

Life Group Discussion Guide

5.22.22

Insight Series

Matthew 12:24-30

How Can I Love Someone So Different From Me?

"Every kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and every city or household divided against itself will not stand."

Matthew 12:25

OPEN

How do you define an enemy? What is a one sentence description of an enemy?

How do you define a friend? What is a one sentence description of a friend?

NEXT

Read Matthew 12:25. Is this a parable? If this is a parable it is perhaps the most obvious parable of them all. If this is an insight "hidden in plain sight" it isn't hidden very well. Nearly anyone would agree that a nation or kingdom divided against itself will eventually be ruined. An athletic team divided against itself is unlikely to win. A marriage divided against itself will not last. When neighbors wage war on one another a city does not thrive. This is a very basic concept...rationally. But it is parabolic...practically. Virtually everyone knows this to be true and yet nations still divide and fall, cities still riot, marriages still fail...

What makes this parable so easy to understand and so hard to live out? (That question is not rhetorical, wrestle together with what your own experiences tell you about this before looking closer at the context in Matthew 12.)

The most difficult casualties of war to reconcile are those that are the result of friendly fire. Look broadly at chapters 11 and 12 of Matthew. These two chapters are marked by the opposition that Jesus encounters. Perhaps what is most striking is where the opposition comes from. First, John the Baptist (the one who is to "prepare the way" for Jesus) sends his disciples to ask, "Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect another?" Then the Pharisees (those who have devoted their lives to teaching and living by the Law of God) accuse Jesus of being an agent of Satan. And near the end of chapter 12, Jesus' mother and brothers come to see him, assumedly as an act of intervention because they have heard that Jesus is saying and doing some strange things.

If we know that a "house divided against itself will not stand" why are some of our deepest wounds from friendly fire?

Read Matthew 12:13-14 together. Consider those two verses without any context. Why would healing a man with a shriveled hand lead to the religious leaders plotting to KILL Jesus (not confront, not debate, not reprimand, but kill Jesus)? Are the Pharisees that opposed to crippled people being made well?

Read Matthew 12:22-24. Consider those two verses without context. Why would healing a demon-possessed man lead the Pharisees to accuse Jesus of being an agent of Satan?

So, what IS the context? Why DID these two events solicit that kind of response from the Pharisees?

Are people evil? Can a person be evil? Mark and Luke quote Jesus as saying, "no one is good but God alone." Does that mean everyone is evil? Consider the man described in Matthew 12:22. He was demon-possessed, was he evil? What is the difference? Is there a difference?

How can I love someone so different from me? Perhaps it begins with a realization that they aren't nearly as different from me as I might have imagined.

CLOSING

Pray together over the division in our neighborhoods, our families, our churches and our world.