

Home Group Leaders Discussion Guide

Luke 11:14-36

Q. Who is the final/ultimate authority in your life?

We all know the “right” answer to that question. But what is important for us to recognize is who have we allowed to truly be that final authority. Some other questions that might help us analyze this are...

Q. Who do you really trust and have confidence in?

Q. Where do you find your security?

Q. To whom do you yield your will? Who do we obey?

In this passage we meet a guy who was possessed by a demon. We really know nothing about how he got himself into this condition. All we really know is that it caused him to be mute (and by Matthew’s account he was also blind—see Matthew 12). And Jesus healed/delivered him.

By now we’re rather accustomed to Jesus healing people. And really, the healing/deliverance of this man is more of a catalyst for the conversation that would ensue. In the ministry of Jesus there was always lurking this question in the minds of people (namely the religious leaders): by what authority is Jesus doing all these miraculous things? And while it’s not so blatantly stated in this particular passage (it is in other places), that’s really the question in the minds of some present. And they even had their own, rather misguided, answer to that question. The theory for some was that Jesus drove out demons by the authority of a higher ranking demon. Of course Jesus blew that theory all to hell—pun intended (see verses 17-20).

In verses 21-22 Jesus used an interesting little illustration about the binding/overcoming of a strong man by one who is stronger, and taking away his possessions. One interpretation of this illustration that I rather like is that the “strong man” in this illustration is Satan. And the one who is stronger who comes along and plunders him is Jesus. By extension, we too (the followers of Jesus) can bind Satan through our obedience. This is why our obedience is so important. The more obedient we are, individually and collectively, the more of a limiting effect it has Satan and his work and power.

This entire passage does remind us that there is a spiritual dimension to our existence. Though we would all acknowledge that, in practice/function how well do we keep it in mind? Our obedience, or lack thereof, has spiritual consequences which in turn has physical/tangible/natural consequences. This is why the whole concept of authority is very important. Who/what we look to and yield to as our authority has natural consequences. We all “obey” something or someone. What we do in the physical/material world has consequences in the spiritual/unseen world...and vice versa. So in verses 24-27 when Jesus discussed a demon coming out of a man, wandering through arid places, and then returning

with 7 demons more wicked than himself, the idea He is conveying is that unless a higher authority has taken possession/dominance over the “host” the demons can come back with a vengeance. So while the initial “deliverance” is important, if there isn’t a new/better “filling” (which comes by yielding to the Holy Spirit and obedience) things can actually get worse.

We need to keep something firmly in mind whenever we look at the teaching and ministry of Jesus. It’s always about the kingdom of God. Everything Jesus says and does is in line with the present reality of the kingdom of God that He wants to alert/awaken people to. That’s why, going back to verse 20 for a moment, Jesus took this opportunity to again point to it, *“If I drive out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come to you.”* This is always the point Jesus wants people to get. And verse 28 demonstrates the proper response to that reality—hear and obey. Whatever else may be doing on in a passage, whatever possible interpretations can be batted around, we can always come back to this clear and simple truth: The kingdom is here...listen and obey. Other things can stay somewhat mysterious or unclear; but the present reality of God’s kingdom and our response to it is always the point we need to come back to.

So while the original condition of the demon-possessed man is concerning, of equal or even greater concern is the condition of those who would not repent at the preaching/teaching of Jesus. Jesus was very clear, at the judgment pagans would rise up and condemn those who would not repent at His teaching. It is probably very hard for us to grasp how scandalous verses 29-32 would have been to first century Jewish ears. There is a lot to unpack in those few verses. But here’s the stuff we definitely want to catch:

-Good, orthodox doctrine includes the idea of judgement to come. Jesus mentions it in such a way that He assumes His initial hearers understood the concept.

-We should not be too presumptuous about ours (or others’) standing with God. It was assumed by the Jews that they were in good standing with God (they were His covenant people after all). They also assumed a relatively poor standing with God of pagans (represented in this passage by the Ninevites and the Queen of the South). In both cases their assumptions were wrong.

-One greater than Jonah, greater than Solomon (and we could add a host of others—greater than David, greater than Moses, greater than Abraham, greater than the temple, greater than even the Law) was present in their midst. The only proper response was to repent.

Q. While it is clear what dominated/controlled the demon-possessed man...what possesses/dominates/controls someone who does not repent and yield their life to Jesus? (Or perhaps a different way of asking this question: what gets in the way, what barriers exist, to people repenting? That may get to the heart of what controls/dominates them)

Q. Do you come from a tradition/background that discussed future judgment much? As you consider the judgment to come, what do you think/feel?

The point of the closing illustration (verses 33-36) is this: Can our eyes see the light that is right in front of us? If we cannot, our eyes are bad and we are in darkness. This would be a key reason why some don't repent...they can't see (or refuse to see) the truth staring them in the face. Our "eyes" can represent our desires too. As the saying goes, we see what we want to see. So if our desires are off target, that can lead us toward darkness.

Going back to the earlier idea of what controls/dominates us. I suspect for most of us that answer is ourselves and our wants. So then the question is, are we willing to yield/submit our wants/wills to Jesus? Again, this points to what/who has the ultimate authority in our lives.

Q. How does your life reflect/represent the present reality of the kingdom of God?

Q. Here's a possible "test" to see if our "eyes" are good: Write down 10 things you want, and why you want them. ("things" can be experiences or intangibles too). Then share your list with each other in HG, and really challenge each other as to whether those are good/right things to want.

Q. How do you respond to not getting what you want? (That could give you a hint as to what controls/dominates you.)