



Kingdom Wisdom

An Upside Down Greatness

Matthew 11:7-19

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://learn.ligonier.org/devotionals/more-prophet>

<https://learn.ligonier.org/devotionals/greatness-of-service>

<https://www.gotquestions.org/wisdom-is-justified-by-her-children.html>

Sermon Outline:

Matthew 11:7-19

1. Enact Biblical Conviction. Vv. 7-8
2. Embrace Christ's Calling. Vv. 9-14
3. Endure Foolish Criticism. Vv. 15-19

Matthew 11:7-19

Jesus' Tribute to John

7 As these men were going away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John, "What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind?

8 But what did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothing? Those who wear soft clothing are in kings' palaces!

9 But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and one who is more than a prophet.

10 This is the one about whom it is written,
'Behold, I send My messenger ahead of You, Who will prepare Your way before You.'

11 Truly I say to you, among those born of women there has not arisen anyone greater than John the Baptist! Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

12 From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and violent men take it by force.

13 For all the prophets and the Law prophesied until John.

14 And if you are willing to accept it, John himself is Elijah who was to come.

15 He who has ears to hear, let him hear.

16 "But to what shall I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the market places, who call out to the other children,

17 and say, 'We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not mourn.'

18 For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon!'

19 The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Behold, a gluttonous man and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds."

Discussion Questions

Ask a volunteer to read Matthew 11:7-19.

INTRODUCTION

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

1. Who is someone you consider to be a great person in history? What makes that person great?

UNDERSTANDING AND APPLICATION

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

I. Enact Biblical Conviction. Vv. 7-8

2. What implied answer was Jesus expecting from His rhetorical questions about John the Baptist in vv. 7-8? What is Jesus communicating about John when He uses these references to "a reed shaken by the wind" or "a man dressed in soft clothing?"

3. What was the source of John's conviction (firmly held beliefs)? Why was his conviction so strong, and how did he live it out?

4. What is the difference between having conviction and enacting conviction? How can we discern if our convictions are right or wrong?

II. Embrace Christ's Calling. Vv. 9-14

5. What was John's calling in life, and how was his greatness connected to his calling? Why does Jesus say that he is the greatest of all the prophets and the greatest of all people to ever live up until that time?

(John was the greatest to ever live, because of the importance of his particular calling in life. John was a prophet who was also a fulfillment of prophecy - Malachi 3:1, 4:5. He was the metaphorical Elijah; the herald of the Messiah who is God in flesh come to dwell with man. Until that time, there had been no more important role in all the world. But now the Kingdom of Heaven had dawned on the earth, and a new era began... John was great, not because of himself, but simply because he said "yes" to the greatest calling in the world... but to put one's faith in Christ is an even higher calling.)

6. Considering the arrival of the Kingdom of Heaven and the New Covenant that Jesus came to make, why are the least in Christ's Kingdom considered to be even greater than John the Baptist was during his life? What does this tell us about the high calling of being a follower of Christ?

(To put your faith in Christ and live for Him is an even higher calling than John's, because in the New Covenant, we are made co-heirs with Christ - Romans 8:16-17. So even if Christ's particular call on your life was to shovel dung till He returns, you still haven't experienced the lows that Christ has, and you still already hold the status of son of God!)

7. What does the statement "be who Christ made you to be" mean in your own words? How does saying "yes" to Jesus instead of saying "yes" to the expectations of the world make you great?

(Our greatness is not our own. It is really the reflection and enjoyment of Christ's greatness. It is most accurate to say that saying "yes" to Jesus is how you experience and enjoy His greatness.)

III. Endure Foolish Criticism. Vv. 15-19

8. How does Jesus describe the critical and unappeasable nature of the people? What does the critical and unappeasable nature of the people say about the attitude of their hearts?

(They were prideful people, because they thought they knew better than God what John and Jesus' ministries should have been. Their pride made them fools as they rejected God's prophet and the Son of God Himself, because they thought they knew better.)

9. What does Jesus mean when He says, "let he who has ears, let him hear," and "yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds?" What do we need before we can get wisdom, and how does the Bible instruct us to get more wisdom and understanding?

(The ministries of John the Baptist and Jesus Christ would be proved to be from God through the results of their ministries. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom... the beginning of wisdom is this, get wisdom." - Proverbs 1:7, 4:7. We need faith in God and humility to know that we don't know anything compared to Him. That is where wisdom starts. From there, James tells us that if we want wisdom, we need to pray for it. And the rest of Proverbs and Psalm 119 make it clear that wisdom is given through God's Word.)

10. What does it take to endure foolish criticism? How can we discern helpful counsel from foolish criticism?

(The people in the text were not speaking from a place of humility or concern. They were speaking from a desire of personal appeasement. Foolish criticism comes from a heart of pride and/or a desire for personal appeasement. Helpful counsel -or positive criticism- comes from a desire to better understand or to help. It has the betterment of others in mind rather than just personal appeasement. Foolish criticism is the most obvious when it is against biblical principles or supporting unbiblical principles.)

Commentary (from ESV Study Bible)

Matt. 11:10 who will prepare your way. See note on 3:3.

Matt. 11:11 Those born of women is a Jewish idiom for ordinary human birth (cf. Job 14:1; 15:14; 25:4), and Jesus implicitly contrasts this with the new birth into the kingdom of heaven. no one greater. John's mission was uniquely privileged because he prepared the way for the Messiah and the kingdom. greater than he. But those in the kingdom of heaven have the greater privilege because they have actually entered the kingdom (in its new covenant reality) and become partakers in the new covenant through the blood of Christ. (On the salvation of believers in the OT, see Romans 4; see also notes on Matt. 22:31–32; Rom. 10:14–15; Heb. 11:4.)

Matt. 11:12 That the kingdom has suffered violence (Gk. *biazō*) probably indicates opposition from the religious establishment, and the violent take it by force probably refers to the actions of specific evil people like Herod Antipas, who had arrested John.

Matt. 11:13 all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John. John the Baptist was the last of a long history of OT prophets that looked forward to the coming of Christ.

Matt. 11:14 he is Elijah who is to come. Malachi had prophesied that "Elijah" would prepare the way for the Messiah (Mal. 3:1; 4:5; see note on Mal. 4:4–6). He did not actually imply only a literal reappearance of Elijah, and John's earlier denial that he was Elijah (John 1:21) was probably an attempt to correct a popular belief that Elijah himself would reappear. Before John's birth, he was designated as the one who would minister in the "spirit and power of Elijah" (Luke 1:17), thereby fulfilling Malachi's prophecy.

Matt. 11:16 this generation. The crowds and the religious leaders who have rejected John's and Jesus' ministries. They are like selfish and stubborn children, always insisting on their own way.

Matt. 11:17 We played the flute . . . and you did not dance. The people reject the gospel because John and Jesus do not conform to their expectations and do what they want.

Matt. 11:18–19 neither eating nor drinking. Some apparently accused John of demonic influence because of his appearance and ascetic lifestyle. Son of Man came eating and drinking. Jesus' association with those in need of spiritual healing, and his refusal to fast according to Pharisaic expectations (see 9:14–17), was turned into an accusation of his being a glutton and a drunkard. However, God's wisdom (Gk. *sophia*) would be justified (vindicated) by the righteous fruit of John's and Jesus' life and ministry.