

# MATTHEW 1:7-11

## ICE BREAKER

**Question:** Is it more important to be honest or to be kind?

Example #1: if a friend or your significant other asked if a new outfit made him or her look fat would you respond by being honest or by being kind?

Is there ever a scenario where it's more important to be honest than kind?

## CENTERING FOCUS

Have everyone close their eyes while someone reads Psalm 23. Have the reader read slowly, phrase by phrase with pauses in between. Ask the group to imagine they are there with God in the field, by the stream. Then read it again slowly...

## LAST WEEK'S CHALLENGE

Last week we were challenged to pause and take time to be silent before we said a prayer for our meals.

**Question:** How did it go? Were you able to implement those times of silence? Was it helpful? Was it difficult? Do you think you'll continue in this practice at times?

## THOUGHT PROVOKING QUESTION

**Question:** Has anyone here been in a scenario where you wrestled with whether you should love God by sticking with your convictions or accept someone who was living contrary to those convictions?

Example #1: If you saw someone who was disciplining their kids or not disciplining them in a way that you felt was Biblical...

Example #2: If someone who was baptized as an infant doesn't believe they should be baptized as an adult follower of Jesus...

## ENGAGING WITH SCRIPTURE

Matthew 22:34–40 (ESV): But when the Pharisees heard that [Jesus] had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together. And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets."

**Question:** How many commandments was the lawyer asking Jesus to identify? How many commandments did Jesus give?

**Question:** Why do you think it was important for Jesus to give two rather than one?

\*Pharisees were passionate about everyone meticulously keeping the law in order to honor God. They believed that it was possible to revere and please God without being compassionate toward people. However, Jesus connects loving God and loving people.

**Question:** Do you think Jesus believed you could love God without loving people? Why or why not?

\*The phrase "law and prophets" was used to encapsulate all of the teachings God gave in the Old Testament.

**Question:** According to Jesus, what outcome did God always hope would come from obedience to his commandments?

John 13:34–35 (ESV): A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

**Question:** As a group, list 3-4 ways that Jesus demonstrated love for his disciples? What was the ultimate way Jesus showed his love for us?

**Question:** What does it look like for us to love each other like Jesus loved his disciples?

**Question:** How can you demonstrate Jesus' love for your family, friends, neighbors, and co-workers this week?

## NEW CHALLENGE

We're still focusing on the rhythm of intimacy, silence. And trying to discover how to practically implement it into our daily and weekly rhythms. At some point each day do this...

1. Put away your phone or any other distractions, settle into your time/place, and get comfortable
  - For most people, sitting with your back straight, shoulders relaxed, legs on the floor is a good start. Others do better lying on their back in a relaxed position.
  - Some of you may prefer to do this exercise while walking or doing something simple with your hands, like laundry or drawing.
2. Begin with a breathing prayer
  - Close your eyes.
  - Take long, deep, slow breaths (if you want, count 4 seconds in, 4 seconds wait, 4 seconds out, repeat). Inhale through your nose, exhale through your mouth.
  - Start to pay attention to your breathing. Just "watch" your breath go in and out.
  - Release the constant chatter in your mind. Let each thought go as quickly as it comes, and just focus on your breathing.
  - Your mind will seize this opportunity to run wild with thoughts, feelings, memories, to do's, and distractions. That's okay. Don't judge yourself, feel bad, give up, or worry. When you notice your mind start to wander, just recenter with a quick prayer, like, "Father..." and come back to your breathing.

- In the beginning, just 1-2 minutes of this is a huge win, and 10 minutes is a home run.

3. Spend a few minutes "abiding in the vine"

- Transition from your breathing prayer to "the practice of the presence of God."
- Notice God's presence all around you, in you. For some people it's helpful to imagine the Father is sitting in the chair across from you or on a throne.
- Welcome his love, joy, and peace from the Holy Spirit.
- If you want, open your mind and imagination to listen for God's voice, or get something off your chest in prayer.
- But the main goal here is simply to "be with Jesus." Don't feel like you have to "do" anything. Just relax and enjoy his presence.

4. Close in a prayer of gratitude and commit the rest of your day to the Father

**Question:** When will you put this into practice this week? How can we help encourage you in this challenge this week?