

You'll Be Surprised Who Enters

2026-05-19 • LAURENCE HALEY



Matthew 21:31

FOR THE LEADER

These questions help you run the conversation. They are not your study. Get into the passage yourself first, because your group needs what God taught you, not just a list of questions. These also lean on Sunday's message, so a few will not land for anyone who missed it. Watch it before you lead.

WHAT THE MESSAGE WAS ABOUT

In Matthew 21 the chief priests and elders ask Jesus a question: by what authority are you doing these things? Laurence Haley showed that they were not confused. They could identify Jesus's authority just fine. Their question was really a search for a way out of submitting to it. Laurence drew the difference with two road signs. Yielding slows down and keeps going. Submitting stops and looks up. A lot of us are yielding to God, slowing down a little, and calling it obedience. But being aware of authority is not the same as obeying it.

To get started

- When did you last realize you were right about something and had done nothing about it?

Looking back at the message

The yield sign image is the spine of this message. Start there.

- 1 Laurence contrasted a yield sign with a stop sign. Where does the difference between yielding and submitting show up in ordinary life?
- 2 Laurence said the leaders' question about authority was really a different question: why do we have to submit to this? When have you asked a question that was really that question?
- 3 Laurence pointed out that Zacchaeus, a rich man, ran ahead and climbed a tree instead of paying his way through the crowd. What does that detail tell you about him? OPTIONAL

Looking at the passage

Read Matthew 21:23-32 aloud so the group hears it as one conversation.

- 4 Read Matthew 21:23-27. What do the leaders ask Jesus, and how do they decide what to answer him?
- 5 Jesus tells a parable about two sons: one says no and later goes, one says yes and never goes. Which one does Jesus commend, and why?
- 6 In verse 31 Jesus says tax collectors and prostitutes are entering the kingdom ahead of the religious leaders. What point is he making with those two groups?
- 7 Verse 32 says John came, they did not believe him, and even after seeing the results they did not change their minds. Why is that last part the most damning?

Bringing it home

This one indicts the religious rather than the irreligious. Keep it aimed where Jesus aimed it.

- 8 Laurence said we can come to church, listen, feel informed, and never actually submit. What does real submission look like in a normal week?
- 9 The tax collectors and prostitutes knew their own reputation and did not pretend otherwise. What does that kind of honesty about yourself make possible?
- 10 Where are you currently looking for an out that you have not admitted you are looking for?
- 11 Be honest: which is more your pattern, saying yes and not going, or saying no and later going? OPTIONAL

The group together

Aim at how the group can help each other move from aware to acting.

- 12 What would it take for this group to move from discussing things to actually doing them?
- 13 Laurence said God places people in the local church for us to listen to. Where is the line between listening well and following uncritically?
- 14 Is there something this group already knows it should do and has not done yet?

BEFORE YOU FINISH

Where have you been slowing down for God without ever stopping, and what would stopping look like?

You might pray about

- For the distance between what we know and what we do
- For honesty about ourselves that opens a door rather than closes one
- For those who feel far outside and are nearer than they think
- For a submission that is glad rather than grudging

