

Crosswalk Communities Discussion Guides
June 19th

Icebreaker Questions (Pick at the least one question, but use as many as your group feels comfortable)

1. This week started with Father's Day. What is one lesson that your father taught you that impacts you today?

Bible Study Questions

1. Read Matthew 17:22-27
 - What do you notice about the story? What observations do you have about Jesus?
2. Jesus is being asked to respond to a common political argument of the day. Yet Jesus wisely recognizes that it is not a primary issue to get engaged in.
 - What issues today do you think should be of primary importance for Christians?
 - What issues do we often make central that should be secondary?
 - How do we discern between the two?
3. Jesus had a position, but chose to accommodate in order to not cause offense. Why did he do this? Where are areas today that we can accommodate in order to keep the focus on primary things?
4. Read John 20:20-23.
 - What does Jesus pray for in these verses? How can we help encourage unity in the church?

June 19th: Jesus' fishing story

Matthew 17:22-27 starts off with Jesus reminding his disciples about his coming death. This time they don't argue with him. What follows is a challenging story regarding taxes and Jesus telling Peter to go fishing.

Background: Paying annual taxes to the temple was a divisive political issue of the times: The law of Moses commanded the people to pay a tax to God whenever a census would take place. Over time, that evolved to be a yearly two drachma tax that was collected to support the temple. The pharisees regarded this as a patriotic duty. The Sadducees refused to pay it and the Essenes believed that it should only be paid once a life time. Due to the disagreements, this was a divisive political debate.

- I. Jesus discerned the difference between primary and secondary issues:** When Jesus was asked to pay the tax, he was being put into a position where he would have to make a statement about this political issue. He had an opinion on it, (was against the tax), but knew that if he made a statement it would become news instead of his more important mission of bringing God's kingdom to earth. He recognized that while this issue mattered, it was not the most important issue at hand.
- II. Jesus was willing to accommodate those he disagreed with in order to remove distractions from what was most important.** Jesus did not believe that he should pay the tax, but he paid it anyway knowing that his refusal to do so would distract people from his mission. Jesus ended up doing it in a way in which he did not personally deliver the tax or which he could honestly claim that it didn't come from his possessions.
- III. Jesus chose his defining positions and the timing of his words carefully:** Jesus would later confront abuses of the temple. But he knew that it not the time to make his position known. If he chose that moment to say what was on his mind, it would have become the focus instead of his true mission.

Application

This story has much to say about the way that we approach many political issues today. As Christians, our calling is to place Jesus mission of making disciples above all else. There are many political issues that we should care about, but which shouldn't be central to our lives. The church has been very guilty of making secondary (and tertiary) issues such as vaccines, masks, various candidates central issues and to get in the way of our mission to make disciples. Jesus told us to love God above all else and then to love others. When a political

issue gets in the way of that, then we have a problem. Like Jesus, we should practice discernment and make sure that we are known for the things that really matter.

An additional note is that this story is one of two payments. Jesus is asked to pay the temple tax and he deals with it with a short fishing trip. Verses 22-23 though look at another payment, the payment that we owe God because of our sin. Jesus made that payment his focus, paying it with his own life.