

Faith At Home



Wednesday, June 17th Bible Study

Matthew 10:24-39

[Jesus said to the twelve:] “A disciple is not above the teacher, nor a slave above the master; it is enough for the disciple to be like the teacher, and the slave like the master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household!

“So have no fear of them; for nothing is covered up that will not be uncovered, and nothing secret that will not become known. What I say to you in the dark, tell in the light; and what you hear whispered, proclaim from the housetops. Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. And even the hairs of your head are all counted. So do not be afraid; you are of more value than many sparrows.

“Everyone therefore who acknowledges me before others, I also will acknowledge before my Father in heaven; but whoever denies me before others, I also will deny before my Father in heaven.

“Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword.

For I have come to set a man against his father,
and a daughter against her mother,
and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law;
and one’s foes will be members of one’s own household.

Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever does not take up the cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Those who find their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it.”

Beelzebul or Beelzebub or Ba’al Zebub

We often hear this name in conjunction with Satan or the devil. But the origin of this name is really a Philistine God. First referenced in the Old Testament book 2nd Kings, the name is written as Ba’al Zebub.

The word Ba’al is a Ugaritic language word that means “Lord.” So, basically a Philistine saying “Ba’al” would have been calling their deity “Lord” much the same way an Israelite would have used the word “Adonai” to refer to their God as “Lord.”

Zebub has a bit more linguistic intricacies. Some sources suggest the word Zebub means “flies” as in the insect, there are depictions of the Philistine god spewing flies, which were commonly associated with disease. Naturally calling your enemy’s god “Lord of the Flies” would have been an insult.

Also, the word Zebub has been translated as “of heavenly places”, or “of the manor”. It was a way to scoff at the Philistines.

“Yep, you worship Ba’al Zebub, Lord of the heavenly places”, would have been said in jest, or highly mocking. No Israelite would have believed Ba’al Zebub was greater than their God Yahweh, so again, this was an insult.

Hell, an actual place called Gehenna

While we love to picture how Dante described hell as being an eternal spiritual place where sinners roast forever, that is not what Jesus was talking about.

Gehenna, translated as the word “hell”, is an actual place. It is a valley, located right outside Jerusalem. It is a place where garbage collected. It is a place where some ancient Kings of Israel even sacrificed their children by fire, in order to appease other gods, not Yahweh. It has a long history, and is worthy of its own entire study. In short, Jesus is referencing a place many believed was cursed, and it was a place they all knew to avoid when they went to Jerusalem

Jesus is Ba’al Zebub?

As the Jesus movement spread among the Jews, those opposed to the Way would have found insults to heap on its followers. One insult would have been to compare Jesus with Ba’al Zebub, the insult Jews used to name the gods of their enemies. Jesus is aware he is being insulted this way. Jesus knows if he is being insulted, his followers will be as well, and the shame falls not on Jesus or his followers, but those who heap the insults to begin with. Jesus says, if they insult their enemy’s god, how poorly are they treating their own?

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Being sent comes with a lot of instructions. The 12 Apostles were introduced in the opening verses of the 10th chapter; and in verse 5 Jesus began preparing them for their journey. This week's verses continue Jesus' pep-talk.

What was the best pep talk you ever received?

When you think of receiving a pep talk, you think of encouragement. How does this pep talk/instruction time from Jesus project encouragement?

Sometimes a pep talk highlights challenges that one will need to overcome in order to accomplish the task. What are some of the challenges the original 12 Apostles will need to overcome as they head out to share the Good News?

What encouragement do we need today as we prepare to share the Good News in ways that connect with our culture?

What are some of the challenges we face as we head out to share the Good News?

Check-In Time

Father's Day approaches. Talk about a memory you have with your father when you were a child that sticks with you every day.

Women/Wives—talk about a memory you have watching your husband/father of your children—when your children were little.

Men/Husbands—talk about a memory you have when your children made you aware of what being a father is all about.

Not all fathers are the same. Perhaps there is someone else in your life who had more of a fatherly impact on you than your biological father. Who was that fatherly figure. What memory can you share that helps you see what a father really should be like?

A time of blessing

God be with you till we meet again ...

St. Paul writes: Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

God, the creator, + Jesus, the Christ, and the Holy Spirit, the comforter,
bless you and keep you in eternal love.

Amen.