

Honor

Session 10 • Matthew 22:15-22,34-40



ENGAGE

PREPARE: On a focal wall, display **Pack Item 2** (Poster: *Outline of Matthew 14–28*) and **Pack Item 6** (Poster: *Loving God, Loving Others*).

ASK: What is your highest allegiance in life? (p. 81)

READ: Enlist a volunteer to read the opening paragraph on page 81. Point out that we don't use the word "allegiance" in everyday speech, but we should carefully consider who or what holds our allegiance as believers.

IDENTIFY: Direct attention to **Pack Item 2** (Poster: *Outline of Matthew 14–28*). Point out that, beginning in Matthew 21, Jesus entered Jerusalem and essentially stayed there until His crucifixion. Share that today's passage in Matthew 22 took place on the Tuesday after His "triumphal entry" and examines the balance between our allegiance to God and human authorities, including the government.

CONTEXT: Summarize the following content from **Understand the Context** to provide more background for the session:

- "The conflict between Jesus and the Jewish religious leaders had been brewing for months. With the cleansing of the

temple (Matt. 21:12-13), it had reached a boiling point. What followed would be several more days of confrontation with the chief priests and elders. The thrust of the confrontation centered around Jesus's authority and the rejection of His authority by the religious elite." (p. 81)

TRANSITION: *The Jewish leaders already had tried to trap Jesus and failed. In today's passage, we'll see how Jesus taught the Jews—and us—to honor both God and human leaders properly.*

EXPLORE THE TEXT

READ: Invite a volunteer to read Matthew 22:15-22 aloud as the group considers the challenge Jesus faced and how He navigated the Herodians' question.

ASK: What does it look like to honor our government in today's culture? (p. 83)

BIBLE SKILL: Direct adults to work in groups of two or three to complete the **Bible Skill** activity (p. 83). Point out that Jesus spoke about giving Caesar his due and giving God what He deserves. Instruct the adults to compare Matthew 22:17-21 to Acts 5:27-29; Romans 13:1-7; and 1 Peter 2:13-17. Encourage them to write a description of the Christian's responsibilities toward

government based on these verses. Allow the groups to share their descriptions.

RECAP: To summarize a Christian response to government, enlist a volunteer to read the **Key Doctrine** (p. 83). Highlight this content to provide more background:

- **(22:19-21)** Since the coin carried Caesar's image, it belonged to him. So Jesus stated, "Give, then, to Caesar the things that are Caesar's." The Greek word Jesus used means to "return" or "restore" what rightfully belongs to Caesar. Then Jesus reminded them of their greater obligation—giving to God the things that are God's. They needed to give themselves fully to God since they bore His image (Gen. 1:27-28) and belonged to Him (Ps. 24:1). Caesar could claim their money, but God held a higher claim on their lives.

EXPLAIN: Emphasize that Jesus saw through His opponents' trap and explained that His followers should be obedient to both government and God. His words here created a foundation on which believers continue to build their understanding of the relationship between our faith and the government.

READ: Invite a volunteer to read Matthew 22:34-40 aloud as the group considers the test presented by the lawyer.

ASK: Why do you think Jesus gave the lawyer two commands instead of just one? (p. 83)

EXPLAIN: Summarize the following content to explain the significance of this question and Jesus's response:

- **(22:36)** The question of "which command in the law is the greatest?" was hotly debated in rabbinic circles. Realizing some commands were more important than others, the rabbis divided them into categories. Within the weightier group, various rabbis proposed different commandments as the greatest. Perhaps this expert believed he knew the answer and was prepared to debate Jesus.
- **(22:37-38)** The expert and the crowd probably expected Jesus to quote one of the Ten Commandments. However, He pointed to the *Shema* (Deut. 6:4-5). Every pious Jew repeated these words twice a day—morning and evening. They also posted them on their doorposts and placed copies of them in their phylacteries (6:8). Jesus's answer focused on love for "the Lord your God." Such love is not mere sentimentality or emotion, but absolute devotion. Jesus named two of the three items of Deuteronomy 6:5—"all your heart . . . all your soul"—but added "all your mind" in place of "strength." In biblical terms, the heart includes both the intellect and emotions, while the soul refers to one's essential being. The mind is the seat of the will that defines action. These terms alluded to the entire person. This is why "all" is repeated with each term. To be sure, the expert understood what "greatest" meant, but Jesus added "most important" to emphasize this command's priority.

ASK: What's at the heart of this command to love other people? What does this demonstrate? (p. 83)

SAY: *Jesus identified these two commands as the greatest and most important because all other laws spring from them. We can't really love God fully without loving our neighbors, and we can't love our neighbors fully without loving God. Every aspect of living a healthy Christian life that honors God can be traced to our ability to obey these two commands.*

APPLY: Direct adults to **Pack Item 6** (*Poster: Loving God, Loving Others*). Lead adults to identify ways they can love God with their entire being and love their neighbors as themselves. Encourage the group to find ways to demonstrate these actions as they step into the “real world” this week.

CHALLENGE

SUMMARIZE: Review these points from this week's Bible passage:

- We are called to submit to government officials and laws.
- We are to honor God exclusively as the one true God and to love our neighbor as ourselves.

ASK: Which is more difficult to honor in your own life: God or the government? Which love is most difficult to demonstrate: love for God or love for your neighbor?

DISCUSS: Lead adults in a brief discussion of the **Apply the Text** activity on page 83. Point back to **Pack Item 6** (*Poster: Loving God, Loving Others*). Remind them that loving God includes loving our neighbors—and Jesus defined a neighbor as any other human we meet (Luke 10:25-37).

CHALLENGE: Call attention to the **Apply the Text** question on page 87. Emphasize that God calls His people to honor Him in every aspect of their lives. Encourage them to spend time during the week talking with God about what areas they might be holding back and how they can surrender those areas to Him for His glory.

PRAY: Encourage adults to pray in pairs. Instruct one adult in each pair to pray that God would empower both adults to honor Him in every aspect of life. Instruct the second adult to pray for government leaders. Close with a prayer for your group.

AFTER THE SESSION

This week, consider how you have seen the adults in your group honor God with their lives. Send a text or email to each individual, acknowledging how they have revealed what it means to honor God. Thank them for the example set for others. Send another text or email to the whole group, challenging them to continue looking for ways to apply what they listed on **Pack Item 6** (*Poster: Loving God, Loving Others*).