

Giving to Caesar and to God

Mark 12:13–17 • Session 02 • 35 minutes

Aim Understand how Jesus answers an attempt to trap him, and consider what it means to fulfill our responsibilities while giving God our whole lives.

Before you lead

Read Mark 11:27–12:17 for the surrounding conflict over Jesus' authority. In this encounter, Pharisees and Herodians question Jesus about paying taxes to Caesar. Their purpose is to trap him, not to learn from him.

Ask the main questions first. Use the follow-ups when the group needs help going deeper; the leader notes are for your preparation. Give people time to answer, and ask them to point to the verses behind their observations.

Suggested timing Welcome, prayer, and reading 4 min • Head 7 min • Heart 12 min • Hands 9 min • Closing prayer 3 min

Head

Understand the passage

Read Mark 12:13–17 aloud. Keep the passage open throughout the discussion.

1. What are the Pharisees and Herodians trying to do in verses 13–14?

Follow-up: How does their praise of Jesus help them do that?

Leader note: Verse 13 states their intention. Their praise sounds respectful, but they are using it to set a trap.

2. How does Jesus respond to their question about taxes in verses 15–16?

Follow-up: What does he recognize about their motives, and what does he ask them to show him?

Leader note: Jesus knows their hypocrisy and asks for a denarius. Supporting the tax could anger people who resented Roman rule; rejecting it could expose him to accusations of opposing Rome.

3. In verse 17, what does Jesus tell them to give to Caesar and to God?

Follow-up: Why is his answer more than a simple yes or no about paying taxes?

Leader note: The coin bears Caesar's likeness and inscription. Jesus recognizes an obligation to Caesar while also insisting that they give God what belongs to him. Notice their amazement at his answer.

Heart

Examine our motives

Choose a follow-up when it helps someone explain an answer. Allow people to share honestly without pressing them to disclose more than they are ready to share.

4. The questioners sound respectful while resisting Jesus. When have you said the right thing about God but been unwilling to do what he says?

Follow-up: What did you want to protect or avoid in that situation?

Leader note: Keep the focus on our own motives. If needed, ask about a time someone wanted to look faithful, avoid embarrassment, or keep control of a decision.

5. When has concern about someone's opinion made it difficult for you to obey God?

Follow-up: What were you afraid you might lose?

Leader note: Verse 14 describes Jesus as someone who teaches truth without being swayed by appearances. Help the group consider how approval, belonging, or security can influence their choices.

6. Jesus says to give God what belongs to God. What part of your life is hardest to entrust to him right now?

Follow-up: What makes it difficult to trust him with that?

Leader note: Invite a specific example, such as money, a relationship, work, or a future plan. Jesus does not explicitly mention people bearing God's image here; Genesis 1:26–27 is a related biblical connection if the subject comes up.

Hands

Put the passage into practice

7. What responsibility do you need to handle more faithfully this week because you belong to God?

Follow-up: What would doing that honestly and well look like?

Leader note: Begin with the tax question in the passage, then consider related responsibilities at work, at home, or in the community. Giving Caesar what is due does not give him the worship or final authority that belongs to God.

8. From what you have shared, what is one step you will take this week to obey God?

Follow-up: When will you take that step, and how can the group support you?

Leader note: Help each person name something they can actually do: have an honest conversation, fulfill a neglected responsibility, or change a decision they have been making to please others. Revisit it next time.

Close in prayer

Thank Jesus for his wisdom and truthfulness. Confess where we have said one thing and done another. Ask God to help each person trust him and follow through on the step they shared.