

The Gospel of Matthew: Beware of the Leaven

Discussion Guide for March 21 and 22, 2026

Summary

This week's passage explores Matthew 16:1–12, where the Pharisees and Sadducees demand a sign from heaven to prove Jesus' authority. Despite witnessing many miracles, their hardened hearts refuse to believe. Jesus responds that the only sign they will receive is the "sign of Jonah," pointing to His future resurrection.

Afterward, Jesus warns His disciples to "beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees." He explains that He is not talking about bread but about the influence of false teaching. Just as a small amount of yeast spreads through dough, even small distortions of truth can lead to serious spiritual problems.

This passage reminds us to trust what God has already revealed and to guard our hearts by staying rooted in His Word.

Ice Breaker

Have you ever believed something that later turned out to be incorrect or misleading? What helped you realize the truth?

Key Verses

1. Matthew 16:1-12
2. Hebrews 11:6
3. Galatians 1:6-9
4. Colossians 2:8
5. Ephesians 4:14

Discussion Questions

1. The Pharisees and Sadducees asked Jesus for a sign even though they had already seen many miracles. Why do you think people sometimes demand more proof from God instead of trusting what He has already revealed?
2. Jesus says the only sign they will receive is the "sign of Jonah," referring to His resurrection. Why is the resurrection such a central proof of who Jesus is?
3. Jesus warns His disciples about the "leaven" of the Pharisees and Sadducees. What does this metaphor teach us about how small influences or teachings can impact our faith?
4. False teaching often distorts the character of God or the message of the gospel. Why is it so important for Christians to understand the gospel clearly?

5. The passage reminds us that the best protection against false teaching is knowing God's Word well. What are some practical ways we can grow in our understanding of Scripture?

Life Application

This week, take time to evaluate the influences shaping your thinking. Consider the books you read, the media you consume, and the voices you listen to regularly.

Ask yourself: *Are these influences helping me grow closer to Christ and understand His truth more clearly?*

Choose one intentional step this week to deepen your knowledge of God's Word – whether that means spending extra time in Scripture, memorizing a verse, or discussing biblical truth with another believer.

Key Takeaways

1. Faith grows through trusting God, not constantly demanding signs.
2. The resurrection is the ultimate confirmation of Jesus' identity.
3. Even small amounts of false teaching can lead to serious spiritual problems.
4. Knowing God's Word is the strongest protection against deception.