

Youth Teaching Resources

November 1, 2020



The Right Stuff

Matthew 23:1-12—“The Right Stance”

Matthew 25:1-13—“The Right Preparation”

Matthew 25:14-30—“The Right Investment”

Psalms 100—“Good God!”

Christmas Letters

1 Corinthians 1:1-9—“Every Good Gift”

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Find links and videos related to this lesson.

“The Right Stance”

Matthew 23:1-12

YOUTH Teaching Guide

by Jeremy Colliver

This youth teaching outline is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartledge, printed in *Baptists Today*. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Baptists Today* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Baptists Today* so they can prepare before the lesson.

SOCIAL MEDIA CHALLENGE

Post to your social media channels people that have helped you grow in your faith.

TEACHING THE LESSON

Fellowship

Begin your session by showing the clip “Leaders of the USA” from *The Ron Clark Story*. If you are unable to show the clip, summarize it to the best of your ability, and then facilitate a discussion using questions like the following:

- 1) Why did he decide to use rap to teach his students?
- 2) Why were the students not expecting this? How did they respond?
- 3) How did the class next door respond?
- 4) What teachers have you had that have been innovative?
- 5) How do you best learn and grown in your faith?

Information

Transition to the next section of the session by reading Matthew 23.1-12. Allow the students to ask any initial questions they have about the text. As you answer their questions, you may want to provide some of the information found in Tony’s commentary to answer their questions. When the students have had an opportunity to share their initial thoughts, continue the discussion by facilitating a discussion using questions like the following:

- 1) Where does the scripture reading for this session fit into the larger scope of Jesus’ life? Why is this important in knowing when reading the text?
- 2) What is Moses’ seat?
- 3) What was the role of the scribes and Pharisees?
- 4) How did the purity laws create a divide between the poor and wealthy?
- 5) What did Jesus want the hearers of this text to learn? How is this applicable today?

Information *continued*

If your group would like to dig deeper in their discussion, share some of the insights that Tony provides in the “Digging Deeper” portion of his commentary. You may want to use some questions like the following to facilitate your discussion:

- 1) Why were there so many laws from the 10 Commandments?
- 2) How is the Jewish law followed today?
- 3) What does “rabbi” mean? What does this mean when Jesus is called rabbi?

You may also want your group to discuss “The Hardest Question” if they would like to continue their discussion on this passage. Tony poses the following question to consider as “The Hardest Question”: Did the scribes and Pharisees recognize hypocrisy in their midst?

Transformation

Conclude the session by introducing the social media challenge for the week:

“Post to your social media channels people that have helped you grow in your faith.”

Allow the students time to share with the larger group some of the people that have helped them grow in their faith.

Close with a prayer asking God for the wisdom to discern truth from what we hear and to act then to act on that truth.

Digging Deeper

by Tony Cartledge

Digging Deeper is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartledge, printed in *Nurturing Faith Journal*. Watch for the “shovel” icon in the THE BIBLE LESSON, and then reference that item in this Digging Deeper resource. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Nurturing Faith Journal* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Nurturing Faith Journal* so they can prepare before the lesson.

Fine points of the law—The oral law, a rabbinic expansion of the written law, was designed to extrapolate so many possible violations that following the fine points of the law would keep anyone from breaking the larger commands.

The Jewish Talmud records a tradition going back to at least the third century CE, when Rabbi Simlai preached a sermon that the law consisted of 613 commandments. These included 365 prohibitions—one for each day of the year—and 248 positive commands, a number thought to correspond with the number of bones and major organs in the human body (*Makkot* 23b).

Moses’ seat—A stone seat excavated inside the synagogue at Chorazin was probably used by the teacher of the day, and likely called “Moses’ Seat.” One might think the inscription across the bottom might be a religious saying, but like plaques in many modern churches, it is a dedicatory paeon to the person who financed or built the synagogue: “Remembered be for good Judah ben Ishmael who made this stoa and its staircase. As his reward may he have a share with the righteous.”

The synagogue was built in an open plan with three rows of columns with benches around the perimeter.

The seat was discovered in 1926: the original is in the Israel museum: I took this photo of an exact replica that now sits in the synagogue in Chorzin.

Chorazin was located just a few miles northwest of Capernaum. The gospels do not record any visits Jesus made to the town, but he must have preached and done miracles there, as it was one of three places over which Jesus pronounced woes because their residents witnessed his mighty works, but did not repent (Matt. 11:20-24, Luke 10:13-15).



Digging Deeper *continued*

Phylacteries and fringes—

Ultraorthodox Jews of today continue to follow rabbinic law, wearing distinctive clothing, letting the hair beside their ears grow into long braids, and donning prominent phylacteries and fringed prayer shawls when they pray. During ordinary activities, they continue to wear four tassels, known as *tzitzit*, around their waist so that they hang down on each side, two toward the front and two toward the back.



In the photo, Jews gathering to pray at the Western wall include some wearing phylacteries and prayer shawls.

Teacher, teacher—In v. 8 Jesus warns the disciples not to seek the title “rabbi,” which commonly referred to teachers, because they had one teacher. The word used there is *didaskalos*, from which we get English words like “didactic” (intended to teach) and “autodidact” (self-taught).

In v. 10 Jesus told the disciples not to be called “instructors,” for they had one instructor, the Messiah. The word used here is *kathēgētēs*, which can mean “instructor” or “tutor,” but also be used in the sense of “leader” or “master.” The latter sense is probably the intended one: the disciples were not to seek to become authorities over each other.

The Hardest Question

by Tony Cartledge

The Hardest Question is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartledge, printed in *Nurturing Faith Journal*. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Nurturing Faith Journal* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Nurturing Faith Journal* so they can prepare before the lesson.

What's wrong—or right—with this prayer?

Psalms 80 is clearly a part of scripture. Does that mean it provides a perfect pattern for prayer? Keep in mind that it reflects Israel's approach to God in a particular setting, and Israel did not always get it right. We can learn from both negative and positive examples.

What's wrong with the prayer? First, the prayer approaches God as one whose primary business is bailing us out. We all are created in the image of God, who gives us both the right and the responsibility to make personal decisions for good or evil. There are times when trouble comes calling with no invitation, but often the trouble we experience is of our own making.

I have known people who didn't learn to take responsibility because their parents were always coming behind them and cleaning up their messes and taking up for them even when they were clearly at fault. When that happens, we have difficulty learning to accept responsibility for our own actions. It's all too easy to blame someone else and expect others to bail us out of trouble.

The Old Testament narratives repeatedly recount (read the Book of Judges!) how Israel was prone to rebellion against God, falling into idolatry, and generally turning their backs on the way God had taught them to live. When they got in trouble, however, they had a tendency to start acting religious. There was something wrong with that then, and there's something wrong with that now.

A second thing wrong with the prayer is that it tries to swing a deal with God. The prayer concludes with a promise that, if God will only save Israel, *then* they will be faithful and worship God as they should. Many of us have prayed that same sort of prayer. Because humans are prone to making deals, we assume that God is, too. But God loves us for who we are, not just for what we do. God wants to forgive us and cleanse us and help us start anew because we come in repentance desiring a better life—not because God needs or wants or needs whatever payoff we might promise.

There is at least one thing right about this prayer: it acknowledges that in some matters, only God can help. When it comes to a redemptive and eternal relationship with God, only God can help us with that.

We may also face other times when trouble comes, whether self-inflicted or not, and we know that only God can help, and it is appropriate to seek God's aid. It is important, however, to understand that there are no guarantees. God promises to love us and care for us and be present with us. God does not, however, promise to make life easy for us, or to always say "yes" when we ask for something.

The Hardest Question *continued*

It is true that sometimes, when we pray, it seems that God is silent. God may seem silent because we don't know how to listen, or don't take the time. God may seem silent because the answer to our prayer is not "yes," and that's the only answer we are listening for. Sometimes, however, the heavens seem quiet because God *is* silent (compare 1 Kings 19:11-12). Sometimes silence is the most powerful way of speaking. Sometimes God's apparent absence may be what it takes to make us hungrier for God's presence.

And sometimes, the answer we need is "no." I suspect most of us can think of things we once asked for with all our hearts, but looking back, we realize that we are better off now because that prayer was not answered with a "yes."

There may be other areas that we *don't* understand and maybe in this life we never will. Why God didn't stop the cancer. Why God didn't keep loved ones safe from all physical harm. Some things we won't understand until we get a chance to stand face to face and ask God ourselves. When that time comes, some of us may have quite a list! In the meantime, though, we live by trust and faith that God does hear our prayer, and that God's presence is sure even when divine intervention is not.