

HE SAID *WHAT?* HARD SAYINGS OF JESUS



Am I really following Jesus?

Most of us are familiar with things Jesus did: walking on water, feeding five thousand with the loaves and fishes, healing a blind man, and of course, dying on the cross.

We're equally familiar with many things He said: Love God. Love your neighbor. Fear not. Do good.

We love these teachings, and they certainly line up with what we know about God: His love, peace, and goodness. But Jesus also said some other things that don't end up as framed prints on our walls.

- ▶ Sell everything you own.
- ▶ Love your enemies.
- ▶ Hate your parents.

Some of the teachings of Jesus are difficult, but we would be wise to see why Jesus said them.

So let's dive in to these hard teachings. What we'll find is that these hard statements—these seemingly counter-intuitive or counter-cultural teachings—are where we find the abundant life Jesus promises to those who really follow Him.



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He Said *What?* Hard Sayings of Jesus

Session 1 **God Won't Forgive This Sin** *Matthew 12:22-32*

Session 2 **You'll Never Die** *John 11:25-27; 20:24-29*

Session 3 **Sell Everything You Own** *Matthew 19:16-26*

Session 4 **Love Your Enemies** *Luke 6:27-36*

Session 5 **Let the Dead Bury Their Dead** *Luke 9:57-62*

Session 6 **Hate Your Family** *Luke 14:25-35*

Session 7 **Exploit Your Friends** *Luke 16:1-12*

BIBLE
STUDIES
FOR LIFE.

DISCIPLESHIP PLAN

How "He Said What? Hard Sayings of Jesus" supports the Discipleship Plan (see page 129):

Building Relationships. The difficult sayings in this study impact our discipleship in areas such as exercising faith and sharing Christ, but they also speak to how we interact with others. Jesus challenges us to live radically different from the world in how we treat others.

1

GOD WON'T FORGIVE THIS SIN



Growing up, what was an “unforgivable sin” in your home?

QUESTION #1

BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE **69**

THE POINT

God does not forgive those who reject Jesus and never seek His forgiveness.



THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

A friend of mine told me about an encounter he had with a woman seated next to him on an airplane. It was a typical conversation until he told her he was a pastor. At that point, she became upset and began talking about a terrible crime one group of people had committed against another. My friend was also shocked by the immoral act, but the woman's insistence that "some sins should not be forgiven" and "those individuals should be condemned to hell forever" genuinely caught him off guard.

Before my friend could respond, the woman addressed her own sins and shortcomings. She declared, "I know I'm not perfect, but God knows my heart. I attend church, try to help others, and I'm a good person. So, I know God will forgive me, and one day I'll go to heaven!"

Is this woman correct? Are there some sins God will not forgive? Is being "religious" or "a good person" all it takes to get to heaven? Jesus' confrontation with a group of Pharisees found in the Gospel of Matthew will help to answer these questions.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

Matthew 12:22-23

22 Then they brought him a demon-possessed man who was blind and mute, and Jesus healed him, so that he could both talk and see. 23 All the people were astonished and said, “Could this be the Son of David?”

While Jesus was on earth, He met some interesting people. On one occasion, a group of men brought “a demon-possessed man” to Jesus. The word “demon-possessed” may seem odd, but it’s an important word to keep in mind; it means to be owned by evil spirits. The evil spirits in this man prevented him from being able to speak or see.

During this time, people believed demon possession was caused by big sins in someone’s life. To the Pharisees—the religious leaders—this man was so deep in sin he had been rendered both blind and mute. We don’t know how long this man had been tormented, but the demons had surely ruined his life.

This man had tried everything within his own power to be free from the evil spirit. Those who tried to help him may have accepted the popular notion this man was just a sinner who had no hope. Some days even he may have believed the same thing.

But all that changed when people brought the man to Jesus, knowing He was the only one who could help him. After all, they had tried everything else to no avail, so they came to Jesus with a degree of hope and trust that He was the answer.

We all know people who seem to be controlled by evil. Their lives are in direct conflict with God, but they live the way they do because they’re living without Jesus. Like this man, they also need to encounter Jesus. In fact, we all need an encounter with Jesus, because we are all sinners in need of forgiveness.

Where have you seen the power of Jesus at work around you?

QUESTION #2

No matter how sinful people are, they are never beyond God's power to forgive. Clearly, the demon-possessed man before Jesus was full of evil, but what did Jesus do? "Jesus healed him." In those three short words, we see the incredible power of God.

The work of Christ—the power of God—is why it is crucial we share the gospel with all people, no matter how bad we think they are. We often think they won't listen, go to church with us, read the Bible, or accept Christ, but when we think that, we underestimate the power of God. God works through even the smallest seeds we plant, seeds of His love and grace.

No matter how many times people reject Jesus, He stands ready and waiting to forgive them. But they must come to Him. Our responsibility is to point people to Jesus.

When the demon-possessed man was transformed by Christ, it pointed to the power of God. Likewise, when we lead people to Jesus, their lives are changed, and that change points others to God.

Matthew 12:24-29

24 But when the Pharisees heard this, they said, "It is only by Beelzebul, the prince of demons, that this fellow drives out demons." 25 Jesus knew their thoughts and said to them, "Every kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and every city or household divided against itself will not stand. 26 If Satan drives out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then can his kingdom stand? 27 And if I drive out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your people drive them out? So then, they will be your judges. 28 But if it is by the Spirit of God that I drive out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. 29 "Or again, how can anyone enter a strong man's house and carry off his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man? Then he can plunder his house. "

Not everyone was amazed by what Jesus did. Enter the Pharisees, the religious teachers who were constantly protesting the actions and words of Jesus.

What are some ways our culture responds to the work of Christ?

QUESTION #3

GOD AT WORK AROUND ME

Select the image that best represents God's work around you. Then answer the question.



Choose one of the images and describe it in a way that could lead others to Christ.

"Right now, God is working all around you!"

— HENRY BLACKABY

Since Jesus did not conform to their religious traditions, the religious leaders were always looking for ways to discredit Him before the people. So when the people suggested Jesus might be the “Son of David” (12:23), this angered the Pharisees. Since Jesus would not conform to their traditions, their arrogance led them to conclude He must be of Satan.

As usual, Jesus’ response showed the foolishness of their thinking. These men obeyed the laws of God, but they lacked a relationship with Him. They believed their good works would make them more pleasing to God, but instead those works weighed them down. They refused to give up their self-righteousness in order to acknowledge the Messiah Himself who was in their midst. They rejected Jesus, His message, and eventually His sacrifice on the cross for their sin.

The failures of the Pharisees should be a warning for us today. The Pharisees were so prideful they thought Jesus was of Satan. Their self-righteousness blinded them to the truth about Jesus’ identity. The Pharisees had blinded themselves to this truth, so they saw no need to repent and turn to Him. We know people like this today. They will mock the church, Christians, and even our personal testimonies. We have to remember they don’t know Christ and His love for them. We were once like that. We were once rebels without Christ, but our kindness can lead others to a better understanding of Jesus.

Matthew 12:30-32

³⁰ “Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters. ³¹ And so I tell you, every kind of sin and slander can be forgiven, but blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. ³² Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.”



Jesus delivered an ominous warning. He prefaced it by pointing to the greatness of God's forgiveness, even forgiveness of those who speak against Jesus. "Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven." Jesus made it perfectly clear that even sin against Him—blasphemy, irreverent speech, or slander—can be forgiven.

But there is a limit to God's forgiveness. "Anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come." Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is serious, and it is sometimes referred to as "the unpardonable sin." The Holy Spirit speaks into our lives the truth of Christ. He convicts "the world to be in the wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment" (John 16:8). To reject the Spirit's message is unpardonable. Why? If we reject His message, we see no need to repent, come to Christ, and ask His forgiveness. God's forgiveness is limited in that He won't forgive us if we do not seek His forgiveness.

Jesus' warning is very serious, but it has caused people to wonder, "What if I have committed the unpardonable sin?" At one time or another, everyone has rejected the Spirit's call to repentance, belief in Jesus, and commitment to live for Him—even if momentarily. The very fact that you accept the truth about Jesus Christ and have a desire to turn from sin and follow Him is a sure sign you have not committed the unpardonable sin against the Holy Spirit!

God is lovingly patient with us and wants to forgive us and give us eternal life with Him in heaven. That is why we have to be persistent with those who reject God. As long as they have breath in their lungs, we need to keep sharing and praying that one day they too will accept Jesus.

How were the Pharisees in danger of committing the unforgivable sin?

QUESTION #4

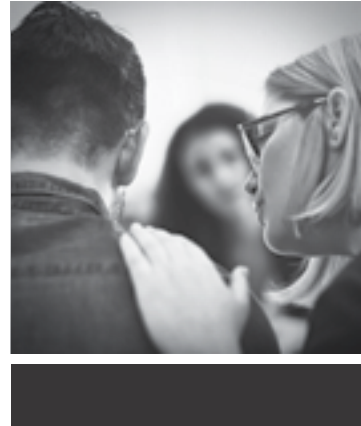
What is the hope and challenge for us in these hard words of Jesus?

QUESTION #5

LIVE IT OUT

All sin is offensive to God, and we all need to come to Christ to be forgiven. What will you do with that truth? Choose one of the following applications:

- ▶ **Be humble.** Pride keeps us from seeing our need for Christ and His forgiveness. Allow the Lord to search your heart for areas of pride that point to reliance on self and not on Christ.
- ▶ **Be patient.** It can be hard to be around people who are resistant to what Christ offers. Pray for patience! God is often working “behind the scenes” in a person’s life, so pray for opportunities to be used by God to patiently plant seeds.
- ▶ **Look for opportunities.** You know others who need to hear the gospel and come to faith in Christ. Ask God to open their hearts to receive His forgiveness, and pray for opportunities to share the message of Christ.



Just like the woman on the plane mentioned at the beginning of the session, many people compare themselves to others and think they’ll be just fine. Remember, though, that what really matters is that we look up and compare ourselves to Him.

My thoughts