lord,” they said.

²⁹ He reached out and gently touched their eyes and said, “It will be done according to your faith.”³⁰ Just then, their sight was restored. But the first thing they saw was Jesus wagging a stern finger at them. Jesus said, “Don’t you tell a soul about this. You understand me?”³¹ But them fellows went out and told everyone what had happened to them.

³² When Jesus and his cowhands left, a man that was demon possessed and couldn’t talk was brought to Jesus.³³ Jesus drove the demon out and the man spoke for the first time. Those that were watching stood there with their mouths hanging wide open in astonishment. They said, “No one has ever seen anything as awesome as this in all of Israel!”

In verses 36-38 (ahead on page 19), Jesus called the crowd “cattle,” meaning many were ready to be brought into God’s kingdom—but he also said he needed day-workers to go into those “pastures.” Are you prepared for God to use you to gather someone into his kingdom?

³⁴ But the Religious-Know-It-Alls (Pharisees) said, “He must be working for the devil in order to drive out demons.”

Prayer for More Cowboys to Gather Mavericks

³⁵ Jesus went all throughout the country, teaching in their churches, telling the good news of God’s Green Pastures and healing every ache and ailment. ³⁶ When he saw all the mavericks, he felt sorry for them because they were shunned and starved, like cattle without a brand and no rancher to take care of ‘em. ³⁷ Then he told his cowboys, “The cattle are everywhere, but there just ain’t enough cowboys. ³⁸ Ask the Lord of the gathering to send out cowboys into his pastures.”

Matthew 10



Jesus Sends His Cowboys Out to Gather

Jesus hollered for his cowboys to come over to him. He gave ‘em the authority to get rid of evil spirits and to cure ills and ailments.

² These are the names of the first cowhands (apostles): Peter and his brother Andrew; old Zebedees’ sons James and John; ³ Phillip and Bart (sometimes called Bartholomew); Thomas and the tax collector Matthew; Alphaeus’ boy James, and Thad (also called Thaddaeus by his grandma); ⁴ Simon, who was extremely intense, and Judas Iscariot, who double-crossed Jesus.

⁵ Jesus sent these twelve cowboys out to gather and laid out for them what he wanted them to do: “Don’t go to the pastures that aren’t Jewish just yet or any pastures where the cross-bred Samaritans hang out. ⁶ Go gather the lost cattle of Israel. ⁷ When you’re out there, give everyone this message: ‘The kingdom of heaven and the Boss’ perfect pastures are real close.’ ⁸ Doctor anyone that is sick and I’m even givin’ you the gift of raisin’ up those that are dead. You didn’t do anything to deserve any of this and you should give just as I have given you. ⁹ Don’t hide any cash or coins in the bottom of your boots; ¹⁰ take no saddle bags or bedrolls, or an extra vest or pair of britches; those you take care of will and should take care of you.

In verse 1, Jesus “called” his apostles, which means he invited them—he didn’t rope ‘em and drag them to him; he let them decide for themselves. Which choice have you been making—to follow Jesus or to stay behind?

In verse 2-4, among the people called to be apostles, there were fishermen, a tax collector and a political activist—people from all walks of life. If Jesus can use a man who works with fish or taxes or politics, don’t you think he can use one that works with horses?

¹¹ “It don’t matter whether you’re stayin’ at a ranch, a town, or a big city, find someone honest and trustworthy and stay at their place until you leave. ¹² When you enter the home, take your hat off to it. ¹³ If the place and its people treat you well and deserves your blessin’, give it to ‘em. If not, don’t feel bad about takin’ it with you. ¹⁴ If no one welcomes you in or listens to what you say, shake the dust off your boots and ride away. ¹⁵ I’m tellin’ you what, it’ll be better for Sodom and Gomorrah on judgment day than it will be for that place. ¹⁶ I’m sendin’ ya’ll out like steaks to hungry coyotes. Ya’ll will need to be savvy as horse traders, but innocent as the day you were born.

Jesus Tells His Cowboys About the Coming Rough Times

¹⁷ “Watch your backs with men. They will hand you over to the local sheriffs and beat you within an inch of your life, right there in the churches. ¹⁸ Because of me, you will be taken before governors, presidents, and later, even to those who aren’t Jews, so that you can tell them about who I am. ¹⁹ Don’t fret about what you’re supposed to say when they arrest you though. When the time comes, I’ll give you the words that you’ll need. ²⁰ It won’t be you that’ll be talkin’ at ‘em, it’ll be the Spirit of God speakin’ through you.

²¹ “Brothers are gonna double-cross each other, and a father will do the same to his kid. Children will buck their parents and turn on ‘em, and have ‘em put to death. ²² Everyone will hate you because of me, but if you stay in the saddle and ride with me, you will be saved in the end. ²³ When they pester, plague, pick-on, and persecute you, just saddle up and ride away to somewheres else. I’m tellin’ you honest, you won’t even get through the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes.

²⁴ “A cowhand isn’t over the trail boss and a horse isn’t above its rider. ²⁵ It’s fine for the cowhand to be like the trail boss. If the trail boss has been called Satan, then his crew will be called that more!

²⁶ “So don’t fret or be afraid of them. Nothin’ will be hidden where you won’t see it comin’. ²⁷ What I tell you around the campfire at night, tell everyone else durin’ the day. What I whisper to you in private, tell the whole world. ²⁸ Don’t be scared of people that can kill your body. They can’t kill your soul. Instead, be afraid of the one that can kill your body and soul in hell. ²⁹ You can buy two little birds for a penny, can’t you? But not one of them will fall out of the sky without God’s permission. ³⁰ He even knows how many hairs you have underneath your hat. ³¹ What I’m sayin’ is, don’t be afraid of anything. The Boss loves you a lot more than little birds.

³² “If you tell everyone at the livery, the feed store, the cow sale, the boot shop, and

In verse 16, Jesus told the disciples to tell people the good news about him, but be prepared for people who would try to mistreat them or take advantage of them. The next time you share the Gospel with someone, will you remember to be as savvy as a snake but as innocent as a dove?

In verse 32, Jesus said that if a person would speak up for him to other men, he would speak up for that person to God—but if a person would not speak up for him, then neither would he speak up for them. When is the last time you spoke up for Jesus?

anywhere else you go, that you belong to my crew, I will tell God that you ride with me. ³³ But if you deny ridin' with me, I'll dang sure deny you before the Boss when you get there.

³⁴ "Don't think that I have come to make everyone lovey-dovey and peaceful. I didn't come to bring superficial harmony, but a sword. ³⁵ Because I have come to turn 'a boy against his dad, a girl against her mom, a daughter-in-law against her husband's mother—³⁶ a cowboy's worst enemies will be the folks on his own spread."

³⁷ "Any cowboy that loves his mom or dad more than me isn't worthy to ride for my outfit. Same goes for anyone who loves their kids more than they love me. ³⁸ Anyone who isn't willin' to take up his own cross and ride with me isn't worthy of me. ³⁹ Anyone that rides for themselves will lose their life, but whoever rides with me and shuns themselves for my sake will find life.

⁴⁰ "He who welcomes and receives you receives me, and he who receives me receives the Boss. ⁴¹ Anyone who welcomes one of my cowboys gets the same reward as the cowboy that rides for me and anyone who welcomes an honest man because he is honest will get an honest man's bounty. ⁴² And if someone so much as lifts a finger to help one of my cowboys because they ride for me, I'm tellin' you straight, he will get rewarded."

Matthew 11



John's Bout with Doubt

When Jesus got through training on his cowboys, he went and trained others that would listen in and around Galilee.

² John the Baptist was stuck in jail and when he heard all the great things Jesus was accomplishin', ³ he sent some of his boys out to ask Jesus, "Are you the real deal or should we be waitin' on someone else?"

⁴ Jesus said, "Go back and tell John what you see and hear: ⁵ The blind have been cured, the lame are walkin' around, those with all sorts of diseases are bein' cured, deaf ears can now hear, folks are comin' back from the dead, and the good news is

In verses 2-3, John started to doubt Jesus, and Jesus said to look at the facts—Jesus healed the blind, the lame, the lepers, the deaf and the dead, all while spreading the good news. If you start to doubt Jesus, will you look at the facts in the Bible and in the changed lives of Christian cowboys?

bein' taught to the poor. ⁶ God will bless those who won't shy away or be ashamed of ridin' with me."

⁷ When John's boys left, Jesus began tellin' everyone that was there about John. "What kind of man did y'all think would be livin' out there in the desert? Someone that resembles a tumbleweed and is just blown around the pasture every time the wind picks up? ⁸ Did you go out there lookin' for a guy in a three-piece suit? Those guys live in fancy houses, not the desert. ⁹ If you went out there lookin' for a prophet, then you sure enough found him. But John was more than just a prophet, ¹⁰ he is the one that they've been talkin' about since before you were born:

'I'm sendin' a cowboy to blaze a trail for you, and he will bust the brush open so you can come through.'

¹¹ "This right here's the truth: No woman has ever given birth to someone greater than John the Baptist. But, the sorriest cowboy in God's Green Pastures is greater than John. ¹² From the days of John the Baptist until right now, the Pastures of Heaven have been ridin' this way hard and many ruthless people have been attacking it. ¹³ Until John came, all the world had been waitin' and talkin' and lookin' forward to this time right here. ¹⁴ If you'll open your minds and hearts to understand this, he is just like the great cowboy Elijah, who wasn't scared to tell folks the truth and tell them about me comin'. ¹⁵ If you got a lick of sense you'll be able to understand what I'm tellin' you.

¹⁶ "Let me see if I can explain the folks of this generation. They are like the fans in the stands while the cowboys stand in the arena and talk to them. The cowboys say to them:

¹⁷ We rode the rough stock for you and got bucked off, but you didn't cheer because you wanted to see us rope. We roped fast and quick, but you didn't clap because no one got bucked off."

¹⁸ "John didn't drink alcohol and often went without food so he could pray, but y'all said he was evil. ¹⁹ But then I come, the Son of Man, having a beer with outlaws and whores but y'all say, 'He's a pig and a drunk and he hangs out with low lifes.' A wise man gets results no matter what."

Rest for the Soul is Coming

²⁰ Jesus began to criticize the cities where most of his miracles had been done. Even after all he did, they just kept right on with their same old sorry ways instead of ridin'

In verse 25 (ahead on page 23), Jesus prayed about two kinds of people—the worldly "wise" who think they have all the answers and the "children" of God who look to God for wisdom. Which one are you—the arrogant know-it-all or the humble child of God?