

FOLLOW-THROUGH

Small Group Discussion around the Sunday Message
Matthew 25:31-46, Parable of the Sheep and the Goats
November 26, 2006



Introduction

1. Read Matthew 25:31-46.
2. The parable is about the final judgment and comes after two other parables concerning the end times (Parable of the 10 Bridesmaids, Parable of the Talents). How does this text fit into the larger framework of the other two parables?
3. Do the other two parables (prepared, wise use of gifts) shed any light or help explain any meaning behind this parable? What?

Getting Inside the Parable

1. In the parable the King comes and separates the people like a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. On His right were the sheep who received their eternal inheritance; the left were the goats who received eternal punishment. The reason for the separation, “what you did (not do) for the least of these my brothers (and sisters) you did (not do) for me.” What do you think the significance of the “works” are in the parable?
2. Is there any significance that neither the righteous nor the cursed realized that they had or had not helped out the King?
3. Read Matthew 7:15-23; James 2:14-26. These passages talk about faith without works being dead. Works are not something that we do in order to obtain our salvation, but in response to the salvation that Christ won for us on the cross. We have a responsibility (*ability to respond*) to serve others. Does knowing this change either our perception or our motivation to serve? Good or bad?

Digging Deeper

1. Service to others is a part of who we are and what we are about as Christians. We are all called to serve others where and when we can, as led by the Holy Spirit. In fact, the Holy Spirit is the one who has blessed us with our Spiritual Gifts and our serving heart that urges us to serve. Take the time to individually take the SHAPE inventory (which can be found online). If you do not have copies of the SHAPE inventory, one person can read the different areas, everyone right down what fits for you. Discuss your Spiritual Gifts, Heart, Abilities, Personality and Experience with the group. What surprises you? What do you disagree with? How does this fit how you are currently serving? Are there other areas that fit you better?
2. Can a person do good works and not be saved? Can a person be saved and refuse to do good works? What difference does our service to others make in the end?