



FATHER



MASTER



BRIDEGROOM



KING



A 6-SESSION **BIBLE STUDY**  
ON THE KINGDOM PARABLES

LEADER'S GUIDE

## SESSION 1

### A Father and His Sons

*“Which of the two did the will of his father?” Matthew 21:31*



### Opening Prayer

Heavenly Father, you have called us to repent of our sins. By the power of the Spirit, teach us to follow your will and to be about your work as we look only to your Son, our Savior Jesus Christ, for forgiveness and eternal life. Hear our prayer in his name.  
Amen.

### Leader's Guide For Session 1

**BEFORE CLASS:** Read through this session yourself. Examine the Bible readings listed and become acquainted with them.

**READ:** Have a member of the group read the Introduction on page 4 aloud.

**READ:** Have someone read the Opening Prayer, or read the prayer in unison.

DISCUSS: Discuss challenges to authority.

READ: Read aloud or have someone read aloud the Introduction.

### Part 1

READ: Read aloud or have someone read aloud the Scripture reading.

1. Jesus is asked if it is lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, why his disciples eat with unwashed hands, to show a sign, if divorce is lawful and why his disciples break the Sabbath. Other examples may include John 8:5, the woman caught in adultery, Matthew 12:10, healing on the Sabbath, or Mark 12:23, a question about the resurrection. The priests and elders ask Jesus by what authority he does these things. If Jesus claims his own or any human authority, his enemies will say that people should not believe him or that he is a troublemaker to be arrested. If he claims divine authority, he could be arrested for blasphemy. Answers will vary, but people may doubt the love of God, or his power, in times of tragedy. They may say all religions worship the same God. Christians may face ridicule for their faith or be dismissed as ignorant or intolerant.

## Icebreaker Discussion

Tell (if you are willing to admit it!) about a time when you challenged someone in authority, perhaps a parent, teacher or police officer. Did that end well for you? Why or why not?

### Introduction

Jesus asked his disciples, “Who do people say the Son of Man is?” (Matthew 16:13). The disciples offered the current theories—Jesus was John the Baptist risen from the dead. He was Elijah or Jeremiah or another prophet. Jesus then asked, “But who do you say that I am?” Peter answered correctly for them all: “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matthew 16:16). Jesus was, and is, the Christ, the Messiah of Israel. His disciples believed in him, as did many people, but others challenged his authority.

### Part 1

- **Read Matthew 21:23-27.**
1. As Jesus enters Jerusalem, the crowds hail him as the Son of David who “comes in the name of the Lord” (Matthew 21:9), but many of the chief priests and other Jewish leaders do not believe that Jesus came from God. They often try “to entangle him in his words” (Matthew 22:15). What other traps have they tried against him? (For example: Matthew 22:17; Mark 7:5; Mark 8:11; Mark 10:2; and Luke 6:2.) Having watched Jesus enter Jerusalem, heal people and cleanse the temple, his enemies try once more to set a trap. What do Jesus’ enemies ask in Matthew 21:23? How might any answer become a trap? What might people do or say today to challenge God’s authority? What challenges to our faith might we, as followers of Jesus, face today?

2. Jesus, as always, is ready for them. He answers their question with a question of his own. What challenge does Jesus have for the priests and elders?
3. You can almost hear the wheels frantically turning as the religious leaders consider possible answers. What are their options? What do they finally answer and why? What happens to their trap for Jesus?

## Part 2

- **Read Matthew 21:28-32.**

1. Jesus tells the religious leaders a parable to back up his question. How do the two sons in his story respond to their father's command? Which son obeyed the father's will?
2. According to Jesus, which people are like the first son in the story and how are they like him? Which people are like the second son and how are they like him?
3. Read Luke 7:28-30. In rejecting John's call to repentance, what had the religious leaders ultimately rejected? God "desires all people to be saved" (1 Timothy 2:4). When people even today refuse to believe in Jesus, what are they rejecting?
4. John was sent "to make ready for the Lord a people prepared" (Luke 1:17). How would repentance prepare the people of Israel to meet God face to face? What part does repentance play in your faith and life today?
5. Referring to the sons in his parable, Jesus asked, "Which of the two did the will of his father?" (Matthew 21:31). Read John 6:40. The priests and elders, like the second son, rejected the will of the Father. What is the Father's will for us?

2. Jesus asks the source of John's authority.
3. If John had divine authority, the Jewish leaders should have believed him. If John had only human authority, the crowds might riot because they thought John was a prophet. In the end, they say that they do not know the source of John's authority. They are caught in their own trap.

## Part 2

READ: Read aloud or have someone read aloud the Scripture reading.

1. The first son refuses to work but then changes his mind and goes to work. The second son agrees to work, but never goes. The first son obeyed his father's will.
2. The tax collectors and prostitutes, like the first son, ignored the laws of God but listened to John and repented of their sins. The chief priests and elders, like the second son, claimed to obey God's laws but refused to listen to John, who proclaimed the way of righteousness.
3. The Pharisees and lawyers rejected the purpose of God for themselves because they refused John's baptism of repentance. When people refuse to believe in Jesus, they reject the purpose of God, who desires their salvation.
4. To repent of one's sins is to acknowledge that God is righteous in his judgment against sin. To repent is to come before God in humility and acknowledge his lordship. Answers will vary.
5. It is the Father's will that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him should have eternal life and be raised up on the Last Day.

6. The work of God is to believe in the one he sent, that is, to believe in Jesus. Answers will vary, but through the study of Scripture we learn more about our Savior and about life in his kingdom.

READ: Read or have someone read the Summary.

6. The father told his sons, “Go and work in the vineyard today” (Matthew 21:28). Read John 6:28-29. When people asked Jesus what they must do to be doing “the works of God,” what was Jesus’ answer? How does the study of Scripture strengthen you in this work of God?

## Summary

John’s message, rejected by the religious leaders, was “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matthew 3:2). In rejecting the prophetic authority of John and the lordship of Jesus the Messiah, they rejected the purpose of God for their lives—the forgiveness and eternal life found only through faith in his Son. Jesus, the obedient Son, came to do his Father’s work and will, to carry our sins in his own body to the cross. It is the Father’s work and will for us that we believe “in him whom he has sent,” that we “should not perish but have eternal life” (John 6:29; 3:16). The call of the kingdom is a call of repentance and faithfulness: *“When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?”*

# Hymn

*(Tune: Dundee CM)*

You are the way; through you alone  
Can we the Father find;  
In you, O Christ, has God revealed  
His heart and will and mind.

You are the truth; your Word alone  
True wisdom can impart;  
You only can inform the mind  
And purify the heart.

You are the life; the empty tomb  
Proclaims your conqu'ring arm,  
And those who put their trust in you  
Nor death nor hell shall harm.

You are the way, the truth, the life;  
Grant us that way to know,  
That truth to keep, that life to win,  
Whose joys eternal flow.

SING: Sing or speak aloud the Hymn in unison.

READ: Have someone read the Closing Prayer, or read the prayer in unison.

ASSIGN: Assign the readings and questions for the next session.

## Closing Prayer

Lord Jesus, like the son in your parable, we turn away from your Word and will to follow our own desires. We remember your suffering and death for our salvation, and pray that you would turn our hearts and minds to repentance. Forgive our sins, and strengthen our faith for life and work in your kingdom. Amen.

## For Next Time

Read Psalm 80:8-19. How is Israel described in these verses? What happened to the vine? What prayers for mercy do you find in these verses? Read Isaiah 5:1-7. Why does the Lord permit the destruction of his vineyard?