

Group Gathering Question:

Have you ever tried to trap a wild animal or even a small animal to get it out of your house/attic/garage? If so, how and why?

Read this week's scripture and discuss:

1. Certain people tried to trap Jesus by asking him about paying taxes. How would the crowd respond if Jesus simply said, "Pay Caesar?" How would the government respond if Jesus said "Don't pay?" Why were the people amazed by Jesus' response?
2. What, if anything, does Jesus' answer teach us about our relationships with God and state?
3. Is it ever right to disobey the U.S. government? If so, how, when, and why?
4. What are some yes or no questions that you think people ask in order to "figure out" (or put you in a box) what you think about everything?
5. Jesus says the Pharisees are trying to test him and calls them hypocrites. How might people today try to test Jesus? What would that look like?
6. Is it a challenge for you to be with Christians who think differently about various topics (politically, theologically, etc.)? In what ways is it healthy to be in community with those who think differently? In what ways is it a challenge?
7. What do you think it means to be made in the image of God? Is it easy or difficult for you to think you are made in God's image? Is it easy or difficult for you to remember that others are made in God's image?

prayer requests

- Prayers of comfort for Jennie Lunsford in the death of her mother.
- Prayers for a successful ZPC Blood Drive and for those who will receive the donations.

The religious leaders of the day felt threatened by Jesus and so tried "to trap him in his words." Jesus calls them hypocrites. We might ask, would Jesus ever think that I'm hypocritical in my words or actions? We are citizens of heaven first, Paul says (Philippians 3:20-21). But we also live on earth in a nation where we have laws. We are made in God's image, not Caesar's image. We can always strive to receive God's grace and then respond with God's grace to others.

1. If Jesus said, pay Caesar, the Pharisees could say he was opposed to God, the only true King. If Jesus said, don't pay, the Herodians could hand him over to Herod on grounds he was rebelling against the Roman government. They were amazed by his teaching because Jesus asked them for a coin (he didn't produce one). Then when they said it had Caesar's picture on it, he said give to Caesar, and give to God what is God's. He didn't answer their question but got around it and gave a smart response.
2. As citizens of the United States, we are to follow the laws – including paying taxes. We are to honor the government (1 Peter 2:17). We are to worship God – and give to God what belongs to God. It can be a fine line, but we can do both as followers of Jesus.
3. This is a great question for discussion. If the government were to ask us to do things that were obviously against God's laws, we might choose to disobey. For those who think that they can't go to war, they can be conscientious objectors. In many cases, we may not agree with government policy, but choose to go along with it or avoid interacting with that policy.
4. Here are a few suggestions: Democrat or Republican? Progressive or Traditional? Liberal or Conservative? How did you react to the racial injustice and the protests and riots last summer? Mask or no mask? Stay at home all the time or going to restaurants and seeing your friends? Everyone should have the vaccine right now or you have some questions about the vaccine? Even... Where are you going on vacation? Where do your kids go to school/college? How does it feel to be put in a box?
5. We can test Jesus with our inner questions, our concerns or our actions or inaction. Some example might be: Do I save as much as I can for retirement or do I give more away? How do I spend my free time? How do I serve others – how far do I go or get uncomfortable in serving? Do I trust my family members to Jesus or do I hold on really tightly to them? Do I trust Jesus enough to get mad with him and question him when tragedy strikes? Career, relationships, church, money and time – how do I show my trust in God in these?
6. For most of us, yes it is a challenge. It can be healthy to see and hear how others think and feel. We may grow by hearing other's perspectives. If we talk only with those who agree (or watch or read only those we agree with), we may never change our minds or even be open to changing our minds. It can be a challenge because we see things in the world that we think are wrong. Most of us don't like conflict, and many of us who are older were taught not to discuss religion, politics, or sex. So those topics can be challenging.
7. In this story, Caesar's image is on the coin. Caesar was more than a king or a president, he was considered a god. Do we have other gods we follow or do we follow Jesus, albeit with flaws and failures sometimes in how we follow? We must remind ourselves and be reminded that we are made in God's image – we are loved and are gifted – and others are made in God's image and loved too.