



Kingdom Preparation

Faith and Authority

Matthew 21:23-32

How to Prepare

Begin preparing by reading the full passage a few times. Then answer the questions for yourself. Then think about how your Small Group might answer them. Try re-wording the questions to fit you and your Small Group. Don't feel tied down to the discussion guide, just be sure to discuss the main point of the text in your conversations.

Resources-

<https://www.gotquestions.org/parable-two-sons.html>

<https://www.gotquestions.org/Bible-repentance.html>

Sermon Outline:

Matthew 21:23-32

Fake Faith:

1. Challenges God's Authority. V. 23
2. Obfuscates the Truth. Vv. 24-27
3. Pretends to Obey. Vv. 28-31a
4. Refuses to Repent. Vv. 29, 31-32

Matthew 21:23-32

you by what authority I am doing these things.

The Authority of Jesus Questioned

23 Jesus entered the temple courts, and, while he was teaching, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to him. "By what authority are you doing these things?" they asked. "And who gave you this authority?"

24 Jesus replied, "I will also ask you one question. If you answer me, I will tell you by what authority I am doing these things.

25 John's baptism—where did it come from? Was it from heaven, or of human origin?"

They discussed it among themselves and said, "If we say, 'From heaven,' he will ask, 'Then why didn't you believe him?'

26 But if we say, 'Of human origin'—we are afraid of the people, for they all hold that John was a prophet."

27 So they answered Jesus, "We don't know."

Then he said, "Neither will I tell

The Parable of the Two Sons

28 "What do you think? There was a man who had two sons. He went to the first and said, 'Son, go and work today in the vineyard.'

29 "'I will not,' he answered, but later he changed his mind and went.

30 "Then the father went to the other son and said the same thing. He answered, 'I will, sir,' but he did not go.

31 "Which of the two did what his father wanted?"

"The first," they answered.

Jesus said to them, "Truly I tell you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you.

32 For John came to you to show you the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes did. And even after you saw this, you did not repent and believe him.

Discussion Questions

Ask a volunteer to read Matthew 21:23-32.

INTRODUCTION

Here is a question or two to help introduce the topic and jump-start discussion.

1. In your own words, what is the difference between a fan of someone and a follower who is under that person's authority? Why is authority such a difficult concept for people to embrace in our culture today?

UNDERSTANDING AND APPLICATION

These questions should help your Small Group dig deeper into the text and then apply it to your lives today.

I. Fake Faith: Challenges God's Authority. V. 23

2. Who were the religious leaders and elders, and why did they ask about Jesus' authority? Was it a sincere pursuit of truth or defensive maneuvering?

3. What is Christ's source of authority? Why should the religious leaders have known about His authority, and how should they have approached Jesus with this question?

4. How can we discern the authority of a ministry, teacher, or truth claim in our lives? What should that process of discernment look like?

II. Fake Faith: Obfuscates the Truth. Vv. 24-27

5. Obfuscation is defined as making something "obscure or unclear." How did the leaders obfuscate the truth in their answer to Jesus' question to protect their own status?

6. Why do people sometimes play dumb with clear commands from scripture? What are some ways people tend to do that?

III. Fake Faith: Pretends to Obey. Vv. 28-31a

7. In the parable of the two children, what would have been the ideal response to the father? Which child is affirmed to have obeyed his father, and why is it significant that neither of the two children obey the father perfectly?

8. What does the comparison of the two children teach us about pretending and repentance? What does it look like when people "pretend" to be Christians?

IV. Fake Faith: Refuses to Repent. Vv. 29, 31-32

9. Why does Jesus say that the tax collectors and prostitutes will enter the Kingdom before the religious leaders? What is the prerequisite to entering the Kingdom that the religious leaders refuse to do but the more obvious sinners are more willing to do?

10. What is the process of repentance and what does it start with? What hope do Christ's words hold for repentant sinners, and what condemnation do they warn about for "self-righteous" sinners?

Commentary (from ESV Study Bible)

Matt. 21:23–22:46 Controversies in the Temple Court over Jesus' Authority. On Tuesday of Holy Week, Jesus presents three extended parables showing God's judgment on the leaders for not encouraging the people to accept Jesus' invitation to the kingdom of heaven (21:28–22:14). This is followed by a series of four interactions as the religious leaders try to trap Jesus, who in turn reveals his true identity as the Son of God (22:15–46).

Matt. 21:23 These things most likely refers to Jesus' disrupting of the commercial activities of the temple the previous day (vv. 12–13), and also to his authority to heal (vv. 14–16) and to teach in the temple (v. 23), because he is neither an official priestly nor scribal authority.

Matt. 21:25–27 From heaven or from man? The leaders' refusal to answer this question shows their dishonesty, but Jesus also traps them, for as religious leaders they must now profess their ignorance. And if they do not know whether John was from God, how can they judge whether Jesus is?
Chart: The Parables of Jesus (Matthew 21:28–44)

Matt. 21:28–32 The parable of the two sons demonstrates the religious leaders' failure to respond rightly to John the Baptist's prophetic ministry. They hypocritically did not live up to their talk. The fruit of one's life ultimately proves whether or not one is obedient to God's message. A person's actions ultimately prove whether or not he is obedient to God.