

# Family Bible Study

9/27/2026



15. Which of the sons do you think did their father's will? Why?
16. Who did the Temple officials say did the father's will (v31)?
17. Why might the first son's change of mind be important? Does his initial refusal disqualify his later obedience? Why not?
18. Conversely, does the second son's respectful answer count for anything if he never actually obeys?
19. What does this question reveal about the difference between religious appearance and actual obedience? How does this apply to the Temple officials' response to John—and Jesus?
20. What is the judgment Jesus makes concerning the Temple officials (v31)?
21. Why would tax collectors and prostitutes have been regarded as unlikely candidates for the kingdom?
22. Is Jesus saying that the tax collectors and prostitutes are morally superior to the religious leaders? Why or why not?
23. Why might repentance be easier for someone who already knows that he or she is a sinner?
24. What does it mean that John came "in the way of righteousness" (v32)?
25. According to Jesus, what did the religious leaders fail to do (v32)?
26. Notice Jesus' words: "you did not believe him" and "you did not change your minds." What connection does he make between faith and repentance?
27. What does genuine recognition of Jesus' authority look like? Is it possible to acknowledge Jesus intellectually while resisting his authority practically?
28. What are some ways Christians can say "yes" to God with their words while effectively saying "no" with their lives?

## Matthew 20:1-16

## *The Authority of Jesus Challenged*

<sup>23</sup> And when he entered the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came up to him as he was teaching, and said, "By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?" <sup>24</sup> Jesus answered them, "I also will ask you one question, and if you tell me the answer, then I also will tell you by what authority I do these things. <sup>25</sup> The baptism of John, from where did it come? From heaven or from man?" And they discussed it among themselves, saying, "If we say, 'From heaven,' he will say to us, 'Why then did you not believe him?'" <sup>26</sup> But if we say, 'From man,' we are afraid of the crowd, for they all hold that John was a prophet." <sup>27</sup> So they answered Jesus, "We do not know." And he said to them, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.

<sup>28</sup> "What do you think? A man had two sons. And he went to the first and said, 'Son, go and work in the vineyard today.' <sup>29</sup> And he answered, 'I will not,' but afterward he changed his mind and went. <sup>30</sup> And he went to the other son and said the same. And he answered, 'I will, sir,' but did not go. <sup>31</sup> Which of the two did the will of his father?" They said, "The first." Jesus said to them, "Truly, I say to you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes go into the kingdom of God before you. <sup>32</sup> For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him. And even when you saw it, you did not afterward change your minds and believe him.

## Questions to Wonder with Kids

- Have you ever said, “Yes, I’ll do it!” but then forgot or decided not to do it? What happened?
- Which is more important: saying you will do something or actually doing it? Why?
- The religious leaders in this story ask Jesus: “By what authority are you doing these things?” That is, what gives him the right to teach and do what he was doing. Who gave Jesus his authority?
- I wonder why the religious leaders were asking Jesus this question...
- What does it mean to say that Jesus has “authority”? Who are some people who have authority in your life?
- Jesus tells a story about a father who had two sons. Which son *said* the right thing? Which son *did* the right thing? Which is more important?
- What does it mean to “change your mind” about doing something wrong? What’s another word the Bible uses for turning away from wrongdoing and turning toward God?
- I wonder if God cares just about saying prayers and talking about him, or if he also wants us to live the way Jesus taught...
- What matters more to God: never making a mistake or turning back to God when we do make mistakes?
- Is it too late to obey God after you have made a wrong choice?
- Is there something you have promised God, your parents, or someone else that you need to follow through on?
- Is there something you need to say “I’m sorry” about?

## Questions for Adults

1. In this passage, Jesus has arrived in Jerusalem and is teaching in the courts of the Temple. The chief priests and elders confront him. What question do they put to Jesus (v24)?
2. What “things” (v23) might the chief priests and elders have been referring to? See Matthew 21:1-22.
3. Why do you think the religious leaders asked about Jesus’ authority—idle curiosity, sincere desire to know God, hostility and jealousy of Jesus’ popularity, seeking a reason to dismiss Jesus’ teaching?
4. What is the difference between asking a question because we genuinely want to know the answer and asking a question because we want to avoid an uncomfortable conclusion?
5. How did Jesus respond (v24)? Why did he not just answer their question?
6. Jesus asks them by what authority John baptized (see Matthew 3). What was John’s response to the Jewish leaders then (3:7-10)?
7. What are the two kinds of authority Jesus suggests John might have had (v25)? How would you characterize the difference between the two?
8. What is the difference between “having authority” and “having power”?
9. Why are the leaders unwilling to answer Jesus? What were they afraid of (v25-26)?
10. Why would recognizing John's divine authority necessarily create a problem for the religious leaders?
11. What does their internal discussion in verses 25–26 reveal about their priorities?
12. What was Jesus’ response to their non-answer (v27)?
13. Jesus then tells a story, a parable (v28-30). Who are the characters in the story? What do they do?
14. Why two “sons” and not two “workers”?