

LESSON 2: JESUS IS COMING TO JUDGE

This includes:

- 1. LEADER PREPARATION**
- 2. LESSON GUIDE**

1. LEADER PREPARATION**LESSON OVERVIEW**

Actions speak louder than words because they reveal what people truly believe. Everything we do has a consequence—both on earth and for eternity. Jesus promised he'd return to judge what we've done. He'll separate people who believe in him from people who don't—and even from people who only pretend to believe in him. Thankfully, because of Jesus' sacrifice for our sins, he'll judge us through his merits, not our own. And he'll take everyone who believes in him to live in heaven with him forever.

LESSON OBJECTIVES

- 1. WHAT:** Jesus is coming back to judge our actions and to separate people who believe in him from those who don't.
- 2. WHY:** Because authenticity is important to Jesus, he wants us to live out what we say we believe.
- 3. HOW:** Students will see that although our actions can't save us, Jesus will look at what we do to see how serious we are about our relationship with him.

PRIMARY SCRIPTURE

Matthew 25:31-46

SECONDARY SCRIPTURE

Matthew 9:36

TEACHING PREP

**LEADER
TIP**

Use this short overview to prepare for your lesson. While you may not want to convey this information word-for-word with your group, you'll want to absorb it as you prepare to lead.

Read Matthew 25:31-46.

We often prefer to read Scripture passages about the compassionate Jesus—the gentle shepherd who welcomed children, healed people, and befriended sinners. This passage about the end of time presents Jesus in a different role, as Judge.

Like the king of a great nation, Jesus is in charge on his throne. He has the final say about who will and won't enter eternal life in heaven. Yet this passage still reveals Jesus' compassion because he doesn't hand down the punishment we truly deserve.

So people could better understand his truths, Jesus used analogies that were relevant to his time on earth. Sheep and goats often grazed together, and they were separated when it was time to shear the sheep.

When Jesus judges each of us at the end of time, he'll separate the sheep (followers of Christ) from the goats (non-Christians, as well as people who only pretend to believe in Jesus). As our Judge, Jesus will look at our actions to determine if we truly believed in and followed him. Those who have faith in him will enter into eternal life with God in heaven. Those who don't will enter hell, or eternal punishment.

We may think that Jesus requires us to do big things for him, such as standing before crowds to share the gospel. But the examples he shares with the crowd in this parable are rather surprising. Jesus is looking at the little things of life for examples of our commitment to him. He calls us to show his love to others by being a friend, expressing concern, and meeting people's basic needs.

Jesus doesn't specify whether individuals "deserve" to be helped or not. That doesn't matter to him. We are what matters to him—along with everyone in need.

There's debate as to who Jesus was calling "brothers and sisters" in verses 40 and 45. Some say he was referring to the Jews, while others say it's all Christians or people in need everywhere. But the focus of this parable isn't on *who* but *what*. Jesus is calling us all to serve where needs exist. Sharing his love with other people is how we show our genuine love for him.

THE BEFORE & AFTER [OPTIONAL]

TEXTS OR TWEETS

Send one or both of these messages to your students prior to your meeting. As with the rest of the curriculum, edit these questions to fit the needs of your ministry.

- Are you a sheep or a goat? How can you tell? Let's talk more tonight.
- Do your actions really matter? Join us for a great discussion—and bring a friend!

PARENT EMAIL

Send this email to parents following the lesson to encourage them to continue the conversation at home. Feel free to edit and customize the email to fit your ministry needs.

Dear parents,

We're continuing our series about "Jesus at the End of Time," which looks at Jesus' role in the future. In the second lesson, we studied Matthew 25:31-46, Jesus' parable of the sheep and the goats. Basically, he's saying that what we do matters. Our actions show whether we really believe in Jesus and follow him. When we meet other people's needs, we're extending Jesus' love to them—and actually loving Jesus, too.

The separation of the sheep and the goats on Judgment Day seems pretty harsh, but it actually reveals Jesus' compassion. He doesn't hand down the punishment we truly deserve for our sins. Instead, he allows everyone who believes in him to enter eternal life in heaven.

Jesus is coming to judge the Christians from the non-Christians, but we can be assured by the fact that he judges us not on our own merits but on his.

Look for a chance to engage your teenager about these topics this week. You might want to begin your conversation with one of these questions:

- Describe a time when someone surprised you by meeting one of your needs. What was that experience like?
- When is it easiest and most difficult for you to reach out to other people and help them?
- When you serve people, do you view yourself as serving Jesus? Why or why not?
- Do you think it's easier for a judge to show compassion or for a compassionate person to exercise justice? Explain.
- If a stranger evaluated your faith based solely on your actions, what might he or she say? To that person, what might stand out as your top priorities?

Thanks for all you do as we minister to teenagers together. May God bless your week!

LESSON 2: JESUS IS COMING TO JUDGE**2. LESSON GUIDE****GETTING THINGS STARTED [OPTIONAL]****LEADER
TIP**

Preview the following video for your group: youtube.com/watch?v=9LR2hFP1yb4 (or use another video about the topic of beliefs). You'll need an Internet connection and a computer or tablet to display the video for your participants.

For discussion purposes, it might be helpful to have copies of the lyrics available: songlyrics.com/rich-mullins/creed-lyrics/.

Welcome your students and invite them into your meeting area. Open in prayer, and then play the video clip. Then **ASK**:

- *What stood out to you the most about this song?*
- *Would you say this song focuses on Jesus' love or on his convictions? Why?*
- *Rich Mullins sings, "I believe what I believe is what makes me what I am. I did not make it, no it is making me." How do your beliefs make you who you are?*

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: *These days, it's more culturally acceptable to embrace all beliefs than to stand up for one particular belief. When Christians speak of Jesus returning to earth for Judgment Day, they may be accused of being judgmental themselves. But Jesus himself told us he'll return to judge the world and take everyone who believes in him to heaven. This is a loving act because he'll judge us based on his sacrifice on the cross, not on our sins. Although our actions on earth can't get us into heaven, they're evidence of our love for Jesus as we show his love to other people.*

TEACHING POINTS**LEADER
TIP**

Use the Teaching Points to help students capture the essence of each lesson with more discussion and less lecture-style teaching. Remember: All throughout these lessons, it's up to you to choose (1) how many questions you use and (2) the wording of the main points—keep ours, or change the wording to make it clearer for your audience.

Read Matthew 25:31-46 together as a group. Consider dividing verses among your students so several people have a chance to read.

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: *Often we prefer to read Scripture passages about the compassionate Jesus, who welcomed children and healed people. This is a more difficult passage because not everyone will decide to follow Jesus—even though he desires that all people make that decision. Jesus will return at the end of time as our judge, but he's a compassionate judge who showed us mercy by dying for us.*

1. JESUS IS ON THE THRONE

ASK:

- *What's it like to picture Jesus as a literal king on a throne? In what ways is that frightening or comforting to you?*
- *What does it mean to you that Jesus can be both Savior and Judge? How do those two roles seem compatible or incompatible?*
- *What role, if any, do you think our earthly actions will play in the judgment process? How might that affect the way you live your day-to-day life?*

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: *Like the king of a great nation, Jesus is in charge on his throne. He has the final say about who will and won't enter eternal life in heaven. Although Jesus desires that all people believe in him and receive salvation, he makes it clear in this parable that not everyone will accept his free gift of salvation.*

2. JESUS WILL SEPARATE THE SHEEP FROM THE GOATS

ASK:

- *Describe some circumstances where actions speak louder than words. What's your reaction when people do things that contradict what they say?*
- *How can you tell when people truly believe what they say?*
- *If we can't earn our way into heaven, then why do our actions matter?*
- *Think of someone who isn't a follower of Jesus—how does hearing this parable make you want to share Jesus' love with that person?*

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: *During Jesus' time, sheep and goats often grazed together, being separated when it was time to shear the sheep. When Jesus judges each of us at the end of time, he'll separate the sheep (Christians) from the goats (non-Christians, as well as those who only pretend to believe). Jesus says he'll consider our actions to tell if we truly believed in and followed him. Those who believe—really believe—will enter eternal life in heaven. Those who don't will enter eternal punishment in hell.*

3. JESUS SAYS WHAT WE DO MATTERS

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: *We may think that Jesus requires us to do big things for him, such as standing before crowds to share the gospel. But in this parable, he shares examples of little things that show our commitment to him. Jesus calls us to extend his love to other people by being a friend and meeting basic human needs.*

ASK:

- *What does it feel like to have a need of yours met? What does it feel like to be able to meet other people's needs?*
- *We can't feed, clothe, or befriend everyone on earth, so how do you know which needs to meet?*

- *When you serve other people, how are you extending Jesus' love to them? How is Jesus' love being extended to you?*

EXTRA DISCUSSION [OPTIONAL]

Ask students to form groups of two or three to discuss these questions.



ASK:

- *Read Matthew 9:36. Like many other Bible passages, this one describes Jesus as having compassion. Throughout his earthly ministry, Jesus healed people and performed miracles out of compassion. How can Jesus both judge people and have compassion on them?*
- *Describe a time when Jesus showed his compassion for you. How did that make you want to “pay forward” his compassion to others?*

Bring everyone back together, and ask for volunteers to share answers to the previous questions, as time permits.

LIVING IT OUT

ASK:

- *How do you balance being saved by grace (through Jesus' death on the cross in our place) and being called to righteous living (doing good works)?*
- *If actions speak louder than words, what does it look like to act like a follower of Jesus?*
- *Describe a time when you literally or figuratively fed “one of the least of these.” What impact did it have on that person? What impact did it have on you?*
- *What can you do this week to live more like a “sheep”?*

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: *Because no one is perfect, we can obtain eternal life in heaven only through faith in Jesus. God has called us to righteous living, and Jesus will come back to judge us. What we do matters, but it's impossible for us to do it on our own. Jesus wants to continue his work in us—teaching and encouraging us to be more like him each day. Let's allow Jesus to work through us as we share his love with other people.*



Ask students to each find a quiet spot in your meeting area for a few minutes of prayer and reflection. Consider praying together as a group or asking if any students would like prayer from the rest of the group.

SUMMARY



Provide a quick summary or take-home challenge based on (1) this lesson's content, (2) the dialogue that took place today, (3) your understanding of the issues and struggles your teenagers are facing, and (4) the big picture of your youth ministry and what your leadership team wants accomplished with the teaching and discussion time.

FOR KEEPS [MEMORY VERSE]

Encourage and/or challenge your teenagers to memorize the Scripture below.

*“Jesus told him, ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me’ ”
(John 14:6).*